TAHOE REGIONAL PLANNING AGENCY

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

April 22, 2026

TRPA/ZOOM

1. CALL TO ORDER AND DETERMINATION OF QUORUM

Vice Chair Conrad-Saydah called the meeting to order at 11:47 a.m. on April 22, 2026.

Members present: Ms. Conrad-Saydah, Mr. Guthreau, Ms. Laine, Mr. Rice, and Ms. Williamson.

Members absent: Ms. Faustinos and Ms. Hays.

2. PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD FOR ITEMS ON THE AGENDA

Ms. Laura Patton, Natural Resource Director at the League to Save Lake Tahoe (Keep Tahoe Blue), commented in support of three items on the agenda. Regarding the proposed threshold update priorities (Agenda Item 5.C), she expressed strong support for the work to modernize foundational standards by focusing on biodiversity and recreation, and to address standards lacking measurable targets. She emphasized that updating thresholds is not only good policy but a legal obligation under Article 5 of the compact to achieve and maintain environmental threshold carrying capacities, and that standards must be measurable, science-based, and reflective of current conditions. Ms. Padden noted that the 2023 threshold evaluation revealed that many standards still lack clear targets or sufficient data, and expressed hope that the 2026–2027 prioritization would be viewed as part of a broader, adaptive modernization effort, cautioning that outdated and unmeasurable standards risk undermining environmental outcomes and compliance with the compact.

Ms. Patton also expressed support for the Aquatic Invasive Species outreach and education item and for the proposed Meyers Watercraft Inspection Station, describing aquatic invasive species as one of the most immediate and preventable threats to Lake Tahoe. She highlighted the League's Eyes on the Lake citizen science program and noted the launch of a new AIS Outreach Team engaging the public on non-motorized use, particularly given the threat of golden mussels. She emphasized the importance of permanent inspection stations for long-term basin protection.

Mr. Marlon Charneau, Supervisor of the Tahoe Livable Communities Program at the California Tahoe Conservancy, commented on the Meyers Watercraft Inspection Station (Agenda Item 5.A). He noted that the Conservancy is a partner in the project and expressed full support for the project design, including both the aquatic invasive species inspection function and the workforce housing component. He described the Conservancy's asset lands program—established to support conservation while also advancing affordability and sustainable communities—as a critical element of the project design.

3. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

TRPA Chief Partnerships Officer Kim Caringer stated noted one change to the agenda: Tom Boos would present the Aquatic Invasive Species Outreach and Education item (Agenda Item

5.B) in place of McKenzie Koch, who was out sick.

Vice Chair Conrad-Saydah deemed the agenda approved as posted.

4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Ms. Conrad-Saydah moved approval of the draft January 28, 2026 EIP Committee meeting minutes as presented.

Motion carried by voice vote.

Vice Chair Conrad-Saydah introduced Vinson Guthreau as a new member of the committee. Mr. Guthreau noted that he is the new Director of the Nevada Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, having been appointed by the Governor on March 30, 2026, and that he was assuming the committee assignments of his predecessor.

5. MEYERS WATERCRAFT INSPECTION STATION

Mr. Dennis Zabaglo, TRPA Aquatic Invasive Species Program Manager, presented an update on progress toward a permanent Meyers Watercraft Inspection Station. Ms. Thea Graybill of El Dorado County's Long Range Planning team was also present to assist with questions.

Mr. Zabaglo provided background on the AIS inspection program, which began as a voluntary effort in 2008 following the discovery of quagga mussels in Lake Mead in 2007, and transitioned to mandatory inspections and off-ramp locations in 2010-2011. The program has successfully kept invasive mussels out of Lake Tahoe since its inception. He noted that with the golden mussel now present just a couple of hours away from the basin, long-term sustainable infrastructure is critical to maintaining the program's effectiveness.

The proposed permanent station would be sited on four parcels at the southwest corner of US Highway 50 and California Highway 89 in Meyers, using California Tahoe Conservancy asset lands—properties deemed non-sensitive and eligible for development. The current temporary station accommodates only two boats, with additional inspections conducted on the public roadway during busy periods. The proposed site would accommodate up to 14 tow vehicles and boats queued off the roadway. A parallel effort is underway on the Nevada side at Spooner, in partnership with the Nevada Department of Transportation, the Tahoe Transportation District, and the Forest Service, with construction potentially beginning as soon as this year.

The 30% design incorporates an off-road queuing area, two decontamination bays with pass-through capability, six units of workforce housing to serve inspection staff in summer and snowplow drivers for El Dorado County in winter, an educational kiosk, public restrooms, and a trail connection to the existing Highway 50 bike path. The design was shaped by public engagement beginning in fall 2024, with operations sited away from Pomo Street to reduce impacts on adjacent neighbors.

A joint environmental review document—serving simultaneously as a TRPA Initial Environmental Checklist, a CEQA Initial Study Mitigated Negative Declaration, and a NEPA

Environmental Assessment (triggered by the use of federal bipartisan infrastructure law funds)—was released concurrently with the meeting for public comment. Mr. Zabaglo noted that the level of environmental review does not require formal scoping or Governing Board action at this stage, but that the project will return to the Governing Board for a permitting decision in the future. A second public open house is scheduled for May 4th at the Lake Valley Fire Department training facility.

Committee Member Questions and Comments

Ms. Laine expressed support for the project and El Dorado County's involvement. She asked whether public restrooms are included in the design. Ms. Graybill confirmed that restrooms are included in the 30% design and are being analyzed in the environmental document, with the question of year-round availability subject to future partner discussions. Ms. Laine noted that public restrooms in the Meyers area are in high demand, and that availability for those using the inspection service would help relieve pressure on local businesses.

Ms. Laine also raised a question from a recent TRPA-League board-to-board meeting: whether inspections cover not just motorized watercraft but also accessories such as life jackets, wetsuits, water skis, and fishing waders. Mr. Zabaglo confirmed that inspections are comprehensive—visual and tactile—covering compartments, lockers, wetsuits, floaties, and all gear, with soaking buckets available for smaller items.

Ms. Conrad-Saydah asked whether electric vehicle charging is contemplated in the project design, given the amount of time vehicles spend on site and the growing number of electric trucks and towing vehicles. Mr. Zabaglo acknowledged that EV charging is on the team's radar for future design phases, though not yet formalized at the 30% level. Ms. Conrad-Saydah encouraged the team to consider EV charging as a way to increase public engagement with the program, alongside the educational kiosk already planned for the site. TRPA Executive Director Julie Regan added that the increasing prevalence of electric boats makes this worth tracking.

Ms. Williamson asked whether the program can accommodate non-motorized craft and non-boat watercraft such as paddle boards and fishing gear. Mr. Zabaglo confirmed that non-motorized craft and angling equipment are subject to inspection, and that rovers, station staff, and beach and launch facility managers are all authorized to require inspections. He noted that the non-motorized component of the program has grown significantly, particularly following the discovery of New Zealand mud snails, and that the rover program and expanded outreach are helping to reach this audience.

6. AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES OUTREACH AND EDUCATION

Mr. Tom Boos, presenting on behalf of McKenzie Koch of the Tahoe Resource Conservation District, provided an update on the AIS outreach and education program, which has grown substantially with TRPA support for a full-time outreach staff position.

Mr. Boos outlined the program's four goals: increase public awareness of the AIS threat; maintain consistent messaging across diverse audiences including motorized boaters, non-motorized paddlers, anglers, and visitors; activate all available outreach platforms; and change behavior through promotion of clean, drain, and dry practices.

He described ten tactics implemented in 2025. The program deployed coordinated messaging under the 'Stop Golden Mussels, Clean Your Gear' campaign, including six billboards on incoming highway corridors and nine publication advertisements. Partnerships are central to the program, with active coordination with the Tahoe Resource Conservation District, Keep Tahoe Blue (Eyes on the Lake citizen science), the Tahoe Fund (boating maps at inspection stations), Clean Up the Lake (underwater identification toolkit for divers), UC Davis TERC (interactive educational exhibit, with a unit being installed at the Meyers station), and beach concessionaires through the Forest Service and California State Parks, whose staff are trained to screen non-motorized watercraft for risk. A joint incentive campaign with Keep Tahoe Blue offered monthly prizes and a paddle board grand prize to encourage Tahoe Keeper enrollment and Eyes on the Lake reporting.

The Rover program, launched with two staff in 2024 and expanded to four in 2025, was highlighted as a major initiative to reach non-motorized users who would not otherwise encounter inspection stations. Rovers visited 30 beaches, logged 17,000 public interactions, inspected 10,000 watercraft, and identified 78 high-risk craft for expedited decontamination.

Additional tactics included deployment of four solar-powered CD3 self-service decontamination machines at Sand Harbor, the Tahoe Keys, Meeks Bay, and the Elks Club Truckee River put-in; installation of 113 clean, drain, and dry signs around the lake with QR codes linking to stewardship information; mandatory decontamination of all motorized watercraft adopted in 2025 in response to the golden mussel threat; a simplified fee structure with a 50% discount for boats arriving already clean, drain, and dry; expanded social media activity (Instagram gained 700 followers since mid-2024); attendance at 27 events with approximately 2,700 interactions; presentations at two statewide golden mussel webinars and two international conferences; and a robust marketing campaign including direct mailers to 96,000 households, email newsletters to 15,000 subscribers, 7,000 boating app downloads, billboard placements, Tahoe In Depth articles, television and podcast coverage, print advertisements, and website modernization.

Key 2025 results: 830 new Tahoe Keepers enrolled—a sharp spike attributed to the incentive program and McKenzie Koch's outreach work—and 60% of motorized boats arrived at inspection stations already clean, drain, and dry, up from a historical average of 48-53%.

Committee Member Questions and Comments

Ms. Laine thanked Mr. Boos for the presentation and for recognizing McKenzie Koch's contributions, noting that she hears positive community feedback about the Tahoe Keepers program and that locals who paddle or kayak have been effective peer ambassadors for the program.

Mr. Rice asked whether the program coordinates with the Lake Tahoe Visitors Authority and the Tahoe Douglas Visitors Authority to amplify AIS messaging. Director Regan confirmed that TRPA coordinates with all visitors authorities in the region on destination stewardship messaging, and that visitors authorities are actively pushing golden mussel messaging and supporting billboard sponsorships. Mr. Zabaglo added that an effort is underway to place a running AIS informational video in lodging facilities and to update all land manager websites so visitors encounter consistent AIS messaging.

Ms. Conrad-Saydah suggested bringing a condensed version of the AIS outreach update to the full Governing Board as the summer season approaches, to encourage board member participation as Tahoe Keepers and as ambassadors of the program.

7. THRESHOLD UPDATE PRIORITIES

Mr. Dan Segan, TRPA Chief Science and Policy Officer, presented the proposed threshold update priorities for the agency's 2026-2027 work plan.

Mr. Segan provided historical context, noting that most threshold standards were adopted in 1982 following amendment of the compact to include the concept of environmental threshold carrying capacities. A 2017 Science Advisory Council assessment found that fewer than 40% of the 178 existing standards were specific and measurable, and fewer than 30% were specific, measurable, and grounded in current science. The Governing Board adopted the SMART criteria—specific, measurable, attributable, relevant, and time-bound—as the standard of evaluation.

Since 2017, the Governing Board has taken five actions to modernize the standards: two rounds of technical cleanup in 2018 and 2019; adoption of a VMT standard for sustainable communities and transportation in 2021; adoption of updated goals for Aquatic Invasive Species, Stream Environment Zone, and Tahoe yellowcress standards in 2024; and adoption of updated forest health and water quality standards. As a result, the total number of standards has been reduced from 178 to 111, of which 61 have undergone initial environmental review and are considered specific, measurable, and science-based.

The remaining 50 standards fall into three categories proposed as the focus of the next round of threshold update work.

The first priority area is recreation standards. Two policy statements remain within the recreation category. Policy statements were adopted prior to the 1987 Regional Plan as guidance to the Governing Board and contain general directional language rather than specific, measurable outcomes, making it difficult to produce objective threshold evaluations. A Recreation Working Group, including all partner agencies, has been convened to develop specific and measurable criteria for sustainable recreation sites. TRPA has also received grants from the California Tahoe Conservancy and the Nevada Division of State Lands, augmented by agency general funds, to retain consultants with expertise in sustainable recreation planning. A Governing Board workshop will be included in the consultant's work plan to allow board members to provide input on the criteria being developed.

The second priority is biodiversity. The agency currently maintains six threshold standards related to individual bird species—primarily raptors—adopted in the early 1980s in response to DDT-related population declines. Many of these species, including osprey and bald eagle, are now well above their threshold targets. As the forest health threshold update process demonstrated, the agency's concept of a healthy basin has evolved to encompass the full ecosystem and biological diversity of species the landscape supports. The proposed update, framed as 'Biodiversity Beyond Birds,' would work with the Biological Interagency Working Group to develop updated standards covering a broader range of taxa. The Tahoe Science Advisory Council has agreed to play both an embedded, engaged review role during the development process and an independent peer review role at its conclusion.

Ms. Conrad-Saydah noted the complexity of setting biodiversity thresholds in a changing climate, citing the declining visibility of pika as an example. She suggested exploring the use of umbrella or keystone species as indicators of overall ecosystem health, and raised the challenge of distinguishing attainment shortfalls resulting from management actions versus those driven by climate change. She also encouraged the Science Advisory Council to consider how shifting habitat conditions affect the species being tracked. Mr. Segan confirmed that these questions are precisely what the Science Advisory Council's engaged role will help the agency work through.

The third priority is continued technical review and administrative cleanup of approximately 30 remaining management standards and policy statements that lack specific or measurable outcomes or defined baselines, such as direction to 'reduce pollutant load' without a defined target. At the time of the last threshold evaluation, approximately 60 standards fell into this category; the water quality and forest health updates have reduced that number to just over 30. The proposal is to update all remaining standards by the next threshold evaluation, with an overall timeline targeting completion by the end of 2027.

Director Regan thanked Mr. Segan and the science and data team—present in the room—for their monitoring, field analysis, GIS, and technology work, and for coordinating with partner agencies. She noted the direct connection between current, science-based threshold standards and the agency's permitting function: planners use the threshold standards during environmental review of every project, and standards not grounded in current science create uncertainty at the permitting level. She expressed appreciation for the board's prior direction to prioritize threshold modernization.

Ms. Laine moved to recommend the proposed threshold update priorities for the 2026-2027 work plan as presented in the Staff Summary.

Ayes: Mr. Guthreau, Ms. Conrad-Saydah, Mr. Rice, Ms. Laine, and Ms. Williamson.
Nays: None.
Motion carried.

8. COMMITTEE MEMBER COMMENTS

Director Regan also introduced Rodney from Exec Shield Security, who attended the meeting as part of a new board security program, and welcomed him to the agency.

9. PUBLIC INTEREST COMMENTS

There were no public interest comments.

10. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Rice moved to adjourn. The meeting was adjourned at 1:01 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Katherine Huston
Paralegal, TRPA

The above meeting was recorded in its entirety. Anyone wishing to listen to the recording may find it at https://www.TRPA.gov/meeting-materials/. In addition, written documents submitted at the meeting are available for review. If you require assistance locating this information, please contact the TRPA at (775) 588-4547 or virtualmeetinghelp@TRPA.gov. The initial draft of these minutes was generated with the assistance of artificial intelligence tools using the official meeting recording and transcript. The draft was reviewed and edited by TRPA staff for accuracy and completeness prior to approval.