

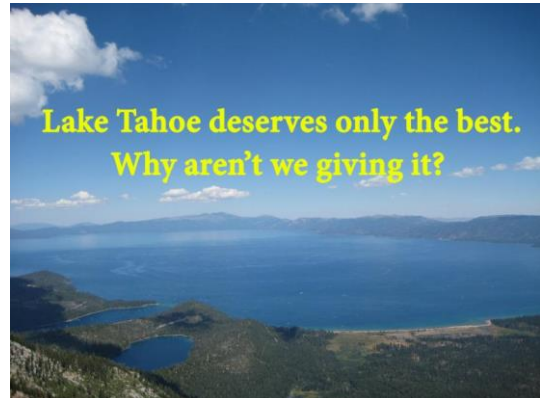


Newsletter: August/September 2015

Is Lake Tahoe really on the cutting edge of environmental planning?

Although TRPA has spent a lot of time since 2012 touting messages about how "*Lake Tahoe is often looked to as an area on the cutting edge of environmental planning*" (e.g. [1](#), [2](#), [3](#)), we beg to differ. This may have been the case decades ago, but other areas now surpass Lake Tahoe in terms of environmental protection, stormwater technology, and natural resource protection. Here are some examples of how our local planning isn't quite 'ahead of the game:'

- California's Water Board [promotes natural infiltration](#) instead of large stormwater facilities to help reduce polluted stormwater runoff, yet TRPA's 2012 Regional Plan promotes more pavement in [areas closest to Lake Tahoe](#) and encourages large "areawide" stormwater facilities;
- The Environmental Protection Agency encourages the [elimination of curb and gutter systems](#), however extensive systems are being installed and/or planned around the Basin;
- Caltrans reports and numerous traffic studies note [increasing highway capacity leads to more traffic and driving](#), but the TRPA and transportation agencies are [approving more](#);
- [Other local government](#) regulations protect natural ridgelines, while Tahoe agencies are [contemplating new ridgeline development](#); and
- Tahoe plans include [more parking spaces](#) as groups undertake efforts to [remove them](#).



Making matters worse, the proposed [2015 Lake Tahoe Restoration Act](#) would amend the TRPA Compact to weaken TRPA's role in environmental protection by [requiring TRPA](#) to consider the (presumed) economic impacts of plan regulations. *Keep in mind this is often what the corporations and large developers claim to be 'economic.'* Their ideas of 'economic' (increasing their immediate [short-term] profits) are not based on truly helping our locally-owned/small businesses and communities, or long-term protection of Lake Tahoe. **TRPA is currently the only agency with land use authority in the Lake Tahoe Basin charged with protecting Tahoe's environment;** the economics of the Basin are already being monitored and prioritized by local entities (e.g. Counties), along with numerous groups (e.g. [Resort Associations](#)). Notably, the original TRPA Compact was strengthened in 1980 because local governments eyeing tax dollars were approving projects that harmed Tahoe's environment (although TRPA has, unfortunately, returned most project approval authority back to the counties, oversight is still required). The proposed Compact amendment will leave us with no land use authority that truly prioritizes Lake Tahoe's environment.

As depicted in our ["Tahoe Regional Overgrowth" map](#), the North Tahoe Region is already facing substantial development proposals that will bring more people, more cars, and more crowding. We are not opposed to new development, but believe it should complement and respect Lake Tahoe's fragile environment and our unique communities - not *overwhelm* them. We will continue to keep you informed as these plans and projects proceed.

Sincerely,
Susan Gearhart
President, Friends of the West Shore

[Local Project Updates](#)

West Shore Tahoe City Public Utility District (TCPUD) Water Treatment Plan:

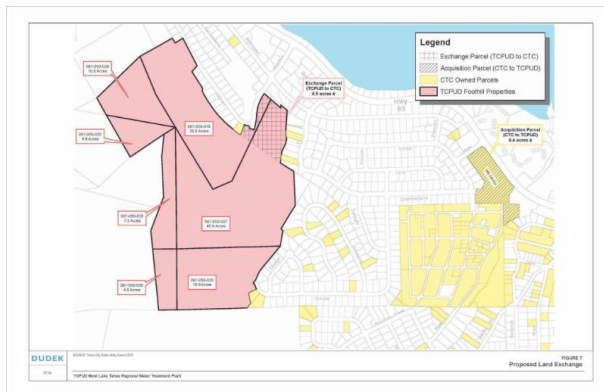
On August 7th, the TCPUD issued a *"Notice of Intent to Adopt a Mitigated Negative Declaration and Notice of Public Hearing."* After previously focusing on [three properties](#), the Lodge site has been identified as the preferred location, which is on state-owned land managed by the California Tahoe Conservancy [CTC]. The CTC and TCPUD are considering a land swap involving a TCPUD-owned parcel off Lagoon Street. FOWS supports this project's proposed location and the associated land swap ([read FOWS comments to the TCPUD](#)).

Comments on the draft environmental document are due by 4:30pm on September 9, 2015, and may be provided in writing to Matt Homolka by email at mhomolka@tcpud.org or by mail to TCPUD, P.O. Box 5249, Tahoe City, CA 96145 or by hand delivery to the TCPUD offices at 221 Fairway Drive.

The TCPUD will hold a public hearing on:

Wednesday, October 7, 2015, at 5:00 pm
TCPUD Board Room
221 Fairway Drive in Tahoe City

You can also ask questions by contacting Kurt Althof, Grants and Community Information Administrator, anytime at: kalthof@tcpud.org or (530) 580-6057.



Proposed Land Exchange [View Larger Image](#)



Aerial Image of Lodge Site [View Larger Image](#)

Tahoe Keys Proposed Herbicide Use:



<http://www.keysweedsmanagement.org/>

The Tahoe Keys Property Owners Association (TKPOA) recently released the "[Tahoe Keys Integrated Weed Management Plan](#)" which reviews various options for dealing with the weeds growing in the Keys' channels, including the repeated application of herbicides.

FOWS is concerned about the impact this could have to the Lake and existing water supplies, and believes the health of the entire Lake must be prioritized, and options that may involve temporary closures or other inconveniences should be included. Unfortunately, the Plan seemingly dismisses several non-chemical options because they may interfere with recreational use of the area:

"Restricting access and use of the area during treatment...may not be acceptable."

"Actively dewatering the Tahoe Keys lagoon could interfere with the recreational use of the facility."

"The cost of removing nutrient-laden sediments is high, would require permits, and impair the use of the coves during operations."

The report also fails to take a harder look at reducing the amount of nutrients released into the channels (which causes more weeds to grow), like addressing fertilizer use. **Comments on the TKPOA's [proposed Plan](#) are due September 25.**

Squaw Valley Village Expansion:

The [proposed project](#) will include almost 1,500 new bedrooms (hotels, condos, and timeshares), a 90,000 sq. ft. indoor amusement park, and roughly 300,000 additional sq. ft. of new commercial uses.

FOWS is extremely concerned about the proposed project's impacts to the Lake Tahoe Basin, including traffic ([FOWS submitted comments on 7/14/2015](#)). The draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) concludes 'significant and unavoidable' impacts to congestion in Tahoe City.



(From: <http://www.sierrawatch.org/squaw-valley/>)

Further, traffic impacts to the Basin (and West Shore) were not fully examined. For example, although the draft EIR identifies increased traffic on SR 89 along the West Shore, the impacts of these increases are not assessed. [Comments from other organizations](#) also identified significant problems with the analysis in the draft EIR, and an overwhelming majority of the nearly 315 public comments submitted [opposed the size and scale of the proposed project](#). No release date for the Final EIR has been provided.

Regional and Local Planning Updates:

Placer County - Tahoe Basin Area Plan (TBAP):

FOWS submitted [extensive comments](#) on the draft Placer County Tahoe Basin Area Plan ("TBAP") and associated documents on 7/31/2015. Concerns include, but are not limited to:

- Zoning changes that will increase crowding, building height, and block existing lake and mountain views;
- The conversion of commercial uses into tourist uses, and the related increases in population, traffic, and other impacts;
- Complex and confusing planning documents and repeated changes in terminology; and
- The inclusion of the Tahoe City Lodge "Pilot Project" and lack of defined criteria regarding "Pilot Projects."

Although FOWS has expressed concern regarding the environmental impacts of the [Tahoe City Lodge Pilot Project](#) (including additional traffic in downtown Tahoe City and blocked views), we also have two key concerns about the planning *process*:

1. Although labeled a "Pilot Project," there are no definitions or criteria regarding what projects qualify as "Pilot," how presumed benefits and consequences will be monitored, and how results will be used to guide future planning; and
2. The upcoming TBAP environmental impact study/report (EIS/EIR) states it will analyze the area plan at a 'policy level' and the TC Lodge at a 'project level.' We believe the project should be analyzed separately from the Area Plan.

The most recent schedule provided by Placer County notes the draft EIS/EIR will likely be released for public review in December/January. This will be followed by a 60-day public comment period. *Stay tuned...*

Martis Valley West Parcel Area Plan / "Brockway Campground" - Placer County:

For long-time readers of our Newsletter, the proposed [Martis Valley West Parcel Area Plan](#) - a 112-unit luxury housing development on the ridgeline above North Lake Tahoe - isn't new information. Frankly, the proposal has been a moving target:

- The 112 homes were proposed via a new Area Plan.
- When the public (including [Realtor groups](#), [Tahoe residents and groups](#), and [Truckee residents](#)) expressed concern, the idea for [a new campground](#) emerged.
- Meanwhile, the developer quietly attempted a boundary line amendment to have land on the ridge declared outside of the Lake Tahoe Basin, and thus not subject to TRPA regulations. FOWS [strongly opposed this amendment](#), and it was dropped earlier this summer.



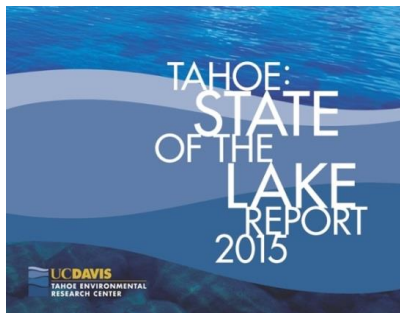
A new campground with 550 units is proposed on the ridgeline above North Lake Tahoe
<http://www.brockwaycampground.com/index.html>

- Now, the precedent-setting, 550-unit "[Brockway Campground](#)" is proposed, with [substantial development](#), including a general store, cafe/restaurant, swimming pool, family pavilion, and other structures.

Whether the campground is a serious proposal, or a means to an end (such as the 112 luxury homes), like many others, we are concerned with *any* substantial development on Tahoe's famous ridgelines. The scenic impacts from Lake Tahoe and surrounding mountains should be enough to warrant ridgeline protection; add in the fire danger, limited roadway system, traffic, water demand, and other impacts, and protecting our ridgelines should be an easy decision, but [requests to do so](#) have not been addressed. We will keep you updated as more information becomes available.

* If you haven't yet signed the [Petition to Protect Tahoe's Ridgelines](#), we encourage you to do so.

Annual Report from Lake Tahoe Scientists: Keep Tahoe Blue, or Keep Tahoe Clear?



The [2015 State of the Lake Report](#), released by the Tahoe Environment Research Center (TERC) last month, includes new findings about Lake Tahoe's 'blueness' and clarity. Until now, improving clarity was assumed to also benefit the Lake's 'blueness'. But [blueness and clarity](#) are actually controlled by *different things* - **blueness** is controlled by the amount of algae in the water, while **clarity** is controlled by fine inorganic particles.

The key take-home message: if we want to have blue water, we have to reduce the nutrients that contribute to algae growth. The only proven way to do this is through natural ecosystem processes. Researchers warned: "[We] need watershed restoration if [we] really want a blue [Lake]."

For years, FOWS has advocated for the reduction of nutrients known to increase the algae along Tahoe's shorelines; in fact, it's one reason we challenged TRPA's [2012 Regional Plan Update](#), which encourages more pavement closer to the Lake, where watershed restoration is needed.

Other reported findings include:

- Although the mid-lake clarity improved in 2014, researchers stated: "this has little to do with what agencies or scientists did," because the drought has meant less polluted water runoff entering the Lake (which resulted in improved lake clarity); and
- Concentrations of attached algae 'near the shore' (called "periphyton") appear to have declined this year, but measurements were taken at different (lower) spots in the lake due to drought, so they aren't measuring the same locations or plant species as previous years.

Membership Dues:

We are pleased with the ongoing support from our existing and new members and supporters. We look forward to ongoing interaction with all who share the desire to protect the West Shore and Lake Tahoe. That said, we kindly include this 'gentle request' for your annual [membership dues](#), and encourage new supporters to join. Your tax-deductible dues will help support ongoing efforts of the only organization providing a collective voice for West Shore communities (and beyond). If you aren't a member already, [here's how your membership helps](#). [Individual memberships](#) are as low as \$25 (although additional donations are welcome), and information for Homeowners Associations can be [found here](#). If you have questions, ideas, suggestions, or just want to shoot the breeze on Tahoe issues, please feel free to [contact us](#)! [Dues may be paid online or mailed to FOWS](#).

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