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Plan a trip from your desktop, selected nominations from Southern Sierra Geotourism now ready to view

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WHAT: Phase milestone for nominations selected for the Southern Sierra Geotourism MapGuide, includes networking reception and light refreshments

WHERE: Tulare County Board of Supervisors Conference Room

WHEN: Monday, June 27, 2011, 10am-2pm

The Sierra Nevada Geotourism Website has reached another major milestone and the Southern Sierra phase of the online MapGuide at www.sierranevadageotourism.org is ready for exploration. The project has achieved its phase plans in the Southern Sierra area, with almost 250 nominations received from locals, highlighting the amazing and sometimes offbeat places visitors can go.

The National Geographic Society partnered with the Sierra Nevada Conservancy and Sierra Business Council in August 2009 to create this interactive MapGuide for the entire Sierra Nevada region that will help users not only pinpoint great places to visit, but guide visitors to recreational, historic, and locally owned destinations that make the region unique. History buffs and adventurers, backpackers and foodies, birders and sightseers can discover unique destinations based on recommendations from those who know best — residents of the Sierra Nevada.

"The MapGuide is such a valuable resource because it can be used by repeat visitors to find unique activities and destinations. You won't get bored here," said Sierra Business Council Project Manager, Nicole DeJonghe. "If you're looking to really get into nature, and feel deep solace, you'll find that in the Southern Sierra. It's a place that everyone can go to and experience dramatic landscapes, access to vast public lands, great rivers, and meet local, salt-of-the-earth characters."

Start up your computer and explore the ins and outs of the Southern Sierra. Spend a night at the Oak Flat Fire Lookout or consider a hike or bird watching class at the Audubon Kern River Preserve. Build a trip around the Living Green Kern River Valley Festival or consider doing something you've never done before at Lake Isabella, like a taking kiteboarding lesson.

"Geotourism is smart, fun, beneficial to the local economy and provides the visitor an opportunity to explore special places recommended by the people who live there," said Sierra Nevada Conservancy Executive Officer Jim Branham. "Any visit to the Sierra is special, but through geotourism visitors gain a more in-depth understanding of their local destination, its residents and its heritage."

For the purpose of this project, the Sierra Nevada is sectioned into four phase areas. The MapGuide website reflects the completion of three phases thus far, the Yosemite

Gateway, Tahoe Emigrant Corridor, and the Southern Sierra. This summer the project solicits nominations from the Northern Sierra Cascade area, which includes the counties of Shasta, Butte, Tehama, Modoc, Lassen, Plumas, Sierra and Yuba.

“An inherent benefit of geotourism is connecting diverse interests under a common goal,” said Jim Dion, Associate Director of National Geographic Society’s Center for Sustainable Destinations. “The design of the MapGuide process, specifically in forming a regional stewardship council, encourages and builds mutually beneficial partnerships.”

A major function of the MapGuide is to bring people together under the geotourism concept. A goal of the project is to educate visitors and residents about the type of tourism that works to sustain a place. Currently the website boasts over 1000 mapped assets and almost 1700 users who are able to log in and nominate sites, as well as plan adventures using the online trip planning tool.

The MapGuide is a collaboration of National Geographic Maps, the Center for Sustainable Destinations, Sierra Nevada Conservancy, and Sierra Business Council, as well as numerous organizations and individuals serving as the Sierra Nevada wide Geocouncil. Visit www.sierranevadageotourism.org today in order to start planning.

