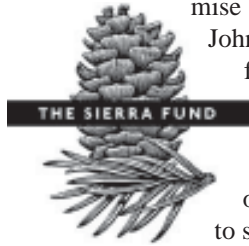


# Sierra Nevada Conservancy—A Reality

by Frances Spivy-Weber

In September, Governor Schwarzenegger signed the Leslie/Laird Sierra Nevada Conservancy bill (AB2600) to create the Laird/Leslie Sierra Conservancy. Reversing the names on the bill and the Conservancy illustrates how cooperation and compromise between Assemblyman John Laird, a Democrat from Santa Cruz, and Assemblyman Tim Leslie, a Republican who represents much of the Sierra, were keys to success.



## Working Together

The flag of unity was carried by many others, too. Both Assemblymen had very able staff; the Governor made a Sierra Conservancy a goal for his first year; Resources Secretary Mike Chrisman and CalEPA Secretary Terry Tamminen and their staff invested untold hours working

with the legislature; Mono County Supervisors, businesses throughout the region, land trusts, and homeowners stepped up early to show support for a Conservancy. There was strong support throughout the state, and the environmental community in the Sierra was unified behind the leadership of the Sierra Fund, Sierra Nevada Alliance, Sierra Business Council, and the Mono Lake Committee.

The Sierra Nevada Conservancy has broad purposes—from increasing opportunities for tourism and conserving the region's historical and living resources to protecting and improving water and air quality. The Conservancy will not be able to own land, but it can provide funds to others for land purchases. See [www.sierraconservancy.org](http://www.sierraconservancy.org) for more details.

The Sierra Nevada Region is large, including much of the Sierra and Cascade

ranges up to the Oregon border; the Eastern Sierra to the crest of the White/Inyo ranges and to Highway 14 south of Olancho; the western Sierra to the lower level of the Blue Oak woodland. Mono Lake's sub-region (one of six) includes Alpine, Inyo, and Mono counties.

## How Will it Work?

The Conservancy will be governed by thirteen voting members. After January 1, 2005, six elected officials and their non-voting alternates will be selected by the counties to represent each sub-region in two-year terms. Five members will come from the Administration—the Resources Secretary and Director of Finance and the Governor will appoint three public members who are not elected officials. Two additional public members will be appointed by the Speaker of the Assembly and the Senate Committee on Rules. Statewide representatives will serve for four years. ❖

## Discussions About DWP Conservation Easement Resurface

By Kimberly Rollins

The Los Angeles City Council and Mayor James Hahn made news over the summer by discussing the possibility of a conservation easement that would protect the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power's (DWP) 360,000 acres in the Eastern Sierra from future development.

In 2001, the General Manager of DWP, David Freeman, proposed an easement that would prohibit development on DWP lands. It failed, however, due to opposition from local governments who felt excluded from the process as well as local stakeholders who thought the plan for an easement lacked clarity (see Spring 2001 *Newsletter*).

Hahn and the LA City Council made a similar proposition earlier this year. Once again there were mixed feelings about how an easement should be handled or if one is even necessary.

When Hahn visited the Owens Valley, he emphasized he was on a "listening tour" only, and that it would be a while before any decisions about an easement were made.

Andrea Lawrence, Board Member of the Mono Lake Committee and founder of the Andrea Lawrence Institute for Mountains and Rivers (ALIMAR), has been working with local stakeholders for years trying to reach an agreement on the best way to the protect the scenic Eastern Sierra.

Lawrence emphasized that she wants to keep the easement as simple as possible. One of the most concerned groups has been the ranchers who are concerned an easement would affect their right to lease DWP land for grazing. Lawrence said she did not want an easement to affect the ranchers' right to graze, she just wants to protect the Eastern Sierra from future development.

The Eastern Sierra Land Trust, based in Bishop, is also actively pursuing the concept and would like to be the holder of the easement.

After Hahn and the City Council met with intense opposition, Hahn has been reluctant to formalize an easement. He did, however, promise some level of protection from development in the Eastern Sierra.

The Mono Lake Committee is involved in discussions relating to this and other Eastern Sierra easements, and will post any significant updates online at [www.monolake.org](http://www.monolake.org).

Anyone interested in helping can contact: Andrea Lawrence, ALIMAR, (760) 934-2877 [andrea@alimar.org](mailto:andrea@alimar.org), [www.alimar.org](http://www.alimar.org) or the Eastern Sierra Land Trust at, (760) 873-4554 or online at [www.easternsierralandtrust.org](http://www.easternsierralandtrust.org)