

About the Sierra Nevada Alliance

The Sierra Nevada Alliance is a non-profit educational organization committed to a future that is shaped by the physical and spiritual values of the Sierra, the integrity of its landscape, its human and cultural resources and its communities. Through community-based efforts we can weave the tapestry that celebrates the splendor, values our quality of life, and protects the long-term health of the Range of Light.

The group's short-term goal is twofold: 1) to bring about working relationships between grassroots groups that maximize their effectiveness and that can develop into strong coalitions, and 2) to open communications between grassroots activists and community leaders. The Alliance is intent on providing support systems for Sierra grassroots groups, providing educational materials and opportunities to explain the interrelationships of people, the local economies and the environment, and lobbying for region-wide solutions for issues that impact the Sierra.

The long-term goal is to change the current culture of uncontrolled growth and ongoing depletion of the natural resources of the Sierra to a culture that respects and cares for the natural places that are meaningful to local residents – by capturing the passion of the people who live in and love the Sierra to protect those special places.

About the Author

Kerri Timmer is a consulting writer and communications specialist with more than 15 years' professional experience in the public relations and communications field. For the past nine years she has worked exclusively with environmental constituencies, serving as project manager for the Environmental Law Foundation in Oakland, CA; as executive director of SYRCL, the South Yuba River Citizens League, in Nevada City, CA; and as a consultant for the Planning & Conservation League Foundation in Sacramento, CA, the Sierra Nevada Alliance in South Lake Tahoe, CA, the Sierra Business Council in Truckee, CA, and the University of California at Davis, among other groups. Kerri holds a B.A. in English Literature from San Francisco State University.

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This book is dedicated to the memory of Auburn-area environmental activist, Frank Olich, who used his incredible gifts of positive thinking and "optimism beyond belief" to bring members of his community together to protect the watersheds they love.

~ * ~ * ~

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To order additional copies of **The Watershed Council Toolkit**, please contact the Sierra Nevada Alliance at (530) 542-4546 or email sna@sierranevadaalliance.org.

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Creation of this guidebook would not have been possible without the support of a number of individuals and organizations. First and foremost, I want to thank River Network, of Portland, Oregon. River Network is an organization whose mission is to help people organize to protect and restore rivers and watersheds. They publish a wonderful guidebook of their own, ***Starting Up: A Handbook for New River and Watershed Organizations***. The ***Starting Up*** handbook provides invaluable resources and assistance with day-to-day operations of a new organization, including recruiting a board of directors, choosing a name for your group, budgeting and financial management, fundraising strategies, working with volunteers, developing public relations and community support, and so much more. I would strongly recommend getting a copy of this handbook as an operational companion piece to the Alliance's ***Watershed Council Toolkit***.

Secondly, I'd like to thank Laurel Ames, executive director of the Alliance, for her patience and guidance in helping shape the content and direction of the ***Toolkit***.

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Dear Watershed Collaborators,

Collaboration is a concept that is going to be with us for a while. President Clinton endorsed the collaborative process related to major events taking place at Lake Tahoe in 1997; the Forest Service has held workshops on collaboration; and even the home of the Home Rule movement - Catron County, New Mexico - has embarked on a collaborative effort.

Is it easy? No. Does it take a lot of time? Yes. Is it worth it? The Alliance thinks so.

It is important, when contemplating giving up old ways and warily approaching new processes, to assess the time, money and effort of both. Do legal appeals take time? Yes. Are lawsuits enormously expensive? Yes. But can facilitated, collaborative decision-making be equally time-consuming and expensive in its own way? Possibly.

Both the old ways and the new require time, energy and financing. But the resources tend to come from different pots. Only you know whether those pots are worth trading for you or your organization.

The advantage that we see in collaboration is that once agreements are made, they last for a much longer time than some of the victories we've experienced in the past - the ones that end up creating even more passionate enemies who work even harder to overturn our successes.

Conservation and protection efforts around Lake Tahoe illustrate the concern. The League to Save Lake Tahoe, for example, began with an aggressive litigation strategy, which paid off in victory after victory. But, once the resulting new rules were in place, they were not enforced. In fact, the "losers" continuously undermined the requirements, and, ultimately, the lake continued to lose clarity.

With the launching of a consensus process, however, the recalcitrants have come to the table and are becoming part of the solution instead of a continuation of the problem. Without the acrimony of the winner/loser model, there is a new energy invested in protecting Lake Tahoe from the ravages of the past.

The Alliance believes the Sierra is worth the same effort.

Onward—

Laurel W. Ames
Executive Director

Watershed Council Toolkit

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Preface

SNA Watershed Council Toolkit

Have you or someone you know considered starting a watershed council in your area? Or maybe there's already a group of people meeting about watershed issues, and you want to become a part of the group. Or you are a member of an existing watershed group, but you need some help with organizing, choosing projects or finding funding. Well, you're not alone!!! Other people have gone through or are embarking on similar paths. Let's learn from each other!

HOW TO USE THIS TOOLKIT

The Sierra Nevada Alliance *Watershed Council Toolkit* is designed to provide you with a set of tools to make your participation in a watershed council group more effective and/or your group's activities more productive. The ultimate goal is to help you create positive change in your watershed.

The *Toolkit* describes a process for organizing stakeholders into an effective group that can a.) assess the watershed's condition, b.) create an action plan for addressing issues and maintaining or enhancing the watershed's health, and c.) carry out those actions, including finding funding and conducting necessary monitoring and follow-up activities.

Although the Sierra Nevada Alliance developed this guide as a service for people working on watershed issues in the Sierra Nevada, it can serve as a useful resource for individuals and organizations interested in watershed efforts throughout the state.

The *Toolkit* is divided into three parts:

PART I contains information on what watersheds are, how different stakeholder groups have come together for the good of their watershed, and what the benefits may be to starting or participating in a watershed council for your watershed.

PART II looks at "Getting Started," including some of the important steps or decisions regarding organizational structure, decision-making processes and participant make up.

PART III discusses how to keep a watershed council going once

it is started. This section may be helpful to those who are already involved in watershed councils but who want to know how to make their organizations more effective.

