



Newsletter: December 2016/January 2017

Looking ahead to 2017...

Although several environmentally harmful projects and plans were approved in 2016, the fight for Tahoe is not over! Despite being presented with 1,000's upon 1,000's of pages of environmental and policy documents in a short time frame, the public submitted extensive comments, clearly making a difference! For example, some local government representatives recommended denial of projects like the Village at Squaw Valley and Martis Valley West Specific Plans and significant media attention brought community concerns to the forefront.



We must continue to protect this National Treasure!

As we move into 2017, we will see the construction of the Homewood Village Resort, Fanny Bridge bypass, Tahoe City Lodge, and other new projects and plans, along with continued growth in visitor traffic. Not only will more cars mean more pollution, but increased congestion will exacerbate threats to public health and safety during emergencies. As many have heard, on [12/28 a fire](#) destroyed the South Lodge at the Homewood Mountain Resort. Luckily, no lives were lost or injuries reported, but had this fire occurred during the dry summer months, the consequences could have been far more severe (more information below). In addition, the [recent earthquakes](#) felt in the Basin reflect another potential natural hazard that could result in emergency situations in the future.

The good news is that the amount of coordination among members of the public and community and conservation organizations has grown. FOWS will continue to advocate for the protection of our area and keep the public updated regarding these projects and plans. We thank you for your ongoing support, and wish you, your family, and your friends a wonderful holiday season and a Happy New Year!

Sincerely,

Susan Gearhart
President, Friends of the West Shore

Special Update regarding Homewood Resort:

Fire destroys South Lodge:

On 12/28, a [structure fire destroyed the South Lodge at the Homewood Mountain Resort](#). Hours after being reported crews were still working to knock flames down (the cause is still under investigation). If there is an upside, it is that this happened while the buildings were surrounded by snow and ice, mass numbers of vehicles were not on the roadways, and nearby homes and other buildings faced lower threats of ignition than if such a fire occurred during the dry, populated summer months. However, this is yet another example of why we must be prepared to deal with fire emergencies and to fully engage the public in plans for such situations (more below).



The 12/28 fire at the South Lodge.
(Source: [Sierra Sun](#))

Homewood Evacuation Plan:

West Shore residents have been waiting for the public meeting regarding the September 2016 [Homewood Evacuation and Life Safety Report](#) (Evacuation Plan) released as a result of the Settlement Agreement between the California Clean Energy Committee (CCEC) and Homewood Village Resort, LLC (HVR). The CCEC was supposed to be notified of the meeting and subsequently planned to inform FOWS and others, however the CCEC reported that they were not informed by HVR or Placer County representatives when the item was included on the North Tahoe Fire Protection District (NTFPD) 12/14/2016 Board [agenda](#). **In addition, HVR and Placer County failed to undertake reasonable efforts to inform the public as is their responsibility;** no information was advertised on relevant websites or social media, nor were interested parties sent notices. As a result, most of the public remained unaware of this meeting. [FOWS has requested another meeting](#) - this time with adequate public notice - and encourages you to [write the NTFPD](#) (the party responsible for responding to public comments on the Evacuation Plan) to also request another public meeting with proper advertisement.

The Evacuation Plan will affect how our lives will be protected in the event of a wildfire on the West Shore; enormous efforts should be undertaken to ensure public involvement. For example, the Evacuation Plan suggests reliance on a "shelter-in-place" concept during a wildfire; we have many questions about how this will work. The recent fire at the South Lodge exemplifies the importance of understanding these plans. For example, what if the relied upon shelter itself is on fire? What threats are posed from smoke inhalation while in these shelters? Under what circumstances have such shelters been successful elsewhere? Like you, FOWS has many questions.

Regional and Local Planning Updates:



Traffic and public safety are among the top concerns that have not been adequately addressed.

Approvals of the Tahoe Basin Area Plan, which determines the future of our area for the next twenty years and beyond, have been swift. On 11/4 the final Environmental Impact Report/Statement (FEIR/S) was released and immediately followed by several public hearings. [FOWS comments can be read here](#). While there are some improvements from previous draft plans, remaining concerns include traffic, water quality, and public safety, as [area-wide impacts like traffic have not been fully addressed](#). The FEIR/S also covers the proposed Tahoe City Lodge (Lodge), a 118-unit, four-story hotel; extensive focus on the Lodge has

unfortunately drawn attention away from adequate consideration of the entire area plan. On 12/21, the California Clean Energy Committee [filed a lawsuit challenging Placer County's approval of the TBAP](#), citing vague and unenforceable mitigation measures for greenhouse gases and transportation impacts and other inadequacies.

Final TRPA Governing Board approval is anticipated on 1/25/2017. We encourage you to submit comments to the Board ([click here to email the full Board](#)) and/or attend the hearing.

TRPA Regional Plan Update (RPU):

RPU Lawsuit by FOWS and Sierra Club:

In November, the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals ruled in favor of TRPA. While we are disappointed, we will remain diligent and continue to advocate for responsible planning and implementation. (see [Press Release](#) and [court ruling](#)).

Threshold Evaluation Report:

TRPA recently issued the [draft 2015 Threshold Evaluation Report](#) (TER), which assesses the status of the TRPA environmental standards that provide the backbone for protection of the Basin. [FOWS extensive comments](#) identified positive aspects as well as concerns with the report. Beginning in 2017, potential revisions to the standards will be evaluated. FOWS will continue to advocate for threshold standards that are based on sound science and protection of Tahoe's natural resources.

Martis Valley West Parcel Specific Plan (MVWPSP):

The Placer County Board of Supervisors (BOS) voted for final approval of the MVWPSP on 10/11 despite the substantial concerns raised by members of the public, environmental organizations, and the California Attorney General. Several organizations have since [filed lawsuits](#) regarding the inadequate environmental documents. FOWS supports their efforts to ensure sufficient environmental impact review and mitigation are included.

Fanny Bridge/SR 89 Highway Realignment Project:

The Tahoe Transportation District has provided a [construction timeline](#). Tree removal has already started, including the [Memorial Pines](#) on the 64-acre Tract.

Village at Squaw Valley Specific Plan (VSVSP):



Image from Sierra Watch

On 11/15, the Placer County Board of Supervisors [voted to approve](#) the massively-sized project (the only "no" vote came from our area's representative, Jennifer Montgomery). Evidence used by Supervisors to support their decision included an [11th hour agreement with the California Attorney General to pay just over \\$15,000/year](#) toward mitigation for impacts to Lake Tahoe - an amount that won't go very far among costs that run in the millions. On 12/15, [Sierra Watch filed a lawsuit](#) against approval of the project based on a flawed environmental analysis and violation of public meeting laws. We will keep you updated as these challenges work their way through the courts.

Lake Tahoe West (Forest) Restoration Partnership

A new partnership comprised of a broad mix of public and private stakeholders has been formed to address the management of forests along Lake Tahoe's West Shore (including lands in both Placer and El Dorado Counties). An inaugural meeting was held on 11/30. FOWS is encouraged by the opportunity to improve the restoration and long-term management of our forests, watersheds, recreation opportunities, and public health and safety. The next meeting is scheduled for 1/12; the public is welcome to attend.

Alpine Meadows to Squaw Valley Base-to-Base Gondola:

No schedule for the draft Environmental Impact Report has been provided. Background information can be found [here](#).



[View larger image](#)

Easy ways to help FOWS!

#GivingTuesday:

Thank you to our supporters who donated to FOWS during this year's #GivingTuesday. We look forward to continuing to represent the West Shore and help keep you informed.



Save Mart:

Did you know that up to 3% of your purchase at Save Mart and [other stores](#) can be donated to FOWS at no extra cost to you? A program previously known as "SHARES" allows shoppers to designate FOWS to receive donations earned through their purchases. Sign up for a new account or register your existing account [through this link](#), then you simply provide your phone number at checkout and funds are donated to FOWS. It's easy and there is no cost to you!

Amazon Smile:

We've joined the Amazon Smile program; all you have to do is order from Amazon through [this link](#) and 0.5% of your purchase will be donated to FOWS at no additional cost to you!



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.

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