



Newsletter: October/November 2014

Reaching beyond the West Shore...

As you may have noticed, FOWS has been addressing issues that extend well beyond West Shore. Initially concerned with the large developments being proposed along our narrow, two-lane Highway 89, we have found the pressures to build around the entire Basin have an impact on us all - in our communities and our environment.

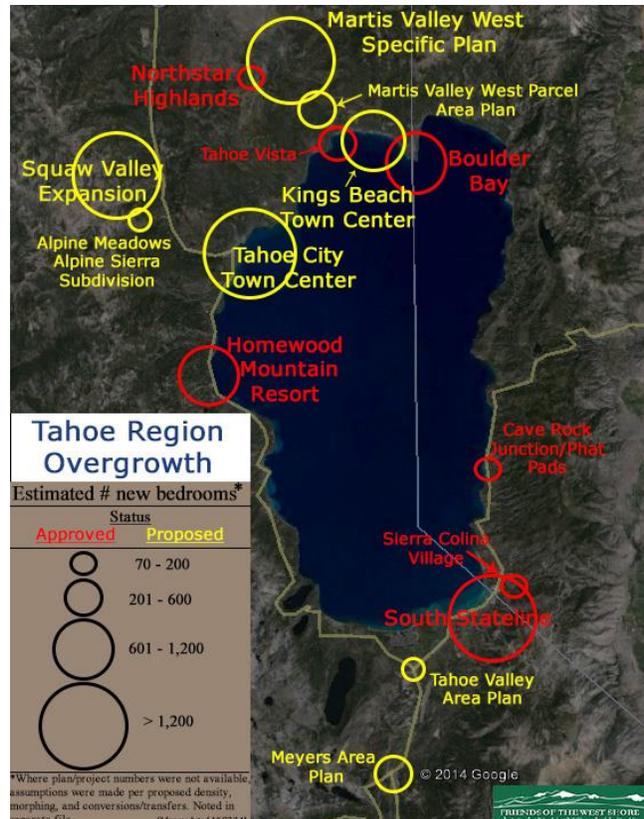
Although politicians may prefer to believe that state lines, if not county lines, can be used to separate the impacts of projects and plans in their jurisdictions, Lake Tahoe is one lake. There are no invisible barriers preventing polluted water from one part of the Lake crossing into another, nor do visitors limit their driving to one jurisdiction.

While the impacts of pollution running into the Lake may be easy to visualize, how the public process employed by developers and agencies around the Tahoe Region impacts the West Shore is far less obvious. Beginning with back-room deals that resulted in 13th hour additions to the Regional Plan Update, and continuing through recent efforts by Placer and El Dorado County representatives to limit and dismiss public comment, the pressure to keep the public from participating in planning for their own communities appears high.

We are proud to be part of the regional network of community and conservation organizations working hard to protect Lake Tahoe while also making sure our communities have an informed say in their own futures. On that note, Placer County will soon release drafts of new plans for the West Shore and North Lake Tahoe. We will continue to assess and share these plans with you and working to ensure our communities have a say in our future.

Sincerely,

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



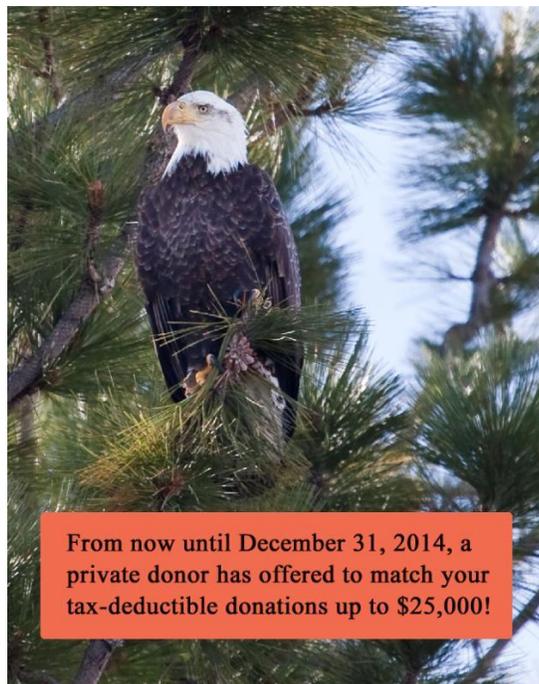
Estimated development around the basin, 10/17/2014.

[Recent News](#)

FOWS Challenge to Preserve Lake Tahoe

As noted in our recent Alert to members, FOWS is the only local community and conservation organization willing to do what it takes to preserve Lake Tahoe through partnering with the Sierra Club to challenge TRPA's approval of the new Lake Tahoe Regional Plan Update (RPU), which supports large corporate resort developments around the Basin and has allowed local governments like Placer County to push for considerable new growth (as reflected in the map above). Standing up for West Shore and Lake Tahoe requires ongoing funding to support [our efforts](#).

We need YOUR help!



From now until December 31, 2014, a private donor has offered to match your tax-deductible donations up to \$25,000!

We have made it easier to donate now - just [visit us online and select the Donate button](#) to donate through PayPal, or send a check to the FOWS address. We thank you for your support, and look forward to continuing to represent your interests.

Check out our new Facebook page!

In order to keep you better informed, we've jumped into the social media realm.

[Like us on Facebook](#) 

A quick look back at this summer's Tahoe Nearshore Dipper volunteer program

We all love our beautiful Lake Tahoe, from the deep blue mid-lake to the once-clear nearshore areas. Although the decline in clarity of the mid-lake appears to have slowed, occurrences of algae-coated rocks and floating mats of debris seen each summer in our nearshore areas have continued to increase. Regional efforts to reduce pollution - questionable as they are given the growth allowed by TRPA's new Regional Plan - are only focused on the mid-lake clarity. The impacts of pollution in our localized nearshore are not uniform.



That's why FOWS created the [Tahoe Nearshore Dippers](#) program, which encourages volunteers to help collect clarity measurements from various nearshore areas. Although volunteers are encouraged to continue taking measurements year-round, the summer months are when we see the most impact to these areas. We thank this year's volunteers, and look forward to reinvigorating the program for next summer!

Regional and Local Development Updates:

Martis Valley West Parcel Area Plan - Placer County:

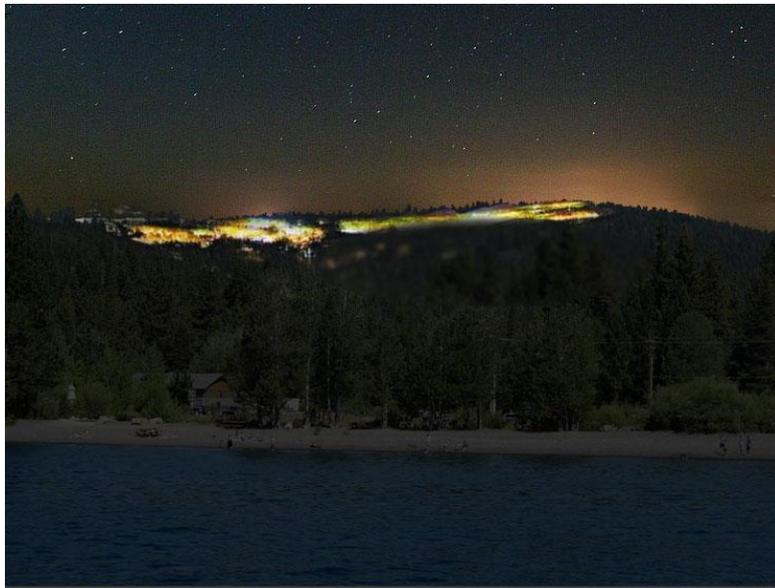
The proposed Martis Valley West Parcel Area Plan (MVWP AP) is located in Placer County's jurisdiction within the Basin. There are no environmental benefits to Lake Tahoe from this project, which aims to build 112 new luxury homes on undeveloped forested ridgeline above Tahoe's north shore - an area currently zoned over 94% conservation under the RPU. The developer claims there will be benefits to Tahoe because the project will use the RPU's transfer program, which allows 112 existing small "sub-par" units to be removed from anywhere in the Basin and "transferred" for this new development. However, not only is there no measured evidence that the RPU's transfer program provides the benefits claimed by TRPA, these existing (and undefined) units will come from somewhere where there is already infrastructure like roads, parking lots, water/sewer, and other utilities. All of this will have to be constructed if this project is approved, creating substantial environmental impacts in the Tahoe Basin. Approval would also set a dangerous precedent for Tahoe's remaining, privately-owned ridgeline areas.

On October 16th, FOWS was pleased to participate in the community's efforts to raise awareness through a [publicly-led meeting](#) organized by North Lake Tahoe [community members](#), where representatives from many organizations (including FOWS) discussed the problems with the proposed development. It was estimated over 100 people attended this meeting, with roughly 50 people attending the Placer County Board of Supervisors meeting on 10/21 to [express their opposition to the project](#). The draft Environmental Impact Report is expected sometime this fall.

The proposed project area is visible throughout North Lake Tahoe and from the Lake:



Views of location where ridgeline development is proposed.
Prepared by Kaufman Planning.



Simulated light pollution from project.
Prepared by www.savetahoeforests.com

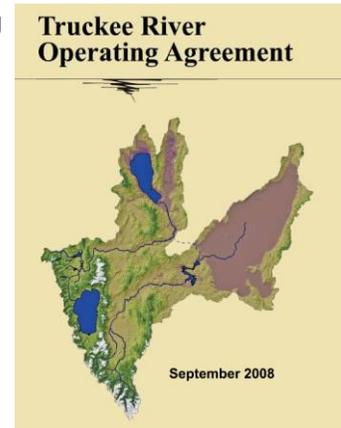
CalPeco/Liberty Utilities Electrical Line Project:

The CalPeco/Liberty Utilities Project proposes to upgrade electrical lines running through North Lake Tahoe, which although advertised as important for providing reliable power service to existing customers, in fact appears to be based solely on increasing the power capacity for other projects in the works. The CalPeco/Liberty Project - although beneficial to the large resort corporations - [will be paid for by all Liberty Energy customers](#) in the Tahoe Basin who will see their power bills go up to cover the project costs. The project will also cause major environmental impacts, including the removal of upwards of 30,000 trees in the Basin alone. The Final Environmental Impact Report/Statement was released last month.

Water Supply - NEWS!

In our last newsletter, we reported on the Truckee River Operating Agreement (TROA), which assigns the amount of water that can be taken from Lake Tahoe, surface water, and our groundwater. While the agreement has been signed by most parties involved in this multi-decade effort, [a federal judge has just reaffirmed the Agreement](#).

This decision means there is no new water to allocate for new development from the Tahoe Basin or Martis Valley. This should raise serious questions about developers' claims that new water will be available for their large expansions, like the Martis Valley West ridgeline development project.



Recent trends in Public Process:

An unfortunate "trend" has emerged in recent years in the Tahoe Basin. Beginning with the RPU's changes, which through extensive appeal requirements and convoluted area plan processes, makes public participation in plans and projects even more difficult, our planning agencies do not appear to be interested in true public engagement in planning for our future. Our challenge to TRPA's RPU created a storm of pro-RPU press messaging, including implications that those opposed to the RPU were simply against any and all new development. This misconception is still carried forward to this day by TRPA and many resort-related interests, making it more difficult to help share the facts with the public.

More recently, Placer County staff responded to efforts of citizens in North Lake Tahoe to engage the public in the proposed Martis Valley West ridgeline development by recommending that the 50+ people in attendance at the [10/21 Board of Supervisors meeting](#) to speak on the project wait to comment until after the draft environmental document is out. At the other end of the Basin, El Dorado County's Planning Commission readily dismissed the feedback of 100's of residents on the new Meyers Area Plan and recommended the local advisory council [not be required to follow public process requirements](#).

If we want to ensure the public continues to have a say in our future, more people need to step up and speak out! Whether attending meetings, submitting comments, writing letters to the media, etc., the more people who speak up, the more difficult it will be for communities to be dismissed or have our input marginalized. We are glad to help provide you the information and assistance you need to speak out!

[Planning Updates:](#)

Placer County - Tahoe Basin Area Plan:

Due to concerns raised by the public and TRPA's Board members, Placer County is reorganizing the draft Area Plan (which will cover all areas in the Placer County portion of Lake Tahoe, possibly excluding the 112 acres in the Martis Valley West Parcel Area Plan) to match TRPA's terminology. This will be released this fall with a 60 day public comment period. Placer County and TRPA will also release a 2nd Notice of Preparation after draft Area Plan language has been available for public review. County staff presented an [update and new schedule](#) during the recent October 21 Board of Supervisors hearing.

El Dorado County - Meyers Area Plan:

The efforts of [concerned citizens](#) have delayed the Meyers Area Plan update process. The draft Plan was heard by the Board of Supervisors on 10/28 in South Lake Tahoe, who agreed to hold another workshop in December.

It is uncertain when El Dorado County plans to develop an Area Plan for the remaining portions of the County, which would include portions of Tahoma, McKinney-Rubicon, and Meeks Bay. However, El Dorado County has previously stated it does not intend to start a new Area Plan process until the Meyers Area Plan is complete.

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

Update on lawsuit against TRPA's 2012 Regional Plan Update (RPU):

On September 30, FOWS and the Sierra Club filed the [Opening Brief for our Appeal](#) to the federal 9th Circuit Court of Appeals. We will keep you updated as the process proceeds.

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.