

FISCAL YEAR 2021/22 PROGRAM AUTHORIZATION

Recommended Action: Adopt Resolution 20-06-07 (Attachment 1) authorizing program expenditures of up to \$3,938,000 for fiscal year (FY) 2021/22.

Executive Summary: Staff requests Board authorization of up to \$3,938,000 in expenditures from existing funding sources for California Tahoe Conservancy (Conservancy) program activities during FY 2021/22 (the Program Authorization). The Program Authorization allows Conservancy staff to enter into necessary contracts to support day-to-day Conservancy program operations and allows for the initiation of work as program needs arise. The precise Conservancy expenditures will depend on the enactment of the Governor's Budget and specific Conservancy priorities established throughout the fiscal year, but will not exceed the total amount authorized. The Program Authorization advances Goals 1 through 5 of the Conservancy's Strategic Plan and each program's priorities, as described below.

Location: Program and project activities throughout the California side of the Lake Tahoe Basin (Basin).

Fiscal Summary: The requested FY 2021/22 authorization is \$3,938,000 from state operational and capital funding sources (such as Propositions [Prop.] 12, 40, 50, 68, and 84, Habitat Conservation Fund, Environmental License Plate Fund, Tahoe Conservancy Fund, Lake Tahoe Conservancy Account, and the General Fund).

Last fall, the Conservancy submitted a proposed budget to the California Department of Finance and the California Natural Resources Agency. The Governor's proposed Budget for FY 2021/22 included most of the Conservancy's proposals. To date, the Legislature is still preparing a final budget. Once the Governor's Budget is enacted, funding will be available for the new fiscal year, starting July 1, 2021 (see Attachment 2).

Overview

History

The Conservancy's 2018-2023 Strategic Plan outlines the goals and strategies for how the Conservancy will fulfill its mission to lead California's efforts to restore and

enhance the extraordinary natural and recreational resources of the Basin. The Conservancy uses the Strategic Plan to guide its work and prepare annual operational plans, which provide detailed steps for program implementation. The Conservancy Strategic Plan goals are:

Goal 1 – Steward Conservancy Lands and Protect Basin Communities from Wildfire

The Conservancy owns and manages nearly 4,700 parcels, totaling around 6,500 acres, including thousands of quarter-acre lots within the Basin’s urban areas. These parcels provide open space, water quality, and recreational benefits, and significantly reduce the potential level of development in the Basin. The Conservancy safeguards people and the environment by managing Conservancy land for multiple uses and benefits.

Goal 2 – Restore the Resilience of Basin Forests and Watersheds

The Conservancy plays a critical role in helping Basin partners plan and implement watershed restoration projects, including wildlife, stream environment, and storm water quality improvements, and removal of aquatic invasive species (AIS). The Conservancy also collaboratively leads landscape initiatives that work across land ownerships and jurisdictions to increase the scale, pace, comprehensiveness, and efficiency of forest and watershed restoration in the Basin.

Goal 3 – Provide Public Access and Outdoor Recreation for All Communities

The Basin is one of the United States’ premier summer and winter recreation destinations. The Conservancy supports public access and outdoor recreation projects for all communities to provide a wide variety of benefits, including open space, disadvantaged community access, shoreline access, community health and well-being, community connectivity, wildlife viewing, and habitat and water quality protection.

Goal 4 – Foster Basinwide Climate Change Adaptation and Sustainable Communities

The Conservancy addresses climate impacts by restoring aging developed properties on environmentally sensitive lands; transferring or leasing vacant Conservancy land in town centers to support housing, multi-modal transportation, and economic development; and acquiring remaining private properties in roadless subdivisions to remove the threat of development.

Goal 5 – Strive for Organizational Learning and Excellence

The Conservancy’s operational plans provide the organizational backbone for its programs and investments by guiding how day-to-day tasks and project work contribute to Strategic Plan goals. The Conservancy also fills key vacancies, provides professional development and mentorship, and upgrades its financial, recordkeeping, and other support systems to improve the accountability, transparency, and cost effectiveness of its programs.

Background

Since 1988, the Board has delegated annual authority to the Executive Director to enter into contracts for services needed to support Conservancy goals and programs. The specific activities covered under each annual authorization change depending on the needs of the Conservancy, the funds available, and the priorities for a given year. These authorizations have consistently allowed staff to carry out the daily management of Conservancy land and facilities and support Conservancy goals, while retaining the authority of the Board to approve projects.

Toward that end, the recommended action does not authorize individual project implementation. This Program Authorization is solely a tool to allow staff to enter into contracts for its day-to-day operations to manage Conservancy lands; coordinate and collaborate with partners; engage consultant and contract services; and analyze feasibility for potential future projects. The Program Authorization supports FY 2021/22 program priorities and goals, as outlined below.

Land Management:

Through the Land Management Program, Conservancy staff and the Tahoe Resource Conservation District (Tahoe RCD) crews inspect, restore, and protect the Conservancy's nearly 4,700 parcels. In addition, the Land Management Program operates 11 facilities, including six popular beaches, and the largest wetland in the Basin, the Upper Truckee Marsh. It also provides public outreach and education at high-use sites. Over the next fiscal year, the Conservancy will work to accomplish the following:

1. Inspect, maintain, and restore, Conservancy parcels and roads for public safety, water quality, forestry, habitat, and recreational purposes.
2. Implement the Conservancy's Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) transition plan and associated upgrades.
3. Resolve a subset of high priority encroachments on Conservancy lands from a backlog of more than 500 encroachments.
4. Continue co-managing Van Sickle Bi-State Park with the Nevada Division of State Parks and ensure the park is well maintained and safe for public use.
5. Continue developing a land management strategy to manage Conservancy lands more effectively and efficiently.

Tahoe Livable Communities:

The Conservancy addresses climate impacts and supports housing and sustainable compact development through its Tahoe Livable Communities (TLC) Program. The TLC Program acquires and restores aging developed properties on environmentally sensitive lands, and retires or transfers the development rights to town centers. It also sells, leases, and exchanges vacant Conservancy land in town centers to support housing,

multi-modal transportation, and economic development; and acquires remaining private properties in roadless subdivisions. Over the next fiscal year the Conservancy will work to accomplish the following:

1. Partner with state, regional, and local agencies to develop housing and sustainable development projects on Conservancy asset lands in the Basin.
2. Acquire environmentally sensitive lands and developed properties to prevent further degradation of water quality and promote development in town centers.
3. Continue to transfer coverage and marketable rights pursuant to Tahoe Regional Planning Agency (TRPA), local, community, and state planning goals.
4. Integrate interdivisional priorities in forestry, watershed, land management, racial equity planning, and climate adaptation with TLC program goals to promote multiple-benefit projects.
5. Continue to partner with the Strategic Growth Council to coordinate and integrate state agency investments and policies in the Basin, with a particular focus on sustainable communities and climate change adaptation programs.

Community Forestry:

Within the nearly 4,700 Conservancy-owned parcels is approximately 5,500 acres of forested land, the majority of which is located within and adjacent to communities and infrastructure. The Community Forestry Program improves forest health and reduces risks from wildfire on these Conservancy lands. On adjacent lands, staff coordinates with fire agencies and other land managers for projects consistent with the Lake Tahoe Basin Forest Action Plan. This complementary work enhances community wildfire protection and reduces risks to Conservancy lands. Over the next fiscal year, the Conservancy will work to accomplish the following:

1. Thin vegetation and use prescribed fire on Conservancy lands within neighborhoods and in the wildland-urban interface to protect Basin communities from wildfire and improve forest health.
2. Mitigate hazard trees and other threats to public safety on Conservancy lands.
3. Coordinate with utility companies and water providers to abate hazards to infrastructure on Conservancy lands.
4. Plan, prioritize, and coordinate vegetation thinning, prescribed fire, and capacity building work with partners of the Tahoe Fire and Fuels Team.
5. Assist Basin partners with forestry work that helps achieve the goals of the Lake Tahoe Basin Forest Action Plan by providing leadership, technical expertise, and resources.

Landscape Forestry:

The Conservancy and its partners are increasingly shifting to large-landscape, multi-jurisdictional, multiple-benefit projects to more rapidly and comprehensively achieve

resilience goals in the Basin. The Landscape Forestry Program convenes and collaboratively leads multiple landscape-wide partnerships that create efficiencies of scope and scale. In addition, the Landscape Forestry Program works to build capacity for forest management Basinwide. Over the next fiscal year, the Conservancy will work to accomplish the following:

1. Collaboratively lead and support the Lake Tahoe West Restoration Partnership, a collaborative effort to restore the resilience of forests, watersheds, and communities on 59,000 acres of Lake Tahoe's west shore.
2. Collaboratively lead and support the Tahoe-Central Sierra Initiative, which is restoring forest resilience on approximately 2.4 million acres by strategically linking forest restoration collaboratives.
3. Apply scientific advancements, new technologies, and innovative approaches to forest restoration.
4. Survey, inventory, and monitor sensitive biological resources.
5. Continue developing Conservancy forest management standards and guidelines, protocols, and data management systems that safeguard people and the environment, and create consistency and operational efficiencies.
6. Collaboratively lead and participate in select state and regional initiatives to increase the pace and scale of forest health projects, strategically use prescribed fire, expand the restoration workforce, and increase biomass utilization.

Watershed Restoration, Recreation, and Water Quality:

The Conservancy improves water quality, enhances wildlife habitat, protects biodiversity, sequesters carbon, expands public access, and restores climate resilience through the Watershed Restoration, Recreation, and Water Quality Program (Watershed Program). The Watershed Program leads and supports major watershed restoration and recreation projects. It also partners with other agencies to plan, fund, and implement water quality and public access improvements throughout the Basin. Over the next fiscal year, the Conservancy will work to accomplish the following:

1. Plan and implement watershed restoration and recreation activities on Conservancy lands.
2. Collaboratively lead and support the Greater Upper Truckee River Watershed Restoration Partnership, which is linking a variety of resource protection and restoration, recreation, and transportation efforts within the region.
3. Coordinate with Lake Tahoe Environmental Improvement Program (EIP) partners on work to restore, enhance, and protect stream environment zones, wildlife habitat, and storm water quality.
4. Coordinate with EIP partners to advance plans that enhance public access, neighborhood connectivity, and outdoor recreation for all communities.
5. Coordinate with EIP partners to implement the AIS Action Agenda, which sets short- and long-term management targets to control AIS in Lake Tahoe.

6. Support the Tahoe Science Advisory Council in its work to provide management-relevant science that informs policy and anticipates critical or emerging issues relevant to lake water quality and ecosystem health.

Climate and Biodiversity:

The Conservancy's Climate and Biodiversity Program integrates biodiversity conservation, climate change adaptation, and greenhouse gas emissions reductions throughout the Conservancy's work. The Climate and Biodiversity Program also supports Basin partners by coordinating with state agencies and providing updated climate science to inform planning restoration and ongoing management. Over the next fiscal year, the Conservancy will work to accomplish the following:

1. Complete the Lake Tahoe Climate Adaptation Action Portfolio (CAAP), which is the last component of an integrated package of guidance documents developed with partners to accelerate how agencies adapt resource management, infrastructure, and the economy to climate change in the Basin.
2. Engage partners and collaborate with scientists to advance science that supports restoration, adaptation, and biodiversity conservation.
3. Support Conservancy staff in further integrating biodiversity and adaptation science and adaptive practices in other Conservancy programs.
4. Assist Basin partners that are planning and leading efforts aligned with the CAAP by contributing technical expertise to analyses, modeling, and monitoring.

Organizational Learning and Excellence:

The Conservancy must ensure that its staff has the requisite skills and resources to continue accomplishing innovative and ambitious programmatic work. The Conservancy must also continue to work closely with fellow state agencies to enact emerging gubernatorial and legislative mandates, and fulfill its responsibility to represent the State in the EIP. Over the next fiscal year, the Conservancy will work to accomplish the following:

1. Invest in professional development and workforce health to increase staff autonomy and leadership, and improve work products and efficiency.
2. Further integrate fiscal and budgeting, legal, and information technology within programs.
3. Improve the Conservancy's ability to achieve State and Basin mandates by aligning the work of fellow state agencies in the Basin.
4. Conduct racial equity action planning and community engagement to achieve racial equity in the Conservancy's operations, investments, and policies.
5. Support external communications to help the public learn about and engage in the Conservancy's programs and projects.

Detailed Description of Recommended Action

1. Major Elements and/or Steps of the Recommended Action

This authorization allows staff to expend up to \$3,938,000 in FY 2021/22 for various program activities. Such activities may include the Conservancy's day-to-day operations to manage Conservancy lands, coordinate and collaborate with partners, engage consultant and contract services, and analyze feasibility for potential future projects. Staff will return to the Board for project-specific authorization as needed.

The allocations described below reflect Conservancy staff's anticipated use of the requested funds. Staff bases these estimates on current needs and opportunities. Staff may adjust the actual allocation or expenditure of funds to meet changing circumstances and respond to emerging opportunities while remaining within the overall scope of the Program Authorization.

The projected program allocation would provide up to the following amounts to support ongoing work and collaboration with partners in each of the Conservancy's programs:

- \$2,023,000 for Land Management to maintain Conservancy lands.
- \$285,000 for TLC to operate the land bank, and plan and assess the feasibility of future projects.
- \$810,000 for Community Forestry to manage forests on Conservancy lands, and plan future projects.
- \$310,000 for Landscape Forestry to survey, inventory, and monitor resources; conduct forest management research; and plan future forest management projects.
- \$205,000 for Watershed to survey, inventory, and monitor resources; conduct watershed and water quality research; and plan future restoration and recreation projects.
- \$100,000 for Climate and Biodiversity to conduct climate and biodiversity research.
- \$205,000 for the Conservancy's Organizational Excellence interdivisional work including engaging with communities, providing training to employees, developing communications materials, and purchasing supplies.

Budget Authorization	FY 2021/22 Funding
Land Management	\$2,023,000
Tahoe Livable Communities	\$285,000
Community Forestry	\$810,000
Landscape Forestry	\$310,000
Watershed Restoration, Recreation, and Water Quality	\$205,000
Climate and Biodiversity	\$100,000
Organizational Learning and Excellence	\$205,000
Total	\$3,938,000

Authority

Consistency with the Conservancy’s Enabling Legislation

Program Authorization implementation is consistent with the Conservancy’s enabling legislation. Specifically, this authorization allows the Conservancy to expend funds necessary for the activities described above. These activities are authorized by the Conservancy’s enabling legislation, specifically: Government Code section 66906.8 authorizes the Conservancy to select and hire consultants or contractors to provide services necessary to achieve the purposes of the Conservancy, including protection of the natural environment at Lake Tahoe. Government Code section 66907.9 authorizes the Conservancy to initiate, negotiate, and participate in agreements for the management of land under its ownership and control with local agencies, nonprofit organizations, individuals, corporate entities, partnerships or other entities. Government Code section 66907.10 authorizes the Conservancy to improve and develop acquired lands for a variety of purposes, including protection of the natural environment, protection of public access and recreational facilities, preservation of wildlife habitat areas, and facilitation of access to and management of Conservancy-owned lands.

Consistency with the Conservancy’s Strategic Plan

The recommended activities are consistent with all the Conservancy’s 2018-2023 Strategic Plan goals and strategies.

Consistency with the Conservancy’s Program Guidelines

The recommended action is consistent with the Board’s existing policy direction, including the Special Use Guidelines, Forestry Guidelines, Grant Guidelines, and Land Transfer Guidelines.

Consistency with External Authorities

The recommended funds allow the Conservancy to conduct feasibility and conceptual analysis, which may result in projects that fulfill EIP, sustainability, and other Conservancy and statewide resource and environmental objectives. The land management activities are consistent with the EIP because they implement EIP project #06.01.03.0002 - California Tahoe Conservancy Land Management Program and

facilitate the implementation of other individual EIP projects related to forestry and restoration.

Compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act

The Program Authorization does not involve any commitment to any specific activity which has the potential to result in either a direct physical change in the environment or a reasonably foreseeable indirect physical change in the environment. The Program Authorization is therefore not a “project” within the meaning of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). Staff will evaluate any individual projects, however, prior to implementation to determine the appropriate level of CEQA review.

List of Attachments

Attachment 1 – Resolution 21-06-07

Attachment 2 – Fiscal Year 2021/22 Budget

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