

Executive Director's Report

As summer nears, the California Tahoe Conservancy is in the midst of planning future environmental restoration and public access projects, and making plans for the efficient use of funds available with the passage of Proposition 4, the Climate Bond. The Climate Bond provides a total of \$54.5 million to the Conservancy. California Assembly Bill 100 made \$23.5 million in Climate Bond funding available early to the Conservancy as part of a broader state wildfire resilience effort. Along with additional Climate Bond funding that becomes available in July, these funds are supporting work by the Conservancy and our partners to restore wildfire and forest resilience, improve watersheds, increase public access, protect biodiversity and accelerate nature-based climate solutions in the Basin. We look forward to ensuring these funds advance high priority projects while easing processes for grant applicants and ensuring we meet the State's goals for transparency.

The Conservancy honors the legacy of longtime Lake Tahoe environmental champion Laurel Ames, who passed away last month. Over a career that spanned more than six decades, Laurel served as executive director of the League to Save Lake Tahoe (Keep Tahoe Blue) and founding director of the Sierra Nevada Alliance, in addition to helping to found the California Watershed Network and leading Tahoe advocacy for the Sierra Club. The natural resources and communities of the Lake Tahoe Basin are better protected and more resilient thanks to Laurel's decades of committed and strategic advocacy.

The Conservancy also honors the legacy of Michael Plaziak, who passed away in April after serving as executive officer of the Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board. Mike initially joined the Regional Board as an engineering geologist in 1995. In addition to his time with the Regional Board, Mike served with the Marine Corps for 27 years during numerous deployments.

Jason Vasques, Executive Director
California Tahoe Conservancy

Program Updates

1. Land Management

Land Management Projects

The Land Management Program is implementing small-scale restoration and management projects on Conservancy land with Tahoe Resource Conservation District crews, who started work in May.

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. The City of South Lake Tahoe (City) is currently using the site for fire and police training.

Facilities Management

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

2. Tahoe Livable Communities

Property Acquisitions

Staff continues to work on identifying and completing property acquisitions. This includes continuing work to complete the acquisition adjacent to Van Sickle Bi-State Park, that the Board approved in March.

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. Summer is the busy season for Land Bank sales, coinciding with construction season in the Basin.

3. Recreation and Public Access

Accessibility Improvements at North Shore Beaches

Staff continues planning lakefront accessibility improvements at Patton Landing Beach (Carnelian Bay) and North Tahoe Beach (Kings Beach). For the two projects, the Conservancy will refurbish and improve accessibility of the restrooms and picnic areas, resurface all walkways, including the sidewalks along State Route 28, and ensure the facilities meet the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). At Patton Landing, the Conservancy will construct an accessible picnic area and ramp to the beach. Each project is estimated to cost approximately \$1.25 million to plan and construct, for a total of \$2.5 million. The Conservancy has secured \$1.2 million in grants from the North Tahoe Community Alliance, Tahoe Fund, and California Department of

Fish and Wildlife. The Conservancy will use its own funds for the remaining \$1.3 million. Staff expects construction for both projects will happen in the next two years.

Land Management Strategy

Staff continues to advance the next phase of the Conservancy's land management strategy planning process. In 2023 and 2024, the Conservancy worked with a consultant to begin outlining considerations for developing a comprehensive land management strategy. Work included outreach to help identify key land management issues, needs, and potential planning options. This next phase includes an internal visioning process to define the goals, objectives, and guiding principles of the Land Management Strategy; develop a stakeholder engagement plan; build upon previous work developing a sequenced process for completing the Land Management Strategy; and conduct technical studies to support rulemaking and land use planning. This summer, the Conservancy expects to contract with a consultant to assist with the next phase of planning. The next phase will take approximately 18 months to complete.

Recreation and Public Access Program Update

Please refer to the Recreation and Public Access Program Update, Agenda Item 7 for recent information on the Recreation and Public Access Program and the Tahoe for All Program Description.

Tahoe Public Beaches Website

The Conservancy and Tahoe Fund jointly manage TahoePublicBeaches.org, a website to help improve the recreation experience for residents and visitors. Basin partners developed the site in part to ease overcrowding on the most-frequented hotspots by providing detailed information about all public beaches, including lesser-known destinations, using information provided directly by land managers. The Conservancy pays annual hosting and site management costs. Over 180,000 people used the site in the past 12 months. Partners launched the platform as a mobile app in 2013 before transitioning content to a website in 2019.

Lily Avenue Access to Lake Tahoe

Following discussions with south shore accessibility advocates, staff with the Conservancy, City, and Tahoe Regional Planning Agency are collaborating to explore options to improve access to Barton Beach from Lily Avenue for people with mobility challenges.

4. Community Forestry

Community Protection Projects

Staff is administering contracts to implement wildfire risk reduction projects on open space lots in Tahoe neighborhoods. Projects include thinning both Conservancy parcels and adjacent USDA Forest Service properties under a Good Neighbor Authority Agreement. These multi-ownership projects are occurring on the west shore in both

Placer and El Dorado Counties and on the south shore in El Dorado County and the City. Crews using hand tools will complete these projects.

Wildland-Urban Interface Projects

Staff is also planning and managing approximately 150 acres of mechanical treatments on larger Conservancy properties near Lake Tahoe Airport and in the 15th Street area of the City. The Governor's Emergency Proclamation to expedite critical fuels reduction projects provides the Conservancy an opportunity to fast track the 55-acre 15th Street project through review via the new suspension process. This project is comprised of both Conservancy and USDA Forest Service parcels.

5. Landscape Resilience

Tahoe-Central Sierra Initiative

Tahoe-Central Sierra Initiative (TCSI) partners continue to develop a ten-year contract to guarantee a certain supply of wood products from across national forests in the TCSI region. Partners are designing this contract to enhance the economic viability of facilities serving the region. TCSI partners released a Request for Information from private sector timber operators in May and hope to award the contract in fall or early winter.

Tribal Engagement

Conservancy staff and Tahoe Basin Connectivity Study grantees met with Washoe Environmental Protection Department staff at Máyala Wáta to deploy wildlife cameras. As part of the study, Tribal staff will continue to play a key role in this work by checking the camera stations and providing additional Tribal input for the study.

6. Watershed Restoration and Water Quality

Upper Truckee Marsh South Project Planning and Engagement

Staff has been engaging the public to inform the Upper Truckee Marsh South Project planning effort. The Conservancy released an online public survey in early April and has received significant interest with more than 500 survey responses to date. Staff also led public site tours in May and engaged the public at community events, including Earth Day events in South Lake Tahoe and with the Washoe Tribe of Nevada and California. The Conservancy will offer additional public and partner engagement opportunities as the project progresses.

Elks Club Parking Improvements

In July, the Conservancy will construct an upgraded parking lot on its Elks Club property along the Upper Truckee River. The new parking lot will meet ADA requirements so that everyone can enjoy this property. Storm water improvements will keep pollutants from entering the Upper Truckee River and Lake Tahoe. The Conservancy will also install

gates at both entrances to the parking lot, as well as permanent signs stating that no overnight parking is allowed. The Conservancy will close the parking lot to the public during construction, but will maintain public access to the river and certain trails in the area during construction.

Budget, Accounting, and Administration

In November 2024, voters passed Proposition 4, the Climate Bond, 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 Accelerate Nature-Based Climate Solutions (\$29 million) – to 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) – to improve watersheds and forest health, utilize biomass, restore chaparral and forests, and increase workforce development. As noted above, the legislature made \$23.5 million available immediately to respond to the urgent need to address the threat of wildfire.

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.

In January 2025, Governor Gavin Newsom proposed a budget that includes baseline funding that covers the Conservancy's staff and operations. The Conservancy anticipates the May Revision of the proposed budget to be approved by the legislature including \$22.3 million for staff operations, grants, and Conservancy projects.