

DRAFT

# Strategic Plan

2024–2029



# Table of Contents

Who We Are.....	2
Overview .....	5
Our Evolution .....	10
How We Work.....	12
How to Read Our Plan .....	19
<b>GOAL: Provide Recreational Opportunities and Access for All.....</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>GOAL: Drive Forward-Thinking Solutions and Accountability.....</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>GOAL: Safeguard the Basin’s Environmental, Tribal, Cultural, and Recreational Attributes for Future Generations .....</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>GOAL: Restore the Basin’s Social and Ecological Resilience .....</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>GOAL: Care for the Basin’s Natural and Cultural Resources.....</b>	<b>37</b>
Acknowledgements.....	41
Key Terms.....	42

# Who We Are

## MISSION

The mission of the California Tahoe Conservancy (Conservancy) is to lead California's efforts to restore and enhance the extraordinary natural and recreational resources of the Lake Tahoe Basin (Basin).

## VISION

We envision a future for the Basin where:

- The Lake is clear and its watersheds are healthy;
- The Basin has vibrant fish and wildlife, safe and healthy communities, and resilient forests and watersheds;
- Outdoor recreation and eco-tourism support a sustainable economy;
- All communities and visitors have equitable access to the Lake and Basin landscapes;
- Communities and visitors minimize their carbon footprints as much as possible by walking, biking, and using public transit; and
- Basin projects and programs provide national models for sustainability, stewardship, equity, social and ecological resilience, innovation, and adaptation to climate change.

Established in 1984, the Conservancy is one of ten state conservancies in California that collectively work towards conserving, protecting, and restoring the State's natural resources, and providing public recreational opportunities for all. The Conservancy owns and manages approximately 4,700 parcels of land totaling around 6,500 acres in the Basin.

Visit our website to learn more about us: [tahoe.ca.gov/about-us/](https://tahoe.ca.gov/about-us/).

## GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Our guiding principles reflect how we continue to meet our mission and achieve our vision for the Basin. We embed these fundamental principles in every facet of our work to signal the core values that we consistently uphold. Our guiding principles serve as a compass to navigate challenges, seize opportunities, and build enduring partnerships.

We will:

- Integrate adaptive measures into all our work to enhance the Basin’s climate resilience.
- Collaborate with the Washoe Tribe of Nevada and California (Washoe Tribe) in elevating tribal practices and presence in the Basin.
- Commit to diversity, equity, and inclusion in all actions and decisions.
- Foster partnerships, including with underserved communities, to amplify our impact and optimize resources.
- Seek process and policy improvements to increase the pace and scale of our work.
- Employ the best available science, including tribal expertise, and planning principles, to inform our work.
- Embrace the integration of ecological and community perspectives to conserve the Basin for all.

## COMMITMENT TO TRIBAL NATIONS

The Conservancy is committed to working with all tribes in the Basin and to the special relationship that we have with the Washoe Tribe. Our land acknowledgement, provided by the Washoe Tribe, represents our understanding of the responsibility we have as we work in the Tribe’s ancestral homelands. We recognize the value of uplifting native voices and providing space for meaningful Tribal contributions to the development of policies, programs, science and research, and project decisions, particularly when they may affect tribal communities.

*Daʔaw (Lake Tahoe) is the homeland of the waší-šiw (Washoe people—the people from here). The waší-šiw are the aboriginal stewards of the land in and around the Lake Tahoe Basin since the beginning of time and as a sovereign nation the Washoe Tribe of Nevada and California, as it is known today, continues to advocate for the protection and preservation of waší-šiw ʔítdeʔ (the Washoe people’s homelands). The waší-šiw relied on the land for survival; hunting, fishing, and gathering of traditional foods and medicines within their homelands was an integral part of the wá-šiw (Washoe) culture and through this intrinsic relationship they helped shape the natural beauty of the Lake Tahoe Basin that so many enjoy today.*

*As colonizers arrived en masse in the Comstock during the gold rush era, the wá-šiw summer camps became prime locations for logging and cattle grazing and the waší-šiw were no longer allowed to manage their lands as they had done for millennia. The*

*removal of wá-šiw people from the land and increase in development and tourism to the Lake Tahoe Basin has negatively impacted an area that is not only renowned for its natural beauty and pristine waters but is now in dire need of rehabilitation. The Washoe Tribe of Nevada and California has maintained their role as environmental stewards of the Lake Tahoe Basin (despite policies that sought to eradicate them) by continuing to advocate for their homelands and to protect, respect, and take care of waší-šiw ṽítdeṽ.*

We commit to treat this place with the same respect as those who walked before, the waší-šiw. We are also committed to finding opportunities for the Washoe Tribe to reestablish and grow their presence in the Basin through land ownership and management, access, representation on Basin boards and committees, and capacity building of a Tribal workforce for Conservancy and Basin partner projects and programs.



*Rhiana Jones, Environmental Director for the Washoe Environmental Protection Department, speaking to volunteers at a restoration event as part of the Ma?yála Wá’á (Meeks Meadow) Restoration Project. Photo courtesy of John Peltier Photography.*

# Overview

## PURPOSE

The Conservancy's Strategic Plan (Plan) is our roadmap through 2029. This Plan communicates how we will continue to meet our mission and achieve our vision through a focus on Access, Innovation, Protection, Restoration, and Stewardship. This Plan also describes how we will deploy our resources to carry out strategies aligned with statewide and Basin-specific mandates, plans, and partnerships. Lastly, this Plan points the Conservancy towards achieving measurable outcomes to restore and enhance the Basin's extraordinary natural and recreational resources.

## Access

- **Goal: Provide Recreational Opportunities and Access for All**  
The Conservancy is committed to ensuring that the Basin's recreational resources are accessible to all and that the Basin remains a welcoming and inclusive destination for all while maintaining sustainable and thriving communities. We will expand recreational networks, develop effective trail management strategies, and enhance equitable and sustainable access.

## Innovation

- **Goal: Drive Forward-Thinking Solutions and Accountability**  
The Conservancy is committed to embracing innovative approaches to address today's challenges with creative solutions that will pave the way for a more resilient Basin. We will advance scientific and technological solutions, seek diverse funding sources, foster teamwork and staff development, and cut green tape.

## Protection

- **Goal: Safeguard the Basin's Environmental, Cultural, Tribal, and Recreational Attributes for Future Generations**  
The Conservancy is committed to protecting the Basin from the potential harms that future risks, especially those exacerbated by climate change, pose to its environmental, tribal, cultural, and recreational attributes. We will protect forests and reduce wildfire risk, collaborate on biodiversity and climate change, and expand

protective measures to prevent impacts to natural, tribal, and cultural resources.

## Restoration

- **Goal: Restore the Basin’s Social and Ecological Resilience**  
The Conservancy is committed to restoring the Basin’s social and ecological resilience by addressing and ameliorating longstanding environmental impacts from the past. We will advance comprehensive restoration projects and engage with local communities to revitalize the Basin’s biodiversity and wildlife habitats, and promote sustainable practices for the long-term well-being of the region.

## Stewardship

- **Goal: Care for the Basin’s Natural, Tribal, and Cultural Resources**  
The Conservancy is committed to caring for the Basin’s natural, tribal, and cultural resources through our immediate and continuous responsibilities to maintain Conservancy lands. We will modernize land management policies, enhance community engagement and partnership, and promote tribal presence.

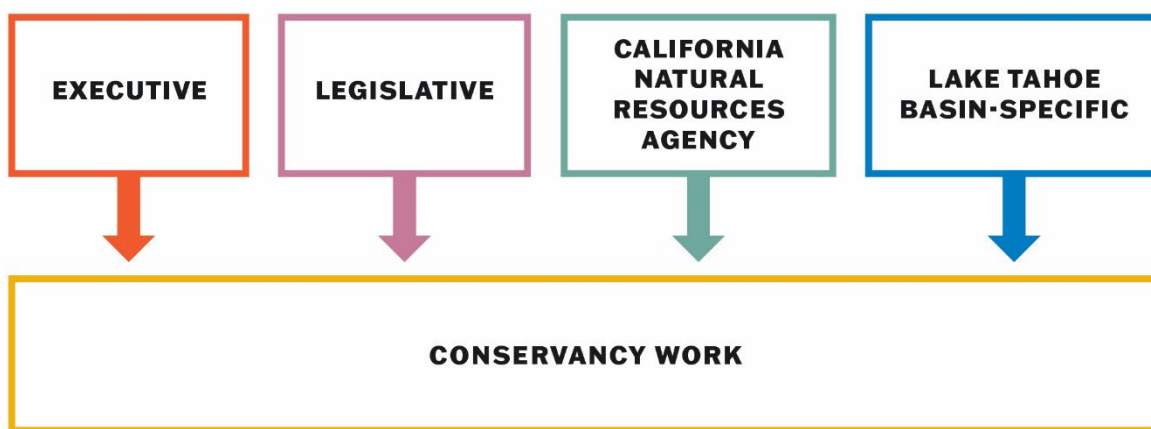
## POLICY DRIVERS

As a place-based state agency, we are uniquely positioned to act as a bridge to advance state and regional priorities simultaneously. Numerous key policies, initiatives, and plans shape our goals and the strategies articulated in this Plan. We use our position and resources to implement executive orders and legislative intent to advance statewide initiatives including **tribal engagement, racial equity** and **outdoor access, climate change, wildfire risk reduction, and biodiversity**. Our strategies and actions are designed to use **nature-based solutions** and implement key state strategies such as the **California Climate Adaptation Strategy, California Wildfire and Forest Resilience Action Plan** and **Pathways to 30x30**. Our goals and strategies are also designed to improve **outdoor access for all** while focusing on sustainability for the Basin.

While advancing these and other state priorities, our goals and strategies align with regional, tribal, and Basin priorities and plans to ensure that Basin interests are met. We specifically look to the **Bi-State Compact** and **Lake Tahoe Regional Plan**, which guide sustainable development while preserving the Basin's unique environmental values to

inform project planning and design, collaborative efforts, and funding. We plan acquisitions and projects and provide grant funding to help meet the goals of the **Lake Tahoe Environmental Improvement Program (EIP)**, focusing on projects that enhance water quality and forest health, support wildlife habitats, protect communities, and improve recreational amenities in the Basin.

**Policy Drivers**



**PEOPLE**

Our Plan is founded on a steadfast commitment to people—from our Board and partners to the Conservancy personnel and the diverse public we serve, for example:

- **Conservancy Board:** Our governing board plays a critical role in steering the Conservancy’s strategic direction, ensuring our actions and initiatives are aligned with our mission and the broader vision for the Basin. The Board’s leadership and oversight guides the development and implementation of our Plan, ensuring it responds effectively to the evolving needs of the Basin and its communities.
- **Conservancy Staff:** The backbone of our organization, our dedicated employees bring a wealth of expertise, passion, and commitment to our mission. Their work is instrumental in advancing our mission and making a tangible difference in the Basin.
- **Basin Tribes:** The Conservancy recognizes the vital importance of the Basin’s original stewards, the Washoe Tribe. In carrying out this Plan, the Conservancy commits to meaningful collaboration and engagement with the Washoe Tribe to honor and



incorporate traditional ecological knowledge, practices, and perspectives in land management and conservation. This special partnership aims to ensure that our work respects and enhances the tribal, cultural, and natural resources that are central to the Tribe’s heritage and identity.

- **Partners:** Collaboration with our partners is key to our success. We work closely with a wide array of existing and new partners, including local communities, nonprofit organizations, government agencies, and the private sector, to leverage resources, knowledge, and expertise. These partnerships enhance our capacity to undertake comprehensive restoration and conservation efforts, driving progress towards our shared vision for the Basin.
- **Public:** Our commitment extends to all Californians and specifically to Basin communities, including those that have been systematically excluded in the past. We strive to engage with and serve all communities, ensuring that our work is inclusive and equitable. Through open communication, community engagement initiatives, and our specific racial equity actions, we aim to ensure that the benefits of our work are widely shared and that everyone has a voice in shaping the Basin’s future.



*People enjoying the Dennis T. Machida Memorial Greenway in South Lake Tahoe.*

**CALL OUT BOX**

**DEFINITION: SYSTEMATICALLY EXCLUDED COMMUNITIES**

Groups of people who have been left out of decision-making processes that impact their way of life. Political and social frameworks prevented marginalized communities from fully participating in society, leading to discrimination and unfair disadvantages that still manifest into many aspects of life. In the Basin, this includes employment, housing, representation on local boards and committees, and recreational access. The Conservancy is working to address these disparities and combat racist policies that have plagued underserved communities for too long.

---

DRAFT

## Our Evolution

The Conservancy has had a pivotal role in shaping the environmental health and sustainability of the Basin since its establishment in 1984. Over the years, our organization has evolved through four different "eras" while consistently maintaining our mission. The Conservancy continues to implement and advance the work that defines each era.

### FOUNDATION AND EARLY YEARS

The California State Legislature established the Conservancy in 1984 to acquire and improve land to complement the land use planning and regulatory authorities of the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency (TRPA). The Conservancy's early objectives included protection and restoration of water, air, and wildlife habitats; land acquisition, restoration, and management; and promotion of the Basin's scenic beauty and recreation opportunities while promoting public access.

### ERAS OF DEVELOPMENT

The Conservancy's history is defined by four distinct periods, each characterized by specific achievements.

#### **Acquisitions Era: 1985–1996**

- The Conservancy began with a focus on acquiring environmentally sensitive lands, mostly on undeveloped lots, to restore and manage lands, preserve the scenic beauty and recreational opportunities of the region, and provide public access to Basin lands.

#### **Environmental Improvement Program Era: 1997–2008**

- After years of environmental protections, planning, and land acquisition, scientists and environmental advocates sounded the alarm that more needed to be done to protect the Lake's famed clarity and the Basin's resources. The Presidential Forum of 1997 included a pledge to restore and protect the Basin through the EIP, a component of the Lake Tahoe Regional Plan. The EIP aligned the Conservancy's resources with funding from other partners to increase efficiency and impact of environmental restoration. This era marked the Conservancy's focus on the urgency of its work, which was largely funded by voter-approved state bonds. Under the EIP, the Conservancy has provided more than 170 grants to local governments and

nonprofit organizations. These grants fuel a wide array of projects focused on ecological restoration, public recreation and access, land protection, forest health, and wildfire risk reduction. The cumulative impact of these efforts is substantial, reflecting the Conservancy's significant contribution to the Basin's resilience.

### **Post-Great Recession Era: 2009–2017**

- Amidst funding losses that impacted projects, bond grant programs, and staff positions, the Conservancy reduced its capacity and operations to prioritize core functions. The Conservancy began to pursue more diverse funding options to continue its work and advance its mission.

### **Climate Resilience Era: 2018–Present**

- This era has marked a focus on landscape-scale watershed restoration, land management, wildfire mitigation, and public recreation enhancements to advance the Conservancy's mission. As we look forward, the Conservancy will consider climate resilience in all aspects of our work as embodied in one of its guiding principles, "integrate adaptive measures into all our work to enhance the Basin's climate resilience."



*The Upper Truckee Marsh and River on the south shore of Lake Tahoe.*

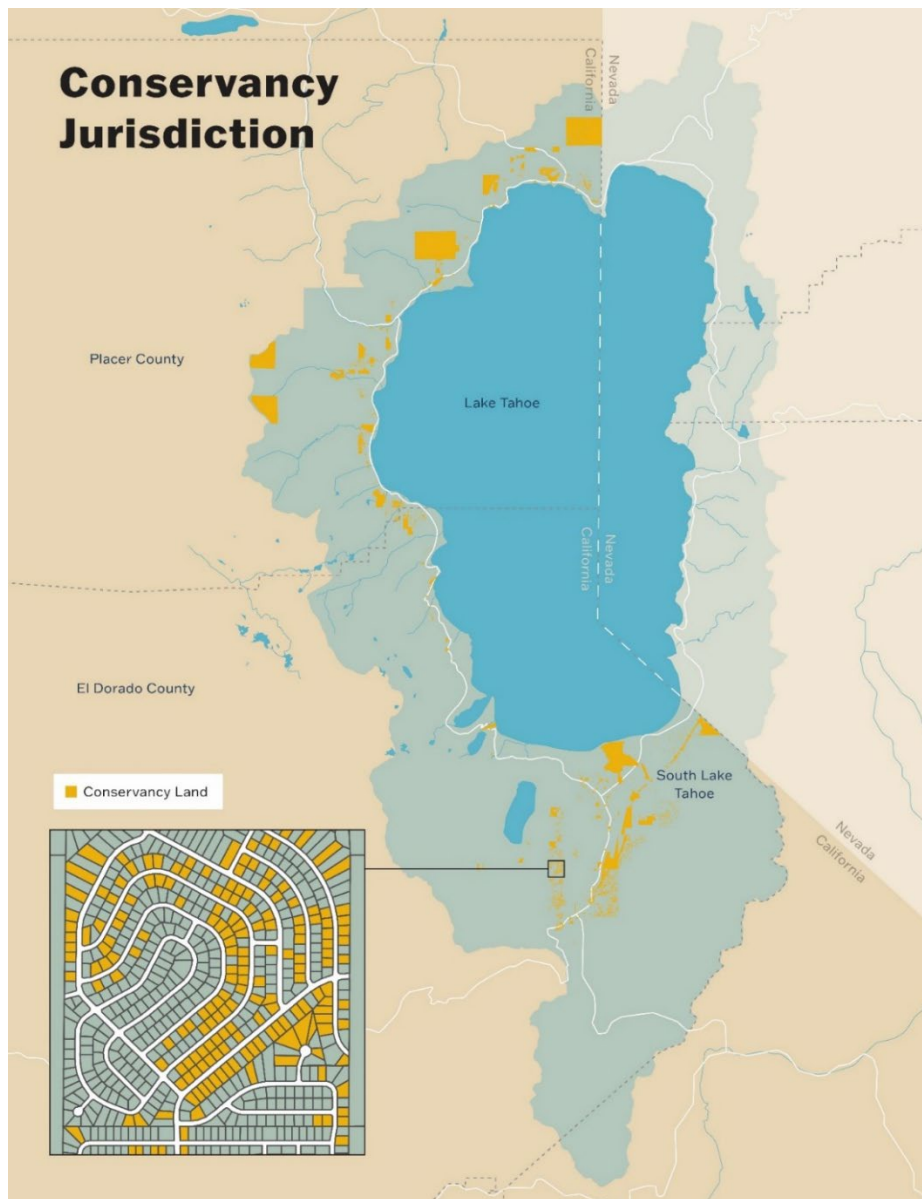
## How We Work

We prioritize partnerships and collaboration to strategically implement Basin priorities and optimize outcomes. This section provides an overview of our jurisdiction and governance, land management practices, all-lands approach, funding, and roles.

### JURISDICTION AND GOVERNANCE

The Conservancy is a state agency within the California Natural Resources Agency. The Conservancy's jurisdiction covers the California side of the Basin, encompassing 236 square miles. The Conservancy is governed by an eight-member Board of Directors, including:

- the State Secretary for Natural Resources (or designee);
- the State Director of Finance (or designee);
- one public member appointed by the State Senate;
- one public member appointed by the State Assembly;
- one appointed representative each from El Dorado County, Placer County, and the City of South Lake Tahoe; and
- one ex officio, non-voting member representing the United States Secretary of Agriculture.



*Note: The inset box in the map above depicts an example of Conservancy open-space parcels within neighborhoods. They can be found throughout the California side of the Basin.*

## LAND MANAGEMENT

Since its establishment in 1984, the Conservancy has focused on fulfilling its mission by actively acquiring and managing environmentally sensitive lands and parcels. The Conservancy's portfolio includes nearly 4,700 parcels, with a significant portion deemed environmentally sensitive. This number represents nearly ten percent of all state-owned parcels across California. The Conservancy's land management efforts are diverse, comprehensive, and generally focus on public access, stream environment zone protection, and wildlife preservation.

These parcels, often no larger than a third of an acre and interspersed throughout developed areas, pose singular challenges and opportunities for land management. The Conservancy's approach includes implementing restoration and maintenance projects, conducting biennial inspections of its properties, managing forest health, and reducing wildfire risks. The Conservancy also supports partner environmental projects through use of our land for storm water basins, shared use trails, and other public improvements. These activities are vital for protecting the Basin's natural environment and promoting public recreation and access.

The implementation of these diverse land management strategies underscores the Conservancy's commitment to its mission, leveraging land acquisitions and partnerships to promote environmental stewardship, public access, and the overall health of the Basin's ecosystems.

## Acquisitions

The Conservancy acquires environmentally sensitive lands to protect and enhance the Basin's natural and recreational resources. These acquisitions, ranging from subdivision-sized parcels to larger tracts, are aimed at preventing environmental damage from development in sensitive areas. The Conservancy's current acquisition priorities are guided by funding, eligibility, and parcel location, where possible emphasizing lands in undeveloped subdivisions to mitigate potential environmental harms.

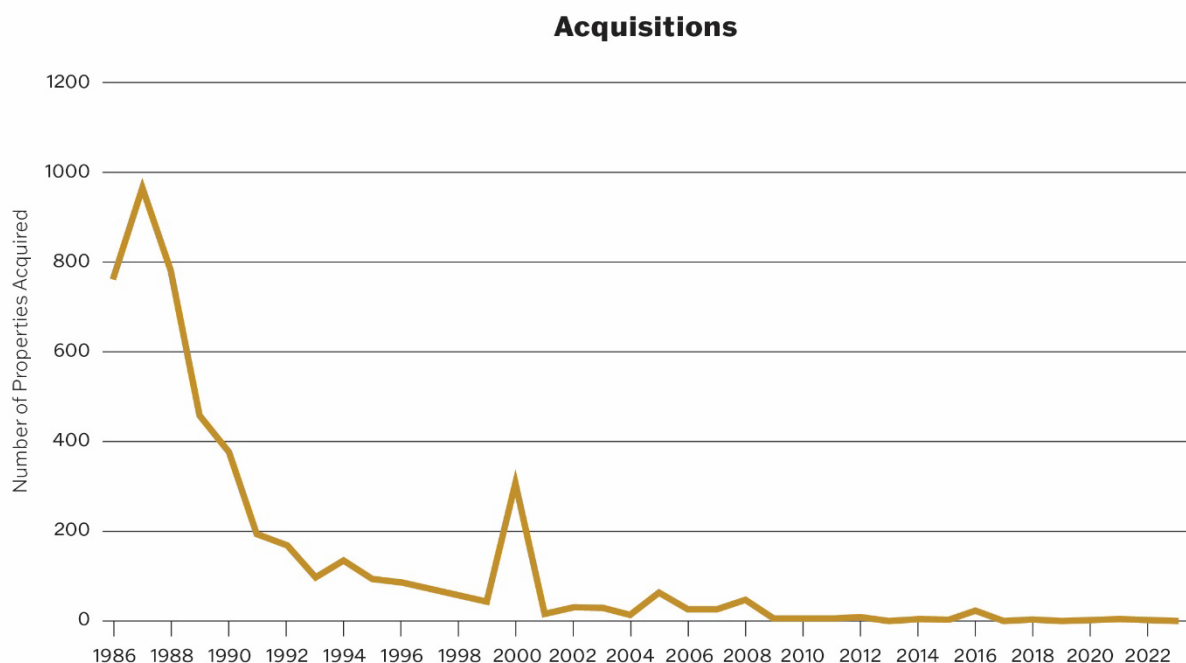
---

### CALL OUT BOX

#### ACQUIRING THE MOTEL 6 / KNOX JOHNSON PROPERTY

In 2024, the Conservancy acquired 31 acres along the Upper Truckee River in South Lake Tahoe. This acquisition—supported by state, regional, and private partners—helps protect Lake Tahoe's water quality and provides an important wildlife corridor. The acquisition includes floodplain, mountain meadow, and wetlands, and provides the opportunity to remove four acres of fill that was wetlands before being developed in the 1960s. The property had been a top priority for acquisition and restoration for state and regional partners for decades.

---



*Note: In 2000, Caltrans transferred a large number of properties to the Conservancy that the State of California had originally acquired as right-of-way for a planned but never completed freeway through the south shore. Today, the first sections of the Dennis T. Machida Memorial Greenway follow the same right-of-way alignment.*

The Conservancy also engages in the strategic sale of certain parcels classified as "asset lands." Asset lands are deemed not essential for achieving the Conservancy's conservation or recreation goals. However, they may be sold to support town center revitalization, affordable housing, and other regional and area plan objectives. The Conservancy designated 17 asset lands in Kings Beach, Meyers, and the City of South Lake Tahoe that could support sustainable compact development consistent with local area or town center plans. This approach contributes to sustainable development within the Basin and supports the Conservancy's efforts to balance conservation initiatives with community and economic development needs.

Acquisitions and strategic land management practices exemplify the Conservancy's commitment to preserving the natural beauty and ecological integrity of the Basin, ensuring its resources are safeguarded for future generations.



## APPROACH

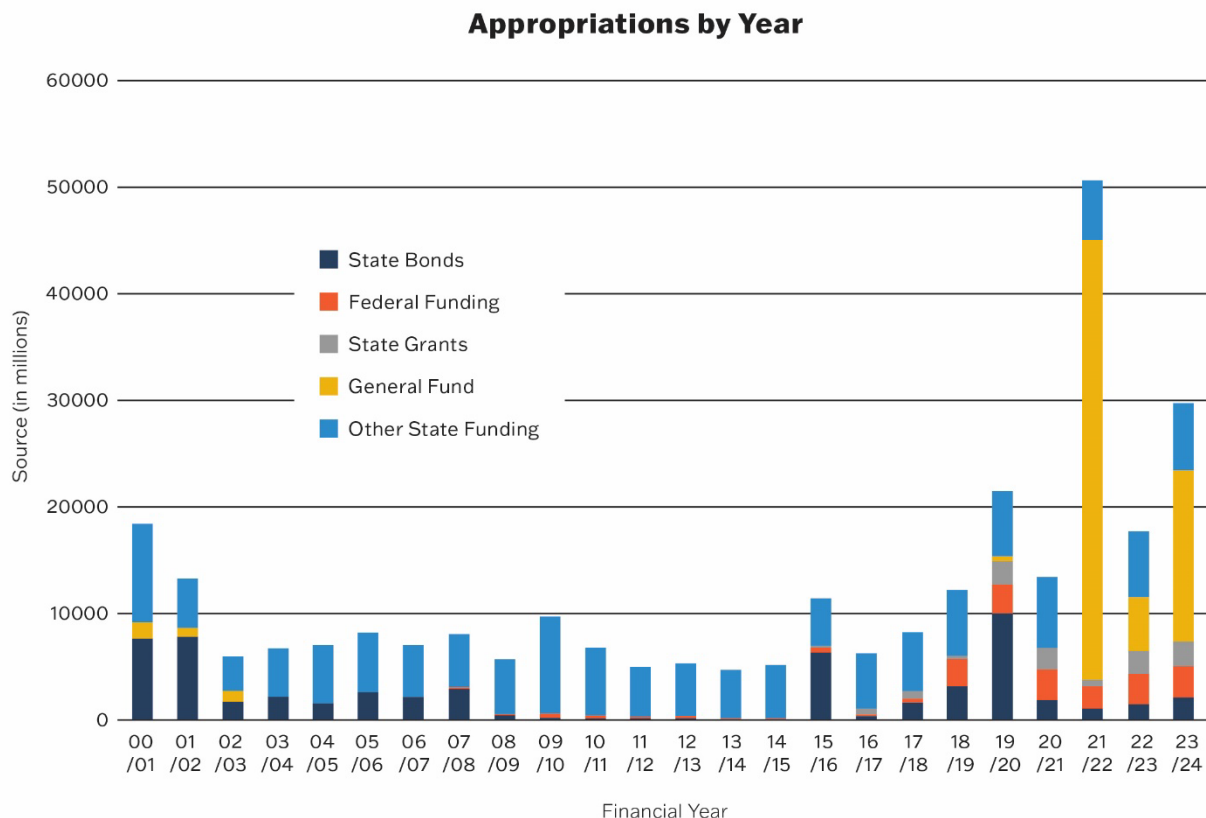
The Conservancy takes an all-lands approach to our work. This approach brings landowners and interested parties together across boundaries to decide on common goals for the landscapes they share. We scale our work at the Conservancy lands, watershed, Basinwide, and regional levels as follows:

- Conservancy lands scale pertains to the specific parcels of land managed by the Conservancy, targeted for conservation, public access, and recreational purposes.
- Watershed scale focuses on the specific areas that drain into Lake Tahoe, emphasizing water quality, soil health, and ecosystem services within these critical hydrological units.
- Basinwide scale refers to the entirety of the Lake Tahoe Basin, addressing environmental management practices and policies that affect the Lake, surrounding lands, and communities as a unified ecosystem.
- Regional scale encompasses a broad geographical area beyond the immediate Lake Tahoe Basin, considering cross-border environmental and economic impacts, and initiatives that span multiple jurisdictions and ecosystems that strategically address larger-scale issues and achieve economies of scale.

## FUNDING

The Conservancy is mostly funded by state special revenue funds (e.g., Lake Tahoe license plate, Habitat Conservation Fund, Environmental License Plate Fund), state and federal grants, and state bonds. We also receive funding from other agencies and partnerships in the Basin. The Conservancy anticipates its funding levels will continue to vary into the future. One of our strategies is to seek more diverse funding options, such as public-private opportunities, to enhance the Conservancy's fiscal sustainability and effectiveness.

## Funding Sources



## ROLES

The Conservancy plays a multifaceted role as California’s EIP lead agency within the Basin. The Conservancy’s roles have evolved over time and within any given project to meet the Basin’s needs. Key roles include:

- **Conducting Land Acquisition and Management:** Acquiring environmentally sensitive lands for protection, public access, wildlife conservation, and to help support area and Regional Plan priorities.
- **Supporting Restoration Projects:** Implementing projects aimed at restoring natural habitats and ecological resilience across the Basin.
- **Engaging with Community, Tribes, and Partners:** Collaborating with local communities, tribes, organizations, and government agencies to amplify conservation efforts and ensure inclusive access to natural resources.
- **Leading Policy and Planning Efforts:** Guiding environmental management practices,

planning processes, and policy development to sustainably manage the Basin's resources.

- Providing Funding: Supporting partner-led projects through focused grants that align with the Conservancy's strategic initiatives and regional priorities.

These roles, shaped by decades of conservation and partnerships, underline the Conservancy's commitment to a healthier, more accessible, and resilient Basin.

## PROGRAMS

The Conservancy is structured to address its current priorities and achieve its mission. We work across program teams to collaboratively carry out the strategies detailed in this Plan across several fronts:

- Landscape Resilience: Addressing climate impacts at a landscape scale on natural, cultural, and tribal resources in the Basin.
- Forestry: Focusing on forest health and resilience.
- Land Management: Managing land for conservation and enhancement.
- Recreation and Public Access: Increasing public access to natural areas.
- Tahoe Livable Communities: Promoting sustainable community initiatives.
- Water Quality and Watersheds: Improving water quality and watershed health.

These programs are supported by the Conservancy's legal, communication, information technology, fiscal, human resources, and executive staff, ensuring a comprehensive approach to program delivery and strategic plan execution. The success of these programs hinges on a cross-functional strategy that does not confine specific goals to a single program, allowing for a more flexible and integrated approach to achieving the Conservancy's mission.

## How to Read Our Plan

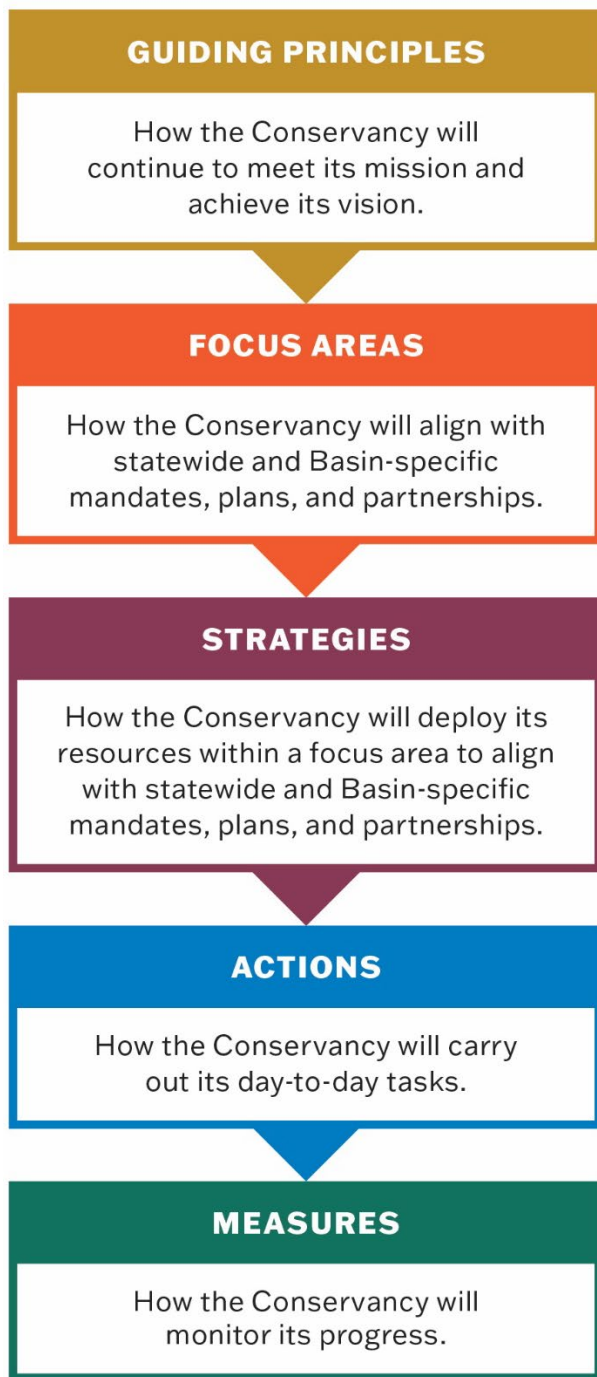
When reading our Plan, it is essential to understand how it is structured around our five focus areas: Access, Innovation, Protection, Restoration, and Stewardship. Each of these focus areas is a critical component of our mission, reflecting the breadth of our commitment to lead California’s efforts to restore and enhance the extraordinary natural and recreational resources of the Basin. Here’s how to navigate our Plan:

- **Focus Areas:** We begin with our five focus areas—Access, Innovation, Protection, Restoration, and Stewardship. Each represents a pillar of our commitment to fostering an environment where nature and people can thrive together.
- **Goals:** Within each focus area, we define a central goal. These goals mirror the essence of the focus area they belong to and are designed to channel our efforts towards impactful outcomes.
- **Strategies:** For every goal, we highlight key strategies. These are our pathways to achieving the goals, chosen to maximize our effectiveness and aligning with both statewide and Basin-specific mandates, plans, and partnerships.
- **Actions:** Under each strategy, we provide examples of concrete actions. We will initiate or continue these specific steps to manifest our strategies into tangible results. It is in these actions that our guiding principles are most evident, helping to guide our decision-making and execution.
- **Measures:** Measuring both the outputs and outcomes of our work under this Plan is important. Over the lifetime of the Plan, we will develop outcome measurements. They will need to be aligned with EIP performance measures and thresholds as well as other state and Basin initiatives. We commit to reporting on our progress against the plan annually to our Board.

Our guiding principles act as a compass throughout our Plan, ensuring that with every goal set, strategy devised, and action taken, we are true to our fundamental values. They are not isolated in a single section but rather are the undercurrent that runs through every aspect of our Plan, reminding us of who we are and how we must act to achieve our vision.

As you move through our plan, you will notice that each focus area, goal, and strategy builds upon the last, much like the layers in the provided diagram—each encompassing and supporting the next. This cumulative approach ensures that our work is informed by measures of success.

## STRATEGIC PLAN CONCEPTS



## STRATEGIC PLAN DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

Developing the strategic plan involved a comprehensive process that included analyzing past achievements and challenges, forming new Focus Areas, Goals, and strategies, and drafting the plan. The Conservancy engaged various parties, including Board members,

staff, the Washoe Tribe, partners, and community members to ensure the plan aligns with the needs and priorities of Basin communities and partners. In developing the plan, we also considered environmental, social, and economic factors to create a balanced and forward-looking strategy.

DRAFT

## **Focus Area: Access**

### **GOAL:**

# **Provide Recreational Opportunities and Access for All**

Access to the outdoors is a fundamental right and a cornerstone of well-being for all Californians. We aim to strategically leverage the land we manage and partnerships with other public land managers to ensure that everyone, regardless of background or ability, can enjoy the Basin's outdoor spaces. We are also focused on fostering inclusivity and empowerment to create outdoor spaces that people with diverse backgrounds can enjoy and help steward. Working together with local communities and the Washoe Tribe, we aim to co-create recreational and access opportunities that reflect shared aspirations. We strive to connect all people with the Basin's forestlands and watersheds. Together with our Basin partners and the community, we forge a path toward a future where the outdoors continues to be a source of enjoyment for all.

There are three strategies under this Goal:

1. Expand Recreational Networks and Partnerships
2. Develop Effective Trail Management Strategies
3. Enhance Equitable and Sustainable Access

## **EXPAND RECREATIONAL NETWORKS AND PARTNERSHIPS**

Expanding recreational networks and partnerships is crucial for improving access to the Basin. By working closely with local communities, our partners, and the Washoe Tribe, we aim to build a wider and more inclusive recreational network. This collaboration with expanded partnerships broadens the reach of accessible natural spaces and ensures that their development and management are guided by diverse inputs, including the invaluable traditional knowledge of the land. Through this united effort, we strive to enhance our care for the Basin and make recreational opportunities more readily available to everyone. Key actions may include:

- Support and expand the Basin's active transportation trail network, such as the Dennis T. Machida Memorial Greenway.
- Implement multiple-benefit recreation projects that expand access, protect the

environment, and create resilience to climate change.

- Promote shared environmental stewardship with the Washoe Tribe, visitors, and the local community.
- Strengthen and expand partnerships to support access for all and regional priorities.
- Use partnerships, such as the Lake Tahoe Destination Stewardship Council, to explore opportunities to make it easier for people to find information about recreating at and accessing Lake Tahoe.

### DEVELOP EFFECTIVE TRAIL MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

Developing effective trail management strategies is crucial for providing sustainable recreational opportunities and access for all. Our intent is to maintain ecological integrity as more people come to enjoy the Basin’s natural landscapes. We will protect the Basin while enhancing the visitor experience by implementing best practices in trail and associated infrastructure design, maintenance, and resource conservation. These efforts also ensure that access to these recreational areas remains open and sustainable for future generations. Key actions may include:

- Develop a dirt trail management plan for resource protection, safety, navigation, and access.
- Improve shared use of trails on Conservancy lands and connect with neighboring trails and paved bike paths.

### ENHANCE EQUITABLE AND SUSTAINABLE ACCESS

Enhancing equitable and sustainable access is fundamental to ensuring that all individuals, regardless of background or ability, have the opportunity to enjoy the Basin’s recreational offerings. This strategy focuses on removing barriers to access and fostering a more inclusive environment for visitors, tribes, and residents. One of the Conservancy’s roles is to ensure that the Basin remains a destination for recreational and cultural engagement. This means balancing the needs of visitors and residents with the stewardship, restoration, and protection of the many natural spaces found within our public lands. We also intend that our efforts to increase access do not detrimentally impact the natural environment by incorporating sustainable practices into the development and maintenance of recreational areas. We aim to guarantee that the Basin remains a welcoming and resilient destination for all. Key actions may include:

- Provide opportunities on Conservancy and other public lands for disadvantaged and



underserved communities to access and connect with the natural environment.

- Acquire lands specifically designed to contribute to improved year-round public access.
- Work with partners on seasonal public land access issues, such as winter access to trailheads and parking areas.

---

## CALL OUT BOX

### IMPROVING ACCESSIBILITY AT PATTON LANDING BEACH

The Conservancy’s Patton Landing Beach is an excellent example of enhanced equitable and sustainable access to Lake Tahoe. The beach includes a small café building, picnic areas, nonmotorized boat launch, a small wetland, and a large beach area. A Conservancy-authorized concessionaire operates a nonmotorized watercraft rental and café business at the beach. A nonprofit organization associated with the concessionaire organizes paddling programs for people with physical disabilities and mental health challenges, and underserved youth. The Conservancy plans to install additional amenities at the beach that meet Americans with Disabilities Act requirements. Accessibility improvements at Patton Landing Beach will benefit a large number of people with and without disabilities.



*People enjoying Patton Landing Beach on the north shore of Lake Tahoe.*

## **Focus Area: Innovation**

### **GOAL:**

## **Drive Forward-Thinking Solutions and Accountability**

*Innovation* introduces positive changes to the Conservancy by adding capability, creating efficiency, and providing new solutions to the complex challenges facing the Basin. We strive to invest the resources and time necessary to foster innovation as a catalyst for accomplishing our mission. By embracing proven technological advances, piloting novel programs, and applying the best available science, planning principles, and data to our work, we will continue to promote innovation in the Basin. We also recognize that the talents and contributions of Conservancy employees are the key to our success, and we will strive to foster an environment of collaboration, equity, and advancement. We commit to maintaining high standards of accountability, transparency, and integrity. Collaborating with our partners and the public, we will lead the way towards a more resilient and thriving Basin.

There are four strategies under this Goal:

1. Advance Scientific, Planning, and Technological Solutions
2. Seek Diverse Funding Sources
3. Foster Teamwork and Development
4. Cut Green Tape

### **ADVANCE SCIENTIFIC, PLANNING, AND TECHNOLOGICAL SOLUTIONS**

Adapting and advancing our mission is critical to continuing to address the impacts from climate change as the resulting challenges become increasingly complex. We will employ the best available science, including tribal expertise and planning principles that promote sustainable, equitable, and inclusive development of diverse communities, to inform our work. Science provides a reliable foundation to inform our decisions. Using planning principles helps determine and promote sustainable and equitable policies. These solutions help us improve how we manage lands, including conducting more effective land and wildlife surveys during project planning, using the most current information to inform restoration and the treatments we implement, and identifying the best methods to measure

the effectiveness of our work. We will continue to engage with the science, planning, and technology communities—including the Tahoe Science Advisory Council, Destination Stewardship Council, and Tahoe Living Working Group—to keep pace and find opportunities to apply new ideas to our work. Key actions may include:

- Work with the science, planning, and technology communities to support and inform relevant innovations that increase the impact of our programs, accelerate our actions, and maximize our effectiveness.
- Apply scientific advancements, tribal expertise, and new technologies in areas such as climate resilience, biodiversity, and aquatic invasive species control.
- Employ planning principles that promote more walkable, bikeable communities with an increased number of affordable housing units.
- Use demographic data, resources usage patterns, and other geographic information to identify systematically excluded communities and non-traditional partners and use this information to identify and execute projects that have maximum benefit.

---

### CALL OUT BOX

#### SCIENCE TO ACTION

The Conservancy and its partners work closely with the Tahoe Science Advisory Council to inform our work through science and monitoring. The Council’s “Science to Action Strategy” provides insights into the effectiveness of our environmental restoration and management in meeting Basin threshold standards, such as lake clarity, and furthering climate resilience. The Conservancy has been working directly with researchers at the University of Nevada, Reno to measure the amount of carbon that is captured and stored in soil and vegetation through wetlands and meadow restoration. This and other innovative studies can improve our understanding of the impacts and benefits of the investments the State and others are making in Basin restoration.

---



*Ben Sullivan, a researcher with the University of Nevada, Reno, paddles while taking measurements at the Upper Truckee Marsh for a study on how functioning wetlands can combat climate change by capturing and storing carbon from the atmosphere.*

## SEEK DIVERSE FUNDING SOURCES

Pursuing diverse funding sources continues to be an important part of our work in maintaining and building our funding capacity into the future. Financial diversity—especially through public-private partnerships—allows us to innovate, adapt, and continue to meet our mission, including expanding our services to systematically excluded communities and non-traditional partners through grants and novel programs. Transparent management of these varied funding streams reflects our commitment to accountability, reinforcing trust, and underscoring our dedication to effective and efficient practices. Key actions may include:

- Identify and pursue diverse funding opportunities, including private-public partnerships.
- Continue to apply for federal, state, local and private grants to support the Conservancy’s work to help ensure a more stable funding outlook.

## FOSTER TEAMWORK AND STAFF DEVELOPMENT

Fostering teamwork and staff development is pivotal for our success. We commit to investing in learning and development opportunities for our employees. Working together effectively and growing the capabilities of our staff allows us to better serve the public while

empowering a high-functioning workforce. We value our employees and see their professional growth as key to the success of the organization as a whole. By nurturing a culture of inclusion, collaboration, and continuous learning within our organization, our team is continually equipped with the knowledge, skills, and perspective necessary to innovate and tackle challenges. This strategy strengthens our capacity to collaboratively accomplish our mission, and to serve the public equitably. Key actions may include:

- Cross-train, mentor, and integrate Conservancy employees across divisions to raise awareness of core agency activities and needs.
- Expand equity awareness and understanding among Conservancy employees and incorporate equity into our work.
- Provide training and leadership opportunities for staff to support growth and empower operational excellence.

## CUT GREEN TAPE

Streamlining processes and reducing bureaucratic hurdles accelerate action and impact. We strive to implement projects more quickly and efficiently to accomplish our mission. This commitment to efficiency, while maintaining quality and integrity, fosters innovation and enhances transparency and responsiveness in our conservation efforts. Cutting green tape creates a pathway for more dynamic and impactful stewardship of the Basin, aligning closely with our mission and the expectations of the public and our partners. Key actions may include:

- Identify opportunities within state process and policy to make our projects more timely, impactful, and cost effective.
- Maximize our institutional knowledge of, and ability to navigate, laws and policies to ensure that all required processes are followed efficiently, including using California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) exemptions, when appropriate, to accelerate restoration projects.
- Streamline internal operations to best use our resources.

## CALL OUT BOX

### SPEEDING FOREST RESTORATION

The Conservancy is committed to reducing barriers that impede progress in addressing the complex environmental challenges facing the Basin. We will continue to focus efforts on increasing the pace and scale of our forest health work. We helped develop a Programmatic Timberland Environmental Impact Report for state, local, and private land on the California side of the Basin, and we use that analysis to implement forest health projects across land ownerships. We use a Good Neighbor Authority agreement with the USDA Forest Service to treat federal lands at the same time our crews are working on adjacent Conservancy parcels. These streamlining efforts help us reduce wildfire risk for communities and improve the resilience of Basin forests.



*A Conservancy Forestry Aide marks trees in preparation for a future forestry project. We take a comprehensive approach by planning ahead to thin all the public open space lots in a neighborhood at the same time, including federal and local government lands. This lets us treat more properties more effectively than treating lots one at a time.*

---

## **Focus Area: Protection**

### **GOAL:**

# **Safeguard the Basin’s Environmental, Tribal, Cultural, and Recreational Attributes for Future Generations**

*Protection* embodies the tangible actions we are taking today to safeguard and enhance the Basin for tomorrow. This encompasses preserving natural resources and protecting tribal and cultural heritage and recreational attributes that define the Basin’s identity. We will continue to implement adaptive measures to mitigate the impacts of climate change, wildfire risk, invasive species, and other emerging challenges. Our aim is to keep natural, tribal, and cultural resources vibrant and enhance the resilience of this unique landscape for residents and visitors alike for generations to come.

There are three strategies under this Goal:

1. Protect Forests and Reduce Wildfire Risk
2. Collaborate on Biodiversity and Climate Change Initiatives
3. Expand Proactive Measures to Preserve Natural and Cultural Resources

## **PROTECT FORESTS AND REDUCE WILDFIRE RISK**

Improving forest health and reducing wildfire risk are protective measures we must continue to safeguard Basin communities from catastrophic wildfire. Our forestry program works closely with our partners, including the Washoe Tribe, through the Tahoe Fire and Fuels Team (TFFT) to use Community Wildfire Protection Plans and the Lake Tahoe Basin Forest Action Plan to prioritize, plan, and implement fuels reduction and forest health projects throughout the Basin. With the TFFT, we also focus on building capacity for workforce and organizational efficiency, leveraging funding to implement projects across multiple land ownerships, and conducting demonstration and pilot projects to reduce costs and increase sustainability of wildfire resilience work. This strategy underscores our commitment to protect Basin communities’ resources. Key actions may include:

- Continue to collaborate with partners to achieve the goals of the Lake Tahoe Basin Forest Action Plan by providing leadership, technical expertise, and resources.

- Reduce wildfire risks through ongoing forest health management on Conservancy lands.

---

### CALL OUT BOX

#### COMMUNITY WILDFIRE PLANNING

The Conservancy, through a grant from the Department of Conservation Regional Forest and Fire Capacity Program, is supporting an innovative update of the Tahoe Basin Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP). The Tahoe Resource Conservation District is leading the update process with the TFFT. The scope for the CWPP update has been expanded to include equity concerns and underserved demographics. Partners are using a decision-support tool to create an updated list of prioritized, fuel hazard reduction projects. The update will produce an online version of the CWPP to ease future updates. The updated CWPP will serve as a roadmap for community forest health and fuels reduction projects and funding across the Basin.



*A Corpsmember with the California Conservation Corps working on a forest health and fuels reduction project on Conservancy land in South Lake Tahoe.*



## COLLABORATE ON BIODIVERSITY AND CLIMATE CHANGE INITIATIVES

We recognize how a diversity of animal and plant species is critical for balancing and making ecosystems more resilient to climate change. We are integrating biodiversity and climate resilience objectives throughout our programs, including collaborating on biodiversity and climate change initiatives across the Basin, region, and State. For example, we are studying wildlife connectivity to better understand wildlife corridors and barriers and help land managers protect the Basin’s biodiversity. By strengthening partnerships with other state departments, federal agencies, tribes, research institutions, and community organizations, we aim to pool resources and knowledge, and leverage other efforts to create a resilient and biodiverse future for the Basin. Key actions may include:

- Partner on landscape-scale initiatives by providing expertise and capacity building resources.
- Coordinate with statewide and Basin partners for biodiversity and climate change policy, science, mitigation, and adaptation.
- Execute strategic acquisitions that improve Basin biodiversity and climate resilience.

---

### CALL OUT BOX

#### WILDLIFE CONNECTIVITY

The Conservancy funded a grant to the nonprofit Wildlands Network, in partnership with Pathways for Wildlife, for a multi-year study of wildlife connectivity in the California side of the Basin. The grantees are analyzing wildlife movement patterns, distribution, and abundance, and identifying key barriers and bottlenecks to wildlife movement, such as roads and infrastructure development. Using this information, the team will recommend actions Basin partners can take to remove barriers to existing wildlife connectivity. Understanding how wildlife move through and within the Basin will inform how the Conservancy and other Tahoe land managers make management decisions, including forest health projects to meet forest resilience and biodiversity goals.

---



*A bobcat triggers a motion-detecting camera on Conservancy land near the Upper Truckee River in El Dorado County. Photo courtesy of the Wildlands Network and Pathways for Wildlife.*

## EXPAND PROACTIVE MEASURES TO PRESERVE NATURAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

We manage nearly 4,700 parcels that provide numerous benefits to the ecosystems and communities in the Basin. Expanding proactive measures to preserve natural, tribal, and cultural resources across these lands is critical to prevent and mitigate risks to the Basin’s environment and heritage. Our programs are shifting towards more preemptive action in a number of ways, including embracing innovative solutions for our parcel management system and expanding coordination with the Washoe Tribe to increase protection of tribal resources on projects that we fund and implement. We will engage with our partners to identify additional opportunities to prioritize early intervention and protect the Basin’s biodiversity and cultural landmarks. Key actions may include:

- Conduct annual property inspections to identify natural resource and public health and safety issues to inform management actions.
- Prevent and resolve encroachments on Conservancy lands.

## **Focus Area: Restoration**

### **GOAL:**

# **Restore the Basin’s Social and Ecological Resilience**

*Restoration* emphasizes actions that the Conservancy must take to return natural lands and communities to a resilient state. We recognize that people and natural lands are inherently connected, and there is a legacy of past impacts on both social and ecological systems in the Basin. Through targeted restoration projects, we aim to improve forest and watershed health, revitalize degraded habitats, and enhance water quality, laying the groundwork for a more resilient ecosystem. Equally important is our commitment to fostering social resilience by engaging with communities, promoting social and cultural well-being, and supporting sustainable economies. By targeting restoration projects that improve social and ecological resilience we ensure the Basin’s ability to withstand and recover from climate and social challenges.

There are two strategies under this Goal:

1. Integrate and Scale Up Restoration
2. Support Community Resilience Projects and Regional Priorities

## **INTEGRATE AND SCALE UP RESTORATION**

Landscape scale restoration initiatives transcend individual property boundaries to comprehensively address ecosystem-wide challenges. Collaboration is vital to this work, and we will engage a broad coalition of public, private, tribal, and community partners to leverage resources, share knowledge, and align efforts for maximum effectiveness. We will continue to collaboratively lead landscape restoration initiatives at both the Basin and regional scale, including the Greater Upper Truckee River Watershed Partnership and the 2.4-million-acre Tahoe-Central Sierra Initiative, as well as identify new opportunities to scale up restoration across land ownerships. By embracing this integrated and expansive approach with partners, we aim to address the complex, interconnected challenges facing the Basin, paving the way for a resilient landscape. Key actions may include:

- Advance multi-benefit, large-scale restoration projects that create resilience to climate change.
- Build capacity for climate resilience and larger scale restoration projects.
- Enhance and maintain healthy ecosystems and natural processes through restoration and management of Conservancy lands and watersheds.
- Partner with the Washoe Tribe to jointly restore Basin watersheds and incorporate tribal practices.



*The Tahoe-Central Sierra Initiative’s Framework for Resilience offers ten pillars of landscape resilience that reflect the interdependent nature of social and ecological values.*

## SUPPORT COMMUNITY RESILIENCE PROJECTS AND REGIONAL PRIORITIES

Supporting community resilience projects and regional priorities is imperative to protect natural resources, build community resilience, and promote sustainable development. Central to this effort is collaboration with community-based organizations and Conservancy partners within the Basin. The Conservancy will continue to strive for catalytic projects,

where one investment draws in additional investments, such as the Sugar Pine Village affordable housing project. These efforts support access to affordable housing, ensure long-term economic prosperity, and protect natural resources. By weaving these objectives into our restoration initiatives, we emphasize ecological restoration along with the social and economic needs of a resilient community. Key actions may include:

- Acquire aging developed properties, restore environmentally sensitive land, and either retire or transfer the associated development rights to town centers.
- Sell, lease, or exchange Conservancy asset lands in town centers.
- Enhance climate resilience in Basin communities by promoting sustainable infrastructure and investment.
- Direct Land Bank development rights to facilitate infill development projects on Conservancy non-environmentally sensitive asset lands, and to advance EIP goals within the Basin.
- Acquire the remaining private properties in several of Lake Tahoe’s roadless subdivisions.
- Provide Conservancy land and development rights to support partner EIP projects.

---

### **CALL OUT BOX**

#### **SUPPORTING AFFORDABLE HOUSING**

Sugar Pine Village is the largest affordable housing project in the history of the Basin, with 248 units. In 2019, the Department of General Services selected two Conservancy asset land parcels for the Sugar Pine Village Project. The project helps fulfill Executive Order N-06-19 by prioritizing state properties for sustainable, innovative, and cost-effective housing projects.

---

## **Focus Area: Stewardship**

### **GOAL:**

## **Care for the Basin’s Natural and Cultural Resources**

*Stewardship* focuses on the responsibility and diverse actions being taken now to care for the Basin. As a steward of the Basin’s land, we have a responsibility to leverage effective policies, land management, resource allocation, and engagement approaches to best serve the many communities who thrive on our public lands. Our focus is on preserving the Basin’s diverse ecosystems and rich history through collaborative projects and sustainable practices in coordination with our partners and tribes and through community engagement. Through a focus on stewardship, we will continue to actively carry out our work with care for the Basin’s forestland, waters, and communities.

There are four strategies under this Goal:

1. Modernize Land Management Policies
2. Steward and Secure Conservancy Lands
3. Enhance Community Engagement and Partnerships
4. Promote Tribal Presence

### **MODERNIZE LAND MANAGEMENT POLICIES**

Modernizing land management policies stands as a foundational strategy to achieving responsible stewardship. We are committed to updating our approaches to reflect the latest in science, planning, and community needs. This strategy is about leading change, ensuring that our land management practices are as forward-thinking as the community we serve.

Key actions may include:

- Develop and implement updated land management practices, policies, and regulations for Conservancy lands.

### **STEWARD AND SECURE CONSERVANCY LANDS**

Stewarding and securing Conservancy lands is pivotal to our mission of caring for the Basin's naturally diverse and culturally rich resources. We are dedicated to implementing comprehensive land management practices that safeguard these lands from threats, whether they stem from environmental pressures or human activities. We aim to steward

the resilience and health of lands under our management through ongoing monitoring and the application of rules and regulations. This strategy includes protecting land to enhance biodiversity, habitat, watershed function, and recreation opportunities. Our commitment to steward and secure Conservancy lands is a testament to our resolve to preserve the Basin's invaluable resources. Key actions may include:

- Restore and protect lands, cultural, and tribal sites, and biological resources to prevent encroachments.
- Implement adaptive management and monitoring measures to align with statewide and Basin-specific environmental goals.

### ENHANCE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND PARTNERSHIPS

Enhancing community engagement and partnerships allows the Conservancy to better address the collective needs of Basin communities through our work. Recognizing that the challenges we face are multifaceted, we are committed to strengthening our existing relationships and broadening our network by collaborating with non-traditional partners to bring innovative solutions and diverse perspectives to our stewardship efforts. Through these strengthened and expanded partnerships, we aim to enhance the effectiveness of our programs. Our approach underscores the belief that collective action, rooted in shared commitment and creative collaboration, is key to securing the future of Basin resources.

Key actions may include:

- Collaborate on project teams to enhance our technical support, resource and land allocation, policy and strategy guidance, and operational efficiency.
- Engage with legislators and statewide agencies to understand their goals, communicate our priorities, and identify solutions together.
- Expand partnerships with diverse organizations throughout the Basin to increase our capacity and collaboratively steward lands.
- Provide additional opportunities for public engagement and consultation on Conservancy programs and projects.

## CALL OUT BOX

### ADVANCING EQUITY

The Conservancy continues efforts to address racial equity in our work while improving our community engagement. Conservancy Board members and staff have participated in multiple trainings on community engagement and equity. In addition to soliciting input from traditional partners and community members, the Conservancy worked with the Washoe Tribe of Nevada and California and four community-based organizations, who conducted research on reducing barriers to recreation and public access for Tribal members and communities facing the greatest inequities. The Conservancy is drawing on what we learned through these steps to develop and implement a racial equity action plan, which will complement this Strategic Plan.

---

### PROMOTE TRIBAL PRESENCE

Promoting tribal presence within the Basin is critical to empowering Indigenous communities and supporting successful stewardship. Acknowledging the deep connections that the Washoe Tribe has with this land, we aim to amplify their voices and perspectives in the stewardship and management of the Basin. This involves not only recognizing the expertise the Washoe Tribe holds but also actively integrating their practices and leadership into our conservation efforts. We have prioritized strengthening our relationship with the Washoe Tribe by coordinating on several projects and by identifying opportunities to add tribal capacity to work in the Basin. By fostering a stronger tribal presence, we are ensuring that the stewardship of these lands honors their past, current, and future legacy. Key actions may include:

- Increase and expand Tribal access and land acquisition across Basin watersheds.
- Promote the Washoe Tribe's active participation in Basin stewardship projects.



## CALL OUT BOX

### SUPPORTING TRIBAL STEWARDSHIP

Ma?yála Wá’á (Meeks Meadow) is an important place for the Washoe Tribe. The Conservancy is providing grant funding to the Tribe to help implement their co-management agreement with the USDA Forest Service for meadow restoration. This restoration will bring back culturally important plant and animal species to the Tribe, reconnect Tribal members to the meadow, and support Tribal capacity in meadow restoration, forest health treatments, and groundwater monitoring. Conservancy grants are supporting CEQA analysis, biomass collection and transport, reintroduction of cultural burning and tribal science and knowledge, and conifer removal in the meadow.



*Ma?yála Wá’á (Meeks Meadow) on the west shore of Lake Tahoe. The meadow and surrounding area have cultural importance for the Washoe Tribe, but the meadow’s ecological health has declined since European settlers drove the Washoe people off their homeland. Photo courtesy of John Peltier Photography.*

---

## Acknowledgements

Note: The final Strategic Plan will include a section, to go here, that acknowledges the many people who have contributed to the development of this Plan.

All photos and graphics by the California Tahoe Conservancy unless otherwise noted.



*Families riding bicycles to school in June 2023 along the Dennis T. Machida Memorial Greenway, where it crosses Trout Creek in South Lake Tahoe. The Conservancy and its partners designed the trail to use raised crossings to protect wetlands habitat.*

## Key Terms

- **All-lands approach:** A method of addressing challenges that uses a large-scale mindset to overcome traditional geographic and organizational boundaries and leverage capabilities of cross-functional teams and knowledge systems.
- **Landscape-scale:** An all-encompassing conservation strategy that considers tribal and partner goals and balances competing priorities.
- **Social and ecological resilience:** The ability to heal from and protect against environmental and social challenges in a way that promotes future health and well-being for all parties involved.
- **Community:** The Basin community includes residents who live and work in the Basin, the Washoe Tribe who are the original stewards of the Basin, and visitors who come to the Basin for day trips and people visiting from around the U.S. and other countries to vacation.
- **Systematically excluded communities:** Groups of people who have been left out of decision-making processes that impact their way of life. Political and social frameworks prevented marginalized communities from fully participating in society, leading to discrimination and unfair disadvantages that still manifest into many aspects of life. In the Basin, this includes employment, housing, representation on local boards and committees, and recreational access. The Conservancy is working to address these disparities and combat racist policies that have plagued underserved communities for too long.
- **Cultural and tribal resources:** Natural assets such as plants, land, water, animals, and medicine. Cultural practices and assets can be either tribal or non-tribal.