

California Tahoe Conservancy
Agenda Item 7
September 18, 2025

UPPER TRUCKEE MARSH SOUTH PUBLIC INPUT UPDATE

In March 2024, the California Tahoe Conservancy (Conservancy) acquired the Upper Truckee Marsh South property (formerly known as the Knox Johnson and Motel 6 property), connecting public lands along the Upper Truckee River (River). The acquisition includes the 4-acre former motel and restaurant site, 25 acres of wetland, 1,500 feet of River corridor, and 2 acres of upland with a residential structure. A critical and heavily used segment of the South Tahoe Bikeway (Bikeway) crosses the River and traverses the property. The acquisition is in the heart of South Lake Tahoe and near several residential neighborhoods.

This Conservancy property presents a great opportunity to continue restoring the Upper Truckee Marsh (Marsh) and improving public access. Staff recently began planning the Upper Truckee Marsh South Project (Project). The Project area includes the new acquisition and adjacent existing Conservancy wetlands in the southern Marsh. The Conservancy is exploring ideas for wetland restoration, public access improvements, and vegetation management.

In spring of this year, staff conducted broad outreach to solicit Project ideas and comments from partners and the public. Staff engaged with the Washoe Tribe of Nevada and California (Washoe Tribe), the City of South Lake Tahoe, and other Lake Tahoe Basin (Basin) partners. Several in-person events, including workshops with Conservancy staff, meetings with community-based organizations, site walks with the public, and tabling at community events, provided opportunities for broad public input. Outreach also included a bilingual online public survey that was open for more than two months and received over 500 responses. The survey queried the public about how they use and access the property, desires for future improvements, and demographics.

The Conservancy's goal for this outreach effort was to hear from Basin residents and visitors, including people from diverse sectors of the community. The online survey respondents came from varying demographics, and the Conservancy made additional targeted efforts to hear from underserved communities. Staff attended the Washoe Tribe's Earth Day event to hear from Tribal members including youth and elders. Staff also held individual meetings and workshops with organizations representing Hispanic and Latino community members, seniors, and people with disabilities.

Responses to the public and partner outreach provided numerous ideas, opportunities, perspectives, and concerns. Major themes from the outreach indicate:

- Significant support for prioritizing River and wildlife health, restoration, and scenic quality.
- The importance of the Bikeway through the property, and ideas to improve it as part of the Project.
- Interest in improving public access to the site's natural environment and the River, and ideas for a picnic area, restroom, and pocket park.
- Conflicting perspectives on the appropriateness of parking at the site.
- Interest in accessibility improvements, including to trails, River access, and shaded rest areas.
- Public safety concerns related to illegal camping, wildfire, flooding, and Bikeway user conflicts.
- Some continued interest in developing the property for housing.
- Ideas for aesthetic improvements, wayfinding signage, and interpretive exhibits about natural resources and Tribal stewardship.
- General enthusiasm for the Project, and appreciation for the Conservancy soliciting public input.

Staff is incorporating the public feedback in preliminary Project concepts and alternatives, and preparing for additional public engagement later this year. The next phase of public engagement will focus on collecting input on conceptual Project designs and elements. This phase will inform the Conservancy for when it refines the Project in anticipation of environmental review in 2026. Similar to the earlier round of public engagement, the Conservancy will aim to hear from all sectors of the community and Tahoe visitors, along with key partners such as the Washoe Tribe and others. Staff will continue to work closely with partners and the public as the Project progresses in 2026 and thereafter.

Conservancy Staff Contact

Scott Carroll, Watershed Program Staff

scott.carroll@tahoe.ca.gov