

ENVIRONMENTALLY SENSITIVE LAND ACQUISITION

Recommended Action: Adopt Resolution 26-03-05 (Attachment 1) authorizing the acquisition of a parcel located at 3621 Blackwood Road (El Dorado County Assessment Number (AN) 027-290-004), demolition of an existing 206-square-foot shed, removal of an above-ground generator and fencing, and related site stabilization, for a total amount of up to \$440,000.

Executive Summary: The California Tahoe Conservancy (Conservancy) recommends the acquisition of a 1.9-acre parcel with environmentally sensitive land at 3621 Blackwood Road in the City of South Lake Tahoe (City). The parcel is located in the Bijou Park Creek watershed, contains mountain meadow and wetland habitat, and is adjacent to Conservancy and USDA Forest Service land. Bijou Park Creek runs through the parcel. The parcel and surrounding watershed provide important wildlife habitat and serve as a corridor for bear, coyote, and other species. This acquisition enables the Conservancy to restore the parcel, protect Bijou Park Creek and associated habitat, and prevent future development on sensitive land. The acquisition aligns with the Conservancy's 2024-2029 Strategic Plan goal to Restore the Lake Tahoe Basin's (Basin) Social and Ecological Resilience. It also supports Executive Order N-82-20, which aims to conserve 30 percent of California's natural lands by 2030. Upon Board authorization, Conservancy staff will perform the necessary due diligence activities to acquire the parcel, demolish and remove the existing structure, and stabilize the site.

Location: The parcel is located at 3621 Blackwood Road in the City (AN 027-290-004) (Attachment 2).

Fiscal Summary: The total cost of the parcel acquisition, demolition, and site stabilization is up to \$440,000, which will be funded by a combination of several funding sources that may include Proposition 68, Proposition 4, and the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency's (TRPA) Excess Coverage Mitigation Fund. Conservancy staff will process the acquisition as a part of its regular workload.

Overview

History

Since its inception, the Conservancy has acquired environmentally sensitive parcels in priority watersheds throughout the California side of the Basin to facilitate wetland and mountain meadow protection. Additionally, the Conservancy acquires and restores environmentally sensitive land coverage, either permanently retiring it to eliminate development potential or transferring coverage to support sustainability goals.

In fall 2024, the landowner contacted the Conservancy and expressed interest in possibly selling this parcel. In August 2025, the Conservancy made an offer at fair market value based on an approved appraisal, and the owner accepted the offer.

Detailed Description of Recommended Action

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

The Conservancy proposes to acquire El Dorado County AN 027-290-004 (Attachment 3). The parcel currently includes an AM radio tower, a 206 square-foot shed housing radio equipment, an adjacent above-ground generator, and fencing that surrounds the shed and generator. The landowner and lessee of the radio equipment have agreed to end the lease when it expires in January 2026. The landowner also agreed to remove the AM radio tower on the site before the Conservancy acquires the parcel. The Conservancy will demolish and remove the remaining shed, generator, and fencing, and stabilize the site after closing escrow.

Upon Board approval, Conservancy staff will take the necessary steps to complete the transaction. As part of the property acquisition due diligence process, the Conservancy will complete an environmental site assessment. The current property owner reviewed the approved appraised fair market value of \$390,000 and is a willing seller. If applicable, the seller must pay any encumbrances such as taxes, judgements, liens, or deeds of trust prior to escrow closure. The Conservancy will pay for escrow fees, title insurance, and other related closing costs. Staff has obtained and reviewed a title report and will update the report prior to closure of escrow.

2. Overall Context and Benefits

The 1.9-acre parcel is located within the Bijou Park Creek watershed, adjacent to both Conservancy and USDA Forest Service lands, and surrounded by apartments, homes, and other development in the Bijou community. The Bijou community is an economically disadvantaged community, and acquiring the parcel will provide residents with neighborhood access to public land. The parcel's protection as permanent open space supports the City's ongoing Bijou Park Creek Restoration Project and protects wildlife habitat and corridors, scenic quality, and long-term watershed health.

The City's watershed project is a comprehensive restoration effort focused on improving water quality, stream environment zones (SEZ), and drainage along Bijou Park Creek. The proposed acquisition parcel, since it is privately owned, is not currently identified for any watershed project improvements, but improvements are proposed both upstream and downstream of this parcel. Bijou Park Creek runs through the parcel, and protecting this area through acquisition will help improve water quality and enhance wildlife habitat by preserving natural filtration processes and maintaining a connected and undisturbed wildlife corridor. Maintaining this active drainage will also support the watershed's and surrounding community's resilience to climate change by allowing water runoff to spread out safely.

In addition, staff determined that the parcel contains existing coverage eligible for removal, which may be deposited into the Conservancy's Land Bank or permanently retired to help achieve the goals of the Lake Tahoe Regional Plan. This acquisition aligns with the Conservancy's 2024–2029 Strategic Plan goal to Restore the Basin's Social and Ecological Resilience and advances Executive Order N-82-20, which calls for conserving 30 percent of California's natural lands by 2030.

3. Schedule for the Recommended Action

Pending Board authorization, Conservancy staff will complete the necessary due diligence activities and will close escrow during late spring or summer 2026. Conservancy staff will undertake demolition and stabilization of the site after the acquisition is completed.

Financing

Staff seeks authorization for up to \$440,000 for the acquisition of the parcel, the subsequent demolition and removal of the existing structure, generator, and fencing, and site stabilization work. The purchase price of the parcel will not exceed fair market value, as approved by the Department of General Services. The Conservancy will use a combination of several funding sources that may include Proposition 68, Proposition 4, and the TRPA's Excess Coverage Mitigation Fund. Conservancy staff will process the acquisition as a part of its regular workload.

Authority

Consistency with the Conservancy's Enabling Legislation

This acquisition is consistent with the Conservancy's enabling legislation. Specifically, Government Code section 66907 authorizes the Conservancy to select and acquire real property for the purposes of protecting the natural environment, providing public access or public recreational facilities, preserving wildlife habitat areas, or providing access to or management of acquired lands.

Consistency with the Conservancy's Strategic Plan

The acquisition aligns with the Conservancy's 2024-2029 Strategic Plan goal to Restore the Basin's Social and Ecological Resilience.

Consistency with the Conservancy's Program Guidelines

The recommended action is consistent with the Conservancy's Land Acquisition Program Guidelines.

Consistency with External Authorities

The recommended action is consistent with the Lake Tahoe Environmental Improvement Program (EIP) because it contributes to the implementation of EIP project #01.02.04.0001 – Acquiring Environmentally Sensitive Land.

Compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act

Pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines (Cal. Code Regs., tit. 14, § 15000 et seq.), certain classes of activities are statutorily 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 found it to be categorically exempt under CEQA Guidelines section 15325, Transfers of Ownership in Land to Preserve Existing Natural Conditions and Historical Resources, and the Conservancy's CEQA regulations, section 12102.25, because it involves the acquisition of land to preserve open space, allow for restoration and enhancement of natural conditions, and prevent encroachment of development into SEZ. In addition, the demolition and removal of the existing structure, above-ground shed, and fencing is exempt under CEQA Guidelines section 15301, Existing Facilities, and the Conservancy's CEQA regulations, section 12102.1, and the related site stabilization work is exempt under CEQA Guidelines section 15304, Minor Alterations to Land, and the Conservancy's CEQA regulations, section 12102.4. Staff prepared a notice of exemption (NOE) (Attachment 4). If the Board approves the acquisition, staff will file the NOE with the State Clearinghouse pursuant to CEQA Guidelines, section 15062.

List of Attachments

Attachment 1 – Resolution 26-03-05

Attachment 2 – Environmentally Sensitive Land Acquisition Location Map

Attachment 3 – Environmentally Sensitive Land Acquisition Project Map

Attachment 4 – NOE

- Exhibit A – Location Map

Conservancy Staff Contact

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