

TAHOE REGIONAL PLANNING AGENCY  
GOVERNING BOARD

TRPA/Zoom

November 15, 2023

**Meeting Minutes**

I. CALL TO ORDER AND DETERMINATION OF QUORUM

Chair Ms. Gustafson called the meeting to order at 9:15 a.m.

Members present: Ms. Aldean, Mr. Aguilar, Ms. Conrad-Saydah, Ms. Diss, Ms. Faustinos, Mr. Friedrich, Ms. Gustafson, Ms. Hill, Mr. Hoenigman, Ms. Laine, Ms. Leumer, Mr. Settlemeyer, Ms. Williamson

Members absent: Ms. Hays, Mr. Rice

II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Mr. Friedrich led the Pledge of Allegiance

III. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Ms. Gustafson deemed the agenda approved as posted.

IV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Ms. Aldean provided her minor clerical edits to Ms. Ambler and moved approval of the October 25, 2023 minutes as amended.

**Motion carried.**

V. TRPA CONSENT CALENDAR

1. October Financials
2. Governing Board Revised Committee Charters and Membership Appointments

Ms. Aldean said the Operations and Governance Committee recommended approval of item number one. They're one third of the way into Fiscal Year 2024 and everything is going according to plan. They're still waiting for confirmation of the additional funding from the state of California for salary adjustments. Mr. Keillor is optimistic that the money will be forth coming. The Planning fees are ahead of the three year average.

Item number 2 for the revised committee charters was not heard by any committee. Staff did issue an errata to this item.

Board Comments & Questions:

None.

Public Comments:

None.

Ms. Aldean moved approval of the Consent Calendar.

Ayes: Ms. Aldean, Mr. Aguilar, Ms. Conrad-Saydah, Ms. Diss, Ms. Faustinos, Mr. Friedrich, Ms. Gustafson, Ms. Hill, Mr. Hoenigman, Ms. Laine, Ms. Leumer, Mr. Settelmeyer, Ms. Williamson

Members absent: Mr. Rice

**Motion carried.**

VI. PLANNING MATTERS

A. Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) Annual Program Update

TRPA staff Mr. Zabaglo provided the presentation.

Mr. Zabaglo said Aquatic Invasive Species are non-native species introduced generally by human activities and can have devastating impacts on the environment. Things that they are concerned about are the two on the left of slide 3; Quagga Mussels, and Water Hyacinth, and on the right are the Asian clams and the Eurasian watermilfoil. They do not have Quagga Mussels or the Water Hyacinth in Lake Tahoe.

The AIS program has a lot of different elements. They have a federally approved Aquatic Invasive Species Management Plan, which has been critical in the rapid response to the New Zealand mudsnail. It is approved by the Federal Advisory Committee known as Aquatic Nuisance Species Task Force that staff serves on. It has different strategies within prevention, mainly to reduce risk. They do mandatory boat inspections to reduce the risk of new invasions. And then with control of existing species that were introduced into the lake prior to our inspection programs, which is that your Eurasian watermilfoil and Curly-leaf pondweed trying to reduce abundance lake wide. Monitoring surveillance and rapid response are the different types of monitoring activities, monitoring at the lake wide scale surveillance at more fine scale and then rapid response to anything that they see such as the New Zealand mudsnails.

This program wouldn't exist without that critical level of partnership with some 80 partners in the Environmental Improvement Program. The Tahoe Resource Conservation District is the partner that does the boat inspections and is a critical partner in control and have been instrumental with this New Zealand mudsnail response as well.

They try to make all of their policy decisions based on science, not only with prevention, with knowing what temperature of water is necessary to kill any of the invasive species but

also with control as well. The Tahoe Keys project there was a comprehensive environmental analysis that looked at the different aspects of treatment methods that they were proposing to make sure that there was a rigorous scientific assessment of those treatments.

They are still the gold standard for both control and prevention. But then they also have folks serving in leadership positions. TRPA staff Mr. Boos is going to be the president of the North American Invasive Species Management Association (NAISMA). Mr. Zabaglo recently completed his term as chair of the Western Regional Panel and Ms. Frey has been providing trainings on critical risk of spread of invasives in the lake for things like construction project or other monitoring activities through the Hazard Assessment and Critical Control Points.

The priorities for prevention are to continue trying to reduce the threat of new invasions with mandatory boat inspections, decontamination using hot water. Also, with this new invasion of New Zealand mudsnails there is now a bigger focus on our Tahoe Keepers Program. They want to emphasize the importance of that and enhance it to address not only that species but any other risk. They have bipartisan infrastructure funding to update that's also in Spanish. And then permanent inspection stations which have additional funding from the bipartisan infrastructure law for that as well.

Staff are meeting with El Dorado County and the California Tahoe Conservancy at the end of the month to talk about some next steps for the permanent Meyers Inspection Station. This will hopefully include employee housing as well.

For the Spooner permanent inspection stations, they just signed a contract with the Tahoe Transportation District who also has structural needs at the location for transit and for the invasive species inspection station aspect. The Nevada Department of Transportation is serving as the engineering level for design. They have a contractor already selected and the Tahoe Transportation District will be releasing a Request for Proposal for the structural design presumably by the end of the year.

With control they're guided by our Action agenda which is a strategic document that was commissioned in 2019 that focuses on reducing abundance of existing species and provides a roadmap to the funding and other needs they have to achieve significant reductions in control. They about half funded of what they feel they need to accomplish reductions, over the 10 year planning horizon of that strategic document. It also talks about how to increase pace and scale and that's part of that funding equation.

Some of the projects they've been working on this season both managed by or overseen by TRPA, and the Tahoe Resource Conservation District is the Taylor Tallac project which they are partnering with the Forest Service where we are serving as a project manager. There are some weeds that were discovered offshore of the Taylor Tallac creeks and have infrastructure money to address this as it likely came from those creeks that are infested. Some of that work was just completed last week and will be done for another 5 or 6 days next week.

At least the 6 acre infestation, there's a lot of different sparse or patchy types of densities there.

This is one of the critical locations and important ecological sites in Tahoe and can be home

for any native species that they have. It's the largest functioning wetlands in the entire basin.

Slide 7 shows Emerald Bay and a re-infestation that was discovered as a result of surveillance monitoring. While they still have an infestation in the Tahoe Keys, they're always going to need to do that surveillance level of monitoring to ensure they are able to address projects like this before they get out of hand. The original infestation was about 6 plus acres ten years ago, and then the surveillance divers discovered about 3 acres last season. With funding from the Tahoe Fund, they were able to get out there this season and just finished the work on about three acres.

Year two of the Tahoe Keys project has been completed. An example of sonar scans that are used to detect bio volume of plants on the left of slide 8 is from the Summer of 2022 and then on the right is late August of 2023. Green is good. The colored polygons are the different treatment sites. On the left is where they had herbicides and a combination of herbicide and ultraviolet light and some of the ones on the right in the middle are where ultraviolet light only was used. A lot of areas achieved that 75 percent reduction in bio volume which is which was the target. From there they used that monitoring information from the beginning of this season to determine where those Group B methods would go. Group A was the initial treatment such as the ultraviolet light and herbicides of that knock back of 75 percent and then using Group B which is any nonchemical method, including ultraviolet light to maintain that knock back.

Slide 9 shows an example of where those Group B sites occurred. This was on a much smaller scale. When these treatment sites were about one to two acres in size, these Group B locations for bottom barriers and hand pulling were much smaller scale. Maybe one to two tenths of an acre. But because of the high water conditions this year there are areas along the shore that were re-wetted and that weren't treated last year. Then with one of the herbicides lasting for longer than they anticipated required that turbidity curtain remained in place. The ultraviolet lightboat wasn't able to go in when they wanted to in those combo sites. The ultraviolet did go in this year and perform Group A treatments in those combo sites. There was quite a bit of ultraviolet light used this year, not only as Group B, but in repeating some of the Group A treatments and because they have that availability now, they went into the ultraviolet only sites and treated those holistically as well.

Slide 10: These are the different treatment sites that occurred this year. The ultraviolet was also used as the Group A type of treatment this year both in the UV only sites and in the combo sites and they're about 25 acres in total. That does include multiple rounds of treatments. They go in about two to four times per year at those locations spending anywhere from 10 to 20 minutes at each treatment plot. And with bottom barriers Group B, about three quarters of an acre, overall, at nine different sites which was a much smaller scale of these treatments. Then diver assisted suction at 12 sites just over one acre and then ultraviolet as spot treatments with those Group B treatments at 10 different sites at about 6 acres.

The interim report for year two was just completed by the Tahoe Keys Property Owners Association and the link to that can be found in the staff report. Now, there's conversations about planning for year three and beyond.

The monitoring program tracks our success both in prevention and control. With prevention, there is a secret shopper that goes out to all of the inspection locations and to the launch facilities to make sure that protocols are being followed. That is done by an independent organization on our behalf. There's been very good success throughout the history of the program. They also check customer service and education aspects to make sure that not only are inspectors but the contracted partners at the marinas are providing proper information as to why we're doing what we're doing. They also do plankton tows which is a net that goes in the water to try and collect microscopic juvenile stages of the Quagga mussel. There's been no detection in the 16 plus years they've been doing this program. Now, there are also these artificial substrates that are placed about a dozen locations around the lake, Fallen Leaf and Echo lakes. These artificial substrates are where Quagga mussels might hide or attach and similar with the New Zealand mudsnails.

With control they want to make sure they have measurable metrics. In the near future staff will be bringing forward a presentation on updating our thresholds. Right now, they do acres treated which they will keep because acres treated is like wildfire, you might have to repeat those treatments over time to make sure you're maintaining that as zero. They also then want to include how they track our success by reducing actual abundance of the invasive species.

There are 108 transects established throughout the lake for monitoring. This was done in 2018 when we conducted their first lake wide monitoring and then also developed the plan so it's repeatable over time. The transects cover every tributary, marina and embayment that is marina like where you might have an enclosed area and then some of them are random but maintained over time.

The transects were planned for previous years but with funding they were done this year. But they also are now able to incorporate another test method called sonar. That heat map you saw for the Tahoe Keys has now been tested out in the lake.

They've been doing quite a bit of work over the past 1.5 months with many partners on the detection of the New Zealand mudsnails. These were discovered on September 6<sup>th</sup> about 2,000 feet offshore of the Truckee River by their contracted divers performing site assessment work which is a more or less a pretreatment survey of weeds that were occurring in this offshore area. Those divers notified TRPA and the Tahoe Resource Conservation District immediately and started taking samples for identification and they implemented their rapid response plan.

They formed an incident team of both TRPA and the Tahoe RCD with TRPA staff Mr. Boos serving as our incident commander. Mr. Boos has previous experience leading an effort of rapid response with the state of Montana who had a discovery of Quagga mussels.

When they received the species confirmation both visually and by genetics that it was the New Zealand mudsnail notifications were made to both states and, partners, and the Fish and Wildlife service. They then expanded their monitoring to identify a broader delineation from the point of discovery. They did a grid survey and those transects were already happening for plants, so they modified those to give them a better chance to then see if

they were able to detect New Zealand mudsnails at a lake wide scale. They repeated some of those processes by going deeper and slower. Normally they're at about 3 to 4 meters above the bottom when they're doing plant surveys, now they're at about one to two feet above the bottom to be able to better detect them. They've also engaged with the Science Council to coordinate a team of experts not only locally but nationally on New Zealand mudsnails and were able to get some recommendations.

The New Zealand mudsnail is about the size of a grain of rice. These are not anywhere near as devastating as Quagga and Zebra mussels, but they do have impacts similar to other invasives where they out-compete native species, and sometimes fish eat them and they're definitely a poor source of nutrition. They were first discovered the United States in 1987 in the Snake River in Idaho and subsequently in California in the Owens River Valley in 2000 and then since that time the closest discoveries have been in the lower Truckee near Reno. They can live in a variety of habitats, but as their name suggests, they do like muddy conditions.

During the discovery, they were at the Western Regional Panel on Aquatic Invasives and were able to talk with partners and get them to serve on that technical advisory committee that the Science Council formed. They were all very surprised where we found them and thought they would have been found in the river first. So far, they have not seen them in the river at all, they've been in 20 to almost 100 feet of water.

They're spread primarily by recreation. Fishing and non-motorized recreation such as felt boots from the fishermen have been an issue in the country for quite some time. They are looking at ways to engage with all of our different partners and users on best ways to prevent spread.

TRPA staff member Ms. Vollmer does a lot of stream surveys throughout the basin at every tributary doing a kick survey where they get in the water and kick up the bottom and make collections with nets. They've confirmed with the lab that reviews that data that no mudsnails have ever been discovered in any of those samples. They also looked at the Tahoe Keys data that they've been collecting for the last two plus years, and nothing has been found in that as well. They've established new decontamination protocols to treat Tahoe now as a positive water body from these New Zealand mudsnails. That requires automatic decontamination at the inspection stations if someone is coming back to Tahoe with their watercraft. They've let their Western partners know that Tahoe is now in New Zealand mudsnail positive, so if a boat goes to them, they're aware of that. Also, a reminder to boaters to pull their drain plug as they leave the water body. That's consistent with Nevada state law and an equivalent on the California side where you have a requirement to be clean, drain, and dry with that being put into TRPA's Code of Ordinances in 2018.

They are reviewing recommendations by the Science Council which can be found through the link in the staff report. They're doing an expanded delineation to better understand how far that infestation went and an emphasis to focus on containment versus control. Most places elsewhere do not do any type of control other than trying to limit the spread and do a lot of outreach. Tahoe is going to be at the forefront of whatever management actions we take because other places don't do much about it. Also, a recommendation in the Action Agenda that had already been started was to do other risk assessments for additional

species. looking at additional species and what risk they pose to the lake.

The red dots on slide 16 shows the locations of where New Zealand mudsnails were discovered. The initial stretch was about three miles from Pope Marsh to Ski Run and the Science Council Technical Advisory team recommended expanding and now have about a ten mile linear grid survey from that eastern point of Emerald Bay all the way over to Nevada Beach. No detections on those outer stretches, but one detection over by Camp Rich in a buoy field, so, it's a bit of an anomaly and still needing to understand how that may have got there. But it seems to be confined to the South Shore. The lake wide transects throughout the lake did not detect anything other than the transects that bifurcate this area.

Another recommendation by the Science Council is to do additional types of monitoring called Environmental DNA (EDNA) monitoring that is able to detect biological pieces of these species. It's used quite a bit for presence and absence of various species. The Forest Service has experience doing this and takes advantage of that. Even though their visual surveys up the river have not seen anything, they're very hard to find so the Environmental DNA is a good indicator of their presence.

They did additional surveys in the Tahoe Keys and did find them on the marina side but close to the channel entrance and believe that it's likely coming in from that infestation, not coming from the Keys itself, but nothing on the homeowner side.

Strategizing their future priorities, monitoring is a major component that they want to repeat everything they did this year with grid surveys, EDNA, and those transects looking at the prevention and containment. The CD 3 machine that they were able to purchase through the League to Save Lake Tahoe and had additional funding from bipartisan infrastructure that focuses on non-motorized clean, drain, and dry activities. They are looking at ramp infrastructure. Many of their marinas require drains similar to a driveway drainage trench and trying to put those in other areas for draining those bilge and ballast tanks so it's not going back into the lake. And certainly, additional outreach is going to be a major component of future actions.

The New Zealand mudsnails prevention budget is about \$2.5 million annually. There is a potential gap of about \$200,000. They were not successful in a grant this past year with the state of California Department of Boating and Waterways grant. It's a potential gap there if they don't use Lake Tahoe Restoration Act funding. The control action agenda suggests a \$7 million annual need and is about halfway there. So, there is a gap of about \$3 to \$4 million and lake wide monitoring they spend about \$200,000 currently every 3 years.

With some of these actions that they want to take with the New Zealand mudsnails they are looking at a one-time cost for capital improvements of any of those ramp's structure with drainage, these CD 3 machines, or cleaning stations are one-time capital costs. And then roving inspectors is something they've identified as a way to help enhance prevention overall with any of the species that they're concerned about. That's about a \$100,000 annual add.

For monitoring, if we now want to do that on an annual basis and include New Zealand mudsnails they are looking at about a \$300,000 annual need. Then for additional outreach, signage, and advertising is about \$30,000 a one-time cost. That does not account for any

non-seasonal staffing needs that they may need. Anything they do in response to New Zealand mudsnails is going to be an add on and are already under funded, especially in control.

Staff will be bringing the AIS fee structure to the Governing Board in January. They want to leverage their existing programs that we have to do some of these New Zealand mudsnail and other invasives that they're worried about. All of the monitoring, outreach, and CD 3 machines are going to put us in a better position regardless of the species. They want to expand or increase new funding opportunities. The federal government just provided a national rapid response funding and may have access to for the New Zealand mudsnail response. The Lake Tahoe Restoration Act reauthorization is going to be a priority and then continuing the bipartisan infrastructure law. They've been very fortunate to get that money, only one of two entities throughout the country to get that for natural resource needs, and that has funded very significant projects for the program.

Presentation: [Agenda-Item-No-VIA-Aquatic-Invasive-Species-Annual-Program-Update](#)

#### Board Comments & Questions

Ms. Laine said she was able to go out on a lake tour with TRPA and learned a lot. One of those things was the great personnel that's now involved with the Tahoe Keys Marina and their willingness to invest in the Aquatic Invasive Species. They were told at the time that Liberty Utilities wasn't able to bring power to the turbidity bubble curtain in the channel, is that still an issue?

Mr. Zabaglo said through funding with the Tahoe Fund and the League to Save Lake Tahoe they were able to install a bubble curtain on the marina side channel several years ago and power issues have made it difficult to maintain. The League, homeowners, and the marina have been trying for a year to get that service upgraded.

Ms. Gustafson said she provided some information that day of the tour.

Mr. Zabaglo said they met with Tahoe Keys this week and supposedly it's happening soon to upgrade that service that will allow that bubble curtain to be in on all the time. The new marina owners have been fantastic.

Ms. Aldean said she assumes that the New Zealand mudsnail juveniles can be detected by the same sampling method we use for other invasive species?

Mr. Zabaglo said it's not the same as they have eggs. They are asexual so they can reproduce sexually and asexually so, they only need one, but they do produce eggs and they tend to sit more on the bottom. Some Plankton tows aren't necessarily a way to detect them. They are still investigating that but is not something that people typically use. The Environmental DNA is good in streams because there's a lot of material for that stuff to attach to. In the lake itself, not as much. They are fortunate to have Dr. Jerde, who's an EDNA expert, formerly with the University of Nevada, Reno and now working with the University of California, Santa Barbara. For the lake itself there isn't a lot of stuff floating and that is why it's so clear. There is nothing for it to attach because there needs to be lots of water to filter through to



be able to have a fair chance, but they're working with them to see if there's things, we could do to improve that efficacy of detection. EDNA in the rivers is something they want to look at in those visual surveys and the substrates are going to be primary methods within the lake itself.

Ms. Aldean said she's been told that the fish migration was interrupted this year by the timing of the work at the mouth of Taylor Creek.

Mr. Zabaglo said that is incorrect. The Forest Service had to turn the dam off for about one day to clear out some beaver dam areas. Spawning has is ongoing as we speak, but no impact.

Mr. Friedrich asked staff to explain the current assessment of the problem of transport of AIS from hot spots lake wide from motor roads.

Mr. Zabaglo asked if that for existing species within the lake itself.

Mr. Friedrich said yes. domestic transport. We're doing the inspections of boats coming in and in the Action Plan they talk about some monthly monitoring at marina slips and rental boats. Is that happening and do we have the budget for it? The larger question is how much of a problem is transport of AIS from hot spots elsewhere and spread that way.

Mr. Zabaglo said it's certainly a vector and some of the actions that they take to mitigate that. At the Tahoe Keys there is a boat backup station on the homeowners' side that allows any pieces of plants to come off the boat before they go out and then those bubble curtains serve as a barrier to prevent additional spread outwards from the Keys. In addition, pulling your plug requirement is a way to mitigate spread through other areas of lake. Fragments or Asian clam veligers, or now New Zealand mudsnail eggs could be within those waters and so draining that boat as it's coming out is a requirement both at the code and state level. Then the seal inspectors at all of the marinas are trained to look for any attached plants on boats and trailers as they leave. Pulling the plug and looking at the boats and trailers is a requirement to get a seal before they leave.

Mr. Friedrich said those sound like good mitigation measures, but does staff know how many boats participated in the voluntary backup station at the Tahoe Keys? Should they be doing it at every hot spot and how is it enforced? How big of a problem is it with any kind of domestic transport within the lake? And what about other hot spots where they are not doing backup stations?

Mr. Zabaglo said they don't have actual metrics to see what's on a boat if it doesn't go through a boat backup station. Certainly, that is a risk and that's why they do all of their surveillance and lake wide monitoring presumably on an annual basis in the future to ensure that they're detecting anything if it becomes bigger problem for spread.

Mr. Friedrich asked if those monthly inspections are happening or is that dependent on more budget for that? He thought the AIS Action Plan talked about monthly inspection of marina slips and rental boats.

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Mr. Zabaglo said they do have the marina management plans where they're required to implement activities to reduce spread, reduce risk, reduce habitat if possible. Also, where they're doing checks of their marinas on a regular basis, skimming if necessary if they have existing aquatic invasive species. They are working with marinas to build that in a more robust way. Also, partners such as the League doing Eyes on the Lake training at all the marinas, and which would be a requirement at some equivalent for compliance with their AIS management plans.

Mr. Friedrich said to do adequate monitoring, control, and prevention, are the fees on boats adequate to cover that monitoring of boating activity for the AIS portion of it.

Mr. Zabaglo said they're going to be bringing the fee schedule in January. They're still assessing the budget needs for next year since the season just ended and they're collecting all of the data and will have better answers for that in the coming months. There's also the Shoreline fee of \$10 that goes towards monitoring and is used for the contractors doing the surveillance work.

Mr. Hoenigman said this seems incredibly critical and time sensitive as things get more out of control. The costs get greater and greater, and it gets harder and harder to stuff that genie back in the bottle. And it sounds like we're short on money. Are we looking at different funding mechanisms? We have to look at what we could be doing to get that funded so that we can. He doesn't want to just keep these things barely in control, we need to get rid of this stuff. Maybe we can't in the Tahoe Keys but if that's just one hot spot, that seems a lot easier to manage than having hot spots all over the lake. What can we do as a board?

Mr. Zabaglo said funding certainly is a critical need to implement projects, increase that pace and scale, and additional monitoring where it's appropriate. The Lake Tahoe Restoration Act reauthorization is priority number one. They've been fortunate with the bipartisan infrastructure law to have money for the next several years that's filling in gaps. There's the new rapid response plan that they're going to investigate to fill in gaps that were spending for this New Zealand mudsnail response. But then also any other types of grants that may become available. They do have funding from the state at a general fund level if there's opportunities there potentially that has not increased and get about \$750,000 from the two states to provide that support for the AIS program. But then there's also the fee structure so they have to look at every revenue source that they have and take a critical look there.

Mr. Hoenigman asked if they could put that as a to do to look at how we can get there and get there soon.

Ms. Caringer said a good way to think about the funding that they need in Aquatic Invasive Species is if you look at the overall Environmental Improvement Program funding model, they have a good federal anchor right now with the Lake Tahoe Restoration Act. If they work hard to reauthorize it, they are getting around \$5 million per year, right now.

Mr. Zabaglo said on average it's been about \$3 to \$4 million but this last appropriation is closer to \$5 million.

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Ms. Caringer said if the annual need for control is \$7 million, they need to try to fill in the gap with the state and local private match. She would like to take that to the Environmental Improvement Program committee and look at how the state and local private matches are complementing that federal anchor and would be great to strategize with the committee on that.

Ms. Gustafson asked how deep do they think these New Zealand mudsnails can survive. Do we have any scientific data on that?

Mr. Zabaglo said believes the literature suggests up to 150 feet and they did find them at 150 feet around the South Shore on that shelf that comes out from the river. They were just there and not in great numbers. It's possible that they tumbled off of that shelf where they found them. Most are in that 20 to 90 foot range.

Ms. Aldean asked where people get their fishing licenses on the South Shore. They are issued by the state or Fish and Wildlife Service, correct?

Mr. Zabaglo said correct.

Ms. Aldean asked if any money from the revenues could be diverted to the control of the invasive species since there is a connection apparently between New Zealand's mudsnails from recreational fishing.

Mr. Zabaglo said he believes it's a federal act that puts some revenues from sales of bait and tackle and angling gear that can go to the states, but they are eligible for those fundings, but both states get it, and they get money from the states. It's not a direct allocation.

Ms. Aldean asked if that is something that they can lobby for.

Mr. Zabaglo said potentially. It's called the Dingell-Johnson Sport Fish Restoration Act.

Ms. Conrad-Saydah appreciated all the information and updates. If there's any way, they can help with trying to rally that funding at the state or federal level, please let us know.

Ms. Leumer said she would also be eager to be plugged into any follow up to help from a state level.

Ms. Regan said staff will take as an action item a review of the overall funding gaps and will prioritize for the newly constituted EIP committee meeting in January, a discussion around that. This program is one of the signature Environmental Improvement Programs overall. Several years back, the beginning funding for the Aquatic Invasive Species Program came from the federal government, Army Corps of Engineers, and the Southern Nevada Public Land Management Act. Then they hit a fiscal cliff when that ran out and the two states came together to add appropriations to support the prevention program. The private community came together, the Tahoe Fund, the League to save Lake Tahoe, and the boaters themselves.

They have this vast partnership around the program. And it's one of the highest levels of

funding that they've been getting from the Lake Tahoe Restoration Act and the infrastructure law. But even with that, they're still short and costs continue to rise.

B. Destination Stewardship Plan: Update on the Lake Tahoe Destination Stewardship Plan and Implementation activities

TRPA staff Mr. Middlebrook, Ms. Berry, Tahoe Fund, Ms. Chaplin, Lake Tahoe Visitors Authority provided the presentation.

Mr. Middlebrook said In May, staff provided the Governing Board with a preview of the plan which was released in June. TRPA and our Bi-State Compact does call for us to do recreation planning to ensure fair share access to our recreation assets and make sure people have a great time while doing it. They also have recreation threshold standards that measure achievement towards those goals and sustainable recreation is one of the focus areas along with transportation in the Environmental Improvement Programs. So, lots of connections to this space for TRPA and why our agency is involved in this.

(presentation continued)

Ms. Berry said she'll present on some of the background, and how did they decide that they needed something called the Lake Tahoe Destination Stewardship Plan. Ms. Chaplin will cover how they developed the plan, and Mr. Middlebrook will talk about what's in the plan. This is not that will be put on the shelf and never do anything with it. It's about an action plan where you're going to see some real differences around the lake pretty soon.

We have a \$4.5 billion direct economy which is about \$10 billion in economic impact from our tourism and outdoor recreation economy. The latest numbers and will say these numbers need improving, they seem to land in different places every day, but 17 million visitor days from 2 million unique visitors. And they're surrounded by ever growing population areas, 27 percent population growth projected in Nevada and Northern California at the same time. It's not news to everyone that Tahoe has always sort of suffered from its own popularity. That was never more evident than during the pandemic. COVID just showed a light on that in a time where you couldn't go to your local park, the mall, Disneyland, or Hawaii, but you could come to Lake Tahoe. They know that it was really important for people to seek refuge in beautiful outdoor places for their physical and mental health, but it created some challenges as they saw in the media. Challenges for our land managers, challenges for our residents, and challenges for the environment.

One good thing that came out of this was it forced an entirely new collaboration to come together. What started very organically was every week a whole bunch of people would get on a call because every day it seemed like the regulations were changing around COVID. We're two states, the federal government, five counties, and a city. If you're a visitor you could walk ten feet from one side of a path to another path and have an entirely different set of rules, which made it challenging to help manage this at a time where we were seeing an influx of visitors where we were being asked to socially distance and created a lot of tension in the system. Everybody came together to talk about what's working and not working and how they could collaborate a bit better.

It was a group that had never really come together before. It was land managers that often come together under the Environmental Improvement Program combined with the visitors' authorities, the business community, law enforcement, non-government organizations like the Tahoe Fund at the table to all help. They got through the summer of 2020 and then took time to pause and reflect. Then they decided to hold a workshop that TRPA and the Tahoe Fund helped put together on Zoom for about 70 people. How much of it was Covid driven and how much is here to stay or has been here to stay for a long time.

There's never been a shared vision for tourism and outdoor recreation in Tahoe. There were so many different people under this one big umbrella, but they've never all agreed on which way they were rowing in the boat. After that workshop, it was clear that they needed to have a shared vision, a shared mission, and a plan for how they were going to better manage people, how they were going to sustain a vibrant economy, how they were going to take care of the local community, and most importantly take care of our local environment. That's ultimately what led to the Destination Stewardship Plan.

In 2018, they started talking about this term sustainable recreation. Then the pandemic brought everybody together. Then they held the sustainable recreation and tourism workshop. They've transitioned from sustainable recreation to destination stewardship. It's an important note that Destination Stewardship is much, much bigger than sustainable recreation. Sustainable recreation is important. It's the infrastructure on the ground of how they're going to manage people. Destination Stewardship is the whole puzzle of people visiting. It's not just trails, its transportation, housing, and looking at the environmental improvements that are required. It's marketing, messaging, what's the visitor's authority doing to drive people here or not drive people here and change messaging. That led to hiring consultants, a number of organizations chipped in to raise a little over \$200,000 to bring the consultants in and then launched a Destination Stewardship Plan in June of 2023. Now they have developed a Destination Stewardship council that flows out of that plan, which is 17 different organizations, mostly made up of the folks who helped build the plan, but the addition of Vail Resorts and Palisades to the council as well.

(presentation continued)

Ms. Chaplin thanked TRPA staff for their support from the beginning because they were floundering a little bit on what to do, how to do it, and how to respond to this new tourism dynamic. They managed to bring 17 different organizations together originally and have 200 stakeholders on a monthly call that are still meeting today and are discussing the same topics that will go to them as a council. Adding Vail Resorts and Palisades were two important outdoor recreation organizations to join this effort.

When they started this process, the consultants helped them bring together our residents and visitors and then had discussion groups that were broken down by categories, for instance, recreation providers or lodging providers. They ended up with 15 groups. They had huge responses. Everyone after the pandemic was surprised at what came out of this particular time period, which we hope we don't have to ever revisit. There were over 1,100 respondents to the resident's survey and 2,300 responses to the visitor survey that came through the destination marketing organizations that were part of this process. So, 2,300 is a really good sample, one of the best that they've ever done and very accurate information.

Then they identified leaders and stakeholders around the basin to engage in one-on-one interviews and then these discussion groups and lots of workshops with over 300 participants.

The residence survey, 4 out of 5 of these residents rated the quality of life better than other places and 3 out of 7 of them agree that tourism and outdoor recreation is critically important. But only 21 percent of the residents feel that tourism and recreation support their lifestyle and help them have a strong sense of community. So, there is work to do here. Eighty-eight percent of the visitors said that it was important in their destination choice that there was some type of culture of environmental stewardship. That number has increased recently to over 90 percent according to their data. The visitor's authority is now specifically targeting markets that have this high index for sustainability consciousness. They tend to spend more money in a destination, they like supporting local businesses, which is good for us if they come to visit our destination because we have a lot of small businesses as opposed to the big box. For instance, the Northwest tends to index very high and so we are spending money there and we are mixing our messages, come here it's great it's beautiful and then on the other hand some of our messages are very specifically come here it's great and leave it a better place. Eighty-two percent say they do their part when they visit a destination like Lake Tahoe to keep it clean and pure. Seventy-one percent believe they're mindful and respectful of the natural environment. They didn't necessarily see that during COVID and was a little surprising and needs to do more digging there. This next statistic is really accolades to TRPA; 42 percent feel that they are doing an excellent job of safeguarding natural resources.

(presentation continued)

Mr. Middlebrook said the plan isn't going to pick up trash or direct traffic and the plan really is about action. They finally have that shared vision for sustainable recreation destination stewardship in the region where Tahoe is a cherished place welcoming to all, where people, communities and nature benefit from a thriving tourism and outdoor recreation economy. This vision is supported by four strategic pillars. The first one being fostering a tourism economy that gives back. They were very intentional about making this our first priority pillar because they understand that the economy is the lifeblood of our community and if our tourism economy is not giving back to our community members through wages, jobs, security, and housing, we really don't have anything and needs to be the cornerstone. Our local communities and neighbors need to be the cornerstone of this plan. They want to turn this shared vision into a shared action. They want to improve the Tahoe experience for all. This is that infrastructure piece, the bike paths, the facilities at recreation sites, the transit to and from those recreation sites, making sure that our businesses have vibrant downtowns, and improving that experience through infrastructure. To make sure that people are having a great time and preventing bad behavior in the first place. Instead of begging people not to litter, make it impossible for them to litter in the first place and think about how you solve the problem differently. Then advancing a culture of taking care and getting everyone to buy into that Tahoe way of doing things. The Take Care Tahoe campaign is a great example of how they're doing this already.

Under the pillar of turning the shared vision into shared action, the plan called for five initial steps towards governance. While governance isn't always the flashiest thing, it's very

important that we set up the proper structures to really get the plan implemented in the most efficient and expeditious way possible. They've already established that Destination Stewardship Council.

The folks and the partners that were involved in creating the plan plus additional members are going to be part of that new stewardship council that will oversee the direction and implementation of the plan. They've now hired their first managing director for the council, Nettie Pardue who is a Meyers resident. She most recently was executive director of Outward Bound California. She has years of experience in outdoor space, nonprofit management, facilitation, and collaboration building. They are working on securing funding and other resources to support the council's structure and implement the priority actions in the plan. They are also working on establishing action teams to tackle many of the actions in the strategic plan, whether there's an action team around infrastructure and infrastructure projects, funding, communications, etc. Then a communication strategy and making sure that people are not only aware of the plan and the progress that they're making, but also are able to see themselves as part of the overall strategy and see their own ownership over destination stewardship for the region.

This isn't just a planning process with more ideas and more plans to come, it's about actions. Since they've been operating the what was weekly, then bi-weekly, now monthly calls around our response for recreation and destination stewardship, they've been implementing a lot of programs. The City of South Lake Tahoe has their plastic water bottle ban, which is a great step towards that.

Many of the partners in North Shore, Placer County, Incline Village helped them expand Clean Tahoe, litter mitigation program. Clean Tahoe is picking up litter lake wide, again cleaning up after some of the visitors that aren't doing their part. Microtransit services, Take Care campaign, volunteer programs, the North Tahoe Community Alliance, one of Ms. Chaplin's counterparts on the North Shore just gave out \$20 million in community grants that are funded by tourism in the district through their new tourism business improvement district and are going to things like transportation, microtransit, litter management, and housing. In terms of a circular economy that gives back to the community, this is a great example. Tourism dollars are staying locally and being spent to mitigate the impacts of tourism. Also, the California Tahoe Conservancy has been giving grants for equitable access projects to the lake making sure that no one's being left behind in this process.

Where they are at now is doing a lot of public outreach for the plans. They've been making the rounds that various conferences, boards and commissions. They were recently at the South Lake Tahoe City Council and this month they'll be going to the El Dorado County Board of Supervisors in January and am in discussions with Placer County on getting an agenda item for their Supervisors meeting. If any of you have a board, a commission, a community group, a service club, anyone you think would be interested in this information, they'd love to talk to them.

Like all things at Tahoe, shared funding is how they're going to get things done. There's a long list of partners that have either helped fund the planning process, funding implementation of the plan or both. Right now, they're at over \$330,000 for the next two years to help implement the plan.

Sustainable recreation and transportation are one of the focus areas of the Environmental Improvement Program and are going to be working through destination stewardship and the EIP program to marry the two processes. Recognizing the destination stewardship is somewhat broader than just the sustainable recreation aspects of the EIP but making sure we're working in tandem and in coordination to identify the correct infrastructure projects, recreation access projects, and connect to that to funding.

Presentation: [Agenda-Item-No-VIB-Destination-Stewardship-Plan-Update.pdf](#)

#### Board Comments & Questions

Ms. Aldean said one of their shopping centers in the Bay Area, they've been using solar powered trash compactors called CleanCUBE. Is that something that you've given some thought to?

Mr. Middlebrook said the City of South Lake Tahoe has 10 or 12 of them and the North Shore in Placer County has them as well. The ones on the South Shore are connected to the internet. They text message the maintenance staff when they're full so you don't waste a bunch of time having someone go out and check the can.

Ms. Berry said it's a great example of a collaboration that the council brings together.

Ms. Laine said she was fortunate enough to participate in some of the public meetings that they had and was very interested in watching that process. The City of South Lake Tahoe motto in the Parks and Recreation Department since 1965 has been "All year playground." They've always kind of known that they had that asset, but they were certainly overtaken by the casinos who had control of all the money and back then, about casinos and skiing, but we knew we had more to offer and Covid 19 was a catalyst. She's lived here her whole life and Mr. Middlebrook was born and raised here and am shocked by the number of 21 percent of people that think that they somehow have some dependency on the tourism market. If you live here in Tahoe and were always taught that back in the day that no matter what you did and her family was in photography, even though the tourists may not have been your direct client, it was because of the tourists that we were able to live here and depended on the locals for a lot of what they did. But they always knew and understood that they were attached. With Covid 19 they saw a lot of families move into the area, but they retained their employment from wherever they came from. They saw a lot of Bay Area and Southern California people doing that. Is part of that number the fact that people feel that their employment is out of the area and therefore they don't depend, and that's maybe a question they can't totally answer but it seems like it's part of it.

Ms. Gustafson asked how they did the survey and how did you reach residents because that might indicate why.

Mr. Middlebrook said the survey was done online in both English and Spanish. It was sent out through their various partner networks. Ms. Laine brought up an interesting point, when you look back at the 2007 recession, that saw a decline in visitation and everyone was hurting from the front line businesses such as restaurants, ski rentals, to the dentist whose



patients rely on tourism to pay their dentist bill. That was a stark reminder that we are all connected to tourism. With the Covid 19 pandemic they almost had the opposite challenge where everyone was coming. You didn't necessarily have that direct economic impact of losing all of the visitation, it came with other challenges such as litter, traffic, illegal campfires, and other pressure points on the community. It was a little different feeling and is something that they're still wrestling with and trying to figure out how to drill down and address those concerns. The impact felt was different than in previous recessions and economic upheavals where the pain of losing tourism was felt a bit more throughout the community. New visitors and new residents are a factor. Folks that have remote jobs are definitely a factor. The survey didn't get into those minute details because it's hard to do with a multiple choice survey but is something they'd love to explore more.

Ms. Berry said it comes back to communication of benefits. She doesn't think that everyone has done a great job in demonstrably showing the benefits of tourism to people who might not be directly employed through the tourism economy. It's a bit of a balance. Things got out of balance during COVID and just got the ire of some folks. And there's perception versus reality. They still heard this summer that it was just too busy here, but visitation was down this summer. Some of it is how they communicate that out and a big part of this plan is better communication of that. Things like what the North Tahoe Community Alliance (NTCA) is doing on the North Shore and giving \$20 million back to the community that comes directly from the tourism economy is a tremendous way to show look what you're getting by putting up with living in a tourism economy.

Ms. Faustinos agreed that the communication element is what's going to be the success of this and the more people that buy into it, it'll be able to stand up very effectively. As we look at the Environmental Improvements Program projects, how do we include destination stewardship across the board so that it does become that consistent element that we're always thinking about and making sure that it's being included in funding proposals. And looks at the work that's being done to ensure that every project we look at includes this model.

Ms. Berry said there's three parts to this. They have to support our economy, take care of our local community, and take care of our local environment. The Environmental Improvement Program is the part that takes care of the local environment the most. There wasn't any intention in the plan to redo anything that's already being done. The plan only lives and survives based on the success of the EIP program and there's a lot of crossover between EIP leadership and destination stewardship leadership.

Mr. Friedrich said the bottom line is action and Mr. Middlebrook did speak about some of those actions that have taken place. When he looked at the survey results, to him he thinks of it as the three "T's" of tourism, trash, and traffic. He would wager that if there were fewer impacts that people felt from visitors, he doesn't think people are against visitors or tourist per se, but they are against parking issues, parking alongside Emerald Bay, and all the various issues they come with cars and traffic. They're against the July 4<sup>th</sup> fiasco at Zephyr Cove and those are high profile incidents of impacts. When you get those examples of local actions, what do you see is the kind of the stewardship council's role in helping to replicate those actions? Can you copy and paste them in other jurisdictions or help local jurisdictions adopt strong actions and also TRPA having strong actions on traffic, trash, and other visitor

impacts as part of the stewardship plan. How do you help decision-making bodies like ours take action to do things that are needed to mitigate tourism impacts?

Mr. Middlebrook said that is the power of the council as mentioned with the compacting trash cans idea. All the sudden, two or three jurisdictions start looking at them and then other people join on. The power of the council and getting people together is just that information sharing so people know what's going on. As you move into that joint implementation for the trash cans instead of everyone ordering trash cans independently, why not do one order to get both savings in terms of quantity to get that synergy together through this partnership.

Ms. Berry said a big part of this plan is just better management of people. You can look at trash as there are just people who like to litter, or you can look at it as there are not enough trash cans because if there were more trash cans maybe people wouldn't litter so much. In each of the pillars there will be working groups and one of the working groups she's most excited about is the peak demand management plan and that is why it's great to have Vail and Palisades at the table. They're the experts in the industry. They can probably count on a calendar how many days of the year it's really crazy in Tahoe or it's just feels like it's bustling over. Maybe that's 50 days a year and maybe they need something like the Forest Service's incident command when it's a high fire danger day, maybe it's an incident command strategy for peak visitor days. We can't build Tahoe for the busiest day of the year, but we can have a plan in place to know the obvious ones such as July 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, and 5<sup>th</sup>, what are they going to do on those days that looks different than say March 22<sup>nd</sup>. What's great about this council is that it's the destination stewardship council for all of Tahoe. As soon as we start to get into our silos, we start to lose the impact. The more we can treat this as one place, the more successful we're going to be.

Mr. Friedrich said if we had 17 million visitor days and none of them came in a car, that would be the perfect vision that's not realistic at this point, but we can minimize it. "More fun, less carbon." They've talked a lot here about physical barriers along Emerald Bay or on the East Shore that hasn't happened yet or road diets, restriction of parking areas, or concentrating cars where you want them to park and making it more difficult elsewhere, basin entry fees or zonal fees, all the various things they've talked about. What is the role of the stewardship council in fostering, promoting, advocating for these ideas and then bringing them to the decision-making bodies where those decisions are made? They are not going to make the policy decisions, but they can help set it up.

Ms. Chaplin said it's important to understand that when they start to look at this body of work and action items and there were many of them that bubbled up from all those surveys and conversations that they had. They are still in the infant stage of figuring out which one they own as the stewardship council, which ones they support because they're already being done, and which ones they get involved in and which ones they support in a different way. For instance, do they come and advocate at a public meeting for one of these things or do they actually take it on? That's the next step, starting in December with their first meeting with their new managing director. The road is long and was very clear when they started this process that the plan had to be a living plan and it had to be executable.

## GOVERNING BOARD

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Ms. Hill said communication has greatly improved, especially on with everyone coming together. Is there anything else that jurisdictionally they can do, or TRPA can do that maybe is missing? She would love the group to come to Washoe County and the Reno-Sparks Convention & Visitors Authority (RSCVA) to see how we can continue to spread this great work. Part of their job on the RSCVA is to talk about why we're important to the local economy. This is not the case in California, but many of the reasons that they don't have income tax is because they have tourism. It's incredibly important to Nevada and certainly to northern Nevada.

Mr. Middlebrook said the counties and local jurisdictions have been great partners in the planning process. As they move forward to implementation, financing and supporting the council structure that way, but also project implementation, Washoe County already has grand plans for transportation improvements, bike path improvements, and making sure that destination stewardship principles are ingrained into the things they are already doing is extremely helpful. Making sure when they're designing a new trail or a new recreation facility that they are talking with the Take Care team and getting the right signage for Take Care Tahoe in those recreation sites. The Reno-Sparks Convention & Visitors Authority and Visit Truckee Tahoe were partners in the planning process and shows the power of destination stewardship. Outside of their jurisdiction boundaries, people were coming together. During the height of Covid RSCVA had a billboard in the San Francisco Bay Area that was promoting Reno Tahoe, but it was a picture of Emerald Bay and pulled that billboard down while still paying for the signage because they understood the importance of being a good partner at the table.

Ms. Diss said as a Nevadan and someone who worked in state government, tourism equals dollar signs. She was working in the state government in 2020 and it was not a fun time when you have to cut important resource programs because you have no money. There are programs front loaded to manage the litter, but litter does seem to be a real pressure point for folks. It makes people feel like there's a lot of disrespect coming from the tourists. She feels that more trash cans and things like that will help but have you all have looked at other high tourism areas that has peaks in visitation like we do, like New Orleans for example. I think that they've just accepted that this is part of Mardi Gras to have litter and they have a cleaning crew ready to go the next day to clean it up. We would rather that the litter not be there at all but to prepare for it in that way. Understanding that it's not necessarily the responsibility of the local jurisdictions but because of the benefits that tourism brings, that it's just part of the balance.

Ms. Berry said everything's on the table right now, so it's a great idea. Now that they have Nettie Pardue on board, they're going to have an all day workshop on December 5<sup>th</sup>. They'll then start to develop working groups. A number of them went through a social science workshop a few years ago to understand how you change behavior and one of the big lessons was that the more you show the bad behavior, the more you are creating a cultural norm of that behavior, and it exacerbates the problem. They don't want to show pictures of trash on beaches and say, can you believe people trash the beaches because then that tells everybody you can trash the beaches in Tahoe. What you want to show are the norms we want, which is a beautiful pristine area, and talk about how people are making the effort to keep these places clean. Unfortunately, the media just latches onto things and that's all they want to talk about.

Ms. Chaplin said the other thing to mention, and this is where destination marketing organizations can come into play is they used to people in Seattle or Dallas, they'll still do that to promote tourism but now they will broaden that messaging strategy to include messages that are very specific on how you behave when you come here. It also takes us to model that behavior. When you look at the beach on July 5<sup>th</sup> that wasn't all the tourists. The Lake Tahoe Visitors Authority's strategic plan that is just being published and will be adding that layer of messaging that has to do with how we behave here, how you can find out what you can do and what you can't. Can you have a plastic bottle or not and will also broaden our messaging to be in market. So, it won't be just talking to people before they get here but they'll be able to talk to people when they are here. And that's going to help with that whole process, especially with the litter. They've already put money into the Take Care program for instance, but maybe they'll do more and find a better way to get those touch points with those visitors try to try to correct it. Messaging is still a way that they can help support this plan.

Ms. Gustafson said she spent 26 years working at the Tahoe City Public Utility District under contract with Placer County and now she sits in another seat overseeing those contracts. A lot of the issue at least on North Shore and West Shore was their routine of picking up trash at a certain time every afternoon long before people were doing takeout food. Covid brought us takeout food much more trash people at beaches at picnic tables with takeout food. The last pickup of trash was 3 pm. Visitors had bagged up their trash but then left it by the trash can. They assumed that a local municipality was coming back to take it. They contracted with Clean Tahoe not because they were out picking up every individual piece of trash but rather, they're focused on emptying the trash in the cans that they've put out there. They've put out more cans and asked for more frequent cleanups. They needed more infrastructure to allow the visitors. The visitors took a bad rap, she didn't see anybody walking on a trail throwing out their trash. At night the animals would come get into the trash then it would be all over the beach the next day distributed by our wildlife. She continues to feel this anger about tourism that points fingers. What Placer County always did was to clean up trash on July 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> until midnight. That was part of their culture but only paid that overtime on those peak days. What do we need and again to your point of It's really our infrastructure and our service because things happen.

Ms. Berry said the July 5<sup>th</sup> beach day took all of headlines and it was locals, it wasn't tourists that created that, but if you would take that one location of Zephyr Shoals out, the headline would have been Tahoe's Beaches, the cleanest they've ever seen on July 5<sup>th</sup>. They lost the media narrative on that one, unfortunately.

Ms. Gustafson said the group that she saw that you didn't survey that is so powerful and so large on North Shore is our vacation homeowners. Some 70 percent of those are not rented, their owner used and have friends and family use them. How can we reach that group? When she was at the PUD, they would try to reach them through utility bills, homeowner associations, and newsletters. She urged them to look at that group because they use their homes, especially on the North Shore.

Ms. Berry said too often they easily lump things together, either a resident or you're a visitor. What they learned in this study which they already knew is there's a lot of different sections within that. There are second homeowners who spend a lot of time here and they

are second homers who don't spend a lot of time here. There are also vacation rentals. One thing that was uncovered and is probably the hardest challenge to solve is our day visitors. They study called it untethered visitors, but they know there's 4 to 5 million people who come up and recreate and they go home. They're not sure how much they're contributing to the economy, but they have a pretty good sense they're contributing to the impacts to the environment. We need to be more strategic as we move forward and thinking about how they are reaching everyone. The North Tahoe Community Alliance (NTCA) just funded a new initiative with Take Care Tahoe to reach short term rentals with a campaign of environmental messaging. They can take what they do with the short term rentals and do that with the second homeowners.

Ms. Conrad-Saydah said wanted to connect our last presentation with this one and find out from your polling if you had learned anything about whether visitors receive that information about aquatic species and potentially change their behavior as a result or you know essentially how much they're connecting that aquatic invasive species signage with their recreation. The second question is there was a slide that showed the dog waste issue. She finds that one of the most surprising things in Tahoe is it's one of the few places she goes where dog waste is just left on the beaches in the snow. How are you getting the word out that that waste will go into the lake when the snow melts and what that messaging campaign is and what the progress is.

Mr. Middlebrook said on the first question, on the Aquatic Invasive Species connection, the survey they did for the destination stewardship plan didn't get into that level of detail, but other information they have through the Aquatic Invasive Species Program, the Tahoe Keeper program, surveys that they do of boater at the inspection stations do show that the messaging is working. The annual opinion polling shows that that messaging is working, and more and more people are aware of the program and more people are clean, drain, and dry with their watercraft. That stuff does work and as they move forward with the AIS program and things like New Zealand mudsnail, they're really going to take the successes they've had in the past and continue them and then expand those successes to other programs and other focus areas of the EIP.

Ms. Berry said they've been working for 10 years to convince people that if it's your dog, it's your duty or be number one at picking up number two. What they learned through this process is Take Care has been around now for almost 10 years and there's a lot of good things about it, but It isn't big enough or powerful enough. One of the pillars, is building a culture of caretaking and one of the first things they're going to do is look at the Take Care campaign and understand what does it do well, what does it need to do either better or differently for it to be adopted under the council? One of the things when they created Take Care back in the day was that they were all drowning each other out with stewardship messages. And the idea was could they have one campaign for the whole region. Now, looking back, they have like a hundred different stewardship messages within Take Care. Some of the thinking right now is to get to more what you call tent poll messaging with focusing on just three or four key initiatives. They think through just focusing on those that together they elevate all levels of stewardship. Litter and pet waste is definitely one of those tent poles. But it also comes down to infrastructure. Do they know where the dog waste is, and do we have dog waste stations there? Are we giving people the bags? One thing they learned in social sciences is that most bags are green or brown and then what happens is

people leave the bag on the trail for their return trip and then those colors blend in with the environment and then the bags are left on the trail. What they learned is that they need bright colored bags so that you can't miss them.

Mr. Aguilar said when you talk about tourism dollars, How much of that goes back to the local communities versus the state or the county?

Mr. Middlebrook said a lot of the secondary spending is difficult to track in the study. It showed that the direct spending was about \$4.5 billion dollars and the kind of secondary with the multiplier of the total economic output was closer to \$10 billion. Where all those dollars trickle down for example, in Washoe County what are for hotels, what percentage of that stays in Tahoe, what percentage of that goes back to the main county budget and how it trickles out is something they do need better data on and a better understanding of. In general, they're also talking about doing more detailed economic studies to see how long dollars stay in the region. If a visitor comes in and spends one dollar at a local coffee shop, how often or re-spent is that dollar in the local economy? Having better data around that will help them better support the economic actions in the plan.

Mr. Aguilar asked how they got that data and how to increase the transparency of that data.

Mr. Middlebrook said there are some firms out there that are doing economic analysis on ecosystem service benefits. Putting a dollar amount on the value of clean air, clean water, tracking visitor spending, multipliers using AI and machine learning to project that out in the future given different climate scenarios and different weather patterns. Working with one of those firms and bringing some expertise in is something they could do in the future.

Mr. Aguilar asked is that six months, ten years, or?

Mr. Middlebrook said definitely not ten years. Yesterday, he had a call with one of those firms to get some more information on their products and are actively having those discussions now.

Mr. Aguilar asked if we could expect some of this information within one year.

Mr. Middlebrook said it will depend on the ability to fund that work.

Mr. Aguilar asked what it cost to fund that work.

Mr. Middlebrook said it depends on the scope and how big you want to go, but it could be on the low end from \$50,000 up to the high end of \$200,000 depending on the overall scope of that work.

Mr. Aguilar asked if that was something TRPA would pay for or who pays for that type of study.

Mr. Middlebrook said those conversations are ongoing. Most likely as Tahoe does many things by funding it collaboratively with all of the partners.

Mr. Aguilar said the reason he is asking is it goes back to the discussion about especially State Route 28 on the Nevada side, is what are the funding sources that are available to fund infrastructure from a safety perspective? He's trying to get an understanding as he has these conversations, what dollars are flowing back into the local communities to address some of these high priority needs.

Ms. Hill said they need to talk about this because of the way that Washoe County taxes are structured through NRS. They go directly to the RCDA and then the RCDA then gives a portion to the visitor's authority in Incline Village. The visitors' authority has their own mission. She just received an email that they're going to be helping the county with snow clearing but it's not enough money. They need to talk about that because in California there's a bit more of an ability to use Transient Occupancy Taxes for direct services for the community. So, that's not really happening in Nevada.

Ms. Regan said we're fortunate to have built this new table for destination stewardship. To tie a bow on a couple of the key points are starting with the economics piece, one of the things that they have all collectively realized in Tahoe over the last several years, is they have this incredible body of work in the physical sciences around the lake, but only in more recent years have they been delving into the social science, socio-economic drivers, and the science council is getting involved in that. This is a positive shift and it's really within the last four plus years that they even did an economic study of the Environmental Improvement Program so that they can quantify, they know that 1,700 jobs are a result of the EIP program and some of the other multipliers. They are getting better at that, but to really address the challenges they've highlighted, they have to be more sophisticated in that work.

Tahoe In Depth is a key vehicle to reach those part-time homeowners. They know from our readership that particularly those who subscribe to Tahoe In Depth are largely part-time homeowners. That will continue to be a key vehicle to get the messages out, but we need to do more because they publish two issues per year and would like to do a third publication. Consistency of message is really key in breaking through the clutter that's out there.

In terms of the changing demographics, Ms. Conrad-Saydah brought up last month's presentation and there is so much of a connection of what they've seen in the transformation of our economy from a gaming-dominated economy where people drove and parked in parking lots and were in one centralized area that had infrastructure to support that. It has shifted over the last 20 years, they really have not invested in that infrastructure to handle the roadway parking, the corridor impacts, the increase in the beach access on State Route 28 and State Route 89 in Nevada and California. It's no surprise that they're seeing these pressure points. The good news is we do have the ability to solve that, and we have the data that is going to help them do a better job in that. They've also seen changing residents in recent times and more people are moving here that don't have that historical knowledge of the connection to tourism. They have to do a better job of communicating those benefits from an economic and quality of life standpoint.

The final wrap-up point that they've touched on is that 80/20 rule. If you take the visitors at their word that roughly 80 percent feel like they're doing a good job of taking care of Tahoe when they visit, there is a 20 percent problem of those who aren't. But that 20 percent problem gets all the exposure. Let's work together and we can harness that power of

education and marketing in a way that public agencies will never have the budgets to do. By unifying and getting synced up with our messages and the power of that access, that's unprecedented.

It's groundbreaking, they are leading a national and international discussion around the work that they're doing in Tahoe. Certainly, a huge challenge ahead of us, it's not getting any easier. They know from the trends in outdoor recreation, people have discovered the great outdoors and they're going to keep coming.

These conversations started well before Covid and there is a lot of solid ground to build on.

Ms. Gustafson said on behalf of the local jurisdictions, they want to be at the table and provide more funding for data research. They need to be a part of that because they feel that pressure of the angst that we are feeling in our communities. They get thousands of letters on Tahoe issues as a Board of Supervisors. So, understanding that and playing a vital role. Let her know when you need more funding because sometimes the people at the table working with you on a daily basis don't know how passionate her board is about getting that data and thinks there are others are too. coming out again this week.

## VII. REPORTS

### A. Executive Director Status Report

Ms. Regan said the earlier discussion on aquatic invasive species and destination stewardship is a nice segue into some work that's been ongoing for some time. Last Tuesday, she was invited by Senator Jacky Rosen to represent TRPA and our greater partnership at her subcommittee on Travel and Tourism with the theme on destination stewardship. This was a good opportunity to raise visibility around some of our challenges. They've already been inquiries been getting inquiries of clean shuttles that could help support our transit needs here in the basin. It was an exciting opportunity to elevate the work they're doing in Tahoe, but also to plug the Restoration Act extension and some of the other needs that we have.

Congressman Amodei has been a champion for us on the house side of getting our Lake Tahoe Restoration Act extended and right now they need to get a committee hearing in the house and we have some hiccups that they're working through. They took this opportunity to give him the latest on what they're doing in Tahoe and leverage the issue of the New Zealand mudsnails as an urgent point to get that act re-authorized. Because if we lost funding for the Restoration Act on the invasive species program. That would have catastrophic results.

US Senator Tom Carper from Delaware is the longest serving elected official in the state's history. She knew him when he was a State Treasurer before he went to Congress, became the Governor and has been the Senator for 20 plus years. He's the chair of the Environment and Public Works Committee and that is the committee that our bill needs to hitch a ride on to go through the Water Resources Development Act and we're having some issues with that. It was a great opportunity to meet with him and his staff. His staff is also very key on



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infrastructure funding in general that flows through that committee. She tried to leverage the opportunity to be back there for this unplanned trip, but it was trip worth making and wanted you to know of how all these dots intersect in terms of the work that we do and the partnerships that we have to keep elevating the Tahoe message.

The Nevada Legislature in Nevada meets every other year and we're heading into an interim session. The Nevada Oversight Committee is the oversight for Tahoe Regional Planning Agency and the Marlette Lake Water System. There has been a six member committee appointed and they only have one returning member, Senator Robin Titus when she served in the Assembly served on our oversight committee for many years is back. Melanie Scheible, who's a Senator from Southern Nevada, is also returning. Senator Skip Daly from Washoe County, Assembly Woman Shannon, Bilbray-Axelrod from Clark County, Assemblyman Rich DeLong, who is important because his district touches the lake, will be serving on the interim committee as well as Assembly member Angie Taylor of Washoe County.

The California Tahoe Alliance and you have heard me mention this group before. Member Leumer and Laine have been active with that group and some advocacy at the capital in California. After one of the more recent bonds passed in California, the Environmental Improvement Program partnership came together to unify voices in Sacramento to up our presence in front of legislators in California. This group's been meeting for many years and TRPA was instrumental in helping it get set up. Right now, Dr. Darcie Collins from the League to Save Lake Tahoe coordinates that group and has around 12 partners. The local jurisdictions on the California side, public utility districts, the Tahoe Fund, the Tahoe Resource Conservation District, the Lake Tahoe Community College, and other partners come together to have a unified legislative advocacy platform and our issues are right for in in the forefront. They also have the California Tahoe Conservancy as an advisory member to that group. Should a water or climate bond be placed on the ballot next year, they are making sure that Tahoe is top of mind and included in those in addition to the formula funding for transportation that would match federal statute and bring potentially millions of dollars into Tahoe in the transportation space to help fulfill that 7-7-7 funding share.

There's a large amount of work that's going on behind the scenes and will be getting into that at the committee level in both the Environmental Improvement Program committee and the Transportation committee next year.

The annual Pet Parade was held on October 31<sup>st</sup>. We trick or treat with our staff members children around the office and then we walk around the parking lot with all of the pets.

Ms. Regan introduced Kayla Horowitz who is our front desk Public Service Specialist. Yesterday, they were visited by someone from the Bay Area who's a First Amendment advocate and is going around public institutions filming the reaction of people for his You Tube channel. He also went to the Tahoe Transportation District office. Ms. Horowitz was professional, calm, and courteous while being filmed the entire time. The individual filmed a lot of different people in their offices from the windows and we showed our finest hour of being professional and helpful. He filmed at the local unified school district and some other public institutions. She's proud of our team for being professional.

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Michelle Brown is our newest planning associate in the Regional Planning Department and Kaley Arboleda is with AmeriCorps and will be with us for one year working with the Regional Planning Department on the Phase 3 Housing Amendments.

Staff have been doing a lot of outreach to let the community know that the Regional Planning Committee will be discussing housing amendments today.

In December, we'll be having our holiday lunch with staff and the Governing Board. Staff will also be having their holiday event on December 8 at the Valhalla this year. Advisory Planning Commission or Governing Board members are invited to attend. Also, in December, we'll be chartering our first meeting of the new Transportation Committee. The Regional Planning Committee will be hearing the Placer County Area Plan Amendments after the conclusion of the Board meeting. The Operations and Governance Committee and the Nevada Tahoe Regional Planning Agency, which is the Nevada delegation of the Board, will also be meeting on December 13.

Next year, some of the items coming to the Governing Board will be the Meeks Bay Restoration and there'll be discussions on VMT not only at the Regional Planning Committee in December, but also in the January board meeting. Also, early next year, staff will be bringing for discussion and action for the thresholds related to stream environment zones and invasive species.

### B. General Counsel Status Report

Mr. Marshall said he sent out an email with updates on our cases. The search for a high level associate is still in process. It's difficult to find someone who wants to come in as a high level associate who you would like to build into a potential candidate for General Counsel because that usually means they're stepping back plus there's some uncertainty associated with the final hiring decision which is ultimately the Governing Board's decision as to his position. They are going to recalibrate and look to see what they can do and maybe think about some other ways to service our legal needs.

## VIII. GOVERNING BOARD MEMBER REPORTS

No report.

## IX. COMMITTEE REPORTS

### A. Local Government & Housing Committee

No report.

### B. Legal Committee

No report.

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C. Operations & Governance Committee

No report.

D. Environmental Improvement, Transportation, & Public Outreach Committee

No report.

E. Forest Health and Wildfire Committee

No report.

F. Regional Plan Implementation Committee

The committee will meet at the conclusion of the Governing Board meeting.

X. PUBLIC INTEREST COMMENTS

Julie on behalf of Elise Fett said with respect to the Aquatic Invasive Species they are happy with the work done so far, but they want to talk about the nutrients portion of weeds specifically and how to combat them. It kind of goes with the stewardship program, those signs that slow down Tahoe and the trash signs have been helpful, and we think that it would be great if we could get a sign out there that says "To love the lake and stop using fertilizers, fertilizers." Fertilizers even with all of the BMPs and all the great things that we've done still I do make it into the lake and add nutrients and contribute to weed and algal growth. In the fight against the weeds, what wasn't talked about with some of the other things that are happening like laminar flow aeration used to reduce biomass and these sorts of things. They want to keep those nonchemical solutions in the forefront and make sure that people are aware of what's going on with those and how they're working. They want to address these and keep our lake as healthy as possible with as little chemical activity as possible.

Gavin Feiger, League to Save Lake Tahoe said thank you to Chair Gustafson for connecting them with Liberty Utilities. They came out and did some work and are coming out again this week to ensure that the new compressor is fully operational. The League funded the entire bubble curtain at the Tahoe Keys and is looking to take over ownership of it. The League will continue to help with the funding piece. Before the New Zealand mudsnail discovery they were only about 50 percent of the Aquatic Invasive Species program was funded. They are working with TRPA and everyone to try and make that happen.

XI. ADJOURNMENT

Ms. Aldean moved to adjourn.

Motion carried.

Ms. Gustafson adjourned the meeting at 11:35 a.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

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Marja Ambler  
Clerk to the Board

*The above meeting was recorded in its entirety. Anyone wishing to listen to the recording of the above-mentioned meeting may find it at <https://www.trpa.gov/meeting-materials/>. In addition, written documents submitted at the meeting are available for review. If you require assistance locating this information, please contact the TRPA at (775) 588-4547 or [virtualmeetinghelp@trpa.gov](mailto:virtualmeetinghelp@trpa.gov).*

DRAFT