

MEETING MINUTES (TRANSCRIPT SUMMARY)

TRUCKEE RIVER FUND ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING OF NOVEMBER 21, 2025

(Meeting via teleconference and In-Person)

The following meeting minutes is a summary of the certified transcript for the Truckee River Fund Advisory Committee meeting held at 8:30 a.m., Friday, November 21, 2025, via Zoom teleconference and in-person at The Community Foundation of Northern Nevada, 50 Washington St, Ste 300, Reno, NV.

Those Present:

Committee Members: Jim Smitherman, Chair; Terri Svetich, Vice Chair; Brian Bonnenfant, Bill Bradley, Mike Brisbin, Peter Gower, Neoma Jardon, Dave Stanley.

Also: Lauren Sgandurra, Community Foundation of Northern Nevada; Sonia Folsom, Kara Steeland, TMWA; Sarah Ferguson, Council for TRF; Susan Merideth, TRF Minutes Recorder.

Members of the Public: Iris Jehle-Peppard, One Truckee River.

- + Committee member arrived after roll call ++ Committee member left meeting before adjournment
* Asterisks (*) denote non-action items

Agenda Item #1: Roll Call: Roll call was taken. A quorum was noted.

Agenda Item #2: Public comment: There was no public comment at this time.

Agenda Item #3: Approval of the agenda: Bill Bradley motioned to approve the agenda for the November 21st meeting, and Brian Bonnenfant seconded the motion. The agenda was unanimously approved.

Agenda Item #4: Approve the May Summary Meeting Minutes: Bill Bradley motioned to approve the Meeting Minutes (Transcript Summary) for August 22, 2025 as written and Terri Svetich seconded the motion. The Minutes were unanimously approved by the Committee. Brian Bonnenfant abstained from the vote since he was absent from the meeting.

Agenda Item #5: Fund balance report: The amount of the fund balance as of November 21, 2025 is \$261,960, including \$225,000 reserved for the Spring 2026 funding cycle plus \$36,960 in unused from the Fall funding cycle.

Agenda Item #6: Presentation by One Truckee River on Coordinated Vegetation Management Project, Iris Jehle-Peppard

Iris Jehle-Peppard from One Truckee River started by reviewing the origins of the Truckee River Coordinated Vegetation Management initiative, designed to enhance the health and ecological function of the river system. The Nevada Land Trust and One Truckee River formed a steering committee and technical working group to advance this initiative, which was necessary because many different agencies hold authority along the river corridor, creating a complex management environment. The technical working group includes local, state, and federal agencies, including the City of Reno, the City of Sparks, Washoe County and Truckee Meadows Water Authority. Other stakeholders were interviewed and remain available for further input.

The initiative focuses on the middle, urbanized reach of the Truckee River, from Crystal Peak Park to Vista Narrows, with consultant support from SWCA and DRI. The collaborative work resulted in a framework for a vegetation management and restoration plan, as well as planning guides and tools, including a pivot-chart tool that matches site conditions with appropriate plant species and management methods.

In 2023-2024, a comprehensive conditions assessment was completed, that included mapping riparian vegetation and dominant species, channel condition, tree height and rock cover, aquatic conditions, and water quality and bioassessment indicators. From the assessment data, a project prioritization tool was created using ecological conditions index, feasibility scoring, public needs scoring, consideration of flood conveyance constraints and project type. This effort resulted in a prioritized project list and mapped locations with highest need, categorized by condition. OTR shared priority maps for the City of Reno, the City of Sparks, Washoe County and the Reno-Sparks Indian Colony. All maps, tools, plans, and a case study are hosted through the Truckee Meadows Regional Planning Agency and linked on the One Truckee River website.

Iris also shared the results of a 2024 public survey to illustrate public perception and usage of the River. Of the respondents, 85% reported using the Truckee River path for over five years. For those who do not visit the river, primary reasons included safety concerns and access limitations, while some respondents preferred other parks and did not feel drawn to the river corridor. Over 90% of respondents agreed the community needs to do more to improve river health and safety.

Iris emphasized that public safety and ecological health are often competing priorities; for example, dense vegetation can obstruct line of sight and affect safety but removing vegetation for visibility can harm ecological function. A key challenge identified is homelessness along the river, which increases pressure for vegetation clearing. Iris advocated for balanced solutions such as proactive pruning, protection of mature trees from beaver damage and native plantings following invasive species removal.

Moving forward, Iris suggested policy-level coordination, targeted training for maintenance crews across agencies and nonprofits, and additional funding for extensive riverbank repair.

The Truckee River Vision Plan was highlighted as a model for balanced vegetation management—maintaining thriving habitat while preserving visibility for public safety. The presentation concluded with OTR asking the Committee to consider how they can support prioritizing coordinated vegetation management for the Truckee River.

The Committee discussed key points from the presentation and offered suggestions.

Committee members asked whether agencies performing riverbank reconstruction are coordinating their work with the One Truckee River vegetation management framework. Iris responded that, in many cases, the opportunity to coordinate has been missed. She recently contacted the City of Sparks and RTC about the Sparks Boulevard expansion and was told ecological work is being done to meet regulatory requirements, but it is not clearly communicated or tied to the One Truckee River plan. She noted this as a positive step but an example of where earlier coordination could have been beneficial.

Questions were raised about what standards or regulations agencies use for revegetation. Iris said that requirements are generally driven by environmental regulations but she has not deeply reviewed those project-specific permits. She emphasized that RTC and other entities are slowly beginning to recognize their role in ecological work, citing the Broadhead riverbank repair project funded by RTC and NDOT as an example, but said she would welcome support in reaching the right contacts within those institutions.

Committee members asked whether she has presented the plan to oversight and regulatory agencies. Iris confirmed that NDOT has been involved in the process and she has presented to their staff, but NDOT has not committed staff to the technical working group or partnership council, RTC has representation on the partnership council, though their representative has had limited engagement outside biannual meetings and NDEP staff are members of the partnership council.

Regarding homelessness along the river, the Committee asked how the plan anticipates repeated impacts from encampments and flooding on restoration sites. Iris explained that since One Truckee River has no regulatory authority, proactive management is key; however, she acknowledged jurisdictions often lack staff and resources to implement maintenance consistently.

The Committee highlighted the positive impact of River Rangers in downtown Reno, and the marked reduction in encampments, fires, and pollution and emphasized that enforcement can support both safety and environmental outcomes. Iris agreed enforcement is essential but urged a balanced approach so enforcement activities do not result in indiscriminate vegetation removal. Some members stated they do not personally see tension between enforcement and ecology, noting that reduced encampments benefit

all objectives. Iris replied that, on the ground, staff often do experience this as a tension when trying to balance competing directives.

When asked if the vegetation plan includes irrigation, Iris said it is addressed conceptually but the framework is not site-specific. She went on to describe the efforts of the workforce program, which has worked with the City of Reno to repair and reactivate irrigation in river-adjacent parks, planted trees, removed invasive species and coordinated with River Rangers to avoid conflicting efforts.

As the main themes of the management project are vegetation maintenance and riverbank repair and there is a substantial backlog of needed riverbank repair projects, Iris asked whether the Committee could explicitly recognize the coordinated vegetation and riverbank repair work as a funding priority. Iris also asked that the TRF encourage riverbank repair projects that align with the assessment and prioritization work, ensure enforcement-related funding avoids clear-cutting and support projects that combine invasive removal along with native plantings.

The Committee responded that this type of work clearly fits the Fund's existing criteria and agreed they could acknowledge and reference the OTR Coordinated Vegetation Management plan in future RFPs and communications. The Committee will also consider emphasizing riverbank repair and vegetation work as priorities before the next grant cycle. The Committee thanked Iris for OTR's extensive work, advocacy and the clarity of the information presented.

Agenda Item #7: Blueprint Collaborative's Strategic Assessment

The Blueprint Collaborative conducted a strategic assessment this year to evaluate and strengthen the TRF's grantmaking process, and a final report was presented to the Committee at the May 16, 2025 meeting. One of the insights from the evaluation was that the efficiency and fairness of committee meetings needs improvement. Bill Bradley expressed concerns with the Blueprint Collaborative's assessment, particularly how interview comments were interpreted and framed in the report.

Bill Bradley asked Sonia Folsom and Kara Steeland as to TMWA's responsibility in addressing homeless impacts along the river, stating it would be helpful to know explicitly if TMWA's role in enforcement, so the advisory committee is not repeatedly revisiting the same questions about enforcement and homelessness. While TMWA is not an enforcement agency and has no explicit enforcement stance, they will have a discussion with TMWA leadership and board members to clarify their position and report back to the Committee.

The Committee expressed concern about application pre-screening and removal of applicants from the Committee review process. The intention of the pre-screening is to ensure that clearly ineligible applications do not consume meeting time and that the fund can show consistent, defensible criteria if challenged. The ultimate decision-making still rests with the TMWA Board, but clearer policies would help the advisory committee and board align and avoid contradictory decisions.

The River Rangers was highlighted as a project that broadly aligns with the goals of the TRF but was rejected before reaching the Committee for funding consideration. Upon further review, CFNN staff clarified that the application in question did not meet the RFP criteria because it requested direct funding for a new staff position. While many approved budgets include funding for personnel, the TRF currently does not support direct funding for staff positions. The Committee concluded that there needs to be clearer language in the RFPs regarding what types of expenses are funded versus what will not be considered for funding, in this example distinguishing acceptable project-based personnel support from disallowed requests for creating or fully funding an ongoing staff position.

The Committee further discussed equity and consistency in the decision-making process. Applicants have expressed concern over the years that the process feels unpredictable and inequitable; for example, when certain costs are funded in one cycle but denied in another. Also, some new applicants felt they were denied simply because they were new and “unknown.” Such discrepancies highlight the need for explicit, written policies, so the Committee can refer to specific standards.

There was also discussion about the open meeting law (OML) and whether applicants may contact advisory members, with one concern being whether applicants are allowed to speak with committee members one-on-one prior to meetings. Sarah Ferguson, Council for TRF, clarified that the main risk arises when committee members start discussing applications with each other, directly or indirectly, outside of a noticed meeting. A single member speaking with an applicant is not inherently an OML violation, but it can easily lead to problems if information is then shared among committee members. The Committee requested further clarification and suggested OML training might be beneficial.

In conclusion, in an effort to improve process fairness and transparency, the Committee will consider developing more explicit funding categories and exclusions and explore ranking or scoring methods so decisions can be backed up with documented criteria if there are questions about equity. The Committee will also work on developing clear written policies distinguishing project funding that includes personnel versus direct funding of ongoing staff positions and clarify what is and is not fundable in RFPs and guidance documents. A special meeting devoted to policy and process will be scheduled after the next RFP, and any adopted changes will be in place for future funding cycles.

Agenda Item #8: TRF funding priorities for upcoming grant cycle

No action. Priorities remain unchanged.

Agenda Item #9: Review of in-kind match standard

The Committee reviewed the standard that some applicants use to value their in-kind match for volunteer hours and consider raising the amount in the RFP from the current volunteer rate of \$20 per hour to the national standard rate.

Referring to The Independent Sector, an agency that sets hourly rates for non-profits across the nation and by state, for 2024, the hourly rate established for volunteers in Nevada was \$30.86/hour and the national rate was \$34.79/hour.

Bill Bradley motioned to increase the standard hourly rate in the RFP for in-kind volunteers to \$35/hour for 2025-2026 and that the rate be reevaluated annually. Neoma Jardon seconded the motion, and it was unanimously approved by the Committee.

Agenda Item #10: Review 2026 TRF Calendar

A proposed meeting calendar for 2026 was presented to TRF Advisory Committee for approval. Brian Bonnenfant motioned and Terri Svetich seconded the motion to accept the 2026 meeting calendar as presented. The committee unanimously approved the motion.

Agenda Item #11: Committee and staff comments

Terri Svetich noted a recent TMWA newsletter article about TMWA partnering with DRI on launching STEM curriculum to support local science education focusing on the Truckee River system, including providing high school teachers educational resources through DRI starting this fall. She asked if there is overlap with the Watershed Education Initiative efforts of Sierra Nevada Journeys, who receives funding support from TRF. Kara Steeland explained the complementary focus of the STEM partnership which is a standalone, Truckee River watershed specific curriculum for high school students, while SNJ's is a hands-on education opportunity focused on younger students.

Agenda Item #12: Upcoming Meetings: Friday, February 20, 2026 at 8:30am

Brian Bonnenfant motioned to hold the meeting on Friday, February 20, 2026 at 8:30am at The Community Foundation of Northern Nevada and by teleconference. Terri Svetich seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

Agenda Item #13: Public comment: *None.*

Agenda Item #14: Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 10:30 am.