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STAFF REPORT

Date: November 8, 2023
To: TRPA Governing Board
From: TRPA Staff
Subject: Lake Tahoe Destination Stewardship Plan Update

Summary and Staff Recommendation:

Staff will provide an update on the [Lake Tahoe Destination Stewardship Plan](#) and implementation progress.

In June of this year, a new group of partners in outdoor recreation and tourism launched the first ever Destination Stewardship Plan for the Tahoe Region. The planning process began in early 2022 after the community and environment felt immense challenges brought on by the COVID-19 Pandemic. Eighteen regional organizations collaboratively developed the plan's vision and actions with the participation of over 3,000 residents, visitors, and businesses through surveys, interviews, and workshops.

The plan identifies 32 actions across four strategic pillars: Foster a tourism economy that gives back; Turn a shared vision into shared action; Advance a culture of caring for the greater Lake Tahoe Region and; Improve the Tahoe experience for all.

This item is for informational purposes and no action is required.

Project Description/Background:

Tahoe is a place of aesthetic, cultural, and environmental contrasts. Spanning two states, encompassing diverse communities, and embodying a wide range of perspectives, this stewardship plan has been meticulously designed for and by the Tahoe community.

With more than 2 million unique visitors spending nearly 17 million visitor days in the region, including 4 million 'untethered' visits generating more than \$4.5 billion in direct spending last year, much is at stake. With a local population of about 54,000 in the Basin and another 17,000 in Truckee, protecting the quality of the Tahoe experience while advancing the needs of the region's communities and its visitor and recreation-based economy is a major challenge. It will take an all-hands-on-deck approach and epic collaboration to achieve a harmonious balance of interests.

The Lake Tahoe Destination Stewardship Plan bears the fruit of countless hours of collaboration, engagement, and knowledge sharing. It is a testament to the dedication and perseverance of all involved, and it showcases the necessity of cross-sector collaboration for addressing the Lake Tahoe region's complex challenges.

Since the launch of the Destination Stewardship Plan, one of the major focuses has been establishing a Destination Stewardship Council to manage implementation of the plan. The Council is now officially formed and hired a Managing Director in October to coordinate the council and implementation activities.

Regional partners have wasted no time in making tangible progress. While recreating at Tahoe, residents and visitors can see the changes that are making their experience more enjoyable and reducing the impacts of traffic, trash, illegal campfires, and more.

Traffic and Transportation

- **South Lake Tahoe:** The app-based Lake Link launched summer 2022, allowing visitors and locals to request free rides on the main thoroughfares from the casinos and the new Event Center in Nevada to the AI Tahoe neighborhood in South Lake Tahoe. In its first year, Lake Link provided over 160,000 rides with 50 percent of those being taken by residents.
- **North Lake Tahoe:** TART Connect offers free, on-demand, year-round microtransit service throughout North Lake Tahoe and Truckee to promote sustainable transportation and reduce traffic congestion. TART Connect serves over 200,000 riders per year including a 19 percent increase in its second year of operation.
- **Regional:** Transportation agencies and recreation land managers are working with the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency to remake Tahoe's most popular roadway corridors along state Route 89 and 28. Tahoe's two-lane roadways and recreation access points were not designed for the rising popularity of outdoor recreation and the increasing impacts of climate change on surrounding communities. Improvements include increased trail and transit access, restriction of roadside parking, and better infrastructure including trash cans.

Litter

- Ambassadors were positioned at highly impacted beaches and trailheads over the summer to directly interact with the public about issues like litter, and not feeding wildlife. In 2023, ambassadors spent over 3,000 hours interacting with visitors at these high-use recreation areas.
- The City of South Lake Tahoe banned the sale of single use plastic water bottles by April 2024 city wide to reduce litter across the community and encourage people to enjoy the great tasting Tahoe tap water.
- South Lake Tahoe's Clean Tahoe Program is now operating on the North and East Shores of the lake, picking up more litter at recreation sites and in residential neighborhoods.
- North and South Lake Tahoe has invested in solar compacting trash cans that can handle larger volumes of trash at highly impacted sites. These trash cans can also text park staff when full to empty them more efficiently on a regular basis.
- Area non-profits continue to organize litter clean ups around the Basin. The League to Save Lake Tahoe's Blue Crew program engaged 864 volunteers to remove 6,836 pounds of trash in 2022. Additionally, Clean Up The Lake continued to clean up underwater trash by scuba diver and hosted the first ever Litter Summit in the summer of 2023 to bring together partners to develop more solutions to the region's litter challenges.

Tourism Initiatives

- The new Tahoe Blue Event Center in Stateline, Nev., includes events during shoulder season to help spread visitation and provide year-round employment opportunities for seasonal workers. The event center opened in September 2023 and early bookings demonstrate the flexibility and appeal of the new multi-purpose venue.

- The North Tahoe Community Alliance recently awarded \$20 million in community grants. Many of the funded projects will address tourism impacts including new trail construction, litter clean ups, improved access to recreation sites, and expanded micro-transit operations.
- North Lake Tahoe is sponsoring alternative transportation plans for large events, including bike valets and transit.

Equitable Access

- The California Tahoe Conservancy granted \$449,000 to equitable recreation access programs that will get those most in need connected to Tahoe.
- The Tahoe Regional Planning Agency completed a transportation equity study and housing equity and climate assessment to ensure everyone has equal access to Tahoe's outdoors and essential services, and the local workforce can afford to live within the Tahoe Basin. For more information on housing affordability programs read the housing article in this issue of Tahoe In Depth.
- Working with local community members, South Lake Tahoe's newest park is located on Ski Run Boulevard and will serve residents who have zero park access. The park is now open with a community celebration planned for Spring 2024.

[The full Lake Tahoe Destination Stewardship Plan can be viewed here.](#)

Contact Information:

For questions regarding this agenda item, please contact Devin Middlebrook, Government Affairs Manager, at (775) 589-5230 or dmiddlebrook@trpa.gov.

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