



**PLANNING**  
— IN THE —  
**EASTERN SIERRA**

*Improving Intergovernmental Coordination,  
Public Involvement and Land Use Decisions*

*A Report by*  
The Sierra Nevada Regional Initiative  
The California Planning Roundtable  
The California Planning Foundation

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A watercolor painting of a mountain landscape. The background features jagged, snow-capped mountains in shades of blue, green, and white. The foreground is dominated by lush green trees and foliage, with some areas of pink and red, suggesting a valley or a specific type of vegetation. The overall style is soft and painterly.

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# Introduction

In 2000, the Sierra Nevada Regional Initiative (SNRI) received a grant from the David and Lucille Packard Foundation to undertake the Eastern Sierra Land Use Planning Project. The goal of the project is to enhance the quality of land use planning in the Eastern Sierra region comprised of Alpine, Mono and Inyo Counties. Project objectives include strengthening governmental planning through education, and supporting and empowering participation in planning decisions by non-governmental organizations and citizens at large.

SNRI intends to accomplish the project objectives through the development of training programs and materials to assist in enhancing the expertise of town and county planning officials, and federal and other governmental land managers in the Eastern Sierra region. The programs will focus on planning approaches and techniques that permit sustainable economic development while maximizing the conservation of the pristine beauty, natural resources, and unique landscapes that are the Eastern Sierra's principal attraction. The programs are also intended to include workshops and informational outreach to non-governmental organizations and citizens, to assist in increasing the effectiveness of public input in planning decisions.

As part of this effort, the Eastern Sierra Land Use Planning Workshop was held on September 8 and 9, 2001, at June Lake. The workshop

was developed and conducted by SNRI, with assistance from the California Planning Roundtable and the California Planning Foundation, and with extensive input from professional planners, policy makers, and residents from the Eastern Sierra region. The workshop ses-



sions attracted more than 80 participants, including the groups mentioned above, elected and appointed local government leaders, and professional staff from local, state, and federal agencies.

Compiled by the California Planning Roundtable, this report is intended to draw public attention to the significant challenges facing the Eastern Sierra, and to summarize the discussions, issues raised, and range of possible policy choices identified in the June Lake workshop. The first part of this report, the welcoming keynote address to the workshop by Andrea Lawrence, SNRI Project Director, effectively captures the thoughtful and passionate consideration for the Sierra shared among workshop participants.

Part 2 of this report, "The Workshop at June Lake," briefly reviews the major points raised and discussed at the workshop, and summarizes the workshop panels. A detailed account of the workshop sessions can be found in an appendix to this report that is available on the California Planning Roundtable website: [www.cproundtable.org](http://www.cproundtable.org)

"Initial Outcomes and Possible Directions" highlights some of the ideas for change that emerged from the workshop. More importantly, it notes that both the Eastern Sierra Land Use Planning Workshop and this report are only initial steps in a challenging and continuing process of collaborative regional efforts to ensure the long term preservation of the

Sierra, and its multitude of interrelated resources.

Those who produced this report wish to thank the people and organizations who made the Eastern Sierra Land Use Planning Workshop possible. Partial lists of the many dedicated contributors are in the summaries of the workshop panels, and in the acknowledgments at the end of this report. We also want to apologize in advance if we have inadvertently misstated or misrepresented any of the hundreds of comments by workshop panelists or audience participants.

# What We Value

by Andrea Lawrence, SNRI

The following is the welcoming address given at the Eastern Sierra Land Use Planning Workshop on September 8 and 9, 2001, by Andrea Lawrence, Sierra Nevada Regional Initiative Project Director.

This is a first for the eastside. We have all three counties (Inyo, Mono, and Alpine) as well as citizens of the eastside, plus the California Planning Roundtable and California Planning Foundation, sharing in today's discussion.

Let's talk about what we value. I've always felt that the most important thing that we have to do is to look at land use in the Eastern Sierra first with our hearts and our spirits. Then, second, we can look at the planning and the methodology by which we approach our land use. Recently, in the *National Geographic Traveler*, Bud Roper set the scene so beautifully for this area. We should all read this article, "A Mammoth Ambition," because living here we never quite see the big picture of the eastside.

First of all, we are a land of superlatives. I'm biased about it, but it happens to be fact:

**We start off with the highest point in the Lower 48, Mt. Whitney;**

**Then we have the lowest point in the United States, Death Valley;**

**We have the continent's deepest cleft, which is the Owens Valley, whose floor is almost two miles below the summits bordering it;**

**From the Sierra Nevada, we can cross the Owens Valley to the White Mountains, where we have the world's oldest living individual**

**things, which are the bristlecone pines. The granddaddy of them all, the Methuselah Tree, is close to 5,000 years old;**

**Now we wander north, up to the Long Valley Caldera, which is the active seismic area;**

**And, of course, as we go we're coming up US Highway 395, one of the most glorious scenic highways, a crown jewel of the**



**state of California, and clearly an amenity that enhances the quality of our lives;**

**Soon we come to Mono Basin, a visual and ecological treasure, the preservation of which is a stunning achievement from the point of view of the lake and the work they've done on the lake;**

**Farther north is Bodie, our state historic park;**

**And from the eastside, we can easily go into the best part of Yosemite.**

Also what we have here — very importantly — is the eastern side of the Sierra Nevada, John Muir's unequalled Range of Light, which is not only an icon for us but also for the nation and the world. The Sierra Nevada is populated by glorious and wonderful meadows, lakes and streams, and all kinds of opportunities, open to us who live here as well as to the recreating public.

Both residents and visitors are very important. Living or visiting here, we can walk just a few minutes away from town and see more beauty in one day than most people can see in a lifetime. That's a vital part of our quality of life.

The other thing that is part of our quality of life is the incredible landscape — our great open space. One of the quirkiest legacies of the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power is the 300,000 acres of open space they control. In my heart of hearts, I'd like us over time to find some way to get a conservation easement on those lands. That would truly be a worthy legacy for all of us.

I'd like next to go to the theme of what's in our hearts and what's in our spirits about where we live. In an essay called "A Sense of Place," Tony Hiss writes about how we are sensitized by our environment, by where we live and by our communities. Hiss says, "As places around us change — both the communities that shelter us and the larger regions that support them — we undergo changes inside. This means that whatever we experience in a place is both a serious environmental issue and a deeply personal one." Living in the Eastern Sierra, that becomes even clearer to me. I believe that we who live on the eastside are perhaps more sensitized to our place than most people are — by the grandeur of this landscape and by the remoteness of our communities and thus our interdependence — to the impact of impending changes.

What we bring to the issues of planning and land use is incredibly important. What we need to do in the long term, I think, is to realize that while earlier, exploitive land-use patterns may be appropriate in some places, they are not appropriate here. We know that sprawl is no good, no matter where you are. It's not appropriate in a rural area and most certainly not in the Eastern Sierra.

We have to look at other alternatives for accommodating the growth our communities expect. In doing so, I think we should be guided by our sense of connection to our land and our communities — our sense of place. Out of that sensibility, we can make the decisions that are so critical not only to our own sense of well-being but also to the quality of the future for our families and for our children.

We have very precious and very rare resources here: the recreational opportunities our mountains offer. These are not resources that people find in a lot of other places. There's a wonderful expression for mountains — "vertical archipelagos." Our mountain-archipelagos are treasures that we must understand with our hearts as well as with our heads — that is, with our science. In promoting recreation, I think we have to remember that so many people will come up here, not just for the beauty but also for the resources, especially for the hiking, for getting out into this wonderful Range of Light.

So our planning needs to incorporate tourism and recreation as well as normal growth. I think many of you who have been involved in the Sierra Business Council process understand this. It's the Sierra Business Council's theory that we must have clear boundaries around our communities.



We cannot allow our communities to sprawl beyond those boundaries. In whatever planning we do, we have to be mindful of the quality of our landscape, because that is our resource.

Let me emphasize this point: I think that being mindful of the quality of our landscape is crucial, because it is the land that supports our spirits, our livelihoods and, most importantly, our quality of life. There is a wonderful book by Dan Kemmis that's called *Community and the Politics of Place*. It's a thoughtful presentation about how we build our communities. What he says about planning is that our public policies must be a reflection of our places — that our policies must not be imposed on the land but must come out of the land. And, of course, I think that could not be more true of any place than of this place where we live.

This workshop is a marvelous opportunity to get together to start pushing the envelope and opening the doors of our own minds to ways of refining our land use policies. Perhaps together we can bring a vision into play, one that acknowledges and honors this landscape that we live in.

I think it's important to know that God did not make the Sierra Nevada a lot-and-block subdivision, and we shouldn't be using it as a lot-and-block subdivision. When I was on the County Board of Supervisors, they complained about how much public land we have (about 93%). "Yes," I said, "that is terrible. We should have 99% public land!" I hope we can enlist the cooperation

of private landowners and extend to private lands in the Eastern Sierra the same care and consideration we hope to give our public lands.

Those are some things we need to keep in mind. I hope that in today's discussions, we will discover some real issues that we can then focus on, issues that will pull us more fully into the future in a very productive way.

Let me express my huge thanks to all of you for being here. Our workshop facilitators are going to be absolutely superb. They're going to keep you right on the mark so you can do great things and come back to help us all solve the land-use problems the Eastern Sierra faces.

# The Workshop at June Lake

**T**he Eastern Sierra Land Use Planning Workshop held at June Lake in September 2001 provided the venue for a careful, collaborative examination of past and current planning practice in the Eastern Sierra. Its focus was identifying, “What tools have worked?” and “What new techniques should we consider?”

The first part of the workshop provided an overview of the unique setting that is the Eastern Sierra. The Saturday session began with an opening keynote address by SNRI Project Director Andrea Lawrence, who is also a former member of the Mono County Board of Supervisors. Andrea’s introduction was followed by an overview of current conditions in the Eastern Sierra, including presentations by experts on natural resources, water quality and supply, population, economy, transportation, and housing.

The heart of the workshop was a series of panel discussions, covering public participation in the planning process, collaboration in planning, community and resort development, and the economics of rural government. Each was facilitated by a member of the California Planning Roundtable or California Planning Foundation, and included Eastern Sierra community activists, professional planners, and policy makers. An important component of each panel was a moderated discussion of the topic with members of the audience.

Sunday’s session featured two roundtable discussions, “Planners’ Gut Level Shop Talk” and “Public’s Gut Level Shop Talk.” Each built on

the first day of the workshop and was a wide-ranging, at times emotional discussion of planning issues facing the Eastern Sierra and how best to address them.

The hours of discussion in the workshop among planners, politicians, governmental officials at all levels,



environmentalists, and concerned community members, appeared to reflect agreement that the valuable ecosystems of the Sierra are endangered on several fronts, and that the key challenge is how to maintain a sustainable environment with the growth pressures unique to the Eastern Sierra region.

An important foundation for much of the thinking and discussion at the workshop was the Sierra Nevada Ecosystem Project (SNEP), by the Center for Water and Wildland Resources, University of California at Davis. The SNEP assessed outcomes under several scenarios for population growth and settlement patterns. Although the expected outcomes under each scenario varied, the SNEP report concluded that any future scenario would require significant changes in land use and infrastructure policies

to achieve lower impacts on critical habitats. The report states: *“If current population growth and settlement patterns continue, then half the private land in the Sierra would be settled. If a more compact form of settlement were followed, then the land area occupied would still double from the present amount. If low population growth and compact development were chosen, then little additional land (8% more) would be required, assuming that infill and carefully targeted density transfers are used.”*

The report goes on to state: *“Translation of SNEP strategies into actual policy may proceed more easily through development of regional policies for the different regions of the Sierra.*

*These regions differ in population levels, density, and growth, and in the manner in which they incorporate costs of resource use and environmental risk, governmental coordination, and activism. The pattern of employment, commodity production, and services directly dependent on the Sierra Nevada ecosystem varies greatly across the range; economic linkages clearly define distinct regions within the Sierra.*

As the Sierra Nevada Ecosystem Project report concluded: *“It is unlikely that a single model or policy would apply equally well across all regions, except perhaps one that encouraged widespread institutional innovation toward ecosystem stewardship.”* These thoughts were echoed in the workshop and there was general consensus that effective regional cooperation, coordination

and partnerships could benefit both the Eastern Sierra region as a whole, and each of its individual communities.

The Eastern Sierra Land Use Planning Workshop was convened because of a widely held belief that the unique character of the Eastern Sierra — its ecosystems and communities — and the variety of development pressures that face the region, call for the best planning that can be mustered. Two sets of outcomes of the workshop are represented in this report. The first is a summary of key points raised at the workshop, listed below. The second is a set of approaches for further consideration and discussion, and appears in the “Initial Outcomes and Possible Directions” section of this report.

### Key points raised

**Environmental values must be protected as other concerns (economic, social, etc.) are addressed.**

**Effective regional cooperation, coordination and partnerships could benefit the Eastern Sierra region as a whole and each of its individual communities.**

**Effective public participation is crucial to ongoing planning efforts. There have been successes in this regard in the Eastern Sierra; there is a need for more, and more meaningful, public participation. Media coverage is an important component to involving and educating the public.**

**The Eastern Sierra have had successes with regional intergovernmental review of planning activities and development proposals; these efforts should be continued and, as appropriate, expanded.**

**There is an ongoing need for development monitoring and analysis.**

**Affordable housing is a critical concern shared by all three counties. A mismatch of job availability and affordable housing results in workers who must commute into a community because they cannot afford local housing. The results cut across a variety of issues: land use, transportation, and the provision of public services.**

**Effective public policy making requires the availability of comprehensive data.**

**There is a need for ongoing skill building among local planners, elected and appointed officials, and citizens, including tools for: 1) planning and public participation processes; 2) land use and environmental planning; 3) infrastructure planning and development; and, 4) public finance.**

Several things were abundantly clear throughout the workshop. One was the absolutely unique gift that the Eastern Sierra represents, both to local people and to the rest of the world. Another was the great love for the Eastern Sierra that characterizes local policy makers, community members, and professional staff. Finally, it was clear that there is much work to be done and that, equally clearly, there is the will to do it.



**The economics of rural government will continue to provide serious challenges. Funding sources have not met increasing demands on public infrastructure and services. To address the economics of rural government in the Eastern Sierra, better financial tools are needed, which may include greater regional coordination.**

# The Panels



The panel discussions that identified the above key points included each of the following. A detailed summary of each panel may be found in an appendix to this report that is available on the California Planning Roundtable website at

[www.cproundtable.org](http://www.cproundtable.org).

## The Eastern Sierra as Place Panel:

*Connie Millar, Sierra Nevada Research Center, USFS, PSW Research Station*

*Steve Addington, Bureau of Land Management, Field Office Manager, Bishop*

*Greg James, Inyo County Water Department*

*Greg Newbry, Mono County Planning Department*

*Steve Frisch, Sierra Business Council*

*Scott Burns, Mono County Community Development Director*

*Bill Taylor, Mammoth Lakes Senior Planner.*

*Facilitator: Linda Dalton-California Planning Roundtable (with the California Planning Foundation at the time of the workshop)*

To set the stage for the discussion of planning in the Eastern Sierra, this panel provided an overview of the region's identity as defined by its natural amenities and common dilemmas. Connie Millar captured the special character of the Eastern Sierra with four terms: The crests of the Sierra and White Mountains and the valleys of the Great Basin desert form distinct *edges*. The region's stark landforms and unique vegetation create a highly readable *landscape* that transgresses *time*. Finally, the area remains fundamentally *wild*, fragile and sensitive to human impacts. In addition, particular issues and opportunities may be addressed by sub-regions drawn around natural features such as watersheds and air sheds as well as by sub-regions defined politically or economically.

The panel concluded that these distinctive characteristics are a challenge as well as a strength. Resource exportation can deplete the economic assets of the region, while resource attraction can draw so many people that the natural and aesthetic values become diluted. Panelists wondered how projects could be designed that increase the ability of economic, social, and natural features of the area to reinforce rather than drain one another.

## Public Participation in the Planning Process

### Panel:

*Scot Burns, Mono County Planning Director*

*Darin Dinsmore, Sierra Business Council*

*Elizabeth Tenney, Eastern Sierra Advocates Network*

*Rick Leslie, Lone Pine Design Review Board.*

*Facilitator: Tom Jacobson - California Planning Roundtable.*

Public participation has become a mainstay of planning in California, but there remain significant challenges in how to make public participation effective and meaningful. The goal of this panel was to highlight examples of public participation in planning processes in the Eastern Sierra, including the associated successes, obstacles encountered and lessons learned.

The examples represented a variety of creative techniques for meaningfully integrating the public into planning decision-making, including: Mono County — Regional Planning Advisory Committees, ESAN (Eastern Sierra Advocates Network) (which was known as the PESTER Network (Preserving the Eastern Sierra Tradition of Environmental Responsibility) at the time of the workshop), and the Inyo County Design Review Ordinance/Lone Pine Design Review

Board. One panelist concluded with insights on nine fundamental principles (the “Nine Cs”) for effective public participation: credibility, commitment, contribution, competence, collaboration, continuity, conscience, conversation and celebration.

## Collaboration in Planning

### Panel:

*Chuck Thistlethwaite, Inyo County Planning Director*

*Byng Hunt, Mono County Supervisor*

*Jeff Bailey, Inyo National Forest Supervisor*

*Nancy Upham, Chair Coalition for Unified Recreation in the Eastern Sierra (CURES)*

*Facilitator: Janet Fairbanks - California Planning Roundtable*

The panelists were asked to discuss collaborative planning from their perspective and experiences, and to tell the group what it means to them. They were asked to share successes and obstacles, lessons learned and how collaborative planning can be used in the future.

The panel defined collaborative planning as a process where stakeholders define common goals or resolve common problems. By working together in a collaborative manner a synergistic effect occurs; the result far exceeds what can be accomplished as individual agencies. The panel discussed the pros and cons of creating a council of governments, providing opportunities for collaboration on a regional scale. The challenge facing a large geographical area such as the Eastern Sierra is how to effectively institutionalize a collaborative planning process among the various governmental agencies and citizens. The panel stressed that successful collaborative planning is inclusive, rather than exclusive; has a common goal; avoids compromising; recog-



nizes that collaborative planning is a process not an end product, and not all problems can be resolved with this model.

## Community and Resort Development

### Panel:

*Brian Peters, Alpine County Planning Director*

*Rick Pucci, Bishop Administrator/Planning Director*

*Mike Vance, Mammoth Lakes Community Development Director*

*Benno Nager, MMSA/Intrawest*

*Facilitator: Stan Hoffman - California Planning Roundtable, California Planning Foundation*

This panel dealt with the issues surrounding resort development while maintaining a sense of community for the full time residents. As resort areas become larger and attract more visitors on a year round basis, the economic forces on the land market and the need for a more diverse labor force generates problems familiar to more urban areas — increasing the need for public services, such as schools, parks, neighborhood beautification, cultural activities, public works and traffic control. The clash between the demand for relatively higher priced resort housing and the more moderately priced worker housing increases in-commuting of retail, construction and service workers and creates other development impacts on both the resort and nearby communities.

## The Economics of Rural Government

### Panel:

*Brian Peters, Alpine County Planning Director*

*John Wohlmuth, Mono County Chief Administrative Officer*

*Steve Julian, Mammoth Lakes Town Manager*

*Facilitator: Stan Hoffman - California Planning Roundtable, California Planning Foundation*

Discussion of the economics of rural government centered around the issues of limited dollars and limited resources, and how to pay for increasing demands on public infrastructure and public services. The aftermath of the Proposition 13, and subsequent legislation have served to constrain most local governments in providing expanded services. In general, the rural communities in the Eastern Sierra have become overly dependent on retail sales taxes and hotel lodging taxes. How can a community expand its financial base to meet demands for increased public services from resort travelers, while at the same time meeting the needs of a growing worker population?

## Planners' Gut Level Shop Talk

### Panel:

*Marshall Rudolph, Mono County Counsel*

*Chuck Thistlethwaite, Inyo County Planning Director*

*Scott Burns, Mono County Community Development Director*

*Rene Mendez, Inyo County Administrator*

*Brian Peters, Alpine County Planning Director*

*Mike Vance, Mammoth Lakes Planning Director*

*Facilitators: Susan DeSantis and Tom Jacobson - California Planning Roundtable*

The focus of the Planners' Gut Level Shop Talk was to discuss ideas for building capacity within the Eastern Sierra governmental structure to more effectively address growth and development issues. The question was asked: what tools are needed to help you do integrated planning?

The panel agreed that a vision is needed for the Eastern Sierra region to keep everyone on the same page. To establish the vision, the region needs to invest time up-front to build strong relationships. One way to do this is to move toward a formalized regional planning structure to provide a forum for continued discussions. Two key issues were raised: affordable housing and the airport. The planners discussed pursuing a regional approach to housing, including needs assessment and strategy development. They also agreed that settling the location of a regional airport is challenging, particularly because it encompasses safety, economic and political issues.

## Public's Gut Level Shop Talk

*Facilitator: Linda Dalton - California Planning Roundtable (with the California Planning Foundation at the time of the workshop)*

Participants sought more ways for timely engagement on issues that affect their communities:

**Media coverage needs to occur in advance of decisions.**

**Information should be presented clearly and concisely, not just in complex documents like Environmental Impact Reports.**

**Public input must reach appointed and elected officials before they have made up their minds, not just through public hearings late in the process.**

**Citizens need feedback on how their involvement affects decisions, not just as an exercise to satisfy a legal requirement.**

# Initial Outcomes and Possible Directions

In many ways, the participants in the Eastern Sierra Regional Planning Workshop confirmed the problems tentatively identified by SNRI at the outset of this project. The Eastern Sierra region is currently experiencing unprecedented growth and land development pressures. Despite the best efforts of expert and motivated local land planners and governmental land managers, the magnitude, volume and complexity of the development proposals now under review or expected to be filed for approval in the near future are taxing the entire planning infrastructure of this rural area.

The traditional land uses of mining, timber harvesting, and grazing are being far outstripped in economic terms by destination resort developments, and residential construction projects designed as vacation homes, or as retirement homes for affluent out-of-area retirees. These kinds of development projects simultaneously increase the local demand for lower-income service workers, while they displace many of the area's existing affordable housing units. The predictable consequence is unmanaged growth in small communities outside of the principal population centers — a kind of “rural sprawl,” which has consequences as grave to conservation values as the “urban sprawl”

elsewhere in California. This rural sprawl jeopardizes migrating deer herds and fragile wetlands, threatens the purity of mountain streams, and brings additional residents expecting local government services to areas where community resources are already overtaxed.



Both community members and agency planners in the affected communities often feel overwhelmed by the new development surge. Local general plans and other land planning documents were not

designed to address development projects of the kind and scope now proposed. As a consequence, local communities and their policy makers are frequently asked to make ad hoc revisions to their basic planning policies to accommodate specific projects, sometimes under severe

time and resource constraints. Many feel that they lack the necessary land planning “tools,” relevant experience, and professional support to ensure that these development projects are designed to have the minimum adverse impact on the key conservation values that draw visitors to the Sierra Nevada in the first place. In the Eastern Sierra, there is no COG (council of governments) or other regional governmental infrastructure to provide the institutional support and coordination needed by the decision-makers and land planners of the different jurisdictions. Local conservation groups, whose work is performed almost entirely by volunteers, find it difficult to track the governmental review and approval process for significant projects, and to participate in those decisions in an informed, timely, and effective manner.

The articulation of these issues at the June Lake workshop, and the responses explored by the participants, suggest that the following approaches may be worthy of additional local consideration and discussion.

They fall into three topic areas — structure, process, and policy initiatives — and reflect the key points outlined above. Clearly there are overlaps between these topic areas (for example, a structural or procedural approach might be used to address substantive policies).

## Structure

**Regional Collaboration.** Convene regional forums, workshops and other means to maintain dialogue and collaboration on critical issues, such as transportation, housing, air quality, airports, infrastructure financing, economics, open space, water supply and quality, watershed protection, and public investment.

**Intergovernmental Collaboration.** Consider establishing one or more governmental entities charged with addressing matters of regional concern. This might take a variety of forms, such as a single purpose agency, a traditional Council of Governments with a non-traditional mission (identification and preservation of critical habitat and wildlife corridors, watershed preservation, etc.), or others.

**Availability of Comprehensive Data.** Develop, maintain, and disseminate regional geographic information system databases, imagery, and applications, including the publication of maps.

## Process

**Public Involvement.** Develop new programs and expand existing programs for providing citizens with timely information on various planning efforts, projects, and public works activities occurring in the three county region. Involve interested citizens, stakeholders, and representatives of organizations by providing workshops on topical issues, early notification of pending public hearings, and ongoing broad citizen/organization involvement in the planning and decision-making processes.

**Media Coverage.** Continue to expand media coverage as a tool for effective public participation.

**Regional Intergovernmental Review.** Continue and expand efforts to inform local, state and federal agencies about planning activities and proposed development projects, and coordinate local and regional decisions with state and federal agencies.

**Development Monitoring and Analysis.** Produce and analyze current demographic and economic projections, and assess the impact of changing demographic and economic characteristics on planning and policy issues. This can help local governments in the region “get ahead of the curve” by being able to better anticipate the cumulative impacts of multiple development proposals in different jurisdictions, rather than reacting to each proposal individually.

## Policy Development and Implementation

**Affordable Housing.** Consider developing and adopting countywide housing elements as means of addressing city and county housing needs in a coordinated fashion.

Consider applying to the California Department of Housing and Community Development for grant funding under the Inter-Regional Partnership Program, aimed at developing strategies for addressing jobs/housing balance.

**Environmental Values.** Explore the use of land trusts and conservancies, as part of focused land use planning efforts, as opportunities to manage large land areas with critical resource, environmental and amenity values.

Develop mechanisms for monitoring ecosystem health across county boundaries.

Identify and document the critical natural resource systems of the region: land, wildlife corridors and habitats, wetlands, and viewsheds. Adjust local general plans to more effectively preserve and protect those resources and systems, and more effectively consider and respect the natural characteristics of the region.

**Rural Government Economics.** Explore and develop better public finance tools, which are essential to the ongoing health of Eastern Sierra cities and counties. Such efforts could provide better financial stability and long term solvency through tools such as equitable impact fee systems.

Consider various forms of regional collaboration in public finance matters. These should include coordinated efforts to avoid local governments making land use policy decisions based more on the potential to increase sales tax and other revenues than sound planning principles (a practice known throughout California as the “fiscalization of land use”).

Expand public awareness of the constraints on local government revenue generation imposed by the limited amount of land in private ownership, in terms of the ability of local agencies to provide the type and level of services the new development projects need.

Explore opportunities for facilitating discussions between local governments in the region and the federal government regarding rural economies.

**Skill Building.** Increase capacity among local planners, officials and citizens by providing regular access to a variety of information sources and planning methods, including: 1) process tools; 2) infrastructure tools; 3) financial tools; and, 4) land use and environmental planning tools. This might be accomplished by working with professional planning organizations and/or university programs, and supported by grant funding.

Improve local access to expert facilitation, and further develop local facilitation skills. One option could be the creation of a non-profit institute that could serve as a forum fostering more effective interjurisdictional relationships, as a venue for developing a regional vision that could be incorporated into local plans.

# Afterword

A number of important and encouraging changes have occurred in the Eastern Sierra region since the June Lake workshop. The three Eastern Sierra county planning directors have characterized the workshop as resulting in “lots of energy,” “countless discussions,” and “establishing lines of communication not there before, such as interest in regional planning.”

The creation of an Eastern Sierra Council of Governments (COG) is being discussed, and intergovernmental coordination is improving at many levels. For example, The Town of Mammoth Lakes and the County of Inyo are discussing the airport. The need for more collaborative planning has been acknowledged and furthered. Sometimes this has appeared more as process than measurable objectives, but that in itself is a positive outcome. Mono County, working with the Mono County Collaborative Team, applied for a affordable housing grant, the need for which was emphasized at the workshop. Although the grant was not approved, they will try again.

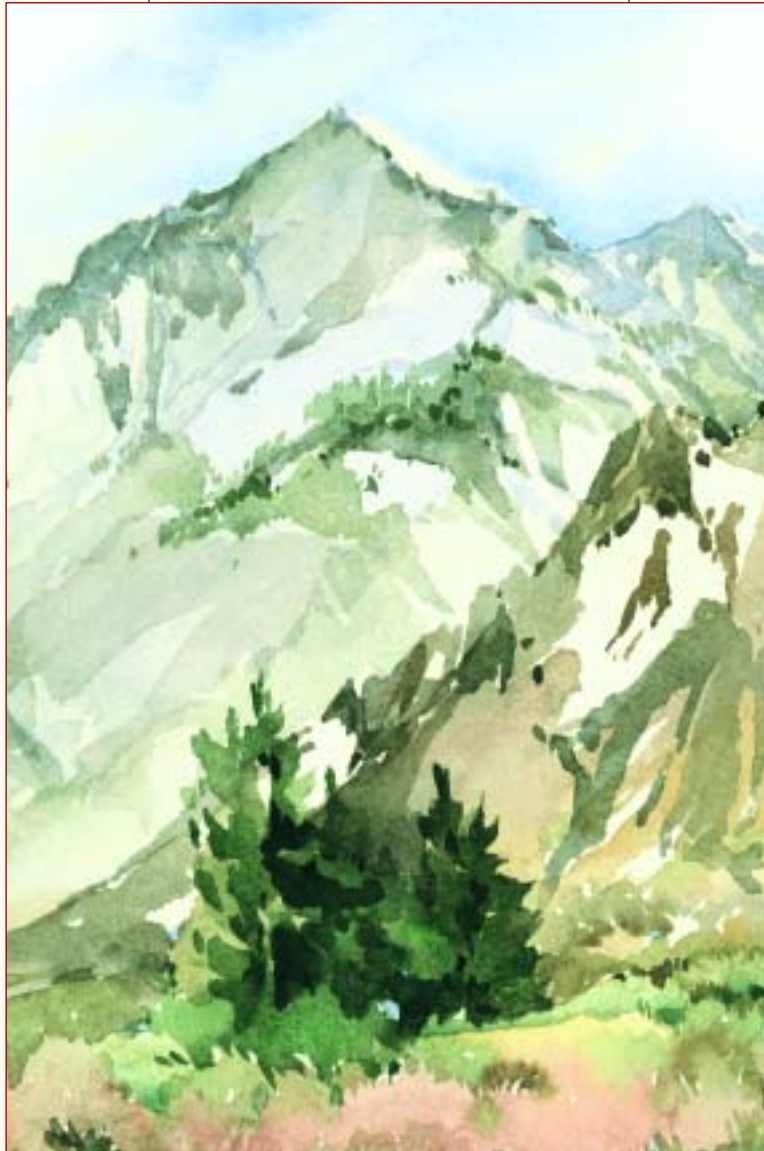
A tangible result for Alpine County was a request for Nancy Upham, Inyo National Forest Public Information Officer and one of the Founders of the Coalition for Unified Recreation in the Eastern Sierra

(CURES), to appear before the Alpine County Board of Supervisors to talk about the CURES process and its positive programs.

Scott Burns, Mono County Planning Director, had begun a process where the three Eastern Sierra county planning directors

to talk about the California Main Street Program — an effort to revitalize main streets in rural communities. The SBC representative credited the June Lake workshop for the turnout and success of the local meeting. The work continues.

The Sierra Nevada Regional Initiative, California Planning Roundtable, and California Planning Foundation hope that the Eastern Sierra Land Use Planning Workshop, and this report, will assist in catalyzing further discussion and action in the months ahead. We share with many the hope that these efforts will help initiate long term policy directions that will fulfill the vision of an Eastern Sierra region that meets the needs of the natural environment, its communities, and all of those who treasure the Eastern Sierra. Finally, we hope that this preliminary work in the Eastern Sierra region can assist communities throughout the Sierra Nevada in achieving more effective conservation of the abundant, but ultimately fragile resources of the Range of Light.



regularly get together to review their projects and problems. On a recent occasion, this process was enhanced by a large gathering of people who came together at the suggestion of the Sierra Business Council (SBC)

# Acknowledgements

## The California Planning Roundtable

The California Planning Roundtable is an organization of experienced planning professionals who are members of the American Planning Association. Membership is balanced between the public and private sectors, and between Northern and Southern California. The mission of the Roundtable is to promote creativity and excellence in planning by providing leadership in addressing important, unresolved planning issues in California.

This report represents the views of the Roundtable as a group. It does not necessarily represent the views of employers or clients of individual Roundtable members.

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