

TAHOE FOR ALL GRANTS

Recommended Actions: Adopt Resolutions 26-03-07, 26-03-08 and 26-03-09 (Attachments 1.2, 2.2, and 3.2), authorizing the following grants:

1. Lake Tahoe Community College (LTCC): Up to \$110,000 for the Wilderness Education-Washoe Partnership Program;
2. City of Richmond: Up to \$60,000 for the Pathfinders Youth Outdoors Program; and
3. Golden Gate Bird Alliance: Up to \$30,000 for the Birding for Everyone Fellowship.

Executive Summary:

Staff recommends authorizing three Tahoe for All (TFA) grants to improve equitable access to Lake Tahoe's beaches, trails, and mountains. Although Lake Tahoe is a world-class outdoor recreation destination, many people face economic, social, or physical barriers to accessing and enjoying its opportunities. This recommendation builds on the success of eight previous grants authorized in 2022 and 2023 by the California Tahoe Conservancy (Conservancy) Board for projects that serve communities that have been historically underserved and face barriers to accessing Lake Tahoe's outdoor destinations. Staff evaluated the applications under the Conservancy's 2019 Grant Guidelines (Guidelines), the TFA Program Description, and the TFA Scoring Criteria. The grantees—LTCC, City of Richmond, and Golden Gate Bird Alliance—will provide low or no-cost opportunities for underserved people to have outdoor experiences, develop leadership and naturalist skills, explore environmental career pathways, and experience the health benefits of spending time outdoors at Lake Tahoe. Attached to this recommendation are separate, detailed project descriptions for each grant. The grants further the Conservancy's Strategic Plan Goals to Provide Recreational Opportunities and Access for All and Drive Forward-Thinking Solutions and Accountability. The grants also advance several of the Conservancy's Racial Equity Action Plan Goals. Upon Board authorization, Conservancy staff will work with grantees to execute needed agreements and support project implementation.

Location: The three recommended projects are located throughout the California side of the Lake Tahoe Basin (Basin) in Placer and El Dorado Counties.

Fiscal Summary: The Conservancy will finance LTCC, the City of Richmond, and Golden Gate Bird Alliance grants with Lake Tahoe License Plate funds, totaling up to \$200,000.

Overview

History

Despite significant public land and outdoor recreational opportunities in the Basin, many low-income and underrepresented people face significant economic, cultural, or physical barriers to accessing the Basin's outdoor spaces. Many Californians lack the resources to make it to the Basin at all. Recent studies shed light on equitable access issues at Lake Tahoe. Data also show that low-income families may need to travel farther distances to access one of the public beaches with free entry. Visitor surveys completed in 2022 show visitors feel less welcome at Lake Tahoe than at other popular outdoor recreation destinations nationwide. Unfortunately, this phenomenon exists in many outdoor spaces statewide, especially for people of color, people with disabilities, tribal members, and people who speak a language other than English.

Other barriers limiting access at Lake Tahoe can be:

- economic, for example, lacking equipment or transportation,
- safety, for example, knowing how to swim, having health insurance, experiencing language barriers in wayfinding signage, or having mental illness,
- social, for example, feeling unsafe or unwelcome in majority white spaces, or having cultural differences, or
- physical, for example, lack of accessibility for people with disabilities, or having different levels of physical fitness.

As a result, many people, both residents and visitors, are missing out on the health, community, and life-enhancing benefits of spending time outdoors at Lake Tahoe.

The Conservancy's recreation and access work has always focused on improving public access to Lake Tahoe's outdoor recreation opportunities through acquisitions and facility improvements, shared-use trails, and accessibility improvements. In 2022 and 2023, the Conservancy expanded its public access work to help underrepresented people access the Basin. During this period, the Board authorized eight grants, totaling \$858,000, to local organizations that lead underserved youth and people with physical and cognitive disabilities on outdoor trips throughout the Basin. These grants have helped more than 7,000 people participate in outdoor activities. The recommended actions build on the success of the pilot rounds of TFA grants, awarded as Recreation and Public Access for All grants in 2022 and 2023.

In 2024, the Conservancy formalized the Recreation and Public Access grant program, renaming it the TFA Grant Program. Staff drafted the TFA Program Description (an appendix to the

updated Guidelines to be considered by the Board during the March meeting) and created the TFA Scoring Criteria and application form. Staff received feedback on the Program Description from the Board and the public between February and May 2025. The Board emphasized that formalizing the program should provide an opportunity for organizations outside the Basin to apply and receive funding, ensuring that the Conservancy serves all of California with the TFA funds. Feedback from the public emphasized the need for clarification on eligibility and provided input on program priorities.

With all TFA Grant Program materials complete, the Conservancy released a funding announcement on September 17, 2025, to solicit pre-applications for TFA funding. Staff held a technical assistance webinar to inform potential applicants of the TFA Grant Program's purpose, goals, eligibility, and grant application timelines and processes. A total of 47 organizations joined the technical assistance webinar, and the Conservancy received 37 pre-applications. Staff then reviewed each pre-application for eligibility, including whether the project was located within the Conservancy's jurisdiction and whether the applicant met the Conservancy's statutory restrictions regarding eligible nonprofit organizations. The Conservancy invited 17 organizations to submit full applications, 14 of which did so by the deadline.

Staff evaluated each grant application based on the criteria described within the Conservancy 2019 Guidelines. In addition, staff used the Conservancy's 2024-2029 Strategic Plan, TFA Program Description, and TFA Scoring Criteria when reviewing the application, which consider the number of participants from underserved groups, the extent to which the project reduces barriers for underserved people to access Lake Tahoe, and the extent to which the project provides long-term positive impacts on participants. Staff also consulted the TFA Advisory Committee, an advisory group of professionals with experience serving underrepresented groups in the outdoors, who scored the applications using the same tools. This robust process of internal and external review helped Conservancy staff select these projects for recommendation to the Board.

Major Elements and/or Steps of the Recommended Actions

Attachments 1 through 3 provide details on each grant, including a project description, information on the grantee, expected benefits, budget, and schedule. A summary of each grant is below.

- **LTCC: Wilderness Education-Washoe Partnership Program – \$110,000**
LTCC will partner with the Washoe Tribe Education Advisor to recruit Tribal youth and young adults to participate in three-day wilderness education trips. LTCC will co-develop curriculum for each trip with the Washoe Tribe of Nevada and California. The curriculum will include programming in camping, backpacking, kayaking, wilderness first aid, and California Naturalist Certificate training. Each three-day course will also include

an LTCC campus visit to explore career pathways in wilderness, forestry, and environmental science. This program honors the Washoe connection to the Basin and support ongoing Tribal engagement with LTCC. LTCC will offer six three-day wilderness training trips over the course of three years. Participation will be free for all participants, all of whom will be Tribal youth and young adults, aged 15-25. This program will serve up to 72 Tribal youth and young adults.

- **City of Richmond, Pathfinders: Youth Outdoors Program – \$60,000**

The Pathfinders: Youth Outdoors Program aims to remove barriers that prevent underrepresented youth in Richmond from accessing outdoor recreation by providing no-cost, transformative experiences. The Pathfinders: Youth Outdoors Program aims to empower Richmond youth to access shoreline parks, trails, and open natural spaces in the East Bay. This grant expands outdoor experiences for Pathfinders: Youth Outdoors Program participants to include camping trips to the Basin, where they will learn about the natural and cultural history of the area. The Pathfinders: Youth Outdoors Program holds four to six pre-trip activities, funded separately from this grant, such as gear fitting, outdoor skills, practice hikes, and trip planning. This grant would fund six three-day camping trips in the Basin over three years, serving up to 90 youth, all of whom are from disadvantaged or severely disadvantaged communities.

- **Golden Gate Bird Alliance, Birding for Everyone Fellowship – \$30,000**

The goal of the Birding for Everyone Fellowship is to empower the next generation of Black, Indigenous, and people of color conservation leaders by building skills, confidence, and a sense of belonging in outdoor and conservation spaces. The Birding for Everyone Fellowship is a 12-month program, providing ten individuals from underrepresented communities a full year of free birding and ecology classes. The cornerstone of the program is a multi-day immersive trip to the Basin. Participants will learn to identify bird species unique to montane ecosystems—species they do not encounter in the Bay Area—while building confidence in field skills such as observation, use of optics, and group leadership. Birding activities will be paired with team-building activities and recreational time on Lake Tahoe. This grant supports three cohorts of fellows over three years, serving a total of 30 individuals. Grant funds support the multi-day Basin trip at the end of the year-long fellowship.

Financing

The Conservancy will finance the LTCC, City of Richmond, and Golden Gate Bird Alliance grants with Lake Tahoe License Plate Fund dollars, totaling up to \$200,000.

Project	Grantee	Leveraged Funding	Conservancy Funding
Wilderness Education-Washoe Partnership Program	LTCC	\$55,612	\$110,000
Pathfinders: Youth Outdoors Program	City of Richmond	\$25,000	\$60,000
Birding for Everyone Fellowship	Golden Gate Bird Alliance	\$11,492	\$30,000
Total			\$200,000

Authority

Consistency with the Conservancy’s Enabling Legislation

The recommended actions are consistent with the Conservancy’s enabling legislation. Specifically, Government Code section 66907.7 authorizes the Conservancy to award grants to local public agencies and nonprofit organizations for purposes consistent with its mission.

Consistency with the Conservancy’s Program Guidelines

The recommended actions are consistent with the Recreation and Public Access Program Guideline goal of funding projects that support environmental education, interpretation, and wayfinding efforts that promote stewardship, provide information, and lessen confusion for recreationists.

The recommended actions also align with the TFA Program Description, as each grantee will provide programs for communities that are underserved or have been historically excluded from outdoor recreation opportunities, and provide a meaningful and enjoyable experience in the Basin.

Consistency with External Authorities

The three grants advance several priorities outlined in the California Outdoors for All Strategy, including:

- Foster Belonging in Outdoor Spaces by respecting the historical and current connections between land and all Californians. This ensures that all communities feel safe and celebrated in the outdoors through language accessibility, enhancing a sense of emotional and physical safety, and inclusive outdoor education

- Connect People to the Outdoors by addressing barriers that limit Californians from getting to outdoor spaces, such as transportation, information-related, administrative, and financial barriers
- Align Funding to achieve Outdoors for All by dedicating resources to advance California’s Outdoors for All priorities

These grants advance the Lake Tahoe Destination Stewardship Plan strategic pillars and objectives, including:

- Advance a Culture of Caring for Tahoe, by creating programming that promotes environmental stewardship and literacy
- Improve the Tahoe Experience for All, by ensuring that all have opportunities to access the Lake Tahoe region by supporting actions and initiatives that improve diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility

The recommended actions also advance other state priorities, such as the equitable access components of the California Pathways to 30x30 Strategy.

The recommended actions support the Lake Tahoe Environmental Improvement Program (EIP) action priority 03.01.01, to improve public access, and EIP Project 04.02.01.0031, Tahoe Conservancy Recreation and Public Access for All Grants.

Compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act

Staff evaluated each grant individually and found that they do not have the potential to result in either a direct physical change in the environment, or a reasonably foreseeable indirect physical change in the environment. The activities, therefore, are not a “project” within the meaning of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to CEQA guidelines, section 15378, and therefore CEQA does not apply.

List of Attachments

Lake Tahoe Community College

Attachment 1.1 – Project description, budget, and schedule

Attachment 1.2 – Resolution 26-03-07

City of Richmond

Attachment 2.1 – Project description, budget, and schedule

Attachment 2.2 – Resolution 26-03-08

Golden Gate Bird Alliance

Attachment 3.1 – Project description, budget, and schedule

Attachment 3.2 – Resolution 26-03-09

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