

## CHAPTER 13

### SCENIC RESOURCES

The scenic quality of the Lake Tahoe Basin is generally cited as one of its most important natural resources. The large, enclosed alpine lake-mountain setting offers a visual unity that is unique. The visual attributes of the setting include the clear blue lake, mountain vistas, and a forested setting. It is quite clear, therefore, that scenic resources encompass an aggregation of almost all of the other threshold components.

This chapter describes this scenic resource and the process through which recommended thresholds for its protection have been developed.

### SYSTEM COMPONENTS

The high quality scenic environment of the Tahoe Basin is the result of several factors:

1. The dominant element of the lake, a water feature visible from many areas of the basin, that results in a single large feature landscape type.
2. Distinctive mountain landforms that surround the flat plane of the lake and create an enclosed landscape type.
3. Skylines (often ridgelines) that define the earth-sky silhouette.
4. Conspicuous water-land edges.
5. Conspicuous edges between different vegetation types.
6. Numerous feature elements, such as streams and rock formations, and sand and rocky beaches that are less dominant than the lake, but create smaller feature landscape types on a sub-scale.

Although the Tahoe landscape is extensive, varied, and complex, viewers predominantly see the landscape from major roadways or from the lake itself. Privately held lands are generally located around the perimeter of the lake, in most cases along major roadways, and it is on these lands that major urban development has occurred.

Large areas of the Basin in public ownership (national forests and state parks) offer natural landscapes of exceptionally high quality. These areas are generally not as easily accessible to the average visitor or resident as those lands near major roadways, and for this reason, are seen by most viewers as more distant background or middleground, rather than foreground landscapes. Publicly-owned areas are managed to provide recreational opportunities for the public. Development and operation of recreational use areas can have effects on visual quality and result in visual problems, as can be seen with the Heavenly Valley ski slopes and the visually obtrusive campers and trailers of Camp Richardson. These effects are generally limited in extent and minor in comparison with residential and commercial development on private lands. Management agencies of public lands, such as the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service (USFS), have also set goals and policies for protection of visual resources on public lands. The USFS manages most of the public lands according to the Forest Service Visual Management System. Under this system, based on visual criteria, all national forest land is designated for preservation, retention, partial modification, modification, or maximum modification. These recommended objectives are combined with other resource values and recreation needs criteria to determine final management objectives on national forest lands.

In the Tahoe Basin all national forest lands have been designated for preservation, retention, or partial retention. The general visual resource condition of USFS lands and the visual quality objectives for these lands are shown in Table 13-1. Private lands do not benefit from uniform visual quality management, although there are a number of policies and regulations that directly or indirectly affect scenic resources. These policies and regulations are discussed later in this chapter.

The threshold study focuses on identifying scenic resource components and establishing thresholds for major scenic resources from basin roadways and from the lake itself, those areas most frequently used by residents and visitors.

Table 13-1. Visual Quality of National Forest Lands:  
Initial Objectives and Present  
Conditions, Lake Tahoe Basin

Visual quality category	Amount of land, acres	
	Initial visual quality objectives	Present conditions
Preservation Allows ecological change only	21,300	21,200
Retention Allows management activities if not visually evident	71,100	104,500
Partial Retention Allows management activities which may be evident but which must be subordinate to visual quality	41,000	3,900
Modification Management activities may dominate but must blend with the natural surroundings	0	1,900
Maximum Modification Management activities may dominate but must blend with surroundings in the background	0	500
Unacceptable Modification <sup>a</sup>	NA	1,400
Total National Forest Land <sup>b</sup>	133,400	133,400

Source: USFS

<sup>a</sup>This is not one of the visual quality categories in the Forest Service inventory system; it is included here because 1,400 acres are presently even more modified than defined by the maximum modification category.

<sup>b</sup>This total for National Forest land includes lands that the USFS expects to acquire in the near future.

A planning study conducted for the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency (TRPA) in 1971 identified regional visual resources on a basin-wide level. Eleven major landscape units were defined within the Basin (Litton and Shiozawa, 1971). These areas were identified by field reconnaissance made primarily from Highways 50, 28, and 89. Subordinate units were also identified. Major units had the following spatial characteristics:

1. Enclosures are identified by wall-like facades that drop from a rear surrounding ridge; a cohesive skyline is part of the unit.
2. Headland spurs or shoreline spurs are present.
3. Semblance of a floor or flattened lower and central slopes are present.
4. There are cove indentations along the waterline or some other means of identifying a limited segment of the water edge.
5. Presence of conspicuous or dominant landforms such as peaks, scarps, or lakes.
6. Presence of visually distinct forest stands or other plant associations.

These units were seen by the study's authors as "reasonably finite entities. Their structural unity and visual continuity make them logical areas within which particular management goals may be related to specific visual environments."

#### VALUE STATEMENTS

The natural landscape of the Tahoe Basin, with mountain peaks, granite rock formations, forested slopes, and clear lake waters, provides a rare visual resource. Preliminary value statements developed for scenic resources include the following:

1. Maintain and enhance the dominant natural-appearing landscape for the vast majority of views and lands in the Basin.
2. Maintain and/or improve the aesthetic characteristics of the man-made environment to be compatible with the natural environment.

3. Restore, whenever possible, damaged natural landscapes.
4. Maintain levels of lighting necessary for public health and safety, and in keeping with the unique environment of the Tahoe Basin.

These value statements were compiled from existing goal statements contained in various documents adopted by TRPA or local, state, or federal agencies with jurisdiction in the Tahoe Basin. It has been used to focus the scope of work on protection of the natural landscape, rather than improvements in the man-made (urban) environment. The scope of work also emphasizes identification and protection of existing visual resources, rather than concentrating on restoration.

The word "scenic" rather than "visual" is used because it refers to the natural landscape, and therefore reflects the emphasis of the threshold study. The word "scenic" is also consistent with the language of the compact. The word "visual" refers to both the natural and man-made landscape.

#### HISTORICAL DATA AND TRENDS

The USFS prepared an inventory of visual resources on national forest lands in the Basin in 1977. This inventory was prepared for implementation of the Visual Management System for the Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit Land Management Plan, and is the most extensive inventory of scenic resources done in the Basin.

Few historical data are available documenting or recording scenic resources in the Basin. The major source of historical data is the "Scenic Analysis of Principal Travel Routes in the Lake Tahoe Region" USFS (1971) and the 1978 update of the roadway portion of that analysis.

A report to TRPA, "Visual Pollution of the Lake Tahoe Basin," was prepared in 1971 by James McEvoy III and Sharon Williams. This report documented a survey done by the Tahoe Research Group in 1970 that sectioned the interior (lakeside) half of the perimeter roadway (US 50, California 89, and California and Nevada 28) into 1,000-foot units and inventoried viewing opportunities and obstructions in each of these sections. Conclusions of the report are summarized below:

1. One of the most serious viewing problems is the presence of numerous buildings and commercial signs.
2. Commercial signs seriously detract from the beauty of the Lake Tahoe environment.
3. Utility lines are both numerous and conspicuous in the Tahoe region and often obstruct or impact . . . otherwise pleasing views. Utility lines are visible along 54 percent of the interior perimeter roadway.
4. Removal of vegetation and disturbance of soil have created serious problems.
5. Present urbanization of the area has eliminated about one-fourth of the total view of the lake potentially available from the perimeter highways.

Another report done for TRPA, The Cumulative Impacts of Shorezone Development of Lake Tahoe, 1978, surveyed public reaction to development of the shorezone with piers, marinas, and other water-related construction. The report documents and maps the location, amount, and type of shorezone development in 1978. Results of public surveys indicated that shorezone development was seen as a negative factor at densities above six piers per thousand lineal feet. This report provides a baseline for updating shorezone development, and indicating areas of densities greater than six piers per thousand lineal feet.

From the late 1970s until the present, concern for maintaining the visual quality within the Basin prompted several agencies and jurisdictions to adopt policies related to visual or scenic resources. The USFS has instituted a Visual Management System on all national forest lands within the Basin. Placer and El Dorado Counties both adopted Scenic Highway Elements in 1977 and 1978, respectively. Placer County developed the Sierra Design Guide to guide development in and outside the Basin; Tahoe City developed an Urban Design Plan in 1977, and Washoe County prepared the Incline Village/Crystal Bay Policy Plan in 1981, in which aesthetic goals and policies for Basin lands were established. The City of South Lake Tahoe prepared a Design Guide and requires architectural review to promote improved development. The City of South Lake Tahoe and TRPA adopted sign ordinances in 1978 that controlled commercial signing, especially along roadways. A number of other ordinances were adopted, such as TRPA's Shorezone Ordinance in 1979, that have indirectly affected visual resources by limiting the number of allowed shorezone facilities. These and other policy documents that establish goals, policies or objectives for maintaining visual or scenic quality are summarized below.

## EXISTING STANDARDS AND POLICIES

No uniform standards exist within the Lake Tahoe Basin for visual resources. Local and state governments, TRPA, and CTRPA have adopted goals, policies, and implementing regulations for protection of certain aspects of visual resources. These goals, policies, and regulations are summarized here by agency or jurisdiction. In addition, other policies and regulations regarding Basin land use and transportation have an indirect effect on visual resources by controlling location, density, and type of development. These policies are not described here, as they are too numerous. The general effects of land use and transportation plans and policies on visual resources are described in the causal relationships section of this chapter.

United States Department of Agriculture, Forest Service;  
Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit Land Management Plan

The goal for visual quality set forth in the USFS plan is to "maintain an attractive forest appearance." Management directions to achieve this goal are:

1. Maintain or enhance high visual quality in areas surrounding recreation developments.
2. Identify in the Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit Land Management Plan, areas where visual quality must be restored.
3. Increase opportunities to view Lake Tahoe from highways, vista points, and other planned locations.

The plan also sets specific objectives for the maximum amount of alteration allowed within the designations of preservation, retention, or partial retention.

TRPA

The following TRPA policies address scenic resources:

1. TRPA Sign Ordinance. Adopted in 1979, this ordinance is intended to maintain the natural scenic quality of the region by prohibiting certain signs. Provisions of the ordinance prohibit off-premises signs, attachment of signs to trees or other natural vegetation, and signs with heights above those specified by Section 7.13 of the Land Use Ordinance (a height equivalent to the height of a building allowable within a given use district).

2. TRPA Subdivision Ordinance. The ordinance states that "subdivisions shall be planned, designed, constructed, and maintained to preserve the natural environment and scenic beauty of the Lake Tahoe Region" and "specific consideration shall be given to preservation of . . . areas of special natural beauty . . . particularly where of scenic or environmental importance or value; . . . (and) to preservation of important vistas." The ordinance requires placing utility lines and facilities underground unless "the applicant demonstrates, and the permit-issuing authority determines . . . that installation of any of the foregoing lines and facilities above ground will better protect scenic and environmental values." The ordinance also requires a vegetation preservation and protection plan as part of a development application to ensure maximum feasible preservation of existing vegetation.
3. TRPA Tree Conservation Ordinance. The purpose of the ordinance is to govern conservation of healthy trees on lands not used primarily for commercial harvesting of timber. The ordinance requires issuance of permits for removal or damage to trees, except under certain specified conditions.
4. TRPA Ordinance 78-7. The purpose of the ordinance is to provide a procedure to permit removal of healthy trees to maximize efficiency of solar energy systems. Removal of trees is limited to those necessary to remove the impediment to efficient operation of a solar energy system.
5. TRPA Grading Ordinance. The purpose of the ordinance is to require permits for construction and maintenance of land fills, excavations, cuts and clearing of vegetation, and to provide for revegetation of cleared areas.
6. TRPA Shorezone Ordinance. The ordinance established regional shorezone tolerance districts and limitations on development within such districts; establishes minimum standards and regulations for construction within the shorezone, and prohibits certain types of development within the shorezone. Permits are required for construction, alteration, removal, and use of any structure as provided for by the ordinance.

California Tahoe Regional Planning Agency (CTRPA)

An overall regional goal of the plan is that "the world famous scenic beauty of the region must be protected so that sights, sounds, and odors in the region are healthful and pleasing." Open space policy in the plan related to visual resources is stated as follows:

1. Identify areas which can make a special contribution to the preservation and enhancement of the Tahoe region and to the people's enjoyment, health, and safety of being in the region.
  - a. Areas of particular scenic beauty, whether viewed from close up or a distance or both.
  - b. Viewpoints and viewsheds.

Implementation actions for this policy are:

1. Acquire development rights or fee title to lands of high open space significance for public use.
2. Make it feasible for open lands with economic uses to remain in those uses.
3. Support the activation of the Tahoe Conservancy to acquire critical fragile and open space lands for public management and use.
4. Support local, state, and federal land acquisition programs.

The Regional Plan contains an Environmental Quality Plan with a Design and Aesthetics Element. The Environmental Quality Plan covers conservation and preservation of the natural environment, and also the improvement of the built environment. The overall design and aesthetics goal is:

Protect the natural beauty of the region, provide visual and physical access to scenic areas, improve the visual quality of developed areas and scenic corridors, and maintain the maximum amount of open space in order to preserve the unique environmental qualities upon which the well-being of the region depends.

Within this broad goal there are a number of specific goals and policies to carry them out. Most of these policies are directly related to visual resources and scenic quality; for this reason, they are presented below.

Environmental Goal. Prevent the destruction of attractive natural features and qualities of the region.

Environmental Policies.

1. The clarity of the air, the blue sky, and maximum visibility of the surrounding mountains and Tahoe views must be protected and maintained.
2. The crystal clarity and intense blue color of the waters of Lake Tahoe must be protected and maintained.
3. Prominent land forms, easily erodable and highly visible areas must be protected from insensitive earthmoving activities, vegetation removal, and other development.
4. The vigor and natural appearance of the vegetative cover shall be maintained for its very important contribution to the scenic and recreational qualities of the region.
  - a. Vegetative alterations shall be minimized and prompt revegetation provided for disturbed areas through planting of native species.
  - b. Timber removal operations shall be conducted only in accordance with a CTRPA Timber Harvest Ordinance so as to prevent soil erosion and the siltation of lakes and streams and to minimize impacts upon visual qualities of the area.
5. The visual qualities of openness and natural forested alpine character of the region shall be preserved.
6. Views of scenic areas--both from close-up and a distance--shall be preserved and enhanced.
7. Areas of special natural beauty shall be designated and protected by specific policies and procedures.
8. The Lake Tahoe region should have a pleasing natural odor, such as pine scent.

(The scenic beauty, scenic corridors, and open space of the region shall be protected through implementation of the Land Use Plan, the Conservation Plan, the Recreation Plan, and this section.)

Public Access to Views and Scenic Areas Goal. Provide greater public access to scenic areas and to scenic views.

Public Access to Views and Scenic Areas Policies.

9. Dedications or access easements shall normally be required along streams and along the shoreline. The CTRPA may waive this requirement if it finds overwhelming evidence that the recreational suitability of the site, land capability and tolerance, lack of support and maintenance services, privacy problems, or the relationship between location and the proposed development, and the amount of this required dedication dictates otherwise.
10. Transportation facilities shall be designed where feasible to provide views and to incorporate features such as view turnouts and vista points. (Turnouts at viewpoints should be encouraged.)
11. Bicycle and pedestrian pathways shall provide access to connect various scenic and recreation areas in the region.

Built Environment Goal. Enhance the visual quality of the built environment and minimize the detrimental effect of development upon the scenic beauty and views of the region.

Built Environment Policies.

12. The visual qualities of developed areas and scenic corridors shall be improved.
13. New construction shall not significantly alter the aesthetic character of existing natural environments.
14. Roads, building, and other improvements should be as unobtrusive as possible.
15. Open space corridors in urbanized areas shall be designated to reduce concentration of development and to maintain a desirable balance between man-made development and a natural appearance.

Transportation and Utility Facilities Goal. Design, construct, and maintain transportation and utility facilities in such a manner as to enhance the appearance of areas within the region as a whole.

Transportation and Utility Facilities Policies.

16. Transportation and utility facilities shall be designed and constructed to blend as much as possible with the environment and not detract from the natural beauty of the area.
17. Visual scars from road construction and other activities incident to development shall be minimized by careful design standards and the use of alternative construction methods.
18. Scenic analyses of proposed transportation and utility corridor routes shall be utilized to minimize environmental impacts.
19. Undergrounding of power (distribution) lines and other utilities shall be required wherever technologically feasible provided that undergrounding would not cause severe damage to the environment.
20. Scenic highway corridors and policies regarding them shall be designated in the Special Areas portion of this Design and Aesthetics Element.

Siting and Development Goal. Create an attractive environment that blends with and reflects the scenic qualities of the region.

Siting and Development Policies.

21. Development proposals, including building design, location, and density, shall be compatible with the environmental quality of the region and shall provide for adequate open space.
22. Overriding aesthetic considerations may be grounds for disapproval of a proposed project or development.
23. Compact commercial developments are encouraged over strip commercial development.
24. Owners of existing structures (should) shall be encouraged to improve the appearance of their structures by such means as remodeling and landscaping.
25. The design of structures should display a sensitivity to the best aspects of the character, quality, and scale of the site.

26. New facilities should be arranged in a compact, attractive, and efficient manner on each site.
27. Buildings shall be designed to reflect the alpine setting and use materials appropriate to the region.
28. Building heights shall be kept at generally low levels so as not to detract from the enjoyment of the natural setting.
29. Natural building materials are preferred over others in terms of exterior appearance, and the applicant should use materials which are compatible as a group and with surrounding structures.
30. Building colors shall be earthen or natural in tone.
31. The visual impact of paved areas, high-intensity lighting, and service and storage areas shall be minimal.
32. Building design that reflects the standardized architectural themes of national commercial chains shall be rejected as inconsistent with the character of the region.
33. Building design and interior lighting shall be controlled to avoid external glare.
34. Pitched roofs, height and bulk, and other such architectural standards shall be adopted.
35. Specific design standards such as minimum setback, arrangement of parking, and retention of existing vegetation or revegetation shall be adopted.

Landscaping Goal. provide a landscape character as similar to the natural environment as possible.

Landscaping Policies.

36. Development plans shall include landscape protection plans which minimize removal of vegetation and blend the development into the natural landscape.
37. The use of native plants and rocks shall be required.

38. Land contours and existing or planted landscape materials shall be employed to minimize the visual impacts of construction within scenic roadway corridors or scenic areas.

Signs and Lighting Goals. Maintain an attractive relationship between signs and the natural environment.

Restore the natural night-time views of the mountains and sky at Lake Tahoe so that the natural phenomena of darkness and starlight can be appreciated and enjoyed.

Signs and Lighting Policies.

40. Outdoor lighting should be regulated, restricted, or prohibited, as appropriate, to reduce excessive outdoor lighting.
- a. Outside lighting shall be of an indirect type.
  - b. The utilization of direct lighting techniques shall be retired through an amortization program.
  - c. Variances may be considered for public recreational facilities such as playing fields and tennis courts.
  - d. The policies and recommendations of the California State Energy Commission will be adhered to except where the policies and standards set forth by the CTRPA are more limiting.
  - e. The CTRPA should cooperate closely with local design review boards, planning commissions, the State Highway Commission, power companies, and individuals to develop and assure compliance with high standards for outdoor lighting on all new construction or installations, and should work with the appropriate local entities to formulate a program of conversion within a reasonable length of time for existing light sources that do not comply with these standards.
41. Signs shall be designed to be consistent with the associated development and to be unobtrusive to the natural setting.
- a. Signs shall be integrated throughout a project.
  - b. The use of natural materials is encouraged for sign construction.

- c. Sign illumination shall be of low intensity.
- d. Signs shall be illuminated indirectly and shall not flash, rotate, or be otherwise animated.
- e. The size of signs shall be controlled and consolidation of signing encouraged in commercial areas.
- f. Signs that are identified as being inconsistent with this policy shall be retired through an amortization program.

Special Areas Goal. Preserve and enhance the appearance of natural and built features in and around special areas, such as scenic highway corridors and the shorezone.

Special Areas Policies.

- 42. Special areas shall be designated to be given particular attention concerning design and siting of structures, landscaping, signing, and preservation of natural features and views.
- 43. Generally, construction shall be concentrated on the portion of parcels most distant from scenic highways, designated special areas, or the shoreline.

Natural Areas Goal. Designate and protect areas of high scenic quality--whether views from close-up, a distance, or both.

Natural Areas Policies.

- 44. Key areas of open space such as meadows, marshes, lagoons, streamsides, beaches, and other unique landscape features shall be preserved for their scenic variety and importance to wildlife, fisheries, environmental quality, and public use.
- 45. The visual qualities of the shorelines of lakes and scenic highway corridors shall be protected and/or improved.

46. Dedications or access easement shall normally be required along streams and along the shoreline. The CTRPA may waive this requirement if it finds overwhelming evidence that the recreational suitability of the site, land capability and tolerance, lack of support and maintenance services, privacy problems, or the relationship between location and the proposed development and the amount of this required dedication dictates otherwise.
47. Federal- and state-funded programs should be promptly initiated for public acquisition of key areas to ensure their preservation.

Scenic Highway Corridors Goal. Designate and protect scenic corridors (bands of land generally adjacent to the highway rights-of-way) along major existing roadways.

Scenic Highway Corridors Policies.

48. Areas of natural beauty, adjacent to or viewed from transportation facilities, shall be preserved and areas of development shall be controlled so as to be attractive and in keeping with the natural scenery of the region.
  - a. Shorelines and scenic areas of special significance as viewed from roadways will be designated and protected.
  - b. Views of the lake from state highways shall be preserved.
  - c. Development shall meet high standards of visual quality.
49. Commitments should be made to protect the appearance of the scenic corridors of Highways 50 and 20 and Route 89, between the southern boundary of the Basin and Interstate 80; CTRPA shall designate these highways as "scenic highways."
50. Support shall be given to El Dorado and Placer Counties in maintaining the appearance of corridors of their designated scenic roads in the region. These are: Fallen Leaf Road, Ward Valley Road, Alpine Meadows Road, Squaw Valley Road, and Route 267.

Scenic Highway Corridors Standards. Standards shall be developed for scenic corridors in regard to:

- a. Regulation of land use and intensity of development;
- b. Detailed planning of land and sites;
- c. Control of outdoor advertising;
- d. Careful attention to and control of earthmoving and landscaping; and
- e. Aesthetic designs of structures and equipment.

Standards for development in scenic corridors shall include:

- a. Minimum setback of 100 feet for all new development where parcel depth permits and half of parcel depth in all other cases.
- b. Retention of existing trees and replacement of removed vegetation in setback area.
- c. Restrictions on size, location, material, and lighting of signs.
- d. Amortization and removal of non-conforming signs.

CTRPA Land Use Ordinance, 1975 (amended 1980). The land use ordinance contains specific criteria for residential development in Class 1 to 3 lands, and for development and expansion of ski areas that directly relate to visual resources. These criteria include construction practices that minimize soil, vegetation, and topography disturbance, and provide for revegetation of disturbed areas. In addition, the criteria for ski run expansion and development include the following conditions to maintain aesthetic quality:

1. Placement of lift facilities and ski runs shall take into account visual and other aesthetic impacts on the lake and surrounding areas including those outside the Basin, e.g., the proposed Granite Chief Wilderness west of Ward and Blackwood Canyons.
2. Design of lift towers, terminal structures, etc., must be consistent with safety and consistent with aesthetic goals of the CTRPA Regional Plan. Ski tower heights should be determined in each case on the basis of visual impact and safety.

3. Any road constructed as part of expanded lift facilities may not be visible from ground or lake level beyond the bounds of the master plan area.
4. Erosion control can have significant visual impacts that must be considered especially in the short term on highly visible construction areas.

CTRPA Recreation Element, 1979 Update. One of the goals of the element is to "maintain and enhance the unique recreational and scenic resources of the region."

Policies directed explicitly toward maintaining scenic resources are the following:

1. A determination of outstanding natural areas, that is, areas with outstanding scenic and physical qualities, shall be made and these areas shall be protected from development incompatible with the identified natural values.
2. All recreation areas, particularly the day use and scenic vistas, should be served by convenient modes of non-automobile transportation

El Dorado County, Scenic Highways Element, 1978

Goals of the element relating to Basin roads are:

1. To adopt a General Plan Element consistent with the state guidelines for the official designation of certain portions of U.S. Highway 50 and State Highways 49 and 89.
2. To encourage alternate modes of transportation through scenic corridors; i.e., bicycle, equestrian, and pedestrian.
3. To promote economic development and tourism in areas through which scenic highways pass.
4. To coordinate the implementation of the Scenic Highway Element with the citizens of El Dorado County and adjoining jurisdictions.

Policies of the element relating to basin roads are summarized as follows:

1. To preserve the beauty and scenic character of those roadways designated as scenic corridors by the State of California or the County of El Dorado.
2. Current land use can be changed in the direction of reverting to nature without reference to this governing body. Changing current land use in the direction of changing the character or type of land use or intensification of current usage or development of any kind may require review by the county.
3. If required by local ordinance, the land owner shall submit a detailed plan of the proposed change . . . showing . . . the effects on the aesthetic qualities of the site.
4. Outdoor advertising within the scenic corridor will be controlled.
5. Removal of existing, nonconforming signs will be encouraged.
6. Landscaped areas of scenic corridors will be compatible with . . . the Scenic Highways Element of the County General Plan.
7. Revegetate graded areas.
8. Encourage design . . . of structures . . . to be compatible . . . with scenic setting . . .

U.S. Highways 50 and 89 within the Basin are identified as eligible for official State Scenic Highway designation. The program described in this element recommends design review and sign control for Highway 50, and that the Highway 50 easement be retained as a scenic corridor and possibly developed as a nonvehicular scenic route. Scenic corridor boundaries are not defined in this document, which recommends that surveys of the scenic corridors be undertaken to determine the location and necessary extent of protective measures.

Placer County, Scenic Highway Element, 1977

Basin roads eligible for State Scenic Highway designation within Placer County are Highway 89 and Highway 28. Basin roads designated as county scenic highways are Ward Valley Road and Highway 267. Corridors are not defined in this element, although criteria for corridor establishment are discussed.

Goals and supporting policies are summarized as follows:

Goal: To preserve, enhance, and protect the scenic resources visible from scenic highways in Placer County.

Policies

1. To encourage and utilize existing county programs for protection and enhancement of scenic corridors, including but not limited to design review, sign control, undergrounding utilities, scenic setbacks, density limitations, planned unit developments, grading and tree removal standards, open space easements, and land conservation contracts.
2. To require the use of aesthetic design considerations for road construction, reconstruction, or maintenance for all scenic highways.
3. To encourage anti-litter, beautification, and clean-up programs along scenic routes.
4. To provide for landscaping . . . to maintain and improve scenic qualities and screen unsightly views.

Goal: To develop a system of scenic highways to serve roads of residents and visitors to Placer County.

Policies

1. To link major points of historical interest and recreational activity.
2. To provide coordination of scenic highway programs between jurisdictions
3. To provide a variety of scenic routes.

Goal: To promote and enhance the historic and recreational opportunities in Placer County.

Policies

1. To encourage the establishment of scenic highways which provide access to recreational, historical, and cultural facilities.

2. To encourage uses as appropriate along scenic highways.
3. To inventory and take steps to protect and maintain historical landmarks and monuments along scenic routes.
4. To encourage the use of bicycles as an alternative mode of travel.

A program for protection of scenic routes is recommended, and includes existing controls provided through the General Plan, subdivision regulations, zoning, and undergrounding of utilities, as well as the following proposals:

1. A scenic corridor development plan prepared for each state scenic route.
2. Specific scenic corridor studies for county scenic routes.

Washoe County, Incline Village/Crystal Bay Policy Plan, 1981

. The plan area includes all of Washoe County in the Lake Tahoe Basin. The plan, developed by the Washoe County Regional Planning Commission, consists of a series of policies and implementation measures to achieve the plan goal of "preserving and enhancing the natural environment, the scenic and visual character, and the beauty of the existing Incline Village/Crystal Bay communities and the Washoe County portion of Lake Tahoe". The policies address issues such as architecture, landscape and site design, undergrounding of utilities, signing, alterations of the natural landscape and landform, and renovation of the Crystal Bay casino core area. Implementation measures for the plan include development of design review standards and development of a sign ordinance to be adopted by the Washoe County Board of Supervisors.

City of South Lake Tahoe, Sign Ordinance, 1978

The City's sign ordinance regulates the location, number, and size of signs within the city limits. Allowable size for free-standing signs is proportional to the length of parcel frontage. Height of signs is a maximum of 20 feet, as measured from the natural grade of the bottom of the sign structure. Allowable size for building signs is one square foot of sign area for each linear foot of building face, with a maximum of 85 square feet. Height of signs is 20 feet from ground level or the height of the building. No animated or mobile signs are permitted, with some exceptions.

City of South Lake Tahoe, Open Space and Community Park Plan, 1980

One of the stated purposes of open space in the plan is "retention of areas of aesthetic and recreational value . . ." Certain lands totaling 2,193 acres are identified for acquisition for open space and community parks. One of the proposed methods of acquiring these lands is use of scenic easements.

City of South Lake Tahoe, 20-20 Committee Report, December 1978

This report recommends the following goals:

1. To make the environment of the City of South Lake Tahoe pleasant and attractive to those who live and visit within its confines.
2. To give broader scope to visual concerns, references to the city should be expanded to include the area encompassing the entire South Shore.

Policies related to visual resource management are:

1. "To provide the traveler with a sense of entry into South Lake Tahoe employing a sequential experience . . ."
2. "To impart to all that South Lake Tahoe is a distinctive community . . ."
3. "To project the image of an ecologically-minded community by upgrading the appearance . . . (and) setting aesthetic standards . . . along major transportation corridors."
4. "To foster a meaningful community sense . . ."

Major programs recommended by the report are:

1. Maintenance of high standards by the Architectural Review Committee.
2. Authorization of an urban physical design plan and specific beautification program.
3. Adoption of guidelines for landscaping.
4. Adoption of abatement procedures to eradicate nonconforming features.

## 5. Support of redevelopment.

City of South Lake Tahoe Design Guide

The City requires architectural review by ordinance where buildings face on a state highway, where structures are within 100 feet of the high water line of Lake Tahoe, and in the Tourist-Commercial and Industrial zoning districts. The City has prepared a Design Guide with guidelines for site design, building design, and landscaping for prospective applicants.

## CAUSAL RELATIONSHIPS

Scenic resources in the Tahoe region are affected primarily by man's activities and use of the land. Some natural factors, such as seasonal changes, (i.e., changes in vegetation color) and geologic events (i.e., landslides, earthquakes), can also affect scenic resources. These natural changes usually either do not result in permanent reductions in scenic quality or are so rare and unpredictable that they cannot be controlled.

Man's activities have a high potential for changing the quality of the scenic resource, and have in the past dramatically altered the visual character of some parts of the Basin. The survey conducted in 1970 for TRPA by the Tahoe Research Group documented causes and specific locations of reduction in visual quality. Major problems identified by this survey were buildings that blocked or impaired views, commercial signs, utility lines, removal of vegetation and disturbance of soil, and elimination of lake views by development. A visual analysis conducted in 1978 for the South Tahoe Public Utilities District/Douglas County Sewer Improvement District Environmental Impact Statement for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) also identified sources of visual problems, as follows.

1. Single-family residential dwelling units that are obtrusively sited and project above the forest canopy.
2. Single-family residential dwelling units that block views of the lake.
3. Grading or excavation for road or building pad construction that has resulted in loss of vegetation on cut banks and eroded slopes.
4. Structures of such height and bulk that they obstruct views of the lake or mountain backdrop.

5. Building groups that alter the natural contours of the topography and remove significant amounts of vegetation.
6. Strip commercial development that forms a solid visual barrier without view corridors to mountain backdrops or lake views.
7. Commercial signs that are distracting, garish, or out of character with the natural environment.
8. Unlandscaped undivided roadways of four or more lanes with roadside parking.
9. Fences or walls along the roadside that interrupt the natural character of the environment.
10. Ski slopes that scar the mountain backdrop.
11. Structures whose exterior color and materials are out of character with natural surroundings.

#### ANALYSIS TECHNIQUES AND MODELS

The scenic resources inventory is described in this section.

##### Scenic Resources Inventory

To establish thresholds, more detailed identification and inventory of scenic resources within landscape units, as seen from principal travel routes, was needed. An inventory was conducted of scenic resources that documents subcomponents making up the scenic resources within each roadway and shoreline unit. The individual subcomponents have been mapped and photo-documented, and described in narrative text. This inventory provides a baseline of 1982 existing resources, so that threshold levels can be tied to measurable degrees of change in resource status that would result from management decisions.

The 43 roadway and 33 shoreline units defined by the 1971 USFS Scenic Analysis of Travel Routes were used for this inventory. Three roadway units were added during the inventory for a total of 46 roadway units. Figure 13-1 shows the roadway and shoreline units. Appendix F contains the scenic resources inventory for both roadway and shoreline units.

Roadway Unit Inventory. Each scenic roadway unit was surveyed and inventoried from February through April 1982.

The subcomponents that make up scenic resources from roadways are:

1. Foreground, middleground, and background views of natural landscape from roadways.
2. Views to the lake from roadways.
3. Views of the lake and natural landscape from roadway entry points to the Basin.
4. Special landscape features, such as streams, beaches, and rock formations, that add interest and variety to views.

Each scenic resource unit is defined by the length of the roadway unit and the areas seen from that roadway unit (the viewshed). Subcomponents for each scenic resource unit are mapped and keyed to detailed descriptions. Each subcomponent is documented by type, number, location, and quality.

Scenic quality ratings were made for each subcomponent and unit, based on four visual criteria. The purpose of these criteria is to provide comparative evaluations of the scenic resources within each scenic roadway unit and among roadway units. Criteria for evaluation of the quality of the resource subcomponents are (1) unity; (2) vividness; (3) variety; and (4) intactness. These four criteria are frequently used and accepted criteria for describing landscape quality (Litton, 1974). Unity can be expressed in a landscape by a dominant land form with coordinated, subordinated surrounding parts, by a single well-defined enclosure, or a set or series of strong features. A unified landscape is one in which the visual resources join together to form a single, coherent, harmonious visual unit. Vividness can be expressed by contrasting elements, such as color, line, and shape, marked differences in elements seen as related, or repetition of similarities. (The visual quality of vividness can also be described as distinctiveness.) Variety is usually that of numerous or different parts seen together. Variety can also be described as richness. Intactness describes the degree to which a landscape retains its natural condition, or the degree to which modifications emphasize or enhance the natural condition of the landscape.

The assignment of numbers to subcomponents and units is intended to express comparative scenic quality ratings of high, moderate, and low values rather than to suggest absolute numerical values. Each subcomponent is assigned a score from 0 to 3+ for each of the four criteria. A rating of 3 indicates high visual quality; a rating of 2 indicates moderate visual quality; a rating of 1 indicates low visual quality; and a rating of 0 indicates an absence of visual quality. A rating of 3+ is assigned to a resource with an exceptionally high visual quality. The total score for each subcomponent is then translated back into a subcomponent composite score of 0 to 3+. For each roadway unit, the total score is based on the number and quality of subcomponents and the overall scenic quality of the unit. Table 13-2 is an example of the rating procedure for Roadway Unit 37, Echo Summit to Highway 89/Highway 50 intersection. Table 13-3 shows the scenic quality criteria ratings and the composite ratings for each of the roadway units. The unit summaries in Appendix F show both subcomponent and unit ratings for roadways.

In addition to a scenic quality rating, each roadway unit was then assigned a sensitivity to change rating. This rating expresses the degree of vulnerability of the resources within any given unit to change. A rating of 3 indicates a high degree of sensitivity to change; a rating of 2 indicates a moderate degree of sensitivity to change; and a rating of 1 indicates a low degree of sensitivity to change. Some resources are more sensitive to change than others. The factors considered in determining the sensitivity to change for any given resource include the following:

1. Characteristics of the Resource Subcomponents. Some scenic resources have especially sensitive parts or elements. A view of a ridgeline or skyline, for instance, or an edge between water and land, can be easily impaired by changes in landform or land use. The scenic quality of some views may depend upon a compositional arrangement of varied elements. Removal or blocking of any one of these elements could reduce the quality. Examples of such compositions are frequently seen in the Tahoe Basin around stream zones. In general, characteristics that tend to be sensitive to change are steep slopes, edges, and transitional areas (for instance, from an area of vegetative cover to a rocky area), and views of features, enclosed or focal landscapes (Litton, 1974).

Table 13-2 Summary of Ratings for Roadway Unit 37

Subcomponents	Criteria				Subcomponent total	Subcomponent composite
	Unity	Vividness	Variety	Intactness		
Entry point view 1-1,2	3	3+	3	2	11+	3
Views of natural landscape 1-3 1-4 1-5	3	3	2	3	11	3
	3	3	3	3	12	3
	2	3	2	2	9	2
Visual features 1 2	2	2	2	2	8	2
	3	2	3	3	11	3
					Unit rating	3

Total scores  
 10 - 12 high  
 6 - 9 moderate  
 1 - 5 low

Composite scores  
 3 high  
 2 moderate  
 1 low

Table 13-3. Criteria and Composite Scenic Quality Ratings for Roadway Units

Roadway unit no.	Roadway unit name	Criteria unity	Variety	Vividness	Intactness	Total	Composite Total <sup>a</sup>
1	Tahoe Valley	2	2	2	1	8	2
2	Camp Richardson	3	3	2	2	10	3
3	Emerald Bay	3+	3+	3	3	12	3+
4	Bliss State Park	3	2	2	3	10	3
5	Rubicon Bay	2	2	2	1	7	2
6	Lonely Gulch	2	2	2	1	7	2
7	Meeks Bay	3	2	3	2	10	3
8	Sugar Pine Point	3	2	3	3	11	3
9	Tahoma	1	1	1	1	4	1
10	Quail Creek	1	2	2	1	6	2
11	Homewood	1	2	2	1	6	2
12	Tahoe Pines	2	3	3	2	10	3
13	Sunnyside	2	3	3	2	10	3
14	Tahoe Tavern	2	1	1	1	5	1
15	Tahoe City	1	2	1	1	5	1
16	Lake Forest	2	2	1	0	4	1
17	Cedar Flat	1	2	2	1	6	2
18	Carnelian Bay	1	2	2	1	6	2
19	Flick Point	2	3	2	1	6	2
20	Tahoe Vista	1	2	2	1	7	2
21	Stateline	2	2	2	0	6	2
22	Crystal Bay	0	2	2	0	4	1
23	Mt. Rose Highway	2	3	3	2	10	3
24	Tahoe Meadow	2	3	3	2	10	3
25	Ponderosa Area	0	2	2	0	4	1
26	Sand Harbor	3+	3+	3	3	12	3+
27	Prey Meadow	3	3	2	3	11	3
28	Sponer Summit	2	2	3	2	9	2
29	Cave Rock	2	3	3	2	10	3
30	Zephyr Cove- Lincoln Park Meadow	2	3	3	2	10	3
31	Casino Area	1	1	1	0	3	1
32	The Strip	0	1	1	0	3	1
33	El Dorado Beach	1	2	2	1	6	2
34	Al Tahoe	0	2	1	0	3	1
35	Airport Area	1	3	2	1	7	2
36	Echo Summit	2	3	3	2	10	3
37	Upper Truckee River	2	3	2	2	9	2
38	Alpine Summit	3+	3	3+	3	12	3+
39	Brockway Cutoff	2	3	2	2	9	2
40	Brockway Summit	2	2	2	2	9	2
41	Outlet	3	3	3	1	10	3
42	Lower Truckee River	3	3	2	2	10	3
43	Kingsbury Grade	2	3	3	1	9	2
44	Pioneer Trail, North	1	2	1	0	4	1
45	Pioneer Trail, South	2	3	2	2	9	2

<sup>a</sup>Total Scores = Composite Scores  
10 - 12 high = 3 high  
6 - 9 moderate = 2 moderate  
1 - 5 low = 1 low

2. Location of the Individual Resource. This includes the likelihood that outside influences (such as land use changes) would alter the quality of the resource. For instance, long-distance views from the Echo Summit area of the South Tahoe area would probably not be dramatically altered by land use change within the viewshed, since these changes would be viewed at a great distance, and would be individually almost indistinguishable. On the other hand, views of the lake from the Emerald Bay roadway unit would be highly sensitive to any changes in land uses in the surrounding area, since the views could be easily blocked or otherwise impaired.
3. Conditions within the Unit. This includes conditions that may be expected to change or impair the resources. For example, steep slopes or cut banks within the unit may be eroding, with the probability of an impairment in scenic quality. Ongoing construction activity of any significance within any given unit may indicate a high degree of sensitivity to change, depending on the type and location of the activity in relation to the resource.

The sensitivity to change rating emphasizes changes that would result from man-made activities rather than natural processes, such as vegetative succession or seasonal changes in vegetation color.

Shoreline Unit Inventory. The procedure and criteria for documenting and rating resources of the shoreline units were the same as those used for the roadway units, except that the subcomponents varied. Subcomponents making up scenic resources from the lake are:

1. Views of predominantly natural shoreline, unimpaired by man-made features.
2. Views with a high degree of natural landscape variety.

Each shoreline unit's scenic quality was ranked in the same manner as the roadway units, and each unit was given a composite rating establishing its relative scenic quality based on the quality of the resource subcomponents and their sensitivity to change. Table 13-4 is an example of the scenic quality rating procedure for Shoreline Unit 29, Zephyr Cove. Table 13-5 shows the criteria ratings and the composite ratings for each of the shoreline units.

Table 13-4. Summary of Quality Ratings for Shoreline Unit 29

Subcomponents	Criteria Unity	Vividness	Variety	Intactness	Subcomponent total	Subcomponent composite <sup>a</sup>
<u>Background views</u>						
1.	2	2	2	2	8	2
5.	2	2	2	2	8	2
<u>Shoreline Views</u>						
2.	2	3	2	2	9	2
3.	2	2	3	2	9	2
4.	2	2	2	1	7	2
6.	2	2	2	2	8	2
7.	3	2	2	2	9	2
<u>Visual Features</u>						
8.	3	3	2	3	11	3
Unit	2	2	2	2	8	2

<sup>a</sup>Total Scores                      Composite Scores  
 10 - 12 high                      = 3 high  
 6 - 9 moderate                    = 2 moderate  
 1 - 5 low                            = 1 low

Table 13-5. Criteria and Composite Scenic Quality Ratings for Shoreline Units

Roadway unit no.	Roadway unit name	Criteria unity	Variety	Vividness	Intactness	Total	Composite Total <sup>a</sup>
1	Tahoe Keys	1	2	2	0	5	1
2	Pope Beach	3	2	2	1	9	2
3	Jameson Beach	2	2	2	2	8	3
4	Taylor Creek Meadow	3	2	2	2	10	3
5	Ebrite	2	2	2	2	8	2
6	Emerald Bay	3+	3	3+	3	12	3+
7	Bliss State Park	3	2	3	3	11	3
8	Rubicon Point	3	2	2	3	10	3
9	Rubicon Bay	1	2	1	0	4	1
10	Meeks Bay	3	3	2	2	10	3
11	Sugar Pine Point	2	2	2	3	9	2
12	McKinney Bay	2	3	2	2	9	2
13	Eagle Rock	2	2	2	2	8	2
14	Ward Creek	2	2	2	2	8	2
15	Tahoe City	1	2	1	0	4	1
16	Lake Forest	2	2	2	1	7	2
17	Dollar Point	2	2	2	1	7	2
18	Cedar Flat	2	2	2	1	7	2
19	Carnelian Bay	2	2	2	1	7	2
20	Flick Point	2	3	2	1	8	2
21	Agate Bay	1	3	2	1	7	2
22	Brockway	2	3	2	2	9	2
23	Crystal Bay	2	3	2	2	9	2
24	Sand Harbor	3	3	2	2	10	3
25	Skunk Harbor	2	2	3	2	9	2
26	Cave Rock	2	2	2	2	8	2
27	Lincoln Park	1	2	1	1	5	1
28	Tahoe School	2	2	2	2	8	2
29	Zephyr Cove	2	2	2	2	8	2
30	Edgewood	2	2	2	2	8	2
31	Bijou	2	2	2	1	7	2
32	Al Tahoe	1	1	2	0	4	1
33	Truckee Marsh	2	3	2	3	10	3

<sup>a</sup>Total Scores = Composite Scores  
10 - 12 high = 3 high  
6 - 9 moderate = 2 moderate  
1 - 5 low = 1 low

## Scenic Analysis of Travel Routes

In 1971, a study was undertaken by a USFS task group (USFS, 1971) to analyze and evaluate comparative scenic values of the major roads in the Lake Tahoe region and of views seen from the lake itself. The study established a baseline of scenic quality. This study defined 43 roadway units on Highways 50, 267, and 89 around the perimeter of the lake, and 33 shoreline units as seen from the lake itself. Figure 13-1 shows the roadway and shoreline units. The study evaluated scenery on roadways based on the following criteria:

1. Man-made features along roadway and shoreline.
2. Physical distractions to driving along roadways.
3. Roadway characteristics.
4. Views of the lake from roadways.
5. General landscape views from roadways and shoreline.
6. Variety of scenery from roadways and shoreline.

For the roadway analysis within each criterion, three numerical grades (1, 3, and 5 for low, medium, and high ratings) were assigned. With this scoring system, the task group traveled over each roadway unit in both directions at site-seeing speed, and the average of the two ratings became the rating assigned. Any unit could have a minimum low score of 6 and a maximum high score of 30. Actual scores ranged from a low of 9 to a high of 27.

For shoreline units, the same task group traveled at slow speed around the lake at a distance from shore similar to that traveled by site-seeing boats. A continuous section of lakeshore with similar landscape characteristics was designated as a unit. The scoring process was the same as for roadway units except that only three criteria were applied (1, 5, and 6 of criteria listed above). Shoreline units could have scores from a minimum of 3 to a maximum of 15. Actual scores ranged from 5 to 14. Examples of rating sheets for 1971 are included in Appendix F. Ratings for 1971 for the roadway and shoreline units are summarized in Tables 13-6 and 13-7.

The roadway unit analysis was updated in 1978 as part of the visual assessment for the South Tahoe Public Utilities District/Douglas County Sewer Improvement District Environmental Impact Statement. The update showed that of the 43 roadway units, 15 had undergone some deterioration in visual quality. This deterioration for the most part resulted from new development and construction, and signing and grading along roadways. Ratings for this update are summarized in Table 13-6.

Table 13-6. Roadway Travel Route Ratings,  
1971, 1978, and 1982

Unit number	Unit name	Ratings,		
		1971	1978	1982
1	Tahoe Valley	14	11	11-
2	Camp Richardson	20	20	20
3	Emerald Bay	27	27	26
4	Bliss State Park	22	22	21
5	Rubicon Bay	23	17	17
6	Lonely Gulch	21	17	17
7	Meeks Bay	12	12	13 <sup>a</sup>
8	Sugar Pine Point	23	23	23
9	Tahoma	15	13	13
10	Quail Creek	18	14	14
11	Homewood	14	14	13
12	Tahoe Pines	19	19	17
13	Sunnyside	14	14	14
14	Tahoe Tavern	17	15	13
15	Tahoe City	12	12	12
16	Lake Forest	18	15	13
17	Cedar Flat	18	17	17
18	Carnelian Bay	16	14	14
19	Flick Point	14	14	14
20	Tahoe Vista	14	11	10
21	State Line	21	21	20
22	Crystal Bay	21	15	12
23	Mt. Rose Highway	27	27	25
24	Tahoe Meadow	26	26	26
25	Ponderosa Area	12	12	12
26	Sand Harbor	27	27	26
27	Prey Meadow	27	27	27
28	Spooner Summit	16	16	16
29	Cave Rock	24	24	23
30	Zephyr Cove-Lincoln Park	19	19	18
31	Meadow	18	14	14
32	Casino Area	15	10	13 <sup>a</sup>
33	The Strip	9	6	6
34	El Dorado Beach	16	16	16
35	Al Tahoe	10	6	7 <sup>a</sup>
36	Airport Area	15	15	15
37	Echo Summit	26	26	26
38	Upper Truckee River	18	18	18
39	Alpine Summit	24	24	24
40	Brockway Cutoff	15	15	15
41	Brockway Summit	21	21	21
42	Outlet	10	10	10
43	Lower Truckee River	20	20	20
44	Kingsburg Grade	-	-	13
45	Pioneer Trail, North	-	-	10
46	Pioneer Trail, South	-	-	20

<sup>a</sup>Indicates improvement

Table 13-7. Shoreline Travel Route Ratings, 1971 and 1982

Shoreline Unit No.	Shoreline unit name	Ratings	
		1971	1982
1	Tahoe Keys	11	9
2	Pope Beach	9	8
3	Jameson Beach	8	8
4	Taylor Creek Meadow	13	13
5	Ebrite	9	9
6	Emerald Bay	13	12
7	Bliss State Park	12	12
8	Rubicon Point	13	12
9	Rubicon Bay	6	6
10	Meeks Bay	9	9
11	Sugar Pine Point	11	11
12	McKinney Bay	9	9
13	Eagle Rock	12	11
14	Ward Creek	10	10
15	Tahoe City	5	5
16	Lake Forest	6	5
17	Dollar Point	11	10
18	Cedar Flat	9	8
19	Carnelian Bay	5	5
20	Flick Point	9	8
21	Agate Bay	8	8
22	Brockway	11	10
23	Crystal Bay	12	11
24	Sand Harbor	12	12
25	Skunk Harbor	13	13
26	Cave Rock	12	10
27	Lincoln Park	10	8
28	Tahoe School	12	11
29	Zephyr Cove	10	9
30	Edgewood	11	11
31	Bijou	9	9
32	Al Tahoe	10	9
33	Truckee Marsh	14	14

An update of the travel route analysis was completed for 1982 during the threshold study for roadway and shoreline units. Of the 43 roadway units, a total of 16 units were altered since the 1978 update. Thirteen of these units had undergone a reduction in scenic quality, and three of the units had improved scenic quality. Improvements in these three units were the result of remodeling, redesign or removal of commercial signs, reduced construction activity, and improvements in street appearance. Ratings for this roadway update are summarized in Table 13-6. Rating sheets with field notes for each unit are contained in Appendix F. Figure 3-1 shows the travel units for shoreline and roadway units.

Of the 33 shoreline units, a total of 16 units had undergone a reduction in scenic quality from 1971 to 1982. Table 13-7 shows the 1971 and 1982 shoreline ratings. Rating sheets with field notes for each unit are included in Appendix F, and are available for review at the TRPA office.

#### ALTERNATIVE THRESHOLDS

The purpose of scenic resource thresholds is to establish a mechanism for protection of identified resources and a means of monitoring change in these resources.

##### Recommended Thresholds

The recommended thresholds are presented in this section.

Number One. The recommended threshold would be expressed in numeric terms, and would represent existing scenic quality and sensitivity to change of resources in each scenic roadway and shoreline unit. The assignment of numbers to units is intended to express comparative ratings of value rather than to suggest absolute numerical values.

The threshold number proposed for each unit is a composite of the scenic quality rating (0 to 3+) and the sensitivity to change rating (1 to 3). Units with a threshold number from 5 to 6+ would indicate that existing scenic resources are of high quality and are also highly sensitive to change. Units with a threshold number from 3 to 4 would indicate a moderate level of scenic quality and sensitivity to change, or high scenic quality and low sensitivity to change, or low scenic quality and high sensitivity to change. Units with threshold numbers from 0 to 2 indicate a low scenic quality and low sensitivity to change.

The recommended threshold for scenic resources is:

Maintain or improve the numerical threshold rating assigned to each roadway and shoreline unit, including the scenic quality rating of the individual resources within each unit, as recorded in the Scenic Resources Inventory.

Number Two. It is also recommended that the scenic quality of the travel experience (the Travel Route Rating) on major basin roadways and from the lake be monitored through periodic updates of the scenic analysis of principal travel routes. The recommended threshold policy is:

Maintain the 1982 travel route ratings on all roadway and shoreline units. Restore scenic quality in roadway units rated 15 or below and shoreline units rated 7 or below.

In practice, the recommended threshold number (existing scenic quality) would be maintained or improved. Mechanisms for ensuring this level of scenic quality would be developed during preparation of the Regional Plan, and will address land use alterations, signing policies, architectural review guidelines, and lighting policies. The 1982 Travel Route rating would be updated on a regular basis to monitor change occurring within each unit.

Table 13-8 shows the recommended scenic resource thresholds for roadway units. Table 13-9 shows the recommended scenic resource thresholds for shoreline units. The 1982 Travel Route ratings for roadway and shoreline units are shown in Table 13-10.

#### Alternative Thresholds

Alternatives to the recommended threshold are discussed below.

Minimum Scenic Quality. This alternative represents a lower level of protection for scenic resources than the recommended threshold. It would propose that the threshold level be set at 2 (moderate scenic quality) for all scenic resource units with existing scenic quality of 2 or better.

Table 13-8. Recommended Scenic Resource Thresholds,  
Roadway Units

Roadway unit no.	Roadway unit name	Scenic quality rating	Sensitivity to change rating	Recommended threshold
1	Tahoe Valley	2	1	3
2	Camp Richardson	3	2	5
3	Emerald Bay	3+	3	6+
4	Bliss State Park	3	1	4
5	Rubicon Bay	2	2	4
6	Lonely Gulch	2	2	4
7	Meeks Bay	3	3	6
8	Sugar Pine Point	3	3	6
9	Tahoma	1	2	3
10	Quail Creek	2	2	4
11	Homewood	2	1	3
12	Tahoe Pines	3	2	5
13	Sunnyside	3	3	6
14	Tahoe Tavern	1	2	3
15	Tahoe City	1	2	3
16	Lake Forest	2	2	4
17	Cedar Flat	2	2	4
18	Carnelian Bay	2	2	4
19	Flick Point	2	2	4
20	Tahoe Vista	2	2	4
21	State Line	2	3	5
22	Crystal Bay	1	2	3
23	Mt. Rose Highway	3	3	6
24	Tahoe Meadow	3	2	5
25	Ponderosa Area	1	2	3
26	Sand Harbor	3+	3	6+
27	Prey Meadow	3	2	5
28	Spooner Summit	2	2	4
29	Cave Rock	3	3	6
30	Zephyr Cove-Lincoln Park	3	2	5
31	Meadow	2	1	3
32	Casino Area	1	1	2
33	The Strip	1	1	2
34	El Dorado Beach	2	2	4
35	Al Tahoe	1	1	2
36	Airport Area	2	1	3
37	Echo Summit	3	2	5
38	Upper Truckee River	2	2	4
39	Alpine Summit	3+	3	6+
40	Brockway Cutoff	2	1	3
41	Brockway Summit	2	1	3
42	Outlet	3	2	5
43	Lower Truckee River	3	2	5
44	Kingsburg Grade	2	3	5
45	Pioneer Trail, North	1	1	2
46	Pioneer Trail, South	2	2	4

Table 13-9. Recommended Scenic Resource Thresholds,  
Shoreline Units

Shoreline unit no.	Shoreline unit name	Scenic quality rating	Sensitivity to change rating	Recommended threshold
1	Tahoe Keys	1	1	2
2	Pope Beach	2	2	4
3	Jameson Beach	3	1	4
4	Taylor Creek Meadow	2	3	6
5	Ebrite	3+	3	5
6	Emerald Bay	3	3+	6+
7	Bliss State Park	3	3+	6+
8	Rubicon Point	1	2	5
9	Rubicon Bay	3	2	3
10	Meeks Bay	2	2	5
11	Sugar Pine Point	2	2	4
12	McKinney Bay	2	1	3
13	Eagle Rock	2	1	3
14	Ward Creek	1	1	3
15	Tahoe City	2	1	2
16	Lake Forest	2	2	4
17	Dollar Point	2	3	5
18	Cedar Flat	2	2	4
19	Carnelian Bay	2	2	4
20	Flick Point	2	2	4
21	Agate Bay	2	1	3
22	Brockway	2	3	5
23	Crystal Bay	3	3	5
24	Sand Harbor	3	3	6
25	Skunk Harbor	2	3	5
26	Cave Rock	2	2	4
27	Lincoln Park	1	2	3
28	Tahoe School	2	1	3
29	Zephyr Cove	2	2	4
30	Edgewood	2	2	4
31	Bijou	2	1	3
32	Al Tahoe	1	1	2
33	Truckee Marsh	3	3	6

Table 13-10. Roadway and Shoreline Units  
1982 Travel Route Ratings

Roadway unit no.	Roadway unit name	1982 Travel route rating	Shoreline unit no.	Shoreline unit name	1982 Travel route rating
1	Tahoe Valley	11	1	Tahoe Keys	9
2	Camp Richardson	20	2	Pope Beach	8
3	Emerald Bay	26	3	Jameson Beach	8
4	Bliss State Park	21	4	Taylor Creek Meadow	13
5	Rubicon Bay	17	5	Ebrite	9
6	Lonely Gulch	17	6	Emerald Bay	12
7	Meeks Bay	13	7	Bliss State Park	12
8	Sugar Pine Point	23	8	Rubicon Point	12
9	Tahoma	13	9	Rubicon Bay	6
10	Quail Creek	14	10	Meeks Bay	9
11	Homewood	13	11	Sugar Pine Point	11
12	Tahoe Pines	17	12	McKinney Bay	9
13	Sunnyside	14	13	Eagle Rock	11
14	Tahoe Tavern	13	14	Ward Creek	10
15	Tahoe City	12	15	Tahoe City	5
16	Lake Forest	13	16	Lake Forest	5
17	Cedar Flat	17	17	Dollar Point	10
18	Carnelian Bay	14	18	Cedar Flat	8
19	Flick Point	14	19	Carnelian Bay	5
20	Tahoe Vista	10	20	Flick Point	8
21	State Line	20	21	Agate Bay	8
22	Crystal Bay	12	22	Brockway	10
23	Mt. Rose Highway	25	23	Crystal Bay	11
24	Tahoe Meadow	26	24	Sand Harbor	12
25	Ponderosa Area	12	25	Skunk Harbor	13
26	Sand Harbor	26	26	Cave Rock	10
27	Prey Meadow	27	27	Lincoln Park	8
28	Spooner Summit	16	28	Tahoe School	11
29	Cave Rock	23	29	Zephyr Cove	9
30	Zephyr Cove-Lincoln Park	18	30	Edgewood	11
31	Meadow	14	31	Bijou	9
32	Casino Area	13	32	Al Tahoe	9
33	The Strip	6	33	Truckee Marsh	14
34	El Dorado Beach	16			
35	Al Tahoe	7			
36	Airport Area	15			
37	Echo Summit	26			
38	Upper Truckee River	18			
39	Alpine Summit	24			
40	Brockway Cutoff	15			
41	Brockway Summit	21			
42	Outlet	10			
43	Lower Truckee River	20			

For scenic resource units with a scenic quality of 1, the existing low scenic quality would be maintained. No restoration would be required for scenic resources within any of the units. The effect of this alternative on scenic resources would be an overall reduction in quality. Some units with existing high or exceptionally high quality would have reductions to moderate quality, and areas with moderate or low quality would continue at existing levels. This alternative provides somewhat more protection for areas with high scenic quality than a no project alternative.

Maximum Scenic Quality. This alternative represents a higher level of protection for scenic resources than the recommended threshold. It would propose that the threshold level be set at the highest potential scenic quality rating for all scenic resource units, and that restoration of scenic resources be implemented to attain this level. For example, if a scenic roadway unit with a present rating of 2 (moderate scenic quality) was determined to have a potential rating of 3 (high scenic quality), the threshold for that roadway unit would be set at 3, and steps would be taken to achieve the 3 rating.

This alternative threshold would require additional inventory work to determine the highest potential scenic quality rating for each scenic resource unit. Each roadway and shoreline unit would be inventoried to identify resources that have been impaired or removed, and the threshold rating would then be set assuming restoration of these resources. Under this alternative, the overall quality of scenic resources would improve. The visual environment in urban and developed areas would also improve, as a result of restoration of scenic resources in these areas.

No Action. Under the no action alternative, on federally owned lands the USFS Visual Management System would continue to protect scenic resources. On privately owned lands, existing policies regarding scenic and visual resources would be implemented. These policies vary by jurisdiction, and are discretionary, subject to decisions made by governing bodies. It is unlikely that uniform basinwide policies for protecting scenic resources on privately owned land would be developed.

The 1982 update of the Scenic Analysis of Principal Travel Routes shows an improvement in three roadway units located in urban or developed areas. These improvements have resulted from redesign or removal of commercial signs, architectural remodeling, improvements in street appearance, and reductions in construction activity. It is likely that with existing policies this trend towards improvement of visual quality in urban or

developed areas would continue under this alternative. Most of the improvements would probably be tied to redevelopment applications, and would therefore occur slowly.

Scenic resources (those visual resources associated with natural landscapes) would not be specifically identified, and no special measures would be available for protection or preservation of these resources. The probable result would be gradual removal or alteration of these scenic resources in areas designated for development, with an accompanying reduction in overall scenic quality in the Basin.

#### IMPLICATIONS OF THRESHOLDS

The following sections summarize the probable effects of scenic resource thresholds on land use and social and economic conditions.

##### Recommended Threshold

Adoption of scenic resource thresholds would affect siting and design of residential, commercial, and recreational land uses within the Basin. To a lesser degree, siting and design of industrial land uses may also be affected, although this effect is likely to be minimal since very little land in the Basin is allocated for industrial use. The thresholds may also affect the location, type, and density of development. For instance, in some areas certain types of residential development, such as clustered townhouses or apartments, may be preferable to others, such as low-density, single-family development. In some instances, adopted thresholds may preclude development of now vacant lands, where such development would impair or remove an identified scenic resource. This effect would depend in part on the implementation and regulation measures developed for the regional plan.

Existing development would be affected by the thresholds policy of improvement of scenic quality in areas with low or moderate scenic quality, or within roadway resource units with travel route ratings below 7. The specific effects would depend on restoration measures and timing developed for the regional plan, but general effects could include resiting or redesign of structures and paved areas; landscaping; erosion control measures; revegetation of cut slopes; changes in commercial signing; removal, redesign, and resiting of lighting facilities; improvements in traffic systems and management; and improved maintenance in public areas and thoroughfares.

Implementation of scenic resource thresholds would result in increased administrative costs, and may result in increased opportunity costs related to reduction in development potential, depending on the implementation measures developed for the regional plan. Restoration measures would also result in additional costs to be borne probably by both the public and private sectors. The amount and phasing of these costs would also depend on implementation measures. Many of these measures, such as erosion control and traffic management, would overlap with measures developed for other threshold components, such as water quality and air quality.

By affecting location, type, and density of residential and commercial development, scenic resource thresholds may also have an indirect effect on housing, resident population, and employment. If implementation measures require reduction in the total amount of developable land and, in turn, the potential number of total dwelling units, or commercial square footage, available housing in the Basin would be reduced, housing costs would probably increase, and shifts in employment would result. If, however, implementation measures are devised that reduce the total amount of developable land but, by means of density transfers, maintain the same number of potential total dwelling units and commercial areas as are now possible with existing regulation, the effects on housing, population, and employment would be a function of changes in housing and commercial area cost and location, and are likely to be less significant. More precise assessment of effects would depend on specific implementation measures developed in the regional plan.

There will be a need for increased administrative time for project review by the appropriate agency (or agencies) to insure that thresholds are not exceeded, and a need for additional design capability at the agency staff level.

#### No Action Threshold

Current trends of land use and development would continue according to the TRPA Regional Plan. Under the existing Regional Plan, vacant lands designated for development would continue to be gradually built-out and some intensification of existing development would occur. The USFS Visual Management System would continue to protect visual resources on federally owned lands. Existing policies of agencies with jurisdiction on privately owned lands would continue to be implemented.

Under this threshold, there would be no significant immediate effect on social and economic conditions. A possible long-term effect would be reduction in scenic resource quality to the degree that the Tahoe Basin was no longer an attractive natural area destination for some visitors. This effect in turn might reduce visitor and tourist use levels and indirectly

affect population, housing, and employment. It is more likely that visitor and tourist use levels would remain high even though the reasons the visitor or tourist came to the Basin would change.

#### Minimum Scenic Quality Threshold

The effect of this threshold would be similar to that of the no action threshold, although some lands with scenic resources would require special siting and design regulation of development to maintain a moderate threshold level.

Social and economic effects of this threshold would be similar to that of the no action threshold, although basinwide scenic quality would remain at a moderate level. There would probably be no long-term reduction in visitor or tourist use levels resulting from reduction in scenic quality, even though the perception of the basin as a predominantly natural area may change. Administrative time by implementing agencies would be somewhat increased, and staff capabilities would have to include design expertise.

#### Maximum Scenic Quality Threshold

The effect of this threshold on future land use would be similar to that of the recommended threshold. The effect on existing land use would be greater under this alternative than under the recommended threshold, since restoration of scenic resources would be required on any roadway or shoreline unit where the resources have been impaired or removed. Restoration measures would probably be similar to those described for the recommended threshold, but much more widely applied, especially in resource units in urbanized and developed areas.

The effects of this threshold on social and economic conditions would be similar in nature to those described for the recommended threshold, although this alternative would be likely to result in greater lost opportunity costs, larger reductions in developable housing units and commercial areas, an indirect reduction in resident population and employment, and increased administrative costs. Restoration of all scenic resource units to their potentially highest quality rating may eventually reduce, to some degree, the existing housing stock and commercial area, and would result in the highest public and private costs for implementation of restoration measures.