

### **Tahoe Resource Conservation District Partnership Update**

The California Tahoe Conservancy (Conservancy) and the Tahoe Resource Conservation District (Tahoe RCD) have a strong partnership that began in the late 1980s. Tahoe RCD is one of the few conservation districts in California that focuses solely on environmental protection and restoration, and its mission aligns closely with the Conservancy's. In addition to managing land, Tahoe RCD specializes in fostering fire-adapted communities, controlling and preventing aquatic invasive species (AIS), conducting wildlife and botanical surveys and monitoring, and cultivating land stewardship. Tahoe RCD provides Basinwide leadership in these areas and continues to expand its partnership with the Conservancy.

Today Tahoe RCD provides a variety of land management, restoration, and forestry services for the Conservancy through a joint powers agreement completed in 2011. Through the "Tahoe Conservation Partnership," seasonal crews implement property maintenance, land stewardship, habitat protection and restoration, and forest health projects on Conservancy land. Tahoe RCD staff also provides special expertise such as wildlife and botanical surveys, storm water and ecological monitoring, and geographic information systems (GIS) mapping and analyses.

Together the Conservancy and Tahoe RCD also collaboratively lead Basinwide and landscape-scale initiatives and projects by contributing funding, expertise, and staffing. Recent examples of this collaborative work include:

- **Tahoe Fire and Fuels Team (TFFT) coordination and outreach:** Conservancy staff provides overall management and ongoing support to several TFFT interagency teams, including planning and data management, operations, and public information. In parallel Tahoe RCD and the University of Nevada Cooperative Extension lead the Tahoe Network of Fire Adapted Communities Program that connects residents and fire districts to create defensible space and increase resilience.
- **AIS control:** Tahoe RCD and the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency (TRPA) lead the Lake Tahoe Basin's (Basin) AIS prevention and control programs. For many years Tahoe RCD has used Conservancy grants to implement projects that control AIS on the California side of Lake Tahoe. The Conservancy, Tahoe RCD, and the TRPA recently developed the AIS Action Agenda for the Basin to strategically guide and fund such projects over the next ten years. Tahoe RCD is using Conservancy funding to prepare federal, state, and regional environmental documents to increase the pace and scale of aquatic invasive fish and plant control projects.

- **Upper Truckee River restoration:** For two decades the Conservancy and Tahoe RCD have joined with several land managers—the City of South Lake Tahoe; El Dorado County; USDA Forest Service, Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit; and California Department of Parks and Recreation—to restore the Upper Truckee River. The Upper Truckee River passes through the Basin’s largest wetland and is the most significant source of fine sediment that diminishes lake clarity.
- **Johnson Meadow acquisition and restoration:** In 2017 Tahoe RCD leveraged substantial Conservancy funding to acquire Johnson Meadow, the largest remaining privately owned parcel in the Upper Truckee River corridor. Conservancy staff is providing technical assistance to Tahoe RCD staff, including management strategies and restoration planning recommendations.
- **Polaris Creek and wetlands restoration:** Tahoe RCD used Conservancy grant funding to study the feasibility of restoring Polaris Creek and the surrounding wetlands, located north of Tahoe City. The project will restore historical wetlands and will potentially also improve outdoor recreation access by relocating recreation amenities, such as ball fields and a campground, from Pomin Park to a nearby location (not yet determined).
- **Enhanced storm water resource planning:** With Conservancy funding, Tahoe RCD analyzed and recommended improvements to water quality performance measures. The pilot study clarified and strengthened the links between project actions and resulting environmental benefits. The study will help inform how Basin partners use and define other Lake Tahoe Environmental Improvement Program performance measures.

The Conservancy and Tahoe RCD are exploring opportunities to further advance state priorities, including wildfire prevention, forest health and resilience, climate change adaptation, and equitable public access to open space and recreation. The strong partnership creates planning, operational, and financial efficiencies, and increases staffing and administrative capacity. This in turn promotes long-term organizational sustainability and also helps offset increasing dependence on state and federal grant funding. The partnership promotes all five of the Conservancy’s Strategic Plan goals: 1) stewarding Conservancy lands and protecting Basin communities from wildfire; 2) restoring the resilience of Basin forests and watersheds; 3) providing public access and outdoor recreation for all communities; 4) fostering Basinwide climate change adaptation and sustainable communities; and 5) striving for organizational learning and excellence.

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