



Case Study

EMBRACING INTERDEPENDENCE SIERRA NEVADA, CALIFORNIA, U.S.A.

Uniting in a formal shared vision creates game-changing conservation action in the highly contested Northern Sierras.

At a donor's behest, five conservation-focused groups (Feather River Land Trust, Sierra Business Council, The Nature Conservancy, Truckee Donner Land Trust, and the Trust for Public Land) undertook the challenge of creating a unified, formal coalition to better undertake the challenge of protecting the Northern Sierras, a comely mountain range straddling the California/Nevada border, known best for its celebrity destination, Lake Tahoe.

Establishing a formal coalition, with a lengthy legal agreement, is akin to creating a new organization. Especially important in the Northern Sierra Partnership (NSP) was making sure that all of the partners, no matter their size, were represented equally. There were many details to be worked out, including clarity on funding organization.

The people involved in the NSP enjoyed a sense of shared purpose as well as mutual respect and trust. Through their partnership, they made sure to structure an agreement that would ensure sharing of power and control. While they were formalizing their partnership, they were also charting what the indicators of shared progress would be in terms of their conservation actions.

Throughout the partnership-building process and now with the beginnings of a successful track record, the partnership has a growing sense of community and "interdependence."

The purchase of the 2.4 mile Independence Lake along with 2,325 acres of adjacent land is a model for how a powerful partnership of stakeholders with different perspectives can work together to achieve the best possible outcome for the health of communities and local economies. The Nature Conservancy, who brokered the real estate deal, will own and manage Independence Lake with the help of other partners in the NSP who will provide for public access and recreation.

The NSP, with its strong show of local support for the project, was a critical component of attracting a broad array of public and private supporters to the project, including the Governor of California. The lake and forests will be managed to sustain fish and wildlife and to provide a continuing supply of clean water to communities downstream. This is just one example of how the NSP is giving hope for the natural world in a region that attracts 50 million visitors a year.