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New Hope for Tahoe's Largest Watershed

Tahoe Resource Conservation District acquisition marks milestone for restoration efforts

SOUTH LAKE TAHOE, Calif. (May 16, 2018) –The largest privately-owned section of the Upper Truckee River, Johnson Meadow, is now publicly owned by the Tahoe Resource Conservation District (Tahoe RCD), setting the stage for the most ambitious watershed restoration effort in the Lake Tahoe Basin.

South Lake Tahoe's Upper Truckee River Watershed is the largest and most impaired in the Tahoe Basin, and a major contributor of fine sediment impacting the clarity of the lake. The Tahoe RCD and its partners will seek to stabilize the river's highly eroding banks, and reconnect the river with its floodplain, capturing fine sediment before it reaches Lake Tahoe.

"This acquisition will jump start a collaborative effort to restore the river, improve wildlife habitat, and provide public access to visitors and the local community," said Nicole Cartwright, executive director of Tahoe RCD.

The restoration strategy, which also includes major projects by the Tahoe Conservancy, the US Forest Service, the City of South Lake Tahoe, and California State Parks, aims to restore over 1,000 acres of unique and valuable habitat and reduce stream erosion by more than 50 percent.

Climate change resiliency will also be a focus as projects aim to improve the watershed's ability to sustain rising temperatures, longer droughts, extreme floods, and other impacts of climate change, in addition to providing a refuge for native fish and wildlife species as temperatures increase at lower elevations. #

Adapting to future climate change will be critical for watershed health and water management according to Katharine Davis Reich, associate director of communications at the UCLA Center for Climate Science, which recently completed projections of climate in the Sierra Nevada at the middle and end of this century. "Warmer temperatures will cause a greater share of precipitation to fall as rain instead of snow," said Reich. "That means more wintertime rain and earlier, flashier pulses of runoff than we're used to. The snowpack will also be

smaller, so that runoff from snowmelt won't last as long into the spring and summer.”

Now, over the next several years, Tahoe RCD and its partners will be seeking \$10-15 million to restore Johnson Meadow and more than \$60 million for a collaborative strategy for the Upper Truckee River watershed. Funding from Proposition 68, a parks bond on the June 2018 ballot, would provide a significant boost to this historic effort.

The purchase of the \$8.315 million 206-acre property was made possible through a collaboration between Tahoe RCD, the California Tahoe Conservancy, California Department of Fish & Wildlife, and the Tahoe Fund. The Mosher family, who owned Johnson Meadow for almost a century, at one time used the property as a dairy and for cattle grazing. The family protected the property from development for several decades until recently seeking a public agency to purchase and restore the land.

“It took an epic collaboration to make this acquisition possible,” said Amy Berry, CEO of the nonprofit Tahoe Fund. “This is the final large piece of the puzzle necessary to unlock what will be Tahoe’s most ambitious restoration effort to date.”

For more information on the acquisition or restoration efforts, please visit <http://tahoercd.org/home/programs-and-projects-link-page/johnson-meadow/>.

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About the Tahoe Resource Conservation District

The Tahoe Resource Conservation District’s mission is to promote the conservation, stewardship and knowledge of the Lake Tahoe Region’s natural resources by providing leadership and innovative environmental services to all stakeholders. Tahoe RCD is a division of local government that is non-regulatory, designed to implement local conservation measures. Our boundary covers the California side of the Tahoe Basin, although through collaboration and partnerships we have been granted authority to work outside District boundaries including Nevada side of Basin and the Truckee River Watershed. Tahoe RCD strives to protect our natural resources including soil and water, wildlife habitat enhancement and restoration, control and prevention of invasive species, watershed restoration, wildfire prevention, and environmental education. Tahoe RCD is unique and diverse by being able to receive funding through state, federal, local, and private sources.#

About the California Department of Fish and Wildlife

The California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) administers the Proposition 1 Restoration Grant Program, providing funds to implement the three broad objectives of the California Water Action Plan: establishing more reliable water supplies, restoring important species and habitat and creating a more resilient, sustainably managed water resources system (water supply, water quality, flood protection and environment) that can better withstand inevitable and unforeseen pressures in the coming decades. To date, CDFW has awarded approximately \$114 million to 109 projects statewide under its Proposition 1 Restoration Grant Programs.

About the California Tahoe Conservancy

Established in 1984, the mission of the Tahoe Conservancy is to lead California’s efforts to restore and enhance the extraordinary natural and recreational resources of the Lake Tahoe Basin. For more information, visit <http://tahoe.ca.gov>.

About the Tahoe Fund

The Tahoe Fund supports environmental improvement projects that restore lake clarity, enhance

outdoor recreation, promote healthier forests, improve transportation and inspire greater stewardship of the region. Through the generous support of private donors, the Tahoe Fund has leveraged more than \$2 million in private funds to secure more than \$40 million in public funds for more than 25 environmental projects. The projects include new sections of the Lake Tahoe Bikeway, restoration of watersheds, removal of aquatic invasive species, forest health projects, public beach improvements, and stewardship programs. For more information please visit www.tahoefund.org.

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