

State of California – The Resources Agency
George Deukmejian, Governor

**CALIFORNIA TAHOE CONSERVANCY
WILDLIFE ENHANCEMENT PROGRAM
PROGRAM ANNOUNCEMENT AND GUIDELINES
JANUARY 1990**

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WILDLIFE ENHANCEMENT
PROGRAM ANNOUNCEMENT AND GUIDELINES

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I. PROGRAM STATEMENT

A. Introduction

Pursuant to Government Code Sections 66905 et seq., and 66950 et seq., the California Tahoe Conservancy has been created, in part, to undertake programs for wildlife enhancement in the Lake Tahoe region. To do so the Conservancy has been given the authority to undertake the acquisition of land and construction of site improvements, either directly by the Conservancy or through grant projects.

Pursuant to this mandate, the Conservancy on December 19, 1986 (revised on January 19, 1990) established a wildlife enhancement program. Funding is provided from two sources. First, funds for site improvements and associated costs related to wildlife enhancement projects are available through an appropriation of Proposition 99 funds in the conservancy's 1989-90 budget. The Conservancy has allocated up to a total of \$1 million for this purpose. Second, funds for land acquisition and associated costs related to wildlife enhancement projects are available from funds appropriated to the Conservancy from the Lake Tahoe Acquisitions Bond Act (Bond Act). The Conservancy has allocated approximately \$1 million for this purpose.

B. Program Objectives

The Conservancy's goal under this program is the funding and implementation of projects which balance resource and implementation objectives. These objectives are more fully described below.

1. Resource Objectives – The resource objective of this program is to address high priority wildlife enhancement needs through the funding and implementation of projects with the greatest potential of benefit to wildlife and habitat in the Basin.

This objective recognizes the need to address wildlife enhancement needs through the funding and implementation of projects with the greatest potential for preservation, enhancement, and/or restoration of wildlife and wildlife habitat in the Tahoe Basin. It recognizes the need to maintain and enhance the full range of the Basin's habitat types. These include key wildlife habitat areas such as meadow, marsh and riparian areas; habitat which serves or could serve as habitat for species identified as endangered, rare threatened, sensitive or of special interest; forest and shrub associations; areas which serve as wildlife movement corridors or seasonal habitat areas; and in stream and offshore fisheries habitat.

2. Implementation Objectives – The implementation objective of this program is the implementation of projects providing significant public benefit in the most comprehensive, cost-effective, and timely manner possible.

This objective recognizes the urgent need to address the effects of human development activity on the wildlife resources of the Basin within the limited amounts of funding available. Within this context, planning and funding under this program will be directed toward implemental projects which:

- Achieve significant wildlife benefits by considering and addressing as many aspects of the wildlife needs in the project area as possible. Projects or portions of projects undertaken must be able to stand alone in providing a wildlife enhancement benefit;
- Achieve these benefits at the lowest necessary cost; and
- Achieve these benefits in the shortest necessary amount of time. It is an objective of this program to fund site improvement and/or acquisition projects which can be completed during the 1990, 1991 and/or 1992 field seasons.

C. Allocation of Funds

The following finding allocations have been made for site improvements and for land acquisition under this program:

- \$1 million for site improvements (Proposition 99 Funds)
- \$1 million for acquisition of undeveloped lands (Bond Act Funds)

These allocations are being made on a program basis. In other words, these funds will be available for projects either directly undertaken either by the Conservancy, through grants, or a combination thereof.

These allocations are also being made on a basin-wide basis. This reflects both a judgment that the amount of funding for the program cannot at this time be broken down by jurisdiction and that the use of limited funds should be based on the highest priority need regardless of location.

It should be noted that project sponsors may use the funds allocated for acquisitions either in conjunction with site improvement funds or for land needed for future wildlife enhancement projects.

D. Comprehensive Approach to Program Implementation

The Conservancy will use a coordinated and comprehensive approach toward the initiation, evaluation, and implementation of projects under this program. Under this approach, projects will be developed concurrently by the Conservancy and by other potential project sponsors. Approved projects will then be implemented directly by the conservancy itself, by another project sponsor via a Conservancy grant, or a combination thereof.

- Construction of site improvements
- Project inspection
- Acquisition of interests in land
- Project evaluation, monitoring and documentation

Eligible acquisition costs are limited to the current fair market value of the interest(s) being acquired less than amount of any other State funds being applied to the purchase price; escrow, title, and other closing costs; and the costs of project administration.

C. Ineligible Project Costs

The applicant will bear all costs related to the submittal of project applications, and preparation and processing of environmental documentation under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

Applicants must commit to fund any project elements that are not substantially related to the purpose of wildlife enhancement.

The applicant will also bear all ongoing operation and maintenance costs of the project, over a minimum 20-year period or over the useful life of the improvement.

E. Contents of Preliminary Submittals – Where possible, the preliminary submittals should include:

- a) Identification of the project area and discussion of the problem to be addressed by the proposed project and its benefits.
- b) A preliminary concept plan which identifies the site improvements contemplated, identifies a monitoring program, identifies any acquisitions which may be needed, and includes an estimate of the project’s cost and a preliminary schedule fro its completion;
- c) An indication of the amount of Conservancy funding sought for site improvements and/or land acquisition; and
- d) Other background information which may be helpful to the Conservancy in its evaluation of the proposal.

While the level of detail expected at this point is not as extensive as for a final application, it is hoped these preliminary submittals will contain sufficient detail to allow assessment of the project’s compliance with program requirements, objectives, and criteria.

Upon receipt of preliminary submittals, staff will initially assess their completeness and their consistency with the general eligibility criteria and objectives of the program. In cases where the staff finds that a project proposal is either incomplete or does not meet eligibility criteria, staff will work with the project sponsor to complete or modify it to where it will qualify for further consideration. Staff will consult with the project sponsors and other agencies and organizations with expertise or other interest in the program in order to refine the proposals.

Staff will also periodically update the Conservancy board on the receipt and status of proposals received. At this time staff will also seek the board's conceptual review of the proposals and seek its direction concerning the preparation of specific project proposals and/or formal grant applications for individual projects.

Staff anticipates taking initial project proposals before the board this year. However, it should be noted that this will be an ongoing process, and potential sponsors are encouraged to submit additional proposals for Conservancy consideration as appropriate throughout the life of the program.

E. Field Review

Field review of potential project sites will precede submittal of final applications. This field review will be attended by Conservancy and other agency staff (Tahoe Regional Planning Agency (TRPA), Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board (LRWQCB), U.S. Forest Service (USFS), Department of Fish and Game (DFG), etc.) as well as staff from the applicant agency.

The final review is intended to encourage the identification of additional high-priority project components. It will also aid applicants in addressing the concerns, if any, of the various agencies. This should make the application process more efficient. Staff will also seek review of proposals for wildlife enhancement projects to be undertaken directly by the Conservancy.

F. Final Applications

Upon conceptual review of project proposals by the board, staff will then prepare specific proposals for projects on its properties and request the submittal of formal grant applications by eligible sponsoring organizations for other projects. These will then be brought to the board for possible action. Final applications should contain as much detail as possible, to allow the Conservancy to judge fully the project's merits and its compliance with the requirements, criteria, and objectives of the conservancy's program.

The required elements of the final application include:

- a) Identification of the project area, discussion of the problem to be addressed and the benefits of the proposed project;
- b) A complete concept plan which included: identification of the proposed site improvements, evidence of ownership or control of the land at the project site sufficient to allow construction and management of the project, a land acquisition plan if needed to secure sufficient ownership or control of the land, an estimated project schedule, and a detailed estimated project budget;
- c) A monitoring program;
- d) The amount of Conservancy funding sought for site improvements and/or land acquisition;

- e) A description of any funding and/or in-kind assistance to be provided by the applicant or other parties, and the inclusion of California Conservation Corps labor or any other cost-saving measures in the project;
- f) Documentation for the project sufficient to comply with CEQA if applicable;
- g) A commitment by the grantee to implement the project in a manner consistent with the objectives of the program and to operate and maintain the project improvements; and
- h) Other background information which may be helpful to the Conservancy in its evaluation of the proposal.

With respect to grants solely for land acquisitions, the Conservancy recognizes that less detail will be available on planned improvements for the project site since funds are not being requested for these activities. Nevertheless, applicants are asked to provide as much information as possible on all the required elements in order to allow the Conservancy to evaluate the overall project for which acquisition funds are being requested.

The Conservancy encourages applicants to commence on environmental assessment for their proposals at the earliest possible time so that they may be able to determine actions needed to meet the requirements of **CEQA**.

III. Project Evaluation

Upon submittal, final applications will be evaluated for completeness and consistency with eligibility criteria and the objectives of the program. In reviewing the applications, the Conservancy staff will again consult with agencies having jurisdiction over the project area or wildlife enhancement expertise such as **TRPA and DFG**.

The following criteria will be utilized to evaluate and prioritize projects either directly undertaken or funded through grants by the Conservancy.

1. Significant and documental benefit to wildlife – The project addresses a significant wildlife enhancement need related to the maintenance and enhancement of a full range of habitat types in the Basin. These include key habitat areas such as marshes, meadows and riparian areas, habitat which serves or could serve as habitat for species identified as endangered, rare, threatened, sensitive or of a special interest; forest and shrub associations; wildlife movement corridors or seasonal habitat areas; and in stream and offshore fisheries habitats. Preference will be given to projects with the greatest potential for preservation, enhancement and/or restoration of wildlife habitat in the Tahoe Basin

2. Adequacy of design – The project uses proven, effective and cost-effective techniques to address wildlife habitat needs.

3. Comprehensiveness – The project considers and addresses all aspects of wildlife habitat needs in the project area for which funds are being requested. Preference will be given to comprehensive, integrated project proposals.

4. Cost –effectiveness – the project meets program objectives in the most cost-Effective manner. Preference will be given to the projects which can be made more cost-effective through the use of the CCC where appropriate, and/or inclusion of matching funds or contributions by the project sponsor.

5. Implementability – The project can be implemented in a timely manner. If a project is large and complex and depends on other funding sources, the portion of the project to be funded by the Conservancy must be able to be implemented by itself in a manner consistent with the objectives of the program.

6. Management – The project can be effectively managed and monitored.

7. Model – The project is useful as a model for future wildlife enhancement projects. Projects incorporating effective and innovative approaches to solving problems will be given preference.

8. Cooperation and support – The project is supported by other public agencies, landowners, and other parties necessary for the successful implementation and long-term viability of the project.

IV Project Implementation

Once the formal applications are approved by the board, the Conservancy will enter into contractual agreements with the applicants. Such projects will then be implemented in accordance with the terms of any conditions of the Conservancy's approval and the grant contract. Staff expects that the earliest group of applications will permit the implementation activities to commence in the summer, 1990.