

## **SPEECH DELIVERED AT THE 2013 LAKE TAHOE SUMMIT**

Remarks by Joanne Marchetta, Executive Director  
August 19, 2013

Good morning! We share the privilege of enjoying today's backdrop, Lake Tahoe, one of the clearest large lakes on the globe.

"Tahoe," as we say, is not just a lake but a place, and any historian will tell you we glean wisdom about a place by understanding its rich history, the wisdom needed to overcome its challenges and see with greater clarity where we are in Tahoe's story and why.

I am honored on behalf of TRPA's Board representing CA, NV, and the Federal Government to take a short walk with you this morning through the history of Tahoe, an extraordinary place with a legacy of conservation led by giants and visionaries past and present, many who are here with us today.

Beginning with the Washoe Tribe's deep respect for the land, the American Conservation movement has deep roots here. But from the very start, white settlers' history has been touched by private lands and human use – we can look back and note what shaped us:

The historic Comstock lode logging that clear cut Tahoe's mountain-sides, gravel mining, cattle grazing, the start of summer vacation homes for the elite, and later new development for the 1960s Olympic Games.

When John Muir in the 1870s first visited Lake Tahoe – (for much the same reason that millions do today, he needed a vacation) – it spurred him to fight to create national parks, including Tahoe.

But even at that time, by the early 1900s, the amount of private land here meant Tahoe would never become a national park.

Out of this cacophonous land use history arose a pressing question: what would happen to Tahoe?

Some 45 years ago a grand experiment was borne of two visionary Governors. Reagan in CA and Laxalt in NV came together in 1969 with leaders of the day on common ground to create a unique entity called the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency (TRPA),

the nation's first bi-state regional environmental authority, a one of a kind organization and a vital avenue to work at the crossroad of private and public interests that lie at the heart of caring for Lake Tahoe.

The importance of TRPA in Tahoe's history is as a crucible for debate and dissonance, but always followed by collaboration and the finding of common ground. Despite the heat of the crucible, where fierce public debates are waged, significant environmental successes have emerged – every single time.

We don't accomplish anything alone. With care and stewardship and the help of many, the great experiment of TRPA has been a way to resolve the inevitable differences and iron out the discord for the continued protection into perpetuity of this cherished place.

**Many of Tahoe's greatest moments have been delivered through the crucible of TRPA:**

**In the 1970s**, following the creation of our Bi-State agency, we established a new paradigm of environmentalism at Lake Tahoe and forged the first major success.

Through cooperation and partnership, the Basin banned septic tanks and mandated the export of wastewater outside the watershed. This action is still heralded as a major policy accomplishment for the lake's water quality.

**In the 1980s**, again with cooperation and compromise,

TRPA set in place the first environmental threshold standards.

We created early visionary growth control policies and set required development caps that are still in place today.

We stopped runaway growth and a population the size of San Francisco in this era – another of our greatest achievements.

**In the 1990s**, the Agency added to regulation an investment strategy.

We spawned the Lake Tahoe Environmental Improvement Program, one of the most comprehensive ecosystem restoration efforts in the nation aimed at restoring the land, air and waters of Lake Tahoe.

Regulations alone were not achieving our threshold standards, and it was this breakthrough commitment to shared public and private investment that turned the corner for our environment.

Galvanized by support from you -- Senator Harry Reid, Senator Dianne Feinstein, and your colleagues in Washington, we chartered the first Lake Tahoe Summit in 1997. President Bill Clinton and Vice President Gore convened on these very shores with state and local leaders and the heads of more than 50 organizations to create the collaborative Lake Tahoe Environmental Improvement Program.

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Like all successes in Tahoe: the EIP as we call it is a partnership of both the public and private sectors, and we are celebrating the first 15 years of achievement –

In 1998, the first shovel turned for a wetlands restoration project.

Since then, we've made steady and significant progress; completing more than 400 other projects improving water quality, reducing hazardous fuels, improving air quality through transportation and bike trail improvements, along with scenic and recreation enhancements.

We accepted the challenge in 1997 and came together for real results.

Moving into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, TRPA kept apace tackling new problems of the day.

**In 2000**, we raised the bar on ourselves and began regulating two-stroke engines on the lake for improved water quality.

Throughout the decade, we steadily addressed forest health and fuels reduction. We created new invasive species controls, so that now we inspect all boats to prevent harmful new invaders.

And we've invested \$100s of millions in transportation improvements to improve air and water quality.

**Here we are today in 2013**, with a new and more up to date environmental plan recently approved last December in hand, and TRPA and its basin partners are not letting up.

Groundbreaking science as part of the Total Maximum Daily Load has shown us that fine sediments from roadways and developed areas are causing the lake's clarity decline.

So, best available science is helping us target needed actions to the most unaddressed harms, the environmental impacts coming from private properties that have not been improved for decades.

And after 15 years of committed investment from the public and private sectors since that first Tahoe Summit, we are proud that the rapid decline in lake clarity has flattened and that in fact the average clarity is now the best in 10 years.

Thanks go to all on this stage and elsewhere for delivering the funding and resources necessary to save our beloved lake and this place.

As TRPA approaches its 45<sup>th</sup> anniversary, we acknowledge our place in Tahoe's history as the red hot crucible for discord but also the fulcrum for solutions and common ground on whatever the emerging issues of the day may be.

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The history we will write of Tahoe as a place need not be only one of discord and difference but a rich story of strikingly successful conservation fueled by the strength of the coalition we have built and will continue to foster.

The coalition is built of federal partners, two states, local governments, environmental interests, businesses, institutions, homeowners, the private sector, scientists, public agencies, the public at large, and citizens of the world.

TRPA is writ large in the successful history of Tahoe's conservation. With the strength of our legacy now cemented in history, we stand ready as the catalyst for continued conservation and cooperation for the next 45 years and the years beyond on behalf of those generations who come after us.

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