

CHAPTER V

RECREATION ELEMENT



The Recreation Element of the Regional Plan provides for the development, utilization, and management of the recreational resources of the Region, among which include wilderness and forested lands, parks, riding and hiking trails, beaches, playgrounds, marinas, skiing areas, and other recreational facilities. Specific activities occur as a part of the recreational opportunity provided within the Lake Tahoe Basin. While many activities may take place in dispersed areas without benefit of constructed facilities, other activities require the use of developed facilities. Dispersed recreational activities include hiking, riding, cross country skiing, and back country camping. Developed recreational facilities includes such facilities as campgrounds, visitor information centers, boat launching and marina facilities, and downhill ski areas. Urban recreation includes such facilities as day use areas, recreation centers, and golf courses, participant sports facilities and sport assembly. Urban recreation is normally provided in urban areas and is primarily intended to serve local needs. Dispersed recreation use normally takes place in the rural portions of the Basin while developed recreation is provided in both rural and urban settings.

Policy direction for recreational development in the Lake Tahoe Basin is provided, in part, by policy statements adopted as environmental thresholds by the TRPA Governing Board:

POLICY STATEMENT

It shall be the policy of the TRPA Governing Body in development of the Regional Plan to preserve and enhance the high quality recreational experience including preservation of high-quality undeveloped shorezone and other natural areas. In developing the Regional Plan, the staff and Governing Body shall consider provisions for additional access, where lawful and feasible, to the shorezone and high quality undeveloped areas for low density recreational uses.

It shall be the policy of the TRPA Governing Body in development of the Regional Plan to establish and ensure a fair share of the total Basin capacity for outdoor recreation is available to the general public.

~~The three Subelements considered under Recreation are Dispersed Recreation, Developed Recreation, and Urban Recreation. Together, t~~he goals and policies of the Recreation Element~~se Subelements~~ are expected to achieve the intent of the thresholds over the life of the Plan by ensuring that recreational opportunities keep pace with public demand, that recreational facilities remain high on the development priority list, and that the quality of the outdoor recreational experience will be maintained.

DISPERSED RECREATION

~~The varied natural landscape features of the Tahoe Basin provide excellent opportunities for dispersed forms of recreation that require little or no developed facilities. The value or quality of a particular activity depends on preserving the attractiveness of the use areas and managing the resource base to be consistent with its environmental capabilities.~~

GOAL R-1

ENCOURAGE OPPORTUNITIES FOR DISPERSED RECREATION WHEN CONSISTENT WITH ENVIRONMENTAL VALUES AND PROTECTION OF THE NATURAL RESOURCES.

Dispersed recreation involves such activities as hiking, jogging, primitive camping, nature study, fishing, cross country skiing, rafting/kayaking, and swimming. All these activities require a quality resource base and some degree of solitude. Achieving this goal will require commitments to develop support facilities and provide access such as trails, trailheads, restrooms in heavily used areas, and some hardening to protect the land.

POLICIES

R-1.1 LOW DENSITY RECREATIONAL EXPERIENCES SHALL BE PROVIDED ALONG UNDEVELOPED SHORELINES AND OTHER NATURAL AREAS, CONSISTENT WITH THE TOLERANCE CAPABILITIES AND CHARACTER OF SUCH AREAS.

Consistent with attainment and maintenance of environmental thresholds, use and access to undeveloped publicly owned segments of Lake Tahoe's shoreline, such as the U. S. Forest Service beaches in Carson and Washoe Counties, can be increased by providing or utilizing transportation systems such as buses, shuttles, and parking and pull-out facilities which link to trail systems along the public owned portions of the shoreline. The establishment of trails and transportation facilities must be compatible with the tolerance capability and special resource and recreation values of the planning area. In some instances, it may be desirable to decrease the use in areas where those values are threatened.

R-1.2 AREAS SELECTED FOR NATURE STUDY AND WILDLIFE OBSERVATION SHALL BE APPROPRIATELY REGULATED TO PREVENT UNACCEPTABLE DISTURBANCE OF THE HABITAT AND WILDLIFE.

To prevent losing resource areas for study or observation, of attraction by disturbances that would either directly or indirectly impact the habitat or influence the behavior of the wildlife shall be limited. Controls might include observation boundaries, limits on the number of users, or total exclusion.

R-1.3 TRAIL SYSTEMS FOR HIKING AND HORSEBACK RIDING SHALL BE EXPANDED TO ACCOMMODATE PROJECTED DEMANDS AND PROVIDE A LINK WITH MAJOR REGIONAL OR INTERSTATE TRAILS.

Local and regional surveys suggest that additional trails may be necessary to satisfy public demand. New trail construction for purposes of hiking, horseback riding, and walking shall be allowed throughout the Lake Tahoe Basin in planning areas where there is allowable land coverage and base facilities. Trails will be accommodated in areas of excess coverage through a coverage replacement program.

R-1.4 EXISTING TRAILS THAT ARE EITHER UNDERUTILIZED OR LOCATED IN ENVIRONMENTALLY SENSITIVE AREAS SHALL BE RELOCATED TO ENHANCE THEIR USE AND TO PROTECT NATURAL RESOURCES.

Trails that adversely impact a valuable resource or aggravate other environmental concerns should be either redesigned to mitigate impacts or relocated. Trails that are underutilized or not maintained should be appropriately restored to a natural state.

R-1.5 OFF-ROAD VEHICLE USE IS PROHIBITED IN THE LAKE TAHOE BASIN EXCEPT ON SPECIFIED ROADS, TRAILS, OR DESIGNATED AREAS WHERE THE IMPACTS CAN BE MITIGATED.

Off-road vehicles are creating erosion and trailhead road maintenance problems throughout the Basin. This policy would prohibit the use of motorized vehicles in areas other than those designated for such use. Areas for this form of recreation shall be determined in cooperation with off-road vehicle clubs, the U. S. Forest Service, county and state governments, and this Agency. Continued use of designated areas will depend on compliance with this policy and the ability to mitigate significant impacts.

GOAL R-2

PROVIDE HIGH-QUALITY RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES.

Numerous opportunities exist in the Tahoe Basin to provide varied and quality recreational experiences. High-quality recreational opportunities often depend on limiting conflicts between uses and ensuring that uses are compatible with affected resources.

POLICIES

R-2.1 WILDERNESS AND OTHER UNDEVELOPED AND UNROADED AREAS SHALL BE MANAGED FOR LOW-DENSITY USE.

Natural areas with limited road access are ideal for dispersed recreational activities keyed to solitude and appreciation of wilderness values. Such areas offer unique qualities best suited to such activities as primitive camping, hiking, fishing, and nature study.

R-2.2 SEPARATE USE AREAS SHALL BE ESTABLISHED FOR THE DISPERSED WINTER ACTIVITIES OF SNOWMOBILING, CROSS-COUNTRY SKIING AND SNOWSHOEING WHEN CONFLICTS OF USE EXIST.

Conflicts of interest and competition for limited resources can detract from the recreational experience. The most vivid example of such a conflict involves the simultaneous use of snow-covered meadows by both cross country skiers and snowmobiles. This policy will establish separate use zones as a strategy to minimize conflicts.

R-2.3 NEARSHORE/FORESHORE STRUCTURES SHOULD BE APPROPRIATELY LOCATED TO MINIMIZE IMPACTS TO RECREATIONAL BOATING AND TOP LINE FISHING.

Excellent recreational fishing is possible in the nearshore of Lake Tahoe. Fish concentrate in this zone due to favorable habitat conditions. To the extent feasible, buoys and other nearshore structures in areas of prime fish habitats should be located to provide for safe navigation through this zone.

DEVELOPED RECREATION

~~The Tahoe Basin is a recreation destination for many outdoor enthusiasts. Developed facilities attracting visitors to the Basin include marina/launch facilities, five ski areas, 21 campgrounds with more than 2,000 sites, several group facilities, one visitor information center, and beaches. Campground and boat launching facilities are at capacity during a major portion of the summer season. Surveys of areawide recreation demand and existing use demonstrate the need for more campgrounds, boat launching facilities and beach areas. Based on criteria of the California Department of State Parks and Recreation and U. S. Forest Service, the use of the existing facilities warrants expansion of facilities to prevent deterioration of the quality of experience and to prevent resource damage.~~

GOAL R-31

PROVIDE A FAIR SHARE OF THE TOTAL BASIN CAPACITY FOR OUTDOOR RECREATION.

This goal addresses the need to reserve capacity for recreation-oriented types of development. Capacity will be reserved in terms of water supply, land coverage, and air and water quality. Public roads and transportation systems shall be managed to provide service to outdoor recreation areas.

POLICIES

R-3.1 ALL EXISTING RESERVATIONS OF SERVICES FOR OUTDOOR RECREATION SHALL CONTINUE TO BE COMMITTED FOR SUCH PURPOSES.

The purpose of this policy is to recognize existing reserve commitments for outdoor recreation, such as the reservation of sewage capacity by the U. S. Forest Service, and to ensure such commitments are not lost or diverted to interests other than recreation.

R-3.2 WHEN REVIEWING PROJECTS THAT COMMIT SIGNIFICANT RESOURCES OR SERVICES TO NON-OUTDOOR RECREATIONAL USES, TRPA SHALL BE REQUIRED TO MAKE WRITTEN FINDINGS THAT SUFFICIENT RESOURCE CAPACITY REMAINS TO OBTAIN THE RECREATION GOALS AND POLICIES OF THIS PLAN.

Based on estimated recreational development permitted by this Plan, the Agency shall specify "fair share" estimates for the Region and for local areas of critical services and resources. No non-recreational projects may be approved that would rely on the utilization of such reserved capacities.

R-3.3 PROVISIONS SHALL BE MADE FOR ADDITIONAL DEVELOPED OUTDOOR RECREATION FACILITIES CAPABLE OF ACCOMMODATING 6,114 PAOT IN OVERNIGHT FACILITIES AND 6,761 PAOT IN SUMMER DAY USE FACILITIES AND 12,400 PAOT IN WINTER DAY-USE FACILITIES.

To assure that the fair share of remaining capacity is allocated to outdoor recreation, agencies that have responsibility for such facilities and activities have collectively estimated the opportunities and needs as reflected in the policy. Ability to build depends on availability of public funds or the willingness of private

investors. Therefore, scheduling is not possible for this Plan. It is estimated that 11 percent of the capacity may be developed in the first 5 to 10 years.

GOAL R-4~~2~~

PROVIDE FOR THE APPROPRIATE TYPE, LOCATION, AND RATE OF DEVELOPMENT OF OUTDOOR RECREATIONAL USES.

The appropriate type of outdoor recreational development should depend on demonstrated need. The rate of development should be responsive to demand. The location of facilities should be responsive to both environmental concerns and site amenities.

POLICIES

R-4.1 EXPANSION OF RECREATIONAL FACILITIES AND OPPORTUNITIES SHOULD BE IN RESPONSE TO DEMAND.

This strategy provides for expansion of existing recreational facilities and opportunity for development of new facilities if they meet environmental thresholds. Opportunity may be expanded to respond to public need if physical resources are available and traffic mitigation measures can be implemented.

R-4.2 BIKE TRAILS SHALL BE EXPANDED TO PROVIDE ALTERNATIVES FOR TRAVEL IN CONJUNCTION WITH TRANSPORTATION SYSTEMS.

This strategy would encourage construction of additional trail systems for bicycling. Emphasis would be on expansion near urban areas to help establish alternative modes of travel to help reduce vehicle miles of travel.

R-4.3 PUBLIC BOAT LAUNCHING FACILITIES SHALL BE EXPANDED, WHERE APPROPRIATE, AND WHEN CONSISTENT WITH ENVIRONMENTAL CONSTRAINTS.

There is a need for additional boat launching capacity on Lake Tahoe. This policy would encourage expansion of existing facilities or conversion of private facilities to allow public use. Incentives for redevelopment or conversion of existing facilities to provide expansion of public use will be provided in areas where these opportunities exist.

R-4.4 PRIVATE MARINAS SHALL BE ENCOURAGED TO PROVIDE PUBLIC BOAT LAUNCHING FACILITIES.

This policy would increase boat access to Lake Tahoe by encouraging marina facilities to provide public launching facilities, where practical, and provide incentives to those facilities which improve or provide such services.

R-4.5 NEW CAMPGROUND FACILITIES SHALL BE LOCATED IN AREAS OF SUITABLE LAND CAPABILITY AND IN PROXIMITY TO THE NECESSARY INFRASTRUCTURE.

This strategy would promote the siting of new campgrounds where the least environmental impact can be expected and where the necessary roads and services are easily accessible. Actual site selection will be guided by the policies of this Plan and the other plans of federal and state agencies.

R-4.6 EXISTING RECREATIONAL FACILITIES IN SOME SENSITIVE AREAS, EXCEPT THOSE THAT ARE SLOPE DEPENDENT SUCH AS DOWNHILL SKIING, SHALL BE

ENCOURAGED, THROUGH INCENTIVES, TO RELOCATE TO HIGHER CAPABILITY LANDS.

This strategy would allow all existing recreational facilities located in insensitive areas (Land Capability Districts 1a, 1b, 1c, 2, and 3) to relocate in better capability areas. This action is intended to reduce coverage on sensitive lands and eliminate associated impacts.

| **R-4.7 DEVELOPMENT OF DAY-USE FACILITIES SHALL BE ENCOURAGED IN OR NEAR ESTABLISHED URBAN AREAS, WHENEVER PRACTICAL.**

Day-use facilities are generally in high demand close to urban areas. The proximity to urban services provides the user with nearby conveniences such as stores and overnight accommodations. Residents also are able to take advantage of these day-use facilities without travelling excessive distances from their homes. This policy would encourage the siting of additional day-use facilities near population centers or where the particular use or service is best suited.

| **R-4.8 VISITOR INFORMATION FACILITIES SHALL BE LOCATED, TO THE EXTENT FEASIBLE, NEAR ENTRY POINTS TO THE BASIN OR CLOSE TO URBAN AREAS.**

These facilities provide a valuable service to the general public through the exchange of information and by providing travelers with directions to major attractions. The siting of these facilities should complement objectives to reduce the vehicle miles of travel in the Basin.

| **R-4.9 PARKING ALONG SCENIC CORRIDORS SHALL BE RESTRICTED TO PROTECT ROADWAY VIEWS AND ROADSIDE VEGETATION.**

This policy would reduce roadside parking by providing off-road parking "satellites" in conjunction with roadside barriers.

| **R-4.10 TRANSIT OPERATIONS, INCLUDING SHUTTLE-TYPE BOAT SERVICE, SHOULD SERVE MAJOR RECREATION FACILITIES AND ATTRACTIONS.**

Vehicle trips related to the use of recreation areas or facilities can be mitigated by the use of transit systems. In some areas, the availability of parking is the limiting factor to recreational use of the area. Transit service could allow more people to utilize existing areas without expanding of auto parking or increasing vehicle trips. Decreased auto use in many areas would enhance the recreational experience.

| **R-4.11 EXPANSION OF EXISTING SKI FACILITIES MAY BE PERMITTED BASED ON A MASTER PLAN FOR THE ENTIRE SKI AREA. THE PLAN MUST DEMONSTRATE (1) CONSISTENCY WITH THE OTHER GOALS AND POLICIES OF THIS PLAN AND THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE COMPACT, (2) THAT THE EXPANSION IS CONSISTENT WITH THE AVAILABILITY OF ACCOMMODATIONS AND INFRASTRUCTURES TO SUPPORT VISITORS WHEN THEY ARE OFF THE SKI AREA, AND (3) EXPANSION OF EXISTING PARKING FACILITIES FOR DAY USE DOES NOT OCCUR.**

The Lake Tahoe Region excels in snow and topographic conditions for alpine skiing. Existing tourist accommodations can adequately support large numbers of destination skiers. Also in place is a transportation network that is being expanded and improved to handle the large summer time population. This transportation system also could be managed to accommodate wintertime use in the Basin. Development of recreation opportunities emphasizing winter sport

activities can, therefore, improve the year-round efficiency of both the transportation system and tourist accommodations. However, alpine skiing does impact large areas of low capability land. Often the areas include oversteepened slopes, fragile soils, sparse vegetation, and stream environment zones. In addition, day use skiers, in particular, contribute significantly to local and areawide traffic congestion. Plans to increase skiing capacity would therefore require careful consideration of on-site impacts as well as off-site impacts on transportation systems.

All ski area expansion will be evaluated based on a master plan which, at a minimum, includes consideration of each item listed in the policy. The master plan will assist in designing the most efficient operation with the least environmental disturbance, and will direct phased development where it is appropriate. Since automobile access to and parking at ski area base facilities has been the source of many problems, new facilities should be planned to avoid these problems. Enlargement or construction of new facilities to provide shelter, sanitation, food service, and first aid would be permitted to serve skiers on the mountain, but enlarged parking lots would not be permitted.

Although there are numerous undeveloped areas suitable for skiing, a finding has been made that expansion of existing areas within and adjacent to the Basin can meet future demand. This would not preclude construction of satellite parking provided it is part of the transportation facilities otherwise provided for in this Plan.

GOAL R-5~~3~~

PROTECT NATURAL RESOURCES FROM OVERUSE AND RECTIFY INCOMPATIBILITY BETWEEN USES.

Overcrowding of facilities or areas can lead to the deterioration of the recreation resource and recreational experience. In the same manner, the quality of the recreational experience can be affected by conflicting uses within the same area. Strategies that address these issues are listed below.

POLICIES

R-5.1 RECREATION DEVELOPMENT IN THE TAHOE BASIN SHALL BE CONSISTENT WITH THE SPECIAL RESOURCES OF THE AREA.

The physical and biological characteristics of the Tahoe Basin combine to create a unique variety of recreational opportunities. These qualities define the types of recreational activities that are compatible with the Basin's natural features. Those activities that can best be served elsewhere or which are incompatible with the Basin's natural qualities should be avoided.

R-5.2 REGULATE INTENSITY, TIMING, TYPE, AND LOCATION OF USE TO PROTECT RESOURCES AND SEPARATE INCOMPATIBLE USES.

This policy would regulate the intensity and type of recreation use in specific locations. Regulations will be adopted and enforced dealing with the types of use and numbers of people at one time permitted for various activities. Timing of permitted uses would be closely regulated to avoid conflict with other resources required by fish, wildlife, and vegetation. Incompatible activities between visitors would be separated by establishing use areas for dispersed recreation separate

from developed recreation areas. This strategy would examine overall demand and planned capacity and determine site specific areas within the Basin for the various demands to be met.

GOAL R-64

PROVIDE FOR THE EFFICIENT USE OF OUTDOOR RECREATION RESOURCES.

Some recreation attractions in the Basin, such as ski areas, beaches, campgrounds, and picnic areas, experience wide fluctuations in seasonal and weekday use. This goal would attempt to promote a more balanced use of certain facilities and sites on a year-round and weekly basis.

POLICIES

R-6.1 PROMOTE THE USE OF UNDERUTILIZED RECREATION AREAS THROUGH PROGRAMS THAT IMPROVE THE PUBLIC AWARENESS OF RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES AND THROUGH AN EXPANDED WATER AND INLAND TRANSIT SYSTEM.

Visitor centers and other public information sources can help inform visitors of the recreation opportunities in the Region and regular transit service can help facilitate the use of lesser known or accessible sites.

R-6.2 SEASONAL FACILITIES SHOULD PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALTERNATIVE USES IN THE OFF-SEASON, WHEREVER APPROPRIATE.

Seasonal facilities tend to be busy only during a particular time of year. Ski areas, for example, are busy in the winter, but much of the associated infrastructure is idle and unused during the summer. This policy would attempt to buffer the variations in use by permitting alternative uses of the facilities during the off-season.

URBAN RECREATION

~~Numerous outdoor recreational opportunities are conveniently located near urban areas. High-demand facilities include participant sports facilities and day-use facilities such as picnic areas, parks, and recreation centers. The demand for such public facilities must be anticipated in order to reserve sufficient capacity for future expansion or development.~~

GOAL R-74

PROVIDE SUFFICIENT CAPACITY FOR LOCAL-ORIENTED FORMS OF OUTDOOR AND INDOOR RECREATION IN URBAN AREAS.

The Tahoe Basin has an abundance of recreational facilities that would more than accommodate the needs of local residents. However, these facilities are more regional in nature and cater to the visitors. The specialized recreational needs of the Tahoe resident need to be considered apart from the more general demands of the tourist.

POLICIES

| **R-7.1. RESERVE SUFFICIENT PUBLIC SERVICE AND FACILITY CAPACITY TO ACCOMMODATE ALL FORMS OF URBAN RECREATION.**

Urban-oriented types of recreation facilities require space and services much like any other developed facility. Areas that are suitable for these specialized facilities need to be identified, appropriately acquired, and managed by local government or service districts. The demand for such forms of recreation must be determined by local residents and local government.

| **R-7.2. URBAN OUTDOOR RECREATIONAL FACILITIES LOCATED IN SENSITIVE AREAS SHOULD BE ENCOURAGED TO RELOCATE TO OTHER SUITABLE SITES.**

This strategy would provide incentives to relocate existing facilities outside sensitive areas such as Land Capability Districts 1a, 1b, 1c, 2, and 3.