

2 groups sue to stop implementation of TRPA Regional Plan

By Kathryn Reed

The Sierra Club and Friends of the West Shore filed a lawsuit Monday in U.S. District Court in Sacramento to stop the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency's Regional Plan from taking effect in its entirety.

"We hope to achieve a reconciliation with the TRPA over their plan and get it strengthened," Laurel Ames with the Tahoe Area Sierra Club told *Lake Tahoe News*. Feb. 11 was the deadline to file such a lawsuit.

Those two conservation groups had been vocal at most of the meetings leading up to the adoption of the Regional Plan in December. The new plan replaced the 1987 document.



Politics at Lake Tahoe can be as turbulent at the lake itself. Photo/LTN file

Water quality, air quality, local delegation, appeals process and coverage are some of the main issues the two groups have

problems with in the latest Regional Plan.

"This lawsuit shows just how out of touch the Sierra Club is with the realities that face Lake Tahoe today," TRPA Executive Director Joanne Marchetta said in a statement.

It will be up to the court to decide if an injunction is put in place, which the groups are seeking. For now, though, the bi-state regulatory agency is acting on the belief the 2-month-old plan is the law of the land.

"It is in effect until a judge or some other process tells us it is not," Jeff Cowen, spokesman with the TRPA, told *Lake Tahoe News*.

The League to Save Lake Tahoe, often a lead agency when comes to suing the TRPA, is not a party of the lawsuit. In a prepared statement Executive Director Darcie Goodman Collins condemned the suit.

"The League is disappointed that litigation has been filed on the Regional Plan. This is the wrong move for Lake Tahoe. While litigation is a useful tool of last resort, in this case, it will only delay the implementation of any positive environmental benefits contained in Tahoe's new Regional Plan. While the plan is not perfect, it is a product of community collaboration and compromise, and is designed to be adaptive," Goodman said.

An unknown is what the state of Nevada will do in regards to Senate Bill 271. That remains in place with the threat of the Silver State pulling out of the bi-state Compact in 2015. Passage of a Regional Plan is part of what SB271 was about. But if the Regional Plan unravels, so might the plans of some Nevada lawmakers to repeal SB271.

"Any litigation will likely result in the dissolution of this Compact and no Compact means no regional environmental standards for Lake Tahoe. Preserving the Compact and

implementing the (Regional Plan update) will provide the greatest long-term benefit to the lake and its communities," Goodman said.