

# Recreation advocates want South Shore to function better

By Kathryn Reed

Coordination and connectivity are two of the main items missing when it comes to recreation on the South Shore.

People don't know what's available, where things are, how to find out about them and once they figure it out things are not linked together.



Survey takers said South Lake Tahoe's pool is an important asset. Photo/LTN file

An example is bike paths don't lead to the parks that do exist on the South Shore.

Consultants putting together the recreation plan for the area found that 85 percent of the survey respondents believe it is either essential or very important for South Lake Tahoe and El Dorado County to offer recreation facilities, programs and public parks to residents.

"If it should be us, then the resources should be provided.

It's the only way to meet that demand," Lauren Thomaselli, South Lake Tahoe recreation manager, said at a recreation commission meeting Oct. 17.

But the county does not provide any recreation services in the basin. It's facilities are limited at the lake with owning Lakeview Commons and the rest of the 56-acre project area which it leases to South Lake Tahoe, and there are parks in Tahoe Paradise and Tahoma, but not run by the county.

El Dorado County Recreation Commissioner Bob Smart pointed out how the basin wasn't even included when the county did its master plan for recreation.

Now officials are acknowledging this part of the county matters.

The South Lake Tahoe and El Dorado County recreation commissions met Thursday to get an update on where the joint Parks, Trails and Recreation Master Plan is at as well as to figure out how their respective entities could help. (Commissioner Rebecca Bryson from the city and Commissioner John Hidahl from the county were absent.)

It's possible Douglas County will be at the table in the future because it has hired the same consultant to work on a complementary rec plan so the entire South Shore is tied together.

The master plan the city and El Dorado are putting together goes from the state line, to Tahoma and out to Twin Bridges.

Vickie Sanders, parks manager for El Dorado County, explained how the county is looking to hire a firm to create an all-encompassing website for recreation. The goal is to have links to relevant recreation partners like the U.S. Forest Service and Tahoe Rim Trail Association so it's not just city or county provided recreation – but all recreation in the county. It would also have a calendar of events.

But it was pointed out how the end product is only as good as what gets submitted to the site for inclusion.

Because it is an El Dorado County product it will not have Douglas County information. This means the coordinated-connectivity piece for the South Shore will still be missing, at least online for the public through this future site.

City Commissioner Bonnie Turnbull expressed concern about yet another website when there are so many now.

Some of the discussion on Thursday centered on the results of the survey that asked people a slew of recreation questions. It was brought up how the city's ice rink was not deemed very important by people but before it was built it ranked higher than bike trails and ball fields. But that was 13 years ago and demographics and items to choose from in the survey were much different.

In ranking the top three recreation items in order of importance out of a list of 18, bike trails had 55 percent of the votes, Lakeview Commons 41 percent and the recreation-swim complex 39 percent.

City Commissioner Scott Valentine mocked the 8 percent who said there is nothing to be done to improve access to parks and recreation facilities on the South Shore.

It is possible people don't want their tax dollars spent to upgrade facilities, or they don't use them, or all of their time is spent on the lake or in the mountains and not on/at man-made recreation entities, or maybe they don't recreate.

What survey takers said the top three things they want are parks to connect to bike trails (62 percent), improve sidewalk access (44 percent) and provide more neighborhood parks (38 percent).

The two volunteer boards expressed a desire to meet more

often. There was a time when they had meetings twice a year. They are also going to begin to share their respective minutes and agendas with each other.

**Future happenings:**

- In the next couple weeks the full survey will be available online via the city and county's websites.
- A meeting on Dec. 11 at 6:30pm (location still being determined) will be the public's opportunity to participate in a roundtable discussion about the recreation master plan.
- In January subcommittees made up of the commissioners from both jurisdictions and those on the recreation master plan committee will meet to work on six specific areas.