

Conservancy spending millions to improve Lake Tahoe Basin

By Kathryn Reed

STATELINE – Even with millions of dollars being spent in the Lake Tahoe Basin each year, it's not always easy to identify a California Tahoe Conservancy backed project.

This state agency based in South Lake Tahoe is the major force behind Lakeview Commons, a major contributor to Explore Tahoe, and a constant funder of bike trails on the North and West shores.



Ray Lacey talks Feb. 20 about the California Tahoe Conservancy. Photos/LTN

But it also contributed nearly \$20 million to the Heavenly Village project that went to environmental improvements.

It is a regular contributor to erosion control projects that reduce the sediment reaching Lake Tahoe.

Brokerage of coverage rights is another component of the agency.

In the nearly 30 years since the Conservancy was established,

it has acquired almost 5,000 parcels in the basin. Many are sensitive lands that will never be developed. Some are in neighborhoods. If they could ever be sold depends on the money used to buy them. Ones bought with state bond dollars are forever the state's property.

Ray Lacey, deputy director of the CTC, enlightened Soroptimist International South Lake Tahoe on Wednesday at Harrah's Lake Tahoe about what his agency has been up to.

He was an integral player in making Lakeview Commons become a reality. It was \$6 million from the Conservancy that paid for the overhaul of El Dorado Beach.

Now he wants to turn the attention to the other side of Highway 50 so the full 56-acre project is completed.

There is also phase 2 of the Lakeview Commons project to be done, too. That includes revamping the area to the Alta Mira Building. CTC has secured an option to buy that building.

The biggest project in the near future is the Upper Truckee Marsh. This swath of 600 acres in the middle of South Lake Tahoe crosses both sides of the Upper Truckee River at its mouth and then extends to Highway 50. It's bordered by the Tahoe Keys and Al Tahoe neighborhoods.



The 60-day comment period for the Upper Truckee Marsh project is open. The draft environmental documents are on the CTC's website. People have until April 8 to comment. There will be two workshops on Feb. 27 - 1:30pm and 6pm - at Inn by

The long-talked-about South Tahoe Greenway Bike Trail is still on the books. This is the 9.2 miles of former Caltrans right-of-way that one

day will become a multi-use path from Meyers to the Lake in Stateline. South Lake Tahoe, along

Connectivity is still the goal with bike trails. with another The North Shore has a better developed system in March 28 at large part because Placer County has a dedicated 6pm in the allotment of hotel tax dollars going to projects Aspen Room at Lake Tahoe like bike trails. Community College. The

These days it's more attractive to help fund a project than be the sole financial provider. Advisory Planning Commission of

"Their bike trail usage is up 15 percent every year," Lacey said, adding that the number of tourists is staying steady and full-time residents is on the decline. the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency is

He said feedback from riders is that they are riding bikes for errands that otherwise would have required a car. It's not all about leisure and recreation, but in part for transit reasons people are pedaling. discuss the project on March 13, with the Governing Board taking it up March

Today, funding is the major obstacle, Lacey 27. said, for why projects are not going forward. What is in the Conservancy's bank account only covers a fraction of the projects on the table.

In the heyday, the CTC may have acquired 200 properties in a month. Now acquisitions are down to a handful a year.