TAHOE REGIONAL PLANNING AGENCY

TRPA
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STAFF REPORT

Date: August 19, 2026

To: TRPA Governing Board

From: TRPA Staff

Subject: 2026 Tahoe: State of the Lake Report

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Summary:
Dr. Stephanie Hampton, director of the Tahoe Environmental Research Center at the University of California Davis (TERC), will present a summary of the 2026 State of the Lake Report. The full report can be accessed at https://tahoe.ucdavis.edu/stateofthelake. TRPA is pleased to welcome Dr. Hampton to present the 2026 State of the Lake Report findings to the TRPA Governing Board and is proud to be one of a group of partners that fund TERC's critical work. This item is informational only.

Background:
The Tahoe Environmental Research Center began regular monitoring of Lake Tahoe in 1968. This long-term record provides a unique perspective on the current status and recent observations of the condition of Lake Tahoe. Continuous monitoring and reporting on clarity have been critical to raising public awareness and informing management action to preserve water quality.

The 2026 State of the Lake report finds that the declines in clarity that occurred between the late 1960s and the 1990s have leveled off, but that clarity has not improved. The report highlights the difference in seasonal clarity trends, where winter clarity has stabilized or even improved, while summer clarity continues to decline. The report also outlines the scientific challenge ahead of us to understand why Lake Tahoe's clarity is not improving at a greater rate. It suggests targeted research into the factors influencing clarity, including ecological change, climate-driven changes, and the nature of the clarity-reducing particles.

Dr. Hampton is the Director of the TERC and a Professor in the Department of Environmental Science and Policy. Dr. Hampton joined TERC in March 2025. Prior to joining TERC, Dr Hampton was the director of the Division of Environmental Biology at the National Science Foundation, Professor and Director of an interdisciplinary environmental research center at Washington State University, and Deputy Director of the National Center for Ecological Analysis and Synthesis at the University of California, Santa Barbara. Her research includes analyzing long-term ecological data collected from lakes as globally diverse as Lake Baikal in Siberia and Lake Washington in Seattle, as well as carrying out global-scale analysis and synthesis, with an emphasis on understanding the effects of climate change and other anthropogenic stressors on water quality and food webs. She is also the President of the Ecological Society of America, a fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, and the Association for the Sciences of Limnology and Oceanography.

Contact Information:
For questions regarding this item, please contact Dan Segan, Chief Science and Policy Officer at (775) 589-5233 or dsegan@trpa.gov.

Submitting Public Comment:

- Please submit written comments by 3 p.m. the day before the meeting.
- You may email comments to publiccomment@trpa.gov. Include meeting details and agenda item in the subject line or write "General Comment" for non-agenda items.
- You may also send by mail, fax to (775) 588-4527, or drop off in person at 128 Market Street.

Attachment:

A. 2026 State of the Lake Report

Attachment A

2026 State of the Lake Report