

FISCAL YEAR 2023/24 PROGRAM AUTHORIZATION

Recommended Action: Adopt Resolution 24-06-08 (Attachment 1) authorizing program expenditures of up to \$3,150,300 for fiscal year (FY) 2024/25.

Executive Summary: Staff requests Board authorization of up to \$3,150,300 in expenditures from existing funding sources for California Tahoe Conservancy (Conservancy) program activities during FY 2024/25 (Program Authorization). The Program Authorization allows Conservancy staff to initiate work as program needs arise and execute contracts to support day-to-day Conservancy program operations. The specific Conservancy expenditures will depend on the enactment of the State Budget and Conservancy priorities established throughout the fiscal year but will not exceed the total amount authorized. The Program Authorization advances the five goals of the Conservancy's 2024-2029 Strategic Plan and each program's priorities, as described below.

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

Fiscal Summary: The requested FY 2024/25 Program Authorization is \$3,150,300 from various funding sources (such as Propositions 50, 68, and 84, Habitat Conservation Fund, Environmental License Plate Fund, Tahoe Conservancy Fund, Lake Tahoe Conservancy Account, Lake Tahoe Science and Lake Improvement Account, and the General Fund).

Last fall, the Conservancy submitted a proposed budget to the California Department of Finance and the California Natural Resources Agency. Governor Gavin Newsom's proposed budget for FY 2024/25 included some of the Conservancy's proposals. To date, the Legislature is still preparing a final budget. Once the State Budget is enacted, funding will be available for the new fiscal year, starting July 1, 2024, to implement this Program Authorization (see Attachment 2).

Overview

History

The Conservancy's 2024-2029 Strategic Plan outlines the goals and strategies for how the Conservancy will fulfill its mission to lead California's efforts to restore and enhance the extraordinary natural and recreational resources of the Basin. We look forward to operating under this new Strategic Plan beginning this year, pending Board approval. The

Conservancy uses the Strategic Plan to guide its work and prepare annual operational plans, which provide detailed steps for program implementation. The Conservancy's Strategic Plan focus areas and goals are:

Access: Provide Recreational Opportunities and Access for All

The Conservancy is committed to ensuring that the Basin's recreational resources are accessible to all. We are committed to making the Basin a welcoming and inclusive destination while maintaining sustainable and thriving communities. We will expand recreational networks, develop effective trail management strategies, and enhance equitable and sustainable access.

Innovation: 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: 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.

Restoration: 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: 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 partnerships, and promote Tribal presence.

Background

Since 1988, the Board has approved an annual authorization that allows Conservancy staff to initiate work as program needs arise and execute contracts to support day-to-day Conservancy program operations. The specific activities covered under the authorization change each year depending on the needs of the Conservancy, the funds available, and the priorities for a given year. These authorizations have consistently allowed staff to carry out the daily management of Conservancy land and facilities and support Conservancy goals, while retaining the authority of the Board to approve projects.

Toward that end, this Program Authorization is strictly a tool to allow staff to enter into

contracts and conduct activities for day-to-day program operations to manage Conservancy lands; coordinate and collaborate with partners; engage consultant and contract services; and analyze feasibility of potential future projects. The Program Authorization supports FY 2024/25 program priorities and goals, as outlined below. These activities are part of the Conservancy's ongoing efforts to lead and participate in select statewide and regional initiatives, including the Pathways to 30x30, Outdoors for All, and Lake Tahoe Climate Resilience strategies, and the Lake Tahoe Environmental Improvement Program (EIP). The Conservancy conducts racial equity action planning, staff training, and Tribal and community engagement to continually advance racial equity in the Conservancy's operations, investments, and policies.

Land Management:

Conservancy Land Management Program staff and Tahoe Resource Conservation District (Tahoe RCD) crews inspect, restore, and protect the Conservancy's nearly 4,700 parcels, including roads and other infrastructure. In addition, Land Management Program staff manages 15 properties with recreational amenities, including nine popular beaches, and the largest wetland in the Basin, the Upper Truckee Marsh. Staff also provides public outreach and education at high-use sites, works to resolve new and backlogged encroachments on Conservancy lands, addresses hundreds of citizen reports of hazards and other land management issues on Conservancy properties, and has recently begun developing a land management strategy to manage Conservancy lands more effectively and efficiently to meet statewide and regional priorities.

Tahoe Livable Communities:

The Conservancy addresses climate impacts and supports housing and sustainable compact development through its Tahoe Livable Communities Program. The Conservancy acquires developed properties with aging structures on environmentally sensitive lands, removes the development, and restores the land. The Conservancy also sells, leases, and exchanges vacant asset lands in town centers to support housing, multi-modal transportation, and economic development; and acquires remaining private properties in roadless subdivisions.

Recreation and Public Access:

The Conservancy's Recreation and Public Access Program works with partners across multi-jurisdictional land ownership to expand public access for all people to experience Lake Tahoe's forests, streams, beaches, and native surface trails. Recreation and Public Access Program staff manages and enhances Conservancy properties to provide high-quality recreational experiences for Tahoe's many visitors and residents. This includes working with the Land Management Program in developing a land management strategy to plan recreation and public access improvements on Conservancy lands for safety, accessibility, and equitable access. The Conservancy also works with partners to enhance recreational access by investing in recreation infrastructure projects and supporting programs that help systematically underserved communities access Tahoe.

Community Forestry:

Approximately 5,500 acres of Conservancy land is forested, with the majority located

within and adjacent to communities and infrastructure. Community Forestry Program staff improves forest health and reduces risks from wildfire on these Conservancy lands. This includes fuels management on Conservancy lands within neighborhoods and in the wildland-urban interface, removing hazard trees and other threats to public safety, and coordinating with utility companies and water providers to address hazards to infrastructure. The Conservancy collaboratively leads the Tahoe Fire and Fuels Team, which works to protect communities and reduce the risk of wildfire in the Basin. The Conservancy also coordinates with and provides technical assistance and funding to fire agencies and other land managers on projects on partner lands to achieve the goals of the Lake Tahoe Basin Forest Action Plan. This complementary work enhances wildfire protection and reduces risks to communities and Conservancy lands.

Landscape Resilience:

The Conservancy and its partners are increasingly shifting to large-landscape, cross-jurisdictional, multiple-benefit projects to achieve resilience goals more rapidly and comprehensively in the Basin. Landscape Resilience Program staff convenes and collaboratively leads multiple landscape-wide partnerships that create efficiencies of scope and scale. This work includes leading and supporting the Tahoe-Central Sierra Initiative, which is restoring forest resilience on approximately 2.4 million acres by linking forest restoration collaboratives. It also includes increasing the pace and scale of forest health projects, using prescribed fire, expanding the restoration workforce, and increasing biomass utilization. Staff also advances biodiversity conservation, climate change adaptation, and greenhouse gas emissions reductions throughout the Conservancy's work. This includes supporting Basin partners by coordinating with state agencies and providing updated climate science to inform restoration planning and ongoing management.

Watershed Restoration and Water Quality:

The Conservancy improves water quality, enhances wildlife habitat, protects biodiversity, sequesters carbon, and restores climate resilience through the Watershed Restoration and Water Quality Program (Watershed Program). Watershed Program staff leads and supports watershed restoration projects on Conservancy lands. The Conservancy also partners with other agencies to plan, fund, and implement climate resilience and water quality improvements throughout the Basin. This includes leading the Upper Truckee River Watershed Advisory Group, co-chairing the Tahoe Watershed Improvement Group, and supporting implementation of the Basin's Aquatic Invasive Species Action Agenda, which sets short- and long-term management targets to control aquatic invasive species in Lake Tahoe.

Organizational Learning and Excellence:

The Conservancy works to ensure that its staff has the requisite skills and resources to continue accomplishing innovative and ambitious programmatic work. The Conservancy also continues to collaborate closely with partner state agencies to meet emerging gubernatorial and legislative mandates and fulfill its responsibility to represent the State in the EIP. This work includes:

- Investing in professional and leadership development;

- Embedding the concepts of racial equity into its operations, investments, and policies through the establishment of a Racial Equity Action Plan, ongoing staff training, and meaningful Tribal and community engagement;
- Promoting equitable hiring by including non-traditional recruiting methods and minimizing the impact of implicit bias in the hiring process;
- Integrating fiscal and budgeting, legal, and information technology operations within Conservancy resource and land programs;
- Seeking updates to the Conservancy's legislative authority for implementing state priorities; and
- Supporting external communications to help the public learn about and engage in the Conservancy's programs and projects.

Detailed Description of Recommended Action

This Program Authorization allows staff to expend up to \$3,150,300 in FY 2024/25 for various program activities. Such activities may include the Conservancy's day-to-day operations to manage Conservancy lands; coordinating and collaborating with partners; engaging consultant and contract services; and analyzing feasibility of potential future projects. Staff will return to the Board for project-specific authorization as needed.

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

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

\$775,100 for Land Management to maintain Conservancy lands and plan future restoration projects.

\$285,000 for Tahoe Livable Communities to conduct appraisals, environmental analyses, and permitting, and plan and assess the feasibility of future projects.

\$900,000 for Recreation and Public Access to plan and assess the feasibility of future projects.

\$200,000 for Community Forestry to plan and assess the feasibility of future projects.

\$200,000 for Landscape Resilience to survey, inventory, and monitor resources, and support climate and biodiversity research and monitoring.

\$450,200 for Watershed to survey, inventory, and monitor resources; conduct watershed and water quality analyses; and plan future restoration projects.

\$340,000 for the Conservancy's Organizational Excellence interdivisional work,

including engaging with communities, providing training to employees, developing communications materials, and purchasing supplies.

Budget Authorization	FY 2024/25 Funding
Land Management	\$775,100
Tahoe Livable Communities	\$285,000
Recreation and Public Access	\$900,000
Community Forestry	\$200,000
Landscape Resilience	\$200,000
Watershed Restoration and Water Quality	\$450,200
Organizational Learning and Excellence	\$340,000
Total	\$3,150,300

Authority

Consistency with the Conservancy’s Enabling Legislation

The Program Authorization is consistent with the Conservancy’s enabling legislation. Specifically, Government Code section 66906.8 authorizes the Conservancy to select and hire consultants or contractors to provide services necessary to achieve the purposes of the Conservancy, including protecting the natural environment at Lake Tahoe. Government Code section 66907.9 authorizes the Conservancy to initiate, negotiate, and participate in agreements for the management of land under its ownership and control with local agencies, nonprofit organizations, individuals, corporate entities, partnerships, or other entities. Government Code section 66907.10 authorizes the Conservancy to improve and develop acquired lands for a variety of purposes, including protecting the natural environment, protecting public access and recreational facilities, preserving wildlife habitat areas, and facilitating access to and management of Conservancy-owned lands.

Consistency with the Conservancy’s Strategic Plan

The recommended activities are consistent with all the Conservancy’s 2024-2029 Strategic Plan goals and strategies.

Consistency with the Conservancy’s Program Guidelines

The recommended action is consistent with previous authorizations by the Board for the management of Conservancy programs, including the Conservancy’s Special Use Guidelines, Forestry Guidelines, Grant Guidelines, and Land Transfer Guidelines.

Consistency with External Authorities

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

#06.01.03.0002 - California Tahoe Conservancy Land Management Program and facilitate the implementation of other individual EIP projects related to forestry and restoration.

Compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act

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

List of Attachments

Attachment 1 – Resolution 24-06-08

Attachment 2 – Fiscal Year 2024/25 Budget

Conservancy Staff Contacts

Matt Whalen, Budget Officer

matt.whalen@tahoe.ca.gov

Kevin Prior, Director of the Land Division

kevin.prior@tahoe.ca.gov

Erin Ernst, Director of the Natural Resources Division

erin.ernst@tahoe.ca.gov

Brent Coe, Director of Administration and Information Technology

brent.coe@tahoe.ca.gov