



**Eastern Nevada County Visitor Safety &  
Environmental Hazard Prevention Program Grant**

*for the*

**Outdoor Visitor Safety Fund**

**RFP No. 154822**

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**Truckee Trails Foundation  
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Truckee, CA 96160**

## TAB A: ENTITY DESCRIPTION

- a. The Truckee Trails Foundation (TTF) is building, maintaining, and advocating for a world-class network of trails and bikeways for health, sustainability, and prosperity. As a nonprofit trail organization in Truckee, California, TTF has made a name for itself by planning and building a flourishing network of trails in the region through careful collaboration with community partners and stakeholders. Key partners include the United States Forest Service (USFS), Town of Truckee, County of Placer, County of Nevada, Truckee Tahoe Airport District, Truckee Donner Land Trust, Tahoe Donner Association, Glenshire Residents Association, and California State Parks.

TTF has managed all aspects of trail planning, including alignment/design, management of resource studies, and entitlements. In addition, over the past five years, TTF has built 20 miles of new trail, including Elizabethtown, Big Chief, El Burro, Carpenter Valley, Ridgeline Nature Loop, Gentle Jeffrey, and Wood Splitter. We pride ourselves in being a multiuse trail organization that makes careful and unbiased consideration of all trail user needs and concerns at all times. In addition to being an active partner in the Pines to Mines Trail effort, a proposed trail connecting eastern Nevada County with western Nevada County, our trail crew manages and maintains 43 miles of USFS trails that lie within eastern Nevada County.

Finally, TTF also successfully managed the installation of over 75 wayfinding signs and three new vault toilets under a grant funded by Placer County in 2020 and 2021.

- b. Principals primarily responsible for TTF's organizational operations currently include:
- **Allison Pedley.** As executive director of TTF, Ms. Pedley oversees daily operations while also monitoring fiscal health, risk management, and strategic plan implementation. Ms. Pedley has been with TTF in this capacity for over 10 years, during which time the organization has witnessed a dramatic increase in community support and project budgets.
  - **Leslie Loveland.** As program director of TTF, Ms. Loveland primarily works in the field, planning the day-to-day activities of the seasonal trail crew while also running heavy equipment in the field. Ms. Loveland oversaw the installation of 76 trailhead and wayfinding signs and three new vault toilets in 2020 and 2021.
- c. The Truckee Trails Foundation primarily serves the greater Truckee area (eastern Nevada County and Placer County, within the Tahoe National Forest), but also occasionally assists with maintenance outside the immediate area, especially on the Pacific Crest Trail. The Pines to Mines trail project extends from east to west Nevada County, and TTF is working with partners throughout the county to make this a reality.

We aim to serve the entire community of outdoor recreationalists who access trails for hiking, mountain biking, and horseback riding in late spring, summer, and fall, and for backcountry ski access and snow play in the winter months.

## **TAB B: COVID-19 IMPACTS**

COVID-19 brought close to \$1,000,000 in additional Transient Occupancy Tax revenue over the prior fiscal year. As well, eastern Nevada County has been on the receiving end of the “Great COVID migration,” with a 1,082 percent increase in San Francisco transplants to the Truckee area between August 2019 and August 2020. While on the surface it would seem like this would equate to an economic *benefit*, and for local businesses it was, the economic impacts to those responsible for maintaining public lands were conversely quite negative. Two factors – more locals and more visitors (all aiming to recreate outside) – have had a dramatic effect on the natural environment we all aim to enjoy, where a general over-crowding of our trails has resulted in a dramatic increase in trash and human (hazardous) waste. For the Truckee Trails Foundation and partner organizations (including the Truckee Donner Land Trust and Visit Truckee-Tahoe), this has meant a need to spend significantly more time on public education and trail/trailhead clean-up (stewardship) and less time on our core mission (to create more recreational opportunities).

Aside from the obvious negative effect this has on our area visually, this problem also creates an obvious impact to our watershed and local fauna, and in turn, a potentially very hazardous health threat to humans who recreate in or consumes fish from nearby lakes and rivers. To help this problem, TTF employed “ambassadors” (funded by Visit Truckee-Tahoe) to speak with the public about “Leave no Trace” principles and to clean trash from these areas. Our ambassadors have spoken with visitors disgusted by the amount of waste left behind at trailheads, snow-play areas, and viewpoints. While this ambassador program is helping, it has become clear that certain locations in eastern Nevada County require infrastructure to help decrease the amount of hazardous human waste. Public vault toilets are critical.

Working with our project team (Donner Summit Association, Truckee Donner Land Trust, Visit Truckee-Tahoe, United States Forest Service, and California State Parks), TTF identified a number of locations where the need for vault toilets is especially dire. These locations were identified based on: (1) overall perception of the number of annual visitors to the site; (2) trash and human waste seen at the location by our trail ambassadors; (3) distance from other public restrooms; and (4) proximity to lakes or rivers that could be negatively impacted by hazardous waste, creating a serious public health problem. Eleven high-use locations, all significantly impacted by increased user visitation from COVID-19 (at or near bodies of water) were identified by the project team. Through a further vetting process which included the varied costs of digging vaults (soil versus granite), the possibility of disturbing archaeological resources, insufficient time to obtain necessary approvals, and/or obtain insufficient long-term maintenance funding, the team effectively reduced this number down to two locations.

## TAB C: PROJECT DESCRIPTION

- a. This project proposes to install vault toilets at two locations in the Truckee area that have been significantly impacted by COVID-19 recreational access. The first location is at Johnson Canyon. Johnson Canyon is a very popular hiking and mountain biking trail in late spring, summer, and fall, and in the wintertime, a backcountry ski access point and snow play area. As such, it is heavily impacted year-round. On property owned and managed by the Truckee Donner Land Trust (and also monitored by TTF's trail ambassadors year-round), excessive amounts of trash and shocking signs of human waste have led the project team to agree this location is in desperate need of a permanent vault toilet. Importantly, Johnson Canyon is located just uphill and to the north of Donner Lake, where snowmelt naturally flows right into this pristine body of water popular for swimming and fishing.

The second vault toilet location is at the Commemorative Overland Emigrant Trail trailhead at Hobart Mills Road. This is the location of the Truckee Ranger District's most popular trail that doesn't currently have a trailhead vault toilet. Like the Johnson Canyon location, this trailhead is located in close proximity to Prosser Creek, which drains into Prosser Lake, another popular body of water popular for fishing and swimming.

These vault toilets represent a key step in our region's need to better manage the impacts of tourism. While COVID-19 caused the recent surge in tourism, our project team agrees that the increase in tourism is not going to recede with the virus: we believe that once people experience the outdoors, it becomes a lifelong endeavor. However, there could come a point where unmanaged trash and human waste becomes so bad at our trailheads that recreationalists seek out other, cleaner, and safer locations to recreate. This is TTF's biggest fear, and what drove the project team to collaborate to begin solving this problem. While COVID-19 did not create an economic downturn in the Truckee area, the result of COVID-19 pushing visitors to our region could continue to have a very negative impact environmentally and economically.

While vault toilets will help solve the human waste issue, the project team also discussed the best way to handle the pervasive trash. Bear proof trash cans seemed like the obvious choice. However, the USFS and Truckee Donner Land Trust both indicated recently that trash cans at trailheads tend to be used over time by vacationers dumping household trash on their way out of town, rather than just recreationalists needing a place to put their empty beer bottle. As such, both land managers agreed that trash cans tend to create more problems than they solve. Therefore, for the time being, the project team agreed to continue with the TTF/Visit Truckee-Tahoe Ambassador program to help alleviate the trash issue at trailheads.

- b. Vault toilets will be ordered as soon as notice of funding is received. In 2020, there was a year-long wait for toilet delivery due to COVID-19. While the wait should not be as long in 2022-23, supply chain issues may continue to create delay. However, our hope is that the vault toilets will arrive for installation sometime in summer of 2023. Prior to their arrival, TTF will ensure that the toilet locations are properly graded and ready for installation. The vendor completes all excavation and installation.

Our trail ambassador program will begin in mid-May and run at least through Labor Day of each year.

- c. This proposal directly responds to the impact of COVID-19, as it identifies two trails/trailheads heavily impacted by the dramatic increase in recreationalists in 2020 and 2021 – recreation that has resulted in an unsightly and hazardous increase in trash and human waste in these areas.

## **TAB D: COMMUNITY BENEFIT**

Eastern Nevada County has witnessed rapid population growth in recent years, with the 2020 census showing 7.1% more residents than 2010 – significantly more growth than west county. Visitation to eastern Nevada County is increasing rapidly as well, spurred in large part by COVID-19 recently. All of this has resulted in an increased need to address recreation impacts to our natural resources. Because tourism represents the largest segment of our economy, Truckee Trails Foundation and our partners are aiming to ensure increased tourism can be effectively managed in a way that keeps our natural environment pristine and enjoyable, and so that people continue to want to live in and visit this side of the county.

Installing vault toilets at these identified locations will create a more enjoyable experience for recreationalists, while also helping to ensure that the surrounding area and waterways are not contaminated with human waste that might result in the absence of toilets. It is clear that contamination of our waterways by human waste is a growing public health concern that toilets will effectively address. Importantly, TTF will choose toilets that are compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act, so that these locations will have more equitable access as well.

TTF will also continue with the trail ambassador program, that will work to address the growing litter problem at trailheads and along trails. In the summer months, TTF (funded by Visit Truckee-Tahoe and the town of Truckee) will have six ambassadors hiking and bicycling our local trails and trailheads to pick up trash, but more importantly, talk with recreationalists about “leave no trace” principles. Similarly, our ambassadors carry dog waste bags to even help ensure that hikers pick up after their dogs. Our team strongly believes that between this ambassador program and vault toilet installation, we will make significant strides in addressing the growing trash and waste problems at our trails and trailheads.

## **TAB E: LEVERAGING PARTNERSHIPS AND RESOURCES**

When the Outdoor Visitor Safety Fund was announced, TTF gathered community partners to see if consensus could be reached regarding priority projects. Accordingly, Donner Summit Association, Truckee Donner Land Trust, Visit Truckee-Tahoe, United States Forest Service, and California State Parks very quickly agreed with TTF that our biggest immediate concern was the environmental, public health, and long-term economic impact of waste at our trails and trailheads.

The group subsequently worked together to identify eleven locations where vault toilets would be beneficial. It is our hope that over time, this team will be able to fund and install toilets at each of these locations. For now, however, the Emigrant Trail and Johnson Canyon trailheads are the most turnkey locations with identified funding for maintenance into the future. In the meantime, Visit Truckee-Tahoe and the town of Truckee will work with TTF to fund the trail ambassador program, which will continue to ensure that our trails and trailheads are looked after as much as humanly possible, while communicating important stewardship messaging to the public.

Importantly, over the next year, TTF hopes to reach an agreement with the town of Truckee to partially fund trailhead toilets through the town's Measure R trails sales tax, which will ideally lead to the installation of at least two trailhead toilets within town limits.

While there are archaeological constraints for vault toilets at some other locations, we are working with landowners and vendors to find creative solutions to this important barrier.

## **TAB F: MANAGEMENT CAPACITY AND MEASURABLE OUTCOMES**

The installation of two vault toilets will require approximately 40 hours of TTF staff time, and 20 hours of Truckee Donner Land Trust staff time. The bulk of the work is done by the vendor, who brings all necessary excavation equipment when the toilets are delivered. As such, once the toilets are ordered, and delivery dates are coordinated, the remaining work includes ensuring that the toilet location is identified and properly graded (by excavator) and prepped.

While the Truckee Donner Land Trust and USFS have committed to maintaining these restrooms, we are asking that funding for the first year of maintenance be included in this grant so that these entities have time to earmark appropriate funding by 2024.

The trail ambassador program is a year-round trail and trailhead stewardship effort managed by the Truckee Trails Foundation. The program is so robust during the summer months that a seasonal coordinator is hired to manage the staff. In the winter months, two year-round staff members have the capacity to manage the program.

The outcomes of this project will be easily measured as follows:

- (1) The successful installation and maintenance of a vault toilet at Johnson Canyon and Emigrant Trail at Hobart.
- (2) The successful implementation of the trailhead ambassador program, including detailed ambassador data regarding contacts, trash, and other trail/trailhead issues.
- (3) Successful conversations with the town of Truckee regarding the installation of two trailhead vault toilets within town limits.
- (4) Successful conversations with California State Parks regarding alternatives to vault toilets at sensitive archaeological sites where toilets are necessary.
- (5) Successful conversations with the Donner Summit Association and the USFS to identify turnkey locations for vault toilets at the summit.