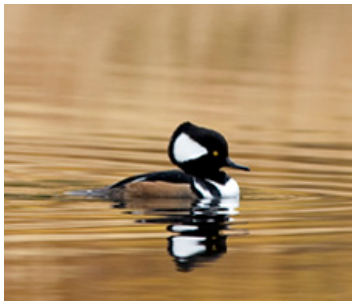
CALIFORNIA
TAHOE
CONSERVANCY

TAHOE CONSERVANCY STRATEGIC PLAN
2012–2017



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INTRODUCTION

The California Tahoe Conservancy has a long history of significant achievements in the Lake Tahoe Basin. For almost three decades, the Conservancy, in collaboration with its partners, has led the state's efforts to invest in projects that protect and restore the Basin's natural and recreational resources.

This strategic plan comes at a time of dramatic changes in the priorities and resources of the Conservancy and other public agencies in the Basin. Several long-awaited regional planning efforts are now completed or nearly completed, including TRPA's Regional Plan Update, the Lahontan Water Board's Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) requirements, and the US Forest Service's updated Forest Plan. These efforts, in turn, are increasingly directed at addressing new and emerging challenges in the Basin, including the development of sustainable, walkable, and transit-friendly communities, and the potentially far-reaching impacts of climate change and aquatic invasive species.

At the same time, however, the state's fiscal crisis continues to reduce the funding and staff available to the Conservancy for these new priorities and for its ongoing restoration, public access, and land management activities. To address these challenges, the Conservancy's primary focus for the next several years will be to:

- Lead California's efforts on the Environmental Improvent Program (EIP) and Basin-wide sustainability and climate change initiatives;
- Complete high priority projects now in the planning stages;
- More efficiently manage its lands and operations;
- Develop an asset management strategy to generate revenue for its ongoing operations and programs;
- Increase its visibility to Tahoe residents and visitors; and
- Work with its partners to secure long-term funding for the Conservancy and the Tahoe Basin.

Above all, we will continue to maintain and expand the Conservancy's hallmark strategy of 1) managing, protecting, and restoring ecologically significant lands; 2) awarding grants to local and nonprofit agencies; and 3) leading the state's effort to coordinate and integrate public and private investments that improve the environmental and economic health of the Lake Tahoe Basin.

THE TAHOE CONSERVANCY

The Conservancy is a state agency within the Natural Resources Agency of the state of California. State law established the Conservancy in its present form in 1984 for the purposes of protecting and restoring Lake Tahoe's natural environment, including water quality, air quality, and wildlife habitat; acquiring, restoring, and managing lands; preserving the scenic beauty and recreational opportunities of the region; and providing public access.

The Conservancy's jurisdiction spans the California side of the Lake Tahoe Basin and covers approximately 236 square miles. This service area includes the City of South Lake Tahoe and portions of El Dorado County and Placer County.

Mission

During the strategic planning process, the management team modified the original mission statement of the Conservancy to better reflect the agency's vision and to simplify its message to the community.

> The mission of the Tahoe Conservancy is to lead California's efforts to restore and enhance the extraordinary natural and recreational resources of the Lake Tahoe Basin.

Vision

The Conservancy envisions a Lake Tahoe Basin where:

- the Lake is clear and its watersheds are healthy;
- public access opportunities are prevalent around the Lake;
- eco-tourism activities support a robust economy;
- communities are walkable, bikeable, and transit-friendly;
- numerous private/public partnerships help sustain the balance between Lake clarity and regional economy; and
- Lake Tahoe serves as a model for sustainability and stewardship.

As the Conservancy maps its vision, it will continue to perform its work in balance with the social, environmental, and economic needs of the Basin.

Guiding Principles

The Conservancy uses the following guiding principles:

- implement projects using a "systems" approach to benefit multiple resource areas;
- use the best available science to prioritize activities that produce the most environmental and ecosystem benefit;
- work collaboratively with other agencies to ensure the implementation of the highest-priority Basin projects regardless of land ownership;
- actively monitor projects and support research to increase the body of knowledge available and contribute to future project success;
- adaptively manage completed projects and Conservancy lands to ensure all investments continue to provide the highest possible resource value;
- cultivate partnerships with other government agencies, non-profit organizations, and the private sector to implement projects;
- remain flexible to effectively utilize funding or implementation opportunities; and
- strategically balance the use of Conservancy staff, AmeriCorps Volunteers, partner organizations, and private contractors to complete program activities.

Governance

An eight-member Board of Directors governs the Conservancy. It consists of:

- the State Secretary for Natural Resources (or designee);
- the State Director of Finance (or designee);
- one appointed representative from each of the three California jurisdictions in the Lake Tahoe Basin: El Dorado County, Placer County, and the City of South Lake Tahoe;
- two appointed members of the public; and
- one ex officio, non-voting member representing the United States Secretary of Agriculture.

This structure of governance allows for active, focused participation by state, local, and public interests.

Partnerships

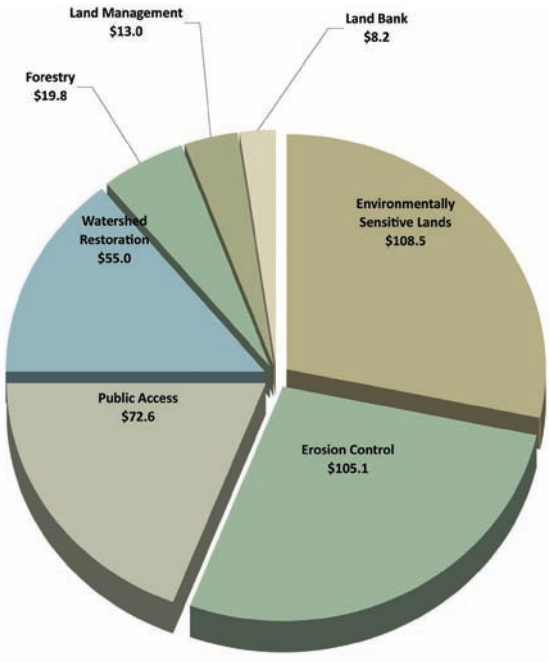
The Conservancy coordinates with a variety of federal and state agencies, the Washoe Tribe, regional and local jurisdictions, the science community, and non-profit organizations. These partnerships are central to the success of projects and regional planning efforts in the Basin. Furthermore, the Conservancy maintains a dialogue with the public to ensure local input and understanding of project objectives.

THE TAHOE CONSERVANCY, 1984–2011

The California Tahoe Conservancy was established in 1984 to preserve, protect, restore, enhance, and sustain the unique and significant natural resources and recreational values of the Lake Tahoe Basin. The second state conservancy to be activated (following the State Coastal Conservancy), it opened its offices in the Tahoe Basin in June 1985. Since its inception, the Conservancy has invested over $382 million in a broad range of conservation and recreation projects, as shown in **Figure 1**.

The Conservancy's initial focus was a mass acquisition program involving the purchase of environmentally sensitive lands for water quality protection purposes. The target parcels included thousands of small, vacant, subdivided lots on erodible, steep lands or in wetland areas which can act to filter out sediments before they reach the Lake, and to prevent the environmental impacts of additional development on these lands. As shown in **Figure 2**, the Conservancy acquired the vast majority of these parcels in its early years.

Figure 1: Conservancy Investments, 1984–2011 (in millions)



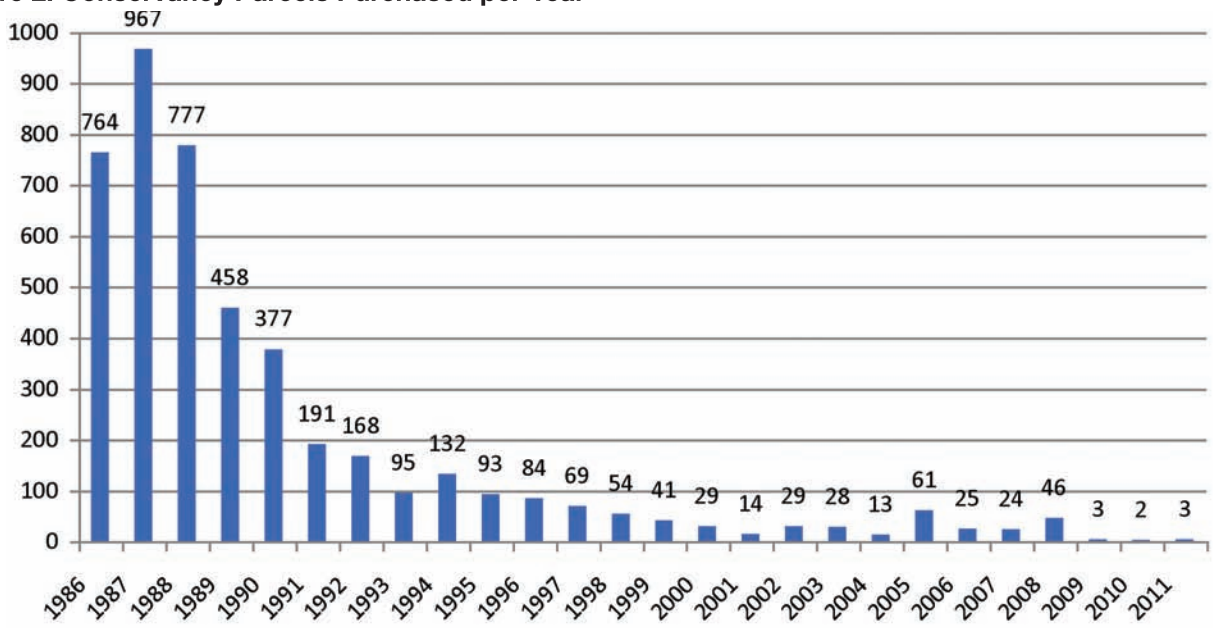
By 1986, the Conservancy had achieved several milestones, including the award of its first soil erosion control grants, acquisition of its first lakefront access parcel in Kings Beach, and the development of its land management program.

Through the late 1980s and into the 1990s, the Conservancy conceived and launched a comprehensive set of programs to address the full range of resource needs and objectives at Lake Tahoe, including erosion control, watershed restoration, wildlife, recreation, and public access. These programs became a key component of the Tahoe region's successful cooperative and collaborative approach to strengthen the environment and economy.

The Conservancy's signature programs and accomplishments include the following:

- **Environmentally Sensitive Lands** – $108.5 million for acquisition of 4.608 parcels/5,750 acres to reduce development potential and for water quality protection purposes.

Figure 2: Conservancy Parcels Purchased per Year



- **Land Bank** – Over $8.2 million to establish a land bank, acquire and restore coverage, and broker marketable rights, fostering sustainable development and facilitating over 6,000 Basin projects, and generating more than $17 million to fund land management and restoration programs.
- **Stormwater Management** – Over $105.1 million in grants to local governments for 102 erosion control projects along 133 miles of public rights-of-way.
- **Watershed Restoration** – Over $55 million to acquire, restore and/or enhance disturbed stream zones, habitat areas, and other watershed lands – including the Upper Truckee, Ward, and Blackwood drainages, the largest and most disturbed watersheds in the Basin.
- **Forest Health** – Over $19.8 million for fuel hazard reduction and forest habitat enhancement projects on over 2,400 acres, providing healthier, more diverse forests and increased public safety.
- **Public Access and Recreation –** Over $72.6 million for enhancement of existing recreation facilities and acquisition and development of new recreation opportunities, including over two miles and 630 acres of shoreline and 45 miles of trails.
- **Land Management** – Over $13 million for responsible management of acquired lands, ranging from open space retention to restoration of natural resource values to active management for recreational purposes.

The 1997 Presidential Summit at Lake Tahoe ushered in a new era for the Basin and the Conservancy. The event spurred the adoption of the EIP, a collaborative, public-private effort to invest in capital improvement projects necessary to restore and improve the Basin's natural and recreational resources.

The Conservancy assumed a leadership role in fulfilling the state of California's commitment to fund and implement the EIP. As shown in **Figure 3**, the Conservancy has secured appropriations from the state's general fund and a series of statewide bond measures, including Propositions 12, 40, 50, and 84, to support its projects and programs. The Conservancy has invested more than $233.7 million in EIP-related land acquisition, water quality, restoration, and public recreation projects, from 1999-2011. As shown in **Figure 4**, these investments have been distributed fairly evenly between projects in the City of South Lake Tahoe, El Dorado County, and Placer County.

Figure 3: Sources of Conservancy Funding 1999–2011 (in millions)

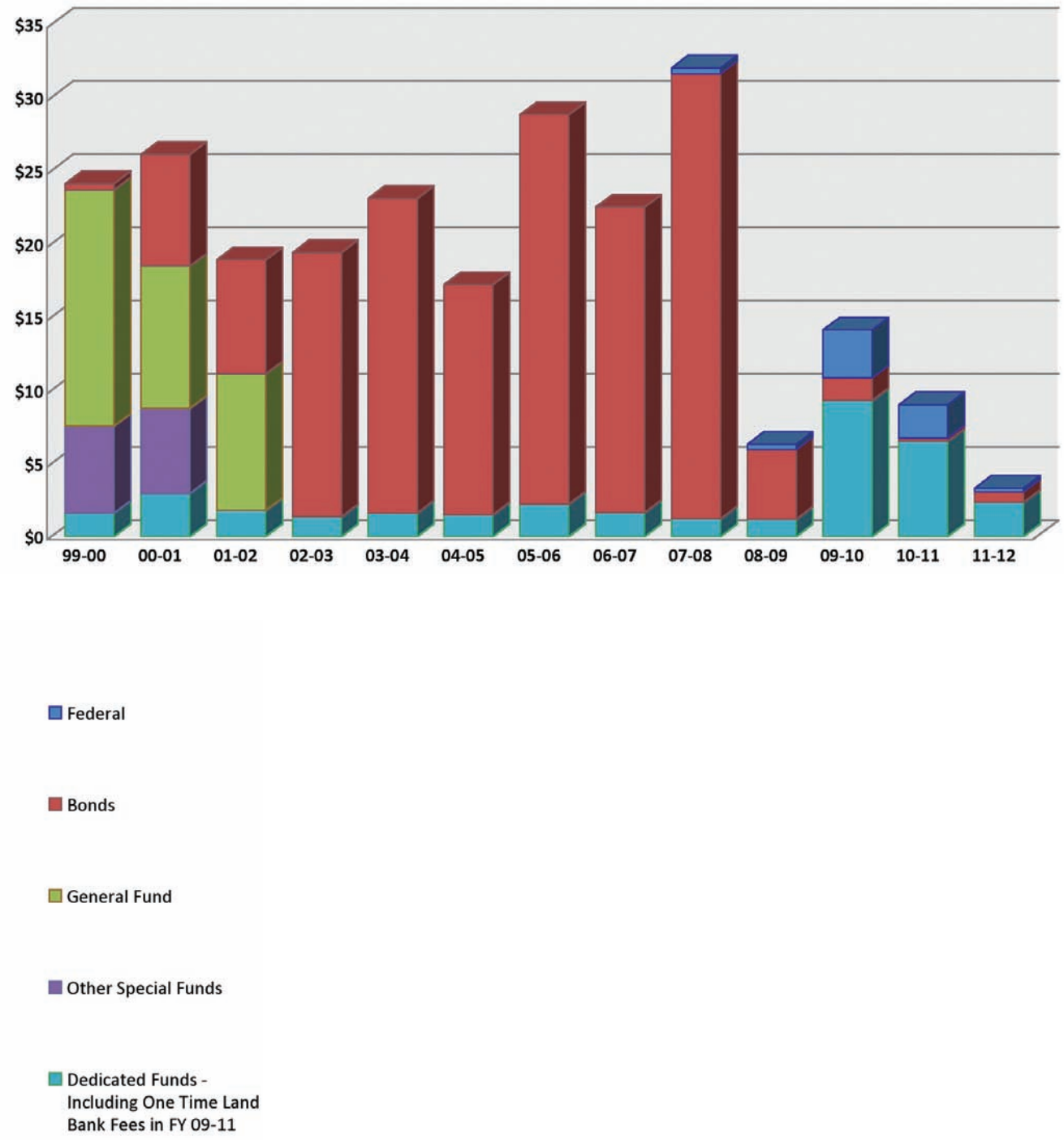
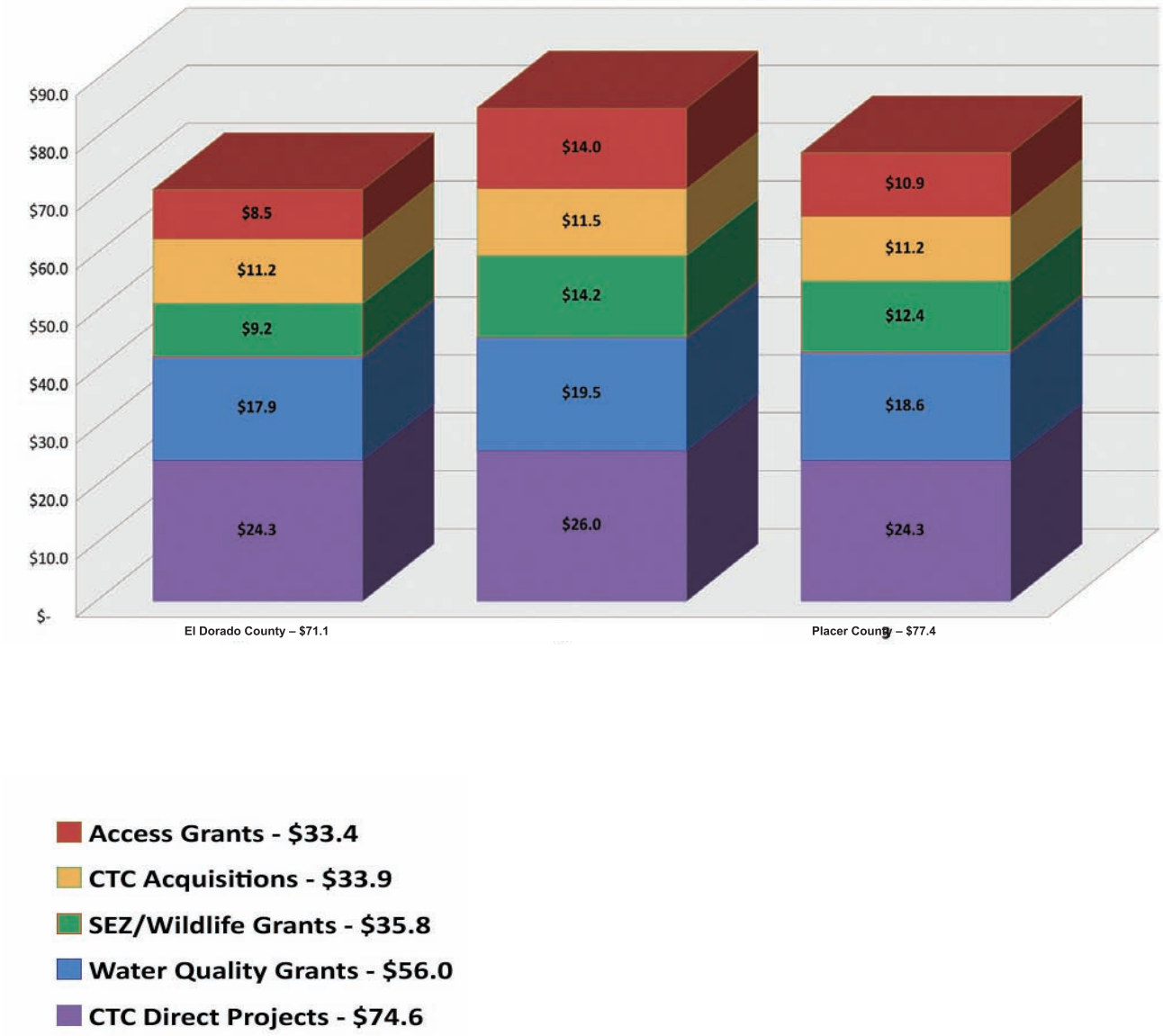


Figure 4: Geographic Distribution of Conservancy Investments 1999–2011 (in millions)



SWOT ANALYSIS – Stengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities & Threats

A key element of the Conservancy's strategic planning process was an independent assessment of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) of the organization. Streamline Consulting Group interviewed 39 Conservancy staff members, eight board members, and 14 partner/stakeholders, including:

- Placer County
- U.S. Forest Service
- Tahoe Regional Planning Agency
- Sustainable Resource Advocates
- Nevada Tahoe Team
- Environmental Protection Agency
- Tahoe Resource Conservation District
- Tahoe City PUD
- Lahontan Regional Water Quality Board
- California State Parks
- Environmental incentives
- Conservation community (League to Save Lake Tahoe, Sierra Nevada Alliance, and various friends groups)

Strengths – key strengths cited across all stakeholder groups were the:

- Mission of the organization
- Quality of staff
- Leadership of the Conservancy to get projects done
- Reputation and image of the Conservancy (the white knight)
- Accomplishments of the organization across its life span

In general the Conservancy is a well-respected organization that is seen as getting results for the Basin. It is often looked to for leadership in advocating for funds and identifying priority projects. The broad mission allows the organization to determine the best priorities for the Basin and work to make these happen. However, as we will see below, this broad mission can also lead to lack of clarity around role and vision.

Weaknesses – weaknesses of the organization were cited as:

- Lack of future funding
- PR/communications – general awareness of what the Conservancy does
- A wavering organizational vision
- Internal operations

Lack of funding was cited as the primary weakness of the organization, and this is more a condition of the state and federal funding picture. Lack of awareness of the organization was also mentioned. Historically this agency has "flown under the radar" and just gotten the job done. Today's reality calls for the Conservancy to inform its stakeholders as to what it is doing and the value it can bring to the region. A weakness cited mainly from staff and external stakeholders was a wavering vision from leadership. We are hoping the strategic planning process will help give clarity to the vision and direction of the organization. Finally, it was noted that the Conservancy has operated much like a start-up over its life time and it focused mostly on purchasing land and getting projects done and paid little heed to operational consistencies. A focus on cleaning up the operations side of the house will help the organization gain tremendous efficiencies as well as greater insight to the business operations of the organization.

Opportunities – for opportunities it was suggested that the Conservancy:

- Play a bigger role in coordinating projects to better map to state funding requirements and overall Basin priorities
- Improve communications/PR of the Conservancy
- Explore private funding opportunities

With respect to the above, the Conservancy is well-positioned to do each one. Increasingly the Conservancy is playing a lead role on the California side helping partners map their projects to changing funding requirements while still mapping to overall Basin-wide goals. In fact, recent legislation has designated the Conservancy as the California lead entity responsible for tracking information and reporting out measurements and results for all California agencies engaged in the EIP process. The Conservancy has also played an instrumental role in the creation of the Tahoe Fund, a private foundation that seeks to drive private sector contributions for Basin-wide restoration and access projects.

And lastly, the state mandates of AB32 and SB375 targeted toward climate change and greenhouse gas emission reduction suggest that future projects must map to these directives in order to be eligible for funds. This means that projects and planning will need to be more integrated and comprehensive to be competitive.

Threats –threats cited were primarily financial and funding based. It was also noted that the Conservancy could have done a better job tracking and communicating its achievements and the overall achievements of the EIP now that the time has come to advocate for more funds. Additionally, many indicated that it is a critical time for the Conservancy to clarify its vision and role so that there is less confusion and more alignment of focus.

Several stakeholders emphasized that the Basin faces some the largest economic and environmental issues of its time. The threat of catastrophic wildfire, aquatic invasive species and global climate change will require greater coordination and collaboration among the federal and state agencies across the Basin. However, these organizations are in flux as they deal with their own declining budgets and capacities to get the work done.

Conclusion/Conservancy Role

Based on these stakeholder discussions, as well as internal staff and Board discussions, the Conservancy should, over the next five years, focus its work in two key areas:

- Environmental Improvement Program/Basin-wide priority projects
- Regional policy and coordination needs of the Basin

Due to the emerging pressures of AB32 and SB375 and need for more sustainable regional planning, the Conservancy should be mapping to the emerging sustainable planning model when focusing its work. Conservancy priorities and planning will map to these regional policy and sustainability efforts. This will require greater integration and coordination with partners and projects as a greater systems approach is taken. This will also allow for greater opportunities to identify and leverage shared resources. Mapping to these priorities will allow the Basin and partners to achieve greater integration and coordination with projects, which will in turn make them more attractive for funding.

There are strategic implications to this shift in role. It means that the Conservancy will provide less direct oversight to grants, preferring to work with partners on a more strategic level. It also suggests that the Conservancy staff will play more of a generalist role and less of a scientific one. Additionally, the Conservancy will not take on a “park manager” role preferring to leave that role to State Parks and other organizations that have a stronger mandate for this work.

LOOKING AHEAD – THE TAHOE CONSERVANCY, 2012–2017

The Conservancy's priorities will continue to evolve in response to emerging challenges and opportunities. During the next several years, the Conservancy's major focus will be on leading the state's efforts to complete high priority EIP projects now in the planning stages, while seeking to secure long-term funding for the EIP. It will also place much more emphasis on coordinating and integrating these projects into a comprehensive and collaborative sustainability planning effort with its federal, state, local, and private partners in the Tahoe Basin.

The Conservancy will also seek to more effectively address new and emerging challenges, including the threats of aquatic invasive species and climate change, and to better align state agency efforts to protect and improve the natural and recreational resources of the Lake Tahoe Basin. As the only state agency focused entirely on the Basin, and with a long track record of collaboration, the Conservancy is well positioned to work with its state and local partners to coordinate and integrate public and private investments in water quality, watershed restoration, recreation, land acquisition and management, and other programs to improve the environmental and economic health of Lake Tahoe.

Given its severe budget constraints, the Conservancy will also increasingly seek to secure grants and other cost-share agreements with its partner agencies, reduce its operating costs, and develop an asset management strategy to generate revenue to support its ongoing programs and operations. A top priority will be to develop sustainable, long-term funding for its ongoing programs and operations.

Strategies, Key Actions, and Performance Measures

The Tahoe Conservancy Strategic Plan contains four primary strategies to achieve its mission and vision:

- Lead California's Efforts on Sustainability, Climate Change, and other Basin-wide Initiatives
- Invest in High Priority Conservation and Recreation (EIP) Projects and Programs
- Effectively Manage Conservancy Lands and Assets
- Strengthen Conservancy Operations

STRATEGY I

Lead California's Lake Tahoe Basin Efforts on Sustainability, Climate Change, and other area-wide Initiatives

With the recent passage of AB 32, SB 375, and other new mandates, state and federal funding priorities are shifting rapidly in support of projects that are consistent with local sustainability and climate action plans, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, improve the health and resiliency of the Basin's forests and watersheds, and help create sustainable, more livable communities.

Recognizing these trends, the Tahoe Conservancy partnered with the Tahoe Metropolitan Planning Organization (TMPO) and a coalition of local and regional agencies and nonprofit agencies in a successful effort to secure nearly $2 million in planning grants from California's Strategic Growth Council to develop and implement a Lake Tahoe Sustainable Communities Strategy.

This collaborative effort will be a major focus of the Conservancy for the next several years as we seek to align Conservancy and other public and private projects and programs, including the EIP, in support of the Basin's sustainability objectives. The Conservancy will be working closely with its federal, state, and local partners and stakeholders on several sustainability and climate change initiatives, including development of a new Basin-wide Sustainability Collaborative, development of a Lake Tahoe Sustainability Action Plan, and a new grants program to assist local governments and nonprofit organizations in funding innovative sustainability projects and programs.

The Conservancy will also continue to support several collaborative interagency initatives, including development of a TMDL implementation plan, an Integrated Regional Water Management Plan (IRWMP), a Tahoe Yellow Cress Conservation Strategy, and others.

Strategy 1A – Support Lake Tahoe's Sustainability Communities Program

The Conservancy is partnering with a coalition of agencies and stakeholders to develop and implement a comprehensive Lake Tahoe Sustainability Communities Program. The Program includes 1) development of Sustainability Collaborative to build public support and involvement in sustainability efforts in the Basin; 2) an evaluation of the current and projected impacts of climate change on the environment and economy of the Basin; 3) a comprehensive Sustainability Action Plan to provide a framework for the Basin's public and private climate change mitigation and adaptation programs; and 4) assistance to local governments in developing compact and sustainable communities.

Key Actions:

With its partner agencies and stakeholders, the Conservancy will:

- **Sustainability Collaborative:** facilitate the development of the Lake Tahoe Sustainability Collaborative.
- **GHG Emissions Inventory:** complete the regional green house gas emissions inventory and baseline forecasting scenarios.
- **GHG Reduction Targets:** establish green house gas emission reduction targets at local and regional scales by sources and sectors.
- **Sustainability Action Plan:** develop a menu of adaptation and mitigation strategies, performance measures, outreach programs, and a tracking and reporting system as part of the Lake Tahoe Sustainability Action Plan.
- **Sustainable Communities:** update local government plans, codes, and zoning to promote compact development and walkable, livable, and bike and transit-friendly communities

Performance Targets:

✓ Attain the Basin's forthcoming sustainability indicators, including reductions in vehicle miles traveled and GHG emissions, increases in transit ridership, walking and biking times, and other measures.

Strategy 1B – Align State Agency Activities and Policies in the Basin to Support Sustainability and Climate Change Initiatives

State agencies fund and administer numerous programs and activities that support state and regional sustainability objectives. As the state lead in the Tahoe Basin for these efforts, the Conservancy will seek to coordinate and integrate state agency projects and programs to maximize their impact and effectiveness.

Key Actions:

- **Coordinate state programs:** identify and review the activities and funding programs of state agencies that should be better coordinated to achieve sustainability objectives;
- **Promote sustainability objectives:** promote the incorporation of state planning priorities and sustainability objectives into federal, state, and local planning and implementation efforts; and
- **Provide local assistance:** expand the Conservancy's grant programs to assist local agencies with meeting state greenhouse gas reduction targets and other state mandates

Performance Targets:

✓ Submit annual cross-cut budget information on state agency programs, expenditures, and accomplishments in the Tahoe Basin.

Strategy 1C – Coordinate Across State Agencies in Support of Other Basin-wide Collaborative Initiatives

The Conservancy will continue to play a leadership role in several interagency collaborative initiatives, including the following:

Key Actions:

- **Regional Plan:** coordinate state agency participation in the Regional Plan, the Regional Transportation Plan, and related regional planning efforts
- **TMDL:** coordinate development of a watershed and TMDL implementation strategy in partnership with TRPA, the Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board, the local jurisdictions, and other key agencies and stakeholders
- **Forest Health and Fuels Management:** coordinate funding and implementation of high priority forest health projects with federal and state agencies and local fire districts
- **Integrated Regional Watershed Management:** actively participate and assist in leading the Tahoe Sierra IRWM Plan Update, annual project updates, and all grant application rounds on behalf of the Conservancy and its Basin and IRWM partners
- **Tahoe Yellow Cress:** coordinate efforts to update the TYC Conservation Strategy by incorporating recent research and science into management, monitoring and protection activities, and continue to provide a leadership role in the management, monitoring and protection of TYC populations in California
- **Aquatic Invasive Species:** work with agency partners to secure sustainable funding and implementation of the Basin's aquatic invasive species prevention and remediation programs
- **Stewardship and Public Awareness:** work with public and private partners to promote stewardship and public awareness of the Lake Tahoe Basin's natural and recreational assets

Performance Targets:

✓ Achieve the key milestones and deliverables of these efforts through a collaborative, interagency process.

STRATEGY II

Invest in High Priority Conservation and Recreation (EIP) Projects and Programs

Launched in 1997, the EIP is a comprehensive, interagency effort to coordinate the development, funding, and implementation of conservation and recreation projects in the Tahoe Basin. In total, the federal, state, local, and private EIP partners have invested over $1.55 billion to the EIP, funding more than 360 completed projects and an additional 166 ongoing projects.

Continuing this level of commitment will be challenging given today's difficult fiscal realities. The EIP partner agencies are now developing a new EIP Implementation Framework that will 1) establish a new management and oversight system led by the Basin's federal, state, and local executives; 2) an improved process for jointly prioritizing EIP projects; 3) better coordinated funding strategies;, and 4) improved reporting on accomplishments and progress.

The Conservancy's role will be to continue to lead California's involvement in the EIP, to secure the state's share of funding, and to develop and implement high priority EIP projects, both on its own lands and through grants to local agencies.

Strategy II.A – Lead California's Involvement in the EIP

As part of an interagency effort led by TRPA and Basin's federal, state, and local agencies, the Conservancy will continue to coordinate state agency participation in jointly funding, prioritizing, implementing, and evaluating the performance of EIP projects.

Key Actions:

- **State EIP Team:** establish and support a state team which includes all state agencies with major responsibilities in the Basin
- **Annual Priority Lists:** coordinate development of annual priority lists of EIP projects and accomplishments
- **State Representative:** represent and lead the California agencies on the Tahoe Interagency Executives (TIE) Steering Committee, the Lake Tahoe Federal Advisory Committee, and other forums
- **EIP Advocate:** advocate for federal, state, and local funding of EIP projects and programs
- **Technical Advisor:** provide policy and technical information, expertise, and advice to EIP partner agencies
- **Tahoe Fund and Other Nonprofits:** work with the Tahoe Fund and other nonprofit partners to increase the private share of EIP funding

Performance Targets:

✓ Secure sustainable federal, state, local, and private investments in the EIP, including $200 million in state funding from cap and trade revenue, a general obligation bond, or other sources

✓ Maintain progress towards achievement of the 33 EIP Performance Measures

Strategy II.B – Restore the Upper Truckee River and Other Key Watersheds

Draining nearly one third of the runoff to Lake Tahoe, the Upper Truckee River is the largest and most important watershed in the Basin, and contributes the highest levels of fine sediment that affects the Tahoe's famed lake clarity. The Conservancy will be leading an interagency collaborative effort to restore the health and resiliency of the Upper Truckee River, and is completing several restoration projects on Blackwood Creek and Ward Creek.

Key Actions:

- **Upper Truckee River:** develop and implement a comprehensive Upper Truckee River funding, implementation, communications, and science strategy in partnership with key agencies and stakeholders
- **Blackwood and Ward Creek:** work with our partners to complete Blackwood and Ward Creek restoration projects and update assessments

- **Research:** invest in research and synthesis of information on the floodplain management benefits of stream restoration projects

Performance Targets:

✓ Restore, enhance or confirm adequacy of stream and floodplain management of 15,000 linear feet of stream channel

✓ Restore or enhance 285 acres of habitat

Strategy II.C – Invest in Stormwater Management Projects and Programs

Stormwater projects are essential to capture and treat fine sediment from the Basin's urbanized areas, the largest source of runoff that affects the lake's clarity. The Conservancy will continue to provide grants to local agencies to help them meet their TMDL load reduction targets.

Key Actions:

- **Prioritize and Evaluate:** work with partner agencies to jointly establish priorities, and to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of water quality projects and programs
- **Grants:** provide grants to local agencies for high priority projects and programs

Performance Targets:

✓ Consistent with the 5-yr targets in the recently adopted TMDL, work with our state and local partners to reduce stormwater runoff loads by 10% for Fine Sediment Particles, 7% for Total Phosphorus, and 8% for Total Nitrogen by September 2016

Strategy II.D – Improve and Enhance Recreational and Mobility Opportunities, and Public Access to Lake Tahoe

Public access and recreation projects serve millions of visitors, and are the foundation of the Basin's outdoor recreation-based economy. Conservancy-funded projects will expand the Basin's overcrowded facilities, reduce traffic congestion, and increase public access to Lake Tahoe.

Key Actions:

- **Lake Tahoe Bikeway:** partner with the Tahoe Transportation District and other agencies to complete the Lake Tahoe Region Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan
- **Lake Tahoe Water Trail:** lead the collaborative interagency effort to improve and enhance the Lake Tahoe Water Trail
- **Lake and Public Access:** partner with local agencies and others to increase and enhance access to significant natural resources

Performance Targets:

✓ Complete 3 public access projects by December 2016

✓ Complete 11 miles of bicycle trails by December 2016

✓ Complete the Water Trail by December 2016

Strategy II.E – Acquire Strategic Parcels

The Conservancy will continue to shift its focus away from acquiring undeveloped urban lots to acquiring land in high priority watersheds, lakefront areas, and roadless subdivisions. It will also evaluate the potential to develop a new program to acquire and restore developed properties in sensitive areas.

Key Actions:

- **Priority Watersheds and Lakefront Areas:** acquire key parcels in high priority watersheds, including the Upper Truckee River, and in lakefront areas to increase public access
- **Roadless Subdivisions:** continue acquiring key parcels in roadless subdivisions that prevent increased development in these areas
- **Developed properties in sensitive areas:** launch a new program to acquire and restore developed property in sensitive areas, and retire or transfer the development rights to town centers

Performance Targets:

- ✓ Complete the acquisitions of Johnson Meadow in the Upper Truckee River and Alta Mira in South Lake Tahoe
- ✓ Acquire two properties each year over five years between 2012 and 2016 within roadless subdivisions
- ✓ Acquire three deed-restricted Stream Environment Zone (SEZ) properties at nominal cost per year over five years between 2012 and 2016
- ✓ Acquire additional lakefront parcels that would significantly improve public access to Lake Tahoe
- ✓ Acquire and restore 2–5 developed properties annually in sensitive areas

STRATEGY III

Effectively Manage Land and Assets

The Conservancy owns and manages more than 6,500 acres of land, mostly comprised of small parcels scattered throughout the California side of the Basin. These parcels provide open space, recreation and water quality benefits, and have significantly reduced the level of development in the Lake Tahoe Basin.

Managing nearly 4,900 parcels is a complex task. Aside from their sheer numbers and small sizes – most are no bigger than 1/3 of an acre – the parcels are often scattered throughout already-developed areas, creating the potential for conflicts between open space and residential uses. The primary focus of the Conservancy's ongoing land management program has been to annually inspect all parcels, respond to citizen complaints, remove hazard trees, and other activities related to managing and restoring these parcels for conservation and recreation purposes.

Over the next several years, therefore, the Conservancy's top priority will be to develop a comprehensive Land Management Plan to more effectively manage and generate revenue from its lands and the Land Bank's inventory of land coverage and other marketable rights. This strategy is likely to include expanded partnership agreements with California State Parks and the Tahoe Resource Conservation District (TRCD); exchanges of parcels with the US Forest Service, State Parks, and the City of South Lake Tahoe; sales of less environmentally sensitive parcels; and expanded use of leases, licenses, and concessions.

Strategy III.A – Efficiently Manage Conservancy-owned Lands

The Conservancy will continue to partner with the TRCD, State Parks, local fire and utility districts, and other agencies to more efficiency manage its lands in the Tahoe Basin.

Key Actions:

- **Comprehensive Database:** develop a comprehensive database of all Conservancy assets (acquisitions, easements, facilities, coverage, etc.) and activities (license agreements, concessions, encroachments, etc.)
- **Inspection/Maintenance/Citizen Response:** streamline inspection/maintenance/citizen response program to improve efficiencies and reduce operating costs
- **Hazard Tree Evaluation:** continue to assess trees on Conservancy owned properties, which constitute a safety hazard to adjacent properties, in a timely fashion
- **Forest Fuels Treatment:** partner with local Tahoe fire districts/departments and other agencies to complete forest fuels treatment work on Conservancy parcels in high priority areas.
- **Urban Lot/Water Quality Restoration:** implement priority restoration projects to achieve the highest water quality benefits
- **Staffing/Contracting:** evaluate need for changes in staffing and contracting to meet current and future budget constraints
- **Facilities and Operations:** develop/expand partnership agreements with State Parks, the TRCD, and other partners to share staff, facilities, and operations and to explore alternative funding sources
- **Volunteer Stewardship Program:** evaluate the potential for a volunteer stewardship program to reduce property management costs

Performance Targets:

- ✓ Inspect 2,600 Conservancy parcels annually
- ✓ Remove up to 200 hazard trees annually
- ✓ Complete 100 annual maintenance projects
- ✓ Implement 20 restoration projects annually
- ✓ Maintain a 10-yr treatment cycle by treating at least 335 acres of forested lands annually

Strategy III.B – Complete Federal, State, and Local Land Exchanges

The Conservancy will seek to implement a large-scale exchange of lands and enter into operating agreements with the US Forest Service and State Parks. These exchanges and agreements will reduce management costs, reduce confusion over ownership and allowable uses, and streamline environmental review and permitting processes.

Key Actions:

- Complete an agreement on land exchanges and sharing of staff and resources with State Parks to improve the management efficiency of state-owned land in the Basin.
- Seek amendments to the reauthorization of the Lake Tahoe Restoration Act to facilitate a large-scale exchange of lands between the Conservancy and the Forest Service.

Performance Target:

✓ Reduce state and federal land management expenditures

Strategy III.C – Improve the Land Coverage and Marketable Rights Programs

The Conservancy will work with TRPA and other partners to increase the environmental and economic benefits of its land coverage and marketable rights programs.

Key Actions:

- **Regional Policies:** work with TRPA and other partners to revise policies that hinder the effectiveness of the land bank
- **Restoration and Development Projects:** work with TRPA and other partners to modify TRPA's ECM Fee Program to better facilitate and mitigate the impacts of sustainable public and private development projects, through the acquisition and restoration of coverage on sensitive lands
- **Land Bank:** reevaluate land bank operations to improve benefits, streamline costs, and increase revenue
- **Restoration Credit:** balance SEZ accomplishments with meeting supply needs of the Land Bank, particularly for restoration credit

Performance Targets:

✓ Acquire and restore coverage at levels necessary to achieve TRPA's Excess Coverage Mitigation (ECM) requirements

✓ Achieve a 20-year supply of SEZ restoration credits for regional bicycle trails and EIP public service projects

Strategy III.D – Increase Public Awareness of the Value of Conservancy Lands

The Conservancy will seek to increase public awareness and support for its land management programs and operations.

Key Actions:

- **Summary Document:** prepare a summary document on the history, purpose, and value of Conservancy acquisitions
- **Accomplishments Report:** prepare an annual accomplishments report on the Conservancy's land and asset management activities
- **Signage Program:** develop a signage program to better identify Conservancy-owned lands
- **Website:** increase and expand use of the Conservancy's website to engage the public and neighboring landowners

Performance Targets:

✓ Sign 1,000 parcels annually until all parcels have markers

✓ Achieve 20% increase in hits to website annually

STRATEGY IV

Strengthening Conservancy Operations

A decline in traditional funding sources is prompting the Conservancy to explore different sustainable long-term financial scenarios. The recent elimination of General Fund support and exhaustion of current bond funding streams will result in a need for a major adjustment to the support budget, through renewal or replacement of these funding streams and/or reduction in expenditures. Crossing this bridge will involve such actions as adjusting current spending patterns to match available funding levels, ensuring efficient and effective use of limited resources, and exploring opportunities to develop new and non-traditional funding streams.

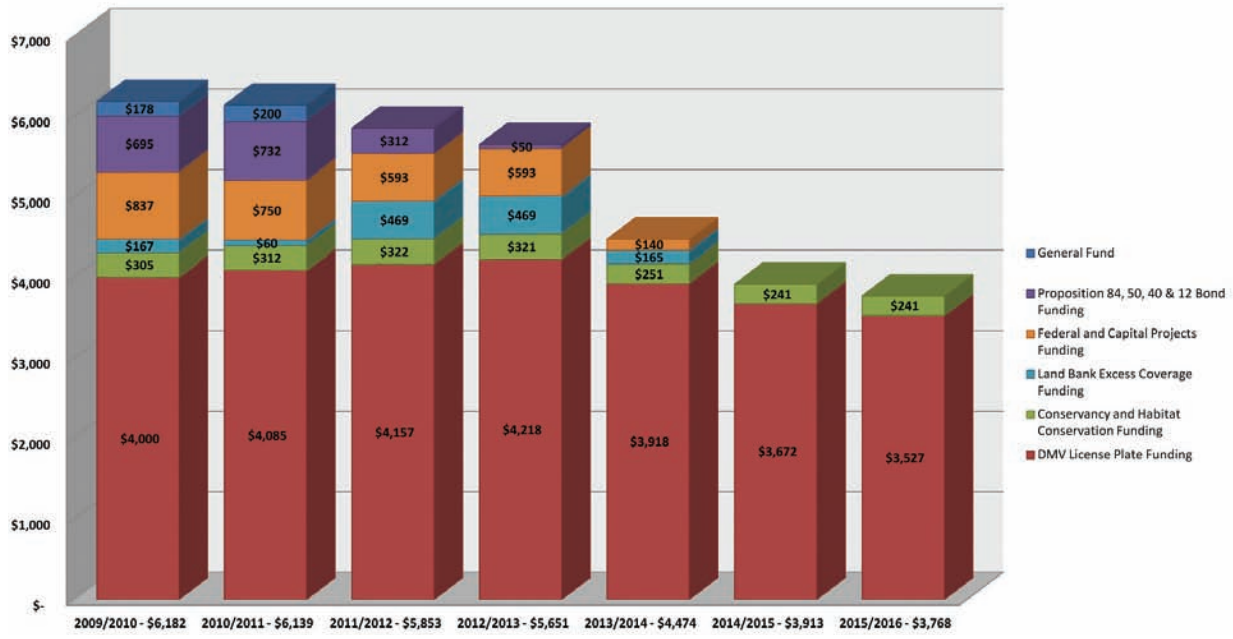
Strategy IV.A – Develop Financial Sustainability Strategy

As shown in **Figure 5**, the Conservancy forecasts a significant decline in its support and capital project revenue beginning in fiscal year 2013/14. This forecast requires the Conservancy to aggressively prioritize, reorganize and implement cost cutting and revenue enhancing strategies to sustain its operations.

Key Actions:

- **Asset Lands:** develop a strategy for sale of asset lands (lands not necessary to achieve program objectives)
- **Special Uses:** annually review leases, licenses, and concessions to ensure market rate revenues, where appropriate
- **Revenue Generation Plan:** develop and implement a plan to generate measurable and significant revenue streams from grants, contracts, and fee for service opportunities
- **License Plate:** increase sales of Tahoe License Plates
- **Operating and Administration Costs:** align operating costs and staffing levels with available funding sources resulting in a balanced budget
- **Administration Costs:** recover the full costs of administering leases, licenses, Land Bank activities, and other services
- **Office Space:** reevaluate office lease and space requirements to reduce costs

Figure 5: Conservancy Projected Annual Operating Budget (in thousands)



- **Shared Resources:** increase use of shared staff, facilities, and operations with the TRCD, State Parks, and other agencies
- **Grants and Cost Share Agreements:** ensure that grants and cost share agreements are fully billed, including all staffing and indirect costs

Performance Targets:

- ✓ Generate $1.75 to $2.5 million in new revenue by 2015
- ✓ Increase Special Uses revenue by 10% ($15,000) by 2014
- ✓ Maintain a balanced budget
- ✓ Increase sales of Tahoe License Plates by a minimum of 10% ($110,000) annually
- ✓ Achieve full cost recovery of staff time on all applicable programs and projects by fiscal year 2013/14
- ✓ Reduce expenditures for office space by a minimum of 15% ($62,000) at termination of current lease (2/1/13)

Strategy IV.B – Increase Operational Efficiency

The Conservancy will update and improve its financial, programmatic, and record keeping systems to improve the accountability, transparency, and cost-effectiveness of its programs.

Key Actions:

- **Tracking:** develop a relational database to support internal tracking and general reporting of all Conservancy-funded projects
- **Reporting:** standardize budget and fiscal reporting systems
- **Contract Administration:** support and streamline processing and monitoring of contracts
- **Grant Administration:** reevaluate grant program guidelines, selection criteria, performance measures, monitoring and reporting requirements, and funding match requirements to reflect new and emerging priorities
- **Cost Analysis:** assess appropriate and cost-effective levels of performing agency functions in-house and/or through other avenues
- **Management Systems:** develop, maintain and improve internal accounting, budget, information technology, GIS, records retention, and personnel management systems

Performance Targets:

- ✓ Streamline and consolidate billing, reporting and administrative processes for grants and contracts
- ✓ Streamline and consolidate quarterly reporting on over 1,700 yearly transactions
- ✓ Reduce predictable and fixed information technology expenses by 5% annually.

Strategy IV.C – Strengthen Human Resource Development

The Conservancy's greatest strength is its staff. We will seek to maintain and improve training, professional development, and other programs to motivate and retain staff.

Key Actions:

- **Retention and Succession:** fill key vacancies related to retirements of long-serving staff, and develop processes to transfer their knowledge and records of Conservancy programs
- **Professional Development:** provide opportunities for training, publishing, job rotations, and other methods for employees to excel and to develop professionally

Performance Targets:

- ✓ Retain 90% of existing staff that are not within five years of retirement age
- ✓ Provide all staff with annual training/ professional development opportunities

Strategy IV.D – Improve Communications

Surveys continue to show that the Conservancy is highly regarded but little known to many visitors and residents in the Tahoe Basin. The Conservancy will improve its website, license plate marketing, project profiles, and develop an annual report and other methods to increase its visibility

Key Actions:

- **External Communications Strategy:** develop and implement an external communications strategy, including an annual report, to increase awareness of the value of the Conservancy and its projects and programs
- **Partners:** collaborate with partners, including the Tahoe Fund, on the license plate marketing campaign, project profiles, and other promotional and fundraising opportunities
- **Website:** expand the content and accessibility of the website to engage the public, potential funders, and agency partners
- **Internal Communications Strategy:** develop and implement an internal communications strategy to increase awareness and communications with staff in all programs
- **Conservancy Ambassadors:** ensure that staff and Board members fully understand our work, accomplishments, and priorities, and can act as ambassadors for the Conservancy

Performance Targets:

- ✓ Achieve a 20% increase in hits to the website annually
- ✓ Increase the number of positive press articles on Conservancy projects and programs
- ✓ Increase staff development of professional journal publications on Conservancy projects
- ✓ Increase public use and awareness of the Conservancy website for leases, licenses and other services and requests