

Cousteau links world water troubles in forum at Tahoe

By Stephen Ward

INCLINE VILLAGE – Twelve years ago, the body of water that shaped the geography of the Western United States for more than 200 years stopped reaching the Sea of Cortez.

The Colorado River, still of cardinal importance to the 30 million people in its surrounding region, is facing collapse because of the harsh conditions of a climate change that's only expected to get worse. Alexandra Cousteau was quick to point out it's a frightening myth to think North America will never face a water issue similar to those in other parts of the world.



Alexandra
Cousteau

This was one of several daunting issues addressed at the 2010 Siebens Binz Tahoe Forum at Sierra Nevada College's Patterson Lawn, which featured environmental conservation luminary Cousteau, granddaughter of world-famous French explorer Jacques-Yves Cousteau.

Cousteau provided 10 suggestions on how to conserve water in the Lake Tahoe area, such as paving driveways with permeable material to prevent the numerous environmental issues resulting from water runoff, or choosing low-impact

recreational activities to reduce carbon footprints.

Many attendees praised the Aug. 28 event for its substance and considerations.

“I like how she shared with us the impacts, not only in other parts of the world, but in Lake Tahoe as well,” David Cummings of Incline said.

Julie Hernandez, also of Incline, said, “It forced us to see what industrialization and contamination (are) doing to our water supply.”

The forum underscored the work of Cousteau from the last few years, including her journey to India where she discovered the sacred nature of the Ganges River, and to Palestine and Jordan in the Middle East where water is scarce and is one of many crises being considered by the war-torn countries.

Cousteau discussed her childhood and the memories she had of her late grandfather. One memory involved her and her grandfather making believe they were “steward kings of the underwater world,” where they would talk to each species as a subject and honor the “biodiversity of their kingdom.” This evocative recollection reminded her of an important lesson she learned from her decorated grandfather; we don’t live this life because of how it will end, but for all the reasons we live for.

Despite the immense catalog of stories and lessons being delivered by the speaker, one broad message oscillated throughout the entire segment; the systems people rely on have a limit to growth, and opportunities are steadily reshaping themselves into obstacles.

Another delicate subject explored at the forum was the Gulf of Mexico oil spill, where Cousteau has been spending much of her time. The speaker had little good news to say in regard to the area, saying the community is broken and the environment is

ruined. She elaborated by describing the turmoil of the fishermen who have lost their pride and ability to provide for their families. When asked about the area and the spill, the fishermen soberly tell her "this isn't our water anymore."