

This report was prepared to reflect community input at a series of four Community Roundtable workshops held August 3 and 4. Two workshops were held on the South Shore and two on the North Shore. This community outreach was requested by United States Senator Dianne Feinstein in advance of the 15th Annual Lake Tahoe Summit, August 16, 2011 at Homewood Mountain Resort. As requested, the report has been submitted to all interested federal, state, regional and local officials, including elected leaders and agency officials. It is provided here for all others who are interested.

URGENT MEMO

To: Elected and Agency Officials
Fr: Citizens of Lake Tahoe
Re: Community Roundtable Recommendations – August 2011

Background on Community Roundtables

Lake Tahoe has long been recognized as one of the world's most iconic natural treasures. It is the third deepest lake in North America, 10th deepest in the world, and renowned for the clarity of its waters. Legendary author Mark Twain came to the Lake in 1861 and proclaimed Tahoe to be "the fairest picture the whole earth affords!"

Today, 85 percent of the Lake Tahoe watershed is publicly owned and managed, primarily by the U.S.D.A. Forest Service. Since 1997, guided by the Lake Tahoe Environmental Improvement Program (EIP), federal, state and local agencies have invested approximately \$1.5 billion in water quality and forest fuels projects to help restore the Lake and the health of its forests, along with other restoration initiatives. However, private investment in the basin has been limited because of many factors including key elements of the 1987 TRPA Regional Plan which are complex and do not adequately incorporate contemporary planning principles, land use, and environmental science. The absence of regulatory predictability has a significant impact on the willingness to invest and engage in the planning process and project development process. The lack of adequate capital to renew Tahoe's communities consistent with environmental values has led to stagnation and frustration. The basin's economic and social health has deteriorated with the loss of some 10,000 permanent residents since 2000. Several schools and many businesses have closed. Unemployment and poverty levels are above state averages. Citizens from throughout the region say its time for all levels of government and agencies to work more collaboratively with the private sector to foster and secure prosperity and sustainability in the Tahoe region.

In preparation for the 2011 Lake Tahoe Summit, California U.S. Senator Dianne Feinstein asked community leaders to organize and conduct a series Roundtable workshops to give Tahoe residents, property and business owners, and all other interested persons an opportunity to discuss and recommend Tahoe policy considerations for all levels of government - federal, state

and local. Organizers retained a facilitator from the Center for Collaborative Policy to help design and lead a series of four Roundtables, held August 3rd and 4th.

Common Themes, Concerns and Linkages

Roundtable participants voiced many of the same themes heard in public forums throughout the Tahoe region over recent years. Concerns included Tahoe's aging built environment, the absence of a comprehensive multi-modal transportation system, environmental challenges, the loss of jobs and permanent population, the rising number of residents living below the poverty line, overall economic decline, and the lack of investment in community revitalization. Citizens expressed a strong desire for a greater role and flexibility in shaping their communities. This desire extends across all segments of our diverse population and points of view. In summary:

Stewardship

- Sustainable environment supported by prosperity and community vitality.
- More attention to Tahoe's aging community infrastructure, environmental threats and public safety.
- More environmental education to help foster stewardship.

Innovation

- Creating a sustainable economy - Tahoe as a center for innovation in the fields of environment, health and wellness, tourism and recreation.
- Living wage jobs.
- Healthy and sustainable communities
 - Education, gathering places, pedestrian and bicycle friendly, affordable housing.
- Strategic alignment and improved capacity for effective partnerships within and across all agencies and jurisdictions working in the Lake Tahoe Basin.

Renewal

- Connected multi-modal transportation system that reduces reliance on the private automobile.
- Revitalization of the built environment.
- A more compact built environment with more restoration of sensitive environmental areas.

There is wide consensus that Tahoe's local governments should be granted greater leadership and flexibility to reshape local communities, within the framework of the Tahoe Regional Plan Update and adopted environmental standards.

Priority Policy Recommendations

Stewardship

Water Quality

The water quality along areas of Lake Tahoe's near shore has been degraded by direct runoff, sediment, algae, aquatic invasive species, and trash.

Actions: Federal and State. Adopt policy that prioritizes actions to improve near Lake Tahoe's near shore water quality. The EPA and appropriate state agencies should prioritize, accelerate and fund the necessary scientific research and work with local partners to develop and implement a comprehensive strategy to improve Lake Tahoe's near shore water quality.

Expanded Partnerships to Reduce the Risk of new Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS)

With confirmed infestation of water bodies ever closer to Lake Tahoe, the threat of new AIS introduction is real.

Actions: State, Federal and Local. Step up the policy of cooperation with and between existing state, federal and local partners in the invasive species network to develop and implement a regional approach to stop the spread of aquatic invasive species between regions and states.

Fuels and Fire Risk Reduction and Forest Health Management

Roundtable participants expressed strong support for a continuation of the policies, partnerships and investments that support fuels and fire risk reduction and forest health management. There was support for continued efforts to integrate forest health management with watershed restoration and water quality objectives.

Actions: Federal, State, Regional and Local. As a matter of policy, agencies at all levels should continue participation and support for the partnerships that plan, prioritize, invest and implement projects that reduce forest fuels and the threat of catastrophic wildfire. Efforts should continue to integrate restoration and water quality objectives into forest health management.

Expand Environmental Education

Trash and other materials left on public beaches and lands are also harmful to Lake Tahoe's fragile environment. The amount of trash and material being left behind continues to increase. Volunteer clean-up efforts help supplement the work of public land management agencies, but Roundtable participants urged that more be done and offered numerous suggestions.

Actions: Federal, State, Regional and Local. As a matter of policy, agencies at all levels should take more aggressive actions to reduce the trash and other materials left on public lands. It is recommended that such actions include, but not be limited to, expansion of existing environmental education campaigns to include information on the growing problem and damaging impacts on Tahoe's fragile environment from trash and litter, more infrastructure for trash collection and recycling, and greater enforcement and penalties for littering. Schools and colleges at all grade levels in the region should add or expand environmental education programs.

Innovation

Sustainable Economy

The Lake Tahoe Basin Prosperity Plan (LTBPP) was developed through an unprecedented regional collaboration involving all six local governments and representatives from business, community, education, economic development, and with input from the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency. The plan was shaped through a year of community meetings and workshops. It is an economic revitalization plan based on market-clusters focused on innovation, entrepreneurship, and sustainability. The LTBPP was developed because economic and community distress indicators are high and have been on a long-term downward trend well before the current economic recession. The three identified clusters - environmental innovation, health and wellness, and tourism and visitor services - are presented in a context consistent with the adopted Lake Tahoe Environmental Improvement Program (EIP). Without sustainable prosperity, Tahoe's local governments and private sector will find it that much more difficult or impossible to meet their EIP investment targets.

Actions: Regional. It is recommended that the TRPA Governing Board adopt a policy to endorse the Lake Tahoe Basin Prosperity Plan as the economic revitalization framework and guidance for creating sustainable Tahoe communities and accelerating environmental restoration.

Federal and State. Continue and strengthen the innovative policy, legislation, grants, and other programs that support regional collaboration to promote jobs, environmental objectives, sustainability and prosperity, and facilitate the public-private partnerships necessary to achieve these outcomes.

Living Wage Jobs

The Tahoe economy was built largely on gaming and the tourism that supported it. The Basin has lost over 8,500 jobs (7,000 from gaming) over the past two decades. This has been a major factor in the 15 percent decline in permanent population since 2000. Many of these have been families with school age children. The Lake Tahoe Basin Prosperity Plan provides a framework for innovation and living wage jobs that would stabilize Tahoe's diminishing middle class and revitalize communities, local services, pride in stewardship, and accelerate environmental improvements.

Actions: Federal and State. Strengthen and expand policies and programs that encourage, facilitate, and nurture entrepreneurship, workforce development, and business innovation.

Regional and Local. Adopt policies and take actions in support of plans and projects that align with Lake Tahoe Prosperity Plan recommendations and cluster strategies designed to create jobs with respect for the environment (e.g., energy efficient green building design, high altitude training facilities, special events, incubators that support small business and entrepreneurship, innovative products and services in the fields of recreation, tourism, green building, and health and wellness).

Renewal

Transportation

To help restore vitality and improve mobility, Tahoe needs "complete streets," including sidewalks, bike lanes, transit stops, and other elements to reduce dependence on cars, improve air and water quality, and promote walk-able, transit-friendly communities.

Actions: State and Federal. Adopt policy to prioritize development of a comprehensive Complete Streets Implementation Strategy specific for Lake Tahoe. Governors to direct Caltrans and Nevada Department of Transportation (NDOT), respectively; U.S. Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood to direct the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) to assist; to work with Tahoe agencies and local partners to develop a comprehensive Complete Streets Implementation Strategy for Lake Tahoe, modeled after the approach defined in Caltrans Deputy Directive DD-64-R1.

Federal, State, Regional and Local. Innovative Transit and Transportation Solutions. Roundtable participants expressed strong support for policies and programs that invest in innovative transit and transportation solutions to improve connectivity and mobility options. Policies and programs that support such innovation and investment should be a priority focus in the new federal transportation legislation (MAP-21) and in state, regional and local transportation plans.

Public Infrastructure

Landmark efforts that began with creation of the South Tahoe Public Utility District in the 1950s were later codified by the California Lahontan Regional Water Pollution Control Board in 1962. Lahontan Board Resolution 58-1 prohibited *“the direct discharge of domestic sewage, treated or untreated, into Lake Tahoe.”* This ultimately led to a requirement that all sewage effluent generated at Tahoe be pumped out of the Basin to help protect the Lake’s quality and clarity. This was a far-sighted and beneficial policy. However, to implement, it required the construction of extensive infrastructure. The many Tahoe special districts responsible for this infrastructure have done a commendable job of trying to keep pace with the capital replacement and operation and maintenance needs to ensure the integrity and efficiency of this infrastructure, but much of it is nearing the end of its original design life. Tahoe water suppliers face a similar challenge, particularly with respect to providing adequate flows for fire fighting in the “Wildland-Urban Interface” (WUI).

There are 110 miles of state and federal highways in the Lake Tahoe region. These routes, managed by Caltrans and NDOT, form the backbone of the region’s transportation system. This infrastructure must also be properly maintained and improved, including the design and construction of water quality retrofits required by environmental standards.

Actions: Federal, State and Local. There is extensive federal and state land ownership in the Lake Tahoe Basin and a significant level of public investment has been made at Tahoe over many decades. Existing federal and state policies and programs that support infrastructure needs must be maintained and expanded where possible, in partnership with local districts, agencies, governments and other operators of infrastructure that provide services to the public.

Environmental Redevelopment

Driven by new water quality science (Lake Tahoe TMDL), recent California legislation, and new federal policies, TRPA’s announced vision for the Regional Plan Update is *“to protect Lake Tahoe and improve Lake clarity with the world’s most innovative water quality standards in a plan that rebuilds environmentally sensitive, sustainable communities.”* Growth control caps in the current TRPA Regional Plan will remain in place. “Environmental Redevelopment” is an approach that has been identified as vital to incentivize and stimulate private sector investment consistent with the goal of rebuilding environmentally sensitive sustainable communities. Regulatory predictability, code and procedural improvements, and targeted delegation by TRPA to local and other partners are all viewed by a broad cross-section of the community as essential to “environmental redevelopment.”

Actions: State, Local and Federal. The states of California and Nevada, local governments, federal agencies engaged at Lake Tahoe, and all others with a stake in the health and sustainability of the region, should join TRPA in endorsing the Regional Plan vision and making timely completion of the Regional Plan Update a policy priority for the Tahoe Basin.

Additional Recommendations

Outcome Based Alignment

Many governments and agencies have jurisdiction and provide services in the Lake Tahoe Basin. In some ways, this represents a strength. It brings a unique diversity of expertise and resources to the region. In other ways, it represents a challenge. With so many involved, it is not easy to effectively coordinate, execute, assess, measure, and report the achievement of

environmental and community goals. Today, efficiency and accountability for investments and outcomes are more important than ever.

Actions: Federal, State and Local. As a matter of policy, all governments, agencies and other stakeholders are urged to review and update their organizational structure and skill set to improve Lake Tahoe's capacity for collaboration and partnerships. Strategic alignment within and across agencies will accelerate the achievement of environmental and community goals and help create a more sustainable Lake Tahoe.

Mediation First

The greatest disproportionate strain on other already constrained and shrinking budgets is the cost of defensive litigation. Lake Tahoe is a highly litigious environment. All stakeholders are urged to take a "mediation first" approach to resolving differences. Successful mediation will accelerate the achievement of environmental and community goals.

Actions: State and Federal. As a matter of policy, the skills and tools, along with a criteria for selecting issues for a "mediation first" approach should be identified and assigned to Lake Tahoe. This goal of this policy and effort is to help reduce (at a minimum) or avoid costly litigation that delays the achievement of environmental and community goals. As an example the governor of California could assign one or more mediators from the Governor's Office of Planning and Research (OPR) that have this expertise. Nevada and the Federal Government may have similar resources that could be assigned to Lake Tahoe when the selection criteria for "mediation first" are met.

Summary of Recommendations

Stewardship

Water Quality

Federal and State. Adopt policy that prioritizes actions to improve Lake Tahoe's near shore water quality. The EPA and appropriate state agencies should prioritize, accelerate and fund the necessary scientific research, and work with local partners to develop and implement a comprehensive strategy to improve Lake Tahoe's near shore water quality.

Aquatic Invasive Species

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