



Newsletter: October 2013

Learning from Tahoe's history...

What FOWS' Mission means can be summed up in the beauty and experiences we enjoy along Lake Tahoe's West Shore, such as:

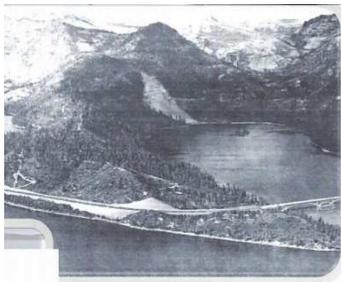
- Another beautiful fall morning spent stretched out on the sandy beach, watching the colors of the sunrise glimmer across the Lake;
- Memories of life-changing moments made extra special by West Shore's beauty - an engagement on East Twin Peak, or an intimate wedding on the beach; and
- Kayaking along the shoreline as the sunset paints purple and pink hues across the sky, matched only by the beauty of the reflection on the Lake's surface.

Over the past century, a great deal of 'blood, sweat, and tears' have been shed by those before us in order to ensure that the natural resources of West Shore, and the entire Lake Tahoe Basin, were preserved for future generations. However, history often repeats itself, and once again, the pressure to overdevelop the Basin has returned in full force.

Now it's our turn to represent the West Shore on behalf of our future generations. We invite you to read more about how FOWS members, working in concert with partner organizations and our communities, are shedding our own blood, sweat, and tears to protect this National Treasure.

Sincerely,

Susan Gearhart,
FOWS President



Proposed Bridge
Over Emerald Bay

in 1960s

Image from TRPA 8/29/12 Webinar:
Proposed highway in the 1960's

A brief glimpse back in time...

Before the TRPA was formed and requirements to protect Lake Tahoe strengthened by Congress in 1980, many of the harmful projects still impacting our environment today were approved by the local governments that ran the show (for example, the Tahoe Keys subdivision and the tall casino towers at South Stateline). But, many were not, thanks to the advocacy of those before us. **Imagine if the proposed bridge across Emerald Bay had been built?**

[Check out more images of past, present, and proposed projects and plans.](#)

Unfortunately, Lake Tahoe's designated protector - the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency (TRPA) - has done a 180 turn, taking us back in time to the years where large development interests called the shots. That is why in February 2013, we partnered with the Sierra Club to legally challenge the Regional Plan Update (RPU); the challenge is still working its way through the federal court system (update below). Yet fueled by pressure from mega-sized resort corporations, TRPA is moving its December 2012 RPU full steam ahead, with Visions of massive resort structures replacing mountain and Lake views. The Area Plans, which will become part of the RPU, will implement these increases, plus give most authority for approving major projects back to the local governments - who are focused on promoting the economy first, with less consideration for the environmental impacts of projects on the West Shore, and Basin-wide (the cumulative impacts of each project add up creating potentially major consequences). Please contact us to learn more, and/or check out the [RPU information on our website.](#)

[Current News](#)

[RPU Lawsuit- Update:](#)

Last Friday, on behalf of Friends of West Shore and Sierra Club, Earthjustice filed the [opening brief](#) for the RPU lawsuit challenging TRPA's approval of the new Regional Plan Update (RPU) for failing to address negative environmental impacts on soil conservation, water quality, and air quality. (Check out the [Press Release](#) for more information). The RPU's Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) - which is based on a legal requirement that TRPA analyze the impacts of proposed Plan changes to the environment - falls far short of providing the evidence to support the conclusions drawn for the RPU. For example:



The RPU calls for more of this. Where are the mountain and lake views?

- The RPU allows significant new development by relying on water quality treatments not proven to result in the environmental benefits, which have primarily been estimated from using a variety of models. *Anyone who follows weather forecasts for the Basin is familiar with how faulty models can be!*
- The RPU did not address the increased water pollution that would result from allowing more pavement closer to the Lake (up to 70% and even 100% covered land in some areas), yet it is well documented that more pavement results in more stormwater pollution and putting it closer to the Lake runs counter to what science tells us is needed to reduce water pollution; and
- The RPU ignored the fact that air pollution is not currently meeting health-based standards (e.g. California's official designation for ozone in the Basin is "nonattainment-transitional"). As a result, the RPU fails to ensure air quality will be improved. Worst yet, the proposed significant increases in new residences, tourist units, and commercial development will draw more people - and their cars - to Lake Tahoe, creating even more air pollution. Yet the EIS concluded this was acceptable based on a forecast of air pollution in 2035. *Don't we deserve to breathe healthy air now - not 22 years from now?*

[The Coalition to Protect Lake Tahoe:](#)

FOWS has joined with other conservation and community groups as members of The Coalition to Protect Lake Tahoe. The Coalition is dedicated to ensuring that Tahoe remains a beautiful place to live and to bring our families to visit. We have spent decades striving to protect Tahoe's deep blue waters and scenic beauty. We want to preserve this treasured place so that future generations will also enjoy coming to Tahoe to recreate and connect with nature. Please view the [Coalition's website](#) to learn more.



The RPU means more traffic and congestion.

[Area Plans for West Shore](#)

[Placer County's Tahoe Basin Area Plan:](#)

Placer County's Area Plan development continues to move forward, with several [recent and upcoming public workshops](#).

- On the upside, in conjunction with Placer County's development of the West Shore portion of the Tahoe Basin Area Plan, FOWS is working to secure improved access to public beach areas in Homewood and other parts of the West Shore.
- On the downside, the extensive development proposed, primarily for Tahoe City, to the extent it will rely on the increases allowed by TRPA's RPU, and the impacts from numerous loopholes that may allow increases throughout the entire Area Plan, will negatively impact the West Shore by creating more water and air pollution.



**Can you imagine these
4+ story buildings crowding
downtown Tahoe City?**

*(Image from NLTRA & TCPUD 2012
Tahoe City Vision)*

Further, increased height, crowding, covered areas (e.g. paved areas), and vehicles in Tahoe City and areas adjacent to West Shore (such as the proposed major expansion of Squaw Valley), will inevitably draw more people to the area, creating more traffic and other impacts from human activities. We encourage you to participate in the [Area Plan process](#), and are happy to help you get up to speed.

The next public meeting is scheduled for **November 6**, at the North Tahoe Events Center, from 5-6:30 p.m. The meeting will focus on the "Topical Policy" for the transportation elements of Placer's Area Plan. Please attend if you can!



[Quick Update: El Dorado County's Area Plan](#)

El Dorado County is currently developing an Area Plan for the Meyers area. Once completed, the County intends to expand the Area Plan to include the remaining unincorporated areas within the County, including Tahoma, Meeks Bay, and Emerald Bay. The boundaries will also incorporate parts of Desolation Wilderness. We will keep you updated as this process proceeds, however it appears the process to include the rest of the unincorporated County areas will not begin until sometime in 2014.

Let us help update you on the facts of the new RPU and Area Plans.

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

Please write to Jennifer Quashnick, FOWS Conservation, at: jqtahoe@sbcglobal.net, or Susan Gearhart, FOWS President, at: susan@friendswestshore.org.

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