

Letter: CTC needs to come clean about its parcels

To the community,

Because the California Tahoe Conservancy is experiencing challenges funding the agency and managing its 4,400-plus parcels, the CTC has begun the process of selling off “asset lands”: potentially 400 parcels. Why should the public care?

Property owners on the California side and California Realtors should be concerned. Often a buyer’s or seller’s main motivation and price decision is based on whether or not the property is adjacent to “protected” conservancy lands.

When the public is encouraged to buy license plates, approve bonds or donate in support of the CTC, the general understanding is that the CTC buys up and retires property from development in perpetuity to protect the environment. Their original mission was to “preserve, protect, restore, enhance and sustain the natural resources”.

But the sad new reality is the CTC has bought property, stripped off non-existent coverage “rights” and potential entitlements and, in the case of these 400 parcels, can now resell these environmentally sensitive sites to anyone – including big development. One of their new guiding principles includes “cultivating partnerships with the private sector” ... “to recoup a portion of the public’s capital investment in these acquisitions for future high-priority projects through the sale of the banked development rights”. Translation: the CTC now wants to buy up old motel rooms (TAUs) and become the TAU Broker for the Lake.

Does this sound like preservation, protection, restoration to you? It sounds more like a cash-strapped agency trying to justify its existence.

Since its inception in 1984, that's 28 years ago, the CTC has only transferred 32 properties. Mostly for public utility easements and public access. The sale of "asset lands" is a totally new direction that should stop immediately until there is full public understanding of the implications from using the public's money to further development. The public spent \$108 million through the CTC to purchase 4,600 parcels to "reduce development".

Another kicker: the CTC plans to trade 1,200 acres to California State Parks (900-plus acres at Burton Creek) and an additional 1,900 acres to the Forest Service.

Who knows how many private parcels will be affected with this massive land swap? (Contact Executive Director Patrick Wright: pwright@tahoe.ca.gov.)

What can we do? The agency should produce a public list of addresses and parcel numbers of the 400 alleged "asset lands" parcels. The CTC owes it to every California citizen to have a full comparison and review of the CTC's old and new missions, as well as the significant change in course under its current leadership. The CTC owes the public an explanation of the sharp turn it has taken with regard to Tahoe's protected lands.

Ann Nichols, North Tahoe Preservation Alliance