

**CALIFORNIA LAKE TAHOE BASIN REGIONAL
HAZARDOUS FUELS REDUCTION AND WILDFIRE PREVENTION**

Recommended Action: Adopt Resolution 16-12-04 (Attachment 1) authorizing: 1) the acceptance of a grant from the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) for up to \$6,814,500 for California Lake Tahoe Basin Regional Hazardous Fuels Reduction and Wildfire Prevention; 2) expenditure of up to \$1,969,500 for project planning and prioritization, monitoring and assessment, and related direct and indirect costs; and 3) the execution of agreements, including grants, as necessary.

Location: California side of the Lake Tahoe Basin, lands owned and managed by the State of California and local jurisdictions, and large private landholdings (Attachments 2a – 2c).

Fiscal Summary:	\$ 30,000	Conservancy Match Component
	\$ 90,000	Partners' Match Component
	<u>\$ 6,814,500</u>	BLM Grant Component
	\$ 6,934,500	Project Total

The match provided by the Conservancy includes activities funded from Proposition 40 and/or the Tahoe Conservancy Fund.

Overview

Description of Recommended Action

Staff led a partner effort to submit a Southern Nevada Public Land Management Act (SNPLMA) Hazardous Fuels Reduction and Wildfire Prevention Round 16 grant program application to BLM to treat between 1,200 and 1,800 acres within the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI). On August 30, 2016, BLM informed Conservancy staff that the application was selected for funding. Multiple board actions are required in order to implement the grant-funded project.

Staff recommends the Board authorize the acceptance of the grant funding for \$6,814,500 and the expenditure of \$1,969,500 in grant and Conservancy match funds associated with planning and prioritization, monitoring and assessment, and related direct and indirect costs. Staff also recommends authorization to enter into agreements, grants, and contracts, as necessary to carry out the work.

Currently, staff is recommending authorization for only the above planning activities because the list of projects will be defined through collaborative prioritization and planning processes. While 3,000 acres have been identified as potential treatment areas (Attachments 2a – 2c), the exact project locations, totaling up to 1,800 acres, will be determined through these collaborative processes. Staff will come before the Board at subsequent meetings to seek authority for funding for the implementation of planned, prioritized projects.

The BLM grant provides funding to treat 1,200-1,800 acres within the WUI over a six year term. Treatment will occur on lands owned and managed by the State and local jurisdictions, and large private landholdings on the California side of the Lake Tahoe Basin (Basin) (Attachments 2a – 2c). Grant partners include California State Parks (Parks), North Tahoe Fire Protection District (NTFPD), Lake Valley Fire Protection District (LVFPD), and others. The treatments will enhance forest health and resiliency, enhance wildlife habitat, and make the adjacent communities, as well as the surrounding forest, less susceptible to catastrophic wildfire.

Upon Board approval, staff will finalize the grant agreement with BLM and initiate prioritization, planning, and monitoring efforts with the Tahoe Fire and Fuels Team (TFFT) through various agreements, including grants and contracts.

History

The TFFT, formed after the 2007 Angora Fire, implements the Lake Tahoe Basin Multi-Jurisdictional Fuel Reduction and Wildfire Protection Strategy (Strategy). The TFFT developed and coordinated six SNPLMA Hazardous Fuels Reduction and Wildfire Prevention Round 16 grant applications for the Basin. The TFFT partners submitted a set of applications that, both individually and as a group, enable sharing of resources to effectuate a cooperative, integrated, and science-driven approach towards fuels treatment over the six year grant term.

The six proposed grant projects directly support fuels reduction goals related to community public health and safety, as well as watershed protection and resilience.

They also strategically connect fuel treatments with community outreach and education efforts, furthering the shared goals outlined in the Strategy. Through combined efforts and geographic linkages, these proposed projects will protect neighborhoods and landscapes throughout the Basin in a fiscally responsible manner by enhancing the effectiveness of each jurisdiction's efforts. The applications, as a whole, also balance on-the-ground implementation activities with project planning, allowing for a "pipeline" of projects ready for implementation in out-years and move planning and implementation to a landscape level, building resilient forests and ecosystems in the face of changing climate and other threats. BLM selected five of these applications for funding.

The California Lake Tahoe Basin Regional Hazardous Fuels Reduction and Wildfire Prevention Project is comprised of three regional focus areas totaling 3,000 acres within the Defense Zone of the WUI on the California side of the Basin (Attachments 2a-2c). The Lake Tahoe Basin Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) and the Strategy were used to determine the focus areas. Of the 3,000 acres identified in the focus areas, the grant provides funding for hazardous fuels reduction treatment on not less than 1,200 acres and not more than 1,800 acres. Prioritization of treatment areas will consider a range of topics including environmental review, terrain accessibility, slope, and cost estimates. This prioritization will be done through a collaborative effort with the TFFT partners. Staff will seek future authority from the Board for implementation of treatments.

In addition to the fuels treatment activities, the grant provides funding for pre and post treatment monitoring and an educational field trip for the public and stakeholders. Monitoring efforts will be coordinated across the five successful grant projects to ensure consistent assessment methodology and data to demonstrate effectiveness at meeting SNPLMA strategic plan goals.

Financing

Due to the regional approach and multiple ownerships within the potential treatment areas, the grant has several partner elements. The Conservancy is the BLM grantee and will provide grant management services, and will enter into agreements, grants, and contracts with partners as necessary to plan the project. As stated above, the TFFT will be involved with the prioritization process. The Conservancy, LVFPD, NTFPD, and Parks have each agreed to provide cost match totaling \$120,000 over the six-year term of the grant.

The cost match requirement will be fulfilled by in-kind contributions, such as staff time, associated with project preparation and oversight. The Conservancy is responsible to provide \$30,000 or one-fourth of the cost match.

Conservancy staff has taken steps to arrange the necessary budgetary authority for the appropriation and expenditure of the grant funds. It is anticipated that subject to board approval the appropriation of the \$6,814,500 will be spread out over four fiscal years, beginning as part of the 17/18 Governor’s Budget and continuing through the 18/19, 19/20, and 20/21 fiscal years. Matching funds will be funded using currently available appropriations.

Grant Budget

Conservancy staff submitted a grant application budget totaling \$6,814,500 and proposed a Conservancy match of \$30,000 plus match of \$90,000 from Project partners, for a total of \$6,934,500. At this time, staff is recommending approval to spend up to \$1,969,500, as detailed below, for planning and prioritization, monitoring and assessment, and related direct and indirect costs. Staff will come to the Board in the future to obtain authority for implementation efforts.

Activity	Amount
Project planning, layout, and contract management	\$ 975,000
Priority planning	50,000
Monitoring and assessment	295,000
Indirect costs	619,500
Grant Budget for initial activities	\$ 1,939,500
Conservancy match	30,000
Recommended spending authority	\$ 1,969,500
Project implementation	4,875,000
Partners’ match	90,000
Total Project Budget	\$ 6,934,500

The budget for initial activities may be adjusted between line items, but total expenditures under the recommended authorization will not exceed \$1,969,500.

Authority

Consistency with the Conservancy's Enabling Legislation

The recommended action is consistent with the Conservancy's enabling legislation. Specifically, Government Code section 66908 authorizes the Conservancy to receive funds in the form of "subventions, grants ... and other financial aids and funds" from public sources. Additionally, section 66906.8 authorizes the Conservancy to select and hire consultants and contractors to provide services necessary to achieve the Conservancy's mission, including protection of the natural environment at Lake Tahoe. Pursuant to sections 66905.2 and 66907.7, the Conservancy may award grants to local public agencies, State agencies, federal agencies, and nonprofit organizations for purposes consistent with its mission. Finally, under section 66907.9, the Conservancy is authorized to initiate, negotiate, and participate in agreements for the management of land under its ownership or control with local public agencies, State agencies, federal agencies, nonprofit organizations, individuals, corporate entities, or partnerships.

Consistency with the Conservancy's Strategic Plan

The recommended action is consistent with the Strategic Plan because the partnership effort allows 1,200-1,800 acres in high priority WUI areas to be efficiently managed for fuels treatment (Strategy III.A). This action also helps to strengthen Conservancy operations (Strategy IV.B) by supplementing limited Conservancy funding with grant funds for project implementation.

Consistency with the Conservancy's Program Guidelines

The recommended action is consistent with the Conservancy's Forest Improvement Program Guidelines. The project reduces the risk of property and forest loss from catastrophic wildfire and increases the health and vigor of the retained trees. Healthy forests are better equipped to deal with the effects of climate change, sequester carbon, increase visual appeal, and provide improved wildlife habitat.

Consistency with External Authorities

The recommended action is consistent with the Environmental Improvement Program (EIP) because it facilitates the implementation of EIP projects in the Forest Ecosystem Health and Hazardous Fuels Reduction Program.

This action is also consistent with both the Strategy and the CWPP.

Compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA)

Pursuant to the State CEQA Guidelines (Cal. Code Regs., tit. 14, § 15000 et seq.), certain classes of activities are statutorily exempt from CEQA or are exempt because they have been determined by the Secretary for Natural Resources to have no significant effect on the environment. Staff have evaluated the planning and monitoring and assessment activities and have found them to be exempt under CEQA. These activities qualify for a statutory exemption under State CEQA Guidelines section 15262 (Feasibility and Planning Studies). A Notice of Exemption (NOE) has been prepared for the activities (Attachment 3). If the Board approves the acceptance of the grant and expenditure of funds, staff will file the NOE with the State Clearinghouse pursuant to State CEQA Guidelines, section 15062.

List of Attachments:

Attachment 1 – Resolution 16-12-04

Attachment 2a – Project location map – North focus area

Attachment 2b – Project location map – West focus area

Attachment 2c – Project location map – South focus area

Attachment 3 – Notice of Exemption

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