

11/2/2016

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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San Francisco, Calif. – The Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals in San Francisco today issued a unanimous ruling upholding the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency's 2012 Regional Plan Update. The Sierra Club and Friends of the West Shore filed a federal lawsuit in 2013, challenging new rules for Lake Tahoe that seriously reduced protections for the treasured mountain lake. The new Tahoe Regional Plan Update, approved in December 2012 by the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency (TRPA), shifted authority over future development decisions to local jurisdictions and weakened environmental protections, including allowing more pavement and asphalt in areas closer to Lake Tahoe where more polluted stormwater will drain into the Lake.

After a lower court ruled in favor of TRPA, plaintiffs appealed to the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals. A final hearing was held in April 2016, and the judges' decision ruling in favor of TRPA was issued today.

“We find it hard to believe, and extremely paradoxical, that problems caused by the over-urbanization of Lake Tahoe can be solved with more urbanization,” said Laurel Ames, Conservation Chair of the Tahoe Area Sierra Club. “The Regional Plan Update means more buildings, more asphalt, and more traffic – the very things that have caused Tahoe's degradation. The public will have to be even more vigilant about conserving our beautiful natural areas. We are disappointed but we continue to believe that Tahoe can be protected.”

Susan Gearhart, President of the Friends of the West Shore, stated, “We lost this battle, but people who care about Tahoe's natural resources will continue to take a hard look at local Area Plans and future projects. While the RPU promised more analysis of impacts before local Area Plans are adopted, to date Area Plans have unfortunately relied primarily on the RPU's flawed analysis instead.”