

## ATTACHMENT 3.3a

### MEEKS MEADOWS RESTORATION PROJECT

**Grant Type:** Planning Grant

**Applicant:** Washoe Tribe of Nevada and California

**Recommended Funding:** \$228,530

**Location:** The Meeks Meadow Restoration Project is located on the West Shore of Lake Tahoe across State Highway 89 from the Meeks Bay Resort, and adjacent to a Desolation Wilderness trailhead. The Project area extends 1.3 miles upstream from Highway 89 and ¼ mile on either side of the Meeks Creek channel (Attachment 3.3b).

#### Project Description

The Washoe Tribe of Nevada and California (Tribe) is requesting Proposition 1 funding from the Conservancy to support several planning activities for the Meeks Meadow Restoration Project (Project). The proposed planning grant will assist the Tribe in completing the CEQA process, conducting vegetation surveys and assessments, developing a culturally significant vegetation and management plan, creating project-related adaptive management recommendations, and defining the future implementation actions. The Tribe is applying for additional funding for this work from the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Tribal Wildlife Grant Program. Completing the proposed planning activities will also position the Tribe to compete for future implementation funds.

The proposed planning grant will allow the Tribe to involve Tribal members, elders, youth, and pertinent Tribal departments in the planning phase and development of this Project. A collaborative effort will result in a culturally-significant Vegetation Enhancement and Management Plan, which will provide an implementation guide for vegetation restorations in the meadow following timber removal and burning, and for continued maintenance of a drought resistant meadow. Maintaining the Washoe Tribal legacy at Lake Tahoe is an important step in collectively planning for environmental change and resiliency. This Project will set a template for increased Tribal involvement in other projects in the Lake Tahoe Basin.

## **Background and Context**

The Tribe has thousands of years of history and experience of resource allocation and environmental management at Lake Tahoe. Meeks Meadow was a historic summer camp for Washoe Tribal members, and continues to be a valuable cultural and environmental asset for the Tribe. Through many generations, Tribal Elders transferred traditional ecological knowledge of the diversity of culturally significant plants and environmental practices to other Tribal members. Historically, the open meadow character of Meeks Meadow was maintained by periodic burning by the Tribe, and the diversity, vigor, and quality of culturally desirable plants was greater than what currently exists there.

The ecological and cultural function of the meadow has declined over time, due to conifer encroachment, meadow drying, and the exclusion of fire (a traditional Tribal vegetation management practice). The Tribe would like to bring back the meadow's historic open character, and restore the quality, extent, and vigor of culturally desirable plants. This will assist the Tribe in reestablishing traditional cultural practices and generational knowledge transfer at Meeks Meadow. In the Lake Tahoe Basin, opportunities for Tribal members to engage in these cultural practices are limited due to past land management activities and land ownership.

The U.S. Forest Service Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit (LTBMU) manages the land at Meeks Meadow in a partnership with the Tribe, and they have been working cooperatively with the Tribe in the project area since 1997. Both parties signed an initial memorandum of understanding at that time, establishing a government to government relationship including protocols and responsibilities, and recognizing common land management and conservation goals. Since then, the parties have signed three additional agreements covering authorities and restoration and maintenance activities for this area, including traditional practices of the Tribe and other ecological restoration efforts.

The LTBMU initiated planning for the Project in 2005 through the funding of an ecosystem assessment report of the Meeks Creek watershed. In early 2012, the LTBMU completed a National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) document for restoration work at Meeks Meadow and issued a Record of Decision.

## **Project Evaluation**

The Project will allow the Tribe to actively manage aboriginal lands in a historical and cultural manner. The long-term intent of this Project is to restore the ecological, hydrologic, and cultural functions of the meadow, while also reducing potential for catastrophic wildland fire. The Tribe plans to accomplish these goals by reestablishing environmentally appropriate meadow processes and functions for the current climate regime and historic and cultural reference conditions. Important meadow processes include natural fire disturbance, evapotranspiration, streamflow dispersal, groundwater recharge, and sediment retention. Restoring these functions will assist in regaining the historical plant succession process, and will increase the culturally desirable vegetation along with future resiliency of the meadow to natural disturbances and drought.

The recommended funding would support planning activities that would lead to implementation of the Project. Future implementation of the Project would result in approximately 300 acres of meadow habitat restoration in the Meeks Meadow through the removal of encroaching conifers, and by reintroducing periodic burning as an ongoing meadow management tool. The preferred approach is to treat the entire meadow in one entry using a combination of mechanical and hand treatments, followed by prescribed fire. If the Tribe cannot treat the entire meadow in one year, the vegetation treatment will be done in phases so that conifer removal and burning on smaller portions of the meadow will be carried out in the same year. Streambank restoration and vegetation enhancements, including the propagation and planting of culturally-significant meadow and riparian plants in key meadow locations, will follow conifer removal. Approximately one and a half miles of the Meeks Creek channel would be improved with vegetation and other stabilization measures.

### **Project Schedule**

Upon execution of the planning grant, Conservancy staff will work with Tribe staff on the workplan. The workplan will specifically list the deliverables supported by the grant. The schedule below reflects anticipated completion dates for major deliverables.

| <b><u>Activity</u></b>  | <b><u>Date</u></b> |
|---|--------------------|
| Culturally-significant Vegetation Enhancement and Management Plan | March 2017         |
| CEQA Process and Environmental Document                           | March 2017         |
| Permitting  | March 2017         |

## **Project Budget**

| <b><u>Activity</u></b>     | <b><u>Conservancy Funding</u></b> |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Design and Administration  | \$27,320                          |
| Vegetation Management Plan | \$50,000                          |
| Monitoring                 | \$22,000                          |
| CEQA and Permitting        | \$105,660                         |
| <u>Contingency</u>         | <u>\$23,550</u>                   |
| <b>TOTAL</b>               | <b>\$228,530</b>                  |

The final amounts may vary between individual items from those shown, but the total expenditures for the Project will not exceed the grant award.

## **Compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA)**

Pursuant to State CEQA Guidelines (Cal. Code Regs., title 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 Resources to have no significant effect on the environment. Staff has evaluated this planning project, and has found it to be exempt under CEQA. This project qualifies for a statutory exemption under section 15262 (feasibility and planning studies). A Notice of Exemption (NOE) has been prepared for the project (Attachment 3.3d). If the Board approves the grant funding, staff will file the NOE with the State Clearinghouse pursuant to State CEQA Guidelines, section 15062.

## **List of Attachments:**

Attachment 3.3b – Project Area Map  
Attachment 3.3c – Resolution 16-03-03.3  
Attachment 3.3d – Notice of Exemption

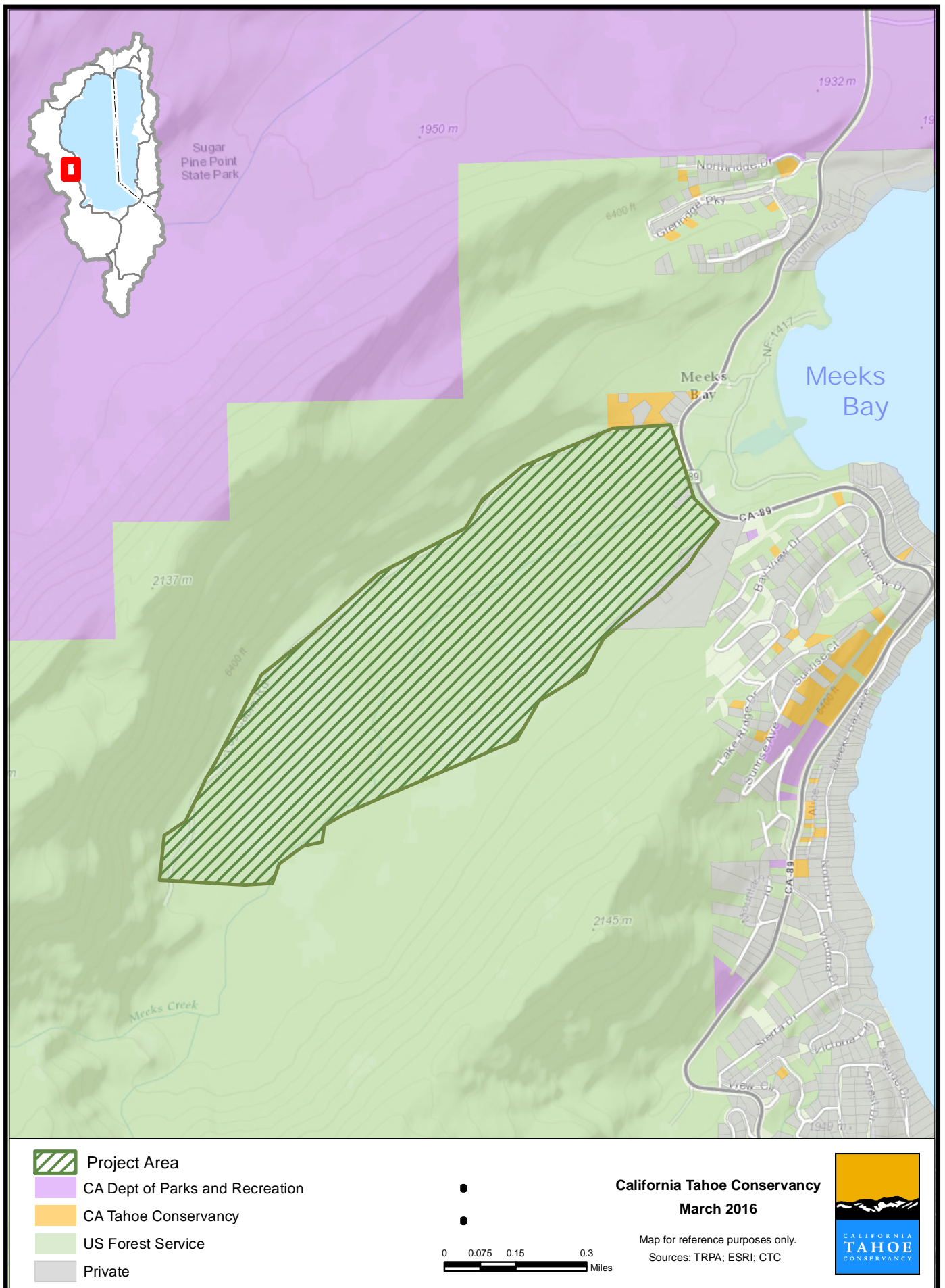
## **Conservancy Staff Contact:**

Joe Pepi

(530) 543-6066  
joe.pepi@tahoe.ca.gov

# ATTACHMENT 3.3b

## Meeks Meadow Restoration Project Area Map



**ATTACHMENT 3.3c**

California Tahoe Conservancy

Resolution

16-03-03.3

Adopted: March 17, 2016

**MEEKS MEADOW RESTORATION PROJECT**

Staff recommends that the California Tahoe Conservancy adopt the following resolution pursuant to Government Code section 66907.7:

"The California Tahoe Conservancy hereby authorizes the award of a planning grant in the amount of \$228,530 to the Washoe Tribe of Nevada and California for the Meeks Meadow Restoration Project and authorizes staff to take all other necessary steps consistent with the accompanying staff recommendation."

I hereby certify that the foregoing is a true and correct copy of the resolution duly and regularly adopted by the California Tahoe Conservancy at a meeting thereof held on the 17th day of March, 2016.

In WITNESS THEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this 17<sup>th</sup> day of March, 2016.

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Patrick Wright  
Executive Director



## ATTACHMENT 3.3d

### NOTICE OF EXEMPTION

To: Office of Planning and Research  
1400 -10th Street, Room 121  
Sacramento, CA 95814

From: California Tahoe Conservancy  
1061 Third Street  
South Lake Tahoe, CA 96150

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***Project Title:***

Meeks Meadow Restoration Project Planning Grant Authorization

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***Project Location – Specific:*** The Meeks Meadow Restoration Project is located on the West Shore of Lake Tahoe across State Highway 89 from the Meeks Bay Resort, and adjacent to a Desolation Wilderness trailhead, as shown on the attached map.

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***Project Location – City:***

Unincorporated area of El Dorado County

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***Description of Nature, Purpose and Beneficiaries of Project:***

Authorization of a grant for Meeks Creek Restoration project planning to improve ecological function and tribal cultural opportunities at Lake Tahoe. This project will involve partnerships with Washoe Tribe of Nevada and California and the US Forest Service Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit.

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***Name of Public Agency Approving Project:***

California Tahoe Conservancy (Conservancy Board meeting of March 17, 2016, Agenda Item 8a)

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***Name of Person or Agency Carrying Out Project:***

Washoe Tribe of Nevada and California

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***Exempt Status:***

- ☐ Ministerial (Sec. 15073)
- ☐ Declared Emergency (Sec. 15071 (a))
- ☐ Emergency Project (Sec. 15071 (b) and (c))
- ☒ Statutory Exemption, section 15262 (planning and feasibility studies)

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***Reasons Why Project is Exempt:***

Action involves planning for restoration of ecological function of the Meeks Meadow and enhancement of tribal cultural opportunities.

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***Contact Person***

Joe Pepi

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***Area Code Telephone***

(530) 543-6066

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***Date Received for Filing:***

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Patrick Wright  
Executive Director





# ATTACHMENT A

## Meeks Meadow Restoration Project Area Map

