

Letter: Truckee – Don't throw Tahoe under the bus

To the community,

Tahoe is being ransomed for development. You may have heard the hurrahs. Sierra Watch and Mountain Area Preservation have negotiated a deal to save 6,600 acres on the east side of Highway 267 above Waddle Ranch from development. It's great, logging will still be allowed, but no one wants to see 1,360 units and 6.6 acres of commercial on that slope.

But there is a problem: a ransom is involved. The transaction is contingent on the new development team, East-West Partners (you remember them) and the current owner, Sierra Pacific Industries' ability to obtain program approval from Placer County to build 760 units and 6.6 acres of commercial on 1,100 acres on the west side of Highway 267. That land is currently zoned forest – no development allowed. As if digging up that side of the mountain wasn't problematic enough, here's the kicker, 112 acres of potential new development and we've heard approximately 200 units (they won't acknowledge any number yet) will be on the ridge inside the Tahoe basin. Drive in about 1.5 miles on the Fiberboard Freeway at the summit of Highway 267 and look up the mountain. What will the new project be like: Think Schaffer's Mill Road.

The application requires rezoning, a land use amendment, changes to the Martis Valley General Plan, the Placer County Community Plan and the TRPA Regional Plan. It will increase the population by 2,000, vehicle trips by 3,434/day, years of construction impacts, move 1 million cubic yards of dirt and cut down 200 acres of trees. This will be intense.

Why does developing a mere 85 acres zoned forest in the basin matter? The proposed transfer of units from the east to the

west side of the ridge on top of Highway 267 is justified and spun by the saving of 6,600 acres outside the basin in the Martis Valley. As fabulous as Martis Valley is; the Tahoe basin is a designated "Outstanding National Water Resource" that must not be further degraded. And worse yet, another 235 acres could potentially be developed inside the basin in the same flawed way thanks to the TRPA's recently approved Regional Plan update and it hasn't even been a year since it was adopted.

Here's a hyperbole: If you can save New York City from flooding, do you get to develop Lake Tahoe? But seriously, there is a dangerous precedent: if another large landholder who owns land outside the basin agrees to a conservation easement, will the county that oversees the land allow development inside the basin as a worthy trade? You bet they will.

If East-West and Sierra Pacific Industries want to develop 85 acres on the ridge within the Tahoe watershed they should do it the right way. Apply to TRPA and the county on a standalone application with no justification of outside the basin conservation. Sierra Watch and MAP we applaud your conservation efforts, just don't ensnare Tahoe in the process.

Thank you,

Ann Nichols, North Tahoe Preservation Alliance