
STAFF REPORT

Date: December 8, 2021

To: TRPA Governing Board

From: TRPA Staff

Subject: Update on the Tahoe Keys Aquatic Weed Control Methods Test

Requested Action:

Staff is not requesting a formal action from the Governing Board on this item. This item is informational only and serves as an overview of the project ahead of the January 2022 Governing Board meeting when staff will present a recommendation action on the project and certification of the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

Project Background:

The Tahoe Keys is a residential development in the south shore area of Lake Tahoe, consisting of approximately 1,500 homes and approximately 170 acres of waterways connected to Lake Tahoe. These waterways are almost entirely infested with Eurasian watermilfoil and curlyleaf pondweed, two invasive aquatic weed species. In 2017 the Tahoe Keys Property Owners Association (TKPOA) submitted applications to TRPA and the Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board (Lahontan) to address the infestation with the use of aquatic herbicides.

Due to the controversial nature of herbicide use, especially as a potential first time in Lake Tahoe, a collaborative process was put in place, that led to the formation of a stakeholder committee. The stakeholder committee then suggested the development of a test program that pairs multiple treatment methods along with a one-time use of aquatic herbicides to better understand what combination of methods will have the best chance of controlling the largest infestation of invasive aquatic weeds in Lake Tahoe. TKPOA revised their proposal to include multiple methods in test sites throughout the west lagoon of the Tahoe Keys.

In the Summer of 2020, TRPA and Lahontan released a Draft joint document (DEIR/DEIS) that analyzed the proposed test project, along with two action alternatives, and a no project alternative. The action alternatives include a program that mimics the proposed project but without the use of aquatic herbicides, with the other alternative focusing on a dredging methodology. The DEIR/DEIS suggests that with proper mitigations and resource protection measures, the proposed test project can be implemented safely and with no significant adverse environmental effects. The no project alternative is identified as the only alternative that has significant and unavoidable impacts due to the long-term threat to the ecological health of Lake Tahoe from the uncontrolled proliferation of aquatic invasive weeds.

The Final EIR/EIS is being prepared and is expected to be released to the public by the end of December 2021. Staff will request the TRPA Advisory Planning Commission make a recommendation to the Governing Board on the certification of the EIS at their January 18, 2022 meeting, with a Governing Board decision on the EIS and proposed test project at the January 26, 2022 meeting. If the project is approved, implementation would commence in the late Spring of 2022.

Contact Information:

If you have any questions regarding this item, please contact Dennis Zabaglo, Aquatic Resources Program Manager, at dzabaglo@trpa.gov or (775) 589-5255.