



Newsletter: April/May 2014

Lake Tahoe's Underwater Treasures...

Growing up, it never ceased to amaze me how clean and clear the water was along Lake Tahoe's shoreline. I could spend hours just walking around the edge of the lake, looking for special treasures - the perfect rock, or the empty shell of an in-lake resident, or become mesmerized watching underwater features as I drifted towards shore on a floating inner tube.

But over the years I've noticed that the clear waters from my childhood are all but distant memories, as floating algae clutters up our nearshore waters and green slime coats the once-clear rocks. My grandchildren are fast losing the chance to ever walk in Lake Tahoe's crystal clear waters as I once did, exploring the lake's bottom for new treasures of their own.



That's why I am truly excited about our new Tahoe Nearshore Dippers program!

We recently introduced this fun, new, family-friendly volunteer program to help gather important information about our nearshore areas. Please read more below and we hope you will join us in "Dippin' it" this summer!

In the meantime, we do know a few things about [what's polluting our nearshore areas](#). The more buildings and pavement we add closer to Lake Tahoe, and the more people and cars in the Basin, the more polluted stormwater ends up in the Lake. Unfortunately, current Projects and Plans are in the works that will not only send more polluted stormwater runoff into the Lake, but will also threaten our rural communities and quality of life. We encourage you to continue reading below to learn more about how these plans will affect you.

Sincerely,

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

[Recent News](#)

Become a Tahoe Nearshore Dipper!

FOWS' new [Tahoe Nearshore Dippers](#) program is a volunteer-based monitoring program that aims to help measure Tahoe's nearshore water clarity conditions, which have been declining for years as more algae growth clutters our shoreline. Although many efforts around Lake Tahoe focus on mid-lake clarity conditions, there is no single monitoring program which focuses solely on gathering clarity measurements in Tahoe's nearshore.

The measurements are easy, fun, and can be done on your own schedule. Just send us your numbers afterwards and we'll post them on the national secchidipin.org website (and FOWS' website). You can also take pictures if you're feeling extra creative, and we'll share them on our Tahoe Nearshore Dippers [Facebook page!](#)

The program has two aspects:

- 1. Help us break a record on July 4th!**
Volunteers around the Lake Tahoe Basin are needed to help man 'stations' on beaches and/or piers; simply invite others on the beach to help take a secchi measurement. Whether you want an excuse to spend all day on the beach, a reason to shoot the breeze with other beachgoers, or simply for the love of Lake Tahoe, please sign up to help us break this record. *Imagine the impact of hundreds of people all helping to measure our nearshore!*
- 2. Ongoing secchi measurements** - FOWS also seeks volunteers who will regularly take measurements at a location(s) of their choosing in the nearshore, preferably once/week or more. FOWS will provide you with your own set of equipment and show you how to use it (it's very easy!).



We are asking volunteers to please **sign up by June 15th**, and we will host a training on **June 28th**. We can also meet you at another time if you are unable to attend on June 28, and we will gladly continue to provide more sets and training all summer long to those who become interested. Please [check out our website](#) for more information, including how you can sign up to become a Tahoe Nearshore Dipper!



[News Updates](#)

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

As reported in our April 11 Alert to our members, on April 7 federal Judge Mendez issued his ruling on our lawsuit challenging TRPA's December 2012 Regional Plan Update. Unfortunately, the courts' tendency to side with agencies [prevailed](#), and our lawsuit was dismissed. Our attorneys at Earthjustice are reviewing the documents now. The deadline to file an appeal is May 7.

[Plans are in the works that will forever change our landscape:](#)

Even as the Community/Area Plans remain under development, the agencies are moving full steam ahead with multiple plans and projects that will forever change our communities. We believe that community-developed Community/Area Plans should be adopted *first* to guide the future of our communities and environment. However, these other projects are so large and precedent-setting that they may dictate the future of our areas before we even have the chance to decide for ourselves.

In the past few months, we have seen multiple large corporate interests descend on North and West Lake Tahoe, working so fast and furious that our communities are mostly unaware of what's going on, let alone what it could mean for the future of our beloved areas.

Here are some of the changes being proposed:

- A new [Martis Valley West Area Plan](#), which would build **112 luxury homes on Tahoe's forested ridgeline** along the North shore.
- **Increases in the urban boundary** of the Tahoe City Town Center (to gain more development potential) [[see p. 12](#)];
- The [CalPeco Electrical "Upgrade"](#) which will **devastate countless North Shore acres** in order to meet the needs of future large resorts (worse yet, this will be paid for by *existing Liberty Energy customers*);
- [Challenges to legal land capability](#) to allow **more development on the Tahoe City Golf Course**; and
- Don't forget the Homewood Mountain Resort (slated to begin construction in 2015), the Northstar Mountain Master Plan Amendment, and the Squaw Valley Proposed Village projects that [remain in the works](#).

Whew, got that all straight? These plans and projects are moving forward even before communities have adopted new Community/Area Plans. FOWS needs your help to help protect what we all cherish. Please [visit our website](#) or [contact us](#) to learn more.

[Area Plans for West Shore](#)

Placer County's Tahoe Basin Community/Area Plan:

Placer County's Community/Area Plan (Plan) development continues to move forward, with new draft Plan documents anticipated this spring or summer. At the April 21 Placer County Board of Supervisors meeting, an [update](#) regarding the status of the Tahoe Basin Community Plan was presented. FOWS noted three concerns in our comments to the Board:

1. The environmental impacts of the proposed Plans have not been adequately assessed, especially with regards to the decline in our nearshore conditions and impacts of adding more pavement and buildings next to the Lake;
2. The changes in zoning and land use have not been explained or clarified well to the public. Only now are many communities learning what the RPU's changes mean, and realizing that the agencies' public relations messaging and various [sketches](#) have not truly represented these changes; and
3. The community Planning Teams who have been working on the Placer County Plan updates for roughly two years have not been engaged in recent changes and request more time to review the current, updated drafts.

FOWS concerns and comments on the Placer County Community/Area Plan update are [highlighted on our website](#). According to Placer County, we can expect an updated Community/Area Plan draft in coming months.

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, which is still scheduled for sometime this year.

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

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