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# NEWS RELEASE

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## **TRPA REGIONAL PLAN COMMITTEE STAYS IN HIGH GEAR, ENDORSES CHANGES TO LAND COVERAGE RULES**

**Lake Tahoe, CA/NV** – The Regional Plan Update Committee of the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency (TRPA) Governing Board made broad strides this month including endorsement of updated policies that would improve how aspects of land coverage and planning procedures are managed in the Tahoe Region.

The committee reviewed land use policies and also endorsed policy updates for public services and recreation to be further analyzed in a draft environmental study due for release in March 2012. The full TRPA Governing Board is expected to make a final decision on the Regional Plan Update in December 2012.

Chief among policy changes discussed by the committee were land coverage rules and proposals for the size of projects that could be reviewed exclusively by local governments with approved plans.

Limiting the amount of land coverage at Lake Tahoe will continue to be a cornerstone of TRPA's plan to protect Lake Tahoe's water quality, according to the Agency. But reasonable changes are being considered to remove impediments that have slowed environmental progress.

TRPA's land coverage regulations are often regarded as restrictive. Paved areas such as roads, parking lots and buildings—impervious surfaces—have an impact on water quality in sensitive watersheds like Lake Tahoe. More land coverage translates to impaired water quality. TRPA's land coverage regulations were created because of this effect on Tahoe's world-famous clarity.

The Regional Plan Update will encourage land coverage to be concentrated in town centers, where it can be coupled with area-wide water quality treatment as well as greater walkability and links to services and transit, according to TRPA Executive Director Joanne Marchetta.

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“Environmental redevelopment projects are needed to accelerate the achievement of environmental thresholds,” Marchetta said. “To evolve TRPA’s environmental strategies to meet 21<sup>st</sup> century challenges they need to recognize that property owners are partners in Lake Tahoe’s protection.”

The following strategies regarding land coverage were endorsed by the committee and will be considered in the Regional Plan Update environmental analysis:

- Allowing exemptions for bike trails for coverage accounting and mitigation fees.
- Creating partial land coverage credits or exemptions for targeted use on pervious (porous) driveways, decks, and other surfaces that allow runoff to infiltrate.
- Exempting from coverage accounting small, relocatable structures on residential properties such as garden sheds.
- Allowing communities to regulate coverage on a neighborhood scale rather than parcel-by-parcel.

The committee also endorsed transitioning to a conformance review model of planning that would allow local governments to address TRPA regulations in local plans. To take effect, local plans would need to be found in conformance with the Regional Plan. Once local plans are in place, local governments could have more exclusive permitting responsibility at Lake Tahoe.

Agency planners believe the conformance review system is consistent with the Bi-State Compact, which directs TRPA to maintain a regional role in the Basin, according to TRPA Regional Plan Coordinator Arlo Stockham.

“Today, we implement the Regional Plan project by project,” Stockham said. “It’s burdensome to applicants and our resources. We are proposing a system where the Regional Plan is implemented primarily through conforming local plans.”

With the enhanced planning system, only larger development projects would require both TRPA and local government approval, according to Stockham. Smaller projects could be approved through a more efficient and predictable process.

Lastly, tentative endorsement was given for modifications to TRPA’s development right transfer system, pending further studies of proposed transfer incentives.

The transfer of development rights program has been successfully used to restore sensitive lands at Lake Tahoe since 1987. The program converts development in

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sensitive lands into a traded commodity that can be moved to more environmentally-suitable project areas. The updates to the system will more strongly encourage transferring development out of sensitive locations where it is causing continuing harm to the Lake's ecosystem. The move would help concentrate restored development rights in town centers where there would be a lesser impact.

"By encouraging the relocation of these development rights, TRPA will accelerate environmental improvement, reduce reliance on the automobile and strengthen the local economy," Stockham said.

Upcoming Regional Plan Committee meetings in January will address additional land use policies and cover TRPA's proposed updates to transportation, conservation, water quality, air quality and noise. A draft environmental impact statement analyzing the proposed policy updates and several alternatives is scheduled to be available for public comment in late March 2012.

More information on the Regional Plan Update including specific policy proposals are available on the [Regional Plan Update](#) page of the TRPA website.

The Tahoe Regional Planning Agency cooperatively leads the effort to preserve, restore, and enhance the unique natural and human environment of the Lake Tahoe Region now and in the future. For additional information, call Jeff Cowen or email to [icowen@trpa.org](mailto:icowen@trpa.org).

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