

Years of Community Engagement Delivered in Regional Plan Update

By Joanne S. Marchetta

How humans reckon the passage of time stands in stark contrast to Lake Tahoe's timescale. Standing on the Lake's shore, most of us have pondered at one time or another the incredible age of these prehistoric waters and scoured peaks. This is an ecosystem that prefers to respond in centuries, ages and epochs, a far cry from the quarterly reports and stock-ticker pace that currently shape our perception and expectations of progress. So the period in which the Regional Plan Update has taken shape may be nothing more than the splash of a pebble to Lake Tahoe, but I know it was a painstakingly long time for some of us mere mortals.

So many of you have given your time and input or followed the progress of the Regional Plan Update in the past few years. Whether you cheered or jeered the forward-thinking changes TRPA has proposed to Lake Tahoe's regulatory system, you can look forward to the next two months as the culmination of your ideas and contributions to the visioning, the workshops, the meetings, and the drafts. On October 24, TRPA will release a final draft of the plan and associated documents, rounding out the latest year of work to make focused updates to the Regional Plan that was first adopted in 1987.

Excitement surrounds this rollout in large part because this is the community's plan. From its roots in 2004 and 2005 when visioning workshops and place-based planning captured the input of thousands of citizens, the update has consistently been about the Lake and our communities. If you have ever wondered whether we could coalesce around a collective vision for Tahoe, then this final draft is your plan. Above all, if you would like a clearer, healthier Lake Tahoe and more bikeable, walkable communities, then this is your plan. We also heard from scores of residents that you wanted more sensible ways to manage land coverage, and it's in the plan. And it's also your plan if you want greater restoration of sensitive areas or more opportunities for a recreation-based economy.

Although it took many millennia to create the breathtaking beauty of this watershed, we learned the hard way that Lake Tahoe's pristine environment is not immune to rapid change. A poorly-planned building boom that lasted only a few decades in the mid-1900s produced grave changes including a seemingly unstoppable loss of the Lake's world-renowned clarity. Over the ensuing 30 years, an average of one foot of lake clarity disappeared every year—a repercussion to Lake Tahoe far more significant than mere ripples. Under the 1987 Regional Plan and later the Environmental Improvement Program, the concerted actions of strong partnerships and advanced science halted the loss in lake clarity. The policies being released this month have been designed to provide

the next quantum leap in Lake Tahoe’s restoration and to ultimately reverse that loss in lake clarity while supporting our communities.

It has never been more important for your voice to be heard and for you to engage in the close of this process. Whether it is your first or your 40th TRPA meeting, plan on attending one of the public hearings below. Your vision is one step closer to becoming reality. More detail on these meetings and the easy-to-follow fact sheets on the plan updates are available at www.trpa.org.

| DATE | AGENDA | LOCATION | PUBLIC COMMENT |
|-------------------------|---|--|----------------|
| October 24 9:30 a.m. | Rollout of Final Draft Plans, response to comments received and supporting documents. | The North Tahoe Events Center Kings Beach, CA | Yes |
| October 25 9:30 a.m. | | Harvey’s Lake Tahoe Stateline, NV | Yes |
| November 14 | Discussion and deliberation | The Chateau Incline Village, NV | Yes |
| November 15 | | Harvey’s Lake Tahoe Stateline, NV | Yes |
| December 12 | Final discussion, public comment and decision requested | Harvey’s Lake Tahoe Stateline, NV | Yes |

--Joanne S. Marchetta is Executive Director of the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency.