

## **RESOLUTION NO. 20-03**

**RESOLUTION OF THE EASTERN SIERRA COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS  
TO ESTABLISH A PROGRAM OF WORK TO BE KNOWN AS THE “ESCOG:  
SUSTAINABLE RECREATION AND ECOSYSTEM MANAGEMENT PROGRAM”  
AND TO SEEK APPROVAL FROM MEMBER AGENCIES FOR THIS WORK**

WHEREAS, the natural splendors and the natural resources of the Eastern Sierra are unique in the world, and the four member agencies of the Eastern Sierra Council of Governments are committed stewards of her many wonders and are humbled to call this unique place home; and

WHEREAS, the natural splendors and the natural resources of the Eastern Sierra make possible sustainable recreation and sustainable tourism activities that are the foundation of the cultures and economies of the four member agencies of the Eastern Sierra Council of Governments; and

WHEREAS, ecosystem management in the context of this resolution can be considered to be the deliberate management of forests and other vegetation assemblages to achieve desired benefits, such as reduced risk of wildfire, for the natural and human communities of the Eastern Sierra; and

WHEREAS, on July 19, 2018 and inspired by management planning efforts on the Inyo National Forest, Mono County and the Town of Mammoth Lakes and the USDA, Forest Service, Pacific Southwest Region, Inyo National Forest and Intermountain Region, Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest, formalized a non-funded Challenge Cost-Share Agreement establishing the Eastern Sierra Sustainable Recreation Partnership, a public-public partnership “...to cooperatively develop, plan, implement, maintain, and monitor programs and projects that are mutually beneficial to the parties and that enhance U.S. Forest Service and Cooperators' activities”; and

WHEREAS, the following Eastern Sierra jurisdictions have subsequently voted to join the Eastern Sierra Sustainable Recreation Partnership: Alpine County, California on August 20, 2019; the City of Bishop, California on September 9, 2019; and Inyo County, California October 8, 2019; and

WHEREAS, on March 7, 2019, the Sierra Nevada Conservancy’s Governing Board, an agency of the State of California, authorized \$618,750 of Proposition 68 funds for the “The Eastern Sierra Sustainable Recreation Partnership: Sustainable Recreation and Tourism Initiative.” The Governing Board’s action demonstrated a first of its kind and pioneering investment in California’s rural outdoor recreation economy and the natural resources that make it possible; and

WHEREAS, on October 21, 2019, the final Record of Decision for the Inyo National Forest Management Plan was signed, one of the first U.S. Forest Management Plans in the nation to be completed under the requirements of the 2012 Planning Rule, and informed by regional efforts such as the Eastern Sierra Recreation Collaborative supported by the National Forest Foundation; and

WHEREAS, on November 22, 2019, the National Park Service Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program awarded a grant to "...to convene, facilitate and report on a gathering of the superintendents of the above-identified NPS units (Death Valley National Park, Devils Postpile National Monument, Manzanar National Historic Site, Sequoia & Kings Canyon National Parks and Yosemite National Park) and to determine their willingness, either as individual units or as a group, to join the Eastern Sierra Sustainable Recreation Partnership and to work with local communities to benefit America's public-lands experience in Eastern California"; and

WHEREAS, on January 30, 2020, the Sierra Nevada Conservancy's Regional Forest and Fire Capacity Program (RFFCP) authorized \$179,300 in CCI funds for work in Mono, Inyo and Alpine Counties to develop a regional priority plan to improve ecosystem health and fire resiliency and build capacity and provide technical assistance consistent with recommendations of the California Forest Carbon Plan, of which the foremost regional priority project, the "Eastern Sierra Climate and Communities Resilience Project" is already underway; and

WHEREAS, on March 5, 2020 and in recognition of the escalating hazard that wildfire poses to mountain communities and their associated economic dependence on recreational opportunities, the Sierra Nevada Conservancy's Governing Board, an agency of the State of California, authorized \$339,534 of Forest Health Proposition 1 and Proposition 68 funds for "The Eastern Sierra Climate and Communities Resilience Project", an early and pro-active planning effort encompassing approximately 55,000 acres on Inyo National Forest lands surrounding the Town of Mammoth Lakes in Mono and Madera counties that will foster stakeholder involvement, define project goals and objectives, identify long term needs for success at this scale, develop proposed actions, and build support for a landscape-scale planning and implementation project that will result in forest health and fuels reduction treatments across the project's 55,000-acre planning area, thereby prioritizing forest health as a fundamental component of sustainable recreation in the region; and

WHEREAS, on May 18, 2020, the U.S. Endowment for Forestry and Communities and the National Forest Foundation awarded \$150,000 for the "Inyo National Forest (California/Nevada) Campgrounds Business Plan" one of ten national awards to support the development of finance models as part of the "Innovative Finance for National Forests Grant Program" that seeks to leverage private sector capital to support resilience of the National Forest System and surrounding lands which, in collaboration with Quantified Ventures, will develop

a business plan that evaluates needs for campgrounds, identifies potential sources of funding through cost-sharing partnerships, and proposes finance options to address an estimated \$70 million funding gap for campground upgrades in California's recreation rich Eastern Sierra; and

WHEREAS, on August 4, 2020, the Great American Outdoors Act was signed into law, which will "...establish, fund, and provide for the use of amounts in a National Parks and Public Land Legacy Restoration Fund to address the maintenance backlog of the National Park Service, the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, the Bureau of Land Management, the Forest Service, and the Bureau of Indian Education, and to provide permanent, dedicated funding for the Land and Water Conservation Fund, and for other purposes..." all of which are of interest to the Eastern Sierra; and

WHEREAS, on August 12, 2020, the State of California and the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Forest Service, Pacific Southwest Region, entered into an "Agreement for Shared Stewardship of California's Forests and Rangelands," citing multiple mutual benefits including specifically healthy forests and Sustainable Recreation that are interdependent interests of the Eastern Sierra, including: "...healthy forests will improve climate resilience and reduce the risk of catastrophic wildfire, safeguard water quality and air quality, protect fish and wildlife habitat, enhance biological diversity, sequester carbon, improve recreational opportunities, and generate good jobs and economic opportunities"; and,

WHEREAS, on February 14, 2020, Eastern Sierra Council of Governments convened as a Joint Powers Authority for the first time and elected its officers including Stacy Corless of Mono County as Chair and Karen Schwartz of the City of Bishop as Vice Chair; and

WHEREAS, during the fire season of 2020, California and the Eastern Sierra endured an oppressive fire season of unprecedented severity exacerbated by climate change, during which, and according to CALFIRE, wildfires acres burned have more than doubled the previous State record of 1.7 million acres set in 2018 and contain therein three of the top five largest wildfires in State history, underscoring the reality that climate adaptation actions are needed now in order to steward healthy forests that provide irreplaceable ecosystem services and sustain the vibrant recreation economy of the Eastern Sierra; and

WHEREAS, beginning in the early months of calendar year 2021, a number of opportunities will come forward from the aforementioned efforts that may specifically benefit residents of the Eastern Sierra and their visitors and for which the Eastern Sierra Council of Governments and its Joint Powers Authority were uniquely intended.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Eastern Sierra Council of Governments as follows:

That a program to be known as the “ESCOG: Sustainable Recreation and Ecosystem Management Program” be established and pursued by the Eastern Sierra Council of Governments using its Joint Powers Authority.

That the ESCOG: Sustainable Recreation and Ecosystem Management Program shall seek to integrate responsible Ecosystem Management, natural resources conservation, sustainable outdoor recreation, and economic development using the best available science and in such a way as to strengthen and inspire all communities in the Eastern Sierra in their pursuits of resilience and sustainability through the functional alignment of partner agencies in pursuit of identified projects.

That, in carrying out these activities, the ESCOG: Sustainable Recreation and Ecosystem Management Program shall be empowered to apply for, pursue, and administer grants and other sources of revenue from state, federal, private, ESCOG member agency, and civic sources to finance projects; retain contractors and hire staff; make recommendations about project feasibility and implementation; enter into long term contracts; engage in any actions already authorized by the ESCOG Joint Powers Agreement including the securing of appropriate levels of insurance; and take any other actions reasonably related to its pursuit of the above mentioned activities, provided, however, that the ESCOG Sustainable Recreation and Ecosystem Management Program shall not be authorized to incur debt that is not otherwise secured by the Program’s identified revenue.

That representatives of the four ESCOG jurisdictions return to their respective governing bodies to seek and secure support for the necessary approvals from each member agency for the ESCOG to pursue this important work.

That the legal counsel for the ESCOG work with member agency’s staff to draft appropriate agenda items to either approve or deny the ESCOG’s pursuit of this important program consistent with the authorities already retained by the ESCOG.

APPROVED AND ADOPTED THIS 16th day of October 2020.

ATTEST:

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
ANGELA PLAISTED, Clerk



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STACY CORLESS, Chair

STATE OF CALIFORNIA        )  
COUNTY OF MONO            )  
TOWN OF MAMMOTH LAKES)        ss.

I, ANGELA PLAISTED, Assistant Clerk of the Town of Mammoth Lakes, DO HEREBY CERTIFY under penalty of perjury that the foregoing is a true and correct copy of Resolution No. 2020-03 adopted by the Eastern Sierra Council of Government Joint Powers Authority at a meeting thereof held on the 16<sup>th</sup> day of October 2020, by the following vote:

AYES:                   Chair Stacy Corless, Vice Chair Karen Schwartz and Board Members  
                              Bob Gardner, Lynda Salcido, John Wentworth, Jeff Griffiths, Dan Totheroh  
                              and Jim Ellis

NOES:                   None

ABSENT:                None

ABSTAIN:               None

DISQUALIFICATION:   None

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
ANGELA PLAISTED, Assistant Clerk