

Executive Director's Report

So far, this winter has taken a page from a climate vulnerability assessment that the Conservancy and our partners developed for the Lake Tahoe Basin in 2020: more extreme storms, with an increasing frequency of atmospheric rivers. Beyond lots of shoveling, the implications we saw include localized flooding and downed trees as well as disruptions to Basin transportation, electricity, and communications infrastructure.

There is no silver bullet to address such climate change impacts. But the Conservancy and our partners are collaborating on many projects to increase the resilience of Basin communities and natural resources to climate-driven effects. And we will be taking better measurements of our progress so we can prioritize the solutions that work best.

Jason Vasques, Executive Director
California Tahoe Conservancy

Program Updates

1. Land Management

Land Management Projects and Contracting: The Land Management Program continues to plan small-scale projects for the 2023 field season. Land Management projects include restoration and water quality protection, property and facility maintenance, open space lot forestry and fuel hazard reduction, and encroachment resolution on Conservancy land.

Seasonal Recreational Facilities: The Conservancy intends to open Tahoe Pines (Meyers) and Van Sickle Bi-State Park to vehicles for the season on May 1, conditions and weather dependent.

Land Management Strategies Request for Proposals and Rulemaking: In February, the Conservancy entered into a contract to explore the full complement of alternatives to achieve more efficient management of its lands, seeking a framework, process, and sequencing of steps to accomplish this goal. In addition, Conservancy staff is beginning the rulemaking process to propose and establish new regulations that would become incorporated into the California Code of Regulations. Potential regulations may include temporary closures on Conservancy lands and additional tools to address unauthorized vegetation removal. The Conservancy may look at developing further regulations to

address other potential land management issues in the future. Conservancy staff is currently initiating this process and will seek Board and public input.

2. Tahoe Livable Communities

Property Acquisitions: In January, the Conservancy updated its offer for the Motel 6 and Knox Johnson parcels (Parcels) in South Lake Tahoe. In addition, staff is taking steps for final acquisition approval by the California Public Works Board for the Parcels. Staff continues to explore other acquisition opportunities as they arise.

3. Community Forestry

Lake Tahoe Basin Forest Action Plan Update: To date, the Conservancy and its federal, tribal, state, and local partners have now completed nearly 11,000 acres of treatments towards their goal of treating all 22,000 acres of wildland-urban interface in the Basin by 2025. The partners originally set the goal in 2019 as part of the Lake Tahoe Basin Forest Action Plan.

Capacity Building: Conservancy staff is developing agreements with local fire protection districts to increase staffing and build project planning and management capacity at the local level. This increased capacity is critical for meeting Basin goals to increase pace and scale of forestry treatments.

4. Landscape Resilience

Capacity Building: The Conservancy is working with the Department of Conservation to amend a Regional Forest and Fire Capacity (RFFC) Program block grant to the Conservancy for an additional \$1.5 million. The Conservancy will use this funding to increase capacity in the Basin for forestry planning, implementation, and outreach and engagement. The Conservancy is working closely with the Washoe Tribe of Nevada and California to increase the Tribe's capacity with existing RFFC funding.

5. Watershed Restoration and Water Quality

Future Restoration Projects: Staff conducted feasibility planning for multiple potential future restoration projects, including at Ward, Carnelian, Trout, and Cold creeks; the Upper Truckee River near Sunset Stables; and future phases at the Upper Truckee Marsh. Staff anticipates that this planning will lead to future proposals for individual projects. Staff is coordinating with partners to secure external funding for these efforts.

6. Recreation and Public Access

Destination Stewardship Plan: Public and private sector organizations from the greater Tahoe region are developing a shared vision and stewardship plan to better manage outdoor recreation and visitation. Staff continued to work with partners developing the plan components, including scenario planning, funding strategies, and action steps.

7. Climate Adaptation and Biodiversity

Biodiversity: Staff continues to advance state initiatives on Pathways to 30x30, climate adaptation, and Nature-Based Solutions by integrating statewide guidance into Conservancy programs and projects. The Conservancy continues to work with state and regional partners on the latest science and participates in state and regional working groups on climate change, biodiversity, and 30x30.

Budget and Accounting

In January, Governor Gavin Newsom proposed a budget for Fiscal Year 2023/24. The proposed budget includes an outlook for a \$22.5 billion deficit. The Conservancy is working with the California Department of Finance and Natural Resources Agency to prepare for and navigate this situation.

For Fiscal Year 2022/23, the Conservancy continues to implement projects using \$5 million available in the Wildfire and Forest Health funding package, and \$6.125 million in the Nature-Based Solutions funding package to help implement the Pathways to 30x30 and Working Lands Climate Smart strategies and execute the Governor's Nature-Based Solutions agenda.

The 2022/23 budget includes baseline funding that covers a portion of the Conservancy's staffing and operations as well as use of general fund and existing bond funding for:

- Minor capital improvements (\$980,000), which includes small restoration projects on Conservancy land;
- Conceptual feasibility and planning (\$600,000) for initial watershed project planning;
- Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) upgrades (\$1,025,000) for planning and implementing updates to existing recreational sites to meet the Conservancy's ADA Transition Plan; and
- Opportunity Acquisitions (\$14,000,000) for acquiring lands in environmentally sensitive or significant resource areas.