

## **LAKE TAHOE RECREATION PLANNING AND MONITORING GRANT**

**Recommended Action:** Adopt Resolution 26-03-06 (Attachment 1) authorizing a planning and monitoring grant to the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency (TRPA) for up to \$50,000 of Proposition 68 funding to assess public recreation sites on the California side of the Lake Tahoe Basin (Basin).

**Executive Summary:** The recommended action authorizes a \$50,000 grant to the TRPA to assess public recreation sites. TRPA staff will develop an evaluation and monitoring framework for public recreation sites throughout the Basin and apply standardized criteria to measure whether the recreation infrastructure is resilient to climate impacts and sustainable for current and future recreational use. The criteria will help identify ways to build and maintain recreation infrastructure to reduce climate impacts and provide high quality experiences. Developing an assessment of public recreation sites will make it possible to quickly identify where improvements are most needed, help funders understand the value and impact of their investments, and encourage collaboration across jurisdictions. The recommended action is consistent with several California Tahoe Conservancy (Conservancy) Strategic Plan Goals including: Provide Recreational Opportunities and Access for All; Drive Forward-Thinking Solutions and Accountability; and Safeguard the Basin's Environmental, Tribal, Cultural, and Recreational Attributes for Future Generations. Upon Board authorization, staff will execute a grant agreement with the TRPA.

**Location:** The California side of the Basin.

**Fiscal Summary:** The Conservancy will award up to \$50,000 of Proposition 68 funds to the TRPA to assess public recreation sites on the California side of the Basin. Conservancy staff will process the grant agreement as part of its regular workload.

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### **Overview**

#### **History**

The Tahoe Regional Planning Compact (Bi-State Compact) provides the framework for the development of the Environmental Threshold Carrying Capacities (commonly referred to as

“threshold standards”). The Bi-State Compact defines threshold standards as “an environmental standard necessary to maintain a significant scenic, recreational, educational, scientific or natural value of the region or to maintain public health and safety within the region.” The 140 threshold standards establish the shared goals for restoration and environmental quality in the Basin. The TRPA creates regulations and policies designed to achieve the threshold standards, and measures progress towards science-based regional environmental goals.

The two existing recreation thresholds, unchanged since 1982, are policy statements: Fair Share Distribution of Recreation Capacity (ensuring that recreational opportunities keep pace with public demand); and Quality of Recreation Experience and Access to Recreational Opportunities (maintaining the quality of recreational experiences and prioritizing development of recreational facilities). Unlike many other thresholds, the recreation thresholds are not quantitative and instead provide decision makers with policy direction.

Since 1982 the recreational landscape at Lake Tahoe has changed considerably. Today, 90 percent of the Basin’s land is publicly owned, up from only 65 percent in 1982. This dramatic increase has led to many more recreational sites and a greater diversity of recreational opportunities. In recent years, the COVID-19 pandemic led to a significant increase in outdoor recreation participation, a trend that is continuing during the post-pandemic period.

Recognizing these changes and the need to quantify progress toward meeting threshold standards, the TRPA is seeking to update the recreation thresholds to more accurately guide and measure recreation activities in the Basin now and into the future.

In 2018, the Conservancy conducted an inventory of lakefront recreation sites on the California side of the Basin. The inventory served as a resource for managing public access along Lake Tahoe’s shoreline. That inventory will also serve as a starting point for the assessment and will be expanded to identify all California recreation sites in the Basin.

In 2021, in response to COVID-19-driven recreation impacts, Basin land managers, destination management organizations, the TRPA, and businesses began working together to identify ways to ensure that the Basin’s natural resources, communities, and visitors all benefit from the region’s outdoor recreation and tourism economy. The Lake Tahoe Destination Stewardship Plan, released in 2023, outlines the steps necessary to achieve this goal. Building and maintaining recreation infrastructure to reduce impacts and provide high quality experiences is a strategic pillar of the Destination Stewardship Plan.

## **Detailed Description of Recommended Action**

### **1. TRPA Preliminary Task**

As a necessary first step, and not to be funded by this grant, the TRPA will work with land managers and recreation experts to designate recreation management zones. The TRPA will

define recreation zones by site location, the managing land agency, and the planned level of use. The TRPA will score recreation sites using objective, standardized criteria, and will aggregate those scores by recreation zone to reflect the overall condition of sites within each zone.

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

Conservancy staff recommends the Board authorize a grant of up to \$50,000 to the TRPA to assess public recreation sites. The grant-funded assessment will complete the following:

- Engage with the Tahoe Science Advisory Council and other recreation experts to develop site evaluation criteria.
- Develop a scoring system of the site evaluation criteria to measure whether the recreation infrastructure is resilient to climate impacts and sustainable for current and future recreational use.
- Evaluate and score recreation sites and zones.

The TRPA will use the 2018 inventory of existing public lake access sites in California to help evaluate and score recreation sites in California. The Tahoe Science Advisory Council and recreation experts will review the scoring criteria and evaluations to ensure accuracy. Recreation sites include passive and active recreation opportunities ranging from lakefront beaches to trailheads and day-use areas. These sites may include built facilities, such as parking lots, restrooms and playgrounds, or natural features such as dirt trails and river overlooks. Recreation zones will group sites together, with some zones containing developed facilities and others consisting primarily of undeveloped sites or a combination of both.

An outcome of these tasks will be a standardized measurement system for tracking recreation infrastructure with regards to climate resilience and sustainability.

## 3. Overall Context and Benefits

The work funded by this grant will inform revision of the thresholds and establish a foundation for future recreation management decisions and targeted investments at recreation sites and zones throughout the Basin. Updating the recreation thresholds will require a clear understanding of the inventory of existing recreation sites in each zone, followed by an assessment of the sites' condition using the scoring criteria. Following the threshold update, the aggregated scores will indicate how close each zone is to attaining or remaining out of attainment of the recreation thresholds.

The Basin is a major recreation destination serving diverse user groups and managed by a mix of private, local, state, and federal land managers and recreation providers. Because land managers are interconnected, a policy change or management action on one jurisdiction's land can create ripple effects across neighboring sites. Strong coordination and collaboration are essential to ensure consistent management, protect resources, and maintain high-quality recreational experiences throughout the Basin.

For land managers, evaluating infrastructure needs within recreation zones will help identify the most appropriate locations for improvements, and encourage collaboration across jurisdictions. For example, if Emerald Bay is a recreation zone, the land managers within the zone will be able to identify what types of sustainability and resilience improvements are needed, and can work together to plan the improvements appropriately.

For the TRPA, developing a standardized measurement system for recreation sites and zones will provide the ability to quickly identify zones where improvements are most needed, and direct resources accordingly. Furthermore, the quantitative measurement system allows the TRPA to measure progress in meeting resilience and sustainability goals over time creating accountability and transparency for funding and policies.

For funders, the scoring and mapping of sites and zones will help them understand the importance of their investments at recreation sites throughout the Basin. The overall assessment will also help land managers secure grants by using the assessment to convey the regional importance of proposed projects.

Ultimately, the tools developed by this grant will help ensure the Basin’s recreation infrastructure is sustainable and resilient as visitation to the Basin continues to increase.

#### 4. Schedule for the Recommended Action

<b>Task</b>	<b>Completion Date</b>
Develop recreation zones (this is a preliminary task and not funded by this grant)	Spring 2026
Develop site evaluation criteria	Summer 2026
Develop scoring for recreation sites and zones	Summer 2026
Evaluate and score recreation sites and zones	Summer 2026 – Fall 2027

#### **Financing**

Upon approval, the grant will total up to \$50,000 from Proposition 68 funds. Conservancy staff will process the grant agreement as part of its regular workload. This grant will support only site and zone evaluations within California. The TRPA secured Nevada Lake Tahoe License Plate funds to support site and zone evaluations in Nevada.

<b>Task</b>	<b>Conservancy funding (proposed)</b>	<b>Nevada Lake Tahoe License Plate funding (secured)</b>	<b>TRPA funding (secured)</b>	<b>Total Funding</b>
Develop site evaluation criteria	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$15,000
Develop scoring system for recreation sites and zones	\$15,000	\$15,000	\$20,000	\$50,000
Evaluate and score recreation sites and zones	\$30,000	\$30,000	\$0	\$60,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$50,000</b>	<b>\$50,000</b>	<b>\$25,000</b>	<b>\$125,000</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 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, including: Provide Recreational Opportunities and Access for All; Drive Forward-Thinking Solutions and Accountability; and Safeguard the Basin’s Environmental, Tribal, Cultural, and Recreational Attributes for Future Generations.

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

The recommended action is consistent with the Conservancy’s Public Access and Recreation Program Guidelines (2009). Via the Project, the Conservancy will increase and enhance significant regional public access and public recreational opportunities consistent with natural resource preservation and increase non-motorized transportation and recreation opportunities.

**Consistency with External Authorities**

The recommended action is consistent with the Lake Tahoe Environmental Improvement Program (EIP) because it supports the implementation of the Lake Tahoe Recreation Infrastructure Action Plan (EIP project #03.01.02.0136). It is also consistent with the Lake Tahoe Destination Stewardship Plan and the California Outdoors for All Strategy.

**Compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act**

Pursuant to the State 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. Staff has evaluated the recommended action and has found it to be exempt under CEQA. The recommended action qualifies for a statutory exemption under CEQA Guidelines section 15262 (Feasibility and Planning Studies). Staff has prepared a notice of exemption (NOE) for the recommended action (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 26-03-06

Attachment 2 – Location Map

Attachment 2 – Notice of Exemption

Exhibit A – Location Map

### **Conservancy Staff Contact**

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