



TRPA: Three areas where we serve the community

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There are three particularly hot issues the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency is working on in its effort to preserve Lake Tahoe while serving the community. Here is a snapshot of some issues that matter to the South Shore.

Place-Based planning moves ahead

Pathway 2007 is moving into local "place-based" planning teams around the lake this month. Pathway 2007 is the partnership between Tahoe agencies and the public to create a 20-year vision for the Lake Tahoe Basin.

Four working groups have been formed within our communities:

- South Shore/City of South Lake Tahoe, El Dorado and Douglas counties
- Washoe County/Incline Village and Crystal Bay
- Placer County/North Shore communities
- Public Lands managed by the USDA Forest Service, state parks and other entities.

The planning working groups, along with the public at large, will be exploring what we value in our communities, how local investment can result in a healthier region and how we achieve the "triple bottom line" where the environment, the economy and the community all win. Place-based planning reflects a new, unprecedented partnership between local governments, the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency and other agencies around the Tahoe Basin.

Opportunities workshops set for March 29-30

We hope you'll come and share your vision for the opportunities that exist for our public

lands at a workshop at the Forest Service on March 29, 6-9 p.m. in South Lake Tahoe. The following evening, the workshop for the town will be held 6-9 p.m. at Lake Tahoe Community College. These workshops are being hosted by the City of South Lake Tahoe, El Dorado County, Douglas County, the USDA Forest Service and the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency. The meetings mark the kickoff of the first phase of place-based planning where local residents spell out the opportunities that abound within their communities. Similar workshops are being held that week all around the lake. Feel free to visit www.pathway2007.org for more details.

The four Pathway 2007 agencies - TRPA, Lahontan Water Board, Nevada Department of Environmental Protection and USDA Forest Service - are updating their next set of regional plans in a collaborative way while incorporating public input throughout the process. The place-based planning approach is designed to get the input of local communities up front before the regional plan is put together to ensure all voices are heard.

Shorezone work coming to closure

For nearly 20 years, the Tahoe Basin community has been unable to agree on an approach to guide development in the shorezone - the place where the lake meets the land. This fact alone should leave no doubt that shorezone issues are controversial and evoke strong emotions from a multitude of often conflicting interests. Some members of the public believe there should be no more piers allowed. Others feel strongly that all lakefront property owners are entitled to build a pier for their enjoyment. Somewhere between these two absolute positions lies a compromise. We're determined to find some solid middle ground and to bring closure to the 20-year debate.

The shorezone environmental document covers issues related to piers, buoys and development along the shores of Lake Tahoe. In 2004, TRPA released a draft environmental document that analyzed five alternatives related to shorezone development. Some alternatives looked at having no more private piers, and others analyzed having many hundred additional private piers. In July 2005, we released a draft of a sixth alternative that focused on a "go-slow," density-based approach with a maximum of 220 new private piers over the next 20-plus years. We were hoping to present a preferred alternative in late March, which reflects the best ideas from all six alternatives and the extensive public comment received. Instead, we're revising the schedule for the preferred alternative and proposed ordinances to be presented to the Governing Board and the public. We expect this presentation will take place in April. When the date is determined, we'll post it on our Web site at www.trpa.org.

Let me confirm that TRPA wants, like all of you, to do what's best for the Lake Tahoe community in preserving our greatest natural asset - this spectacular place that we call home. We all love the lake and recognize that there are very different opinions about how best to preserve this incredible place.

Wildfire prevention taking center stage

With the recent release of the draft Fuel Reduction and Forest Restoration plan, TRPA is working with partner organizations to make our forests healthier, our lives safer and lessen the chance of a catastrophic wildfire in the basin.

As I've mentioned in previous columns, TRPA has been working with local fire districts, state agencies and the Fire Safe Council for more than a year to create a basin-wide fire plan which coordinates all fire plans around the lake. The draft Fuel Reduction and Forest Restoration plan looks ahead 10 years and is vital to the overall management of Tahoe's forests. The plan maps out each fire district by indicating high fire risk areas, prioritizes forest projects and analyzes costs. More specifically, it looks at treating nearly 12,740 acres within the seven fire districts through modes such as mechanical and hand thinning, pile burning and chipping, all the while looking at efficient and cost-effective ways to continue protecting Lake Tahoe.

- John Singlaub is executive director of the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency.

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