

Meeting Notes
Bi-State Executive Committee

Monday August 21, 2017
1 – 4PM

Tahoe Center for Environmental Sciences, first floor, Rm 139
291 Country Club Drive
Incline Village, NV 89451

Executive Committee Attendees: John Laird (CNRA), Brad Crowell (NDCNR), Joanne Marchetta (TRPA), Paul Dodd (UCD), Ron Tjeerdema (UCD), Mridul Gautam (UNR), Jim Thomas (DRI), Darrin Thom (USGS), Alex Friend (USFS-PSW), Todd Ferrara (CNRA), Jim Lawrence (NDCNR)

Agenda

1. Welcome, introductions, agenda review (Co-chairs) 15 min
 - a. Committee members and audience members introduced themselves. It was mentioned that Darrin Thome is sitting in for Mark Sogge (USGS), Ron Tjeerdema is sitting in for Helene Dillard (UCD). Brad Crowell came on a couple of months ago as the Director of NV Department of Conservation and Natural Resources.
 - b. Main purposes of the meeting: 1) learn about the Science Council's progress, and 2) discuss the Council's work plan.
2. Public Comment (Co-chairs) 5 min
None
3. Update on Council Operations, funding, and contracting 20 min
(Discussion item) (Zach Hymanson, CNRA)

Two-page handout included as an attachment 1 to these notes.

- 12 voting Council members have been appointed. Co-chairs (Geoff and Alan) re-elected for another year. Next year one co-chair will change to establish staggered rotation.
- Annual appropriation \$150k to support the Science Council authorized with signing of CA state budget in July. Question: Do you have to get unspent money, re-appropriated? Yes, although any appropriation should be good for 3-years and we spend the oldest funding first. Thanks to Joann and her team at TRPA for being so good to work with.
- We have contracts in place with UCD to support Council operations. We have technical service agreements in place with UCD, UNR, DRI, and USGS to

support the Council member's technical work. These allow us to get work going relatively quickly through the use of work orders. Facilities and administration (F&A) costs: all entities with the exception of the USGS have been able to accommodate the special needs of the council in one way or another.

- Alison has lead the efforts to establish a Council website (<http://www.tahoesciencecouncil.org>), which went live in July. The main purpose of the web site is to make Council information and products available to the public. Items like the Council work plan, technical products, and meeting notes are online.
- The Council has met six times since its formation, and it is pursuing a bimonthly meeting schedule for the next year. The Council is expecting more working meetings of its ad-hoc subcommittees, as more substantive work gets underway.

4. TRPA Threshold update: Progress and next steps 40 min
(Discussion item) (Alan Heyvaert, DRI & Dan Segan, TRPA)

Joann provided some introductory points: The TRPA Threshold standards are aspirational goals for measuring progress and achievements against in terms of environmental health and restoration. The Environmental Improvement Program (EIP), is the main program for agency-coordinated management of restoration and conservation projects. To date, approximately \$2 billion have been invested in the EIP. Most of the current Threshold standards were adopted around 1982. So it's fair to ask if the standards reflect our current understanding, and by extension are we using the funds allocated to the EIP in the most appropriate ways. Both states agree, the Threshold standards are long overdue for an update. Are we still looking at the right things? Still measuring the right things? Appropriately incorporating new science in our updates? Supporting TRPA's update of the Threshold standards is the highest priority work of the Science Council.

Alan noted that the Council has already completed two technical tasks: 1) critical review of the TRPA-proposed Threshold assessment process, and 2) an examination of other environmental evaluation systems.

Dan stated that all 178 existing standards were subjected to the assessment. TRPA collaborated with organizations in the basin to see where we stand with all these standards. Some standards are very easy to quantify and there are others that are far harder. We are not the first people to deal with these difficult issues. What makes a standard meaningful?

Alan stated that Council's work to date has been done by small groups of scientists, with active engagement of the TSAC members. Actual programs that were looked at were spread across the country, as well as the Great Barrier Reef program in Australia. It was an interesting exercise. We had 10 basic background questions that we were interested in evaluating. Such as, how are your indicators ranked? What role does science play? What are the main successful attribute? The questions focused on basic

things that we are dealing with in the Tahoe basin. One thing that was most interesting was that all organizations are interested in what our results are, as many of them have looked to Tahoe as a model and are grappling with many of the same issues. Most organizations are interested in getting the report when complete.

Question: Is there one program that stuck out more than the others? Answer: the Chesapeake Bay Program, very dynamic and robust, attempting to streamline program areas and improve communication.

Alan stated that we're not looking at their science, but rather how science is integrated. Many of these programs multijurisdictional at several different levels of government. The great lakes program is the most complex in this regard, and is struggling to find a common direction. All of the programs have the same problem of defining a common goal. Keeping that goal in mind, and pursuing meaningful monitoring to assess progress towards the goal.

Alan noted that plans for the Council's work on the Threshold update will be discussed under the next agenda item: Council work plan review.

5. Council work plan review and approval, and priority issues
for science/technology in the Tahoe Basin (Action item)
(Geoff Schladow, UCD & Alan Heyvaert, DRI)

80 min

Alan noted that the Science Advisory Council's work plan is included in the Executive Committee member packets. (The work plan is included below as Attachment 3.) He provided a quick overview:

- The work plan is structured the same as the Council's previous work plan, and it describes major work categories and activities proposed through June 2018.
- Funding details are provided for each work category. Both existing funds and new funding (\$150K) are detailed. The Council is proposing to allocate new funding to three work categories:
 - \$10k to council operations,
 - \$10k technical assistance, and
 - \$130K for substantive projects.

Funding for substantive projects is expected to largely support the Council's work on the TRPA Threshold update initiative. The Council is taking a two-prong approach on the threshold assessment: 1) shorter-term immediate focus, and 2) a more comprehensive look at restructuring the evaluation system.

Geoff then provided some information on the Council's other proposed substantive project: development of a decision support framework. What we've learned through the threshold assessment, is that you can't do it all at once. How do you objectively evaluate proposed or existing projects that have data gaps and the like without a framework? The Council is proposing to create a framework. The framework will help to

quantify the risk and benefits. Decision support frameworks have been developed for use in other areas (e.g., the Bay Delta, or Chesapeake Bay). Fortunately, the Tahoe basin is nowhere as near as complex as these locations, so there is optimism that a useful framework can be developed. Geoff noted that the Lake Tahoe Restoration Act identifies several important project evaluation criteria that could be integrated into a decision support framework.

A conceptual model, is often an integral part of the overall framework. Conceptual models describe how a system works. Examples of systems in the Tahoe basin include the Upper Truckee Watershed, or Stream Environmental Zone habitats. Conceptual models describe what drives what. What are the expected outcomes from different drivers, and what are the most important pathways? We know that light affects algae, but how does UV affect it? Lots of things that have various levels of uncertainty. Ultimately, we want to prepare a conceptual model to explain what drives particular processes, e.g., climate, or nutrient supply? How does it link to the system and what are the outcomes. Secondly what will the driver do? What are the critical knowledge gaps? There's a lot that we know about, so we can weigh in heavily on what we know and what we need to know.

One can use a conceptual model of how the system works to evaluate proposed projects: what parts of the system will the project affect? What level of uncertainty is associated with the expected outcomes? What are the benefits? How certain are we? Answers to questions like these can be used to rate project worth, i.e., develop estimates of low, medium, high worth projects. A high worth project (e.g., restore lake clarity in five years), can tolerate much higher risk. In contrast, little risk would be taken for low-worth projects. A decision support framework allows you to systematize how we make those choices.

On a parallel note, Geoff mentioned Senator Feinstein's big concern is climate change. A lot of monies have been invested in Tahoe, was this a bad decision given the realized and potential effects of climate change? The problem is that climate is a major driver of the system. When the TMDL projects started climate change was there, but not recognized. So now that we recognize it, we want to know what it is doing to the system. There are plans and examples of what we can do to negate climate change. We can't stop it, but we can mitigate for it. What's lacking is the quantification of where the basin is going? How is this changing the forest, the nearshore, and the deep waters of Lake Tahoe? Our scientists are providing a probability assessment. This is something we have started, and will tie into how the system works. This is the kind of information we need to address this whole driver of climate.

Commentary among the Executive Committee and Science Council representatives follows.

Brad: what do you mean that climate is not recognized? Were climate considerations integrated in public policy, and the TMDL for Lake Tahoe?

Geoff: the TMDL science started in the late 90s. Climate change was happening but we didn't know enough about it, so the issue was kicked down the road in terms of how it might influence various outcomes. They wanted to deal with what was causing the change in clarity, i.e., the pollutants of concern. Now we are aware of indirect effects of climate change on clarity. Now we have a new framework, how do we monitor it? How does this connect to the thresholds? If it works out, this might provide a more holistic approach to sustainable a monitoring system. This is where we are looking for guidance or approval of approaching the system with this methodology.

John: What action are you looking for from the Executive Committee?

Zach: we are asking the Executive Committee to approve the Council work plan.

John: Is there anything else you want to present?

Zach: Just to reiterate the proposed allocations of the new \$150,000 in funding: \$10,000 to Council operations, \$10,000 to technical assistance, and \$130,000 to substantive projects. The Council is up and running, and in good shape to do work.

Brad: It's unfortunate it's taken so long to get to this point. I'm confused about moving from Science to action. What are the activities and how do we decide what they are? How would I justify/defend and advocate for that? Not quite sure what the pitch is. How do the activities tie into EIP projects? I'm nervous because there is a difference between the science to just do science, and the science to get tangible actions done. But it's not clear how to do this. When we talk about thresholds move forward we need to quickly link actions to science. These are my thoughts.

Alan: With regard to the Threshold update work: we are working closely with TRPA staff, so we do think the science efforts completed for the Threshold update will help TRPA get to tangible actions.

John: Is there a fixed timeline, this is a process that does not have it.

Alan: Working with TRPA to address some things in this process in terms of their priorities. We don't know what their priorities are right now? TRPA will have specific projects that they can point to and say we needed this.

Joann: there needs to be a detailed discussion to maintain a comfortable partnership between the two states.

Geoff: In terms of the decision support framework: the aim is to develop tools to help evaluate the scientific merits of proposed projects. Want to make it clear that the decisions that are made have that awareness.

Geoff believes that both substantive projects can be done.

Darrin: How would this affect what TRPA does? Requesting a tool like this to implement something, can the science arm fit in? Suggests whatever framework is developed

should work for all other organizations. How much will it cost? What is the exact product?

Geoff: We are not sure what the full cost will be. Today we are describing the beginning of this approach. The question for the committee is should we try this out? The ideal product is a conceptual model with boxes and arrows and an accompanying report that explains how it works and how it can be used. A product for the basin.

Jim T.: How are the States part of the process? Brad adds, we don't want know what the process is.

Zach: State of California and Nevada each have non-voting members. As we see things emerging, we are in communication up our chain of command to make sure that we're not veering off course.

Alex: Support idea of this level of discernment. What is valuable science? Are the right experts involved to make a robust, well-rounded program?

Alan: We are aware of this and TSAC has reached out to people with other expertise when needed. Likely to go thru a review process.

John: we need to make sure we are addressing the things that people think are important and are concerned about. Move past secchi disk and address other science issues.

Paul: This is something that we are doing at Davis in some coastal areas: bringing scientists together with agency and public representatives to address difficult issues.

John: I have a couple of caveats: 1) make sure you coordinate with TRPA, 2) make sure however you do it, there is a discipline of science focus.

Jim L: What would the ramifications of the decision support framework be for other projects? In my mind the threshold evaluation update is most important. The decision framework is secondary. How does the framework play into the TMDL? When we had the bi-State negotiations, getting partnerships with governing organizations was key. With the current TMDL, we have a framework and targets in place. Which projects are going to achieve the TMDL most efficiently? I wouldn't want another project countering what is already in existence under the TMDL. It would be great to see EIP projects go through a checklist and rank them on importance; however, a lot of those projects are projects of opportunity. Wouldn't want a framework that would get in the way of capitalizing on the opportunities.

John: Jim's first point on the threshold update has been discussed, and will be worked on. The second point on the TMDL: how is the proposed work going to be additive that is the concern? Making sure we are not reinventing the wheel?

Geoff: TMDL process based on decision support mechanism that was created on the basis of science that is 15 years old, not really taking into account climate change. I can

see a project that has a particular rating under the current scheme, which would get a different rating here.

John: Some of the science based on 15 years ago. Can you do science that will be helpful now based on the current conditions that will not get in the way of TMDL?

Geoff: Yes. The MDL process has a long timeline, running to 2070. It is worthwhile to examine the conceptual models and assumptions that were made on the best available science at some point, and update them. It's not required that organizations buy into it, but it is certainly information that can be used.

John: Jim's concern that I share: we do not want to re-address or re-litigated things. But maybe it's about looking at things based on old science, and we are not re-litigating them, but providing something more current. Making sure this is additive and not re-litigating it.

Geoff: That's what I was going to say next.

Joann: This part of the discussion of how this gets formulated is helpful: this is additive and helpful, and not revisiting old stuff.

John: Science is not getting in the way of projects that are already on the ground

Alan: What we're doing will only add to the information that is available.

Jim L.: That was helpful, yes it must be additive. Make sure to give consideration to TMDL. Science can be helpful in forming what projects are better to fund, acknowledge with multiple jurisdictions and multiple stakeholders and multiple funding sources. Sometimes there are strings attached, and projects move forward for different reasons.

John: Work plan proposal with a couple of caveats: make sure the work is additive and focused. Are there other questions or concerns? Seeing none, is everyone okay with the proposed work plan with the caveats? Let the notes show there were no objections, just lots of oks and nods, not due to nodding off. That was a really helpful discussion.

6. Public Comment (Co-chairs)

5 min

Are there any comments from the public?

Pat: Decision framework has social science built in. Decision support tools can be incredibly useful to the agencies who would be adopting this. In the social science component, one can integrate the kinds of concerns discussed during this meeting.

John: Amazingly productive meeting! Any last comments Mr. Co-chair? Good then, we are adjourned.

Attachment 1

Summary of Tahoe Science Advisory Council Funding, Operations, and Contracting

August 21, 2017

- All 12 voting members of the Science Council have been appointed (see attached list of members). Council co-chairs are Drs. Alan Heyvaert (Desert Research Institute) and Geoffrey Schladow (UC Davis).
- Council funding to date has been provided by a single source: Annual appropriation of Lake Tahoe submerged lands lease fees collected within the State of California. Funding appropriations are authorized by Senate Bill 630 (Pavley).
- The annual funding appropriation is \$150,000. A total of \$620,000 has been allocated to support the Science Council (through June 2018). To date, about \$142,000 of the available funding has been encumbered/spent on Science Council efforts, or on administrative efforts in support of the Council.
- A master contract between the CA Natural Resources Agency and the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency was established in June 2017 to support administration and dispersal of Science Council funding.
- Over the last year TRPA has established one Council operations agreement (UCD) and four technical service agreements with Council-member entities (USGS, DRI, UNR, and UCD). The operations agreement provide staff support and infrastructure to support ongoing Council operations. The technical service agreements support the technical work undertaken by Council members. Three of the four entities have agreed to reduced indirect cost rates for these agreements.
- A Council web site has been developed, primarily to support the sharing of Council events and information with the public. The address is www.Tahoesciencecouncil.org.
- The Council has met six times since May 2016, and the Council will continue with a bimonthly meeting schedule over the next year.

Tahoe Science Advisory Council Members
January 2017

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- 1/ Council co-chairs
- 2/ Non-voting State representatives
- 3/ Bi-state Executive Committee representative

Attachment 2

Tahoe Science Advisory Council Work Plan Highlights

August 21, 2017

- This is the Council's second annual work plan. This work plan describes Council efforts through June 2018.
- Like the work plan provided to the Executive Committee last year, this work plan proposes funding for the Council's three major tasks: (1) Operations, (2) Technical Assistance, and (3) Substantive Projects.
- Support activities are also described in the work plan, although no additional funding is requested for these activities.
- A total of \$150,000 of new funding was appropriated to the Science Council with passage of the California State budget. The work plan proposes allocation of this new funding as follows:
 - \$10,000 for Council operations. We expect increased operations costs due to: (1) the Council's increased meeting frequency (bimonthly vs. quarterly), and (2) production and distribution costs associated with an increase in Council products
 - \$10,000 for technical assistance. There is some potential for an increase in technical assistance requests, primarily in the areas of: (1) targeted analysis, (2) technical workshops, and (3) technical peer review.
 - \$130,000 for substantive projects. The funding available for substantive projects (\$405,000 total) is to provide for the Council's continued work on the TRPA Threshold update initiative, and to provide initial funding to support a parallel project to begin development of a decision support framework.

Attachment 3

2016 - 2018 Work Plan for the Tahoe Science Advisory Council

The Tahoe Science Advisory Council (Council) was established in December 2015 by a memorandum of understanding (MOU) between the Secretary of the California Natural Resources Agency, and the Director of the Nevada Department of Conservation and Natural Resources. The Council is an independent group of scientists who work together in an advisory capacity to promote and enhance the use of the best available scientific information on matters of interest to both the states of California and Nevada.

This document describes the activities and funding (existing and proposed) for the Science Council under three work-plan categories: (1) operations, (2) technical assistance, and (3) substantive projects. In addition, support activities and proposed funding for Tahoe Regional Planning Agency (TRPA) administrative staff, and California Natural Resources Agency staff also are described. Implementation of the initial work-plan began in September 2016, and most of the activities described below are a continuation from that plan. Upon authorization by the Bi-State Executive Committee, implementation of this work plan will occur from September 2017 through June 2018.

A total of \$620,000 has been appropriated through annually approved California budgets to support Science Council activities. These funds were generated within the Tahoe Basin from California submerged-lands lease fees authorized for Council expenditure by Senate Bill 630 (Pavley, 2013). This funding is sufficient to support the Council's efforts under the three work categories through June 2018. In future years, it is anticipated that the level of California lease fees allocated to the Council should primarily support its ongoing operations, some technical assistance functions, and the associated support activities. The long-term funding model also envisions that agencies requesting the Council's services will provide funding for those services. It also is possible that funding identified in this work plan could be matched with other funding in a cost-share arrangement, to support the completion of specific Council activities under the Technical Assistance or Substantive Project work categories.

I. Science Council Activities and Efforts

A. Council Operations

Ongoing Council operations will require funding for organizational support, travel expenses, and communications.

Organizational support includes efforts and costs to secure meeting rooms, audio/visual equipment, and conference call and video conference capabilities. Organizational support also includes per diem to support voting Council members' meeting participation, and funding for a part-time administrative assistant reporting to the Council co-chairs. The administrative assistant: (1) manages the co-chairs calendars; (2) schedules and organize Science Council and Bi-State Executive Committee meetings; (3) secures meeting rooms; (4) prepares and distributes meeting agendas and associated materials; (5) serves as note-taker during Council and Executive Committee meetings; and (6) oversees the maintenance and operation of the Council web site (see Communications section below).

Travel expenses. Council operations funding also will be used to reimburse Council members for their travel to participate in meetings, including regular Council meetings, joint meetings of the Council and the Tahoe Interagency Executives Steering Committee, and the annual Bi-State Executive Committee meeting.

Communications includes the production (formatting and layout), and printing of Council documents. Communications also includes the development and ongoing maintenance of a basic web site to provide for the public dissemination of Council information. Web site contents would include: (1) the MOU establishing the Council; (2) bio sketches of Council members; (3) information associated with Council meetings (i.e., meeting calendar, agendas, and past meeting notes); (4) the approved Council work plan; and (5) Council products (e.g., technical reports, white papers, workshop reports, and peer review results).

Funding ¹		
Initial allocation	\$45,000	Approved in 2016 work plan
Encumbered	\$35,300	\$33,900 TRPA-UCD agreement; \$700 TSAC web site; \$700 video conference camera
Proposed additional allocation	\$10,000	Augmentation to support Council per diem, travel expenses, and communications
Total allocation	\$55,000	
Total available	\$19,700	Funding available through June 2018

¹ All funding values rounded to the nearest \$100.

B. Technical Assistance

Technical assistance includes a suite of activities generally initiated by the Science Council in response to Executive Committee or agency requests, although the Council also may generate a technical assistance activity in consultation with the Executive Committee. Given adequate resources to address requests, these activities may include

1. Plan and undertake technical workshops to examine and discuss technical issues associated with Tahoe basin matters of interest to both States. Depending on the subject matter, funding also may be used to support the participation of outside experts.
2. Undertake (either directly or in an oversight capacity) independent technical peer reviews of high-profile documents or work-products on Tahoe basin matters of interest to both Nevada and California. Depending on the subject matter, funding also may be used to support the participation of outside experts.
3. Complete targeted data analysis, and information evaluation and synthesis in response to agency information requests. The result of this work will generally take the form of white papers or technical memorandums.
4. Prepare issue papers to communicate the nature and understanding of emerging issues, which are likely to affect the Tahoe Basin.
5. Co-chair leadership of the Council and representation of the Council before boards, commissions, and legislative committees.

Funding		
Initial Allocation	\$45,000	Approved in 2016 work plan
Encumbered	\$2,100	EIP tracker tech. assist.
Proposed additional	\$10,000	Augmentation to cover potential increases in tech. assist. requests
Total allocation	\$55,000	Funding available through June 2018.
Total available	\$52,900	

C. Substantive Projects:

The Council will undertake one or more substantive technical projects throughout the term of this work plan. The first priority project is for the Council to work in consultation with TRPA technical staff and managers, to provide research and other technical

services that support the TRPA Threshold Update Initiative. The outcome of the Council's work in this area includes but is not limited to (1) science-based recommendations on the technical adequacy of selected threshold standards; (2) scientifically-supported recommendations for modification of the selected standards and the underlying rationale for those modifications; (3) examination of other environmental evaluation programs to identify best practices; and (4) recommendations on the scope and timeline for science efforts undertaken as part of the complete threshold update project.

The Council will also initiate efforts to develop a decision support framework for one or two topic areas of relevance in the Tahoe basin. Based on current scientific understanding, the framework will provide tools to help prioritize Environmental Improvement projects, identify meaningful performance measures, and develop integrated environmental monitoring.

Funding		
Initial Allocation	\$310,000	Approved in 2016 work plan
Encumbered	\$35,000	Review of existing eval. programs
Proposed additional	\$130,000	Augmentation to support continued and new substantive projects
Total allocation	\$440,000	Funding available through June 2018.
Total available	\$405,000	

II. Activities and Efforts to Support the Science Council

A. Science Council Program Officer

The program officer works collaboratively on ongoing implementation of the Council, under the administrative management of the California Natural Resources Agency, and in conjunction with direction from the Bi-State Executive Committee co-chairs. The program officer will work collaboratively with a Nevada representative to support the Executive Committee co-chairs in their oversight of the Science Council, and in the deliberation of issues considered by the Council. The program officer will have ongoing interactions with the Council co-chairs, to identify and frame issues for the Council's consideration. The program officer also will assist TRPA in the establishment and management of contracts to support Council activities and efforts.

Funding		
Initial Allocation	\$45,000	Approved in 2016 work plan
Expended	\$14,100	Program Officer annual cost
Proposed additional	\$0	
Total allocation	\$45,000	Funding available through June 2018
Total available	\$30,900	

B. Tahoe Regional Planning Agency Services

TRPA will serve as the fiscal and administrative agent for the Council. Specific services include

1. Provide accounting services for Council funding. Establish a separate account in TRPA's financial records and track revenues and expenses. Provide regular (e.g., monthly) financial reports to the California Natural Resources Agency program officer. Provide for an independent annual audit of Council financial records using TRPA's existing auditor.
2. Provide contracting services. Establish and maintain multi-year contracts with the separate entities represented on the Council. As many as eight separate contracts may be necessary. Work in collaboration with the California Natural Resources Agency program officer to develop scopes of work, track contract performance, review the accuracy of submitted invoices, and pay approved invoices. Complete contract amendments as appropriate.

Funding		
Initial Allocation	\$25,000	Approved in 2016 work plan
Encumbered	\$25,000	Covers financial, administrative, and contracting support services
Proposed additional	\$0	Augmentation to cover TRPA services through June 2018
Total allocation	\$25,000	Funding available through June 2018
Total available	\$0	