

NEWS RELEASE

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SIERRA CLUB OUT OF TOUCH WITH ENVIRONMENTAL PROGRESS AT LAKE TAHOE

Stateline, NV – The Tahoe Regional Planning Agency (TRPA) is currently reviewing the opening brief filed by regional plan litigants who, according to the Agency, are continuing their misinformation campaign about the updated environmental plan that is supported widely by environmental advocates, business groups, and state and local leaders.

The plaintiffs' opening brief demonstrates a lack of understanding of current protection efforts in the Tahoe Region, TRPA said, by calling for a police presence to ensure homeowners maintain stormwater infiltration areas called Best Management Practices (BMPs). The Tahoe Regional Planning Agency is widely recognized as already having strong regulations on BMPs and building rules and the new plan accelerates BMP compliance.

"Calling for police action on BMP maintenance was only one example of the extreme arguments made in the litigation," TRPA Executive Director Joanne S. Marchetta said.

"Without offering any workable solutions to ensuring Lake Tahoe's protection and restoration, the Sierra Club has resorted to exaggeration, even deception, to support their claims," she said. "Their representatives are using the good name of the Sierra Club to make distorted claims about development which simply cannot occur under the recently adopted Regional Plan."

Statements made by Earth Justice and Sierra Club representatives have persistently mischaracterized the Plan in an effort to mislead and confuse the public, according to TRPA. The facts on the Regional Plan Update are as follows:

- The new Regional Plan authorizes less than half as much new development as the 1987 plan. Approximately 300 new residences per year were allowed from 1987 to 2007; only 130 per year are allowed from 2012 to 2035. In an effort to improve air and water quality, an additional 600 "bonus units" could be allocated over 20 years in exchange for restoration of environmentally sensitive parcels.
- The new plan maintains growth caps and urban boundary limits on all development and authorizes no new hotel accommodation units.
- Despite claims made, no new high-rise casinos can be built. The plan only allows existing towers to be rebuilt while continuing some of the strongest scenic protections in the nation.

- The plan supports greenhouse gas reductions and smart growth. The Sierra Club's opposition to these plan elements continues to puzzle TRPA since they support these policies everywhere except Lake Tahoe. The Sierra Club also accepts the delegation of permitting to local governments all along the California coast through Coastal Commission-approved local plans, yet the same model approved for Lake Tahoe and supported by environmental groups is opposed by the local Sierra Club here.
- The plan proposes modest infill redevelopment in a handful of existing town centers; this policy is opposed by plan litigants even though it will reduce the amount of fine sediment and other pollutants flowing into the lake. These policies are expected to result in restoration of sensitive lands and to increase open space. A decade of scientific research has shown that the status quo is hurting the lake and the environment.

"Doing nothing at Tahoe means we lose the lake and our communities," Marchetta said.

Two-thirds of Lake Tahoe's environmental health indicators have been met or are trending positively, according to the most recent scientifically peer-reviewed TRPA Threshold Evaluation Report. The 2012 plan aggressively targets accelerating water quality, air quality and soil conservation in the region. The two states renewed their commitments this year to the Regional Plan's strong environmental protections.

The Lake Tahoe Regional Plan was recently hailed by the Western Planners Association, which awarded TRPA with the 2013 Sheldon D. Gerber Award for Excellence in Environmental Planning. The plan also won the 2013 Award for Outstanding Environmental Plan from the Nevada Chapter of the American Planning Association.

Among the innovative environmental aspects of the plan are:

- Using cutting-edge transfer of development regulations to shrink the development footprint around Lake Tahoe thus reducing automobile reliance and increasing the feasibility of walking, biking and transit use.
- Providing incentives for the protection or restoration of 1,200 additional private parcels to add to the approximately 8,000 parcels already protected under the prior Regional Plan.
- Eliminating 10,000 vehicle miles traveled in the Region annually.

The Tahoe Regional Planning Agency leads the cooperative effort to preserve, restore, and enhance the unique natural and human environment of the Lake Tahoe Region, while improving local communities, and people's interactions with our irreplaceable environment. For additional information, call Jeff Cowen at (775) 589-5278 or email him at jcowen@trpa.org.

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