

Executive Director's Report

The devastating Los Angeles fires remind us all of the importance of protecting communities and reducing wildfire risk. Since the January fires, the State of California has been working to help impacted people access critical support during this time of great need.

Here in the Lake Tahoe Basin (Basin), where fires such as the 2021 Caldor Fire and 2007 Angora Fire remain recent memories, the California Tahoe Conservancy (Conservancy) and our partners will continue ongoing work to make our forests and communities more resilient to wildfire.

We have accelerated fuels reduction on our open space lots in Tahoe neighborhoods via projects that include thinning adjacent USDA Forest Service properties under a Good Neighbor Authority Agreement. We have helped fund planning for projects that will reduce wildfire risk around south shore schools. This past fall, the Conservancy awarded a new grant to help North Tahoe Fire Protection District expand work to assist community members in making their homes and properties more resistant to fires. This winter, we have continued to collaborate with Tahoe Fire and Fuels Team partners on prescribed fire operations on Conservancy lands. And we're making plans now to put new Proposition 4 funding to quick use to increase the pace and scale of forest and wildfire resilience work.

Working together with our federal, tribal, state, and Basin partners, we remain committed to protecting the Basin's extraordinary natural resources and its communities and visitors.

Jason Vasques, Executive Director
California Tahoe Conservancy

Program Updates

1. Land Management

Land Management Projects

The Land Management Program is in the throes of planning small-scale projects on Conservancy land for implementation this summer. Projects include restoring sensitive

lands, protecting water quality, maintaining properties and facilities, reducing fuel hazards, and resolving encroachments.

Upper Truckee Marsh South Motel Demolition and Site Stabilization

Staff continues to work with the Department of General Services (DGS) to prepare contracts and obtain permits for demolishing the former Motel 6 and restaurant buildings and parking lot on the Upper Truckee Marsh South property. The Conservancy anticipates demolition will start fall 2025. Staff is also working with the City of South Lake Tahoe (City) for the City to use the site for fire and police training.

Facilities Management

The Conservancy anticipates opening the entrance gates to Van Sickle Bi-State Park and Tahoe Pines for the summer season on May 1. Additionally, to protect birds and wildlife during the breeding season, the Conservancy will implement the annual seasonal dog closure at the Upper Truckee Marsh beginning the same day.

2. Tahoe Livable Communities

Property Acquisitions

Conservancy staff continues to work on identifying and completing property acquisitions. This includes exploring acquisition opportunities, ordering appraisals, completing internal program reviews, lining up funding, teeing up Board approvals, and working with the DGS to meet state acquisition requirements.

Land Bank

The Conservancy banks and transfers development rights and land coverage for affordable housing, town center, and other infill projects in the City and El Dorado and Placer Counties. These rights come from acquisitions, such as the Upper Truckee Marsh South acquisition, as well as through restoring environmentally sensitive land. The Conservancy sells development rights to members of the public to help them meet permitting requirements. The Conservancy also sells and exchanges rights with government agencies to promote recreation, housing, and other area plan goals.

3. Recreation and Public Access

Van Sickle Bi-State Park

Staff continues preliminary planning for the Van Sickle Bi-State Park Phase III Project, in which the Conservancy will construct a paved shared-use path from the park entrance to the California Day Use Area and state line, eventually connecting to the Nevada Day Use Area. Staff expects to complete environmental review and preliminary plans in 2025, and due diligence necessary to secure Public Works Board authorization in 2026. Staff anticipates construction to begin in 2028 or 2029.

Land Management Strategy

In 2025, staff will advance the next phase of the Conservancy's land management strategy planning process. The Conservancy has worked with a consultant to develop land management strategies. This has included outreach efforts to identify key land management issues, needs, and potential planning options. This next phase includes visioning, setting goals, and conducting several technical studies to guide the development of land management strategies and policies.

4. Community Forestry

Fall/Winter Pile Burning Update

With assistance from the Nevada-Yuba-Placer and Amador-El Dorado units of CAL FIRE, the Conservancy completed pile burning on approximately 15 acres across three project areas, in the North Upper Truckee neighborhood in the south shore and the Carnelian Bay and Dollar Hill communities in the north shore.

Upcoming Projects

Staff is advertising and executing contracts to implement forestry projects during the upcoming field season. In addition to the continued work on projects started in 2024, staff will coordinate several new projects, including multi-ownership community projects on the west shore in both Placer and El Dorado Counties, as well as mechanical treatment projects on large Conservancy properties near Lake Tahoe Airport in the south shore.

5. Landscape Resilience

Forest Capacity and Planning

In November 2024, the Conservancy awarded \$601,700 to the North Tahoe Fire Protection District for three years of work on programs to help reduce wildfire risk for north and west shore communities and their surrounding forests.

Tahoe-Central Sierra Initiative

The [Tahoe-Central Sierra Project Tracker](https://projecttracker.tahoecentralsierra.org), available at <https://projecttracker.tahoecentralsierra.org>, went live to the public in early fall. The tracker is a dynamic tool designed to enhance planning, monitoring, and reporting of projects across the Tahoe-Central Sierra Initiative (TCSI) landscape. The TCSI team is now coordinating with partners to add more project information in the tracker.

TCSI partners also released a capacity report in early fall highlighting the individual and collective capacity needed to foster landscape-scale resilience in the TCSI region. The report highlights the critical capacity needs, barriers, and opportunities of entities working within the TCSI region. This assessment serves as a roadmap for TCSI partners

to address these needs, emphasizing the importance of biomass utilization, enhanced regional coordination, advocacy and funding support, and long-term monitoring and adaptive management.

6. Watershed Restoration and Water Quality

Upper Truckee Marsh South Project Planning and Engagement

In addition to the forthcoming demolition of the motel and restaurant buildings and parking lot on the Upper Truckee Marsh South property, Conservancy staff recently launched project planning efforts for the next phase of the broader Upper Truckee Marsh restoration and will address natural resource and public access needs on and in the vicinity of the Conservancy's Upper Truckee Marsh South property. Conservancy staff is working closely with a consultant team, partners, and the public to consider and analyze a broad spectrum of restoration and recreation opportunities in this area.

Conservancy staff recently started a comprehensive engagement strategy for the project. This includes outreach to the Washoe Tribe of Nevada and California (Washoe Tribe), the City, the public, community-based organizations, and other partners and interested parties. Staff toured the project site with representatives from the Washoe Tribe in early December, and the Tribe has conveyed a strong interest in working closely with the Conservancy on the project. The Conservancy will release an online public survey this spring, so that interested parties will have the opportunity to provide ideas, perspectives, and comments to help shape the project. Staff will also attend community events and offer site walks for the public, to inform interested individuals and seek additional public input.

Budget, Accounting, and Administration

In November 2024, voters passed Proposition 4, which authorizes the State to issue \$10 billion in bonds for environmental and climate projects. Proposition 4 emphasizes benefits to disadvantaged communities.

Proposition 4 provides direct funding to the Conservancy via two components:

1. Protect Biodiversity and Accelerating Nature-Based Climate Solutions (\$29 million) - reduce the risks of climate change impacts upon communities, fish and wildlife, and natural resources, and increase public access.
2. Wildfire and Forest Resilience (\$25.5 million) - watershed improvement, forest health, biomass utilization, chaparral and forest restoration, and workforce development.

The Conservancy will work with Basin partners to identify and fund priority projects under the Lake Tahoe Environmental Improvement Program on both Conservancy and partner properties that will further Proposition 4 goals.