

TRPA facing \$1.3 mil. deficit; 8 people laid off, 12 reclassified

By Kathryn Reed

In an effort to close a \$1.3 million deficit, the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency on Friday laid out a reorganization plan that eliminates eight positions and reclassifies 12 others.

“Our position is exacerbated by what I call the perfect budget storm,” TRPA Executive Director Joanne Marchetta told *Lake Tahoe News*.

That storm includes mounting legal bills and cuts in revenue sources.



The bi-state regulatory agency estimates spending about \$1 million in outside legal counsel in the next couple years, Marchetta said.

Personnel cuts account for about \$721,000 of the anticipated shortfall for fiscal year 2011-12 that begins July 1. The remaining \$600,000 will partly come from reducing the impact on the current budget with those employees no longer on the payroll. As the agency works on the next budget, other spending cuts will be addressed.

TRPA's general fund is about \$7.7 million. The bulk of revenue comes from the two states, with California paying two-thirds and Nevada one-third. However, Nevada has not allocated its full share. About 13 percent of the general fund revenue comes from fees.

With building stagnant in the Lake Tahoe Basin, that income is much less than previous years. A downturn in construction is reflected in not needing as many the planners.

The court's decision to invalidate the shorezone plan has rendered that segment of TRPA almost nonexistent.

Five of the positions being eliminated are effective March 4, with the three others being transitioned out. Gone are three planners, a quality monitoring coordinator, records technician, special projects director, shorezone coordinator and 1.5 positions from the Regional Plan update team.

TRPA is down to 68 employees – 22 less than were on board three years ago.

When it comes to the dozen positions being reclassified, some will be immediate and others will occur over time to ensure the organization functions properly and the needs of the public are adequately addressed.

“What we did was conceptually flattened the management structure and simplified it,” Marchetta said. “I approach this from two points of view and not purely from a cost-cutting side of things. We made sure whatever changes we finally settled on were done with an eye on implementing our strategic plan and strengthening those pillars in the strategic plan.”

Despite the news on March 4, TRPA has not put a freeze on vacant positions. The open finance director and public information officer jobs will be filled.

“This was one of those very difficult situations where TRPA had to act and we had to make choices and all of the choice were hard choices,” Marchetta said. “We made them with the assurance we would be strengthening the organization for the long term so we could operate and meet our mission.”