

**From:** [Niobe Burden Austere](#)  
**To:** [Marja Ambler](#); [Julie Regan](#)  
**Subject:** Public Comment AGENDA ITEM NO. VII.B July 26 Governing Board - pertaining to Governing Board Responsibilities  
**Date:** Monday, July 24, 2023 1:01:53 PM

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In reference to AGENDA ITEM NO. VII.B - In the Annual Work Plan Overview -

The Bi-State Compact that established TRPA requires the Governing Board to (1) adopt Threshold Standards and (2) a Regional Plan and Code to achieve and maintain the Threshold Standards it has adopted.

Clarification would be much appreciated where the TRPA is being accountable to upholding and improving on the region's environmental threshold carrying capacity. Also with regards to the Climate Resilience Dashboard and BEFORE making Changes/Amendments to the existing Tahoe Area Basin Plan or aligning with local government with regards to proposed increases in density of ANY kind whether for Luxury condo projects OR Affordable Housing.

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Email sent to Jeff Cowan, July 18 2023

Hi Jeff,

Sorry for my late reply, as I don't have the time necessary to respond quickly with a hospital job, fine art photography business and 9 rental (long term) properties to manage across the nation. I understand that you are the main Public Information Officer of TRPA and thank you for your response. Unfortunately, I don't believe you answered ANY of my questions accurately. I will ask again -

1. **Is TRPA generating a CUMULATIVE IMPACT EIS/EIR to the 2012 Regional Plan, a basin wide environmental cumulative impact analysis study SINCE 2012? YES or NO If so, at what stage is this or is there a timeline?**

The [Regional Plan Progress story map](#) is a wonderfully positive interactive piece but there is still no update to this **information since 2020** when a massive influx of 2nd homeowners, remote workers, and tourists impacted the area. Where is **THIS** information? The statement indicates that the population has been relatively flat since 2010.....when the reality is since 2020 everyone has seen and felt the impacts locals and tourists alike....do you not agree? where do you live? To the point where there have been numerous national publications discouraging tourists from going to Lake Tahoe. I'm sure you've been made aware of these articles....if not let me know. As shown by the story map, TRPA has initiated lots of great work in South Lake Tahoe but in the public eye not so much in North Lake Tahoe, besides the Kings Beach roundabouts that were poorly planned for pedestrian vs auto traffic, controlling invasive aquatic species and supporting micro transit. **Where is the update of this information since 2019 which you reference?**

2. **Is there another Threshold Evaluation Report in the works? The TRPA website indicates that they are updated every 4 years, the last report being in 2019. Of the 10 threshold areas stated on the website, are all thresholds being met prior to these proposed Amendments to the Regional Plan? If not, which ones are not being met?**

I DID take a look at the [Threshold Monitoring Dashboard](#) on the TRPA website, which is exactly what prompted my second question. This is all **OUT OF DATE** material. Can you **please answer when a new Threshold Evaluation Report will be complete and what areas of the 10 threshold areas are being met or not and what mitigation is being implemented?** Certainly the consideration of increased density and approval of SF massive luxury homes on lakeside double lots with removal of historical cabins is not improving the "scenic resources" threshold. What TRPA governing boards, working committees, staff, and decision makers are doing is contrary to upholding its fundamental responsibilities to support adaptive management towards threshold standard attainment! Shouldn't updated threshold evaluations be primary to ANY future management decisions?

One really has to dig deep to find answers (and most don't have the time)....from a March 2022 TRPA staff report online....here are some of the answers I would have expected in your response.....

#### **Referencing the Threshold Update Initiative Stakeholders Working Group**

"The Bi-State Compact instructs TRPA to develop threshold standards for the region in cooperation with the federal government, the two states, and stakeholders. In 2018 the Governing Board asked the Advisory Planning Commission to convene a **Threshold Update Initiative Stakeholders Working Group** charged with providing feedback on the overall direction for the initiative, as well as providing recommendations on partner and stakeholder engagement"

**It's been 5 years. What are some of the conclusions this working group has recommended?** The only information I find on the TRPA website is this March 2022 staff report recommending the reconvening of this working group and a duplication of the members from the APC to serve on the working group..... **duplication of members is not conducive to the importance of necessary time required or objective decision making and reigns across TOO MANY areas of local governing agencies. Where can the work of the past year of this working group be found?** I only find a meeting announcement and agenda regarding the air quality threshold in August of last year.

**Referencing the Tahoe Science Advisory Council** - formed in 2015 by a MOU between the States of California and Nevada, this council is made up of an independent group of scientists who work collaboratively to advise policy makers. **In what way has TRPA been advised by this council and implemented their suggestions?**

The latest meeting I can find was in March 2023 and following are findings I found in one of their reports -

[https://www.tahoesciencecouncil.org/\\_files/ugd/c115bf\\_0acb87953c6c41ac9a79a5281e06923b.pdf](https://www.tahoesciencecouncil.org/_files/ugd/c115bf_0acb87953c6c41ac9a79a5281e06923b.pdf)  
pg 12 of their latest report from June 2022

- Q4) Why have lake very fine particle concentrations remained elevated since the step-change increase of WY 2017? • Lake accumulation of very fine particles increased through WYs 2020 and 2021, although both were years with low runoff. • Either more very fine particles are entering the lake during low runoff years than previously, or more of these particles remain suspended in the lake for longer.
- Agencies and the Tahoe Science Advisory Council are reviewing nearshore algal monitoring and assessing opportunities to modify the program to include all nearshore algae. ALSO, **UC Davis has monitored the most noticeable periphyton in Lake Tahoe since 2000. They are presenting their latest "State of the Lake Report based on 2022 data on July 20th. I assume their findings will be taken seriously.**

**Lastly, is TRPA planning to prepare a roadway by roadway basin wide fire evacuation capacity evaluation? You indicate TRPA is not preparing an evaluation as I describe, who is? The Bi-state compact definition does refer to maintaining the public's health and safety within the region. I do appreciate the amount of work and dollars allocated to defensible space projects but who actually is considering the impacts of additional density being considered and limitations to evacuate the basin on our two lane roads? Who should this question be directed to? I assume you and everyone who lives with the basin with TRPA has noticed the standstill traffic these past few weeks.**

**A perspective from living in Europe- Unless it is mandated for people to take public transportation or it is more convenient than taking their own vehicle, a change in peoples customary habits will NOT happen! For instance, in Zermatt, Switzerland it is mandatory for everyone other than residents and vendors to take the convenient (every 15 minute) train into the valley, with luggage and all and it costs but includes parking. Public transportation needs to be faster, cheaper and more convenient to get places than by private vehicle. How is this issue being addressed? What are the incentives for the public to take all the wo**

**Bi-State Compact Definition - “Environmental threshold carrying capacity” means an environmental standard necessary to maintain a significant scenic, recreational, educational, scientific or natural value of the region or to maintain public health and safety within the region. Such standards shall include but not be limited to standards for air quality, water quality, soil conservation, vegetation preservation and noise.”**

There's lots of information online but nothing consistent or easy to find. With layers and layers of bureaucracy it's utterly discouraging and frustrating to find if our governing agencies are meeting up to their appointed responsibilities. Any clarification would be much appreciated where the TRPA is being accountable to upholding and improving on the region's environmental threshold carrying capacity.

Thank you for addressing my questions.

*Niobe Burden Austere*

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*Concerned Property Owner - Tahoe Vista*