

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	
Total available	\$52,900	Funding available through June 2018.

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	
Total available	\$405,000	Funding available through June 2018.

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	
Total available	\$30,900	Funding available through June 2018

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	
Total available	\$0	Funding available through June 2018

