

California Tahoe Conservancy
Agenda Item 8
July 21, 2011

ANNUAL PLANNING AUTHORIZATION

Summary: Staff recommends authorization to expend up to \$1,137,888 for the purposes of program and project development, review, and implementation (including planning activities such as technical studies, conceptual designs, and environmental document preparation); to assist in regional planning efforts including the Environmental Improvement Program, climate change, and sustainability; and for outreach and marketing of the Lake Tahoe License Plate.

Location: Project development activities throughout the California side of the Lake Tahoe Basin, as well as statewide Lake Tahoe License Plate outreach and marketing.

Fiscal Summary: Up to \$1,030,888 from State sources, including support funds, Lake Tahoe License Plate funds, bond funds, and other appropriate funding sources. Accept up to \$107,000 in grant funds from the Tahoe Metropolitan Planning Organization and the Aquatic Science Center-San Francisco Estuary Institute.

Recommended Action: Adopt Resolution 11-07-03 (Attachment 1).

Background

This annual planning authorization includes authorization for supplementary consultant services and resources in support of: 1) the development and implementation of acquisition and site improvement projects; 2) coordination of regional planning efforts; and 3) continued outreach and marketing efforts in support of the Lake Tahoe License Plate.

Since December 1988, the Board has approved a total of \$29,506,700 in 23 annual authorizations for planning activities. The amount being recommended for approval at this time is less than in previous years, reflecting both a carryover from previous authorizations, as well as the limitation of funds available at this time.

If the Board approves this authorization request, arrangements will be made, pursuant to State contracting procedures, to obtain the necessary specialized expertise and resources to further program and project development. Arrangements will be made with a variety of public or private sources, including other public agencies, university research institutes, and private contractors.

Project Description

Staff is recommending the approval for allocation of funds to support the development and implementation of Environmental Improvement Program (EIP) projects under the Conservancy's Public Access and Recreation, Land Acquisition, Wildlife Enhancement, SEZ/Watershed Restoration, and Soil Erosion Control programs. Funds are also being requested to support the Conservancy's Information Technology department; ongoing regional efforts in climate change and sustainability; and various additional efforts needed to coordinate and align its activities with its EIP partners. Lastly, funds will also be used to continue outreach and marketing of the Lake Tahoe License Plate.

Staff is also requesting authority to accept up to \$107,000 in grant funds from the Tahoe Metropolitan Planning Organization (TMPO) (Proposition 84) and the Aquatic Science Center (U.S. Environmental Protection Agency) for SEZ watershed restoration and for coordination of sustainability planning activities. The allocations described below reflect Staff's estimates with respect to the use of the requested funds. These estimates are based on current projects, needs, and opportunities. Staff may make adjustments in the actual allocation or expenditure of funds in order to meet changing circumstances and respond to emerging opportunities while remaining within the overall scope of the authorization.

1. A total of \$882,888 in State funding is recommended for planning, environmental review, Geographic Information System (GIS) and other specialized technical support for development and implementation of EIP projects under the various Conservancy programs. Funds would also be utilized to coordinate communications supporting regional sustainability planning and coordination of climate change efforts. Lastly, funding will be used to obtain consultant services for the Tahoe Sierra Integrated Regional Water Quality Management Plan work.
2. An additional \$105,000 in State funding is recommended to support ongoing Conservancy information technology materials, website, and network support. These funds will improve information available to the public and Information Systems assistance for staff by:

- providing needed computer assistance to staff in implementing Conservancy programs;
 - streamlining Conservancy data on the computer network by comprehensively overhauling the Conservancy's data storage process for programs and projects; and
 - continuing enhancements and upgrades to the Conservancy's website.
3. A total of \$150,000 is being recommended to continue outreach and marketing activities for the Conservancy's Lake Tahoe License Plate. The launch of a new plate design in summer 2010 has underscored the need to aggressively market the plate in order to increase sales. To date, the Lake Tahoe License Plate has generated more than \$14 million for the Tahoe Conservancy. During the 2010-11 fiscal year, revenues of over \$1 million were generated. These revenues have been used to fund non-motorized trails and restoration projects. Under the program, up to 25% of license plate revenues can be used for marketing purposes.
 4. Authorization to accept up to \$107,000 in grant funds from the TMPO and the Aquatic Science Center, and to enter into agreements with other public entities as necessary in fulfillment of the Tahoe Basin Partnership for Sustainable Communities Project and the EPA Wetland and Riparian Area Monitoring Program Grant Project (WRAMP).

The overarching goals of Tahoe Basin Partnership for Sustainable Communities project are to: 1) ensure that the best available science informs regional and local planning, restoration and implementation efforts; 2) provide technical assistance to local and regional partners in creating more livable communities; 3) adapt and be more resilient to climate change; 4) actively reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions; and 5) develop a sustainability action plan.

The WRAMP grant project's overarching goals are to support California's Wetland and Riparian Area Protection Policy (WRAPP) and to determine if the tools and models associated with the WRAMP program could be applied to Lake Tahoe SEZ restoration and crediting efforts. This grant was awarded to help reverse trends in wetland loss, mitigate future risks to aquatic resources, and produce measurable improvement in the abundance, diversity and health of the State's wetland and riparian resources in the Lake Tahoe region.

Consistency with the Conservancy's Enabling Legislation

The recommended planning activities are consistent with the Conservancy's enabling legislation. Pursuant to Government Code section 66907.10, the Conservancy is authorized to improve and develop acquired lands for a variety of purposes, including protection of the natural environment, provision of public access or recreational facilities, preservation of wildlife habitat areas, or providing access to or management of acquired lands. The Conservancy is also authorized to award grants to other public agencies, federally recognized Indian tribes, specific transportation organizations, and nonprofit entities for these purposes pursuant to Government Code section 66907.7(a). Under Government Code section 66906.8 the Conservancy is authorized to select and hire private consultants or contractors as necessary to achieve these purposes.

Compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA)

While the proposed action itself does not require CEQA review, each project implemented pursuant to this staff recommendation will be subject to CEQA review. Staff will evaluate each project prior to implementation to determine whether the project is statutorily or categorically exempt from CEQA, or whether the project requires a negative declaration or environmental impact report. Staff will bring such CEQA determinations to the Board for review and adoption of environmental findings prior to expending funds to implement the project.

List of Attachments:

Attachment 1 – Resolution 11-07-03

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