TAHOE REGIONAL PLANNING AGENCY

TRPA
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STAFF REPORT

Date: April 15, 2026

To: Environmental Improvement Program Committee

From: TRPA Staff

Subject: Threshold Update Priorities

Summary and Staff Recommendation:
Over the last several years, TRPA has prioritized modernizing its environmental threshold carrying capacities (threshold standards) to ensure they are measurable, grounded in the best available science, and aligned with the region's current goals. Staff recommend prioritizing three sets of updates to the threshold standards in the 2026-2027 work plan.

1) Biodiversity: Update standards related to wildlife, fisheries, and vegetation preservation.
2) Recreation: Update the current recreation policy statements to be more specific and measurable standards.
3) Technical Review: Update all standards that had a status of "Implemented" or "Insufficient Data to Determine Status or No Target Established" in the 2023 Threshold Evaluation.

Required Motions:
To recommend the proposal to the Governing Board, the Committee must make the following motion based on the staff report:

1) A motion to recommend the proposed threshold update priorities for the 2026-2027 work plan as presented in this staff summary.

For the motion to pass, an affirmative vote of a majority of the quorum is required.

Background:
In 1982, the agency established comprehensive, science-based environmental goals for the Region, called threshold standards. Every four years, the agency issues a threshold evaluation report[1], compiling millions of data points in a comprehensive assessment of environmental conditions relative to the established goals. The evaluation is a critical part of the region's adaptive management process, shaping the priorities of the agency and its partners in the environmental improvement program.

[1] https://thresholds.laketahoeinfo.org/ThresholdEvaluation/Index/2023

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The agency and its partners have long recognized that the threshold standards need to be regularly reviewed and updated to maintain their relevance and consistency with best available science. In the 2025-2026 work plan, TRPA prioritized updates to the forest health (vegetation preservation) and water quality standards. Updates to both threshold categories were unanimously adopted by the TRPA Governing Board in February 2026.

At the Board's direction, staff are proposing three sets of targeted updates to the threshold standards for the 2026–2027 agency work plan. The updates will be led by TRPA staff with support and technical guidance from the Tahoe Science Advisory Council, contractors, and the Environmental Improvement Program partners.

1) Biodiversity: The proposed biodiversity threshold standard update would propose a more comprehensive framework that integrates wildlife protection, fisheries, and vegetation preservation goals. The integrated approach recognizes that wildlife populations, aquatic communities, and plant communities are interdependent components of healthy forest and watershed systems, requiring coordinated management strategies that address species-specific habitat requirements while maintaining landscape-level connectivity.
2) Recreation: The proposed update will focus on the current two non-measurable policy statements related to recreation and revise them to be more specific, measurable goals that support sustainable recreation across the Lake Tahoe region. TRPA is preparing a request for proposals to support this update, including public engagement workshops, development of a scoring system, and collection of baseline data. This work is made possible through recent grant funding from the Nevada Division of State Lands, the California Tahoe Conservancy, and the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency General Fund.
3) Technical Review: In the 2023 threshold evaluation, 19 standards were determined to have a status of "Implemented," while 17 standards were evaluated as "Insufficient Data to Determine Status or No Target Established." Collectively, these 36 standards generally reflect sound management intent but lack the precise language, measurable targets, or defined baselines needed to meaningfully assess whether that intent is being achieved. Stakeholders expressed concern over these status determinations, noting that the absence of specific targets or measurable baselines makes it impossible to determine whether management actions are achieving meaningful outcomes. In response to this feedback, staff propose to include a review of the 36 standards to ensure standards meet the specific, measurable, outcome criteria previously adopted by the Board.

Contact Information:
For questions regarding this agenda item, please contact Dan Segan, Chief Science and Policy Officer, at dsegan@trpa.gov, (775) 589-5233.

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