

3.1 RECREATION

This section describes existing recreation resources within and near the project area, applicable regulatory requirements, the methods used for assessment, and the potential direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts of project implementation related to recreation.

3.1.1 Regulatory Setting

This subsection presents information on the laws, regulations, plans, and policies that relate to the environmental resource being discussed and would guide or influence implementation of the project.

FEDERAL

USDA Forest Service, Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit

The USDA Forest Service (USFS), Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit (LTBMU) manages over 75 percent of lands within the Lake Tahoe Basin. Management of LTBMU lands near Meeks Bay is guided by the LTBMU Forest Plan (USFS 2016). The LTBMU Forest Plan identifies desired conditions for sustainable recreation including the following:

- ▶ DC89. Recreation projects are developed with the involvement of neighboring communities, partners, state and local agencies, tribes, and adjacent Forest Service units.
- ▶ DC91. The public has opportunities to access Lake Tahoe shorelines and NFS lands.
- ▶ DC94. Recreation development meets a wide range of social expectations while maintaining the quality of the setting and natural resources.

The Forest Plan also identifies strategies for achieving desired conditions. Relevant recreation strategies include:

- ▶ Consider changing user demands, trends, and preferences, including modifying existing sites and infrastructure to improve natural resource conditions and recreation settings.
- ▶ Undertake recreation expansion to address socioeconomic challenges, improve management of existing developed sites, and mitigate adverse effects to natural resources resulting from recreation activities

Specific standards and guidelines for recreation resources are also described in the *Sierra Nevada Forest Plan Amendment* and Record of Decision (USFS 2004), which adopts an integrated strategy for vegetation management, aimed largely at reducing the risk of wildfire. As it pertains to recreation, the *Sierra Nevada Forest Plan Amendment* clarifies how several of the riparian standards apply to recreation activities, uses, and projects, and gives local managers the opportunity to develop mitigation measures for small and varied recreation projects on a project- and site-specific basis (Standards and Guidelines #103 and #116).

TAHOE REGIONAL PLANNING AGENCY

TRPA provides Basin-wide planning and policy direction related to recreation through its Regional Plan and related implementing ordinances and regulations.

Thresholds

TRPA has established two threshold standards for recreation, which represent minimum standards of environmental quality targets to be achieved in the region. The recreation thresholds are in the form of policy statements rather than numeric standards. The two recreation threshold standards are related to quality experience and additional access and fair share of recreation capacity.

The Quality Experience and Additional Access Threshold consists of two parts:

(1) preservation and enhancement of a high-quality recreational experience and opportunities and (2) the provision of additional access to high-quality lands for recreation, including lake access. The quality of recreation experiences was evaluated for the 2019 Threshold Evaluation through Sustainable Recreation Working Group surveys. Over 92 percent of respondents to the Sustainable Recreation Working Group surveys rated their experiences spent outdoors at Lake Tahoe as "extremely enjoyable" or "very enjoyable" (Lake Tahoe Info 2021a). The evaluation criteria for the second part of the threshold standard relies on assessing the extent of public land acquired, and the availability of additional amenities that provide public access for low density recreational uses, such as trails and trailheads.

Public agency land acquisition programs and the Lake Tahoe Environmental Improvement Program (EIP) have contributed to improved access and visitor and resident satisfaction with the quality and spectrum of recreation opportunities. The percentage of the total land area held in public ownership and managed for public access has continued to increase in the region, and currently, approximately 90 percent of the region is public land. The amount of public land available for low-density recreational use, and the number of amenities that provide access to that land, have also increased.

The Fair Share of Recreation Capacity Threshold is intended to ensure a fair share of the region's total capacity for outdoor recreation is available to the general public. The attainment of this threshold standard is based on three indicators: (1) cumulative accounts of persons at one time (PAOT) allocations; (2) facility development for recreation projects that do not require PAOT assignments; and (3) land acquisition of new public lands that support recreation purposes. A large portion of the pool of PAOTs allocated by the Regional Plan remain available (see Table 3.1-1). The amount of public land available for low-density recreational use, and the number of amenities that provide access to that land, have also increased. As of 2019, 74 percent of summer day use PAOTs were available and approximately 94 percent of summer overnight PAOTs were available (Lake Tahoe Info 2022a).

Table 3.1-1 PAOT Allocations in the Tahoe Basin

Category	Regional Plan Allocation	Assigned as of 2015 Evaluation	Assigned 2015 to 2019	PAOTs Remaining
Summer Day Use	6,761	1,722	32	5,007 (74%)
Winter Day Use	12,400	5,267	168	6,965 (56%)
Summer Overnight	6,114	394	0	5,720 (94%)
Total	25,275	7,383	200	17,692 (70%)

Source: Lake Tahoe Info 2022a.

Based on the most recent Threshold Evaluation Report completed in 2021, the recreation thresholds are in attainment (Lake Tahoe Info 2021b).

No additional PAOTs have been assigned to Meeks Bay in the Meeks Bay Plan Area Statement (PAS 150) (TRPA 2002); however, that does not preclude a project at Meeks Bay from obtaining PAOTs from the reserve of summer day-use PAOTs and summer overnight PAOTs.

Tahoe Regional Plan

The Tahoe Regional Plan contains specific goals and policies to achieve and maintain thresholds. Policies in the Recreation Element address three broad categories of recreation in the Lake Tahoe Basin: dispersed recreation, developed recreation, and urban recreation. Dispersed recreation includes such activities as hiking, jogging, primitive camping, mountain biking, nature study, fishing, cross-country skiing, rafting/kayaking, and swimming. All these activities require a natural environment and some degree of solitude. Developed recreation includes marina and boat launch facilities, ski areas, campgrounds, and beaches. Urban recreation includes facilities located near urban areas, such as sports facilities, day-use areas, and recreation centers. Goals and policies for all types of recreation generally pertain to providing opportunities and sufficient capacity for high-quality recreation opportunities in a manner consistent with resource protection.

The Shorezone Subelement of the Conservation Element identifies special qualities, including physical, biological, and visual, that shall be considered when reviewing a project in the shorezone or lakezone. The Shorezone Subelement requires TRPA to regulate the placement of new piers, buoys, and other structures in the nearshore and foreshore to avoid degradation of fish habitats, creation of navigation hazards, interference with littoral drift, interference with the attainment of scenic thresholds and other relevant concerns. Applicable shorezone goals and policies that could influence the development of recreation-related uses and analysis of impacts on recreation are identified below.

Policies relevant to recreation include (TRPA 2012:4-17 through 4-20, 5-1 through 5-8):

GOAL SZ-1: Provide for the appropriate shorezone uses of Lake Tahoe, Cascade Lake, and Fallen Leaf Lake while preserving their natural and aesthetic qualities.

- ▶ Policy SZ-1.9: The agency shall regulate the placement of new piers, buoys, and other structures in the foreshore and nearshore to avoid degradation of fish habitats, creation of navigation hazards, interference with littoral drift, interference with the attainment of scenic thresholds, and other relevant concerns.
- ▶ Policy SZ-1.13: Allow public access to the shorezone where lawful and feasible on public lands.

GOAL R-1: Encourage opportunities for dispersed recreation when consistent with environmental values and protection of the natural resources.

GOAL R-2: Provide high-quality recreational opportunities.

GOAL R-5: Protect natural resources from overuse and rectify incompatibility among uses.

- ▶ Policy R-5.1: Recreation development in the Tahoe region shall be consistent with the special resources of the area.
- ▶ Policy R-5.2: Regulate intensity, timing, type, and location of use to protect resources and separate incompatible uses.

Code of Ordinances

The TRPA Code of Ordinances (Code) contains the requirements and standards intended to achieve recreation thresholds, goals, and policies. The Code addresses many subjects, including required permits for development, findings required for approval of projects, development standards, development allocations, resource management, water quality, air quality, and transportation. The Code sections applicable to recreation and development that may be related to recreation facilities associated with the project are summarized below in Table 3.1-2.

Table 3.1-2 Applicable TRPA Code Requirements Related to Recreation

Code Section	Summary of Requirements
Section 50.9	Describes how TRPA regulates the expansion of recreational use in the Lake Tahoe Region by identifying targets for recreational use and regulating development to maintain them. The TRPA Code addresses development in the shorezone of Lake Tahoe (TRPA Code Chapters 80–85).
Section 80.4.2	States that any special project conditions of approval shall be guided by the unique characteristics of the project area, and the nature of the backshore (utilizing Policies 1 and 2, Goal #1 of the Shorezone Subelement, Conservation Element of the Goals and Policies), as well as objectives related to the protection of significant vistas, preservation of the site and shorezone from environmental harm during and after construction, and protection of views of adjoining development.
Section 80.4.5	States that no projects shall be permitted if such project will create significant adverse impacts to topline fishing access that cannot be mitigated. TRPA shall make this determination in consultation with California Department of Fish and Wildlife and Nevada Division of Wildlife.
Section 80.4.7	States that developed recreation projects may require an operating plan or equivalent document demonstrating that spatial conflicts with other recreational uses will not be significant as a result of the project. TRPA shall ensure that shorezone recreational projects are designed to avoid overuse and to avoid conflicts between recreation users.
Section 81.4.1	Lists the permissible uses in the lakezone and establishes whether the uses are allowed or special in the lakezone.
Section 81.4.2	Lists the permissible uses in the shorezone, which includes beach recreation, boat launching facilities, and water-oriented outdoor recreation concessions.

Code Section	Summary of Requirements
Section 81.4.4	Lists the allowable accessory structures in the shorezone if they are accessory to an existing, allowed use located on the same littoral parcel, which includes boat ramps, buoys, piers, and storage racks for non-motorized watercraft.
Section 84.3	Identifies the requirements for the construction of additional mooring structures (e.g., boat slips, buoys) and the relocation and conversion of existing mooring structures.
Section 84.3.2.D.3.a	States that a legally existing boat slip within a marina or public facility may be converted to a buoy within the same facility, and vice-versa.
Section 84.4	Describes the provisions for the construction of additional piers and to the relocation, transfer, modification, or expansion of existing piers.
Section 84.4.2.B	Describes that a littoral parcel owned by a public entity shall be eligible for a new pier provided the requirements set forth in Section 84.4.2.A are met, with the exception that requirement set forth in Subsection 84.4.2.A.3 may be waived subject to environmental review.
Section 84.4.3	Provides the development standards for piers, which prohibits shorezone structures in Stream-mouth Protection Zones.
Section 84.5.3.E.1	Allows for a legally existing public boat ramp to be relocated on the same parcel or to a littoral parcel better suited to accommodate low lake levels.
Section 84.6	Describes the requirements applicable to the modification or expansion of existing marinas.
Section 84.10	Identifies the requirements applicable to other activities and uses in the shorezone, including operation of watercraft, no-wake zones (within 600 feet of the waterline of the lake, 200 feet of shorezone structures, and 100 feet of swimmers and non-motorized watercraft), and water-oriented outdoor recreation concessions.
Section 85.5	States that land coverage and land disturbance may be permitted in the backshore for public outdoor recreation facilities if TRPA makes findings, which include findings related to the project's relationship to a public agency's long-range plans for public outdoor recreation and consistency with the Recreation Element of the Goals and Policies.

Source: TRPA 2021a.

Regional Transportation Plan and Lake Tahoe Active Transportation Plan

TRPA developed the 2020 Regional Transportation Plan (2020 RTP) as Lake Tahoe's blueprint for a regional transportation system that enhances the quality of life in the Tahoe region, promotes sustainability, and offers improved mobility options for people and goods (TRPA 2021b). The RTP projects are intended to close connectivity gaps and increase safety on the existing active transportation network and provide all users more of the facilities they need to recreate and travel to their destinations. The 2020 RTP includes policies related to recreation that are applicable to the project that support projects and programs to enhance non-automobile travel modes; providing frequent transit service to recreational areas; ensuring that pedestrian and bicycle facilities are Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA) compliant and Universally Accessible; constructing and maintaining pedestrian and bicycle facilities consistent with the Active Transportation Plan; and designing projects to maximize visibility at vehicular, bicycle, and pedestrian conflict points (e.g., increased safety signage, site distance, etc.).

The Highway 89 Corridor Tahoe Trail Feasibility Study (SR 89 - West Shore Tahoe Trail Feasibility Study Meeks Bay to Spring Creek Road, EIP Project # 03.02.02.0088), is a project listed in the RTP and is identified as a Regionally significant project as a transportation project serving regional needs such as access to and from Tahoe from the SR 89 corridor, major activity centers in the region, high demand recreation facilities, transportation terminals, and major improvements on principle arterial highways.

The Linking Tahoe Active Transportation Plan (ATP) informs the approach for trails in the RTP (TRPA 2018a). Specifically, the ATP presents a guide for planning, constructing, and maintaining a regional bicycle and pedestrian network and support facilities and programs. The network includes on-street bicycle lanes and bicycle routes, and off-street paths and sidewalks. The ATP includes maps and prioritized project lists for the bicycle and pedestrian network and lays out policies for local governing bodies and transportation agencies. The ATP identifies the Tahoe Trail as a regional path that would provide users with a continuous multi-use path around Lake Tahoe. In addition, the ATP

identifies potential funding sources and specifies recommended designs to encourage consistency and safety within the region. Goals of the ATP that are relevant to the project include increasing connectivity by completing the active transportation network and improving safety for bicyclists and pedestrians. Policies in the ATP that are relevant to the project include incorporating segments of the proposed active transportation network into new and redeveloped commercial, tourist, multi-family, public service, and recreation projects and implementing consistent regionwide wayfinding and path etiquette strategies.

Shoreline Plan

The Lake Tahoe Shoreline Plan regulations for shoreline structures including piers, buoys, boat ramps, and marinas to support water-dependent recreation at Lake Tahoe and ensure effective natural resource management for continued environmental threshold attainment. The Shoreline Plan includes development caps and guidelines for appropriate uses, such as marinas and piers, along the lake's 72 miles of shoreline. The Shoreline Plan will allow for a maximum of 10 new public piers and 128 new private piers.

The Shoreline Plan requires that all new and existing moorings on Lake Tahoe be permitted and registered. Moorings include buoys, boat lifts, and boat slips. There are currently an estimated 8,731 existing moorings on Lake Tahoe (TRPA 2018b). Over the 20-year life of the Shoreline Plan, up to 2,116 additional moorings could be distributed in phases to the following pools:

- ▶ 1,486 for private littoral parcels and homeowners' associations
- ▶ 330 for marinas
- ▶ 300 for public agencies

State Route 89 Corridor Management Plan

The SR 89 Recreation Corridor Management Plan (SR 89 Corridor Plan) consists of a series of corridor-wide strategies and recommendations along SR 89 on Tahoe's west shore that would help resolve corridor issues and address opportunities developed in coordination with plan partners, stakeholders, and public (TRPA et al. 2020). The SR 89 Corridor Plan summarizes recommended strategies to collaboratively manage the corridor, and includes a series of phased projects to achieve the vision of shifting the way people arrive to their recreation destinations from being auto-dominated to more transit and multi-modal focused. The components common to all the strategies in the SR 89 Corridor Plan include completion of the Tahoe Trail through the corridor, increasing transit service, and eliminating parking along the highway. Overall, the desired conditions for the SR 89 Recreation Corridor require an increase in operational capacity to effectively administer visitor management strategies, disperse visitation throughout the day, reduce impacts on natural and cultural resources, and eliminate the chaos caused from visitors parking and walking along the highway. The SR 89 Corridor Plan identifies strategies but does not include environmental review or permitting for any of them. Implementation of the recommended strategies would be at the discretion of the various agencies and subject to environmental review, as required.

The SR 89 Corridor Plan includes a number of goals and objectives that are relevant to the Meeks Bay Restoration Project. These goals and objectives are related to providing a quality travel experience by providing for a variety of travel methods for visitors and residents to visit the corridor; enhancing multi-modal transportation systems and roadway improvements to manage congestion, reduce VMT and greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, and result in other improvements to the environment; and providing opportunities for active transportation, including completing the Tahoe Trail through the corridor.

The Meeks Bay Restoration Project is included in the SR 89 Corridor Plan, which also identifies the following projects within the Meeks Bay segment of SR 89:

- ▶ develop Tahoe Trail segment within Meeks Bay with grade-separated crossing, if needed; underground powerlines and co-locate technology infrastructure;
- ▶ develop bus stop at Meeks Bay;
- ▶ relocate roadside parking when alternative access is provided through transit and bike options;

- ▶ replace Caltrans bridge and incorporate capacity for wildlife crossing and pedestrian/bike use;
- ▶ formalize emergency turnouts;
- ▶ provide winter recreation access parking;
- ▶ increase technology infrastructure; and
- ▶ provide a water taxi stop at Meeks Bay.

STATE

California State Lands Commission

The California State Lands Commission (State Lands) is responsible for leasing sovereign lands on the California side of Lake Tahoe. On the California side of Lake Tahoe, a public trust easement allows for public access between the low- and high-water elevation of Lake Tahoe. The area in the public trust easement allows for commerce, navigation, fishing, recreation, and preservation. The high- and low-water marks for the California side of the lake have been established as elevations 6,228.75 feet and 6,223 feet Lake Tahoe datum, respectively. Any activities involving the State's sovereign lands in Lake Tahoe below 6,223 feet require a lease from State Lands.

3.1.2 Environmental Setting

As described above, over 75 percent of the land within the Tahoe Basin is National Forest System (NFS) land managed by LTBMU, which includes the majority of the project area. Totaling over 150,000 acres in the Tahoe Basin, NFS lands include beaches, hiking and biking trails, wilderness, and developed recreation areas such as campgrounds (USFS 2016). The Washoe Tribe operates Meeks Bay Resort Facilities and Tahoe Recreation operates the campground and day-use area on the south side of the project area, under concessionaire agreements with LTBMU. The project area and its vicinity support extensive year-round recreation use, both developed and dispersed. Recreation activities at Meeks Bay on the lake side of SR 89 include camping, swimming, sunbathing, picnicking, paddle boarding, and kayaking. Existing recreation facilities in the project area and their locations relative to the Meeks Bay Restoration Project are shown in Figures 3.1-1 and 3.1-2.

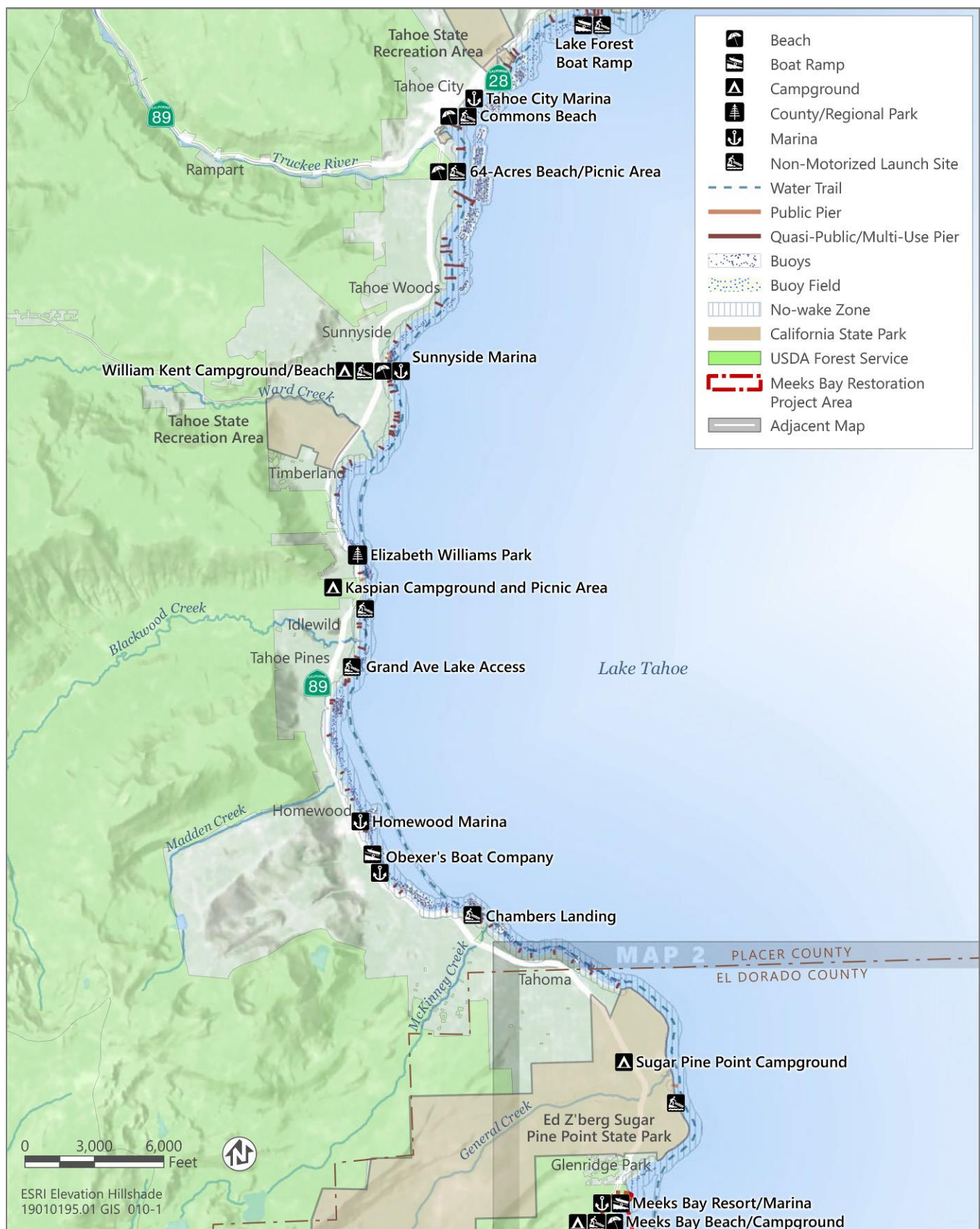
Meeks Bay trailhead is located adjacent to the project area on the west side of SR 89. The dirt parking area provides access to Lake Genevieve and Desolation Wilderness. It is a popular trailhead in the summer and winter for trail and recreation access.

PUBLIC BEACHES AND ACCESS POINTS

Over 20 public beaches and access points to the lake are located between Tahoe City and South Lake Tahoe (see Figures 3.1-1 and 3.1-2). Public beaches on the west shore are generally located on NFS lands or within California state parks. During peak summer months, Lake Tahoe's public beaches and access points are popular places for a variety of recreation activities: swimming, sunbathing, relaxing, barbecuing, paddle boarding, kayaking, jet skiing, and boating.

PIERS

The shorezone of Lake Tahoe is dotted by a total of 762 piers. There are 24 public piers and 191 multi-use piers (i.e., privately owned but serving a homeowner's association or two or more private littoral parcel owners). The remaining piers are private piers serving individual property owners. Piers provide opportunities for fishing, scenic viewing, and to otherwise experience the lake in a way that does not require getting in the water or using watercraft. When the water is high enough, piers can also serve as a place for swimmers to jump or dive in the lake.



Source: Adapted by Ascent Environmental in 2020.

Figure 3.1-1 Recreation Facilities near the Project Area: Tahoe City to Meeks Bay



Source: Adapted by Ascent Environmental in 2020.

Figure 3.1-2 Recreation Facilities near the Project Area: Meeks Bay to Tahoe Keys

The closest public piers to Meeks Bay include one pier at Sugar Pine Point State Park and two piers in Emerald Bay State Park. The pier at Sugar Pine Point State Park is used for pedestrians and could be used for docking State Parks boats. The piers in Emerald Bay are available for docking boats briefly for the purposes of loading and unloading passengers. The pier at Sugar Pine Point State Park is L-shaped, approximately 210 feet long, and ranges from 11 feet wide at the narrowest point to about 57 feet wide at the widest point. In Emerald Bay, an L-shaped pier is located near Vikingsholm. This pier is approximately 135 feet long and ranges from 14 feet wide at the narrowest point to 48 feet long at the widest point. The second pier is located near the Emerald Bay Boat Campground and is approximately 140 feet long and ranges from 20 feet wide at the end to 9 feet at the narrowest point.

MOTORIZED BOATING FACILITIES

Marinas and Public Mooring Locations

Lake Tahoe has 15 public marinas and public mooring locations located around the lake (see Figures 3.1-1 and 3.1-2 and Table 3.1-3). The public can gain access for boating through boat launching and marina/mooring facilities. Mooring facilities at marinas include boat slips and buoys. Marinas may also offer opportunities for the public to rent motorized and nonmotorized watercraft, including sailboats. These facilities are sensitive to changes in lake levels, significantly reducing their ability to meet public demand during low water conditions when many ramps and slips are left dry. Moorings are structures used for the long-term storage of boats and include buoys, slips, and boat lifts. These structures can store boats permanently, seasonally, or overnight. Marinas and moorings provide opportunities for motorized boating on Lake Tahoe. The discussion here focuses on public boating facilities since Meeks Bay Marina is a public boating facility. However, there are a number of private boat ramps and hundreds of private mooring facilities and slips throughout the lake and along the west shore.

Table 3.1-3 Publicly Accessible Motorized Boating Facilities

Marinas/Public Mooring Locations	Number of Buoys	Percent of Buoys on the Lake	Percent of Buoys on the West Shore ²	Number of Slips	Percent of Slips on the Lake	Percent of Slips on the West Shore	Total Moorings	Percent of Moorings on the Lake	Percent of Moorings on the West Shore ²
Meeks Bay Marina	0	0%	0.0%	119	10%	16%	119	6%	11%
Camp Richardson	110	15%	33%	12	1%	2%	122	6%	13%
Emerald Bay State Park	22	3%	7%	0	0%	0%	22	1%	2%
Homewood High and Dry Marina ¹	125	17%	37%	296	24%	40%	421	21%	39%
Obexer's Boat Company	16	2%	5%	39	3%	5%	55	3%	5%
Sunnyside Marina	24	3%	7%	24	2%	3%	48	2%	4%
Tahoe City Marina	41	6%	12%	241	20%	33%	282	14%	26%
Lakeside Marina	63	8%	NA	63	5%	NA	126	6%	NA
North Tahoe Marina	48	6%	NA	30	3%	NA	78	4%	NA
Round Hill Pines	70	9%	NA	0	0%	NA	70	4%	NA
Sierra Boat Company	15	2%	NA	120	10%	NA	135	7%	NA
Ski Run Marina	71	10%	NA	34	3%	NA	105	5%	NA
Tahoe Keys Marina	0	0%	NA	239	20%	NA	239	12%	18%
Timber Cove Marina	80	11%	NA	1	0.1%	NA	81	4%	NA
Zephyr Cove	65	9%	NA	0	0%	NA	65	3%	NA
West Shore Total ²	338	45%	100%	731	60%	100%	1,069	54%	100%
Lake-wide Total	750	100%	NA	1,218	100%	NA	1,968	100%	NA

Note: NA = not applicable.

¹ Homewood High and Dry Marina includes dry rack storage instead of boat slips.

² Marinas in the west shore area include Camp Richardson, Homewood High and Dry Marina, Meeks Bay Marina, Obexer's Boat Company, Sunnyside Marina, and Tahoe City Marina. Other public mooring locations on the west shore include buoys for the Emerald Bay Boat Camp.

Source: TRPA 2016, compiled by Ascent Environmental in 2021.

The Meeks Bay Marina includes 119 slips (see Table 3.1-3), a concrete boat ramp, marina office, and unpaved parking area for boat trailer parking. The marina is only operational during navigable, normal and high lake levels, and the last time it was open was in 2015. The nearest marinas to Meeks Bay are Obexer's Boat Company and Homewood High and Dry Marina, approximately 4 miles and 4.5 miles, respectively, to the north. Camp Richardson, approximately 14 miles south of Meeks Bay, is the closest marina to the south.

In addition to slips, buoys are another method used on the lake for mooring boats. On Lake Tahoe, buoys are generally used seasonally for overnight or longer-term mooring. A semi-permanent anchor block is placed on the lakebed and is attached with a tether to a removable float. Although the anchors remain in place year-round, buoy floats are usually removed during winter, when the buoy moorings are not used. Navigational buoys, such as buoys demarcating swim areas or navigational hazards, are not regulated as buoys under the Shoreline Plan. There are an estimated 750 buoys available for public use (i.e., available for rent) on Lake Tahoe, 338 of those buoys are located within the west shore area between Tahoe City and the Tahoe Keys Marina. The nearest public buoy fields to Meeks Bay are located at Obexer's Boat Company and Homewood High and Dry Marina, approximately 4 miles to the north.

Motorized Boat Launches

Boat ramps serve as the primary means of public boating access to Lake Tahoe. The ramps are used by day users, who launch boats and remove them from the lake each day, and by seasonal users, who launch boats once each boating season and store them on moorings throughout the boating season. Boat ramps are often located adjacent to or as a component of related upland facilities, such as marinas, beaches, and parks. Boat ramps can be susceptible to low lake conditions because they are fixed structures and close to shore. Some marinas and other boat launching facilities provide alternative launching services to a traditional boat ramp (e.g., forklift, gantry).

The west shore from Tahoe City to Camp Richardson in South Lake Tahoe contains five marinas and boat launching facilities (Table 3.1-4). From 2010 through 2015, the annual average number of boats launched at the Meeks Bay Marina boat ramp was 1,971, which represents 38 percent of total annual average number of launches from facilities in the west shore area during periods of normal and high lake levels (TRPA 2017; see Table 3.1-4). The number of boat trailer parking spaces at Meeks Bay is limited, which in turn limits the number of daily boat launches that could occur at Meeks Bay. Meeks Bay Marina and the boat ramp are only open during normal and high lake levels, so the annual average number of launches at Meeks Bay only reflects the periods during which it has been open. The nearest public boat launching facilities are at Obexer's Boat Company and Homewood High and Dry Marina, both located just over 4 miles to the north. To the south, the closest boat ramp is located at Tahoe Keys Marina outside of the west shore area, approximately 17 miles away. From 2010-2015, the annual average number of boats launched at the Obexer's Boat Company boat ramp was 2,352 boats. From 2011-2015, the annual average number of boats launched at Tahoe Keys Marina was 3,509 boats (TRPA 2018c:Appendix A Part 2 Table 1, Kasman, pers. comm., 2021).

Table 3.1-4 Annual Average Boat Launches on Lake Tahoe

Motorized Boat Launch Facilities	Annual Average Motorized Boat Launches/Year ¹	Percent of Lakewide Motorized Boat Launches/Year	Percent of West Shore Motorized Boat Launches/Year ⁴
Meeks Bay Marina ²	1,971	6%	38%
Homewood High and Dry Marina	323	1%	6%
Obexer's Boat Company	2,352	8%	45%
Sunnyside Marina	194	1%	4%
Tahoe City Marina	396	1%	8%
Lakeside Marina	772	3%	NA
North Tahoe Marina	368	1%	NA
Sierra Boat Company	371	1%	NA
Cave Rock	4,752	15%	NA
Coon Street (Kings Beach State Recreation Area) ²	526	2%	NA
El Dorado Boat Ramp ²	359	1%	NA
Lake Forest Boat Ramp	5,469	18%	NA
Sand Harbor ²	4,189	14%	NA
Ski Beach (Incline Village General Improvement District) ³	3,266	11%	NA
Tahoe Keys Marina	3,509	11%	NA
Tahoe Vista Recreation Area ²	1,767	6%	NA
Elks Point ³	60	0.2%	NA
Debra Lane Homeowner's Association ³	40	0.1%	NA
West Shore Total	4,717	16%	100%
Lakewide Total	30,165	100%	NA

Notes: NA = not applicable.

¹ Launch data was collected for 2010 through 2016; however, not every launch location had information for each of these years. Also, for some facilities, no launch information is available because the location was closed due to low lake levels.

² These boat ramps are closed during low lake levels.

³ These boat ramps are not open to the general public.

⁴ West shore, as defined in this table, refers to the area between Tahoe City and Camp Richardson. Boat launch facilities on the west shore include Meeks Bay marina, Homewood High and Dry Marina, Obexer's Boat Company, Sunnyside Marina, and Tahoe City Marina.

Source: TRPA 2017.

BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN ACCESS

Access to Meeks Bay includes an approximately 4-mile-long multi-use path that extends from Tahoma, with the segment from Sugar Pine Point to Meeks Bay completed in 2018. This multi-use path is a component of the planned Tahoe Trail, a paved multi-use path that would circle the lake. Based on trail counter data collected on the path at the south end of Sugar Pine Point State Park, the average number of daily trail users during July 2020 (the month that showed the most trail use) was 113 trail users and on the day that received the highest number of trail users, there were 161 trail users (Lake Tahoe Info 2022b). At this time, the Tahoma to Meeks Bay segment is one of several major sections of the Tahoe Trail that have been constructed, which includes the El Dorado Beach to Ski Run Boulevard segment, U.S. 50/Kahle Drive Intersection to Round Hill Pines segment, the Incline Village to Sand Harbor segment, the Dollar Creek segment, and the 15th Street to Spring Creek Road segment. Other sections of the Tahoe Trail are undergoing planning

and design, including the Sand Harbor to Spooner Summit segment, the North Tahoe Regional Trail, and the proposed path around Emerald Bay connecting Meeks Bay to Cascade. Completion of the Tahoe Trail segment from Meeks Bay to Cascade Creek is identified as a cumulative project at the beginning of Chapter 3 of this document. The purpose of completing the Tahoe Trail is to provide multi-modal access to popular west shore recreation sites, reduce vehicle and parking impacts, improve transportation options available for residents and visitors, improve safety, enhance recreation access, reduce water and air pollution, and enhance stormwater management and water quality.

CAMPGROUNDS

The project area includes two campgrounds, a 36-site campground at the resort and a 40-site campground south of Meeks Creek. Campsites at each of the campgrounds are available for tent or RV camping. Amenities include restrooms and showers. Including the campgrounds at Meeks Bay, there are 11 campgrounds on the west shore of Lake Tahoe with over 1,000 campsites (see Table 3.1-5). The nearest campgrounds to the project area are Sugar Pine Point State Park and D.L. Bliss State Park.

Table 3.1-5 Campgrounds on the West Shore of Lake Tahoe

Campground	Number of Campsites	Approximate Distance from the Project Area (miles)
Meeks Bay Resort	36 campsites	0
Meeks Bay Campground	40 campsites	0
Sugar Pine Point State Park	185 campsites (includes 10 group sites)	1.5
D.L. Bliss State Park	151 campsites (includes 1 group site)	6
Kaspian Campground	9 campsites	7
Emerald Bay Boat Campground	22 campsites	8
William Kent Campground	78 campsites 3 yurts	9
Eagle Point Campground	100 campsites	11
Camp Shelley	25 campsites	13
Fallen Leaf Campground	201 campsites 6 yurts	13.5
Camp Richardson Campgrounds (Eagle's Nest and Badger's Den)	211 campsites	14
Total	1,058 campsites 9 yurts	NA

Note: NA = not applicable.

Source: compiled by Ascent Environmental in 2021.

VISITOR CAPACITY AT MEEKS BAY

Day use and overnight visitor capacity at the Meeks Bay Resort and the area south of Meeks Creek is limited by day use and lodging parking within the project area, parking along SR 89, parking at the Meeks Bay trailhead west of the project area, and the number of campsites in the project area. Approximately 470 parking spaces are available within and near the project area, which are primarily for day use, but parking spaces are also used by overnight guests that stay in the 22-unit resort lodging (see Table 3.1-6). Capacity of the lodging units varies from two to 12 people per unit with a total capacity of 122 guests. As described above under "Bicycle and Pedestrian Access," the Tahoe Trail segment from Tahoma to Meeks Bay provides access to the project area for pedestrians and bicyclists (i.e., non-automobile users). On an average day in July, the Tahoe Trail at Sugar Pine Point State Park is used by over 100 trail users with up to approximately 160 trail users on a peak day. It is reasonable to assume that some portion of those riders travel to Meeks Bay. Although Meeks Bay does not see the high visitation numbers experienced by nearby recreation sites (e.g., Emerald Bay, Sugar Pine Point State Park) (TRPA et al. 2019), the Meeks Bay project area reaches parking, campground, and lodging capacity during peak periods (i.e., summer weekends and summer holidays). However, there is no capacity related to visitors that enter via bicycle or walking on the Tahoe Trail.

Visitation data for day use and overnight visitors to the project area is limited, in particular for Meeks Bay Resort. Additionally, available information only exists for the months the campground is open. Based on visitor counts conducted by the USDA Forest Service, 2018 saw 27,684 visitors to the portion of the project area south of Meeks Creek, and the annual average number of people staying at the Meeks Bay Campground from 2015-2017 was 13,133 (TRPA et al. 2019). More recent visitation information for the 2020 season (May to October) was provided by the concessionaire at the Meeks Bay south area, which indicates that there were over an estimated 95,000 day-use visitors and 20,000 campers at the Meeks Bay Campground. Those estimates were used to provide assumptions about average daily visitation at the Meeks Bay Resort, which received an estimated 328,000 day-use visitors (counted as walk-in visitors and cars in Table 3.1-7) and 18,000 campers in 2020 (see Table 3.1-7). Visitation data for Meeks Bay Resort was limited; thus, visitation estimates were based on the data provided for the area south of Meeks Creek. It is important to note that the visitation numbers in Table 3.1-7 are estimates and actual visitation numbers could be higher or lower than presented. Also, the visitation numbers are presented as average days; however, the actual number of visitors would be higher during the weekend and holidays and lower during the week and non-holiday periods.

Table 3.1-6 Parking Capacity in the Meeks Bay Area

Location	Number of Parking Spaces
Meeks Bay Resort ¹	300
Meeks Bay South of Meeks Creek ²	76
Meeks Bay Trailhead ³	11
SR 89 On-highway Parking ³	84
Total Parking Spaces	471

¹ Parking at Meeks Bay Resort includes day use parking and parking for overnight guests staying in the resort lodging.

² Parking at Meeks Bay south of Meeks Creek is for day use visitors.

³ Parking at the Meeks Bay trailhead and on the highway may be used by people visiting Meeks Bay or could be used by hikers accessing the trailhead.

Source: TRPA et al. 2019, compiled by Ascent Environmental in 2021.

Table 3.1-7 Estimated Visitation to the Meeks Bay Campground and Meeks Bay Resort in 2020

Month	Meeks Bay South of Meeks Creek					Meeks Bay Resort ¹				
	Campground Overnight Visitors ²	Visitors in Day Use Vehicles ³	Walk-in Day Use Visitors ⁴	Total Visitors	Average Visitors/Day	Campground Overnight Visitors ²	Visitors in Day Use Vehicles ³	Walk-in Day Use Visitors ⁴	Total Visitors	Average Visitors/Day ⁶
May ⁷	2,000	6,370	240	8,600	480	1,800	14,590	240	16,630	920
June	3,700	13,860	770	18,330	610	3,330	32,820	770	36,920	1,230
July	4,770	32,340	1,630	38,740	1,250	4,300	127,640	1,630	133,570	4,310
August	4,680	29,690	1,940	36,310	1,170	4,200	117,200	1,940	123,340	3,980
September	3,330	8,190	770	12,290	410	2,990	32,330	770	36,090	1,200
October ⁸	1,730	6,370	240	8,340	520	1,550	12,970	240	14,760	920
Total	20,210	90,450	5,350	116,010	740	18,170	322,960	5,350	346,480	2,220

Notes: NA = not available. All numbers in the table are rounded as they represent approximate estimates of visitation.

- ¹ Information about visitation at Meeks Bay Resort is not available; thus, the assumptions for campground visitation, visitors in day use vehicles, and walk-in visitors are extrapolated from the visitation information available for the area south of Meeks Creek. The number of visitors staying in lodging at the resort is unavailable, but it is assumed that the resort lodging is booked to capacity during peak periods (i.e., summer weekends and summer holidays).
- ² Campground visitation for Meeks Bay Campground was provided by the Meeks Bay Campground concessionaire (Totterdale, pers. comm., 2021). This information was used to develop the estimated average number of people per campsite (3.85 people/site) and proportion of the campsites that are booked each month. Note the vehicle miles traveled (VMT) analysis in Section 3.12, "Transportation and Circulation," uses the TRPA Project Impact Assessment (PIA) tool, which determines project-generated VMT calculations based on the land use type, size, and location of the project using location-based data from the Tahoe Activity-Based model.
- ³ The estimate of visitors in day use vehicles is based on the average number of people per car developed from June 2021 visitor numbers, 2,181 cars with a total of 7,562 people, provided by the Meeks Bay Campground concessionaire (Totterdale, pers. comm., 2021). This calculation also considers the average number of cars parked in each space per day, which varies by month. The vehicle trips and vehicle miles traveled analysis in Section 3.12, "Transportation and Circulation," uses the TRPA PIA tool, as described above.
- ⁴ The walk-in visitor estimates likely underestimate visitation as it is nearly impossible to count every person walking in during busy kiosk times. Information about walk-in day use visitors at the resort is unavailable, so these numbers assume there would be at least as many walk-in visitors as those in the south area. It is possible that the walk-in visitor estimates capture some of the pedestrians and bicyclists using the Tahoe Trail to access the project area.
- ⁵ Because the number of lodge visitors is unavailable, the average visitors/day estimate for Meeks Bay Resort is likely higher than what is presented here. However, parking for lodge visitors is incorporated into the total available parking for the resort used in estimating visitors arriving in day use vehicles.
- ⁶ Visitation data for May assumes that the Meeks Bay Resort and area south of Meeks Creek are open beginning May 14. Parking and walk-in visitation numbers were not provided for May; thus, the May visitation estimate was developed using assumptions from estimated visitation in October (i.e., average visitors per day for May was assumed to be similar to the average visitors per day based on data provided for October (Totterdale, pers. comm., 2021).
- ⁷ Visitation data for October assumes that the Meeks Bay Resort and the area south of Meeks Creek close October 16.

Source: Compiled by Ascent Environmental in 2021.

3.1.3 Environmental Impacts and Mitigation Measures

METHODOLOGY

The following analysis assesses the environmental effects of each alternative with respect to the existing recreation uses and facilities in the project area and changes in public access to these recreation resources and Lake Tahoe. This analysis is based on review of existing documents, policies, ordinances, and other regulations pertinent to recreation.

THRESHOLDS OF SIGNIFICANCE

The thresholds of significance were developed in consideration of the State CEQA Guidelines, TRPA Thresholds, TRPA Initial Environmental Checklist, LTBMU Forest Plan, and other applicable policies and regulations. Under NEPA the significance of an effect must consider the context and intensity of the environmental effect. The factors considered under NEPA to determine the context and intensity of its effects are encompassed by the thresholds of significance. An alternative would have a significant effect on recreation if it would:

- ▶ result in a decrease in the quality of recreation experience or the availability of recreation opportunities;
- ▶ have the potential to significantly alter the character of recreational experiences or significantly increase conflicts between recreation uses, either existing or proposed; or
- ▶ result in a change in access to or along the shoreline that would cause a loss of public access to any lake, waterway, or public lands.

ISSUES NOT DISCUSSED FURTHER

The project would include the construction of public recreation facilities, the potential environmental effects of which are analyzed in Sections 3.2 through 3.13 of this EIS/EIS/EIR. The environmental effects of constructing recreation facilities are not discussed further in this section.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES

Impact 3.1-1: Affect the Quality of Recreational Opportunities

Alternatives 1, 2, 3, and 4 would provide new or improved recreation amenities, campground improvements, and multi-use paths throughout the project area. Each of these alternatives would remove the marina and boat ramp and restore Meeks Creek. Alternatives 1 and 2 would provide universally accessible piers that would improve access for recreation users on the lake, with the Alternative 1 pier providing opportunities for motorized boaters to dock at the pier for loading and unloading passengers that would enhance the quality of boating opportunities. Alternatives 3 and 4 would include a universally accessible paddlecraft launch that would enhance the quality of recreational opportunities for nonmotorized watercraft (e.g., kayaks, paddleboards). These improvements would enhance the quality of recreational opportunities in the project area. The potential reduction in quality of recreation opportunities for motorized boaters related to the loss of the marina and boat ramp would not be substantial because boaters could still travel to the project area for recreation enjoyment. Because the action alternatives would enhance public recreation opportunities in the project area and obtain PAOTs, as required by TRPA, there would be no impact related to the fair share of the total Tahoe Basin capacity for outdoor recreation available to the public. Although the action alternatives would increase visitation to varying degrees, expansion of the day-use and beach areas would offset any increase in crowding in the project area. For these reasons, Alternatives 1, 2, 3, and 4 would result in a less-than-significant impact on the quality of recreational opportunities in the project area.

With the No Action Alternative, the quality of the marina recreation experience would degrade over time as the marina continues to be in disrepair without an adequate reinvestment mechanism; however, because the marina would remain in operation during normal and high water years the reduction in quality would not be considered significant. Opportunities for swimming, beachgoing, kayaking and paddle boarding, bicycling, day use, and camping would remain with the No Action Alternative. Thus, this alternative would have a less-than-significant impact on the quality of recreational opportunities.

As described above under the "Thresholds" section in Section 3.1.1, "Regulatory Setting," the TRPA threshold related to quality experience and additional access for recreation is in attainment. The quality of recreation experiences was evaluated for the 2019 Threshold Evaluation through Sustainable Recreation Working Group surveys. The majority of respondents to the surveys rated their experiences spent outdoors at Lake Tahoe as "extremely enjoyable" or "very enjoyable" (Lake Tahoe Info 2021a). This impact considers whether the project alternatives would degrade the quality of recreation user experience for day users, campers, pedestrians and bicyclists, swimmers, non-motorized watercraft users (e.g., kayakers, paddleboarders), and motorized boaters. The quality of recreation user experience could be influenced by a number of factors, including availability of recreation opportunities, temporary effects of construction activity, conflicts between different user groups, and the degree of crowding experienced by visitors.

No Action Alternative

Under the No Action Alternative, there would be no restoration of Meeks Creek and the marina would remain in place, with a boat ramp and approximately 120 slips placed in the lagoon. The marina would be operational during navigable, normal and high lake levels and would not be operational during periods of low lake levels. Additionally, there would be only minor changes to the marina for health and safety (e.g., if sheet piling is unsafe) and typical maintenance. Development of a multi-use path through or adjacent to the project area may still occur as part of the Tahoe Trail project. With this alternative, opportunities for swimming, beachgoing, kayaking and paddle boarding, cycling, day use, and camping would remain as they are under existing conditions.

During normal and high-water periods when the marina would be operational, the effects on the quality of recreation experiences for swimmers and non-motorized watercraft users from motorized boaters traveling through the bay as they leave or return to the marina would be the same as under existing conditions. Motorized boats would be required to follow the no-wake zone requirements of TRPA Code Section 84.10, traveling no faster than 5 miles per hour (mph) within 600 feet from the waterline along the beach (i.e., roughly the distance from the marina to the edge of the bay) and within 100 feet from swimmers and non-motorized watercraft. Boats leaving and entering the marina would also navigate around delineated swim areas. This would minimize the sounds from the boats and generation of wake that could disrupt swimmers and non-motorized watercraft. Because there would be no change to opportunities for beachgoing, cycling, day use, and camping, there would be no change in the quality of recreation experience for these users compared to existing conditions. Retaining the existing recreation facilities (e.g., marina, boat ramp, campground, and day-use areas) would result in no change to PAOTs in the project area.

One factor that contributes to the quality of recreation experience is crowding, or how much average space each visitor has between them and other visitors. The amount of crowding is determined by the amount of people per square feet of the portions of the project area where visitors would likely spend most of their time while at Meeks Bay (beach and day-use areas). As shown in Table 3.1-8, the average amount of space per visitor would vary throughout the season that Meeks Bay is open, with a density of 107 – 140 square feet (sq. ft.) per person (sq. ft./person) in May, June, September, and October. The average density on the beach and day-use areas in July and August would be an estimated 35 – 38 sq. ft./person, which reflects existing crowded conditions associated with those peak periods. Under the No Action Alternative, there would be no changes in the project area that would result in an increase in the number of visitors to Meeks Bay and there would be no changes to expand areas where day users spend their time (i.e., beach and day-use areas).

The quality of the marina recreation experience would degrade over time as the marina continues to be in disrepair without an adequate reinvestment mechanism; however, because some use of the marina could continue this would not be a substantial reduction in the quality of the marina recreation experience. Implementation of the No Action Alternative would result in no changes to the upland facilities in the project area. There would be no substantial change to the quality of recreation opportunities; thus, this impact would be less than significant.

Table 3.1-8 Visitor Density in the Beach and Day-Use Areas (sq. ft./person)

Alternatives	May	June	July	August	September	October
No Action Alternative	140	107	35	38	122	136
Alternative 1	167	127	42	46	146	163
Alternative 2	167	127	42	46	146	163
Alternative 3	157	118	40	43	137	153
Alternative 4	163	122	41	44	141	158

Notes: The density of visitors (sq. ft./person) was calculated using an estimate of the sizes of the beach and day-use areas divided by the average number of daily visitors estimated for each alternative. Because the final design of the action alternatives is not yet complete, actual sizes of the beach and expanded day-use areas are not yet known, but these calculations assume the beach and day-use areas would roughly be the same size under each action alternative. These estimates are conservative because they assume that all visitors (day use, camping, and lodging visitors) would be in the day-use areas. It is likely that overnight visitors could be spending time in their campsites or lodging units, could be on the lake (swimming, paddleboarding, kayaking, floating, etc.), or could be recreating outside of the project area. Thus, these estimates provide an order of magnitude for changes in visitor density throughout the season and compared to other alternatives.

Alternatives 1 and 2 are not anticipated to substantially change the number of visitors because there would be no additional parking constructed and the overall change in campsites could be reduced by up to four campsites or increased by up to two campsites. Thus, to provide a conservative estimate of change in density under these alternatives, the density calculated here assumes that Alternatives 1 and 2 would increase the number of campsites by two.

Source: Compiled by Ascent Environmental in 2022.

Alternative 1: Restoration with Boating Pier

Implementation of Alternative 1 would reconfigure many of the features in the project area, including removal of the marina and restoration of Meeks Creek. Implementation of this alternative would continue to provide the same recreation opportunities that currently exist in the project area (e.g., camping, day use, beachgoing, swimming, and nonmotorized watercraft use) but removal of the marina and boat ramp would remove opportunities for mooring motorized boats overnight and seasonally, as well as for daily launches of boats and personal watercraft (such as jet skis). There would be no changes to parking capacity and improvements to the campgrounds may only result in the increase or decrease of one to two campsites. Other components of this alternative, such as a multi-use path providing pedestrian and bicycle connections throughout the project area, bike storage, paddlecraft storage, improvements to the day-use areas, and interpretive opportunities, would be new or improved amenities for visitors that would enhance their recreational experience in the project area.

Construction of features of Alternative 1 would result in temporary disruption of recreation uses in the project area. While visitors are likely to continue to access portions of the project area during construction, the daytime construction noise could temporarily degrade the quality of recreational opportunities. Construction noise impacts are discussed in Impact 3.11-1 in Section 3.11, "Noise." With implementation of the project, notification of planned construction would be provided on websites associated with the project area and signage would be posted at the project area.

Construction of a boating pier in the project area would introduce a new structure in a bay that does not contain any human-made structures aside from navigational and safety buoys, which would modify the scenic views of the lake from the beach and views towards the shoreline and could be a factor in potentially degrading the quality of recreational opportunities. Scenic impacts related to introduction of the boating pier to the project area are further discussed in Impacts 3.2-1, 3.2-2, and 3.2-4 in Section 3.2, "Scenic Resources."

Other factors that may affect the quality of recreation experiences related to crowding, camping, and motorized boating are further discussed below.

Motorized Boating

Conflicts may arise between non-motorized recreation users (e.g., swimmers, kayakers, paddleboarders) and motorized boats and personal watercraft that generate noise, odor from fuel emissions, and wakes that can affect the quality of recreational experience and potentially safety of non-motorized recreation users. Recreation user conflicts are further discussed in Impact 3.1-2, below.

Implementation of Alternative 1 would develop a fixed design, 300-foot-long boating pier located north of Meeks Creek with a universally accessible walkway connecting the pier to nearby day use and parking areas. The pier would include a pierhead with one boatlift capable of supporting a 29-foot-long boat that could be used for fire protection. During peak periods of use, the pier would be accessible to an estimated maximum of 11 boats for short periods to load and unload passengers. This estimate assumes an average boat length of 20 feet, with approximately 2 feet of space between boats and that 150 feet on one side of the pier and 120 feet on the side of the pier with the emergency services boat would be accessible for motorized boats to temporarily dock. A water taxi is not proposed as part of the project, but the project does not preclude the use of a water taxi that temporarily docks at the pier. Motorized boaters desiring to stay at Meeks Bay for long periods during the day would need to anchor away from the pier and outside of the swim buoy area, which is the same as existing conditions.

A boating pier in the project area would likely attract motorized boaters to Meeks Bay to take advantage of the ability to load and unload passengers. Motorized boats could also temporarily anchor in the bay outside of the designated swim areas. However, Alternative 1 would result in removal of the marina and boat ramp, thereby removing the potential for up to 119 motorized boats and other motorized boats or personal watercraft that are launched from the boat ramp from traveling to and from the marina. This analysis assumes that the increase in motorized boating associated with the boating pier would generally be offset by a reduction in motorized boats and personal watercraft devices arising from removal of the marina and boat ramp; thus, with implementation of Alternative 1 there would be no substantial change in the quality of recreation opportunities for non-motorized recreation users compared to existing conditions.

Removal of the marina and boat ramp would reduce the opportunities for people to moor motorized boats on the west shore by 11 percent and by 6 percent on the lake (see Table 3.1-3). Additionally, day use visitors that may want to launch their boat from this boat ramp would no longer have that option at Meeks Bay, where previously an average of approximately 30 percent of motorized boat launches on the west shore occurred and 5 percent of the launches throughout the whole lake occurred (see Table 3.1-4). Loss of this mooring location may reduce the quality of motorized boating opportunities, in particular for residents/visitors in the nearby the project area, because they would have to travel farther to launch and reach their boat once it is moored. However, opportunities for mooring and launching boats elsewhere are available and motorized boats could travel to Meeks Bay with Homewood High and Dry Marina located approximately 4 miles to the north, Camp Richardson (mooring only) approximately 14 miles to the south, and Tahoe Keys approximately 16 miles to the south. The potential impacts from Alternative 1 on regional and local access or opportunities for motorized watercraft are specifically addressed under Impacts 3.1-3 and 3.1-4.

Camping

The Meeks Bay Resort Campground would remain similar to its current configuration and would continue to provide tent and RV camping. The Meeks Bay Campground would be reconfigured with minor adjustments to increase privacy of the campsites that may change the number of sites from the existing 40 campsites to an estimated 36-42 campsites. The potential for up to 50 percent of sites in both campgrounds to be converted to alternative camping, such as yurts or camping cabins, could increase opportunities for visitors with limited camping equipment and could expand the visitation season, depending on snow levels, in the project area. Additionally, the Meeks Bay Campground would be reconfigured to provide additional privacy between campsites, which would improve the quality of the camping experience. Under Alternative 1, there would be no substantial change in the number of campsites, RV use would continue to be supported in the project area, and the conversion of some campsites to alternative camping would increase opportunities for a greater variety of recreation users. Thus, there would not be a substantial change in camping opportunities at Meeks Bay, thereby expanding the opportunities for quality recreation in the project area.

Crowding

As described in the "Visitor Capacity at Meeks Bay" section in Section 3.1.2, "Environmental Setting," the project area generally reaches capacity during peak periods (i.e., summer weekends and summer holidays). The project area is estimated to receive an estimated 160,000-172,000 total visitors during each of the busiest months of July and August (see Table 3.1-7), with an estimated average of 5,150-5,560 visitors per day. On peak days, portions of the project area, such as the beach and day-use areas, have a higher density of people compared to other times during the season (see Table 3.1-8). Crowding of people could adversely affect the quality of recreation opportunities for individuals seeking a quieter recreation experience.

As described above under "Visitor Capacity at Meeks Bay," visitor capacity is primarily limited by the number of parking spaces and campsites, although visitors could bike or walk to the project area on the Tahoe Trail. Implementation of Alternative 1 would not result in a substantial change in capacity because there would be no change in parking supply and the number of campsites could only decrease by up to four campsites or increase by up to two campsites. The new multi-use path along the highway would not provide a new connection to the south such that it would be a new access point for additional residents or other visitors but would instead formalize access points to the project area for bicyclists and pedestrians. Note that connections to future planned expansion of the Tahoe Trail between the project area and Cascade south of Emerald Bay are addressed in Section 3.1.4, "Cumulative Impacts," below.

If the changes at the campground result in a reduction of up to four campsites, then there would be a reduction of 32 visitors per day on a peak day. If the changes at the campground result in an increase of up to two campsites, then there would be an increase of up to eight visitors per day on a peak day. Alternative 1 would relocate the resort cabins closest to the shoreline, which would expand the useable beach area. The day-use areas would also be expanded. The increases in these areas would provide more space for visitors. Using the conservative assumption that the number of campsites would increase and the beach and day-use areas expand, the density of visitors would decrease compared to existing conditions and the No Action Alternative (see Table 3.1-8). Thus, there would not be a change in the quality of recreation opportunities related to crowding because implementation of this alternative would not result in an increase in visitor capacity.

PAOTs

The 2019 Threshold Evaluation found the recreation threshold for fair share distribution of recreation capacity to be in attainment (TRPA 2021b). Facilities in the project area that have been assigned PAOTs include the marina, boat ramp, beach, day-use areas, and campgrounds.

With implementation of Alternative 1, removal of the marina and boat ramp would result in a reduction in PAOTs with the PAOTs being added back to the PAOT pool. Reconfiguration of the Meeks Bay Campground could result in either a reduction of up to four campsites, resulting in a reduction of PAOTs, or expansion of up to two campsites that would require allocation of additional summer overnight PAOTs. As described above under the "Tahoe Regional Plan" section of Section 3.1.1, "Regulatory Setting," over 5,700 summer overnight PAOTs are available (see Table 3.1-1); thus, there would be enough PAOTs available if the campground is expanded. Alternative 1 would result in expansion of the day-use areas, which would require additional summer day use PAOTs. As shown in Table 3.1-1, there are over 5,000 summer day use PAOTs; thus, there would be enough PAOTs available for the expanded day-use areas. Additional summer overnight PAOTs and additional summer day use PAOTs would be requested as part of the TRPA permit application for the project and must be obtained prior to constructing and operating the proposed improvements. Allocation of additional PAOTs for the project would contribute to implementation of TRPA's Fair Share of Recreation Capacity Threshold that aims to provide outdoor recreation capacity to the public.

Conclusion

A range of factors resulting from implementation of the Alternative 1 would influence the quality of recreational opportunities. As described above, Alternative 1 would: 1) provide new or improved recreation amenities; 2) not result in an increase in visitation such that crowding would increase compared to baseline conditions 3) reconfigure the Meeks Bay Campground to improve privacy for campers; and 4) result in an increase in motorized boating associated with the boating pier that would be offset by a reduction in boat launch activity from removal of the marina and boat ramp. Because Alternative 1 would enhance public recreation opportunities in the project area and obtain PAOTs, as required by TRPA, there would be no impact related to the fair share of the total Tahoe Basin capacity for outdoor recreation available to the public. As described above, these effects of Alternative 1 would in some cases enhance the quality of recreational opportunities and in other cases would result in no change in the quality of recreation opportunities over existing conditions.

For these reasons, implementation of Alternative 1 would result in a less-than-significant impact related to the quality of recreational opportunities.

Alternative 2: Restoration with Pedestrian Pier

Implementation of Alternative 2 would remove the marina and boat ramp and result in similar recreation features as described above for Alternative 1 but would include a pedestrian pier instead of a boating pier.

Alternative 2 would have similar temporary reduction in the quality of recreational opportunities during construction of project components as those described above for Alternative 1. The pedestrian pier would have similar impacts on the quality of recreational opportunities related to the scenic impacts of the pedestrian pier as those described above for Alternative 1, although to a lesser degree because the pedestrian pier would be 200 feet shorter than that included in Alternative 1. Scenic impacts related to introduction of the pedestrian pier to the project area are further discussed in Impacts 3.2-1, 3.2-2, and 3.2-4 in Section 3.2, "Scenic Resources."

As described above for Alternative 1, the increased privacy in the campground, multi-use path providing pedestrian and bicycle connections throughout the project area, bike storage, paddlecraft storage, improvements to the day use and beach areas, and interpretive opportunities would be new or improved amenities that would enhance the recreational experience of visitors under Alternative 2. The changes in parking, campsites, and day-use areas and associated changes in the number of visitors would be similar to those described above for Alternative 1. Thus, like Alternative 1, there would not be a change in the quality of recreation opportunities from crowding.

Motorized Boating

Implementation of Alternative 2 would develop a 100-foot-long floating pedestrian pier to provide recreational access for swimming, paddlecraft, fishing, and sightseeing during normal lake levels. The pier would be accessed from the nearby day use and parking areas by a universally accessible walkway. Motorized boats or personal watercraft would not be allowed to moor at the pedestrian pier, although they could anchor away from the pier and outside of the swim buoy area, like under existing conditions. Thus, the pedestrian pier under Alternative 2 would not attract motorized boats, including a water taxi, to Meeks Bay. The impacts on motorized boating related to loss of mooring at Meeks Bay would be the same as those described above for Alternative 1. Because the pedestrian pier under Alternative 2 would not attract motorized watercraft, the reduction in the potential for motorized boats and personal watercrafts in Meeks Bay would improve the recreation experience for swimmers and non-motorized watercraft users (e.g., kayakers, paddleboarders) because there would be less noise from engines, less odor from fuel emissions, and less wake.

PAOTs

Implementation of Alternative 2 would result in the same reduction in PAOTs associated with removal of the marina and boat ramp as identified for Alternative 1. Alternative 2 would also result in the same potential increase in PAOTs associated with the Meeks Bay Campground (if the campground is expanded) and expanded day-use areas as Alternative 1. As described above for Alternative 1, there would be enough PAOTs for the campground and expanded day-use areas. Additional summer overnight PAOTs and additional summer day use PAOTs would be requested as part of the TRPA permit application for the project and must be obtained prior to constructing and operating the proposed improvements.

Conclusion

A range of factors resulting from implementation of the Alternative 2 would influence the quality of recreational opportunities. As described above, Alternative 2 would: 1) provide new or improved recreation amenities, including a pedestrian pier; 2) not result in an increase in visitation such that crowding would increase over existing conditions; 3) reconfigure the Meeks Bay Campground to improve privacy for campers; and 4) result in a decrease in motorized boating associated with the marina and boat ramp. These effects of Alternative 2 would enhance the quality of recreational opportunities for most visitors over existing conditions. Because Alternative 2 would enhance public recreation opportunities in the project area and obtain PAOTs, as required by TRPA, there would be no impact related to the fair share of the total Tahoe Basin capacity for outdoor recreation available to the public.

For these reasons, implementation of Alternative 2 would result in a less-than-significant impact related to the quality of recreational opportunities.

Alternative 3: Restoration with No Pier

Implementation of Alternative 3 would result in similar recreation features as described above for Alternatives 1 and 2 but would include a paddlecraft launch instead of a pier. This alternative would also expand the campgrounds and parking.

Alternative 3 would have similar temporary reduction in the quality of recreational opportunities during construction of project components as those described above for Alternative 1. The paddlecraft launch would have similar impacts on the quality of recreational opportunities related to scenic impacts as those described above for Alternative 1, although to a lesser degree because the paddlecraft launch would be located towards the south end of the project area and would be at least 270 feet shorter than the pier included in Alternative 1. Scenic impacts related to introduction of the paddlecraft launch to the project area are further discussed in Impacts 3.2-1, 3.2-2, and 3.2-4 in Section 3.2, "Scenic Resources."

As described above for Alternative 1, the increased privacy in the campground, multi-use path providing pedestrian and bicycle connections throughout the project area, bike storage, paddlecraft storage, improvements to the day-use areas, and interpretive opportunities, would be new or improved amenities for visitors that would enhance their recreational experience in the project area under Alternative 3. The paddlecraft launch would offer a quality travel experience for all with access to the launch provided by a universally accessible path. With implementation of Alternative 3, there would be an addition of 14 parking spaces in the portion of the project area south of Meeks Creek and an additional 7-22 campsites. The potential for these changes to affect crowding is discussed below.

Motorized Boating

Implementation of Alternative 3 would include a non-motorized launch platform or ramp in the southern portion of the project area and would allow for universally accessible paddlecraft launching. Motorized boats or personal watercraft (e.g., jet skis) would not be allowed to use the structure, although they could anchor in the bay away outside of the swim buoy area, like under existing conditions. The paddlecraft launch under Alternative 3 would not be anticipated to attract motorized boats to Meeks Bay. Like Alternative 2, implementation of Alternative 3 would have similar effects related to quality of recreation opportunities for motorized boating because this alternative would remove the marina and boat ramp and there would be no other infrastructure that would support these types of recreation uses. Overall, the impacts on motorized boating related to loss of mooring at Meeks Bay would be the same as those described above for Alternative 1. The increase in quality of recreation experience for other recreation users would be the same as those described above for Alternative 1. In particular, the paddlecraft launch facility would improve lake access for people with mobility impairments.

Camping

Implementation of Alternative 3 would result in expansion and reconfiguration of the Meeks Bay Resort and Meeks Bay campgrounds for a total increase of 7-22 campsites in the project area. The Meeks Bay campground would be partially relocated away from SR 89 in the southwest corner of the project area to reduce noise in the campground. The campgrounds would be reconfigured to increase privacy for campers. The Meeks Bay Resort campground would continue to support RV camping while the Meeks Bay Campground would include vehicle length limitations, short spur lengths, and/or a short turn radius that would not accommodate large RVs. Additionally, up to 50 percent of the sites could be converted into alternative camping facilities. These changes would improve the quality of the camping experience by expanding the number and type of camping opportunities while also providing privacy and reducing exposure to noise from the highway.

Crowding

The addition of 7-22 campsites under Alternative 3 would result in an increase of up to an estimated 90 campers during peak periods (i.e., July) (see Table 3.1-9). The addition of 14 parking spaces would result in the addition of up to an estimated 190-day use visitors during peak periods. Addition of an estimated total of approximately 280 visitors per day to the project area during the peak periods would be an increase of 5 percent over the existing average number of visitors per day based on visitation estimates on an average peak day during July and August (see Tables 3.1-7 and 3.1-9). As discussed for Alternative 1, above, the new multi-use path along the highway would not be a new access point for additional residents or other visitors but would instead formalize access points to the project area for

bicyclists and pedestrians. With relocation of the lodging units away from the beach, the beach area would be slightly expanded. The day-use areas would also be expanded. These expanded areas would provide more space for additional visitors that would alleviate an increase in crowding on peak days. As shown in Table 3.1-8, under Alternative 3, the density of visitors in the day-use and beach areas would reduce compared to existing conditions and the No Action Alternative. Thus, there would not be an adverse impact on the quality of recreation experience in the project area associated with crowding.

As discussed under the "Visitor Capacity at Meeks Bay" section, above, it is likely that there are a higher average number of visitors per day on the weekends compared to during the week. Additionally, because it is not feasible to count every person walking in during busy times and the number of visitors staying at Meeks Bay Resort lodging is unavailable, it is probable that the existing average number of daily visitors is higher than the estimates in Table 3.1-7. For these reasons, it is likely that the increase in visitation on a peak day from additional parking and campsites would be less than 5 percent during peak periods of use (see Table 3.1-9) and would not contribute to a noticeable increase in crowding for people on the beach or in the day-use areas.

Table 3.1-9 Estimate of Additional Visitors from Alternative 3

	May ¹	June	July	August	September	October
Estimated Existing Average Visitors/Day ²	1,400	1,840	5,560	5,150	1,610	1,440
Additional Daily Campers ³	61	68	85	83	61	59
Additional Visitors in Day Use Vehicles ⁴	39	85	192	176	50	38
Total Additional Visitors/Day	100	153	277	259	111	97
Percent Increase over Existing Average Visitors/Day	7%	8%	5%	5%	7%	7%

¹ Parking and walk-in visitation numbers were not provided for May; thus, the May visitation was developed using assumptions from visitation in October.

² The total average visitors per day for the project area is the sum of the average visitors per day for the Meeks Bay South and Meeks Bay Resort areas included in Table 3.1-6.

³ The estimated average number of people per campsite (3.85 people/site) and proportion of the campsites that are booked each month were multiplied by 22, the maximum number of new campsites.

⁴ The estimate of visitors in day use vehicles is based on the average number of people per car (3.5 people/car) developed from June 2021 visitor numbers and the average number of cars per space per day, which ranges from 0.8 in October to 3.9 in July.

Source: Compiled by Ascent Environmental in 2021.

The highest relative increase in visitation over existing conditions would occur during the month of June, with an estimated 8 percent increase in daily visitation. However, under existing conditions during June, the project area is not at capacity for visitation because existing visitation during July and August is much greater. Thus, there would be sufficient capacity in the project area to accommodate an estimated 8 percent increase in visitation without noticeably increasing crowding or adversely affecting the quality of recreational opportunities.

PAOTs

Implementation of Alternative 3 would result in the same reduction in PAOTs associated with removal of the marina and boat ramp as identified for Alternative 1. Alternative 3 would also result in the same potential increase in PAOTs associated with the expanded day-use areas as Alternative 1. With Alternative 3, reconfiguration of both campgrounds could result in expansion of 7-22 campsites that would require allocation of additional summer overnight PAOTs, which would be greater than Alternatives 1, 2, and 4. Like Alternative 1, there would be enough PAOTs for the campground and expanded day-use areas. Additional summer overnight PAOTs and additional summer day use PAOTs would be requested as part of the TRPA permit application for the project and must be obtained prior to constructing and operating the proposed improvements.

Conclusion

A range of factors resulting from implementation of the Alternative 3 would influence the quality of recreational opportunities. As described above, Alternative 3 would: 1) provide new or improved recreation amenities, including a paddlecraft launch facility that could improve accessibility to the lake for people with mobility impairments; 2)

increase parking and the number of campsites and expand the day-use areas; 3) reconfigure both campgrounds to improve privacy for campers; and 4) result in a decrease in motorized boating associated with the marina and boat ramp that would increase the quality of recreation experience for swimmers and nonmotorized watercraft users. These effects of Alternative 3 would enhance the quality of recreational opportunities over existing conditions. The increase in parking spaces and campsites would increase capacity for visitors that would be offset by the expanded day-use areas. This would help reduce the density of visitors in the beach and day-use areas compared to existing conditions and the No Action Alternative (see Table 3.1-8). Because Alternative 3 would enhance public recreation opportunities in the project area and obtain PAOTs, as required by TRPA, there would be no impact related to the fair share of the total Tahoe Basin capacity for outdoor recreation available to the public.

For these reasons, implementation of Alternative 3 would result in a less-than-significant impact related to the quality of recreational opportunities.

Alternative 4: Preferred Alternative

Implementation of Alternative 4 would remove the marina and boat ramp and result in similar recreation features as described above for Alternatives 1 and 2. Alternative 4 would have similar temporary reduction in the quality of recreational opportunities during construction of project components like that described above for Alternative 3, which includes noise and scenic impacts.

As described above for Alternative 1, the increased privacy in the campground, multi-use path providing pedestrian and bicycle connections throughout the project area, bike storage, paddlecraft storage, non-motorized launch, improvements to the day-use areas, and interpretive opportunities, would be new or improved amenities for visitors that would enhance their recreational experience in the project area under Alternative 4. With implementation of Alternative 4, there would be an addition of 14 parking spaces in the portion of the project area south of Meeks Creek. The potential for this change to affect crowding is discussed below.

Motorized Boating

Implementation of Alternative 4 would include a non-motorized launch platform or ramp in the southern portion of the project area, similar to that proposed for Alternative 3 described above. The paddlecraft launch under Alternative 4 would not be anticipated to attract motorized boats to Meeks Bay.

Similar to Alternative 2, implementation of Alternative 4 would have similar effects related to quality of recreation opportunities for motorized boating because this alternative would remove the marina and boat ramp and there would be no other infrastructure that would support these types of recreation uses. Thus, the loss of the potential to moor boats at this location would reduce the quality of motorized boating opportunities, as described above for Alternatives 2 and 3. However, overall, the reduction in the potential for motorized boats and personal watercraft in Meeks Bay and increase in a launch facility that would support non-motorized watercraft would improve the quality of recreation experiences for swimmers and non-motorized watercraft users (e.g., kayakers, paddleboarders) for similar reasons as those described above for Alternative 2. Like Alternative 3, the paddlecraft launch under Alternative 4 would improve lake access for people with mobility impairments.

Crowding

Alternative 4 would include an additional 14 parking spaces like that proposed for Alternative 3, which would result in up to an estimated 190 additional day use visitors during peak periods (see Table 3.1-10). Under Alternative 4, the Meeks Bay Campground could be reduced by up to four campsites or could result in up to an additional two campsites, which would result in up to eight more visitors on a peak day. The addition of an estimated 198 people in the project area during the peak periods would be an increase of 4 percent over the existing average number of visitors per day on an average peak day during July (see Table 3.1-9). Similar increases in visitation would occur in August. With relocation of the lodging units away from the beach, the beach area would be slightly expanded. The relocation of lodging units away from the beach and changes in the day-use areas would result in the same increase in space for visitors as described for Alternative 1. As shown in Table 3.1-8, the density of visitors in the day-use and beach areas would be reduced compared to existing conditions and the No Action Alternative. Thus, there would not be an adverse impact on the quality of recreation experience in the project area associated with crowding.

Table 3.1-10 Estimate of Additional Visitors from Alternative 4

	May ¹	June	July	August	September	October
Estimated Existing Average Visitors/Day ²	1,400	1,840	5,560	5,150	1,610	1,440
Additional Daily Campers ³	6	6	8	8	6	5
Additional Visitors in Day Use Vehicles ⁴	40	85	190	180	50	40
Total Additional Visitors/Day	46	91	198	188	56	45
Percent Increase over Existing Average Visitors/Day	3%	5%	4%	4%	3%	3%

¹ Parking and walk-in visitation numbers were not provided for May; thus, the May visitation was developed using assumptions from visitation in October.

² The total average visitors per day for the project area is the sum of the average visitors per day for the Meeks Bay South and Meeks Bay Resort areas included in Table 3.1-6.

³ The estimated average number of people per campsite (3.85 people/site) and proportion of the campsites that are booked each month were multiplied by 22, the maximum number of new campsites.

⁴ The estimate of visitors in day use vehicles is based on the average number of people per car (3.5 people/car) developed from June 2021 visitor numbers and the average number of cars per space per day, which ranges from 0.8 in October to 3.9 in July.

Source: Compiled by Ascent Environmental in 2021.

The highest relative increase would occur during the month of June, with an estimated 5 percent increase in daily visitation compared to existing conditions. However, under existing conditions during June, the project area is not at capacity for visitation because existing visitation during July and August is much greater (see Table 3.1-10). Thus, it is assumed that there would be sufficient capacity in the project area to accommodate the highest estimated percent increase in visitation without noticeably increasing crowding or adversely affecting the quality of recreational opportunities.

PAOTs

Implementation of Alternative 4 would result in the same reduction in PAOTs associated with removal of the marina and boat ramp as identified for Alternative 1. Alternative 4 would also result in the same potential increase in PAOTs associated with the Meeks Bay Campground (if the campground is expanded) and expanded day-use areas as Alternative 1. As described above for Alternative 1, there would be enough PAOTs for the campground and expanded day-use areas. Additional summer overnight PAOTs and additional summer day use PAOTs would be requested as part of the TRPA permit application for the project and must be obtained prior to constructing and operating the proposed improvements.

Conclusion

A range of factors resulting from implementation of the Alternative 4 would influence the quality of recreational opportunities. As described above, Alternative 4 would: 1) provide new or improved recreation amenities, including a paddlecraft launch facility that could improve accessibility to the lake for people with mobility impairments; 2) increase parking; 3) reconfigure both campgrounds to improve privacy for campers; and 4) result in a decrease in motorized boating associated with the marina and boat ramp that would increase the quality of recreation experience for swimmers and nonmotorized watercraft users. These effects of Alternative 4 would enhance the quality of recreational opportunities over existing conditions. The increase in parking spaces would increase capacity for visitors that would be offset by the expanded day-use areas. This would help reduce the density of visitors in the beach and day-use areas compared to existing conditions and the No Action Alternative (see Table 3.1-8). Because Alternative 4 would enhance public recreation opportunities in the project area and obtain PAOTs, as required by TRPA, there would be no impact related to the fair share of the total Tahoe Basin capacity for outdoor recreation available to the public.

For these reasons, implementation of Alternative 4 would result in a less-than-significant impact related to the quality of recreational opportunities.

Mitigation Measures

No mitigation is required for this impact.

Impact 3.1-2: Create Recreational User Conflicts

Because of the no-wake zone in the bay and because the removal of the marina and boat ramp would offset some of the boating conflicts, Alternatives 1, 2, 3, and 4 would not result in a substantial change in conflicts between these recreation users. With implementation of Alternatives 1, 2, 3, and 4, the potential for conflicts between pedestrians and bicyclists on the new multi-use path in the project area would be minimized because the path would be managed for low-speed use, with through bicyclists being directed to the path along the highway. Campground improvements included in these alternatives would reduce conflicts between tent campers and RV campers by reducing the potential for campers with large RVs to stay at the Meeks Bay Campground. Potential recreational user conflicts associated with Alternatives 1, 2, 3, and 4 would be a less-than-significant impact.

Because the No Action Alternative would not change the facilities or operations in the project area, there would not be a change in recreation user conflict in the project area and there would be no impact.

No Action Alternative

Under the No Action Alternative, the marina, boat ramp, and other amenities in the project area would remain in the current configuration. The marina has the capacity to moor up to 119 boats and from 2010-2013, an annual average of 1,746 boats were launched (see Table 3.1-4). Aside from boats traveling to and from the marina and boat ramp and because there is no other infrastructure (e.g., boating pier) that motorized boats could use, Meeks Bay does not typically attract a lot of boating traffic. There may be some existing conflicts between motorized boats and swimmers and nonmotorized recreationists (e.g., kayakers and paddleboarders) in the bay; however, motorized boats are required to travel at 5 mph within the bay as it is a no-wake zone per TRPA Code (Section 84.10 states that the area 600 feet from the waterline of the lake is a no-wake zone) (see Figure 3.1-3). Additionally, there is a designated swim area demarcated by buoys and there are no-wake zones within 100 feet of swimmers and nonmotorized watercraft, which help to minimize conflicts between swimmers and motorized and nonmotorized boaters. With the No Action Alternative, there would be no change to existing conflicts between motorized watercraft and swimmers and nonmotorized recreationists.

There would be no changes to capacity, operability, and upland facilities associated with recreation (e.g., day-use area, beach, and pedestrian and bicycle circulation). There is currently the potential for conflicts between pedestrians, bicyclists, and motorized vehicles in the project area because bicycles, pedestrians, and vehicles typically share roadways as they travel to or from the beach and day-use areas with their day use equipment (e.g., ice chests, umbrellas, kayaks, paddleboards, beach toys). Similarly, for any bicyclists that travel to the project area on the Tahoe Trail that extends from Tahoma, there are no dedicated multi-use paths in the project area, and so there is the potential for conflicts between bicyclists, vehicles, and pedestrians on the internal roads in the project area. However, vehicles travel at slow speeds in the project area and the distances vehicles drive from the entrances to the parking areas are short; thus, the potential for conflicts are not anticipated to create substantial safety conflicts and there is not an existing significant impact. Because the No Action Alternative would not change the facilities or operations in the project area, there would not be a change in recreation user conflict in the project area and there would be no impact.

Alternative 1: Restoration with Boating Pier

Implementation of Alternative 1 would result in a 300-foot-long boating pier on the lake near the resort, which would allow for motorized boat access during typical high- and low-water conditions. Motorized boats could temporarily dock at the pier to allow for loading and unloading passengers that may want to access the beach and day-use areas or pick up passengers that park in the project area. In addition to the emergency services boat that would be permanently staged at the pier, up to 11 boats could also temporarily dock on the pier at any one time. The presence of a pier at Meeks Bay that could accommodate motorized boats would attract more day user boating activity within



Source: Prepared by Ascent Environmental in 2021.

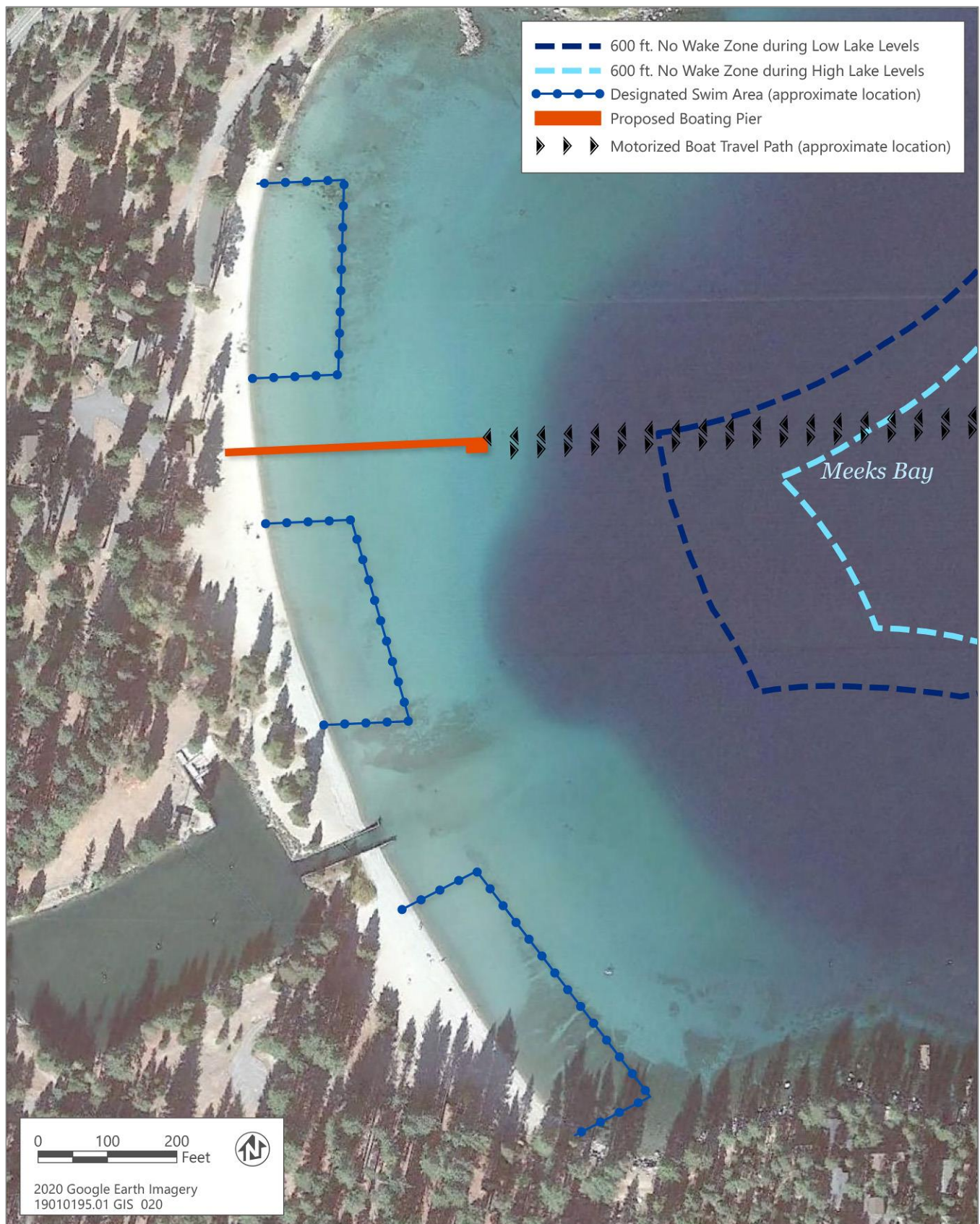
Figure 3.1-3 Swim Area, No-Wake Zone, and Boat Traffic Under Existing Conditions

the bay, which could lead to conflicts between swimmers and non-motorized watercraft and boats. Typically, the marina is used as a mooring area and therefore boaters enter and exit only; they do not linger in Meeks Bay as it currently lacks amenities for boating. Thus, with implementation of Alternative 1, there would be no boats traveling to and from the marina and boat ramp on a daily basis, but there would likely still be motorized boats traveling in the bay. Motorized boats would be required to travel at 5 mph within the no-wake zone that essentially encompasses the entire bay. Slow travel speeds would help to maintain the safety of swimmers and nonmotorized watercraft users (e.g., kayakers and paddleboarders) by reducing wake and allowing motorized boaters to more easily see and travel around swimmers and nonmotorized watercraft users. In addition, designated swim areas would be demarcated by buoys and motorized boats would not be allowed to access the swim area. Because of the designated swim area, requirements of the no-wake zone, and because the removal of the marina and boat ramp would offset some of the increase in boating associated with the pier, this alternative would not result in a substantial change in conflicts between these recreation users.

This alternative would introduce a 300-foot-long pier into a bay that has no existing obstructions for recreation users in the water (see Figure 3.1-4). Because of its length, the pier could be a navigational obstruction for swimmers and nonmotorized watercraft and could concentrate these recreational users near the end of the pier if swimmers or nonmotorized watercraft users wanted to travel around the pier between the north and south ends of the project area, creating additional conflict. The pier itself could be a location of user conflict when boaters are entering or exiting, and the pier is congested with pedestrians during busy summer days. Although swimmers and nonmotorized watercraft travelling around the pier may encounter more motorized boats, they would still be within the no-wake zone which would reduce conflicts. The potential for this alternative to result in navigational hazards to motorized and non-motorized recreation users is further discussed in Impact 3.10-4.

Implementation of this alternative would improve pedestrian and bicyclist circulation in the project area by constructing a two-way multi-use path along SR 89 along the edge of the project area and a spur loop through the project area (including across Meeks Creek), that would be similar in size and design to the existing path that extends from Tahoma to Meeks Bay. This path would be anticipated to be used by pedestrians and bicyclists. There is the potential for conflicts between bicyclists and pedestrians and vehicles on the path along the roadway. However, Alternative 1 would result in fewer potential conflicts between bicyclists and pedestrians and vehicles compared to existing conditions or the No Action Alternative because this section of SR 28 does not have a continuous sidewalk or bike lane and this alternative would construct a dedicated multi-use path along the roadway. With implementation of this recreation feature, there is the potential for conflicts between pedestrians and bicyclists intending to travel through the project area traveling at higher speeds. As described under "Multi-Use Path and Bike Storage," in Section 2.6.3, "Alternative 1 Parking and Circulation," in Chapter 2, the spur loop would be managed for low-speed use and through traffic would be directed to the primary route along SR 89. Managing the spur loop for low-speed use could be accomplished by including signage directing bicyclists to reduce their speed, requiring bicyclists to walk their bikes, or installing speed bumps or other features that would require bicyclists to travel at slower speeds. With management of the path through the project area for slow speed travel, potential conflicts between pedestrians and bicyclists would be minimized. Although the path could become congested during peak periods, in particular the spur path, pedestrians and bicyclists would still be able to use the path and bicyclists that would prefer to travel through the project area at higher speeds could use the path along the highway or in the road. Bike racks would be added in several locations in the project area so bicyclists could securely park their bicycles while they visit the project area. Potential conflicts could occur between bicyclists, pedestrians, and vehicles where the multi-use paths cross roadways in the project area, such as north of the day-use area at Meeks Bay Resort and where the path on SR 89 crosses both entrances to the project area. Because Alternative 1 would have dedicated multi-use paths compared to the No Action Alternative that does not have any, this alternative would reduce pedestrian, bicyclist, and vehicle conflicts compared to the No Action Alternative and existing conditions. As listed in Appendix A, the project includes resource protection measures for the multi-use path that requires installation of a yield sign or stop sign on the path near intersections with roadways, which would minimize or avoid conflicts between these users.

For the reasons described above related to conflicts between swimmers, nonmotorized recreation users, and motorized boaters; between pedestrians and bicyclists; and between tent campers and RV campers, Alternative 1 would result in a less-than-significant impact on recreation user conflicts.



Source: Prepared by Ascent Environmental in 2021.

Figure 3.1-4 Alternative 1 Boating Pier, Designated Swim Areas, and No-Wake Zone

Alternative 2: Restoration with Pedestrian Pier

Implementation of Alternative 2 would remove the marina and boat ramp and would include a 100-foot-long, floating pedestrian pier north of the creek. Like Alternative 1, removal of the marina and boat ramp under this alternative would reduce existing conflicts between motorized boaters and swimmers and nonmotorized watercraft during times when the marina and boat ramp are operational. The pedestrian pier could not be used by motorized boats and, thus, would not serve as an attraction in Meeks Bay for motorized boaters. Motorized boaters could still choose to travel to Meeks Bay, as under existing conditions, but would not have any facilities to support loading or unloading and would still be required to comply with the swim area and no-wake zone rules in the bay (see Figure 3.1-5). For these reasons, implementation of Alternative 2 would result in a beneficial effect related to conflicts between motorized boats and other types of recreationists compared to existing conditions and the No Action Alternative.

With implementation of Alternative 2, the multi-use paths in the project area would result in similar conflicts between pedestrians and bicyclists as described above for Alternative 1. Because the multi-use path along SR 28 would be separate from the roadway, Alternative 2 would result in less potential conflicts between pedestrians and bicyclists and vehicles compared to Alternative 1 because the multi-use path would be separated from the roadway. Alternative 2 would manage the multi-use paths for slow speeds and include bike storage the same as for Alternative 1. Potential conflicts could also occur between bicyclists, pedestrians, and vehicles where multi-use paths cross roadways in the project area, including those areas mentioned above for Alternative 1 and between the campground and parking lot in the area south of Meeks Creek. Thus, Alternative 2 would result in greater potential for conflicts compared to Alternative 1, but fewer conflicts than the No Action Alternative and existing conditions because this alternative includes dedicated multi-use paths. As described above for Alternative 1, the project includes design criteria for the multi-use paths that would minimize or avoid conflicts between these users throughout the project area.

Although some conflicts between motorized boaters and other recreation users could still occur with this alternative, those conflicts would be less than could occur under existing conditions and the No Action Alternative because the marina and boat ramp would be removed and no other amenities to support motorized boating would be added. This alternative would result in minimal conflicts between pedestrians and, relative to existing conditions and the No Action Alternative, bicyclists on the multi-use path and reduced conflicts between tent campers and RV campers. This impact would be less than significant.

Alternative 3: Restoration with No Pier

Implementation of Alternative 3 would remove the marina and boat ramp and would include a non-motorized launch platform or ramp in the southern portion of the project area. The facility would include a floating platform or dock of up to 30 feet in length that could move with lake level fluctuations. Removal of the marina and boat ramp would eliminate motorized boats from leaving and returning to the marina, which would reduce existing conflicts between boaters and swimmers and nonmotorized watercraft during times when the marina and boat ramp are operational. The launch platform or ramp could not be used by motorized boats and, thus, would not serve as an attraction in Meeks Bay for motorized boaters. Motorized boaters could still choose to travel to Meeks Bay, as under existing conditions, but would not have any facilities to support loading or unloading and would still be required to comply with the swim area and no-wake zone rules in the bay (see Figure 3.1-6). For these reasons, implementation of Alternative 3 would result in a beneficial effect related to conflicts between motorized boats and other types of recreationists compared to existing conditions and the No Action Alternative.

With implementation Alternative 3, the multi-use paths in the project area would result in the same potential for conflicts between pedestrians and bicyclists as described above for Alternative 2 in Meeks Bay Resort. Potential conflicts could also occur between bicyclists, pedestrians, and vehicles where the multi-use paths cross roadways in the project area, including those mentioned above for Alternative 1 and where the multi-use path crosses the roads in the Meeks Bay Campground and between the parking lots in the area south of Meeks Creek. Thus, Alternative 3 would result in greater potential for bicycle, pedestrian, and vehicle conflicts compared to Alternatives 1 and 2, but fewer than the No Action Alternative and existing conditions because this alternative includes dedicated multi-use paths. As described above for Alternative 1, the project includes design criteria for the multi-use paths that would minimize or avoid conflicts between these users throughout the project area. Alternative 3 would manage the multi-use paths for slow speeds and include bike storage the same as for Alternative 1.

Alternative 3 would include some of the same types of changes to the campgrounds as discussed above for Alternative 1 related to RV use and privacy. However, Alternative 3 would also increase the capacity of both campgrounds and the Meeks Bay Campground would be shifted further away from the highway. The nature of these changes would not introduce new uses that would result in recreation conflicts.

Although some conflicts between motorized boaters and other recreation users could still occur with this alternative, those conflicts would be less than could occur under existing conditions and the No Action Alternative because the marina and boat ramp would be removed and no other amenities to support motorized boating would be added. This alternative would result in minimal conflicts between pedestrians and bicyclists on the multi-use path and reduced conflicts between tent campers and RV campers relative to existing conditions and the No Action Alternative. This impact would be less than significant.

Alternative 4: Preferred Alternative

Implementation of Alternative 4 would result in the same change in motorized boat access at the project area as described above for Alternative 3. This alternative would include a non-motorized launch platform or ramp in the southern portion of the project area, which would be the same as the non-motorized launch facility proposed for Alternative 3. Similar to the reasons described above for Alternative 3, implementation of Alternative 4 would result in a beneficial effect related to conflicts between motorized boats and other types of recreationists compared to existing conditions and the No Action Alternative.

With implementation of Alternative 4, the multi-use paths in the project area would result in similar potential for conflicts between pedestrians and bicyclists as described above for Alternative 1, including potential for conflicts between bicyclists, pedestrians, and vehicles on the path along the roadway. Alternative 4 would manage the multi-use paths for slow speeds and include bike storage the same as for Alternative 1. Potential conflicts could also occur between bicyclists, pedestrians, and vehicles where multi-use paths cross roadways in the project area, including those mentioned above for Alternative 1 and near the parking lot in the area south of Meeks Creek. Thus, this alternative would result in one more potential conflict than could occur under Alternative 1, but fewer conflicts than the No Action Alternative and existing conditions because this alternative includes dedicated multi-use paths. As described above for Alternative 1, the project includes design criteria for the multi-use paths that would minimize or avoid conflicts between these users throughout the project area. Alternative 4 would include the same changes to the campgrounds as discussed above for Alternative 1.

Although some conflicts between motorized boaters and other recreation users could still occur with this alternative, those conflicts would be less than could occur under existing conditions and the No Action Alternative because the marina and boat ramp would be removed and no other amenities to support motorized boating would be added. This alternative would result in minimal conflicts between pedestrians and, relative to existing conditions and the No Action Alternative, bicyclists on the multi-use path and reduced conflicts between tent campers and RV campers. This impact would be less than significant.

Mitigation Measures

No mitigation is required for this impact.



Source: Prepared by Ascent Environmental in 2021.

Figure 3.1-5 Alternative 2 Pedestrian Pier, Designated Swim Areas, and No-Wake Zone



Source: Prepared by Ascent Environmental in 2021.

Figure 3.1-6 Alternative 3 and Alternative 4 Paddlecraft Launch, Designated Swim Areas, and No-Wake Zone

Impact 3.1-3: Affect Regional Access or Opportunities for Motorized Watercraft

Implementation of Alternatives 1, 2, 3, and 4 would include removal of the marina and boat ramp resulting in a reduction of approximately 6 percent of the mooring capacity on the lake during normal and high lake levels and displacing an estimated average of 6 percent of boat launches on the lake. Alternative 1 would include a boating pier; however, it would not offset the loss of public motorized boating capacity on the lake. Because of the limited capacity for motorized boating on the lake available to the public, the loss of the marina and boat ramp would result in a potentially significant impact on regional access or opportunities for motorized watercraft. Implementation of Mitigation Measure 3.1-3 would maintain capacity for marina moorings by allowing these moorings to be returned to the marina mooring pool. These removed moorings would be available to other marinas, which would reduce the impact to a less-than-significant level for Alternatives 1, 2, 3, and 4.

With the No Action Alternative, because there would be no change to motorized boating facilities in the project area, there would be no impact on regional access or opportunities for motorized watercraft.

No Action Alternative

The No Action Alternative would retain the marina in its current configuration. Additionally, the boat ramp would be retained. Continued operation of the marina would be limited during periods of time when the lake level is too low to accommodate motorized boats in the marina and launch of boats at the boat ramp. Because there would be no change to motorized boating facilities in the project area with implementation of this alternative, there would be no impact on regional access or opportunities for motorized watercraft.

Alternative 1: Restoration with Boating Pier

Implementation of Alternative 1 would remove the Meeks Bay Marina and boat ramp resulting in the loss of opportunity for the specific type of motorized boating recreation offered in the project area. When the Meeks Bay Marina and boat ramp are open during normal and high lake levels, it provides moorings for up to 119 boats and has an average of 1,971 annual boat launches per year. Removal of the marina would remove approximately 6 percent of the total mooring capacity on the lake and would displace an estimated average of 6 percent of boat launches during normal and high lake levels (see Tables 3.1-2 and 3.1-3). Alternative 1 would include a boating pier that would provide an amenity for motorized boaters to temporarily dock at the project area, but piers are not considered to provide capacity on the lake because boats could not moor at them overnight.

Displaced motorized boaters could launch at other nearby launching facilities, like Obexer's Boat Company and Homewood High and Dry Marina located approximately 4 miles to the north. These locations also offer overnight, weekly, or seasonal mooring opportunities. Additionally, there are five other facilities along the west shore providing mooring opportunities (e.g., Camp Richardson, Emerald Bay State Park, Sunnyside Marina, and Tahoe City Marina) and seven facilities throughout the north shore, south shore, and east shore that provide public mooring opportunities.

The Shoreline Plan regulates the total number of public and private moorings on Lake Tahoe. The public marinas and other public mooring facilities, including the Meeks Bay Marina, contain 1,968 existing moorings, with approximately 1,200 moorings at marinas (see Table 3.1-3). The Shoreline Plan would permit up to 330 additional moorings in marinas and 300 for public agencies. Thus, the loss of approximately 6 percent of the total existing moorings on the lake would be considered significant because it would substantially reduce motorized boating on Lake Tahoe.

The TRPA Code allows conversion of moorings in certain instances, but does not address removal of moorings or returning moorings to the lakewide mooring pool. The Code allows marina slips to be converted to a buoy within the same facility (Code Section 84.3.2.D.3.a). However, Alternative 1 does not propose placement of mooring buoys in the project area. Furthermore, replacing the loss of 119 slips with 119 buoys would not be feasible because based on the buoy location standards in TRPA Code Section 84.3.3.E (e.g., 50-foot spacing between buoys), the buoys would exceed the capacity of Meeks Bay and would constitute a new buoy field, which is prohibited by TRPA Code (Section 84.3.3.E.1.a). Therefore, the loss of the moorings associated with the marina would not be replaced on site, and the public mooring capacity could be reduced below levels envisioned in the Shoreline Plan.

For the reasons described above, the loss of a boat ramp that serves approximately 1,700 boat launches per year and the loss of 6 percent of the public mooring capacity would be a potentially significant impact on regional access or opportunities for motorized watercraft.

Alternative 2: Restoration with Pedestrian Pier

Implementation of Alternative 2 would result in the same change in motorized boat access at the project area during normal and high lake levels as described above for Alternative 1. Although Alternative 2 would construct a pedestrian pier that would not be accessible to motorized boats; thus, there would be no motorized boating amenities provided at the project area. For the reasons described above for Alternative 1, the impact to regional access or opportunities for motorized watercraft from implementation of Alternative 2 would be a potentially significant impact.

Alternative 3: Restoration with No Pier

Implementation of Alternative 3 would result in the same change in motorized boat access at the project area during normal and high lake levels as described above for Alternative 1. Although Alternative 3 would construct a paddlecraft launch facility that would not be accessible to motorized boats; thus, there would be no motorized boating amenities provided at the project area. For the reasons described above for Alternative 1, the impact to regional access or opportunities for motorized watercraft from implementation of Alternative 3 would be a potentially significant impact.

Alternative 4: Preferred Alternative

Implementation of Alternative 4 would result in the same change in motorized boat access at the project area during normal and high lake levels as described above for Alternative 1. Although Alternative 4 would construct a paddlecraft launch facility that would not be accessible to motorized boats; thus, there would be no motorized boating amenities provided at the project area. For the reasons described above for Alternative 1, the impact to regional access or opportunities for motorized watercraft from implementation of Alternative 4 would be a potentially significant impact.

Mitigation Measures

Mitigation Measure 3.1-3: Maintain Capacity for Public Moorings

This mitigation measure will apply to Alternatives 1, 2, 3, and 4.

TRPA will add the number of boat slips removed from the Meeks Bay Marina (119 boat slips) into the pool of moorings available for marinas.

Significance after Mitigation

Implementation of Mitigation Measure 3.1-3 would result in adding the number of boat slips removed by Alternatives 1, 2, 3, and 4 as part of the restoration project back into the pool of available marina moorings for Lake Tahoe so that they are available for other entities to provide moorings elsewhere on the lake. As a result, the total marina mooring capacity of Lake Tahoe and the share of total moorings available for public use would be consistent with mooring capacities envisioned by the Shoreline Plan. This would reduce the impact related to loss of regional access or opportunities for motorized watercraft from these alternatives to a less-than-significant level by allowing the capacity for motorized boats to moor on the lake to be retained.

Impact 3.1-4: Affect Local Access or Opportunities for Motorized Watercraft

Implementation of Alternatives 1, 2, 3, and 4 would include removal of the marina and boat ramp resulting in a reduction of approximately 11 percent of the mooring capacity in the west shore area and displacing an estimated average of 38 percent of boat launches in the west shore area. Alternative 1 would include a boating pier; however, it would not offset the loss of motorized boating capacity in the west shore area. Because of the limited capacity for motorized boating in the west shore area, the loss of the marina and boat ramp would result in a potentially significant impact on local access or opportunities for motorized watercraft. Implementation of Mitigation Measure 3.1-3 would maintain capacity for public moorings by allowing the removed public moorings to be replaced with new public moorings elsewhere on the lake, thereby reducing the impact related to loss of local access or opportunities for motorized watercraft from Alternatives 1, 2, 3, and 4. However, even with implementation of Mitigation Measure 3.1-3, public mooring capacity locally near the west shore could be permanently reduced, which would be a potentially significant and unavoidable impact on local access for motorized watercraft.

With the No Action Alternative, because there would be no change to motorized boating facilities in the project area, there would be no impact on local access or opportunities for motorized watercraft.

No Action Alternative

The No Action Alternative would retain the marina in its current configuration. Additionally, the boat ramp would be retained. Continued operation of the marina would be limited during periods of time when the lake level is too low to accommodate motorized boats in the marina and launch of boats at the boat ramp. Because there would be no change to motorized boating facilities in the project area with implementation of this alternative, there would be no impact on local access or opportunities for motorized watercraft.

Alternative 1: Restoration with Boating Pier

Implementation of Alternative 1 would remove the Meeks Bay Marina and boat ramp resulting in the loss of opportunity for the specific type of motorized boating recreation offered in the project area.

As described above for Impact 3.1-3, Alternative 1 does not include replacement of mooring buoys in the project area. Removal of the marina would remove approximately 11 percent of the mooring capacity in the west shore area and would displace an estimated average of 38 percent of boat launches on the west shore (see Tables 3.1-2 and 3.1-3). The boating pier proposed as part of Alternative 1 would not provide motorized boating capacity in the west shore area because boats could not moor there overnight. For this reason and because of the limited capacity for motorized boating the west shore the loss of a boat ramp that serves approximately 1,900 boat launches per year and the loss of 11 percent of the mooring capacity would be a potentially significant impact on local access or opportunities for motorized watercraft.

Alternative 2: Restoration with Pedestrian Pier

Implementation of Alternative 2 would result in the same change in motorized boat access at the project area as described above for Alternative 1. Although Alternative 2 would construct a pedestrian pier that would not be accessible to boats; thus, there would be no motorized boating amenities provided at the project area. For the reasons described above for Alternative 1, the impact to local access or opportunities for motorized watercraft from implementation of Alternative 2 would be a potentially significant impact.

Alternative 3: Restoration with No Pier

Implementation of Alternative 3 would result in the same change in motorized boat access at the project area as described above for Alternative 1. Although Alternative 3 would construct a paddlecraft launch facility that would not be accessible to boats; thus, there would be no motorized boating amenities provided at the project area. For the reasons described above for Alternative 1, the impact to local access or opportunities for motorized watercraft from implementation of Alternative 3 would be a potentially significant impact.

Alternative 4: Preferred Alternative

Implementation of Alternative 4 would result in the same change in motorized boat access at the project area as described above for Alternative 1. Although Alternative 4 would construct a paddlecraft launch facility that would not be accessible to boats; thus, there would be no motorized boating amenities provided at the project area. For the reasons described above for Alternative 1, the impact to local access or opportunities for motorized watercraft from implementation of Alternative 4 would be a potentially significant impact.

Mitigation Measures

Mitigation Measure 3.1-4: Maintain Capacity for Public Moorings

This mitigation measure will apply to Alternatives 1, 2, 3, and 4.

Implement Mitigation Measure 3.1-3.

Significance after Mitigation

Implementation of Mitigation Measure 3.1-3 would result in adding the number of boat slips removed by Alternatives 1, 2, 3, and 4 as part of the restoration project back into the pool of moorings for the lake so that they are available for other public agencies to provide moorings elsewhere on the lake. This would reduce the impact related to loss of local access or opportunities for motorized watercraft from these alternatives. However, because the location of future public moorings would depend on a variety of factors, including capacity for new moorings at other public access points, it would not be feasible to ensure additional access to the lake near the project area. Consequently, public mooring capacity near the west shore could be permanently reduced. Thus, the impact on local access or opportunities for motorized watercraft would remain potentially significant and unavoidable.

Impact 3.1-5: Affect Recreational User Access to Lake Tahoe and the Project Area

With implementation of Alternatives 1, 2, 3, or 4, the types of recreation uses would be shifted (e.g., marina and boat ramp to the restored creek, providing alternative camping sites at the campgrounds), the creek area would still be accessible, and other aspects of the project area would be expanded (e.g., new boating pier associated with Alternative 1, new pedestrian pier with Alternative 2, new paddlecraft launch with Alternatives 3 and 4, expanded day-use areas, new multi-use path). Thus, the impact on recreational user access to the project area and Lake Tahoe from these alternatives would be beneficial.

With the No Action Alternative, because there would be no change in any of the infrastructure or recreational access within the project area, there would be no impact related to recreational user access to Lake Tahoe and the project area for this alternative.

No Action Alternative

With the No Action Alternative, the existing marina, boat ramp, campgrounds, day-use areas, and beach areas would be retained. Because there would be no change in any of the infrastructure or recreational access within the project area, there would be no impact related to recreational user access to Lake Tahoe and the project area.

Alternative 1: Restoration with Boating Pier

Implementation of Alternative 1 would remove the marina and boat ramp and restore Meeks Creek, construct a boating pier, expand the day-use areas, construct multi-use paths through the project area, and include improvements to the campgrounds. Although the marina and boat ramp would be removed, Meeks Creek would be restored in this area and would allow for continued access to this area where visitors to the project area could engage in water play, fishing, or exploration. The boating pier would provide another opportunity for visitors to the project area to access and experience the lake. The pier would be accessed from the beach by a universally accessible walkway, which would provide access to the pier for people with mobility impairments. Although the marina and boat ramp would be removed, limiting access for motorized boaters, operation of the marina and boat ramp are greatly affected by lake levels and is often closed more than other nearby marinas and boat ramps or launch locations during periods of low lake levels. The pier provides an opportunity for motorized boaters to access the landward

facilities. The multi-use path along the highway and the multi-use path spur through the project area would provide access across Meeks Creek for recreation users, thereby enhancing pedestrian and bicyclist circulation throughout the project area. Although changes to the Meeks Bay Campground would discourage large RVs from use of this campground, the Meeks Bay Resort Campground would continue to accommodate RVs and both campgrounds could include replacing some of the campsites with alternative camping facilities (e.g., yurts, camping cabins) that would expand recreation opportunities for visitors that lack camping equipment. Although the types of recreation uses would be shifted (e.g., marina and boat ramp to the restored creek, providing alternative camping sites), the creek area would still be accessible and other aspects of the project area would be expanded (e.g., new boating pier, expanded day-use areas, new multi-use path). Thus, the impact on recreational user access to the project area and Lake Tahoe from Alternative 1 would be beneficial.

Alternative 2: Restoration with Pedestrian Pier

Implementation of Alternative 2 would remove the marina and boat ramp and restore Meeks Creek, construct a pedestrian pier, expand the day-use areas, construct multi-use paths through the project area, and include improvements to the campgrounds. These changes would result in similar improvements in recreational user access to the project area and Lake Tahoe as described above for Alternative 1. Alternative 2 would not enhance access for motorized boaters because the marina and boat ramp would be removed and boats could not dock at the pier. However, motorized boaters could still visit the project area but would need to use other means to access the landward facilities.

Removal of the marina and boat ramp and restoration of Meeks Creek would result in similar improvements in access to the project area for water play, fishing, or exploration like that described above for Alternative 1. The pedestrian pier would provide another opportunity for visitors to the project area to access and experience the lake. The pier would be accessed from the beach by a universally accessible walkway, which would provide access to the pier for people with mobility impairments. Implementation of the multi-use path and camping improvements associated with Alternative 2 would result in the same recreational user access to the project area as described above for Alternative 1.

Although the types of recreation uses would be shifted (e.g., marina and boat ramp to restored creek, providing alternative camping sites) and expanded (e.g., new pedestrian pier, expanded day-use areas, multi-use path), the impact on recreational user access to the project area and Lake Tahoe from Alternative 2 would be beneficial.

Alternative 3: Restoration with No Pier

Implementation of Alternative 3 would remove the marina and boat ramp and restore Meeks Creek, construct a paddlecraft launch, expand the day-use areas, construct multi-use paths through the project area, add up to 14 new parking spaces, and complete improvements to the campgrounds, including increasing the overall number of campsites by up to 22 sites. The use of the campgrounds by RV users would be the same as what is described above for Alternative 1. These changes would result in similar improvements in recreational user access to the project area and Lake Tahoe as described above for Alternative 1. Alternative 3 would not enhance access for motorized boaters because the marina and boat ramp would be removed and motorized boats could not dock at or launch from the paddlecraft launch. However, motorized boaters could still visit the project area, but would need to use other means to access the landward facilities.

Removal of the marina and boat ramp and restoration of Meeks Creek would result in similar improvements in access to the project area for water play, fishing, or exploration like that described above for Alternative 1. The paddlecraft launch would be accessed by a universally accessible walkway, which would provide access to the lake for people with mobility impairments. Implementation of the multi-use path and camping improvements associated with Alternative 3 would result in the same recreational user access to the project area as described above for Alternative 1. Increasing the number of parking spaces and campsites increases visitor capacity, which increases access to the project area and the lake for recreational users.

Although the types of recreation uses would be shifted (e.g., marina and boat ramp to restored creek, providing alternative camping sites) and expanded (e.g., additional parking and campsites, paddlecraft launch, expanded day-use areas, multi-use path), the impact on recreational user access to the project area and Lake Tahoe from Alternative 3 would be beneficial.

Alternative 4: Preferred Alternative

Implementation of Alternative 4 would remove the marina and boat ramp and restore Meeks Creek, construct a paddlecraft launch, expand the day-use areas, construct multi-use paths through the project area, add up to 14 new parking spaces, and complete improvements to the campgrounds. These changes would result in similar improvements in recreational user access to the project area and Lake Tahoe as described above for Alternative 1. Because this alternative would remove the marina and boat ramp and motorized boats could not dock at or launch from the paddlecraft launch, this alternative would not enhance access for motorized boaters. However, motorized boaters could still visit the project area but would need to use other means to access the landward facilities.

Removal of the marina and boat ramp and restoration of Meeks Creek would result in similar improvements in access to the project area for water play, fishing, or exploration like that described above for Alternative 1. Like Alternative 3, with construction of the small universally accessible paddlecraft launch structure, this alternative would enhance access to the lake for people with mobility impairments. Additionally, because this alternative would add 14 parking spaces to the project area, Alternative 4 would increase visitor capacity and increase access to the project area and lake for recreational users.

Although the types of recreation uses would be shifted (e.g., marina and boat ramp to restored creek, providing alternative camping sites) and expanded (e.g., additional parking, paddlecraft launch, expanded day-use areas and beach, multi-use path), the impact recreational user access to the project area and Lake Tahoe from Alternative 4 would be beneficial.

Mitigation Measures

No mitigation is required for this impact.

3.1.4 Cumulative Impacts

The geographic scope for the cumulative settings as they relate to land- and water-based recreation are the west shore of Lake Tahoe and the Tahoe Basin, respectively. The Tahoe Basin is and has long been a tourist destination with numerous recreational opportunities. Recreation services and facilities are located throughout the basin, within urban centers, forested land, along the shoreline, and on waterways. The two TRPA recreation thresholds, Quality of Recreation Experience and Access to Recreational Opportunities, are in attainment. The quality of recreation experiences was evaluated for the 2019 Threshold Evaluation through Sustainable Recreation Working Group surveys, and most respondents to the surveys rated their experiences spent outdoors at Lake Tahoe as "extremely enjoyable" or "very enjoyable" (Lake Tahoe Info 2021a). The region has seen a consistent increase in the amount of public land available for low-density recreational use and the number of amenities that provide access to that land. In addition, evaluation of the Fair Share of Recreation Capacity standard indicates an increase in recreational development that is consistent with the policy statement's direction that a "fair share" of resource capacity be available for public recreation, and the region has experienced an increase in the amount of public land available to support recreational purposes. Based on the most recent Threshold Evaluation Report completed in 2021, the recreation thresholds are in attainment (Lake Tahoe Info 2021b). Because the threshold indicators demonstrate a reasonable level of recreational opportunities, experiences, and capacity, there is no existing adverse cumulative condition related to quality of recreation experience and availability of outdoor recreation capacity. Meeks Bay does not experience the high visitation numbers that other nearby recreation area experience. Under existing conditions, higher densities of visitors occur during July and August relative to the other months that the project area is open to visitors (see Table 3.1-8). Crowding in the project area is typical at areas with beaches (areas that attract tourists and local residents) along the lake in the summer, like at other beach areas in Tahoe.

The fuels reduction and restoration cumulative projects (i.e., Meeks Meadow Restoration, Lake Tahoe West Restoration Project, Tahoe Program Timberland EIR, Fuels Reduction and Understory Burning [California State Parks], and West Shore Wildland Urban Interface Hazardous Fuel Reduction) would result in temporary impacts associated with quality of recreation experience because these projects may temporarily limit access to areas that provide recreation opportunities or result in short-term scenic impacts associated with forest thinning. However, these

impacts would be short term and these cumulative projects would be required to implement standard project requirements, resource protection measures, or other standard operating procedures that reduce adverse impacts, such as noise and scenic resources impacts, on the quality of recreation user experiences.

Buildout of the Shoreline Plan would enhance the recreational experience at Lake Tahoe while protecting the environment. The Shoreline Plan would allow for up to 2,116 new moorings (buoys, lifts, or public slips), 128 new private piers, 10 new public piers, and two new public boat ramps. Some new and existing buoys could be converted to slips, and vice versa, at facilities open to the public (e.g., marinas). Because the Shoreline Plan allows for the development of up to 2,116 moorings, 10 public and two private piers, and two new public boat ramps and includes regulations that address recreation user conflicts (e.g., no-wake zones) and design and placement of shorezone structures, the plan would result in less-than-significant impacts on quality of recreation experience, recreation user conflicts, opportunities for motorized boating, and access to Lake Tahoe.

Implementation of the SR 89 Corridor Plan would include completion of the Tahoe Trail through the corridor, providing a trail from Meeks Bay to Cascade, and expanding transit service throughout the corridor. On-highway parking would be eliminated along the corridor simultaneously with construction of the Tahoe Trail and expanding transit to the corridor. The purpose is to expand how visitors arrive to the corridor and timing transit to time when visitors arrive throughout the day. These changes that would occur as part of the SR 89 Corridor Plan would cause a portion of visitors to shift which mode of transportation they use to access the various recreation opportunities in this area. The Tahoe Trail from Meeks Bay to Emerald Bay would also increase access to and around Lake Tahoe for public recreation. The Tahoe Trail from Meeks Bay to Cascade could provide additional capacity for visitors that do not rely on automobiles along this portion of the lake.

As described in Impacts 3.1-1, 3.1-2, and 3.1-5, Alternatives 1, 2, 3, and 4 would result in less-than-significant impacts on quality of recreation experiences, recreational user conflicts, and recreational user access to Lake Tahoe and the project area. These alternatives would enhance existing recreation opportunities and access in the project area and along the lake, such as improving the campgrounds (including providing additional capacity for parking with Alternatives 3 and 4 and providing additional capacity for camping with Alternative 3), improving pedestrian and bicycle circulation and connectivity with the multi-use path and spur, expanding day-use areas, and restoring Meeks Creek. As discussed under Impact 3.1-1, under all action alternatives, the beach and day-use areas would be expanded, resulting in a decrease in crowding for all action alternatives. The project and implementation of the Tahoe Trail expansion and transit expansion under the SR 89 Corridor Plan could cumulatively combine to increase the number of visitors at Meeks Bay. However, because implementation of the SR 89 Corridor Plan would remove on-highway parking and would time transit so that visitor arrival is staggered throughout the day, some visitors would shift their mode of transportation from automobiles to using the trail and transit. Thus, there would be a reduction in visitor capacity that is controlled by parking supply and transit schedules. Visitation numbers would be managed such that there would not be a substantial increase in visitors that would combine with those of the action alternatives and would not result in a significant change to crowding at Meeks Bay.

For the purposes of the analysis of cumulative impacts on access or opportunities for motorized watercraft (which includes sailboats), this analysis focuses on the project alternatives' regional impact because there are no cumulative projects that would reduce local access or opportunities for motorized watercraft. Because the Shoreline Plan enhances recreation opportunities for motorized boating by providing additional opportunities for access, there is not an existing or reasonably foreseeable adverse cumulative condition. The potential impact from implementation of Alternatives 1, 2, 3, and 4 on regional access or opportunities for motorized watercraft during normal and high lake levels is addressed in Impact 3.1-3 and was identified to be a potentially significant impact that would be reduced to a less-than-significant level with implementation of Mitigation Measure 3.1-3 that would allow for the moorings removed from the marina to be reallocated to the Shoreline Plan pool of marina moorings on the lake. Thus, none of the alternatives would result in a significant impact to access and opportunities for motorized watercraft.

For these reasons, the alternatives would have a less than cumulatively considerable impact on recreation.

This page intentionally left blank.