

## UPPER TRUCKEE RIVER SIGNAGE GRANT

**Recommended Action:** Adopt Resolution 24-09-04 (Attachment 1) authorizing a grant of up to \$100,000 to Tahoe Resource Conservation District (Tahoe RCD) to develop a signage plan for the Upper Truckee River corridor and install signs at various locations.

**Executive Summary:** This recommended action authorizes a \$100,000 grant to Tahoe RCD to plan and implement signage along the Upper Truckee River (River) corridor. Tahoe RCD will work with the California Tahoe Conservancy (Conservancy) and other partners to develop a signage plan for the corridor. In addition, Tahoe RCD will have further discussions with the Washoe Tribe of Nevada and California (Washoe Tribe) to confirm how they would like to engage in developing the signage plan. Such a plan is needed because the multijurisdictional River corridor lacks cohesive signage and messaging. The signage plan will identify sign locations and provide guidance for consistent designs, installation, and multilingual content. Sign content may include information about the history of development and impacts, watershed restoration projects and partnerships, recreational resources, safety and wayfinding, and tribal and cultural values. Tahoe RCD will then produce and install a subset of educational and informational signs, in alignment with the signage plan, to improve user experience and encourage stewardship.

The recommended action advances the Conservancy's Strategic Plan Goals to Provide Recreational Opportunities and Access for All (Strategies 1 and 3), to Restore the Basin's Social and Ecological Resilience (Strategy 1), and to Care for the Basin's Natural, Tribal, and Cultural Resources (Strategies 2, 3, and 4).

Upon Board authorization, Conservancy staff will work with Tahoe RCD to execute the grant agreement and support project implementation.

**Location:** The signage plan will address public lands along the River corridor south of Lake Tahoe (Attachment 2). The specific locations where signs will be installed under the grant agreement are still to be determined.

**Fiscal Summary:** The Conservancy will award up to \$100,000 of General Fund appropriated for nature-based solutions. Conservancy staff will process the grant as part of its regular workload.

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## Overview

### History

The River is Lake Tahoe's largest inflowing stream and is a major source of sediment and nutrients to Lake Tahoe. Logging, grazing, roads, stream channelization, urban development, and an airport have extensively modified the lower portion of the watershed, resulting in impairments that reduce habitat value, water quality, and climate resilience.

The River corridor is an important place within the homeland of the Washoe Tribe. Prior to western colonization, Washoe families spent summers along the River, fishing, hunting, gathering, and managing the land to protect culturally important resources.

Today, the Conservancy, USDA Forest Service – Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit, Tahoe RCD, California Department of Parks and Recreation, City of South Lake Tahoe, and other partners are comprehensively restoring the River to achieve environmental and public access goals. Conservancy staff leads the Upper Truckee River Watershed Advisory Group (UTRWAG), which coordinates restoration work on the lower nine miles of the River. UTRWAG is made up of partner agencies, non-governmental organizations, and interested members of the public.

UTRWAG agencies manage land along the River to protect natural resources and provide public access. Public lands in the River corridor are accessible from numerous neighborhoods and urban areas and are a popular place to recreate. Lake Tahoe Basin (Basin) residents and visitors use these properties for a variety of activities, including walking and running, dog-walking, cross-country skiing, wildlife viewing, swimming, rafting, kayaking, and more. These properties provide excellent opportunities for public access, stewardship, and education.

UTRWAG acknowledges that additional and consistent signage is a priority to effectively restore and manage the watershed. Tahoe RCD and other land managers currently maintain signs on River properties but recommend signage improvements for several reasons. Because multiple public agencies manage land along the River, it can be difficult for the public to know what activities are allowed in different areas. It can also be challenging for recreationists to navigate and recreate through the River properties, as parking locations, trails, private property, and safety considerations are not always posted. In addition, numerous restoration projects are completed or underway, and existing signage informing the public about these efforts is limited. The Washoe Tribe is also interested in conveying cultural interpretive information and ongoing Tribal stewardship efforts along the River, as these areas are an important part of their homeland.

## **Detailed Description of Recommended Action**

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

The Conservancy will provide a grant to Tahoe RCD to develop a signage plan for the lower nine miles of the River. Tahoe RCD will coordinate with UTRWAG to develop sign content and will encourage broad UTRWAG participation in all elements of the plan. Through this coordination, Tahoe RCD will also identify signage requirements and standards specific to partner agencies that must be considered for the plan and signage design. Tahoe RCD will also work with the Washoe Tribe to incorporate educational information about Tribal culture, language, and stewardship. In addition, Tahoe RCD will conduct public outreach for the plan to understand what the River corridor users think is important information for signage content. The plan will identify sign locations, provide a design template, specify messaging and content, and present multilingual translations. Tahoe RCD will need to consider the feedback provided by partners, the Washoe Tribe, and the public and work through what the most important messages are to be displayed on the signs.

Tahoe RCD will produce and install signs at several locations along the River. This will include securing necessary permits or authorizations and hiring contractors to fabricate and install the signs, as necessary. The Conservancy will work with Tahoe RCD to determine the exact number of signs, but staff expects the grant will provide adequate funding to produce and install at least five signs. Staff anticipates that UTRWAG partners will apply the signage plan to future signage efforts along the River corridor and elsewhere in the Basin. In coordination with UTRWAG partners, Tahoe RCD will work to identify funding needs and opportunities to produce and install additional signs.

### **2. Overall Context and Benefits**

The Conservancy prioritizes public engagement, education, and stewardship as part of its Strategic Plan and Racial Equity Action Plan. Informational and educational signage is an excellent way to advance these priorities while improving the recreation experience for all.

The Tahoe RCD signage plan will provide consistent messaging, aesthetics, and information for use by the various public landowners along the River corridor. Guidance on sign engineering, specifications, and installation will benefit land management agencies and provide efficiencies through a collaborative effort. Multilingual translations will support equitable opportunities for recreationists. Staff anticipates applying the signage plan to other areas in the Basin, as it can serve as a model for cross jurisdictional and equity-focused communications.

Sign topics may include:

- The benefits and importance of restoration projects and watershed partnerships, including for climate resilience and carbon sequestration,
- The sensitive nature of the River and wetlands,

- The importance of stewardship to protect these habitats,
- Cultural interpretation to educate the public about the Washoe Tribe’s history, language, and ongoing stewardship practices, while increasing the Tribe’s presence in the Basin, and
- Information about access points, safety information, and how to recreate responsibly.

3. Schedule for the Recommended Action

Tahoe RCD will begin the signage plan in fall 2024 and anticipates completing all grant activities by summer 2026.

**Financing**

Upon approval, staff will award up to \$100,000 of General Fund appropriated for nature-based solutions.

<b>Task</b>	<b>Amount</b>
Project Management	\$25,000
Signage Plan	\$50,000
Sign Production and Installation	\$25,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$100,000</b>

**Authority**

**Consistency with the Conservancy’s Enabling Legislation**

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

**Consistency with the Conservancy’s Strategic Plan**

The recommended action is consistent with several Strategic Plan goals and strategies, including:

- Provide Recreational Opportunities and Access for All (Strategy 1: Expand Recreational Networks and Partnerships, and Strategy 3: Enhance Equitable and Sustainable Access)
- Restore the Basin’s Social and Ecological Resilience (Strategy 1: Integrate and Scale Up Restoration)
- Care for the Basin’s Natural, Tribal, and Cultural Resources (Strategy 2: Steward and Secure Conservancy Lands, Strategy 3: Enhance Community Engagement and Partnerships, and Strategy 4: Promote Tribal Presence)

**Consistency with the Conservancy’s Program Guidelines**

The recommended action is consistent with the Conservancy’s Stream Environment Zone Program Objectives and the Recreation and Public Access Program Guidelines.

### **Consistency with External Authorities**

The recommended action is consistent with the Lake Tahoe Environmental Improvement Program (EIP) because it advances several EIP projects. The recommended action also supports important state mandates and plans, such as the Pathways to 30x30 Strategy, State Wildlife Action Plan, Climate Adaptation Strategy, and Outdoors for All Strategy.

### **Compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act**

Pursuant to the CEQA Guidelines (Cal. Code Regs., tit. 14, § 15000 et seq.), certain classes of activities are statutorily and categorically 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. Pursuant to Public Resources Code sections 21001(f) and 21082, the Conservancy has also adopted regulations to implement, interpret, and make specific the provisions of CEQA. (Cal. Code Regs., tit. 14, § 12100 et seq.) Staff has evaluated the recommended action and has found it to be exempt under CEQA. The recommended action qualifies for a categorical exemption under CEQA guidelines section 15303, New Construction of Small Structures, and the Conservancy's CEQA regulations, section 12102.3, because it involves the planning and installation of a limited number of small structures. Staff has prepared a notice of exemption (NOE) (Attachment 3). If the Board approves the recommended action, staff will file the NOE with the State Clearinghouse pursuant to CEQA Guidelines, section 15062.

### **List of Attachments**

- Attachment 1 – Resolution 24-09-04
- Attachment 2 – Location Map
- Attachment 3 – Conservancy Notice of Exemption
  - Exhibit A – Location Map

### **Conservancy Staff Contact**

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