

MEEKS BAY RESTORATION PROJECT

Public Workshop #3 | June 27, 2022 (5:30 – 7:00 pm)

Engagement Summary & Input Received

Workshop Purpose

- Provide update on overall project need and history.
- Present overview of project alternatives and summary of the preferred alternative.
- Explain contents of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement/ Environmental Impact Statement/ Environmental Impact Report (Draft EIS/EIS/EIR) and its key findings.
- Share guidance on preparing effective comments and explain process for how to submit formal written comments.
- Answer questions to clarify project and environmental document.

Participation Summary

- Workshop was held virtually as a Zoom webinar
- 57 registrants
- 45 individuals attended
- Project Development Team was represented by Rebecca Cremeen (Tahoe Regional Planning Agency), Ashley Sibr (US Forest Service), and Adam Lewandowski (Ascent Environmental). Brian Judge (Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board) was unavailable due to a family emergency.
- Workshop was facilitated by Austin McInerney (Consensus Building Institute).

Presentation Materials & Video Recording

- [Video recording of presentation and discussion](#)
- [Webinar slides shown during presentation](#)

How to Comment on Draft EIS/EIS/EIR

Ms. Sibr from US Forest Service provided an overview of how to effectively comment on the draft environmental document and stressed that comments may not be submitted via email, but that written comment letters may be mailed in or dropped off at the front desk of the relevant lead agencies or, preferably, via the Forest Service website [here](#). All commenters will need to provide the minimum basic information requested if you want to retain “standing” to object on the project later. She detailed the information requested on the Forest Service website and shared the following details on how to effectively comment:

- If you are commenting on the website, you may submit separate comments, however multiple comments with the same content will be considered a single issue for consideration
- Address the accuracy of information, methodology, or assumptions used for the environmental analysis
- Present new relevant information

- Be solution-oriented (e.g., propose corrections or mitigation)
- Clearly state:
 - Why the information provided in the document is in error
 - Alternative ideas about how to address the issues identified in the document
 - The sources of your information

Clarifying Questions and Discussion

Questions and comments were submitted through a combination of verbal participation during the question-and-answer periods of the workshop, and through the Zoom chat dialogue throughout the meeting. Questions and comments raised are presented below under the following themes: 1) project alternatives, 2) scope and findings of environmental analysis, 3) shoreline features and water access, 4) upland features, and 5) other comments.

Project Alternatives

- Comment: *Given the lack of support by the majority that there be no pier and no expanded campgrounds, it's gratifying to see the preferred alternative without those. The beach is almost standing room only during the summer and adding more campers will exacerbate that issue.*
- Question: *Why is "Restore the Marina" not an option?*
 - Response: The no action alternative includes analysis of an operable marina. "Restoration" of the marina does not meet the purpose and need of the project. Please see "alternatives not considered in further detail" section of the document.
- Question: *Why does Alternative #4 include removal of the cabins? Commenter would like this alternative to specifically state that no pier of any type (boat docking or pedestrian access) would be considered.*
 - Response: The rationale for the removal of the cabins is threefold: 1) their removal would improve the scenery from the lake looking to the shore; 2) the cabins are quite old, and their rebuilding has been considered for some time; and 3) their removal will allow the deconstruction of the gabion wall on the waterfront and the restoration of the shoreline, thus increasing beach access.
- Question: *Does the recommended alternative include a paddle craft launch facility? If so, what does the infrastructure of the paddle craft launch facility include?*
 - Response: Yes, it does. Small portable launch structure that is no longer than 30' in length that will float on the water to provide accommodations to physically challenged visitors as well as anyone who is looking to launch their kayak, etc.

- Question: *If the preferred alternative is selected, can you put a buoy line from Kehlet Point (where the house is) to the southeast boundary line of the Forest Service property in Meeks Bay to improve the safety situation between swimmers and boaters?*
 - Response: The environmental document analyzes whether the proposed alternatives will either decrease or increase the likelihood of interactions between swimmers and boaters in the water. Alternative 1 would attract boats since there is pier, but the other alternatives do not include a pier and, thus, reduce the likelihood of dangerous interactions as less boats would be coming into Meeks Bay. However, there is always the chance of boaters coming into the area close to swimmers.

If the preferred alternative is selected, a buoy line could be considered. Current regulations do not allow watercraft to be launched from swimming beaches so there will have to be consideration given to where the launch area will be.

Scope and Findings of Environmental Analysis

- Question: *Has there been an analysis of the magnitude of the increased mosquito population and human disease consequence of this project?*
 - Response: The marina is existing habitat for mosquitoes. The proposed restoration project is not expected to increase the amount of habitat over existing, in fact the amount of standing water is expected to decrease. Issues regarding public health are discussed in Chapter 3 of the Draft EIS/EIS/EIR.
- Question: *Have you ever hiked Meeks Bay Meadows? It is loaded with mosquito and ticks. I don't want them hurting my children. Do you have a survey of mosquitoes in the meadows and the other analogous wetlands?*
 - Response: Please see the answers to the previous questions on the subject. No mosquito samples were taken.
- Question: *The only mention of "mosquito" in the entire EIS is on page 3.9-7 and only acknowledges that mosquitoes carry diseases but does not evaluate the impact of the project on the population at Meeks Bay. It is clear that this project would massively increase the mosquito population of Meeks Bay to that close the infestations in Meeks Bay meadows and all the other wetlands encroachments on the lake. This is a significant environmental effect! Why is mosquito and disease impact not part of the EIS?*
 - Response: The Draft EIS/EIS/EIR analyzes issues that are of concern from the project. If you feel the Draft EIS/EIS/EIR is deficient in this regard, please include it in your official comments.
- Question: *"The proposed restoration project is not expected to increase the amount of habitat over existing." This is a lie. You can go to any of the wetlands encroaching on*

Lake Tahoe and experience a massive increase in the number of mosquitos. The Mosquito population is obviously not a problem now in Meeks Bay, and a severe problem in Meeks Bay Meadows or every other wetlands encroachment on the lake. Have you measured mosquito populations at Meeks Bay vs Meeks Bay Meadows or every other wetlands encroachment on the lake?

- Response: The Project Development Team appreciates your passion for this project. To answer your question directly, no we did not do mosquito larvae tests. If you feel the environmental document is inaccurate or missing data, please include this in your official comments.

- Question: *In California, mosquito and biting insect borne diseases including Zika, Chikungunya, Dengue, Filariasis (canine and feline heartworm), Malaria, Saint Louis encephalitis (SLE), West Nile virus (WNV), Western Equine encephalitis (WEE), and yellow fever are a health crisis. This project will create a corridor for these diseases to be introduced into the Meeks Bay Lake area. Has or will there be a survey and evaluation of the presence and load of these disease vectors in the Meeks Bay Meadows area?*
 - Response: Please see my previous answer related to disease vectors. The habitat for disease-bearing insects is not expected to increase due to the reduction in standing water in the restoration alternatives.

- Question: *With no mention of impact of ticks, mosquitoes, or bears, this Draft EIS/EIS/EIR is clearly a one-sided sham that only presents issues that support the project, or false straw-men objections that also essentially support the project. Who wrote this Draft EIS/EIS/EIR?*
 - Response: The Project Development Team includes many Lake Tahoe locals. Please provide substantive comments on the specific items that you feel are not analyzed adequately in the draft environmental document.

- Question: *“A closer example of the lagoon/beach ecosystem is General Creek in Sugar Pine Point State Park” Yes - and anyone that visits the lagoon knows the very heavy mosquito load in the wetlands area there. Do you have actual data?*
 - Response: Please see the responses to the mosquito related questions above

- Question: *Once the creek lagoon is more fully restored, what is the chance/probability of completely eradicating the invasive species?*
 - Response: the invasive species are most easily kept at bay in functioning ecosystems, and we have had good success in other restoration projects around Tahoe with keeping out invasive species. Complete eradication is always tough, but this project is expected to have a high level of success.

- Question: *There is NO mention of bears in the entire Draft EIS/EIS/EIR. The area has a bad bear issue, and this project would make it much worse as it creates a corridor from*

Meeks Bay Meadows and Desolation Wilderness right down to the lakeside campers and residents. The bears cause property damage and may cause significant human injury. This is a significant environmental effect! Why is bear and wildlife introduction impact not part of the Draft EIS/EIS/EIR? Comment: Do you really want to suppose that there are no more bears in the wetlands areas around the lake than there are in the dry areas surrounding them?

- Response: The Draft EIS/EIS/EIR analyzes issues that are of concern from the project. Adam commented as to the reasons why this issue was not analyzed in detail. If you feel we have missed something, please include it in your official comments.
- Question: *Has there been an analysis increased bear resulting from this project's wildlife corridor funnel from the large bear populations in Meeks Bay Meadows and Desolation Wilderness down into residential and recreational spaces?*
 - Response: The project includes a wildlife undercrossing at the bridge. It is not expected that the project will bring a significant increase in bear to the project area. While the restoration will include additional vegetation, the project does not include any activities that are considered a significant attractant to the bears above the existing condition. Please see the wildlife section of Chapter 3 of the Draft EIS/EIS/EIR. The existing hole in the fence along the property line is to allow bears to safely move without having to travel along Highway 89.
- Question: *How many additional bear euthanizations will this project result in?*
 - Response: Restoration projects, including this one, are generally considered positive for wildlife, including bears.
- Question: *I recommend a stream profile (like Taylor Creek) at the last meeting; is this still a possibility? Has Meeks Bay Fire Department considered an amphibious vehicle for protection?*
 - Response: Although a stream profile chamber would be super cool, that is outside of the scope for this project and would be difficult to construct without affecting either of the recreation sites. Meeks Bay Fire Department has considered a boat on a lift, which is analyzed in Alternative 1.
- Question: *Since the Meeks Bay Resort hails back to the 1950s and 1960s, and these cabins were built to replace those original structures, how was it determined that the cabins are not historic structures per the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA)? i.e., What are the criteria that these cabins did not meet?*
 - Response: The evaluation follows all the rules of the California State Historic Preservation Office, and an analysis of all structures was completed, and it was determined that the motel units that are proposed for removal are not historic. The main reason is that they are not old enough.

- *Question: How was it possible that the Meeks Bay resort was destroyed given its historic significance?*
 - *Response: Please see response to previous question.*

Shoreline Features and Water Access

- *Question: Why is parking so close to the beach preferred over moving the parking closer to the highway?*
 - *Response: In this location it was felt by a majority of those consulted that having day use parking closer to the beach was preferred over having a drop-off with the parking further back, with the major reason cited being having easier access to vehicles for beach equipment, etc. Additionally, relocating the parking to a new location would require more land disturbance resulting in increased impact.*
- *Question: Will the paddle storage and cleaning stations in all the alternatives include wash/drain/dry infrastructure to address potential Aquatic Invasive Species issues?*
 - *Response: This could certainly be included, but we don't specifically call this out in the Draft EIS/EIS/EIR. I would recommend you include this in your comments on the document.*
- *Question: Will the rock breakwater in Meeks Resort be changed at all?*
 - *Response: A natural rock boulder breakwater already exists between the existing cabins and the Kehlet house and this will not be changed. However, the existing rock gabion will be removed and will be replaced with more natural rock and vegetation. In restoring the shoreline, there may be the need to modify the rock boulders, but these changes will be minor to ensure that the beach is protected.*
- *Question: We were there over the weekend and several boats were anchored "just" offshore, tethered together. Without longer pier (which I favor) boats are more likely to anchor close to shore. Will there be some setback for the safety of swimmers, kayakers and paddleboarders?*
 - *Response: Boats are not allowed in the swim areas, which would be buoyed off and cover most of the beach area. Outside of that, boats are allowed to anchor just offshore, per coast guard rules.*

Upland Features

- *Comment: You didn't address a second bridge between each side of the creek to allow moving from one campground to the other. There was a way across other than the highway ever since the 1920's. It is safer than the highway for families, children and eliminate people using automobiles.*

- Response: All the alternatives include a pedestrian bridge over the restoration area.
- Question: *The lakeside cabins are a treasured resource for families that have used those for decades. Moving those inland will be a great disappointment to hundreds of people. What is the rationale for that change?*
 - Response: Scenic improvements, impacts to the shore zone, high levels of maintenance needed, increased beach spaces, removal of the shrapnel from the gabions.
- Question: *Is there employee housing incorporated into any of the plan?*
 - Response: No.
- Question: *Will the extension of the bike trail onto Hwy 89 displace the parking along the east side of the highway?*
 - Response: The parking along the highway would not be removed or prevented, although it could be displaced in some places by the bike path construction. There is a parallel project “State Route 89 Corridor Management Plan” for continuation of the "Tahoe Trail" south past Emerald Bay. One of the questions is which side of the highway will the trail be on going through the Meeks Bay area. Visit the [Cascade to Meeks Trail Feasibility Study](#) to see the various alignments and take a survey to provide input on this project.
- Question: *I am concerned about the parking that happens when beachgoers park on Hwy 89 (close to the resort entrance) to avoid the parking charges. It's hard to envision how the bike lane will not displace ALL of that. there is just not a lot of room for both. just concerned that we will be dealing with more parking that blocks our driveways on the west side of the hwy.*
 - Response: The State Route 89 Corridor Management Plan will be looking at various alignments and how it would affect the highway/parking. I would recommend reviewing that plan, the alignments, and taking the survey that Kirk mentioned above. [westshoretrail.com](#).

Other Comments

- Question: *This will negatively impact residents' lives. Do any of you actually live in this area?*
 - Response: Please express your sentiment in your official public comment and, yes, many of the Project Development Team live and work on Lake Tahoe.
- Question: *Given there is no funding for this project as this time, how much does/did cost play into the final recommended alternative?*

- Response: We do have funding for this environmental document and some design work for restoration and recreation improvements. Once we have the environmental complete, the Forest Service and partner agencies will be well positioned to apply for more funding from various sources.
- Question: *Where can we get a copy of the Draft EIS/EIS/EIR? Is a hard copy of the document available, if so, where, and what cost?*
 - Response: The draft environmental document and project related documents are available from: www.meeksbayproject.org. There is a hard copy available at the library in South Lake Tahoe and at the TRPA office. We don't provide printed copies, but you could download it from the website and take it to a printer.
- Question: *How long will construction last?*
 - Response: It will vary for the various elements of the project. The bridge crossing would be completed within one year/season to minimize disruption to traffic. The restoration work will take a few years as the first year will focus on vegetation removal and prep work to allow the restoration efforts to be undertaken thereafter in year 2-4. The recreation elements will be phased depending on funding availability, but the goal will be to minimize disruption and to complete the work as expeditiously as possible.
- Question: *Will we be able to see the comments other folks have submitted?*
 - Response: The Final EIS/EIS/EIR include all comments received as well as responses to the comments and issues raised during the public review period.
- Question: *To ensure the public is aware of the alternatives and the public comment period it would be a really good idea to put sandwich boards with bar code to the documents at Meeks Bay Resort, Meeks Bay Campground, local post offices and even markets. Additionally, handouts with information on the project, link to alternatives should be provided to resort guests, campground guests, day use guests, local HOA's, and posted at local post offices. There is a lack of information out there on this project based on my interactions with the West Shore communities and at Meeks Bay which is concerning. Some additional outreach would be valuable in keeping the public informed and involved. Thank you for the presentation this evening.*
 - Response: The Project Development Team appreciates these ideas, and we will discuss how we can expand public outreach. We also recommend that anyone interested in the project join our e-News list by signing up at the project website at www.meeksbayproject.org
- Question: *I am currently disabled, who can assist me in providing comments on the Draft EIS/EIS/EIR?*
 - Response: You can contact Rebecca Cremeen at TRPA (rcremeen@trpa.gov / 775-589-5214) and she can provide assistance.