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Newsletter: June/July 2015

Developments, and opportunities, are coming up in Placer County...

As reflected in our updated ["Tahoe Region Overgrowth" map](#), development pressures on Tahoe's Northern and Western regions remain high. While FOWS supports new development, we believe it should fit within the scale of our communities, and the carrying capacity of our environment. In fact, the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency (TRPA) [was formed](#) to ensure new development remained consistent with achieving and maintaining "environmental threshold carrying capacities" (standards to protect natural resource values of the Basin).

In 2011, pressure from Nevada development interests resulted in Nevada's [Senate Bill 271](#), which threatened that Nevada would pull out of the TRPA bistate Compact if TRPA's new Regional Plan did not grant Nevada what it wanted. Unfortunately, California caved to the threat and TRPA approved the 2012 Regional Plan Update (RPU), which allows for significant increases in resort developments, and places the authority for most project approvals into the hands of the local governments. As expected, local jurisdictions like Placer County are not only taking advantage of the RPU's increases, but are in fact proposing changes to allow *even more* development!

If we are to protect Lake Tahoe and preserve our rural quality of life, we must be diligent. We must speak up and let the agencies know how we feel about future plans and projects. It can make a difference - for example, public outcry has delayed the proposed [Martis Valley West Area Plan](#). More recently, public feedback encouraged the Tahoe City PUD to reconsider the preferred site for a new water treatment plant on the West Shore (more below).

As Placer County's new Area Plan moves toward approval in the upcoming year, it will be imperative for the planning agencies to hear from more of the public. FOWS will do our best to inform you as the process proceeds, and to help provide the information you'll need to participate.

Sincerely,

Susan Gearhart
President, Friends of the West Shore



Lake Tahoe: What it's all about

FOWS Volunteer Update:

Calling all volunteers who love spending time on Tahoe's beaches! Now you can hit the beach and help collect important monitoring information about Lake Tahoe. FOWS' [Tahoe Nearshore Dippers \(TND\) program](#) begins 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.



Please [sign up now!](#) We will get you set up with your own periscope set and show you how to take measurements. After that, it's as easy as hitting the beach every week or two, spending a few minutes [taking a measurement](#), and emailing us your results.

In addition, to all teachers, recreation center representatives, and any others who may have large groups of children that would have fun participating in our program, we are looking for specific opportunities to encourage children's groups to become Tahoe Nearshore Dippers, as well as help provide education on Lake Tahoe's nearshore conditions.

Please [contact us now](#) to learn more about becoming a Tahoe Nearshore Dipper!



Taking a Secchi measurement near Homewood

Local Project Updates:

Fanny Bridge/S.R. 89 Realignment Project:

"TRPA's Executive Director stated in the past that TRPA established an urban boundary to stop sprawl. They capped the roadway capacity of the Basin to reduce reliance on the private automobile...why is TRPA approving the expansion of the [highway into a] forested recreation area instead of supporting the reduction on the reliance of the automobile?"

"[This will add roughly] four football fields of pavement."

"...the definition of revitalization is reactivation, renewal, resuscitation, revival and resurrection. When the economy needs revitalization, you do not dismiss it and build a new one, so why would you take something that is in need of help and create something new; this is construction and is damaging to the surrounding area."

"Is anyone on the [TRPA Governing] Board in the impact zone?"

"What is the environmental gain from adding an intrusive bypass? There needs to be the least amount of impact to the Truckee River especially if the sewer line is going to be rerouted. Traffic studies have not been done to show a reduction in traffic and vehicle miles traveled."

"The bypass will not improve the emergency response time since the roads from the North and South Shore are not planned to be widened."

Excerpts of public comments from the 5/27 TRPA GB hearing

Unfortunately, on 5/27 the TRPA Governing Board voted to recommend approval of the final environmental documents and the "preferred alternative" - Alternative 1 (the new bypass, bridge, and roundabouts).

As noted during the hearing, several existing businesses still have significant concerns that have not been addressed. Members of the public also raised ongoing questions regarding the environmental impacts of the project, as well as the economic impacts of spending over \$30 million on an unnecessary project. FOWS would like to express appreciation to the 100+ people who submitted written and/or verbal comments on this project.

What can you do now?

As only 30% of the design of the project has been completed, we have been told there will be opportunities for the public to weigh in as the final design of the new bridge and bypass are worked out by the agencies. This process will move forward once the Federal Highway Administration signs a "Finding of no significant impact" document.

FOWS will keep you informed of upcoming meetings or workshops through our website and Newsletters. Meetings will also be posted on [TTD's website](#).

Homewood Mountain Resort:

According to JMA Ventures, the owners of Homewood Mountain Resort, the project's construction [has been delayed until 2016](#) due to the unresolved lawsuit filed by the California Clean Energy Committee.

West Shore TCPUD Water Treatment Plan:

The Tahoe City PUD has indicated the need for a water treatment system upgrade of West Shore facilities. Locations for a new facility have been narrowed to three sites:

1. Lodge Drive near S.R. 89 (across from Chambers Landing);
2. Chamberland Drive (across from Chambers Landing); and
3. Lagoon Road (off of Tahoe Ski Bowl Way).

The TCPUD recently [announced](#) that due to public input, the Lodge Drive location is the preferred site. This location would be the least disruptive to surrounding neighborhoods and less expensive to construct than the Lagoon Road location. The Lodge site would be located on land owned by the California Tahoe Conservancy (CTC). The environmental documentation



Images and sketch of Lodge Site

is anticipated for public release in August.

<http://waterplant.tcpud.org/site-selection/>

TCPUD has stated that additional rate increases are not needed for this project. However, FOWS will be monitoring this project to ensure that the Homewood Mountain Resort pays its fair share of the costs of the system upgrade, as required in the final Environmental Impact Report/Study for the HMR project ([see excerpts](#)). For more information, please visit the [TCPUD's website](#) for this project.

Placer County - Tahoe Basin Area Plan:

On June 3, Placer County released the [draft Area Plan "package,"](#) which includes the revised Notice of Preparation (NOP), draft Tahoe Basin Area Plan (TBAP) and Implementing Regulations, and associated documents. The TBAP land use changes primarily focus on two "Town Centers" - Tahoe City and Kings Beach - where taller (up to four stories), more dense buildings promoted by the TRPA 2012 Regional Plan Update (RPU) are included in the Area Plans. This would bring more vehicles to our roadways and worsen congestion in already affected areas like downtown Tahoe City.

New "Pilot Project" in Tahoe City:

The draft Area Plan includes the "Tahoe City Lodge Pilot Project," which would tear down the old "Henrikson building" and construct a new four-story resort, described as:

"a 120-unit lodge that would include a mix of hotel rooms and 1- and 2-bedroom suites, conference facilities, a lobby, an activity center, a roof-top swimming pool and hot tub, a recreation room (including workout equipment), food and beverage facilities, as well as parking. The project would operate as a "condo hotel" meaning that the 1- and 2-bedroom suites would be sold to private individuals. However, it is anticipated that nearly all of these units would be put into a rental pool and be rented out through the hotel, subject to Transit Occupancy Tax (TOT) like other hotel rooms." (NOP, p. 8.)

FOWS remains concerned regarding the lack of any definition or criteria for "pilot projects" in TRPA's Code. As it now stands, the Tahoe City Lodge concept (image below) seems reminiscent of TRPA's "Community Enhancement Project" (CEP) program, introduced in 2006 and commonly referred to as a "Code-Avoidance Program." It was through the [CEP Program](#) that Homewood Mountain Resort's major expansion was approved.



[View Larger Image](#)

The draft Area Plan also proposes a "Kings Beach Center Design Concept," which examines [alternative uses](#) for a specific set of parcels in the Kings Beach Town Center.

West Shore Changes:

For West Shore communities, all existing Plan Area Statement uses will remain, however, single-family and multi-family residential uses would be added to the list of allowed uses in the commercial areas of Homewood and Sunnyside (termed "[Village Centers](#)" in the Area Plan). The Area Plan does not propose additional heights or densities along the West Shore.

Comments on the NOP and Area Plan package are due on **August 3rd, 2015**. FOWS has submitted [preliminary comments](#) to TRPA's Governing Board and will prepare more detailed comments to submit by August 3rd.

Regional and Local Planning Updates:

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

In order to raise funds to help support efforts to protect Tahoe's ridgeline from development, the [North Tahoe Preservation Alliance](#) organized the "Rock the Ridge" benefit concert held on June 20th at the North Tahoe Regional Park. Over 200 concerned community members attended. FOWS, volunteers with [savetahoeforests.com](#), and the [Tahoe Area Sierra Club](#) hosted booths, providing

information and answering questions about the MVW ridgeline project and other developments in the region.

In general, no one in attendance supported the new development on Tahoe's ridgeline. Those unaware of the project prior to the fundraising event were surprised and disturbed to hear that such development was even contemplated. The benefit concert also provided a forum for the many younger people who attended to be educated about ridgeline development and the resulting degradation of the beauty of lake Tahoe.

FOWS will keep you informed as we learn any new information regarding these plans and projects.



Susan Gearhart (FOWS President) and Judi Tornese (FOWS Treasurer) at the Friends of the West Shore Information Table on 6/20/2015

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

In our last Newsletter, we informed you about TRPA's proposed commodities "Pilot Program" (not to be confused with the Tahoe City Lodge Pilot Program noted above) that would allow certain ['bonus units'](#) (a type of development right) to be converted from Commercial Floor Area (CFA) to Tourist Accommodation Units (TAUs). The concept originated through Placer County's interest in building 100's of new hotel accommodations, although TRPA advertised "[no new TAUs](#)" as part of the 2012 RPU. Notably, existing regulations allow a developer to tear down a small, 250-300 sq. ft. motel room (and presumably restore the land) in exchange for constructing a new, larger tourist unit up to 1,800 sq. ft. The Bonus Unit program then allows the developer to construct up to three new units for every one unit removed. This results in larger TAUs that can hold more people, and more of them. The combined impacts of these policies could mean 100's to 1,000's more visitors (and their vehicles) in the Basin. In [recent comments to TRPA](#), FOWS estimated the increases that may result from this combination.

We invite you to contact us to learn more, ask questions, or simply get to know the FOWS Board. Also, don't forget to follow us on Facebook!

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