

## **ATTACHMENT 3.4a**

### **Lake Tahoe West Collaborative**

**Grant Type:** Planning

**Applicant:** National Forest Foundation

**Recommended Funding:** \$849,100

**Location:** All lands on the West Shore of the Lake Tahoe Basin from Cascade Creek northward to the Middle Truckee Watershed boundary, in unincorporated El Dorado and Placer counties. (Attachment 3.4b)

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### **Project Description**

This planning grant would support the development of a multi-jurisdictional, landscape-scale strategy to restore and protect ecosystems on the California side of the Lake Tahoe Basin (Basin), from Emerald Bay to Tahoe City. The Lake Tahoe West collaborative will focus on improvements related to forest and watershed health and resiliency and sustainable recreation at a landscape/watershed level.

The non-profit National Forest Foundation (NFF) is requesting funding to design and facilitate the stakeholder collaborative for the Lake Tahoe West Collaborative Project (Lake Tahoe West), and also work with a Core Team comprised of representatives from the USDA Forest Service – Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit, the California Tahoe Conservancy (Conservancy), the California Department of Parks and Recreation, local fire districts, and others.

The application also requests funding to support a Science Team, headed by the USDA Forest Service's Pacific Southwest Research Station (PSW), which will help develop alternative scenarios and evaluate trade-offs among various project objectives, including forest health, air quality, water quality, wildlife habitat, and carbon sequestration. The major goals of Lake Tahoe West will be to concurrently provide for fuels reduction, ecosystem and watershed restoration, forest carbon storage, and wildlife habitat, and to address the major threats to the health of these lands, including climate change, invasive pests, and catastrophic wildfire.

## **Background and Context**

Until recently, the Lake Tahoe Environmental Improvement Program (EIP) and related activities of the Basin's land management agencies have focused on restoring specific high priority watersheds (the Upper Truckee River and Ward and Blackwood Creeks) and on treating priority areas for forest fuels reduction. These efforts have been essential to reduce fine sediment loadings that impair Lake Tahoe's famed lake clarity, and to protect Lake Tahoe's communities and landscapes from the potential impacts of catastrophic wildfire.

Looking ahead, however, these agencies recognize the importance of integrating the Basin's watershed restoration and forest health programs to implement large-scale, multi-jurisdictional restoration projects, and to jointly develop climate adaptation strategies in response to the significant and lasting changes in temperature and precipitation expected over the next several decades. Although the Lake Tahoe agencies have made great progress in coordinating and jointly prioritizing forest fuels and watershed restoration projects, the agencies generally plan, fund, permit, and implement small-scale projects on their own land.

The Lake Tahoe West approach, therefore, represents a fundamental change in how the agencies will manage and protect their lands. In addition, because most of the Basin's land management agencies have been focused either on watershed restoration or forest fuels reduction, they have been slow to embrace the recommendations of key scientists and stakeholder groups to pursue a more holistic ecosystem management strategy. A key goal of Lake Tahoe West, therefore, will be to pursue a more integrated approach, and to emphasize the ecological role of fire, sensitive wildlife habitat, and the importance of forest structure heterogeneity. Accordingly, the restoration strategies will be informed by PSW's Ecosystem Management Strategy for Sierran Mixed-conifer Forests (GR-220) and related federal and state guidance.

The other key goals, in response to changing climatic conditions in the Basin, will be to increase forest carbon stocks and resiliency, to reduce the greenhouse gas emissions and air quality impacts associated with pile-burning in the Basin, and to utilize forest biomass byproducts for renewable energy at the proposed new bioenergy facility near Truckee.

And finally, this new approach may necessitate changes in how projects are permitted, since agencies planning forest health projects will no longer seek to avoid or mitigate damage to stream zones, but to restore and protect them. The land management agencies will have to work closely with Tahoe Regional Planning Agency, the Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board, and others to streamline the regulatory process for these projects.

### **Project Evaluation**

This project addresses several key goals of the EIP, the Conservancy's Strategic Plan, and new and emerging state and mandates, including the following:

- Establishing a collaborative approach among the key agencies, scientists, and stakeholders to restore and protect the basin's forests and watersheds;
- Jointly developing and prioritizing landscape-level projects that address multiple objectives through an all-lands approach;
- Restoring and protecting the basin's forests and watersheds to concurrently provide for fuels reduction, ecosystem restoration, and wildlife habitat.
- Addressing the major threats to the health of the Basin's forests, including drought, climate change, catastrophic fire, invasive pests, severe storm events, and development impacts;
- Facilitating the reduction of wildfire management costs by re-establishing natural fire regimes and reducing the risk of uncharacteristic wildfire;
- Encouraging utilization of forest restoration by-products to improve air quality, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and benefit local economies;
- Streamlining permitting processes for large-scale projects with multiple benefits;
- Leveraging federal, state, local, and private funding sources to achieve the basin's restoration goals; and
- Achieving measurable on-the-ground improvements at a watershed scale.

## Project Schedule

The Lake Tahoe West collaborative will be formed shortly after the grant is approved, and the environmental documents will be prepared in 2016 and 2017. Project deliverables include design and implementation of the collaborative (stakeholder) process and the scientific modeling and monitoring (including equipment purchases) needed to support an informed collaborative and decision-making process. Prior to commencement of work, a workplan must be submitted and approved.

## Project Budget

| <b>Activity</b>  | <b>Total</b>      | <b>Grant Award<br/>Cost Share</b> | <b>Recommended</b> |
|--|-------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------|
| <b>Collaborative Process</b>   | \$ 567,416        | \$270,068                         | \$297,348          |
| - Process Design   |                   |                                   |                    |
| - Facilitation   |                   |                                   |                    |
| - Collaborative Skill Building   |                   |                                   |                    |
| - Stakeholder Match  |                   |                                   |                    |
| - Communications   |                   |                                   |                    |
| - Travel   |                   |                                   |                    |
| <br><b>Scientific Modeling<br/>and Monitoring</b>                      | <br>\$1,000,000   | <br>\$559,000                     | <br>\$441,000      |
| - Science Team Leadership  |                   |                                   |                    |
| - Modeling   |                   |                                   |                    |
| - Equipment  |                   |                                   |                    |
| - Monitoring   |                   |                                   |                    |
| <br><b>Program Planning, Data<br/>Management, and<br/>Coordination</b> | <br>\$ 164,860    | <br>\$ 54,108                     | <br>\$110,752      |
| <hr/> <b>TOTAL</b>   | <hr/> \$1,732,276 | <hr/> \$883,176*                  | <hr/> \$849,100    |

The budget for individual items may vary from those shown above, but total expenditures for Project implementation will not exceed \$849,100. The recommended award represents almost a \$400,000 reduction in the original funding request. NFF intends to seek funding from other sources to bridge the shortfall.

## **California Environmental Quality Act Compliance**

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 3.4d). 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 3.4b – Project Location Map

Attachment 3.4c – Resolution 16-03-03.4

Attachment 3.4d – Notice of Exemption

### **Staff Contact**

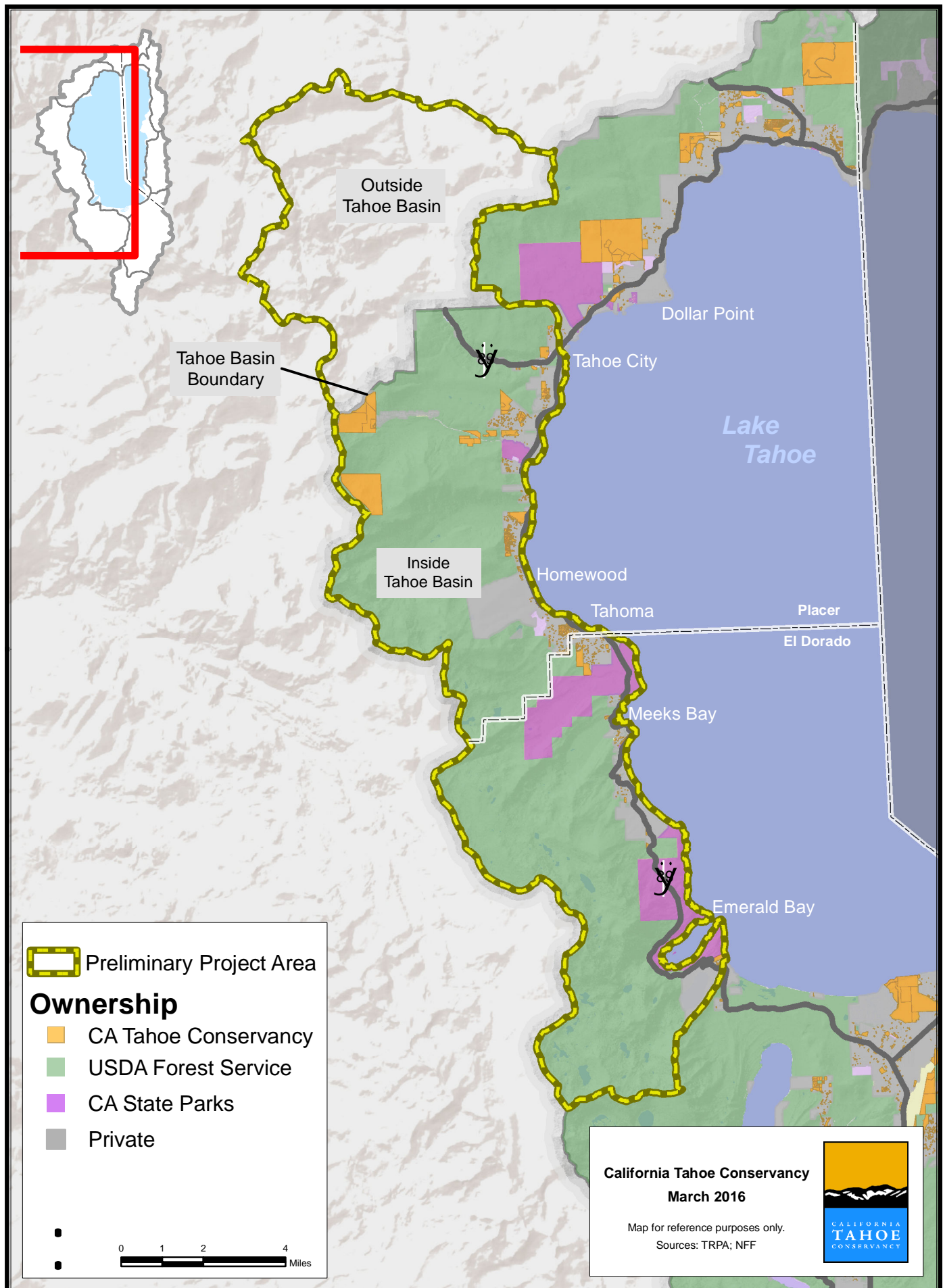
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## Lake Tahoe West Collaborative - Preliminary Project Area



**ATTACHMENT 3.4c**

California Tahoe Conservancy

Resolution

16-03-03.4

Adopted: March 17, 2016

**LAKE TAHOE WEST COLLABORATIVE**

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 \$849,100 to the National Forest Foundation for the Lake Tahoe West Collaborative 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 3.4d

### 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:***

Lake Tahoe West Collaborative Planning Grant Authorization

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***Project Location – Specific:***

From Cascade Creek northward to the Lower Truckee River within the Lake Tahoe Basin.

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***Project Location – City:***

Unincorporated lands in the Lake Tahoe Basin-portion of El Dorado and Placer counties on Lake Tahoe's West Shore.

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

Authorization of a grant to initiate a collaborative process and science-based assessments (including modeling, equipment purchases, and monitoring) to inform a landscape-scale, multi-jurisdictional planning process on Lake Tahoe's West Shore.

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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:*** California Tahoe Conservancy

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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 landscape-scale planning and feasibility studies.

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***Contact Person***

Juan Carlos Urizar

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***Area Code Telephone***

(530) 543-6047

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***Date Received for Filing:***

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Patrick Wright  
Executive Director



ATTACHMENT A

Lake Tahoe West Collaborative - Preliminary Project Area

