

SENATE BILL 630 PUBLIC ACCESS GRANTS

Recommended Action: Adopt Resolutions 22-03-04.1 and 22-03-04.2 (Attachments 1 and 2) authorizing the following two grants:

1. A grant of up to \$130,800 to the North Tahoe Public Utility District (NTPUD) for public facility improvements at the Tahoe Vista Recreation Area (TVRA); and
2. A grant of up to \$75,000 to the Tahoe City Public Utility District (TCPUD) to replace a restroom at the Lake Forest Boat Ramp (LFBR).

Executive Summary: The recommended actions will authorize two grants to enhance public access at Lake Tahoe by (1) rehabilitating the scenic overlook and associated access path at the Tahoe Vista Recreation Area and installing new kayak and paddleboard racks at the site; and (2) replacing the restroom at the Lake Forest Boat Ramp. Publicly owned facilities such as beaches, boat ramps, and public marinas provide public access to Lake Tahoe. Maintaining and improving access to these facilities is important, particularly to ensure access to Lake Tahoe for historically underserved communities. The two grants, funded by the Lake Tahoe Science and Lake Improvement Account (Account), advance both the California Natural Resources Agency's "Access for All" initiative and the California Tahoe Conservancy's (Conservancy) Strategic Plan Goal 3 by expanding opportunities for the public to enjoy California's open spaces and improving community access to outdoor recreation. The grants also continue the Conservancy's commitment to supporting Lake Tahoe Basin (Basin) partners by investing in priority recreation and public access projects. Upon Board authorization, Conservancy staff will work with both NTPUD and TCPUD to execute needed agreements and support project implementation.

Location: The TVRA is in Placer County at 7010 North Lake Boulevard in Tahoe Vista (Attachment 3). The LFBR is also located in Placer County at 2500 Lake Forest Road in Tahoe City (Attachment 4).

Fiscal Summary: Combined, the grants will allocate up to \$205,800 from the Account.

Overview

History

The California State Lands Commission collects fees for public use of state lands at Lake Tahoe, most commonly for use of the lakebed by pier supports and buoy anchors. In 2013, Senate Bill (SB) 630 mandated that those fees be deposited into the Account to support a bi-state science advisory council and nearshore management.

As one of three recipients of Account funding, the Conservancy directs resources toward aquatic invasive species control and public lake access projects. To date, the Conservancy has awarded nearly \$3 million in Account grants. Most of those funds (approximately \$2.2 million) have been invested in aquatic invasive plant control while the remainder support lake access projects. This recommended action continues the Conservancy's commitment to investing Account funds in lake access facilities.

Tahoe Vista Recreation Area Site Improvements

The TVRA is the NTPUD's primary lakefront recreation facility. The site provides the public with year-round access to Lake Tahoe to swim, fish, kayak, paddleboard, and launch and retrieve motorized vessels. The TVRA serves as a Lake Tahoe Water Trail trailhead, providing a sheltered site to launch non-motorized vessels, with parking, restrooms, picnic tables, and drinking water.

Since 2000, NTPUD has completed a series of improvements that have modernized the facility and enhanced the public's experience. Site improvements in 2006, funded by a \$1.4 million Conservancy grant, included new public restrooms, bike racks, a plaza with interpretive displays, an improved boat launch, and reconfigured lakeside parking with storm water treatment. In 2012, NTPUD led further work adding 65 parking and trailer spaces on its property across the street along with a bus pullout, a transportation shelter, and additional landscaping.

NTPUD did not complete any upgrades to the scenic overlook and associated access trail as part of its previous work. The trail is not currently accessible in accordance with Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) standards, restricting access for some visitors. The scenic overlook and associated picnic area are dilapidated and severely eroded.

Lake Forest Boat Ramp Restroom Replacement

The LFBR is a popular public lake access facility on Lake Tahoe's north shore near Tahoe City. The site is directly adjacent to California Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) land, also managed by the TCPUD. The LFBR and DPR properties are accessed through a shared entrance road and together offer public amenities that include a youth athletic field, playground, picnic area, pier, boat ramp, parking lot, and direct access to Lake Tahoe. The combined public facilities promote an outdoor recreation opportunity accessible to a diverse visitor demographic. These public amenities are free (with the exception of a boat launch fee), are open year-round, and are conveniently located near public transit.

NTPUD last renovated the existing restroom at LFBR in the early 1990s.

Detailed Description of Recommended Action

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

Tahoe Vista Recreation Area Site Improvements

Upon authorization, the NTPUD will repair the TVRA scenic overlook and associated path to ensure ADA compliance. The NTPUD will also install benches, picnic tables, and new lockable kayak and paddleboard racks. Finally, the project includes installing additional interpretive signage to educate visitors about Lake Tahoe.

This grant leverages a \$214,200 grant from Placer County's Tourism Master Plan program and nearly \$200,000 of in-kind project support from the NTPUD.

Lake Forest Boat Ramp Restroom Replacement

Upon authorization, the TCPUD will remove the existing restroom and install a prefabricated building on the existing restroom footprint with upgraded materials and construction that will be ADA compliant. The new public restroom will include indoor plumbing and hydronic floor heating, single occupancy use, vandal resistant locking mechanisms, and refillable water stations.

This grant leverages \$262,000 in TCPUD project funding and \$178,000 in DPR grant funding.

2. Overall Context and Benefits

Tahoe Vista Recreation Area Site Improvements

The TVRA is frequently used by residents and visitors alike. This grant will allow NTPUD to enhance site access and facilitate use by recreational users with disabilities. Half of the new kayak and paddleboard racks will be available for residents while the other half will be reserved for the Boys and Girls Club of North Lake Tahoe to support summer recreation programming. These enhancements will improve community access to and foster enjoyment, understanding, and stewardship of Lake Tahoe.

Lake Forest Boat Ramp Restroom Replacement

The existing restroom facility cannot be used during the winter season and is not accessible in accordance with ADA standards. This grant will promote year-round enjoyment of the LFBR by replacing the existing, seasonal restroom with an upgraded, year-round, and ADA-compliant restroom.

3. Schedule for the Recommended Action

Tahoe Vista Recreation Area Site Improvements

NTPUD plans to construct improvements at the TVRA during the 2022 construction season.

Lake Forest Boat Ramp Restroom Replacement

TCPUD plans to replace the LFBR restroom during the 2022 construction season.

Financing

The two grants will be funded by the Account, totaling up to \$205,800.

Authority

Consistency with the Conservancy's Enabling Legislation

The recommended actions are consistent with the Conservancy's enabling legislation. Specifically, Government Code section 66907.7 authorizes the Conservancy to award grants to local public agencies for purposes consistent with its mission.

Consistency with the Conservancy's Strategic Plan

The recommended actions are consistent with Strategic Plan Goal 3: Provide public access and outdoor recreation for all communities.

Consistency with the Conservancy's Program Guidelines

The recommended actions are consistent with the Conservancy's 2009 Public Access and Recreation Program Guidelines. The two grants advance the program objectives to increase public access and recreational opportunities and to provide a range of access opportunities.

Consistency with External Authorities

The recommended actions are consistent with the authority given to the Conservancy through SB 630 pursuant to Public Resources Code section 6717.6.1. The Conservancy engaged the SB 630 stakeholder group to discuss these grants and the reasons for their selection.

Compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act

Pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines (Cal. Code Regs., tit. 14, § 15000 et seq.), certain classes of activities are statutorily exempt from CEQA or are exempt because they have been determined by the Secretary of the California Natural Resources Agency to have no significant effect on the environment. Staff has evaluated these projects and have found them to be exempt under CEQA for the reasons explained below. Notices of exemption (NOEs) have been prepared for both projects (Attachments 5 and 6). If the Board approves the grants, staff will file the NOEs with the State Clearinghouse pursuant to CEQA Guidelines section 15062.

Tahoe Vista Recreation Area Site Improvements

The TVRA Site Improvements Project qualifies for a categorical exemption under CEQA Guidelines section 15301 (Existing Facilities) and section 15303 (New Construction of Small Facilities). Each discrete portion of the Project is clearly and completely covered by one of the categorical exemptions listed above. The Project is exempt under CEQA Guidelines section 15301 because it consists of repairing or making minor alterations to a scenic overlook platform and access trail. The Project is exempt under CEQA Guidelines section 15303 because it consists of the installation of new, small facilities, including benches, interpretive signage, picnic tables, and lockable kayak and paddleboard racks.

Lake Forest Boat Ramp Restroom Replacement

The LFBR Restroom Replacement Project qualifies for a categorical exemption under CEQA Guidelines section 15302 (Replacement or Reconstruction) because it consists of the reconstruction of an existing public restroom where the new restroom will have substantially the same purpose and capacity as the existing restroom within the existing footprint.

List of Attachments

Attachment 1 – Resolution 22-03-04.1

Attachment 2 – Resolution 22-03-04.2

Attachment 3 – Tahoe Vista Recreation Area Site Improvements Project Map

Attachment 4 – Lake Forest Boat Ramp Restroom Replacement Project Map

Attachment 5 – Tahoe Vista Recreation Area Site Improvements Notice of Exemption

- Exhibit A – NOE Map

Attachment 6 – Lake Forest Boat Ramp Restroom Replacement Notice of Exemption

- Exhibit B – NOE Map

Conservancy Staff Contact

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