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STAFF REPORT

Date: September 18, 2019
To: Governing Board
From: TRPA Staff
Subject: Presentation of State of the Lake Report

Background:

Dr. Geoffrey Schladow from the University of California, Davis Tahoe Environmental Research Center (TERC) will present a summary of the 2019 State of the Lake Report. The full report may be accessed at <https://tahoe.ucdavis.edu/stateofthelake>.

TERC has been continuously monitoring the water quality of Lake Tahoe since 1968. This record of almost 50 years of scientific measurements provides a unique perspective on the long-term trends, current status and recent observations of the condition of Lake Tahoe. The State of the Lake summarizes the results of the ongoing research and monitoring efforts and provides important information that TRPA and its partners rely upon to inform policy decisions about the future of the Region.

TERC has monitored the clarity of the lake with a Secchi disk every two years for the last half century. Continuous monitoring and reporting on clarity have been critical to raising public awareness and spurring management action to preserve water quality. The 2019 Report found that average annual water clarity in 2018 was 70.9 feet, a 10.5-foot increase from 2017. The Report highlighted seasonal differences in clarity trends. Winter clarity improved by 11.7 feet to 83.3 feet over the previous year, a sign that stormwater control projects around the lake are working, while summer clarity dropped 16.7 feet from 2015 to 56.4 feet.

The 2019 Report continued to highlight the impact of climate change on the Lake. The average water temperature of the lake's surface in 2018 was 53.2 degrees F, the second warmest on record. The report also highlighted preliminary findings from a research project on the impact of Mysis shrimp on lake clarity. Mysis shrimp are non-native and feed on native zooplankton. The pilot project in Emerald Bay is examining the possibility of Mysis shrimp control as a means to bring back the native zooplankton and improve clarity.

TRPA is proud to be one of a group of partners that fund TERC's work and the development of the State of the Lake Report and is grateful that Dr. Schladow has agreed to present the findings of the State of the Lake Report to the TRPA Governing Board.

If you have questions about the presentation, please contact Dan Segan, Principal Natural Resource Analyst at dsegan@trpa.org or 775.589.5233.