



Newsletter: February 2014

Stand up to protect our Natural Resources!

Although unfortunately there has not been much snow falling this "winter," we hope you have been able to enjoy more time outdoors. If anything, we've had blue skies and open trails, and ample opportunities to get out and explore our beautiful mountains, unique local trails, and views of that amazing deep blue lake. It's important to consider that we are able to enjoy most of these natural resources because they are owned by the public and managed by our agencies on our behalf.

Now, the California Tahoe Conservancy (CTC) wants to sell off some of their open space lands for profit. This change in CTC's purpose, combined with the new Regional Plan, upcoming projects, and potential for major growth in Lake Tahoe, could collectively have huge consequences for our environment and our unique, rural communities.

This year Placer County aims to pursue the updated Area Plans for the West and North shore (read more below). ***If we want to have a say in what our communities want for the future, we will need to come together and take a hard look to make sure that what we want is carefully written into the new Area Plans.*** FOWS will keep you updated as these plans and projects move forward, but we will need your help to make sure our future looks the way our communities want it to.



Sincerely,

Susan Gearhart,
President, Friends of the West Shore (FOWS)

[Recent News](#)

The California Tahoe Conservancy is changing its Purpose

Most people are probably familiar with the California Tahoe Conservancy (CTC). For almost 30 years, the CTC has purchased land on behalf of California's public (with our taxes), protecting Lake Tahoe from development, and providing our communities with important open spaces.



Although we often talk about land values in terms of dollars, the value to the Community of open space land is derived in various forms, including individual lots to acres of open space. It is a human value for living with the land, with the native

vegetation, with ecosystem values, and a personal connection to nature. The nature of open space may provide larger views, will provide natural infiltration of stormwater runoff, and support iconic trees and native flowers. Undeveloped land takes up nutrients in many forms before they can settle and cause more algae growth in our nearshore, and provides climate change benefits.

There are many "CTC lots" along the West Shore (see [page 15](#): "Potential Conservancy Asset Lands - North/West Shore" for examples). Although West Shore lots may not currently be categorized as "Asset Lands" for sale by the CTC, given the CTC's new purpose, anything can change in the future. FOWS and other concerned conservation and community groups, residents, business owners, and elected officials recently met to discuss these changes with the CTC. We followed up with [this letter](#) expressing our concerns about the CTC's new plans to both sell existing open land, and to enter the 'real estate market' through purchasing existing built lands to sell the development rights.

Not only will this rob communities of the values provided by our open spaces, but it will also result in more development that will harm our Basin's fragile ecosystem. For more information read the [CTC's documents and maps](#) on this subject.

[News Updates](#)

[Update on Challenge against TRPA's 2012 Regional Plan Update \(RPU\):](#)

It has been just over a year since we filed the RPU lawsuit to protect Lake Tahoe. Along with our partner in the challenge, the Sierra Club, our organizations have since been subject to extensive political pressure and media campaigns, criticizing us for taking a stand to protect the Lake and our communities. Yet we've noticed lately that something is starting to change around the Lake. Members of our communities are stepping up and getting more involved - and seeing more clearly the potential results of the new Regional Plan. Although it may be easier to identify the RPU's changes in height and density and the increases in the Basin's population from the bigger developments, the 'mixed use' zoning that the RPU placed throughout the West Shore poses some real problems for our local communities, neighborhoods, and environment. It has been a long, busy 13 months since we filed our challenge, and FOWS would like to thank our members and communities for the support you've shown. We will continue to do our best to represent the interests of all who live, work, and play on Tahoe's West Shore, and throughout the entire Basin.

As we await our final court date (currently scheduled for March 26, although subject to change again), TRPA and other agencies have continued to move forward with their plans, which include preparing Area Plans, discussing a change in the transfer requirements to allow more coverage transfers from areas far across the Lake, to revise how residential home allocations are awarded to each local government, and to start the process to update Shorezone Ordinances (which will need to carefully consider the fast-deteriorating nearshore conditions). The RPU's significant changes in zoning and allowed development also continue to move forward, now reflected through local planning processes for Area Plans. [Stay tuned...](#)

Homewood Mountain Resort:

As noted in our Alert last month, we have some news for you. After years of effort and your continued support, we have reached a settlement with JMA Ventures, the developer for the Homewood Mountain Resort expansion project, for a modified project which will reduce the impacts of the resort's expansion.

Some of the highlights of our efforts include the following project modifications:



Image from previous HMR Village Simulation

- A total reduction of 13 new units compared to the larger project approved in 2011 (including 7 units on the gravel parking lot aka the "Fawn Parcel")
- Restoration of sensitive areas of the Fawn Parcel to a naturally-functioning stream environment zone
- The retirement of an additional 44,000 square feet of coverage, in addition to the 178,000 sq. ft. of coverage already required, benefiting water quality and the health of our forest soils
- At least 20 years of extensive traffic monitoring after the first Phase of the project is constructed
- Agreements which will reduce the extent of future development allowed both at the base and on the mountain, and which protect the natural areas on the mountain from more intensive and polluting recreational uses into the future.

FOWS graciously thanks the hard work of countless community members and volunteers who supported our efforts to protect our community and environment. We encourage you to read the [press release](#) for more information, and we will keep you updated as we proceed with our efforts to monitor and participate in the resort's construction and implementation.

[Area Plans for West Shore](#)

Placer County's Tahoe Basin Community/Area Plan:

Placer County's Area Plan development continues to move forward, with new draft Area Plan documents anticipated this spring or summer. In the meantime, after a series of "Topical Policy Workshops" in 2013, Placer prepared a Community Plan Policy Framework. As stated on [Placer's website](#):

"The [Community Plan Policy Framework](#) is designed to provide overarching goals and guiding policies to guide growth and development of communities located in the Placer County Tahoe Basin, provide for the protection and enhancement of natural resources, and further attainment of environmental thresholds. The goals and guiding policies provide the platform for individual policies and actions that will be included in Community Plan Policy Document. The Community Plan Policy Framework document is a result of a series of Topical Policy Workshops that the County conducted over the Fall, where the County sought feedback and input on goals and policy initiatives related to various topics that will be addressed in the Community Plan Policy Document. Accordingly, the overarching goals and guiding policies contained in the document have been crafted with input from the community and respond to specific opportunities and challenges within the North Tahoe Basin."



Source: Placer County's Tahoe Basin Community Plan: Policy Framework (2013)

The agenda and presentation from the last public workshop, held January 29th, 2014, are available on Placer's website. Comments on the Framework were requested by the County by February 1st. [FOWS submitted comments on the Framework](#) and we look forward to reviewing future plans. FOWS concerns and comments on the Placer County Area Plan are [highlighted on our website](#).

El Dorado County's Community/Area Plan

The process to include the West Shore portions of El Dorado County in an Area Plan will not begin until sometime after El Dorado County finishes and adopts the Meyers Area Plan. However, after information was disseminated to the community representing the potential for large scale development in Meyers under the new Area Plan, the community has taken steps to create the opportunity to discuss and decide its own future. Although the Area Plan process has been in the works for over 18 months, the significant increases in height, density, land use, and changes to permitting requirements were not well presented or discussed by the agencies in terms that allowed for full community participation and understanding.

There are some similar changes to West Shore's zoning that will affect both Placer and El Dorado Counties' Area Plans for our communities. We will do our best to provide you with information to help get around the planning lingo and media messaging and allow us all to focus on what our communities truly want to see for our future.

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