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**Newsletter: April/May 2015**

## ***Ever-expanding infrastructure and development threatens Lake Tahoe...***

Although we retain the name "Friends of the West Shore" (FOWS), we are conscious that approval of new plans and projects around the *entire* Lake can also be like 'the camel getting his nose under the tent.' Once a precedent is set elsewhere, the West Shore could be next. This is why FOWS is not only concerned about projects that will have a direct impact on the West Shore, but also about regional projects that set the stage for large increases in development throughout the Basin.

For example, expanding road capacity (the Fanny Bridge project) and adding new higher-capacity power lines (the CalPeco Project) lays the foundation for more development and traffic. Yet the [Fanny Bridge Project](#) is on its way to TRPA approval in May, and the [Calpeco/Liberty Energy Project](#), which will scar forests on the North Shore to provide more power for large resort interests, was recently approved by the TRPA. In both cases, extensive community opposition was expressed, but the assault on our environment and communities continues.

In other examples, changes brought by the TRPA's 2012 Regional Plan Update (RPU) include new zoning that has led to the proposal to build over 100 new homes on Tahoe's forested ridgeline (the [Martis Valley West Area Plan](#)). This could set a dangerous precedent, resulting in the loss of natural ridgeline views around the Tahoe Basin. Further, the TRPA is currently considering RPU amendments to approve new hotel developments beyond those allowed by the 2012 RPU.

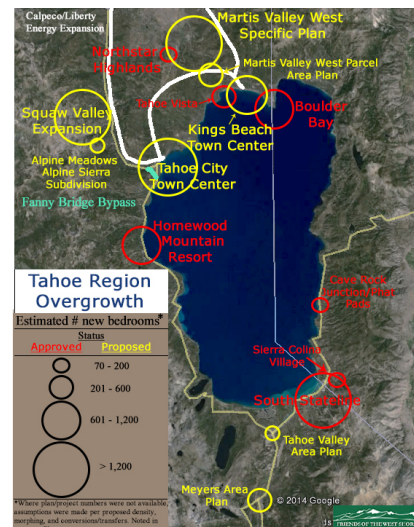
Making matters worse, these new developments will increase the demand for water. We are entering our fourth year of extreme drought, which may be the "[new normal](#)," and California is already facing a water crisis. There are limits on the water that can be used in the Tahoe Basin for development. Yet unlike [California](#), Tahoe agencies are not considering whether we need to rethink adding the large new developments promoted by the 2012 RPU. This is a public health and safety issue in two major ways - we need water to live, and as wildfires increase, we will need water to protect our communities.

What we cannot do is allow all the new developments that are now proposed. Lake Tahoe cannot survive this economic assault. If we wish to pass on the lifestyle we enjoy at the lake, we must resist unwise development.

Sincerely,

Susan Gearhart,  
President, Friends of the West Shore

Bruce Carswell,  
Board Member, Friends of the West Shore



Proposed and approved regional development and infrastructure projects as of 4/29/2015  
[View Larger Image](#)

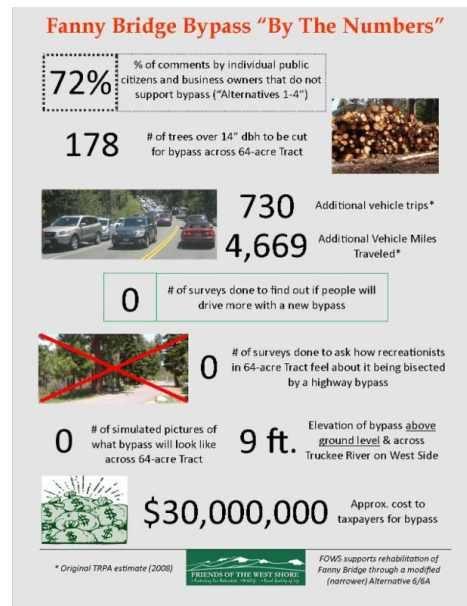
### ***Local Project Updates:***

#### **Fanny Bridge/S.R. 89 Realignment Project:**

On 4/8, the TRPA Advisory Planning Commission (APC) voted to recommend approval of the final environmental documents and the "preferred alternative" - Alt. 1 (the new bypass, bridge, and roundabouts). On 4/10, the Tahoe Transportation District (TTD) voted to certify the environmental documents and support Alternative 1 with the flexibility to consider a stoplight or roundabout at the Tahoe City Wye. Several members of the public expressed concerns regarding environmental and economic impacts, especially to purportedly solve a congestion problem that exists barely 5% of the year. One person summed up how many felt about Alternative 1: "a waste of taxpayer dollars."

FOWS remains concerned that the proposed project will result in substantial environmental harm, draw more traffic along West Shore's two-lane highway, negatively impact businesses in Tahoe City, and not resolve one of the primary causes of congestion in the area - pedestrian crossings in Tahoe City. Ironically, plans to address these problems were just initiated, but unfortunately, [in a separate process](#).

FOWS submitted comments to the [APC](#) and [TTD](#) for their final hearings. As it now stands, the [TRPA Governing Board](#) will vote on the project at their **May 27/28** Hearing. **Please attend and let them know how you feel about this project!**



Fanny Bridge "By the Numbers"

## Placer County - Tahoe Basin Area Plan:

Placer County staff provided an [update](#) to the TRPA Regional Plan Implementation Committee on March 25. Several changes to the original draft proposed Area Plan (from 2014) have been made:



- Placer County has decided to focus land use changes primarily on the [Town Centers](#) in Kings Beach and Tahoe City.
- "Residential and mixed uses" are proposed in commercial areas outside of Town Centers (e.g. Sunnyside, Homewood, and Tahoma).
- The Area Plan proposes [modifications to the Town Center boundary](#) involving the Tahoe City Golf Course. Changes appear aimed at supporting redevelopment of the "Henrikson Property."
- The Area Plan also includes a pilot program, allowing the conversion of "bonus" commercial floor area (CFA) to tourist accommodation units (TAUs).
- There will be more height, density, and coverage (pavement/buildings) allowed in the Town Centers.

The release of the NOP and Public Review Draft Area Plan is expected in **May 2015**. Placer County has not yet scheduled meeting dates or times.

## Regional and Local Planning Updates:

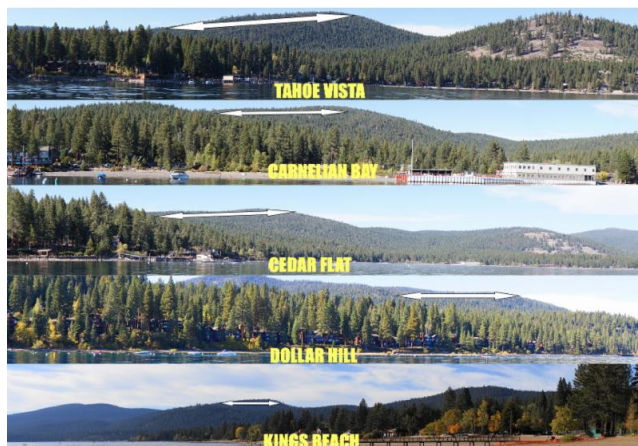
### Martis Valley West Parcel Area Plan (aka "Ridgeline Project") - Placer County:

As we reported previously, the project developer has [temporarily suspended](#) the application for the in-Basin Area Plan, although [future development on the "in-Basin" side is contemplated](#). The revised Notice of Preparation (NOP) for the "out-of-basin" Martis Valley West Specific Plan update was released in late February. Interestingly, the proposed project includes development on land currently within the Tahoe Basin's legal watershed boundary, yet the NOP erroneously states the project lies outside of the Tahoe Basin and thus, TRPA approval is not required.

After the NOP was released, the public learned that the applicant had submitted a proposed boundary line [amendment](#) (BLA) to TRPA. Approval would mean more ridgeline land falls on the "Truckee-side" of the boundary,

making it subject to Placer County's less protective rules. For example, while development proposed on the Tahoe side may have been allowed to build up to 42-foot tall buildings, development on the Truckee-side could span [up to 110 feet tall](#). In all cases this development would be viewable from multiple areas in the Tahoe Basin.

FOWS feels that the NOP's project description must be corrected, and that the BLA must be evaluated through a full environmental impact study under TRPA's Compact requirements. Attorney Micheal Lozeau prepared [comments](#) for the NOP on behalf of FOWS. [Additional comments](#) were also submitted. The TRPA has stated previously the BLA will be heard by the Board in May. No updates have been provided.



Location of ridgeline from multiple in-Basin locations.  
Image prepared by GK Consulting

### **El Dorado County - Meyers Area Plan:**

Although residents have [requested](#) a public hearing to discuss Supervisor Novasel's [conflict of interest](#), which has left them without a vote on their own Area Plan update, the County is moving ahead with a community workshop on May 6th. There is no word regarding area plans for the rest of the unincorporated area of El Dorado County at this time.

***FOWS will continue to follow these Area Plans and update you as new information becomes available.***

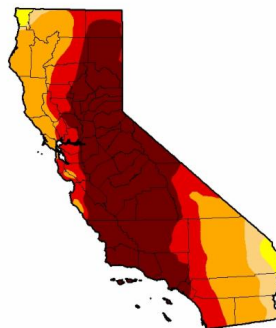
### **TRPA's proposed changes to a key component of the Regional Plan:**

Spurred by Placer County's desire to build [up to 500 new hotel rooms](#), the TRPA is currently considering region-wide amendments to the RPU. Notably, when the RPU was adopted, the agency advertised 'growth limits,' specifically emphasizing the update [did not provide any additional Tourist Accommodation Units \(TAUs\)](#). The agency promised the public it would consider amendments to the RPU at four-year intervals in concert with reporting on the status of the environmental thresholds. With over a year to go until the first post-RPU environmental threshold report is expected, the agency has fast-tracked amendments to the RPU to allow additional TAUs. FOWS submitted numerous [comments and concerns](#) regarding these changes.

### **Requests to TRPA to prioritize climate change and water quality/supply issues:**

On April 22, the TRPA Governing Board held its annual 'retreat' to prioritize tasks for the staff to pursue over the upcoming year and beyond. FOWS provided the Board [recommendations](#) related to focusing on climate change and drought impacts (e.g. more flooding) and increased visitor demands. We are concerned that the RPU's increases in development run counter to actions we need to take to address climate change, such as providing more undeveloped land closer to the Lake to accommodate increased flooding. In addition, as we enter our fourth year of extreme drought with no end in sight, we need to consider the water demands that will come from increased residential and visitor populations, both in and adjacent to the Tahoe Basin.

U.S. Drought Monitor  
California



April 21, 2015  
(Released Thursday, Apr. 23, 2015)  
Valid 7 a.m. EST

	Drought Conditions (Percent Area)				
	None	D0-D4	D5-D6	D7-D8	D9-D14
Current	0.14	28.88	85.11	93.44	98.60
Last Week	0.14	28.88	85.11	93.44	98.60
3 Months Ago	0.00	100.00	98.13	94.34	77.62
Start of Calendar Year	0.00	100.00	98.12	94.34	77.94
Start of Water Year	0.00	100.00	100.00	95.04	81.92
One Year Ago	0.00	100.00	100.00	96.01	76.68

**Intensity**

- D0 Abnormally Dry
- D1 Moderate Drought
- D2 Severe Drought
- D3 Extreme Drought
- D4 Exceptional Drought

The Drought Monitor focuses on broad-scale conditions. Local conditions may vary. See accompanying text summary for forecast statements.

Author:  
Anthony Artiga  
NOAA/NWS/NCEP/CI/CPC

USDA  
NWS  
NOAA

<http://droughtmonitor.unl.edu/>

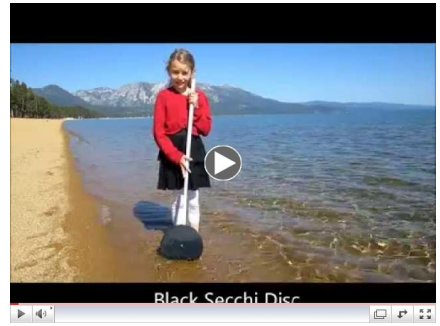
### **FOWS Volunteer Update:**



It's that time again! The Tahoe Nearshore Dippers (TND) program will begin its second year this July. Last year, we set a new world record for the number of measurements taken on one lake in one day, and we have numerous volunteers who consistently took measurements at different beaches all summer long. Curious how your beach fared? The most recent results are posted on FOWS [TND webpage](#), as well as the national [secchidipin.org](#) database.

FOWS' TND program is a fun and easy volunteer-based monitoring program to help measure Tahoe's nearshore water clarity conditions, which have been declining for years as more algae growth clutters our shoreline. Volunteers of all ages are encouraged. Measurements can be taken from piers, along beaches, from boats, and other nearshore areas. Check out this short instructional video!

Please [contact FOWS](#) to learn more and become a Tahoe Nearshore Dipper! We will host a training session sometime in late June (date TBD), get you set up with your own periscope secchi set, and then just send us your measurements as you go! You can take them once a week, twice a month, or daily - whatever is convenient, and your data will be used to help track Tahoe's nearshore conditions!



Basic instructions for Periscope  
Secchi Measurements

**We invite you to contact us to learn more, ask questions, or simply get to know the FOWS Board.**

Please contact Jennifer Quashnick, FOWS Conservation Consultant, at: [jgtahoe@sbcglobal.net](mailto:jgtahoe@sbcglobal.net) , or Susan Gearhart, FOWS President, at: [susan@friendswestshore.org](mailto:susan@friendswestshore.org) (530) 525-0368.