



TAHOE  
REGIONAL  
PLANNING  
AGENCY

## CHAPTER 3

# Issues and Analysis



## 3 Issues and Analysis

This chapter identifies planning assumptions and describes the key issues addressed in the General Plan.

### 3.1 Planning Assumptions

The following assumptions are based on current state and federal laws, regulations, and California State Parks (CSP) policy, which form the basis for planning and set the parameters for addressing planning issues.

CSP will:

- ◆ Manage CSP and Conservancy lands within the KBSRA General Plan area as one management unit consistent with this General Plan, subject to the terms of the Operating Agreement (OA) between CSP and the Conservancy, dated May 2014, as amended. Roles and responsibilities related to special uses and concessions, access for people with disabilities, law enforcement, and revenue and expenses will remain consistent with those specified in the OA.
- ◆ Collaborate with Placer County, North Tahoe Public Utility District (NTPUD), Tahoe Regional Planning Agency (TRPA), and other agencies, non-profit organizations, volunteers, and other regional partners to assist in management of KBSRA.
- ◆ Manage KBSRA in a manner consistent with federal and state laws, the Lake Tahoe Regional Plan, the CSP Department Operations Manual, and other applicable laws and regulations.
- ◆ Coordinate the planning and management of KBSRA with the planning and management of other CSP and Conservancy lands surrounding KBSRA. Coordinate with planning efforts related to the community of Kings Beach and other recreation sites and public land to consider connectivity and compatibility of recreational, interpretive, and resource management programs.
- ◆ Consult with federally recognized Indian Tribes and California Native American Tribes and obtain a respectful understanding of the long-term needs for protection and treatment of Native American cultural resources, heritage and sacred sites, objects, cultural landscapes, and human remains; and to determine future consultations that would be required during the subsequent planning, design, and implementation of projects.

***“Lake Tahoe provides enormous environmental and economic value to California and the nation.”***

- California Governor Jerry Brown at the 2011 Lake Tahoe Summit



- ◆ Maintain and increase the availability and variety of recreational opportunities, access for visitors with physical limitations, and events within KBSRA, to the extent possible without conflicting with the missions of CSP or the Conservancy.
- ◆ Consider the issues and concerns of all citizens of California, including adjacent land owners, and nearby residents but also those who come to visit Tahoe for myriad reasons. Seek input from local, regional, and statewide interests.
- ◆ Maintain the approximate size and configuration of KBSRA.

## 3.2 State Recreation Area Issues

### 3.2.1 Resource Management

#### Scenic Mitigation and Enhancement

**Issue: Enhancing scenic views and mitigating the effects of new or rebuilt facilities.**



*Source: Ascent Environmental*

Scenic views of Lake Tahoe and surrounding mountains are some of the most significant resource values at KBSRA.

Views toward the lake from KBSRA are highly scenic, especially at certain times of the day. It can be very busy with boats, it can be serene. Views toward the mountains offer distant peaks and ridges to the south but also include a busy highway and commercial buildings. Scenic views are a major asset of KBSRA, and likely a primary draw for many visitors.

The aesthetic condition of facilities within KBSRA are varied. Some facilities, such as the plaza area and new restrooms are high quality and contribute to the character of KBSRA. Other facilities, such as the rock retaining walls and the concessionaire building are deteriorating and detract from the overall aesthetic quality.

KBSRA is located within TRPA-designated roadway and shoreline travel units, and it is a designated recreation area evaluated under the TRPA threshold monitoring program. KBSRA is also adjacent to State Route (SR) 28, which is eligible for designation as a State Scenic Highway, although it has not officially been designated as such. Views into KBSRA from the roadway are generally high quality, as they provide relatively unobstructed views of Lake Tahoe and distant mountains. These views are important to visitors and residents of Kings Beach, because they provide open views of Lake Tahoe in Kings Beach.

Scenic quality is regulated by TRPA through Code of Ordinances Section 66.3, which includes limits on the visual contrast and magnitude of human-made structures along the shoreline. These regulations require compensatory scenic mitigation when a project

would exceed limits on the visual magnitude of human-made structures. In addition, any project that is visible from a TRPA-designated scenic roadway unit, shoreline unit, or scenic resource would be required to demonstrate that the project would not degrade the scenic score assigned to the unit or resource. Almost any new or modified facility in KBSRA would be visible from at least one of these designated scenic resources or units. For example, a reconstructed pier that extends farther into the lake could affect scenic views from KBSRA, including views from TRPA-designated scenic resources. Any facility development or alteration of the visible environment will be required to be developed in a way that minimizes degradation of views to Lake Tahoe or scenic vistas visible from the Lake, SR 28, and the from the park itself.

## Aquatic Invasive Species

### **Issue: Preventing new introductions of aquatic invasive species (AIS).**

The aquatic habitat of Lake Tahoe is threatened by AIS. Two invasive nonnative aquatic mussels – quagga mussel (*Dreissena bugensis*) and zebra mussel (*Dreissena polymorpha*) – and an invasive aquatic snail – New Zealand mudsnail (*Potamopyrgus antipodarum*) – have been found on boats but are not yet present in the Tahoe Basin. These invasive species are of particular concern because of their expanding range elsewhere, highly invasive nature, and potential to disrupt ecosystem functions. Aquatic invasive species of serious concern that are present in the Lake Tahoe area include Asian clam (*Corbicula fluminea*); bullfrog (*Rana catesbeiana*); Eurasian watermilfoil (*Myriophyllum spicatum*), an aquatic weed; and curlyleaf pondweed (*Potamogeton crispus*), an aquatic weed.

Region-wide AIS prevention and control efforts are underway, including a mandatory boat inspection program for motorized watercraft. The Tahoe Keepers program, administered by the Tahoe Resource Conservation District, TRPA, and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, seeks to provide information to non-motorized watercraft users to prevent the introduction of AIS. CSP staff would need to verify that any watercraft launched at KBSRA have been inspected for AIS.

## Stormwater Management

### **Issue: Protecting water quality from stormwater runoff from new and existing facilities.**

KBSRA contains stormwater treatment infrastructure, including a detention basin and underground conveyance and treatment systems. Three outfalls release stormwater from this system onto



Source: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Quagga mussels are not present in Lake Tahoe, but are of concern because of their expanding range elsewhere.



Source: Ascent Environmental

Stormwater flows through KBSRA. Controlling runoff into Lake Tahoe is an important consideration.

the beach. This stormwater infrastructure primarily treats runoff from urban portions of Kings Beach outside KBSRA, and this infrastructure is the responsibility of Placer County. Stormwater runoff from facilities within KBSRA generally flows from impervious surfaces onto surrounding soil. The only stormwater management facilities that capture runoff generated in KBSRA are storm drains in the parking lots that collect runoff and convey it onto the nearby beach, and a cobble lined trench in the center of the western parking lot. The small size and proximity of KBSRA to Lake Tahoe reduce the opportunities for infiltration and treatment before runoff enters the lake.

No evidence of concentrated stormwater runoff or erosion is present in KBSRA. This indicates that under normal precipitation patterns, stormwater runoff likely infiltrates into the well-drained soil surrounding impervious surfaces in KBSRA. However, during periods of heavy precipitation or snowmelt, stormwater runoff could cause erosion or carry pollutants from parking lots and other surfaces into Lake Tahoe. Any proposed new facilities within KBSRA that require a TRPA permit will be required to include BMPs that meet this infiltration standard.

## Adapting to Climate Change

**Issue: Planning for variable lake levels, changes in recreation demand, and altered water quality due to climate change.**



*Source: Design Workshop*

*A large and muddy beach is exposed because of low lake levels at KBSRA. Climate change could lead to extended periods of low lake levels, affecting resource values and recreational opportunities.*

A predicted decrease in total annual snowfall combined with an earlier snowmelt could deplete sources of water recharge for Lake Tahoe. Predicted changes in the total volume of precipitation show great variability, but drought conditions are likely to become more common, which could lead to a depletion in the water level for Lake Tahoe. These conditions may reduce access to water-related activities during the summer months, resulting in an increased demand for longer piers, longer boat ramps. A reduction in water level may render historic docks inadequate for loading and unloading motorized watercraft for greater periods of time. At the same time, increased summer temperatures, particularly in surrounding lower-elevation areas, could increase demand for water-oriented recreation at KBSRA. Climate change could also have indirect effects on nearshore water quality, including proliferation of algae and invasive species in Lake Tahoe, which could adversely affect visitor experience. Uncertainty in the specific timing and magnitude of climate change effects makes it difficult to plan for long-term adaptation to these conditions.

## 3.2.2 Recreational Opportunities and Visitor Experience

### Relationship Between KBSRA and the Surrounding Community

**Issue: Balancing KBSRA's role as a statewide resource with its function in the local community.**

Visitors to KBSRA include local residents who use KBSRA as a community park, and visitors from outside the region who visit KBSRA as part of a visit to the Lake Tahoe area. While detailed information on the proportion of local versus out-of-area visitors does not exist, CSP staff observe that local residents and repeat visitors comprise a substantial proportion of the visitors to KBSRA. Public comments received during the planning process and the previous Kings Beach vision planning effort have highlighted the importance of KBSRA to the local community. While other beaches are available nearby (see Exhibit 2.1-2, Regional Recreation Opportunities in Chapter 2), many of the comments focused on KBSRA's role as a community park and gathering space, and an important quality of life asset for local residents.

As a State Recreation Area, KBSRA includes resources of statewide significance, which are valued by visitors from throughout the state and beyond. For instance, a visitor survey conducted in summer 2014 found that one third of all visitors to the north shore of Lake Tahoe visited KBSRA during their stay.

KBSRA consists of parcels that were previously managed by different entities (Conservancy, Boating and Waterways, CSP). As a result, the facilities do not reflect a consistent character that clearly identifies KBSRA as a resource of statewide significance. Consistent with CSP's mission, KBSRA must be managed to protect these statewide resource values and provide outdoor recreation opportunities to provide for the health, inspiration, and education of the people of California. At the same time, KBSRA will continue to be heavily used by local residents as a community park and gathering spot. The management of KBSRA must balance its role as a resource of statewide significance for the benefit of all the residents of California, with KBSRA's function in the local community.



*Source: Ascent Environmental*

*Visitors can easily move between KBSRA and the surrounding community, allowing the park to function as a focal point for the community.*



## Coordination with the North Tahoe Event Center



*Source: Ascent Environmental*

*The North Tahoe Event Center is surrounded on three sides by, and shares parking with, KBSRA.*

### **Issue: Coordinating parking and events with the North Tahoe Event Center.**

NTPUD owns the North Tahoe Event Center, which is surrounded on three sides by KBSRA. The event center serves as a community center, and accommodates a variety of events that often carry over onto the beaches and facilities of KBSRA. The event center hosts community meetings, classes, weddings, and other private events. While the facility is owned by NTPUD, it is accessed through KBSRA. The north side of the event center (facing SR 28) is not visually inviting to pedestrians or other visitors.

Parking for the event center is shared with KBSRA. In exchange for two administrative parking spaces in the parking lot, NTPUD plows the KBSRA parking lot in winter. The remaining parking spaces are available on a first-come, first-served basis to visitors of both KBSRA and the event center. During off-peak seasons at KBSRA, the shared parking arrangement provides adequate parking for the event center and efficiently uses the available parking lots. During peak use periods, such as summer weekends and holidays, parking is at capacity, and visitors to KBSRA and the event center often cannot find on-site parking.

NTPUD is in the early stages of evaluating redevelopment opportunities at the event center. It has expressed interest in acquiring fee title ownership from CSP of additional lands adjacent to the North Tahoe Event Center that would allow for more independent management of the event center or additional redevelopment possibilities. NTPUD has also suggested that the existing agreement between NTPUD and CSP could be revised to streamline operations of the event center. In particular, NTPUD staff have indicated that allowing for pre-paid reserved parking for special events at the center would improve its operation.

## Providing an Appropriate Variety of Lake Access Opportunities

### **Issue: Providing a balance of lake-oriented recreation opportunities within the constraints of the park.**

Access to Lake Tahoe is the primary attraction at KBSRA. Passive beach use (e.g., swimming, sunbathing) is the most common activity, and during summer weekends the beach can be very full. Boating and other watersports are also very popular. A concessionaire provides watersport rentals, including a variety of



kayaks, paddleboards, paddle boats, and jet skis. During periods of high lake levels, the boat ramp provides access for private motorized watercraft. The capacity for boat trailer parking is limited at KBSRA (22 spaces), which could cause boaters to park elsewhere affecting nearby properties. The location of the pier in the center of the beach provides for potential conflicts between motorized and non-motorized recreation.

Non-motorized boating is also very common at KBSRA and growing in popularity. In addition to the concessionaire, a private paddle board rental business operates adjacent to KBSRA and paddle board races, including the Ta-Hoe Nalu Paddle Festival, are hosted at KBSRA. Numerous visitors bring kayaks, paddle boards, and other non-motorized watercraft to KBSRA, with many of them launching near the boat ramp.

### 3.2.3 Facilities and Operations

#### Pier Rebuild

**Issue: Identifying an appropriate pier location and design to provide enhanced lake access.**

The existing pier is located near the center of the beach and extends to a lake bed elevation of approximately 6,223 feet. During periods of low lake levels, the pier does not reach the water and is unusable for motorized boat access. A rebuilt pier could extend into deeper water (lakebed elevation 6,217 feet), and provide increased access for boaters. A rebuilt pier could also provide another option for visitors without boats to access and experience the lake. While the General Plan revision does not include a proposal for a water shuttle service, the rebuilt pier that accesses deep water could make it possible for future water shuttle services to access KBSRA and the community of Kings Beach. Any future water shuttle proposal would be a separate action, independent from the General Plan revision and pier rebuild project.

The Conservancy and CSP commissioned a pier feasibility study that evaluated two pier-rebuild alternatives: one at its current location (center pier alternative), and one to the east of KBSRA adjacent to the existing boat ramp (east pier option). A third pier location at the west end of KBSRA, near the North Tahoe Event Center, was also suggested in public and agency comments and evaluated as part of the General Plan revision planning process. Each pier location would have benefits and challenges.



*Source: Ascent Environmental*

*Boating and other watersports are very popular at the KBSRA. There is a potential for conflicts between motorized and non-motorized recreation.*



*Source: California Tahoe Conservancy*

*The existing pier does not reach the water during periods of low lake levels.*

## Kings Beach Promenade

**Issue: Determining an appropriate promenade alignment and design within the park.**



*Source: Design Workshop*

*Rendering of the Kings Beach Promenade from the Kings Beach Vision Plan. A promenade through KBSRA is a centerpiece of the Kings Beach Vision Plan.*

The Kings Beach Vision Plan, created by Placer County through a public visioning process, included a proposal for a beach promenade. The beach promenade could create a prime east-west bicycle and pedestrian connection along KBSRA, which could connect area beaches and adjacent residential areas. The promenade was envisioned to follow the former Brockway Vista Avenue right-of-way through KBSRA, although there are a variety of different alignments that the promenade could follow through KBSRA. Alignments outside of KBSRA would be determined by Placer County, and are not a part of this planning process.

Through KBSRA, the promenade was envisioned as a boardwalk or similar elevated structure. It was intended to include gathering areas for visitors, and to serve as a major pedestrian and bicycle connection. The promenade could also serve as a beach sand retaining wall that could address maintenance needs discussed under “Sand Management,” below. A promenade through KBSRA could help to address parking congestion by providing additional non-motorized access to KBSRA from nearby areas.

## Boat Ramp Area

**Issue: Addressing the limited capacity and design constraints of the boat ramp.**

The boat ramp and surrounding area near Coon Street provide a public launching site for motorized boats, although the ramp is only useable during periods of high lake levels (at or near a lake elevation of 6,229 feet). During slightly lower lake levels, small- to medium-sized motorized watercraft can still be launched. However, public comments have indicated that launching conditions during lake levels of less than approximately 6,228 feet can be hazardous because of the presence of large submerged rocks near the boat ramp.

When the boat ramp is useable, it provides a valuable recreational asset for motorized boats. During periods of low water levels (i.e., lake levels below 6,227 feet mean sea level), the boat ramp is not accessible for public use; however, commercial users can still access the ramp with specialized equipment. Until 2017, the last time the boat ramp was open for public use was Labor Day weekend in 2012. Since 2008, the ramp has been closed most boating seasons, and was only open for the 2011, 2012, and 2017 seasons. Based on revenue reporting by NTPUD, the boat ramp accommodated approximately 300 non-commercial boat launches

during each of the last two seasons it operated. Three additional public boat ramps are available on the north shore at Tahoe Vista Recreation Area, Lake Forest Beach, and Sand Harbor in Nevada. The other north shore boat ramps receive substantially more use than KBSRA with average launches at each ramp ranging between approximately 3,700 and 9,000 per season. Removal or closure of the boat ramp at KBSRA would reduce the variety of recreation opportunities available there, although these opportunities are provided elsewhere in the north shore region.

Use of the boat ramp is restricted by the limited availability of boat trailer parking. The parking lot near Coon Street provides 22 parking spaces for boat trailers. Overflow boat trailer parking previously occurred off-site as roadside parking along SR 28 and on side streets in residential areas north of SR 28. With construction of the Kings Beach Commercial Core project, most of the roadside parking has been eliminated and use of the boat ramp will likely result in overflow parking that could affect nearby roadways and parking lots. With the current configuration, there is also little room to implement aquatic invasive species checks or a hazardous material spill response.

When the boat ramp is not operational, the area provides additional parking for beach users and other KBSRA visitors. The forest and beach area east of the boat ramp is open to dogs and the Coon Street parking area is popular with dog walkers. The area also contains restrooms and picnic tables. These facilities generally receive less use than the restrooms and picnic tables closer to the center of KBSRA. During peak use periods, the boat ramp area also serves as a drop-off point where visitors will unload passengers, non-motorized watercraft, and other recreational equipment before leaving to park off-site.

## Developed Recreation Facilities

### **Issue: Identifying appropriate developed recreation facilities within a constrained lakefront park.**

While lake access and passive beach recreation are the primary attractions at KBSRA, there are several developed recreation facilities that are popular with visitors and that diversify recreational opportunities at KBSRA. These include numerous picnic tables, as well as more active facilities including a playground, basketball court, and a removable stage used for concerts on the beach. These facilities are used by a wide variety of visitors, but they may be especially important to local residents because they function similar to a community park.

Public comments have noted the importance of these features and have expressed interest in additional or expanded developed



*Source: Ascent Environmental*

*The boat ramp is unusable during periods of lower lake levels.*



*Source: Ascent Environmental*

*Developed facilities, including the basketball court, are popular attractions at KBSRA.*



recreation facilities. Specific suggestions include: a skatepark, splashpad, amphitheater or improved concert area, mini disc golf course, pavilion, additional picnic tables and grills, boardwalks, and other improved or expanded pedestrian facilities. The Kings Beach Vision Plan included proposals for a beach center at KBSRA. The proposed beach center included outdoor pools and shallow water play areas designed to reflect the surrounding natural environment. It also included a proposed indoor heated pool with views of the lake, to offer a desirable winter activity at KBSRA.

The small size of KBSRA limits the extent of developed facilities that can reasonably be accommodated. KBSRA already exceeds the allowable coverage limits, so additional developed facilities could require off-setting mitigation or the removal of existing coverage. Additional facilities would reduce the space available for open space, passive recreation, stormwater treatment, and parking. Some of the suggested uses are not lakefront dependent uses.

## Transportation and Access

**Issue: Providing adequate parking and access opportunities that consider the limited space and variable visitation patterns of the park.**



*Source: Ascent Environmental*

*Approximately 18 percent of KBSRA is dedicated to parking.*

A substantial portion of KBSRA (about 18 percent) is dedicated to parking. With the small size of KBSRA, the amount of parking limits the amount of space available for recreational use and natural landscapes. However, the existing parking is not sufficient to meet demand during peak-use periods.

During weekdays and periods of cooler weather, much of the parking lot is empty. Placer County has encouraged CSP to consider use of KBSRA for shared parking to utilize this space for public or local business parking during off-peak periods. During the summer season, and especially during holidays and weekends, the parking lot is often at capacity. During many of the peak-use periods the demand for parking at KBSRA exceeds available capacity. Parking for boat trailers near the existing boat ramp is particularly limited (see the discussion under “Boat Ramp Area,” above). Visitor parking can spill over onto nearby roadways and parking lots outside of KBSRA when parking areas are at capacity, and when visitors seek free parking despite the availability of paid parking at KBSRA.

The recently constructed Kings Beach Commercial Core Improvement Project enhanced multi-modal transportation and implemented stormwater and infrastructure improvements, but reduced available roadside parking near KBSRA. While some public parking is available within Kings Beach, off-site parking areas within walking distance to KBSRA are limited and are often used

by customers of businesses in Kings Beach. Use of off-site parking by KBSRA visitors can displace parking for customers of nearby businesses, which could adversely affect those businesses. The use of off-site parking is further limited by the fact that many visitors bring recreation equipment (e.g., paddleboards, coolers, umbrellas) that may be difficult to carry from off-site parking areas.

The adjacent North Tahoe Event Center hosts numerous community meetings, classes, and private events that use parking areas in KBSRA. During off-peak periods, this shared parking scheme makes efficient use of the parking area and reduces the need for separate parking for the event center and KBSRA. During peak use periods, however, parking is challenging for both uses. KBSRA's location makes it readily accessible to pedestrians from Kings Beach; it is within an easy walking distance from many residential areas. Recent streetscape improvements make Kings Beach a more appealing destination for pedestrians, which could increase the proportion of visitors that access KBSRA on foot. A lack of wayfinding, information about transit, and limited bicycle and pedestrian connections between KBSRA and surrounding areas contribute to the challenges of parking during peak periods.

As identified in the *Draft 2017 Linking Tahoe: Regional Transportation Plan*, the travel patterns in the region, including Kings Beach, are influenced by intense seasonal peaks associated with summer and winter recreation opportunities as well as daily commute patterns (TRPA 2017:ES-8 through ES-9). It is not feasible to expand the road capacities because of Tahoe's limits on development to protect the environment and other physical constraints. In the north shore area, transit use is minimal, with an estimated less than 1 percent of daily trips during peak seasons using transit (TRPA 2017:I-21). The TART transit service, which includes service through Kings Beach, operates at a 1-hour frequency. The variability in traffic volume and potential demand for transit and enhanced pedestrian and bicycle networks in Kings Beach and the region result in a need for a strategy that is flexible and responds to changing seasonal travel demands.



*Source: Ascent Environmental*

*KBSRA's location in the center of Kings Beach, and recent streetscape improvements along KBSRA make it readily accessible to pedestrians.*



*Source: Ascent Environmental*

*Parking fees are the primary source of revenue at KBSRA.*



*Source: Ascent Environmental*

*A low concrete wall separates the beach from the parking area on the west side of KBSRA. Sand blowing onto the parking lot creates an ongoing maintenance issue.*

## Sand Management

### **Issue: Controlling beach sand deposition on the parking areas.**

Management of beach sand that is blown onto the parking lot is an ongoing maintenance challenge at KBSRA. With prevailing onshore winds and limited windbreaks between the beach and parking lot, significant quantities of sand are regularly deposited onto the parking lots. The issue is most prevalent on the western side of KBSRA, where only a low (2-3 foot-high) concrete wall separates the beach from parking areas and walkways. Near the center and eastern side of KBSRA, taller walls and groves of trees capture much of the blowing sand before it can be deposited on parking lots and other upland facilities.

The situation presents an ongoing maintenance challenge that requires a commitment of resources that could otherwise be devoted to other activities. Currently, CSP maintenance staff regularly remove sand that is deposited in front of the existing walls that separate the beach from upland facilities. The removed sand is then returned to the beach. While this ongoing sand removal reduces the amount of sand deposited onto upland facilities, it is only partially effective and requires an ongoing and sustained effort. Once on the parking lot, the beach sand can be contaminated with oil, grease, or other pollutants, and must be hauled off-site and disposed; it cannot be returned to the beach. Removal of sand from the parking lot requires substantial staff resources. However, addressing sand management through construction of a sand wall could increase the visual mass of human-made features visible from the lake. A vegetated buffer (either by itself or in combination with a wall) could reduce visual impacts from the lake, but vegetation could block views of the lake from upland areas.