

PUBLIC ACCESS AND RECREATION FOR ALL GRANTS

Recommended Actions: Adopt Resolutions 23-12-02 through 23-12-05 (Attachments 1.2, 2.2, 3.2 and 4.2), authorizing the following four grants:

1. Environmental Traveling Companions (ETC): Up to \$150,000 for the Youth LEAD and Shared Adventures Programs;
2. Lake Tahoe Waterman Foundation (Waterman): Up to \$84,000 for the Adaptive Paddling Program;
3. Tahoe Cross Country Ski Education Association (TCCSEA): Up to \$60,000 for the Las Chicas Program; and
4. Tahoe Rim Trail Association (TRTA): Up to \$115,000 to revitalize trailheads to enhance outdoor access on the Tahoe Rim Trail system.

Executive Summary: Staff recommends authorizing four separate grants to nonprofit organizations to improve equitable access to Lake Tahoe's beaches, trails, and mountains. Although Lake Tahoe is a world-class outdoor recreation destination, many people face economic, social, or physical barriers to accessing and enjoying its opportunities. In September 2022, the California Tahoe Conservancy (Conservancy) Board approved four recreation and access grants, which are currently underway. Building on the success of those grants, staff recommends four additional grants to improve equitable access by investing in programs and projects that serve people of all races, ethnicities, physical abilities, and backgrounds. Staff evaluated the applications under the Conservancy Grant Guidelines (Guidelines) and supplemental criteria to meet the State's Outdoors for All Strategy. In addition, staff evaluated the TRTA grant to meet Proposition 68 funding requirements. ETC, Waterman, and TCCSEA will support low- or no-cost opportunities for under-resourced people to have outdoor experiences, gain leadership skills, and experience the health benefits from spending time outdoors. The TRTA will expand inclusivity on the Tahoe Rim Trail system by supporting installation of new bilingual trailhead kiosks. Attached to this recommendation are separate, detailed project descriptions for each individual grant. The grants further Conservancy Strategic Plan Goals 1, 3, and 6, which prioritize stewarding Conservancy lands, opportunities for all people to access Lake Tahoe, and partnerships to promote diversity and inclusion, mentorship, and youth engagement and empowerment. Upon Board authorization, Conservancy staff will work with grantees to execute needed agreements and support project implementation.

Location: The four recommended projects are located throughout the California side of the Lake Tahoe Basin (Basin) in Placer and El Dorado Counties.

Fiscal Summary: The Conservancy will finance the ETC, Waterman, and TCCSEA grants with General Fund totaling \$294,000 and the TRTA grant with \$115,000 in Proposition 68 funding.

Overview

History

Access concerns exist in the Basin even though 86 percent of the lands are publicly owned. Many low-income and underrepresented people face significant economic, cultural, or physical barriers to accessing public lands. Many Californians lack the resources to make it to the Basin at all.

Recent studies shed light on equitable access issues at Lake Tahoe. Approximately 8 percent of adult residents have a disability; 30 percent of the residents are Black, Indigenous, and other people of color; and 9 percent of people live below the poverty line. Data also show that low-income families may need to travel farther distances to access one of the public beaches with free entry. Visitor surveys completed in 2022 show visitors feel less welcome at Lake Tahoe than at other popular outdoor recreation destinations nationwide. Unfortunately, this phenomenon exists in many outdoor spaces statewide, especially for people of color, people with disabilities, tribal members, and people who speak a language other than English.

Other barriers limiting access at Lake Tahoe can be economic (equipment, transportation, etc.), safety (knowing how to swim, having health insurance, language barriers in wayfinding signage, mental illness, etc.), social (feeling unsafe or unwelcome in majority white spaces, cultural differences, etc.), or physical (lack of accessibility for people with disabilities, physical fitness, etc.).

As a result, many people—both residents and visitors—are missing out on the health, community, and life-enhancing benefits of spending time outdoors at Lake Tahoe.

The Conservancy's recreation and access work has always focused on improving public access to Lake Tahoe's outdoors and recreational destinations through acquisitions and facility improvements, shared-use trails, and accessibility improvements. In 2022, the Conservancy expanded its public access work to help underrepresented people access the Lake and surrounding areas. That year the Conservancy Board authorized four grants to local nonprofit organizations that lead underserved youth on outdoor trips throughout the region. In just one year, Conservancy funding has helped more than 100 people participate in outdoor activities.

The recommended actions build from last year's success with another four projects that reduce a variety of access barriers to Lake Tahoe for underrepresented residents and non-residents alike.

Earlier this year, staff conducted outreach to eight organizations in the Basin and six outside of the Basin with programs focused on equitable access. Several organizations contacted staff to learn more. After reviewing eligibility further, staff deemed some organizations ineligible due to Conservancy statutory requirements related to nonprofits.

Staff evaluated each application based on requirements in the Guidelines and consistency with the Conservancy's Strategic Plan and California's Outdoors for All Strategy. Staff also evaluated the TRTA application for consistency with the funding directives in Proposition 68, such as expanding the use of multilingual and culturally appropriate materials.

Major Elements and/or Steps of the Recommended Actions

Attachments 1 through 4 provide details on each grant, including a project description, information on the grantee, expected benefits, budget, and schedule. A short summary of each grant is below.

- **ETC:** Funding supports two ETC programs. Under the first program, ETC works with under-resourced youth from the San Francisco Bay Area to provide an intensive 14- to 21-day backpacking, rafting, and kayaking course, which includes elements located at Lake Tahoe. Under the second program, ETC works with people with disabilities to provide a four-day kayaking trip at Emerald Bay.
- **Waterman:** Funding supports several programs for people with disabilities and under-resourced youth to paddle on Lake Tahoe. Waterman's programs occur at the Conservancy's Patton Landing Beach at Carnelian Bay.
- **TCCSEA:** Funding supports TCCSEA's Las Chicas Program. The TCCSEA provides a year-long course for local Latina youth focused on learning cross-country skiing and mountain biking skills, building community, and improving self-confidence alongside peers. The TCCSEA's programs include accessing trails located on the Conservancy's Dollar Property near Tahoe City.
- **TRTA:** Funding supports the TRTA's efforts to translate and install 13 new bilingual (English and Spanish) trailhead kiosks along the California side of the Tahoe Rim Trail. The new kiosks will feature trail information in English and Spanish, a short land acknowledgement recognizing Lake Tahoe as the homeland of the Washoe Tribe of Nevada and California, accessibility information about the nearby trail, and a QR code where users can find information in several additional languages.

Financing

The Conservancy will finance the ETC, Waterman, and TCCSEA grants with General Fund dollars, totaling up to \$294,000 and the TRTA grant with \$115,000 in Proposition 68 funding.

Conservancy resources leverage \$301,000 in additional funding from other grants, donors, and partners.

Project	Grantee	Leveraged Funding	Conservancy Funding
Youth LEAD and Shared Adventures Programs	Environmental Traveling Companions	\$145,000	\$150,000
Adaptive Paddling Program	Lake Tahoe Waterman Foundation	\$25,000	\$84,000
Las Chicas Program	Tahoe Cross Country Ski Education Association	\$53,000	\$60,000
Inclusive trailhead revitalization	Tahoe Rim Trail Association	\$78,000	\$115,000
Total		\$301,000	\$409,000

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 nonprofit organizations for purposes consistent with its mission.

Consistency with External Authorities

The four grants advance several strategies outlined in the California Outdoors for All Strategy, including:

- Share culturally diverse, relevant, and relatable stories and images of California's peoples and history through the programming, interpretive materials, art, and signage offered at outdoor spaces, cultural and historic places, and museums;
- Foster public appreciation of and connection to California's natural and cultural resources;
- Support improvements to language access for outdoor programming, educational materials, and staff at open spaces, cultural and historic places, and museums;
- Create adult- and youth-centered programming, including intergenerational opportunities, at outdoor spaces to inspire and build confidence across a broad range of recreational users and activities;
- Make information about California's parks and outdoor spaces easier to find and understand;
- Continue funding and exploring opportunities to expand grants that promote creative and affordable transportation options; and
- Prioritize partnerships with nonprofits that provide youth and families from underserved communities and people with disabilities with access to state lands through supervised programming.

The recommended actions also advance other state priorities such as the equitable access components of the California Pathways to 30x30 Strategy and the Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan for 2021-2025.

The recommended actions support Lake Tahoe Environmental Improvement Program action priority 03.01.01 to improve public access.

Compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act

Pursuant to California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines (Cal. Code Regs., tit. 14, § 1500 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. Each of the grants recommended for approval is for a distinct project to be carried out independently by the different grantees. Accordingly, staff evaluated each grant individually and has found each of them to be separate exempt projects under CEQA. The individual CEQA

determinations are discussed in attachments 1.1, 2.1, 3.1 and 4.1. Staff has prepared a notice of exemption for each grant, as found in Attachments 1.3, 2.3, 3.3 and 4.3.

List of Attachments

Environmental Traveling Companions

Attachment 1.1 – Project description, budget, and schedule

Attachment 1.2 – Resolution 23-12-02

Attachment 1.3 – Notice of Exemption

- Exhibit A – Location Map

Lake Tahoe Waterman Foundation

Attachment 2.1 – Project description, budget, and schedule

Attachment 2.2 – Resolution 23-12-03

Attachment 2.3 – Notice of Exemption

- Exhibit A – Location Map

Tahoe Cross Country Ski Education Association

Attachment 3.1 – Project description, budget, and schedule

Attachment 3.2 – Resolution 23-12-04

Attachment 3.3 – Notice of Exemption

- Exhibit A – Location Map

Tahoe Rim Trail Association

Attachment 4.1 – Project description, budget, and schedule

Attachment 4.2 – Resolution 23-12-05

Attachment 4.3 – Notice of Exemption

- Exhibit A – Location Map

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