



# Strategic Plan 2018-2023





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# Strategic Plan 2018-2023

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## Mission

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

Accordingly, the Conservancy envisions a Basin where:

- The Lake is clear and its watersheds are healthy;
- The Basin has vibrant fish and wildlife, safe and healthy communities, and resilient forests;
- Outdoor recreation and eco-tourism support a robust economy;
- All communities and visitors have equitable access to the Lake and Basin landscapes;
- Communities and visitors minimize their carbon footprints by walking, biking, and using public transit; and
- Basin projects and programs provide national models for sustainability, stewardship, equity, social-ecological resilience, and adaptation to climate change.





# I. Executive Summary

For more than three decades, the California Tahoe Conservancy (Conservancy) has played a major role in shaping the landscape and economy of the Lake Tahoe Basin (Basin).

- First and foremost, the Conservancy owns and manages nearly 4,700 parcels totaling more than 6,500 acres, creating a vast network of public lands that provide open space, support wildlife, and reduce storm water runoff that impairs the Lake's famed clarity.
- It has acquired or funded the development of several of the Basin's most spectacular and popular public beaches and parks, from a string of lakefront parks in the north shore, to Commons Beach in Tahoe City, Lakeview Commons in South Lake Tahoe, and Van Sickle Bi-State Park.
- It has operated a land bank to acquire and sell development rights, completing more than 7,000 transactions with homeowners and businesses to develop their properties while still protecting the environment.
- Finally, through both its grant programs and its own initiatives, it has invested over half a billion dollars in hundreds of conservation and recreation projects, as part of the State of California's contribution to the Environmental Improvement Program (EIP).

These projects and programs have improved the clarity of the Lake, the health and resilience of the Basin's forests and watersheds, the length and quality of its bike and trail network, and the vitality of its neighborhoods and town centers.

Despite these accomplishments and investments, however, several growing threats jeopardize the work of the Conservancy and its public and private partners

to restore and maintain the Basin's environmental and economic health. Rising temperatures and extreme weather events threaten lake clarity, community safety, and forest and watershed health, while increasing traffic and housing prices threaten the quality and fabric of its communities. Just last year, after an extended drought followed by record precipitation, the Lake's clarity dropped to the lowest level ever recorded, and tree mortality reached record highs, a harbinger of how climate change threatens much of the progress to date.

In its 2012-2017 Strategic Plan, the Conservancy Board reaffirmed the importance of its long-standing programs, while stressing the need to address climate change, sustainability, and other emerging State and regional priorities. The Plan also highlighted the importance of aligning the Conservancy's efforts with its public and private partners, and better coordinating State agency activities and investments in the Basin. Towards that end, during the past five years the Conservancy funded and launched a broad range of strategic initiatives with its federal, state, local, and private partners. These include:

- The Greater Upper Truckee River Watershed Partnership, a collaborative interagency effort to restore the Basin's largest and most ecologically significant watershed;
- The Lake Tahoe West Restoration Partnership (LTW), a collaborative interagency effort to restore the resilience of forest and watershed health across 60,000 acres;
- The Tahoe-Central Sierra Initiative (TCSI), a

partnership with the Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC), the U.S. Forest Service (USFS), and many others to coordinate restoration of 2.4 million acres;

- The Climate Adaptation Action Plan (CAAP) to start adapting the Basin's resource management, infrastructure, and economy to climate change;
- The Tahoe Livable Communities (TLC) Program, a partnership with the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency (TRPA) and local governments to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, restore sensitive lands, and help revitalize the Basin's town centers;
- The Stormwater Resources Plan to help guide investments to improve water quality, water supply, wetlands, and lake clarity;
- The Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) Strategic Plan to prioritize, sequence, and finance prevention, control, and eradication projects;
- The Strategic Public Access Plan to improve public access along the Lake's shoreline.

These initiatives and others focus on increasing the scale and effectiveness of several Basin-wide programs and mandates, and aligning the Conservancy's efforts with an increasingly broad range of leaders and partners in the Basin. In particular, the Conservancy works closely with the TRPA and local governments to help implement the Regional Plan and area plans; with the USFS Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit (LTBMU) and the Tahoe Fire and Fuels Team (TFFT) to implement the LTBMU Forest Plan and Multi-Jurisdictional Fuel Reduction and Wildfire Prevention Strategy; and the Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board (Lahontan RWQCB) on the Lake Tahoe Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) for lake clarity. The Conservancy also works closely with its wide-ranging partners to coordinate investments in the EIP, and with the League to Save Lake Tahoe and the Tahoe Fund to build public-private partnerships that leverage its funding. Finally, it enjoys a special relationship with the Tahoe Resource Conservation District (Tahoe RCD) in managing the Conservancy's lands and jointly pursuing several initiatives, such as controlling AIS.

The Conservancy has also become increasingly engaged in collaborative efforts with its partners

across the Sierra Nevada region. It has strengthened its partnership with the SNC by becoming a full partner in the Sierra Nevada Watershed Improvement Program and co-leading the TCSI. The Conservancy also actively participates in the Sierra Meadows Partnership, Tahoe-Sierra Integrated Regional Water Management Program, and other regional ventures.

At the State level, the Conservancy is focused on addressing several recent mandates and initiatives, including executive orders and programs related to climate change, sustainable communities, forest health, and community access to recreation. The Conservancy serves on several state-wide workgroups, including the Forest Management Task Force, Natural and Working Lands Climate Change Implementation Plan workgroup, Mountain Meadows workgroup, and others.

As depicted in Figure 1, this Strategic Plan (Plan) describes how the Conservancy will address these State, Basin, and regional priorities in coordination with its many agency and stakeholder partners. To fulfill these responsibilities, the Conservancy has developed twenty-two strategies to achieve five major goals during the period from 2018 through 2023:

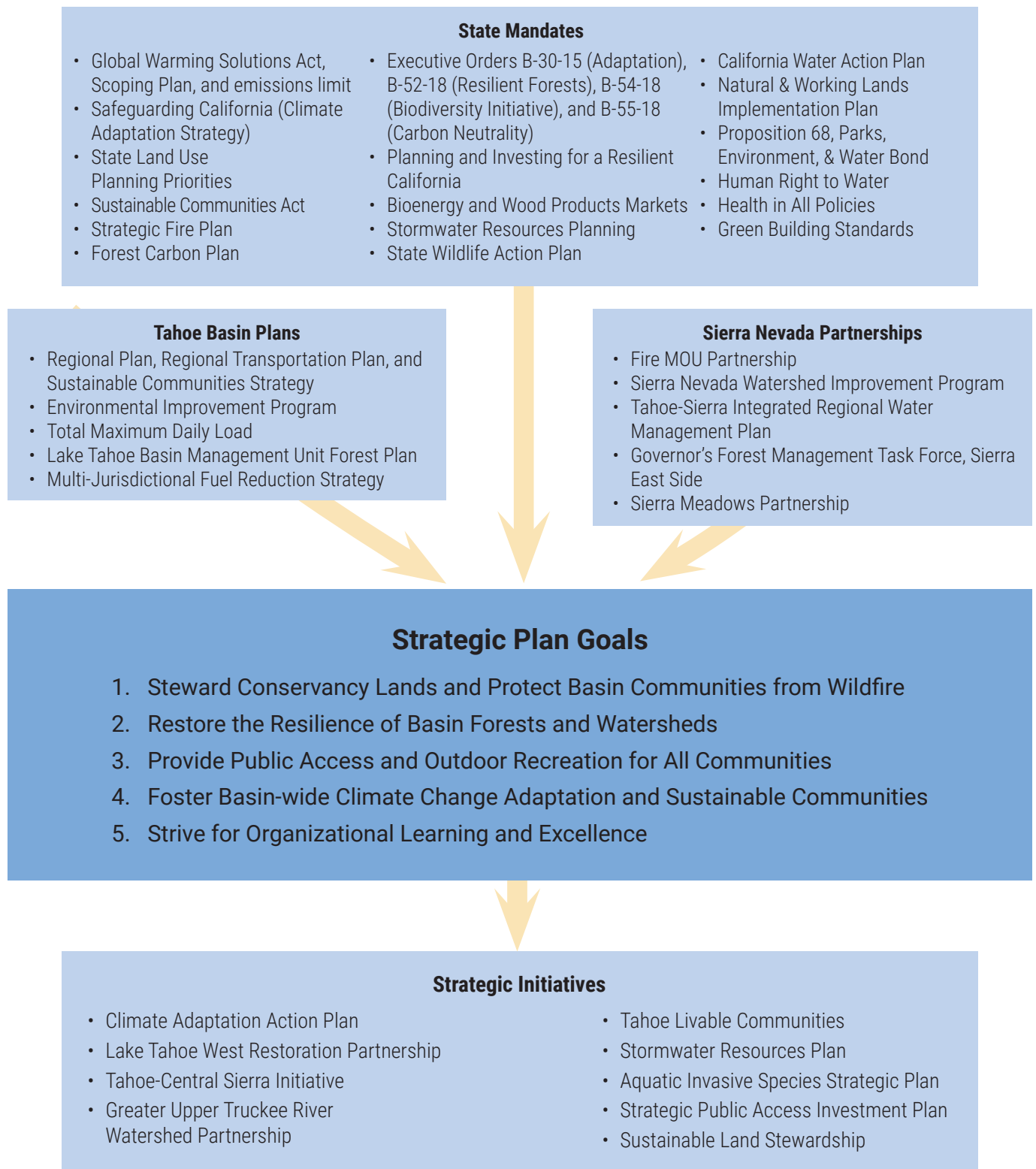
1. Steward Conservancy Lands and Protect Basin Communities from Wildfire
2. Restore the Resilience of Basin Forests and Watersheds
3. Provide Public Access and Outdoor Recreation for All Communities
4. Foster Basin-wide Climate Change Adaptation and Sustainable Communities
5. Strive for Organizational Learning and Excellence

The Plan also includes a brief organizational history, including its evolving roles; guiding principles and financial sustainability principles; and performance measures. The appendices include priorities and criteria for allocating funds under Proposition 68; a summary of an internal and external assessment; and a risk analysis with mitigation measures. A detailed companion report covering 2012-2017 Strategic Plan Accomplishments and Challenges can be found on the Conservancy website.



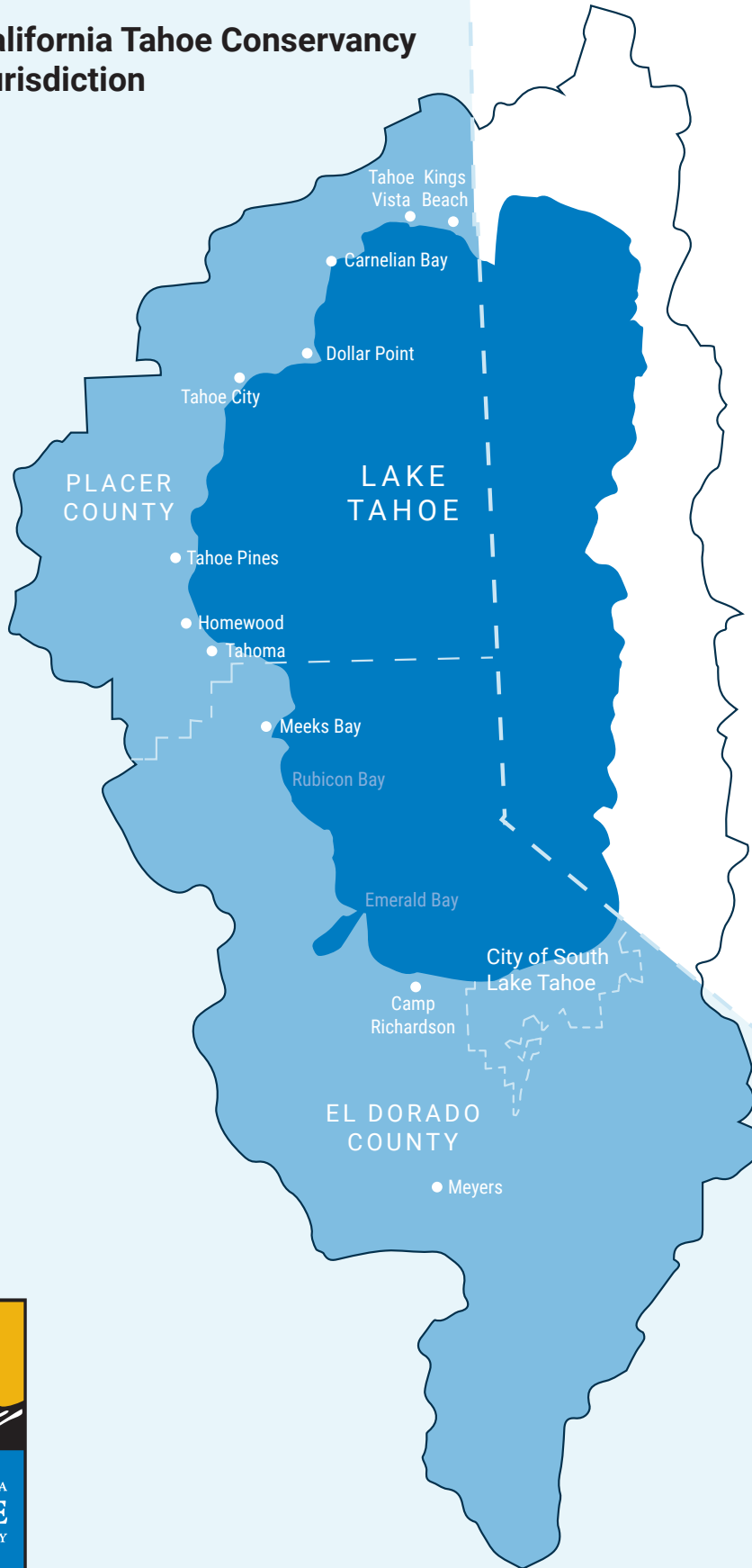
**Figure 1. Strategic Plan Context**

Through this five-year Strategic Plan, the Conservancy intends to meet an array of State mandates, contribute to Basin goals, and support regional partnerships.





# California Tahoe Conservancy Jurisdiction



NEVADA  
CALIFORNIA



## II. Conservancy History, Roles, and Guiding Principles

### 1. Jurisdiction and Governance

The Conservancy is a State agency within the California Natural Resources Agency. The State Legislature established the Conservancy in its present form in 1984 to protect and restore Lake Tahoe's natural environment, including water quality, air quality, and wildlife habitat; to acquire, restore, and manage lands; to preserve the scenic beauty and recreational opportunities of the region; and to provide public access to Basin lands.

The Conservancy's jurisdiction spans the 236 square miles of the California side of the Basin. This includes portions of Placer and El Dorado counties, and the entire City of South Lake Tahoe. In clockwise order from south to north, unincorporated municipalities and areas within the Conservancy's jurisdiction include Meyers, Camp Richardson, Emerald Bay, Meeks Bay, Tahoma, Homewood, Tahoe Pines, Tahoe City, Dollar Point, Carnelian Bay, Tahoe Vista, and Kings Beach. The Conservancy manages ecosystems that, from the Basin's crest down to Lake Tahoe, encompass red fir and mixed conifer forests, meadows, streams and rivers, marshes, beaches, and near-shore waters.

### 2. Conservancy History and Evolution

California and Nevada originally began work to collaboratively establish a Tahoe Conservancy in 1973. The bi-state agency would have had a mandate to acquire and protect private land to complement the land use planning and regulatory authorities of the TRPA, which had been created in 1969. After Nevada declined to move forward with the bi-state agency and interstate compact for acquisitions of Basin lands,

An eight-member Board of Directors governs the Conservancy, including:

- the State Secretary for Natural Resources (or designee);
- the State Director of Finance (or designee);
- one public member appointed by the State Senate;
- one public member appointed by the State Assembly;
- one appointed representative each from El Dorado County, Placer County, and the City of South Lake Tahoe; and
- one ex officio, non-voting member representing the United States Secretary of Agriculture.

however, the two states and the federal government began to establish their own acquisition programs. The USFS established a land acquisition program following enactment of the federal Santini-Burton Act in 1980. Subsequently, California voters passed the Lake Tahoe Acquisitions Bond Act in 1982, which provided \$85 million for State land acquisitions.

The California legislature then re-activated the Conservancy as a California state agency in 1984, and the new agency began its work in 1985. In accordance with the recommendations of the Tahoe Area Land Acquisition Commission, the Conservancy's mandate was to acquire and improve lands with the 1982 bond act

# Conservancy History, Roles, and Guiding Principles

funds, and to provide grants to local agencies to protect water quality and provide wildlife habitat, recreation, and lakefront access. Nevada voters approved a parallel \$31 million acquisition program in 1986.

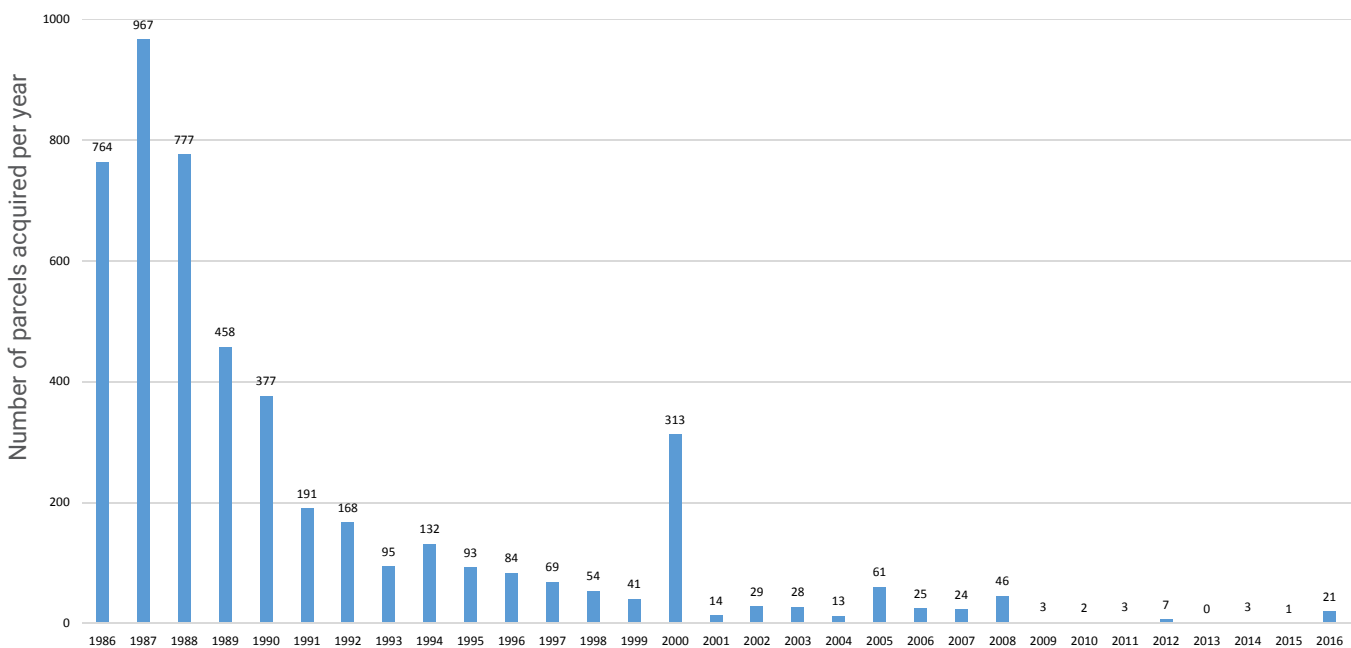
Four eras characterize the Conservancy’s evolution. During its first dozen years—its **Acquisitions Era** (1985-1996)—the Conservancy devoted extraordinary energy and resources to acquiring environmentally sensitive lands for water quality, wildlife, and recreation. It acquired thousands of undeveloped lots from willing sellers, most of which are less than one quarter-acre in size. These acquisitions served the dual purpose of protecting sensitive land and providing some financial relief for property owners whose land was subject to the TRPA’s regulations.

As its capacity, land holdings, and expertise grew, the Conservancy established several new programs, including a Soil Erosion Control Program in 1985 to provide storm water grants to local agencies, Resource and Urban Land Management and Wildlife Programs in 1986 to guide management and restoration of its acquired lands, Forest Resource Management Guidelines in 1990, and a Stream Environment Zone (SEZ) Program in 1991. Through a Memorandum of Understanding with the TRPA following adoption of the

Regional Plan in 1987, the Conservancy established its Land Bank to acquire impermeable land coverage and other development rights to provide mitigation for both existing over-covered parcels and for new projects located on sensitive lands.

The Conservancy’s **Environmental Improvement Program Era** (1997-2008) began with the Presidential Forum in 1997, where President Bill Clinton and Vice President Al Gore joined the two states and the TRPA in pledging to develop and invest in an EIP to restore and protect the Basin. The EIP helped to align and leverage the Conservancy’s ongoing investments in restoration and recreation projects with funding from other agencies and partners in the Basin. In the following decade, the Conservancy drew on several voter-approved bond initiatives, including Propositions 12 (2000), 40 (2002), 50 (2002), and 84 (2006), to invest \$20-30 million annually in State and local EIP projects. Acquisitions continued, too, although the Conservancy typically completed fewer than 50 per year, which partly reflected the declining availability of suitable properties (see Figure 2). The Conservancy began to focus proportionally less energy on new acquisitions and parcel restoration, and more on perpetual stewardship activities, like inspections, forest fuel treatments, and hazard tree removal.

Figure 2. Acquisitions by Year



In 2008, the Basin partners updated the EIP by consolidating projects into six large-scale programs—watersheds, habitat, and water quality; forest management; air quality and transportation; recreation and scenic resources; applied science; and program support—and by highlighting the importance of several emerging threats: wildfire, AIS, and climate change. The Conservancy continued to invest in the EIP through a combination of grant-making and directly planning and implementing signature projects on its own lands.

Events during the **Post-Great Recession Era** (2009-2017) created challenges for the Conservancy and other agencies. The Conservancy lost funding for the forestry elements of its land management program, suffered through an extensive freeze on bond-funded projects, and lost about a dozen positions through attrition. In response to these shortfalls, the Conservancy significantly scaled back its grant programs, reduced lot inspections from annual to biennial site visits, limited surveying and encroachment resolutions, shifted funding from projects to staff support, and significantly decreased its operations (see Figure 3).

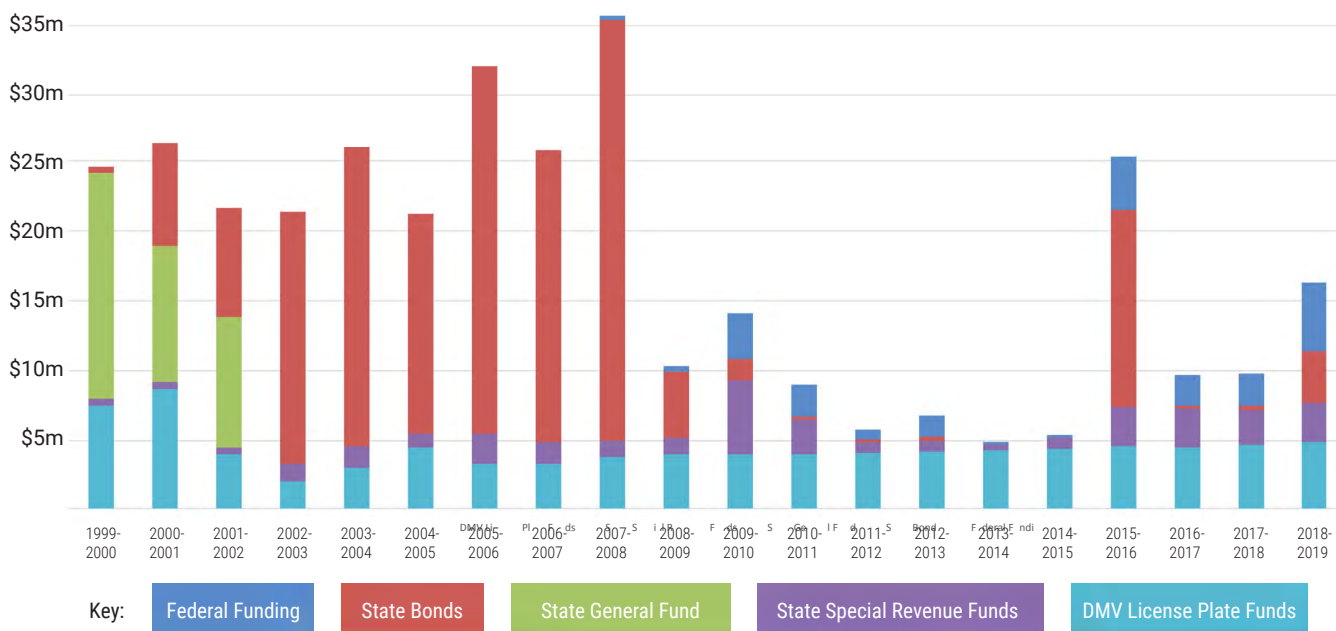
To maintain its core programs during this period, the Conservancy began to aggressively diversify its revenue sources through State and federal grants as well as sales of non-sensitive parcels. It also led a

successful effort to reallocate lakefront buoy and pier fees collected by the State Lands Commission from the State’s General Fund to the Conservancy, the Lahontan RWQCB, and the Natural Resources Agency.

The Conservancy’s financial position improved somewhat following passage of Proposition 1 in 2014, which allocated \$15 million to the Conservancy for competitive grants for ecosystem and watershed protection and restoration projects. Its public access and recreation programs, however, remained largely unfunded. In addition, because Proposition 1 funds must be allocated through competitive grants, these funds are not available to help restore and maintain the Conservancy’s own lands, or its most important restoration project, the Upper Truckee River Marsh.

The Conservancy hopes that 2018 marks the beginning of a **Climate Resilience Era**, given the State’s enormous emphasis on this topic and its importance for so much of the Conservancy’s work. In June 2018, the Conservancy’s financial outlook improved significantly with the passage of Proposition 68, which allocates \$27 million directly to the Conservancy, and provides significant funding to the Department of Fish and Wildlife, the Wildlife Conservation Board, and other State conservation agencies. Most recently, Governor Brown signed Senate Bill 901, which provides \$1 billion

Figure 3. Conservancy Funding Sources



# Conservancy History, Roles, and Guiding Principles

for forest health projects statewide over the next five years, and could become a major source of funding for the Conservancy and other agencies in the Basin. These funding sources will enable the Conservancy to increase its investments in several key programs, even though a major remaining financial challenge will be to overcome the continued lack of dedicated funding for ongoing maintenance of its lands.

## 3. The Conservancy's Roles

Historically, the Conservancy's broad mission has provided it with exceptional operational, programmatic, and financial flexibility. The Conservancy has therefore played a range of roles in different projects and initiatives, from directly implementing its own projects and providing grants to local agencies, to leading or convening Basin-wide initiatives.

Common roles and basic functions include:

1. **Convener:** announce initiative, conduct agency/stakeholder assessment, invite agency/stakeholder representatives, establish governance structure and process. Applies primarily but not exclusively to interagency/stakeholder processes.
2. **Funder:** provide funds through operating budget, grants, contracts, and by securing investment and philanthropy.
3. **Direct leader:** singularly establish goals and provide direction and guidance for how to achieve the goals.
4. **Collaborative leader:** agencies/organizations establish common goals and provide non-hierarchical (i.e., peer-to-peer) direction and guidance for how to achieve the goals.
5. **Technical expert:** contribute technical expertise to analyses, modeling, and monitoring.
6. **Implementer:** conduct or manage on-the-ground work to implement project plans.

The Conservancy's roles in addressing State, Basin, and regional priorities will continue to evolve. For example, the Conservancy led early efforts in the Basin to develop guidance on the design of storm water projects, and for more than a decade provided \$5-10 million annually

in grants and significant technical assistance to the Basin's local jurisdictions. Following adoption of the TMDL water quality plan in 2011, however, leadership on storm water management shifted to the Lahontan RWQCB. The Conservancy suspended its storm water grants program due to funding shortages; and the local jurisdictions significantly increased their expertise and capacity in constructing and managing such projects. Accordingly, the Conservancy has more recently focused on funding a Stormwater Resources Plan to help the local jurisdictions meet State mandates to develop and implement multiple-benefit projects. The Conservancy's role in this and other projects will continue to shift over time as new sources of funding become available, as State and local priorities evolve, and as Basin partners step into new roles.

The Conservancy also plays an important role in representing the State of California in several Basin-wide collaborative interagency efforts, including the Tahoe Interagency Executives (TIE) Steering Committee, the Lake Tahoe Federal Advisory Committee, and others. Although the Conservancy Board has sole responsibility for setting the direction and investment priorities of the agency, participation in these groups is vital to coordinate, leverage, and track federal, State, local, and private conservation and recreation EIP investments in the Basin. In 2019 the Conservancy and its EIP partners will update the 2008-2018 EIP to help shape and coordinate the next generation of EIP programs and projects, and the Conservancy will continue to take a leadership role in securing and investing California's share of funding.

Furthermore, the Conservancy's ability to add value to the Basin depends substantially on its relationships with sister State agencies. The common bond of a gubernatorial administration creates regular opportunities for State agencies to work in tandem, multiply the value that their individual resources provide, and better meet State objectives. It also provides perspective on whether the Conservancy has focused on the right topics and made the right financial choices. To the extent the Conservancy can better communicate, understand, and collaborate with these peers, it can better leverage its unique strengths and assets to fulfill its State and Basin responsibilities, garner resources for the Basin, and create Basin-wide benefits.

Finally, the Conservancy represents the Basin in a broad range of State and regional interagency forums, including the Forest Management Task Force, Natural and Working Lands Climate Change Implementation Plan work group, Sierra Meadows Partnership, Tahoe-Sierra Integrated Regional Water Management group, and Great Basin Landscape Conservation Cooperative, among others. The Conservancy's involvement in these groups is likely to intensify as forest health and climate change command more attention and funding from the State of California.

## 4. Guiding Principles

The Conservancy uses the following principles to guide all of its work:

1. Put the Conservancy's lands at the center of the agency's work.
2. Link daily land management responsibilities with strategic initiatives and increased grant-seeking.
3. Integrate multiple resources to produce multiple project benefits.
4. Inform decision-making with the best available science.
5. Take climate change into account in all planning and investment decisions, including designing projects and programs with enough flexibility to respond to future impacts.
6. Seek to collaboratively identify and implement the Basin's highest priority projects, regardless of land ownership.
7. Monitor and adaptively manage projects to increase scientific knowledge, improve project outcomes, and provide the greatest possible value.
8. Cultivate public-private partnerships, including foundations and impact investors, to create efficiencies and secure the funding necessary for transformative projects and initiatives.

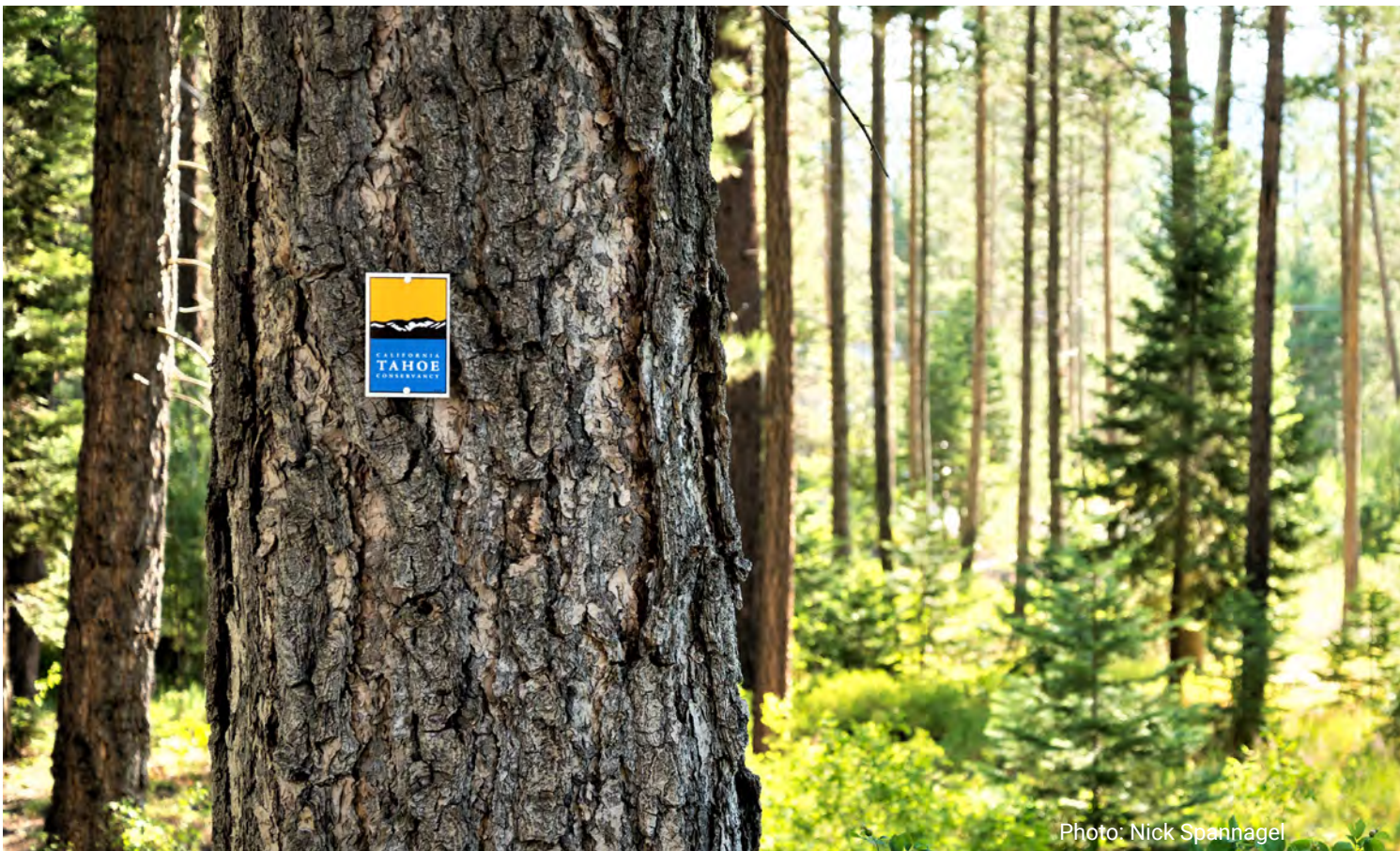


Photo: Nick Spannagel

# Conservancy History, Roles, and Guiding Principles

9. Recognize the integral role of administrative and executive functions to the success of all the Conservancy's work.
10. Maintain the organizational flexibility necessary to fill institutional gaps, implement projects through novel agreements, and use diverse funding opportunities.
11. Use all available financial tools and labor resources to accomplish work.
12. Put the professional expertise of all staff to the highest value use.

## 5. Financial Sustainability Principles

During the last five years, the Conservancy's organizational agility and ability to lead in emerging areas have allowed it to sustain its core programs while taking on several new initiatives. However, the Conservancy's growing responsibilities have stretched its resources and staff. The Conservancy faces hard decisions about how to use its unique assets and strengths to consistently create value, and how to finance this diverse work over the long-term.

First and foremost, the Conservancy must secure the financial resources necessary to steward its lands in perpetuity, including the recreational facilities that allow the public to experience the Basin's clear waters, cool forests, and breathtaking peaks. Yet the Conservancy projects that operations and maintenance costs will increase as it conducts more regular, necessary inspections; resolves severe encroachments; responds to more extreme droughts and storms; negotiates the renewal of dozens of 20-year lease agreements set to expire; and repairs and upgrades aging facilities. Without stable operational funding, the Conservancy will be unable to fulfill its core mission of effectively stewarding its lands.

Second, the Conservancy is also shifting its funding priorities. In its first two decades, the Conservancy directly funded and shaped the development of hundreds of EIP projects. But the Basin's local agencies have used Conservancy grants and other resources to build their own extensive in-house expertise and capacity to manage storm water, restore creeks and wetlands, provide public access, and treat forest

fuels. As a result, the Conservancy will spend less staff time on directly leading, managing, planning, and implementing projects; local jurisdictions excel in this work. Instead, the Conservancy will provide grants to local agencies to construct projects, and will focus its own staff resources on larger-scale collaborative efforts to help integrate these projects across program areas and jurisdictions.

Third, the Conservancy must meet increasing State requirements for building forest resilience and adapting to climate change. The Conservancy can accomplish this by working across geographic and administrative jurisdictions, which creates planning, regulatory, operational, economic, and infrastructure efficiencies. These efficiencies allow the Conservancy and its partners to treat more of the landscape faster, and multiply the impacts of individual investments in climate change adaptation. In the coming years, the Conservancy will devote more staff and resources to collaboratively leading landscape-scale and Basin-wide partnerships that encompass natural resource and community resilience.

In light of these tough choices, this Plan relies on five financial sustainability principles to structure its budget:

1. Pay for essential land management services and for strategic initiatives with State operational funding, rather than bond funding or asset land sales.
2. Maintain sufficient contingency funds to respond to extreme events, such as storms, flooding, and drought.
3. Dedicate the majority of Lake Tahoe License Plate revenues to preservation, restoration, and trail projects, rather than operations.
4. When contributing staff leadership and technical expertise to projects, focus on projects that cover a large geographic scale or the entire Basin.
5. Improve accountability by linking the Conservancy's Strategic Plan, operational plans, annual budget, and budget change proposals.



### III. Goals and Strategies for 2018 to 2023

The Conservancy will pursue five goals and 23 supporting strategies to fulfill its mission and vision from 2018 through 2023. Staff will also prepare annual operational plans for program areas, to provide more detailed steps for implementation, and an annual accomplishment report on progress toward achieving the Plan. Definitions include:

- **Goals** provide direction for Conservancy programs. They account for the Basin’s current institutional configuration, for trends both internal and external to the Conservancy, and for uncertainty about the future.
- A **strategy** describes how the Conservancy will attain a given goal through a focused, sustained effort to create specific relationships, practices, structures, or systems.
- **Operational plans** guide how Conservancy staff carry out the day-to-day tasks and project work necessary to enact strategies and attain goals. Operational plans will include timelines, actions, staffing, and budgets.

Although this Plan places each strategy under a specific goal, in practice the strategies fit together and amplify one another. Together, they form an integrated package, rather than serve as individual components.





Photo: Nick Spannagel

# Goal 1

## Steward Conservancy Lands and Protect Basin Communities from Wildfire

### ACCOMPLISHMENTS

The Conservancy owns nearly 4,700 parcels, including thousands of quarter-acre lots within the Basin's urban areas. These parcels provide open space, water quality, and recreational benefits, and have significantly reduced the potential level of development in the Basin. The Conservancy prides itself in its ability to competently manage its lands for multiple benefits. Staff inspects each parcel once every two years to monitor forest health, identify maintenance needs, and guard against encroachments. Staff has also earned a strong reputation for responding to citizen concerns with care, speed, and efficiency, including removing over 100 hazard trees in any given year. Staff also manages 15 properties with recreational amenities, including nine popular beaches that provide public access to Lake Tahoe. Over the past five years, the Conservancy completed the massive upgrading of its land records system by creating a computerized Property Data Management System, and by beginning to collect paperless data in the field through the use of mobile devices and associated software.

### CHALLENGES

While the Conservancy has a proven track record of excellent land management, it faces several challenges. The Conservancy's scattered ownership of its urban parcels presents significant management challenges. Staff must thin forested lots roughly every ten to 15 years, and also address any maintenance issues that arise.

The extreme winter of 2016-17, for example, created localized flooding issues and large numbers of hazard trees. The Conservancy has struggled to secure adequate funding to effectively manage its lands since the recession. Furthermore, the costs of maintaining its lands are likely to increase significantly as its facilities age and more extreme weather becomes the norm. With nearly 400 unresolved encroachments and the total climbing each year, the Conservancy is losing hard-earned water quality, wildlife, and recreation benefits.

Similarly, responding to citizen concerns involving Conservancy lands is a 365-day priority. The Conservancy fields around 150 citizen reports annually, with up to double this amount in extreme winters. Common topics include dangerous trees, wildlife harassment, excessive public revelry, inappropriate storage of personal property, resource damage, and fire hazards. The Conservancy regularly requests law enforcement patrols through contracts. However, the Conservancy has little control over when peace officers arrive on-site, and may find itself a low priority during busy weekends.

In places where the Conservancy owns public facilities that provide public access on its lands, it must properly operate and maintain these facilities to ensure public safety and health. Well-known Conservancy sites include Carnelian West and Patton Landing on the north shore, Eagle Rock on the west shore, and Van Sickle Bi-State Park on the south shore. Typically the Conservancy's capital investments in these properties—such as drinking fountains and restrooms, and parking lots—have 30-year lifespans. With the Conservancy having started to acquire lands in 1986, a steadily rising tide of facility repair or replacement costs looms on the horizon.

### STRATEGIES

To meet these challenges, during the next five years, the Conservancy will increase its inspections and land surveys to better catalog, prioritize and resolve the backlog of encroachments. The Conservancy also aims to secure dedicated law enforcement assistance. The Conservancy will also continue to complete facility upgrades required by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), and prepare for anticipated climate change impacts and potential extreme events. Finally, the Conservancy will work to implement its financial sustainability principles and obtain dedicated support funding for land management.

Maintaining healthy forests in urban areas constitutes

## Goals and Strategies for 2018 to 2023

another fundamental role of the Conservancy's land management program. The 2007 Angora Fire crystallized attention, political will, and funding around the prevention of wildfire in the Basin. Alongside numerous partners, the Conservancy helped to create the TFFT, and pledged to redouble its forest stewardship efforts in urban, upland, and riparian areas. The Basin's Multi-Jurisdictional Fuel Reduction and Wildfire Prevention Strategy (already required in 2006), and accompanying Community Wildfire Protection Plans, set the direction for ten years of unprecedented investment in forest health treatments designed to protect life and property.

Building upon these efforts, the Conservancy is growing its team to coordinate interagency forest health projects under the direction of the TFFT, and is partnering with the LTBMU to more effectively fund and implement treatments on Conservancy and LTBMU parcels. Together with the TFFT, the Conservancy aims to complete initial forest fuels reduction projects on all federal, State, and local parcels in the Basin's urbanized areas in the next several years.

To enact its first goal—**Steward Conservancy Lands and Protect Basin Communities from Wildfire**—the Conservancy will implement the following five strategies:

- A. Redouble Conservancy land management through a combination of annual property inspections, increased surveying, encroachment resolution, urban lot restoration, ADA upgrades, and prompt removal of hazard trees and responses to citizen concerns.
- B. Increase the Conservancy's presence on its lands through educational outreach, art installations, co-management, and law enforcement.
- C. Communicate the value of Conservancy lands, services, and initiatives to demonstrate accomplishments, sustain staff commitments, educate younger generations, encourage citizen stewardship, and promote civic pride.
- D. Develop Conservancy land and forest stewardship standards and guidelines, protocols, data management systems, remote sensing technologies, and regulations that safeguard people and the environment, create consistency and operational efficiencies, and secure financial sustainability.
- E. Implement and develop innovative financial partnerships and interagency agreements that increase the Conservancy and the Basin's ability and capacity to manage and restore its lands, maintain its recreational facilities, treat forest fuels, suppress wildfire, and beneficially use prescribed fire.



# Goal 2

## Restore the Resilience of Basin Forests and Watersheds

### ACCOMPLISHMENTS

In its 33 years, the Conservancy has undertaken and facilitated a wide variety of watershed and forest restoration projects. Beginning around the year 2000, for example, the Conservancy funded and collaboratively led the decade-long restoration of the Ward Creek watershed. This multi-jurisdictional effort included two Conservancy restoration projects, two Placer County storm water improvement projects, and a State Parks forest health and recreation project. Since completion in 2013, staff has monitored and adaptively managed improvements. The Conservancy continued its restoration tradition over the last five years by:

- Reconstructing a reach of the Blackwood Creek channel and constructing new trails for the adjacent Eagle Rock recreation area.
- Partnering with Alpine Meadows ski resort to stabilize eroding slopes and install best management practices on the lands it leases from the Conservancy.
- Restoring portions of the Upper Truckee River and preparing to restore the Upper Truckee Marsh.
- Supporting Placer County in restoring the Lake Forest watershed near Tahoe City.
- Awarding almost \$4 million to local governments for high priority storm water projects, and helping to meet the first five-year targets for the Tahoe TMDL. This continued a historical emphasis on storm water improvement that has amounted to approximately \$100 million of grant funding over the past 30 years.
- Funding a Basin-wide strategy to monitor, prevent, and control the spread of AIS.
- Facilitating the renewal of a memorandum of

understanding with partner agencies to protect the endemic Tahoe yellow cress flowering plant.

- Finally, in collaboration with several peer agencies, launching the LTW Restoration Partnership, an initiative designed to rapidly increase the resilience of the entire stretch of forests covering the west shore, from Emerald Bay to Tahoe City.

In each case, staff worked closely with partners to monitor and adaptively manage all completed projects, participate in interagency guidance teams, apply the lessons learned, and maintain the benefits from these environmental improvements.

### CHALLENGES

While respecting the complexity of natural and human systems, the Conservancy has great ambitions for its next generation of forest and watershed restoration projects. The Conservancy has launched landscape initiatives that deliberately work across land ownerships and jurisdictions to create management efficiencies of scale and scope. This approach holds the promise of increasing the pace and scale of restoration, and getting ahead of the curve of climate change's worst impacts. However, landscape restoration also requires greater amounts of planning time and staff resources to build shared understanding of the issues and then negotiate consensus on strategy, actions, and funding. Landscape restoration also poses challenges, as staff aim to analyze the system rather than just single parts, to include communities and recreational users as part of ecological restoration, and to anticipate climate change in plans and project designs. With practice, agencies can improve their ability to conduct and implement this work. Nonetheless, for the Conservancy to collaboratively lead such initiatives requires a staff with diverse skills, a strong, interagency commitment, and broad-based stakeholder support.

*Facing page: Members of the Lake Tahoe West Restoration Partnership gather in a west shore forest. Photo: Mason Bindl.*

## STRATEGIES

Looking ahead, the Conservancy plans to continue working with a wide variety of partners to restore the health and resilience of the Basin's forests and watersheds. This includes improving forest diversity, protecting wildlife, applying beneficial fire, clearing meadows of encroaching trees, reducing streambank erosion, reconnecting floodplains, and treating storm water. This work will enhance the ability of these lands to respond to wildfire, drought, insects, and climate change, rather than shifting to shrublands or disappearing from the Basin.

The Conservancy and its partners are also increasingly shifting to large landscape, multi-jurisdictional, multiple-benefit projects to more rapidly and comprehensively achieve restoration goals in the Basin. Working at a landscape scale makes it easier for the Conservancy and its sister agencies and stakeholders to integrate the planning for and management of multiple values and resources across jurisdictions. By contributing individual resources to common priorities, the agencies and stakeholders can also create operational, infrastructure, and economic efficiencies. This evolution in the Conservancy's approach to planning also aligns it with national and statewide trends toward restoring landscape resilience.

Over the next several years, the Conservancy will focus much of its efforts on two landscape initiatives: the Greater Upper Truckee River Watershed Partnership and the Lake Tahoe West Restoration Partnership.

**Greater Upper Truckee River Watershed Partnership:** Since the 1990s, the Conservancy has prioritized restoring the health of the Upper Truckee River, the Basin's largest and most important watershed. Over the past five years, the Conservancy completed a final restoration plan for the Upper Truckee Marsh; invested \$4 million in the Tahoe RCD's acquisition of Johnson Meadow, the largest private parcel along the river; launched the development of a comprehensive watershed restoration strategy for the river corridor and its surrounding watershed; and partnered with the LTBMU to restore a major segment of the river. The Conservancy's primary goals are to complete the first phase of the Marsh restoration project, implement the comprehensive strategy with partners, and secure funding for the strategy, which the Conservancy expects to cost \$50-\$100 million.

**Lake Tahoe West Restoration Partnership:** This initiative involves over 40 partner stakeholders, agencies, and research institutions in a collaborative effort to restore 60,000 acres of forests and watersheds covering the entire west shore of the Basin. In partnership with the LTBMU and the National Forest Foundation (NFF) and other Basin partners, the Conservancy has played a lead role in launching, funding, and steering this initiative. The Conservancy expects to continue investing significant funding and staff time on Lake Tahoe West for the next several years.

In addition to these initiatives, the Conservancy will continue to invest in a broad range of EIP multiple-benefit forest health, watershed restoration, storm water, and AIS projects. The Conservancy works closely with its EIP partners to identify, plan, and fund these projects, and to leverage Conservancy funding with other federal, state, local, and private funds.

To enact its second goal—**Restore the Resilience of Basin Forests and Watersheds**—the Conservancy will implement the following four strategies:

- A. Convene and collaboratively lead a select number of landscape-wide partnerships that create efficiencies of scope, scale, and cost. These include the Greater Upper Truckee River Watershed Partnership and the Lake Tahoe West Restoration Partnership.
- B. Advance multiple-benefit projects that creatively combine restoring and building the resilience of forests and watersheds with water quality protection, green infrastructure, recreation, and climate change mitigation and adaptation.
- C. Pilot scientific advancements, new technologies, and innovative approaches to landscape restoration, and then showcase these exemplary initiatives to other parts of the State and mountainous regions of the American west.
- D. Participate in State and regional initiatives to increase the pace and scale of forest health projects, streamline planning and permitting processes, and create new industrial facilities and markets for forest products.



*The Tahoe Transportation District estimates that 24 million people visit Lake Tahoe annually. Photo: Nick Spannagel*

## Goal 3

### Provide Public Access and Outdoor Recreation for All Communities

#### ACCOMPLISHMENTS

The Conservancy has a long history of securing and promoting public access to Lake Tahoe and the world-famous natural resources of the Basin. The Conservancy acquired and developed a string of popular north shore beaches; partnered with Nevada State Parks in opening Van Sickle Bi-State Park; partnered with the Sierra Business Council in developing the Lake Tahoe Water Trail; and invested heavily in three of the Basin's most popular beaches and community spaces: Commons Beach in Tahoe City, Lakeview Commons in the City of South Lake Tahoe, and Kings Beach State Recreation Area. The Conservancy also invested in several segments of the Tahoe Rim Trail and the Basin-wide bike trail network.

The California Drought, Water, Parks, Climate, Coastal Protection, and Outdoor Access For All Act of 2018, approved by the voters as Proposition 68, starts from the premise that inactivity and obesity cost California over forty billion dollars annually, and that even modest increases in physical activity would reduce health care costs and increase productivity. Proposition 68 therefore requires that public agencies that receive bond funding consider the following: reaching out to minority, low-income, and tribal communities, as well as people with disabilities; mentoring new leaders; creating novel partnerships that increase visitation and access; expanding the use of multilingual and culturally appropriate communication and educational materials; promoting youth engagement and empowerment; and identifying staff liaisons.

## CHALLENGES

The coming decades will stress the Basin’s recreational assets in numerous ways. Climate change will drive much of this. Declining snowpacks will disrupt skiing, snowboarding, and other winter sports. Ever more visitors from throughout the State will seek cool, high altitude refuge during peak summer months. During most of the year, rather than just a few months, wildfire will pose a risk to people and \$15.5 billion in homes, businesses, and infrastructure.

For the Conservancy’s own recreational facilities, aging infrastructure will also take its toll. Extreme winter flooding events and increased tourism will only compound this wear and tear. Revitalized partnerships with peer agencies, concessionaires, nonprofit organizations, and foundations are essential to sustain current levels of service.

## STRATEGIES

In recent years, the Conservancy’s recreation and access staff and grant funds have dwindled, primarily because a major source of funding, Proposition 1, was directed at watershed and forest health rather than recreation. With the passage of Proposition 68,

however, the Conservancy is now in a better position to fund and promote these projects, and to focus on improving community access to outdoor recreation in the disadvantaged communities of South Lake Tahoe and Kings Beach. The agency will also continue to integrate public access into its landscape restoration projects wherever feasible.

To enact its third goal—**Provide Public Access and Outdoor Recreation for All Communities**—the Conservancy will implement the following three strategies:

- A. Provide signature opportunities on Conservancy lands for all people to experience and enjoy Lake Tahoe’s beaches, rivers, wildlife, and mountains.
- B. Foster multiple-benefit projects that link people’s health and well-being, equitable community access, and the Conservancy’s unique array of protected lands.
- C. Work with sister agencies and organizations to fulfill Proposition 68’s diversity and inclusion mandates, including outreach, mentorship, partnership, communication and education, and youth engagement and empowerment.





# Goal 4

## Foster Basin-wide Climate Change Adaptation and Sustainable Communities

### ACCOMPLISHMENTS

With climate impacts visible throughout the State, in 2017 the Conservancy launched the development of a Basin-wide CAAP in partnership with its sister State agencies, the TRPA, and the State of Nevada. Currently being developed, the first part of the plan assesses the Basin's vulnerability to climate change impacts, while the action plan will identify specific agency commitments to adaptation projects and programs. The CAAP integrates a growing body of State directives and grant programs designed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and adapt to the future climate. Since the passage of California's Global Warming Solutions Act of 2006 (Assembly Bill 32), these include Executive Orders on climate adaptation, forest and community resilience, biodiversity, and carbon neutrality; the State's climate adaptation strategy (Safeguarding California); Forest Carbon Plan; guidance on identifying vulnerable communities; and Natural and Working Lands Implementation Plan.

Prior to this, in 2014 the Conservancy launched the TLC program to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, restore sensitive lands, and help revitalize the Basin's town centers. The TLC program advances the Conservancy's mission while simultaneously accelerating implementation of the TRPA's Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS), which, pursuant to Senate Bill 375, requires regional planning agencies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions through improvements in land use and transportation. The TRPA developed a Sustainability Action Plan in 2012, which provides a menu of possible mitigation and adaptation objectives, strategies, and actions that partners can choose to adopt.

Through its TLC program, the Conservancy has refocused its land acquisition and marketable right

**Climate change has started touching everything in the Basin, from the health of the Lake and its forests to its world-class recreation areas.**

programs. These programs now prioritize transactions that:

1. Acquire and restore aging developed properties on environmentally sensitive lands, and either retire or transfer the associated development rights to town centers;
2. Sell, lease, or exchange vacant Conservancy land in town centers; and
3. Prevent future development by acquiring the remaining private properties in several of Lake Tahoe's roadless subdivisions.

By 2018, the Conservancy had completed ten transactions under the TLC program. The Conservancy has banked the development rights associated with these parcels to facilitate new infill development projects on its own non-environmentally sensitive lands (or "asset lands"), which include several vacant developable parcels in the Basin's town centers.

### CHALLENGES

Climate change has started touching everything in the Basin, from the health of the Lake and its forests to its world-class recreation areas. During the winter of 2016-2017, for example, several years of drought flipped dramatically to the wettest year on record in the Sierra Nevada, which resulted in the worst-ever recorded lake clarity. Climate scientists project such weather extremes to become more

*Facing page: Tree mortality on Lake Tahoe's west shore. Photo: Mike Vollmer / Tahoe Regional Planning Agency.*

common at Tahoe, which may have profound and lasting impacts on lake clarity and the health of the economy. In its Sierra Nevada Regional Report, released in 2018 as part of its Fourth Climate Change Assessment, the State identified the following impacts to the region that includes Lake Tahoe:

- An average of 6 to 9 degrees Fahrenheit in temperature warming, with faster warming trends and precipitation changes at high elevations;
- Corresponding long-term trends toward declining snowpacks, declining soil moisture, changes in streamflow hydrology including peak runoff timing and groundwater retention, and associated stress on fauna and flora;
- Increasing occurrence of extreme precipitation events, both floods and droughts;
- Increasing wildfire and drought stress, and decreasing carbon storage in forests;
- High vulnerability of old-growth mixed conifer forests, mountain meadows, and associated biodiversity to climatic changes;
- Increasing vulnerability of tourism-dependent communities to loss of snowpack, changes to stream and lake conditions, and declining forest health; and
- Imperiled public health from heat waves and poor air quality, often compounded by age, disability, and economic inequality.

Such shifting patterns of temperature and precipitation can transform entire forest and watershed ecosystems. Resource and land managers can no longer plan for an individual resource in isolation, and instead must consider it in the context of an unstable system. Uncertainty about specific localized climate impacts, and the declining relevance of historical baselines, place a premium on flexibility, redundancy, monitoring, and adaptive management. At the same time, extreme events often supersede the range of historical variability, and require planning and building for conditions that have never existed during modern times. Climate change has already impacted existing Conservancy facilities and restoration projects, and will continue to pose a challenge for how the Conservancy implements its mission in the future.

## STRATEGIES

The CAAP will play a critical role in integrating climate change throughout Conservancy programs, and in fulfilling the State directive that agencies take climate change into account in all planning and investment decisions. The CAAP encompasses natural resources, public health and safety, recreation, infrastructure, and the economy. Based on a combination of newly downscaled climate projections, expert synthesis of recent scientific literature, and economic analyses, the assessment and action plan will also provide a common foundation of information for future updates of the EIP, Regional Plan and SCS, LTBMU Forest Plan, and other Basin-wide planning efforts. The CAAP will also provide the Conservancy with a framework to address future State mandates associated with climate change.

The Conservancy is also addressing climate impacts through the TLC. During the next five years the Conservancy plans to significantly expand its TLC program, in partnership with the TRPA. The Conservancy will emphasize acquiring sensitive parcels outside of town centers to hasten redevelopment in town centers. The Conservancy will also move ahead with new workforce housing and similar development proposals on its asset lands.

To enact its fourth goal—**Foster Basin-wide Climate Change Adaptation and Sustainable Communities**—the Conservancy will implement the following four strategies:

- A. Ensure that all Conservancy programs integrate climate change science, mitigation, and adaptation.
- B. Develop and implement, in partnership with peer agencies and stakeholders, a comprehensive Climate Adaptation Action Plan for the Basin.
- C. Expand the TLC program to revitalize the Basin's town centers, protect sensitive lands, and meet the goals of the TRPA's Sustainable Communities Strategy, Regional Plan, and local area plans.
- D. Strengthen coordination and collaboration among the State and other agencies responsible for climate change policy, science, and mitigation and adaptation projects.



# Goal 5

## Strive for Organizational Learning and Excellence

### ACCOMPLISHMENTS

The Conservancy's operations provide the organizational backbone for its programs and investments. During the last several years, the Conservancy has considerably strengthened its internal operations in several areas. It has standardized its budget and fiscal reporting systems, implemented a new paperless timekeeping system, developed a centralized system to track property management information, significantly improved its geographic information systems, and enhanced its human resources services.

The Conservancy has also provided leadership and contributed expertise to numerous Basin, State, and regional forums for collaboration. Among others, these include the TIE Steering Committee, EIP Coordinating Committee, Lake Tahoe Federal Advisory Committee, Storm Water Quality Improvement Committee, and Upper Truckee River Watershed Advisory Group;

and the Governor's Forest Management Task Force (formerly focused on tree mortality), Fourth Climate Assessment, All Conservancies Committee, Sierra Nevada Strategic Investment Partnership, Safeguarding California Climate Action Team, Natural and Working Lands Implementation Team, and Sierra Meadows Partnership.

### CHALLENGES

For the Conservancy to continue accomplishing innovative, ambitious programmatic work, its fiscal, legal, information technology, and human resources units must run effectively and efficiently. The Conservancy must ensure that its staff has the requisite skills. Increasingly, these include the ability to manage interagency projects, design stakeholder processes, establish collaborative governance structures, negotiate based on interests, facilitate interagency and stakeholder meetings, write innovative grant proposals, manage complex contracting

## Goals and Strategies for 2018 to 2023

arrangements, and craft novel interagency agreements. The Conservancy will need to continue to support staff professional development through mentoring, training, and practice in these areas.

### STRATEGIES

Looking ahead, the Conservancy will use this Plan to guide its workforce development over the next five years. A robust, resilient Conservancy will have a wide variety of staff with diverse and complementary expertise and skillsets, who share a workplace ethic that combines collegiality, mutual support, innovation, and leadership.

As a major part of implementing this Plan, staff members will develop annual operation plans to track progress and connect their individual development plans to organizational goals and strategies. The Conservancy will also fill key vacancies, provide professional development and mentorship, and upgrade its financial, record keeping, and programmatic systems to improve the accountability, transparency, and cost-effectiveness of its programs.

The Conservancy must also continue to work closely with sister State agencies to enact emerging gubernatorial and legislative mandates, and fulfill its responsibility to represent the State in the EIP. Consistent participation in major Basin-wide forums for deliberation and collaboration, along with enhanced

communication and regular interagency meetings, will allow the Conservancy to meet State mandates and contribute to the Basin by leveraging its unique assets and strengths.

To enact its fifth goal—**Strive for Organizational Learning and Excellence**—the Conservancy will implement the following six strategies:

- A. Align the Conservancy's workforce with its Strategic Plan.
- B. Invest in professional development and workforce health to increase staff autonomy and leadership, improve work products and efficiency, and retain staff for the long-term.
- C. Support Conservancy Board members in learning about and developing fluency with Conservancy programs and operations.
- D. Further integrate fiscal and budgeting, legal, and information technology units with programs.
- E. Seek updates as necessary to the Conservancy's legislative authority for implementing State priorities.
- F. Improve the Conservancy's ability to achieve State and Basin mandates by aligning the work of sister State agencies in the Basin.
- G. Continually assess the effectiveness of the Conservancy's programs and contributions to interagency initiatives, and its collaborative leadership capacity.





## IV. Measuring Strategy and Strategic Plan Performance

The Conservancy will measure its performance under this Plan in several ways. These include:

- Implementation performance measures that answer, *To what degree has the Conservancy implemented the strategies and achieved the goals in this Plan?*
- Effectiveness measures that answer, *To what degree have the strategies and goals accomplished what the Conservancy desired?*
- Process performance measures that answer, *To what degree does the Conservancy have processes in place that will implement strategies and help achieve desired outcomes?*
- Plan performance measures that answer, *How well has this Plan functioned?*

Some Conservancy tasks and actions are easier to measure than others, and some lend themselves more to quantitative or qualitative measurement. This section provides a select number of carefully considered measures that focus on the essence of this Plan. If necessary, staff will revise these measures when evaluating annual operational plans. Staff will also measure and report on performance annually as well as at the end of the five years of this Plan.

### 1. Implementation Performance Measures

- A. Lots inspected, encroachments resolved, hazard trees removed

- B. Acres restored, miles restored
- C. Access and amenities provided
- D. Increase in institutional capacity to adapt to climate change
- E. Acquisitions and transactions completed
- F. Direct and collaborative leadership
- G. Local assistance grants awarded and received
- H. Partnerships cultivated

### 2. Effectiveness Performance Measures

The Conservancy will measure the degree to which:

- A. Inspections protected Conservancy lands, and protected public health and safety
- B. Restoration projects restored watershed and forest resilience
- C. Disadvantaged communities gained more equitable access to Conservancy lands and outdoor recreation
- D. Conservancy policies and programs adjusted to a changing climate
- E. The Conservancy contributed to reducing greenhouse gas emissions
- F. The quality of life in town centers improved

## 3. Process Performance Measures

- A. Forums that the Conservancy has to advance specific strategies and goals
- B. Degree to which these forums:
  - a. Have inclusive representation and foster transparency
  - b. Promote mutual understanding and trust
  - c. Work productively through conflict and minimize litigation
  - d. Improve decision-making
  - e. Increase public understanding and support

## 4. Plan Performance Measures

The Conservancy will measure how well the Plan:

- A. Guided operational decision-making
- B. Helped to prioritize work
- C. Advanced financial sustainability
- D. Mitigated risk
- E. Accomplished the Conservancy's mission



# Appendix 1

## Proposition 68 Funding Priorities and Criteria

### The Conservancy's priorities for Proposition 68 funding include, in no specific order:

1. Climate change adaptation
2. Sustainable communities
3. Outdoor recreation
4. Wildfire prevention, including beneficial fire
5. Watershed and forest restoration and resilience, including wildlife and biodiversity, storm water, meadows, invasive species, and carbon sequestration



### Criteria for funding include, in no specific order:

1. Advance State and Basin planning priorities
2. Advance Proposition 68 goals for diversity and inclusion
3. Create multiple benefits to Conservancy lands and resources and Basin lands and resources
4. Incorporate climate change in planning and investment, including impacts of climate on anticipated benefits; benefits for resilience and adaptation; and emission reduction and carbon sequestration benefits
5. Propose a high quality and innovative project design that includes, for example, rationale, goals, methodology, deliverables, work plan, readiness, and budget
6. Propose transformative change (e.g., change that occurs as a large geographic, ecological, financial, and/or demographic scale)
7. Use California Conservation Corps or community conservation corps services
8. Demonstrate sustainability, including long-term operations, maintenance, and monitoring, and organizational capacity
9. Demonstrate professional qualifications and high quality past performance
10. Demonstrate community, stakeholder, and/or political support

# Appendix 2

## Internal and External Assessment

With the aid of a professional facilitator, the Conservancy developed several sets of information to guide the update to its Plan. First, staff evaluated the performance of the prior 2012-2017 Plan. Second, the Conservancy worked with its federal, state, local, nonprofit, and foundation partners (see list) to assess issues and trends shaping internal organizational dynamics and the external institutional environment. Third, the Conservancy solicited input, insights, comments, and suggestions from its Board members, key agencies, and stakeholders to develop and refine goals and strategies. Staff played a major role through nine work teams, an executive team, and a budget team that met regularly to prepare initial analyses and improve drafts.

### List 1. Stakeholder Group Participants

Stakeholder working group members represented a variety of resource management, recreation, utility, government, planning, and research interests. These included:

1. California Dept. of Forestry and Fire Protection
2. City of South Lake Tahoe
3. Desert Research Institute
4. Environmental Incentives
5. Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board
6. League to Save Lake Tahoe
7. North Lake Tahoe Resort Association
8. Placer County
9. Sierra Nevada Conservancy
10. State of Nevada
11. Tahoe City Public Utility District
12. Tahoe Fund
13. Tahoe Regional Planning Agency
14. Tahoe Resource Conservation District
15. Tahoe Transportation District
16. University of California, Davis
17. University of Nevada, Reno
18. United States Bureau of Reclamation

This section summarizes the organizational strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) for each of the four strategies in the Conservancy's 2012-2017 Plan, and a list of external threats. The Conservancy Board and staff provided input for this SWOT analysis.



Photo: Nick Spannagel



## 2012-2017 Strategy 1: Lead California's Efforts on Sustainability, Climate Change, and other Basin-wide Initiatives

### Strengths

- widespread sense of leadership
- significant staffing and funding dedicated to collaborative initiatives
- promotion of resilient forests
- the Conservancy's diverse roles, from land acquisition, land banking, and land management, through visionary and technical leadership, grant-making, convening, and brokering.

### Weaknesses

- clarity of roles and contributions in a collaborative context
- acknowledgment of existing work in a given policy area

### Opportunities

- increase use of staff for strategizing and strategic initiatives
- play role of convener for Basin-wide initiatives, not only collaborative partner

- coordinate on roles and priorities to meet State mandates
- find efficiencies of scale
- strengthen statewide connections
- seek grant funding through partnerships
- better track strategic expenditures

### Threats

- lack of specificity regarding Conservancy roles that add value to the Basin
- difficulty of attributing individual accomplishments in a collaborative process
- potential for duplicating efforts and adding little value
- lack of sufficient internal communication on project or program vision and strategy
- lack of sufficient internal coordination on complex contracts

## 2012-2017 Strategy 2: Invest in High-Priority Conservation and Recreation EIP Projects and Programs

### Strengths

- widespread sense of accomplishment and leadership
- significant funding for Tahoe Livable Communities program (i.e., sustainable communities)
- balance of investments between local assistance grants and directly administered projects

### Weaknesses

- restrictions on funding and grant eligibility
- difficulty of adhering to timelines
- strongly bureaucratic State procedures slow work
- internal and external communications

### Opportunities

- continue emphasis on signature projects
- use collaborative skills to tackle complex, multi-

disciplinary, high-return projects

- landscape forestry covering the north shore of the Basin
- use funding constraints to advance multiple-benefit projects
- increase environmental literacy in the Basin
- prepare new generations for stewardship

### Threats

- difficulties and delays stemming from bureaucratic procedures
- lack of resources for land banking and sustainable community transactions
- decreasing funding for restoration
- waning commitment to difficult projects

### 2012-2017 Strategy 3: Effectively Manage Land and Assets

#### Strengths

- widespread sense of customer service
- ability to co-manage resources with sister agencies and organizations
- completion of comprehensive effort to provide signage for Conservancy lands
- regular fuels treatments and growing capacity
- markedly enhanced land management data system
- processing of license agreements and special uses

#### Weaknesses

- lack of an overarching plan
- weak description of link between urban lots and Basin-wide forest resilience
- increasing costs
- growing backlog of encroachments
- reduced inspection frequency (every two years)
- prolonged effort to complete land transfers with sister agencies
- insufficient staff

#### Opportunities

- obtain funding by better aligning federal and State priorities
- augment role in forestry and land management
- complete longstanding acquisition priorities
- pilot innovative approaches to planning, regulation, and operations
- partner with adjacent jurisdictions to management urban lots and other lands cohesively
- increase environmental literacy in the Basin (repeat)

#### Threats

- escalating costs
- insufficient funding to fulfill desired land management responsibilities and facility operations and maintenance
- the long time it takes for a forest to grow and show structurally significant changes, when policy and funding want to see rapid change within five years
- climate change

### 2012-2017 Strategy 4: Strengthen Conservancy Operations

#### Strengths

- widespread sense of significant systems improvements
- dedication of resources to professional development
- growing integration of land management and data systems

#### Weaknesses

- increasing dependency on volatile bond funding
- lack of sustainable funding
- lack of time available for professional development
- internal and external communications
- performance measures vary in precision, feasibility, and meaningfulness
- not-yet-complete integration of land management and data systems

#### Opportunities

- use strategic and operational plans to complement each other
- emphasize outcome-based performance measures
- enhance staff training and enhancement of collaborative capacity
- adopt financial innovations to make strategic initiatives easier
- integrate innovative technologies in land management and restoration
- define organizational cultural values
- improve website and social media presence
- improve integration of administrative and program staff
- ensure opportunities for upward career mobility

### Threats

- retirements and associated loss of staff and institutional knowledge
- insufficient time for staff training and development
- lack of sufficient internal communication on project or program vision and strategy (repeat)
- lack of sufficient internal communication for smooth operations
- lack of sufficient internal coordination on complex contracts (repeat)

### External Threats

- inaccessibility and less-than-welcoming atmosphere for lower-income populations in California
- dearth of affordable housing
- perennial need for conflict resolution among agencies
- statewide appreciation of and interest in the Basin less does not match high rates of visitorship
- gaps in statewide and State Legislature understanding of Conservancy role, importance, and achievements



Photo: Nick Spannagel

# Appendix 3

## Risks Analysis and Mitigation

In the context of this Plan, risk consists of the probability that an undesirable event will occur and disrupt implementation of the Plan. This appendix identifies risks associated with enacting the five goals. Common types of risk include environmental, economic and financial, political, and legal and regulatory. It also identifies how the Conservancy will attempt to mitigate these risks. Mitigating risk involves trying to minimize the probability of occurrence (through avoidance, analysis, etc.), monitoring trends, and rapidly responding to events.

Many risks recur across all five goals. This appendix therefore organizes information around common risk types, rather than around the strategies. For each type, a table illustrates which risks apply to which goals.

### 1. Environmental Risks

- A. Environmental disturbance such as a significant fire, insect or disease outbreak, flooding, snow and/or water drought, and climate change
  - a. Mitigation: (1) reference the CAAP vulnerability assessment and other studies in planning and preparation; (2) build flexibility and adaptation into management; (3) monitor implementation and effectiveness of activities
- B. Project design does not perform as anticipated
  - a. Mitigation: monitor project effectiveness and manage adaptively
- C. High amount of recreational use impacts lands, resources, and facilities
  - a. Mitigation: promote recreational planning that anticipates and tracks trends, and innovates accordingly
- D. Lack of suitable property stock for land acquisition and land banking
  - a. Mitigation: employ skilled dealmakers to maximize limited opportunities

Table 4: Applicability of Environmental Risks to Strategies

Risk	Goal 1 Steward Conservancy Lands and Protect Basin Communities from Wildfire	Goal 2 Restore the Resilience of Basin Forests and Watersheds	Goal 3 Provide Public Access and Outdoor Recreation for All Communities	Goal 4 Foster Basin-wide Climate Change Adaptation & Sustainable Communities	Goal 5 Strive for Organizational Learning and Excellence
A. Environmental disturbance	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
B. Project design performance	✓	✓			✓
C. High amount of recreational use	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
D. Lack of suitable property stock			✓	✓	✓

## 2. Economic and Financial Risks

- A. Insufficient funding and revenue to sustainably meet acquisition, operations and maintenance (O&M), project, program, or staff costs. Internal sources of such risk include a looming increase in O&M obligations; facility aging; the need to redesign facilities or augment services in light of climate impacts; land transfer obligations; and rising and compounding encroachment resolution costs. External sources of risk include rising Basin real estate values; the complexity of land acquisition and land banking transactions; fluctuations in State and federal priorities, budgets, and grant-making; global market volatility; and climate change.
  - a. Mitigation: (1) analyze cost projections regularly; (2) implement Financial Sustainability Principles; (3) build diversity and redundancy into signature project funding strategies; (4) integrate climate planning across programs; (5) employ skilled dealmakers to maximize limited opportunities
- B. Liability for a fire on Conservancy lands
  - a. Mitigation: (1) adhere to latest State fire safety regulations; (2) inspect Conservancy properties annually at minimum
- C. Change in State or federal fiscal procedures or requirements
  - a. Mitigation: rapidly assess and respond to fiscal and operational impacts to the Conservancy

Table 5: Applicability of Economic and Financial Risks to Strategies

<b>Risk</b>	<b>Goal 1</b> Steward Conservancy Lands and Protect Basin Communities from Wildfire	<b>Goal 2</b> Restore the Resilience of Basin Forests and Watersheds	<b>Goal 3</b> Provide Public Access and Outdoor Recreation for All Communities	<b>Goal 4</b> Foster Basin-wide Climate Change Adaptation & Sustainable Communities	<b>Goal 5</b> Strive for Organizational Learning and Excellence
A. Insufficient funding and revenue	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
B. Liability for fire	✓	✓			
C. Change in State or federal fiscal procedures					✓

### 3. Political Risks

- A. Disagreements with peer agencies, stakeholders, or the public over the best policy, project, and programmatic choices and decisions
  - a. Mitigation: (1) communicate early and often; (2) clearly explain rationales for decisions; (3) uphold public participation standards; (4) pursue good faith, interest-based negotiations; (5) measure and report on performance
- B. Liability for a fire on Conservancy lands (same as Risk 1-A)
  - a. Mitigation: same as for Risk 1-A
- C. Decline in Lake clarity
  - a. Mitigation: acknowledge the non-linear dynamism and uncertainty inherent in complex adaptive systems, and the need for corresponding humility about the ability to control nature
- D. Sensitivity around housing policy, availability, and affordability
  - a. Mitigation: same as for Risk 3-A

Table 6: Applicability of Political Risks to Strategies

Risk	Goal 1 Steward Conservancy Lands and Protect Basin Communities from Wildfire	Goal 2 Restore the Resilience of Basin Forests and Watersheds	Goal 3 Provide Public Access and Outdoor Recreation for All Communities	Goal 4 Foster Basin-wide Climate Change Adaptation & Sustainable Communities	Goal 5 Strive for Organizational Learning and Excellence
A. Disagreements	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
B. Liability for a fire (repeat)	✓	✓			✓
C. Decline in Lake clarity		✓			✓
D. Sensitivity around housing				✓	✓

### 4. Regulatory and Legal Risks

- A. Difficulty building consensus over the development of regulations
  - a. Mitigation: same as for Risk 3-A
- B. Complexity, overlap, and potential conflict between numerous Basin, federal, and state laws
  - a. Mitigation: (1) ensure professional compliance training; (2) provide managerial oversight; (3) implement regulatory compliance monitoring plans
- C. Financial and staff resource costs of litigation, including encroachment resolution
  - a. Mitigation: carefully weigh risks and costs when prioritizing specific cases and making litigation decisions
- D. Federal changes in environmental budgeting and policy including, for example, the National Environmental Policy Act, Endangered Species Act, Roadless Area Conservation Rule, Clean Power Plan, and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s legal authority to regulate greenhouse gas emissions
  - a. Mitigation: (1) track federal policy deliberations; (2) obtain professional advice regarding how to integrate in Conservancy decision-making, when applicable

Table 7: Applicability of Regulatory and Legal Risks to Strategies

Risk	Goal 1 Steward Conservancy Lands and Protect Basin Communities from Wildfire	Goal 2 Restore the Resilience of Basin Forests and Watersheds	Goal 3 Provide Public Access and Outdoor Recreation for All Communities	Goal 4 Foster Basin-wide Climate Change Adaptation & Sustainable Communities	Goal 5 Strive for Organizational Learning and Excellence
A. Difficulty building consensus over regulations	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
B. Complexity, overlap, and conflict of laws	✓	✓			✓
C. Litigation costs	✓				✓
D. Federal budgeting and policy changes	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓



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