

1.8.4 Natural Hazards Subelement

Overview

Natural phenomena such as avalanches, landslides, wildfires, and flooding can cause extensive property damage, impair environmental quality, and jeopardize public health and safety. Although natural hazards are not addressed by a TRPA Threshold program, the Compact recognizes the need to establish standards for the protection of public health and safety and to maintain the social and economic health of the Lake Tahoe Region.

The goals and policies that provide agency direction on natural hazards are contained in the Natural Hazards Subelement. The Subelement currently contains one goal statement and four associated policies. The goal statement calls for the minimization of risks from natural hazards such as floods, fire, avalanche, and earthquake. The four associated policy statements direct TRPA to:

- regulate development in areas with known avalanche or mass-stability hazards;
- prohibit development within the 100-year floodplain and in areas of wave runup, except where necessary to implement the broader range of Regional Plan Goals and Policies;
- inform residents and visitors about the Tahoe Basin's wildfire hazards and encourage the use of fire-resistant materials and preventative techniques and the management of forest fuels consistent with state laws and the Regional Plan Goals and Policies; and
- encourage public-safety agencies to prepare disaster plans.

The final report of the Bi-State Blue Ribbon Fire Commission (Emergency California-Nevada Tahoe Basin Fire Commission 2008), convened in the aftermath of the June 2007 Angora Fire, recommended, and the agencies of the Tahoe Region adopted, important policies and measures to more aggressively and comprehensively address forest fuels reduction and management of private parcels for defensible space. Changes made to TRPA Code include allowing trees up to 14 inches in diameter to be removed without a tree removal permit (Chapter 71.3) and adding provisions for Defensible Space Assessors to mark trees for defensible space (Chapters 2, 71.1A, and 71.5C). In addition, MOUs with the USFS and Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board (Lahontan) related to forest fuels projects have been updated to streamline the TRPA permitting process for forestry projects. Addressing the Commission's recommendations is an ongoing process; additional updates may occur prior to adoption of the Regional Plan Update.

Alternative 1—Continuation of Existing Regional Plan

Summary

Under Alternative 1, the “No Action” Alternative, the goals, policies, and implementation measures from the 1987 Regional Plan would remain in place.

Goals and Policies

Under Alternative 1, the goals and policies from the 1987 Regional Plan would remain in place.

Implementation Measures

Under Alternative 1, the implementation measures from the 1987 Regional Plan would remain in place.

Alternatives 2, 3, and 4

Summary

Alternatives 2, 3, and 4 are designed primarily to address the key recommendations of the Bi-State Commission regarding the development of a multiagency wildfire prevention plan, the implementation of hazardous-fuels reduction treatments, and the integration of water quality and defensible space BMPs. Because implementing these recommendations is vital to preserving public health and safety, the changes are uniform across all the “action” alternatives.

Alternatives 2, 3, and 4 also incorporate new policies and implementation measures to provide for the updating of the natural hazard map and for programs and incentives to encourage the removal of facilities from known natural hazard areas. In addition, existing goals and policies would be reorganized to clarify language and intent and to move detailed implementation language from the Goals and Policies document to the Code.

Goals and Policies

Under the three “action” alternatives, the goal and policy statements contained in the Natural Hazards Subelement of the 1987 Regional Plan would be revised to clarify language and intent. Four new policies would be added. The first two would address the key recommendations of the Bi-State Commission regarding the development of a multiagency wildfire prevention plan, the implementation of hazardous-fuels reduction treatments, and the integration of water quality and defensible space BMPs. The third new policy would direct TRPA to update the natural hazard map for use in project planning and review. The fourth new policy would direct TRPA to develop programs and incentives to encourage the removal of public and private facilities from known natural-hazard areas.

Implementation Measures

In addition to the existing measures in place today, Alternatives 2, 3, and 4 would incorporate the following new measures to implement the revised and new policies

contained in the Natural Hazards Subelement and improve the effectiveness of TRPA's Natural Hazards Program:

- Natural Hazard Map Development. Amend Chapter 12, TRPA Regional Plan Maps, by updating the natural hazard map. This may be done in coordination with universities and government agencies.
- Relocation of Facilities from Natural Hazard Areas. Amend Code to create incentives that encourage public and private entities to decommission and/or relocate facilities from known natural-hazard areas.
- Hazardous Fuels Reduction. Update the Code to ensure consistency with the Lake Tahoe Basin Multi-Jurisdictional Fuel Reduction and Wildfire Prevention Strategy, as regularly updated, to guide hazardous fuels reduction efforts
- Water Quality and Defensible Space BMP Integration. Amend Code Chapter 25 to integrate defensible space requirements with water quality BMP requirements.

