

Third-Party Review of the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency Forest Health Thresholds

Background

The Tahoe Regional Planning Agency (TRPA), in partnership with members of the Environmental Improvement Program and the Tahoe Science Advisory Council (Council), is updating its Forest Health Thresholds to reflect the latest scientific understanding of desired forest conditions in the Lake Tahoe Basin. The thresholds are designed to measure progress toward resilient forest ecosystems that can withstand disturbance, support biodiversity, and reduce the risk of large, high-severity wildfires. These thresholds are a core component of TRPA's environmental standards and guide basin-wide management and monitoring decisions.

As part of this process, TRPA has developed draft desired condition targets based on forest type, stand density, seral stage, and canopy cover metrics. These targets aim to guide management actions toward a more resilient distribution of forest structure and composition.

To provide an independent evaluation of the scientific basis and credibility of the draft thresholds, the TRPA has requested that the Council conduct an independent third-party review.

Objective

The objective of this review is to evaluate the scientific foundation, clarity, and practical applicability of the proposed forest health thresholds. The review will help ensure that the thresholds reflect the best available science, are methodologically robust, and serve as a scientifically sound basis for long-term monitoring and adaptive management in the Lake Tahoe Basin.

Review Questions

1. Scientific Foundation of Desired Condition Targets

- Are the proposed thresholds consistent with current science and best practices in forest ecology and management?
- Are the selected metrics (e.g., basal area, trees per acre, seral stage, canopy cover) well justified by the supporting rationale?
- Are there any gaps, limitations, or improvements that should be considered based on data that is readily available today?
- How can the standards be structured to remain adaptable as new or improved data become available?

2. Applicability and Interpretability

- Are the thresholds measurable, feasible to implement, and suitable for long-term monitoring and adaptive management?
- Are the thresholds clearly defined and easily interpretable for managers, policymakers, and the public?
- Do the targets adequately account for climate change, fire regimes, and other key stressors?

Deliverable

- A written review (3–5 pages) that addresses the specified review questions.
- Recommendations for refinement or clarification of desired condition targets.
- Please provide supporting references or citations where applicable.

Optional Deliverable

- A marked-up version of the document with track changes and embedded comments.

Timeline

- **Draft Forest Health Thresholds Released** – August 2025
- **Review Period** – September 2025 – November 2025
- **Final Review** – December 2025