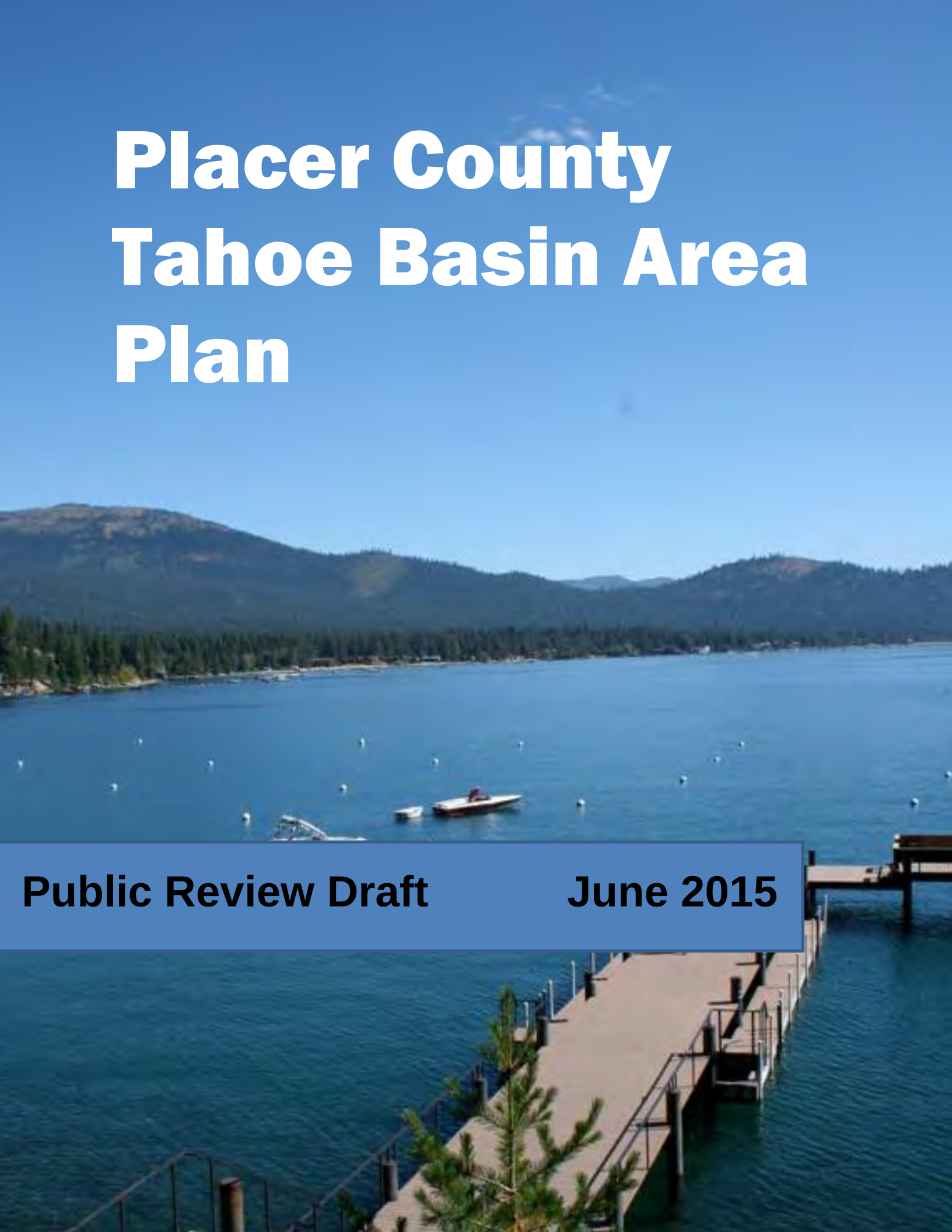
Placer County Tahoe Basin Area Plan



Public Review Draft **June 2015**

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Placer County
Tahoe Basin Area Plan

Public Review Draft

June 2015

Prepared by:

Placer County Planning Services Division

Tahoe Regional Planning Agency

Dyett & Bhatia Urban and Regional Planners

Stockham Consulting

Adopted by the Placer County Board of Supervisors:

_____

Adopted by TRPA Board of Governors:

_____

Acknowledgements

Placer County Board of Supervisors

Jack Duran, District 1
Robert M. Weygandt, District 2
Jim Holmes, District 3
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Jennifer Montgomery, District 5

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Zach Hymanson
Eve Krause
Robert Larsen
Mike LeFevre
Lee Plemel
Mike Riley
Hope Sullivan
Paul Thompson
Roger Trout
Scott Weavil

Placer County NTRAC

Megan Chillemi
Kevin Drake
Katherine E. Hill
Zachary Hymanson
John Jewett
Renee Koijane
Lolly Kupec
Eugene Roeder
Melissa Slig

Area Plan Teams

Todd Mather
Lydia Altick
Ron Parson
Suzanne Wilkins
Jan Brisco
Judith Tornese
John Pang
Nancy Dodge
Kelli Twomey
Gary Davis
Walter Auerbach
Harold Slear
Zach Hymanson
July Friedman
Marguerite Sprague
Kathie Fenley
Jim Williamson
Martin Spitsen
Alex Mourelatos
Keith Franke
Leah Kaufman

Robert Lyman
Peter Przybyslawki
Bill Matte
Ellie Waller
Joseph Lanza
Sue Daniels
Phillip Gilanfarr
Eli Meyer
Theresa May Duggan
Ann Nichols
Ki Nyborg
Andy Deinken
Joseph Chillemi
Tony Demanuele
Andrew Ryan
Bill Johnson

Stakeholder Groups

Patrick Wright, CTC
Lisa O'Daly, CTC
Sue Rae Irelan, CTC
Marilyn Linken, California State Parks
Tamara Sasaki, California State Parks
Scott Elliott, California State Parks
Cindy Gustafson, TCPUD
Paul Schultz, NTPUD
Mike Schwartz, NT Fire
Peter Poe, NT Fire
Steve Teshara, Sustainability Advocates
Sandy Evans Hall, NLTRA
Ron Treabess, NLTRA
Stacie Lyans, TCDA
Joy Doyle, NTBA
Darcie Goodman Collins, League to Save Lake Tahoe
Shannon Eckmeyer, League to Save Lake Tahoe

TRPA Staff

Karen Fink, Transportation Planning
John Hester, Chief Operating Officer
Lucia Maloney, Long Range Planning
Joanne Marchetta, Executive Director
John Marshall, General Counsel
Brandy McMahon, Long Range Planning
Shay Navarro, Env. Improvement Program

Placer County Planning Services Division

Michael Johnson, AICP, CDRA Director
Loren Clark, Assistant CDRA Director
Paul Thompson, Assistant CDRA Director
EJ Ivaldi, Deputy Planning Director
Crystal Jacobsen, Principal Planner
Steve Buelna, Supervising Planner
Allen Bruesch, Supervising Planner
Chris Schmidt, Senior Planner
Edmund Sullivan, Senior Planner
Kally Kedinger-Cecil, Assistant Planner
Nicole Hinkle, Planning Technician

Placer County Staff

David Boesch, CEO
Jennifer Merchant, Tahoe CEO
Cadence Matijevich, Tahoe CEO
Kelly Berger, CDRA/GIS
Amber Conboy, DPW
Rick Eiri, ESD
Andy Fisher, Parks
Paul Griffith, Economic Development
Stephanie Holloway, DPW
Steve Kastan, Board of Supervisors
Peter Kraatz, DPW
Kansas McGahan, DPW
Rich Moorehead, DPW
Christine Onesi, CDRA/GIS
Mark Rideout, Facility Services
Karin Schwab, County Counsel
Rebecca Taber, ESD

Consultants

Sydney Coatsworth, Ascent Environmental
Stephanie Grigsby, Design Workshop
Nanette Hansel, Ascent Environmental
Adam Lewandowski, Ascent Environmental
Martha Miller, Dyett & Bhatia
Eric Roverud, Design Workshop
Gordon Shaw, LSC Transportation Consultants
Richard Shaw, Design Workshop
Arlo Stockham, Stockham Consulting
Jesse Walker, EPS
David Zehnder, EPS

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Introduction

This Placer County Tahoe Basin Area Plan (Area Plan) is a component of the Lake Tahoe Regional Plan and the Placer County General Plan. The Planning area includes the portions of Placer County located within the Lake Tahoe Regional Planning area, including the north and west shores of Lake Tahoe.

The Shoreline of Lake Tahoe

The Area Plan encompasses 46,162 acres (72.1 square miles) and had 9,716 full-time residents according to the 2010 U.S. Census. The boundaries are the El Dorado County line to the south, Nevada state line to the east, and the Sierra Nevada mountain range to the north and west. The communities of Kings Beach/Stateline and Tahoe City account for more than 60 percent of the permanent population. Other communities include Carnelian Bay, Dollar Point, Sunnyside, Homewood, Tahoe Vista, and Tahoma. The Plan area is depicted on Figure 1-1.

The Lake Tahoe Region is under the jurisdiction of the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency (TRPA) and the Bi-State Tahoe Regional Planning Compact (Compact). TRPA was created to restore Lake Tahoe's environment, which had been degraded by logging and development. The Compact requires that TRPA establish environmental threshold carrying capacities (Thresholds) defining the region's environmental goals and implement a Regional Plan that will achieve and maintain the Thresholds over time. Since 1987, a strict Regional Plan has governed all activities in the basin.

TPRA also coordinates an Environmental Improvement Program (EIP), through which federal, state, local and private entities have invested over $1 billion in prioritized environmental improvement projects.

These efforts have improved environment trends, but challenges remain. Restoring Lake Tahoe's water quality remains a very high priority for this Plan and the region. The Planning area is also seeing socioeconomic change, including job reductions, home price increases and a diminished full time population.

In 2011 and after years of study, a Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) water quality improvement program was established for Lake Tahoe in accordance with the U.S. Clean Water Act. More than any prior work, the TMDL identified Lake Tahoe's pollutants of concern and their primary sources. Fine sediment, phosphorus and nitrogen are the primary pollutants. The largest source categories are the urban uplands (developed areas and roads) and atmospheric deposition, largely from private vehicle emissions.

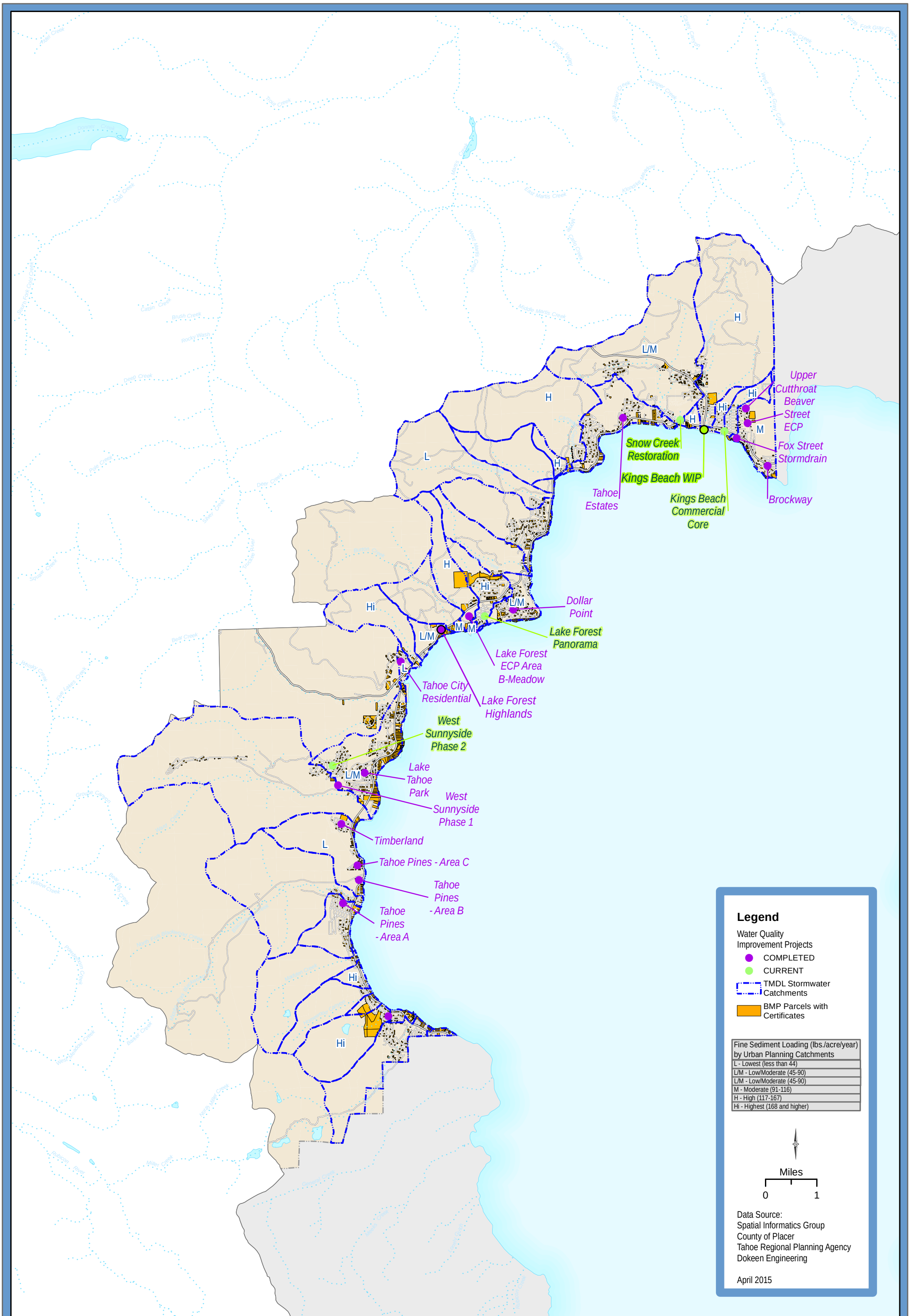
Lake Tahoe Boating Amenities

The Regional Plan was updated in 2012 to incorporate TMDL science and accelerate Threshold gain. A strategic goal was to remove regulatory barriers to "environmental redevelopment" and create incentives for privately-funded environmental enhancements. The amendments were intended to improve the environment and also support a healthy economy and social fabric.

New incentives were created to promote the transfer of development from environmentally impactful areas to redevelopment sites in designated Town Centers. Local governments were encouraged to prepare Area Plans that implement the Regional Plan and streamline the permitting process. Many of the Regional Plan incentives only apply within Town Centers of a conforming Area Plan.

Placer County prepared this Area Plan through a community planning process and in the context of the Regional Plan, the TMDL, and related programs. Like the Regional Plan, the Area Plan prioritizes environmental restoration, community redevelopment and socioeconomic improvement.

The remainder of this Introduction outlines the regulatory context, the planning process, and Area Plan priorities. Existing conditions and future improvement plans are described in the Plan sections that follow.



PLACER COUNTY
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT RESOURCE AGENCY
GEOGRAPHIC INFORMATION SYSTEM DIVISION

Tahoe Basin Area Plan

Figure 2-1
Water Quality Improvement Projects and BMP Certified Properties

1.1 Regulatory Context

TAHOE REGIONAL PLANNING AGENCY

TRPA was established in 1969 under the Bi-State Tahoe Regional Planning Compact (Public Law 91-148) to adopt and enforce a regional plan of resource conservation and orderly development, and to exercise environmental controls. In 1980, the Compact was amended (Public Law 96-551) to require that TRPA adopt environmental threshold carrying capacities (Thresholds) and amend the Regional Plan so that the plan and its elements, as implemented through agency ordinances, rules and regulations, achieves and maintains the Thresholds.

Thresholds define the environmental quality goals that the Regional Plan is required to achieve for matters including water quality, air quality, soil conservation, vegetation protection, fisheries, wildlife, scenic resources, noise and recreation.

Thresholds were adopted in 1982 and a Regional Plan was implemented in 1987. The 1987 Regional Plan sought to achieve and maintain Thresholds primarily through growth control, development regulation, and property acquisition. Growth control measures in the 1987 Plan were extensively litigated and ultimately upheld as lawful by the U.S. Supreme Court.

The 1987 Plan established a “carrying capacity” for development in the Region that was dramatically lower than what previous plans had envisioned. A system of transferrable development rights and land coverage regulations was adopted within constraints of the Region’s carrying capacity. Concurrently, aggressive property acquisition programs were instituted. State and federal land management agencies acquired over 8,500 private parcels and retired the associated development rights between 1987 and 2011. The 1987 Regional Plan and the programs it established substantially reduced the rate of environment decline.

Under the 1987 Plan, a series of “Community Plans” and “Plan Area Statements” were developed for subareas of the region and have remained largely unchanged since adoption.

Starting in the 1990s, Threshold Evaluations and other studies made it clear that the strategy of regulation and land acquisition alone would not be enough to successfully achieve and maintain environmental thresholds. The environmental impact of “legacy development” that was constructed prior to the initial Regional Plan continued to adversely impact the Region. In response, federal, state and local government dramatically increased funding for stormwater management infrastructure, wetland restorations and other environmentally beneficial projects through the Environmental Improvement Program (EIP). Trends towards threshold attainment improved measurably, but thresholds for water quality and other resources were still not being attained.

LAKE TAHOE TMDL (TOTAL MAXIMUM DAILY LOAD)

The Lake Tahoe TMDL program was developed under the Federal Clean Water Act and approved in 2011. The TMDL is intended to complement the Regional Plan and was prepared in coordination with TRPA.

The TMDL identifies Lake Tahoe's pollutants of concern (fine sediment, phosphorus and nitrogen) and the primary sources of those pollutants (urban uplands and atmospheric deposition).

Pollutant load reduction targets are established in the TMDL to attain the Lake Tahoe transparency standard over a 65-year implementation period. The TMDL requires that each jurisdiction holding a National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit - including Placer County - identify and implement measures to achieve the required pollutant load reductions.

County of Placer

Lake Tahoe Pollutant Load Reduction Plan

March 15, 2013

Revised May 15 2013

Prepared for:

Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board

Prepared by:

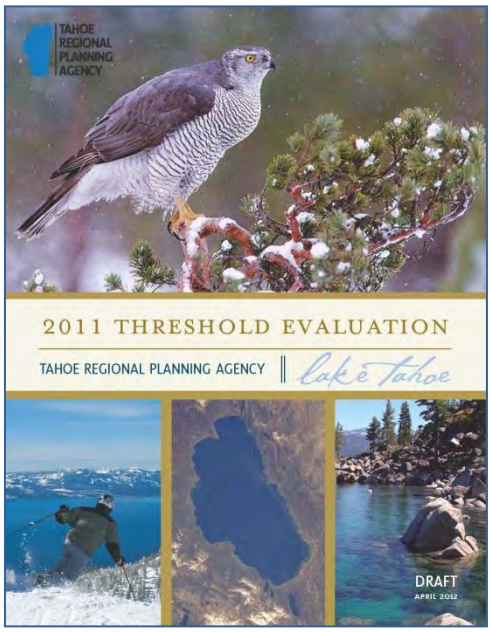
Placer County Department of Public Works

County of Placer Pollutant Load Reduction Plan, May 15, 2013

Placer County's current Pollutant Load Reduction Plan (PLRP) was approved in 2013. Load reduction targets are being achieved with Water Quality Improvement Projects in high priority catchments, pollutant control management measures in road maintenance operations, and the completion of private parcel Best Management Practices (BMPs) for larger projects and redevelopment activities.

2011 THRESHOLD EVALUATION REPORT

The 2011 Threshold Evaluation is the most recent comprehensive assessment of environmental conditions and trends at Lake Tahoe. TRPA prepared the Threshold Evaluation using a science-based process with high level peer review. The Threshold Evaluation utilized information from the Lake Tahoe TMDL and its findings informed the 2012 Regional Plan update and this Area Plan.



2011 Threshold Evaluation, December 12, 2012

The 2011 Threshold Evaluation indicated that significant progress has been made towards many environmental goals and that trends are increasingly positive. Programs that protect undeveloped land, restore natural systems, and retrofit the built environment have benefitted Lake Tahoe's environment.

Topics of continuing concern include Water Quality, Stream Environment Zone (SEZ) Restoration, Aquatic Invasive Species, Transportation (Air Quality and Noise) and Scenic Quality in developed areas. The Threshold Evaluation suggested that the region needs to address the continuing impact of pre-TRPA development to address these challenges.

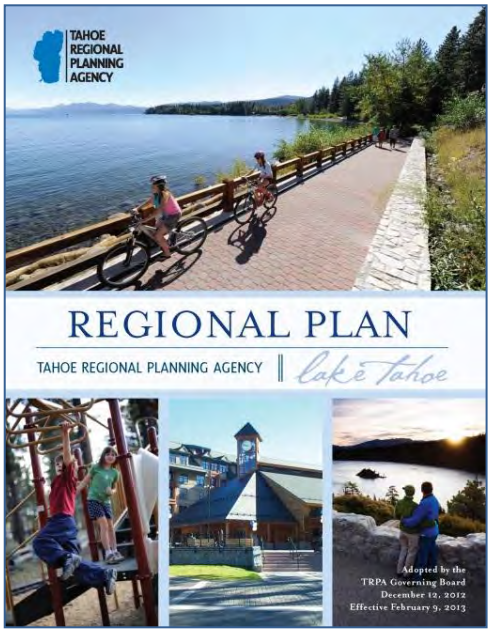
2012 REGIONAL PLAN AND CODE

In accordance with the Compact, the Regional Plan was updated in 2012 to accelerate Threshold Attainment based on findings of the TMDL and 2011 Threshold Evaluation. Key strategies included:

- Maintain effective programs that have protected Lake Tahoe's environment, including the regional growth control system, strict environmental standards and inter-agency implementation partnerships.
- Accelerate Threshold gain with targeted amendments to promote sensitive land restoration, support environmental redevelopment, and increase the availability of multi-modal transportation facilities.
- Improve the planning and permitting process to support increased private investment in needed environmental improvements.

To implement these strategies, the 2012 Regional Plan established Town Centers reflecting initial priority areas for a suite of redevelopment incentives. Tahoe City, Kings Beach and North Stateline are each designated as "Town Centers" where environmental redevelopment is encouraged and development transfers are incentivized.

Local governments were encouraged to prepare new Area Plans addressing Regional Plan policies within the region's communities. Area Plans streamline the permitting process and may include substitute development standards. Many of the redevelopment incentives only apply within Town Centers of a conforming Area Plan. This Area Plan implements redevelopment incentives within the Tahoe City, Kings Beach and North Stateline Town Centers.



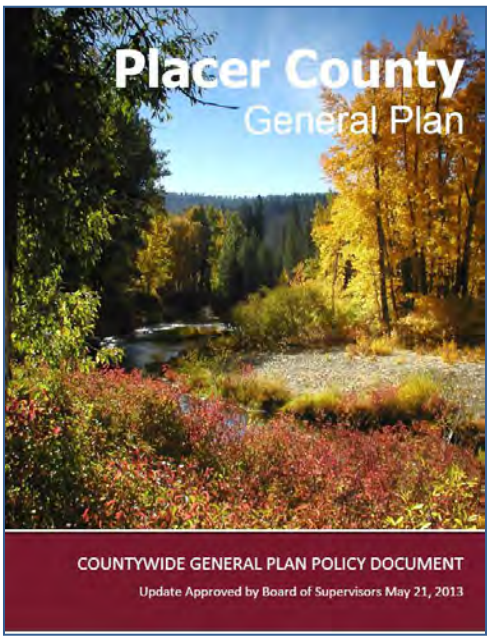
Lake Tahoe Regional Plan, December 12, 2012

Area Plans must be approved by a local government and TRPA. Chapter 13 of the TRPA Code outlines the content and approval requirements for Area Plans. Area Plans may be approved by TRPA if they contain policies and ordinances that are consistent with and further the Goals and Policies of the Regional Plan. The development of Area Plans is intended to implement the Regional Plan at a local level and support the update and consolidation of planning documents in the region.

TRPA Chapter 13 also establishes a conformity program that enables TRPA to transfer limited development permitting authority to Placer County in accordance with a Conforming Area Plan and an associated Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). The conformity process defines which development activities will not have a substantial effect on the natural resources in the region and may be delegated from TRPA review and approval, subject to appeal provisions. This program will eliminate requirements for many projects to be separately reviewed and approved by Placer County and TRPA. Larger projects, shorezone activities and project appeals will still require TRPA approval.

PLACER COUNTY GENERAL PLAN

In addition to the TRPA requirements, this Area Plan addresses California's requirements related to General Plans and upon adoption will also be part of the Placer County General Plan.



Placer County General Plan, May 21, 2013

State Government Code Section 65300 requires that each California jurisdiction prepare and adopt a comprehensive General Plan for the physical development of the county or city. State law requires that General Plans include elements for Land Use, Circulation, Housing, Conservation, Open Space, Noise and Safety.

Additionally, California law (Govt. Code §65588 (e)(3)) requires an update to the Housing Elements at least every eight years. Placer County's updated Housing Element was approved by the State on November 22, 2013. The Placer County Tahoe Basin Area Plan implements the General Plan in the context of TRPA requirements.

Because TRPA's standards are generally stricter and more detailed than other State and County requirements, this Area Plan utilizes the Regional Plan and Code as its foundation. Goals and Policies in the Regional Plan are supplemented with more specific goals and policies in the Area Plan.

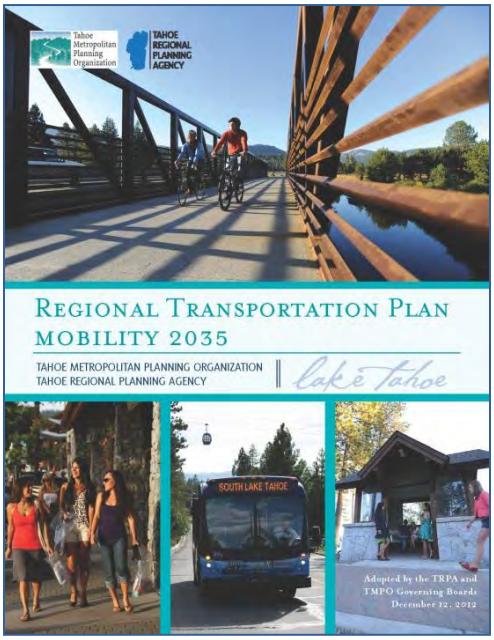
The TRPA Code remains in place for most regulatory topics. Where the TRPA Code does not adequately address local considerations, supplemental and replacement standards are identified in this Area Plan and Code. Topics not addressed in the TRPA Plans continue to be governed by the Placer County General Plan and Code.

REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLAN AND SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY

Mobility 2035 is the Regional Transportation Plan for the Tahoe Metropolitan Planning Organization (TMPO) and also serves as the transportation element of the Lake Tahoe Regional Plan.

Mobility 2035 was approved with the 2012 Regional Plan Update. A primary goal of the Plan is to reduce dependency on the automobile by promoting redevelopment within Town Centers and enhancing facilities and services for walking, biking and transit use.

Mobility 2035 also serves as a Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS) in accordance with California Senate Bill 375 (Sustainable Communities and Climate Protection Act). The SCS demonstrates how integrated transportation, land use, and housing strategies will help Lake Tahoe meet environmental thresholds and greenhouse gas targets for cars and light trucks on the California side of the Tahoe Basin.



Regional Transportation Plan, December 12, 2012

The 2010 Lake Tahoe Region Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan (BPP) is the Bicycle and Pedestrian element for Mobility 2035. The BPP identifies planned bicycle and pedestrian improvements and enables Placer County and other implementing agencies to apply for funding assistance.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM (EIP)

TRPA launched the Environmental Improvement Program (EIP) in 1997 to accelerate Threshold attainment by investing public and private funds to implement water quality restoration and other Threshold gain projects. EIP projects include erosion control measures, wetland and riparian restoration, transportation improvements, forest management, and other environmentally beneficial programs and projects.

TRPA maintains a priority list of EIP projects, which is updated annually. Projects and programs outlined in this Area Plan are consistent with the EIP action priorities and when completed will help achieve the identified performance measures.

1.2 Public Input and the Planning Process

This Area Plan was developed with extensive public input over several years.

Starting in May 2012, Placer County facilitated a series of informational meetings and public workshops. Focused working group sessions were also held with stakeholders from the four planning subareas West Shore, Greater Tahoe City, North Tahoe West and North Tahoe East.

A public meeting for the Area Plan

Placer County's public process was informed by and coordinated with the extensive public process for the Regional Plan update including the Pathway 2007 Place-Based Planning Process, the Regional Plan Update Committee Workshops, and the Bi-State Consultations.

PLACER COUNTY VISION SUMMARY (PATHWAY 2007)

This Area Plan builds upon the Pathway 2007 Placer County Vision Summary, which was prepared during a series of workshops and working group meetings in 2006.

The TRPA Vision Summary Report for Placer County, August 2006

Pathway 2007 participants focused on catastrophic fire, water quality, and the overall scenic excellence and natural beauty of the Tahoe Basin.

The Vision Summary seeks to "restore and enhance the unique natural and human environment of Tahoe while

protecting Tahoe's famed water quality, protecting the public heath, sustaining healthy ecosystems and supporting a vibrant economy for the benefit of present and future generations."

REGIONAL PLAN UPDATE COMMITTEE

In 2011 and early 2012, the TRPA Regional Plan Update Committee prepared the April 25, 2012 Draft Regional Plan. The Regional Plan Update Committee was a representative subcommittee of the TRPA Governing Board and included Placer County's appointee. The Regional Plan was thoroughly reviewed, debated by participants, and ultimately voted upon by the Committee at a series of 15 full-day public meetings. Wherever possible, compromise language was developed to resolve concerns that emerged at Committee meetings. Non-unanimous topics were the focus of later discussions and compromises.

BI-STATE CONSULTATIONS

Following release of the April 2012 Draft Regional Plan, public comments were received and "Bi-State Consultations" were sponsored by the States of California and Nevada to develop compromises for the controversial non-unanimous topics. The Bi-State Working Group developed recommendations that all participants supported which were incorporated into the Regional Plan. Mitigation measures from the Regional Plan Environmental Impact Statement and other public review proposals were also included.

TAHOE BASIN COMMUNITY PLAN UPDATE

In Late 2011, Placer County initiated the process of updating the existing Plans in the Tahoe Basin. At this time, the Draft Regional Plan was being finalized and the Regional Plan Update Committee had endorsed the creation of Area Plans with new development transfer and redevelopment incentives.

Public participation was an essential part of the process. An effective public participation program ensures that the plan's policies are based upon ideas with broad support and reflect the needs and desires of community members. The Public Outreach Strategy included the following:

- Formation of a Technical Advisory Council (TAC) comprised of representatives from key County departments and government agencies to advise the County and TRPA on the technical aspects of the Area Plan;
- Formation of four geographical subarea Plan Teams to help develop the zoning and design standards for each of the four Plan subareas identified in the Area Plan boundary;
- Community workshops in each of the four geographical subareas that were open to the public;
- Periodic town hall meetings to update the public at-large on the planning process;
- Distribution of electronic newsletters and the development and maintenance of a Tahoe Basin Area Plan website; and,

- Regular updates on the progress of the Area Plan to the North Tahoe Regional Advisory Council (NTRAC), the TRPA Governing Board, the Placer County Planning Commission, and the Placer County Board of Supervisors.

TOWN CENTER VISIONING

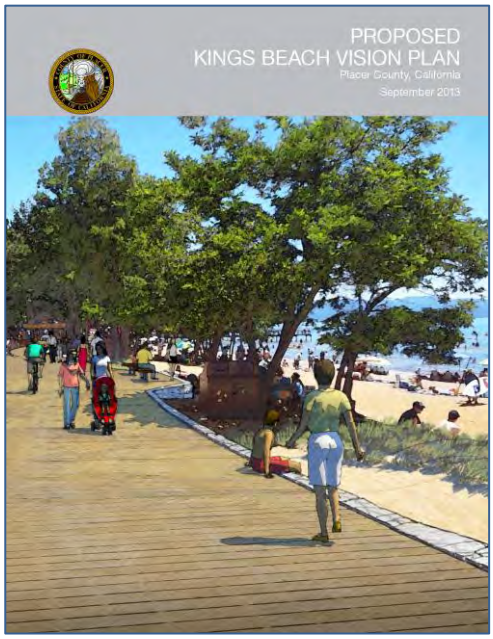
Placer County is a partner in the Tahoe Basin Partnership for Sustainable Communities Planning Grant that was awarded by the California Strategic Growth Council in 2010. Placer County utilized grant funding for the development of visioning documents for the Kings Beach and Tahoe City Town Center areas, and for preparation of this Area Plan.

The primary goal behind the visioning processes was to obtain community input on the future of each community and guidance for redevelopment activities. In both communities, priority was given to environmental gains and high quality redevelopment in certain areas. The Kings Beach and Tahoe City Vision Plans helped guide the development of this Area Plan, including the environmental improvement projects, zoning and design standards, and Area Plan maps for the Kings Beach and Tahoe City communities.

Kings Beach Vision Plan

The Kings Beach Vision Plan is the result of multiple meetings and a three-day public workshop held in June, 2013. Participants shared ideas about what makes Kings Beach unique, the existing challenges, and the opportunities that exist.

A vision emerged to promote a diverse and friendly community that is centered on recreation. Conceptual plans were developed for a series of potential community improvements.



Kings Beach Vision Plan, September 2013

The Kings Beach Vision Diagram depicts some of these ideas, which include:

- Beach Promenade
- Beach Center
- Public Pier and Water Transportation
- Road Improvements and Crossings
- Transit
- Parking
- Trail System
- Improved Accommodations
- Mixed-Use / Infill
- Explorable Town Form
- Gateway Entries

Kings Beach Vision Diagram, August 2013

Depiction of the Kings Beach Commercial Core Improvement Project

Tahoe City Visioning Options Report

The Tahoe City Town Center Visioning Options report provides visioning options for the core area of Tahoe City. A kick-off workshop sponsored by a downtown Tahoe City stakeholders group was conducted along with a three-day charrette held June 27-29, 2012 and a County-sponsored follow-up public workshop on August 28, 2013. Many community stakeholders participated in the visioning process.

Tahoe City Visioning Options Diagram, September 2013

The visioning process examined the center of Tahoe City to identify improvements that could be made. The following eleven vision principles were identified for Tahoe City:

- Implement water quality and other environmental improvements as part of area-wide solutions that appropriately plan for development while helping to meet Thresholds and protecting Lake Tahoe and other natural resources.
- Encourage walkable retail at ground level with appropriate mixed-use reinforcing main street vitality and pedestrian activity.
- Create a more explorable, dynamic town form with side streets, while preserving Tahoe City's unique community character and providing for increased town center recreation – including golf and winter and shoulder season activities.
- Relocate, increase, and upgrade the lodging alternatives to revitalize the tourism economy.
- Encourage prime accommodation sites that include waterfront access and the expected views and amenities that encourage investment.

- Recognize the importance of views and access to Lake Tahoe and the Truckee River.
- Connect visitors to Lake Tahoe culture and experiences through enhanced gateways, wayfinding, education, recreation amenities, and interpretive facilities.
- Enhance and expand recreational opportunities in winter and shoulder seasons to support a year-round sustainable community.

Rendering of a Truckee River Trail Extension

- Streamline permitting and planning standards to encourage new investment.
- Develop solutions at the community scale rather than relying on a parcel-by-parcel approach. (e.g. parking, snow storage, environmental restoration, coverage, BMPs).
- Enhance bicycle, transit and other alternative transportation modes as an essential part of a destination stay. Improve the flow of traffic through roadway design and community/shared-use parking.

1.3 Summary of the Area Plan

Conditions in the Lake Tahoe Region are different today than they were when the 1987 Regional Plan was developed.

By the 1980's, the Region had experienced decades of rapid development. The economy was thriving, but the environment was suffering. More than half of the Region's wetlands had been developed and plans were in place for projects that could have increased the Region's population to 750,000 (more than ten times the current population). Lake Tahoe's water clarity was declining by about one foot per year.

In 2015, the Region faces different challenges. TRPA's strict growth control system has been in place for decades and over $1 Billion has been invested in environmental restoration. Overall, the efforts appear to be working. Unconstrained growth is no longer a threat, Lake Tahoe's water clarity has stabilized and many environmental indicators are showing improvement. Environmental priorities are now targeted to more specific concerns and pollution sources. Socioeconomic conditions are also a concern.

This Area Plan recognizes the regional planning framework and applies regional policies at the community scale. It provides the legal structure for review of land use proposals and applications. It also identifies policy initiatives and capital improvements that would improve environmental conditions and should be incorporated into the EIP and other funding

programs. Consistent with the Regional Plan and extensive public input, environmental redevelopment is encouraged for its environmental and economic benefits.

The adopted Placer County Tahoe Basin Area Plan becomes a part of the Lake Tahoe Regional Plan and the Placer County General Plan. It replaces the six Community Plans, the Placer County Standards & Guidelines for Signage, Parking and Design, and 57 Plan Area Statements that were previously adopted by Placer County and TRPA for the area. It also replaces two Placer County General Plans.

As specified by the Regional Plan, the focus of the Area Plan is to *"Promote environmentally beneficial redevelopment and revitalization within Centers"* and *"preserve the character of established residential areas outside centers, while seeking opportunities for environmental improvements"*. (TRPA Regional Plan, 2012).

Amendments from prior plans are focused within the TRPA designated Town Centers of Tahoe City, Kings Beach and North Stateline. In the Town Centers, development standards are reformed and environmental improvements are planned in accordance with the Regional Plan and TMDL. Significant changes within the Town Centers include:

- Planning additional environmental improvements to restore sensitive lands and enhance recreation and multi-modal transportation facilities.
- Implementing Regional Plan standards for development transfers, building height, density and land coverage to provide capacity for development transfers and redevelopment – combined with restrictions and transition areas to enhance scenic quality and address Regional Plan requirements.
- Allowing residential and mixed uses within Town Centers.
- Supporting Town Center redevelopment by providing opportunities to convert commercial space (CFA) to redeveloped tourist accommodation units (TAU).
- Adjusting the Town Center boundaries and land uses within the Centers to promote redevelopment and maximize opportunities for environmental gain.
- Adopting new mixed use site and building standards calling for pedestrian oriented designs and scenic enhancements.
- Updating the 1993 Placer County Standards and Guidelines for Signage, Parking, and Design to improve the graphics and strengthen dark sky lighting requirements.
- Adopting new parking standards to better utilize parking lots and minimize pavement.
- Changing zoning on restoration project sites to Conservation or Recreation.
- Allowing non-contiguous sites to be considered a "project area."

Outside the Town Centers a "Village Center" concept is embraced for the existing commercial areas. Mixed use zoning, new design standards, and parking amendments apply within Town and Village Centers. Additional opportunities for secondary residences are provided within ¼ mile of mixed use areas and transit routes.

Land uses and development standards from the Community Plans and Plan Area Statements have otherwise been maintained. The Area Plan consolidates standards from the six Community Plans and 57 Plan Area Statements into a single document. Subareas are identified and maintain existing standards for each old plan area. These provisions are further described in the Land Use Plan and implementing regulations.

ORGANIZATION OF THE AREA PLAN

This Area Plan is comprised of eight sections and implementing regulations. Reference documents that are not part of this Area Plan are provided as Appendixes.

Part 1 – Introduction: An overview of the regulatory framework, planning process, and Area Plan content.

Part 2 – Conservation Plan: Current environmental conditions and plan to achieve and maintain environmental Threshold standards.

Part 3 – Socioeconomic Plan: Socioeconomic conditions and plan for improvement.

Part 4 – Land Use Plan: Existing and planned land uses and development.

Part 5 – Transportation Plan: Existing and planned multi-modal transportation facilities and services.

Part 6 – Recreation Plan: Existing and planned recreation facilities and services.

Part 7 - Public Services and Facilities Plan: Existing and planned public services and facilities.

Part 8 – Implementation Plan: Implementation Projects and environmental performance targets.

Area Plan Implementing Regulations: Zoning districts, land use regulations, development standards and design guidelines.

Appendixes (Reference Documents – not a part of the Area Plan)**:**

A. Memorandum of Understanding for the Placer County Tahoe Basin Area Plan (placeholder – MOU to be prepared).

B. Kings Beach Vision Plan, September 2013.

C. Tahoe City Visioning Options Report, September 2013.

D. Existing Conditions Report, September 2013.

E. Study on Economic Development Incentives for Town Centers, February 2015.

F. Summary of Community Plan Performance Measures, March 2015.