

Letter: Cutting off lake access a bad precedent

To the community,

The story of the Somers Loop Right of Way trail begins with a generous offer, but could end with the local residents and other public losing a well-known trail to the lake.

Nevada Pacific Development Corporation (NPDC) is proposing to donate to the public 16 acres comprising acreage surrounding the Incline Flume/Bullwheel as a trade-off for a long-standing trail to a Crystal Bay beach. This is a generous offer by the owner. But the proposed abandonment and reversion to NPDC of a portion of the Somers Loop Road and the public access trail easement to Lake Tahoe adjacent to NPDC's lakefront properties violates the public's right to use this old trail to the beautiful sandy cove.

While it is exciting that Nevada Pacific Development will donate their other 16 acres, what they propose is a trade-off that results in the loss of public lake access. Tradeoffs are always difficult, but lake access is so limited on the North Shore that existing access to coves and beaches must take precedence.

1. LOSS OF PUBLIC LAKE ACCESS – Public access to the lake in Crystal Bay is limited today; losing one of the area's few access points to Lake Tahoe does substantial harm to the public.

2. LAKE ACCESS/ROW IS PRICELESS – The value of the public right of way and a public access to the lake is a gift that cannot be rejected.

- a. The Somers Loop Right of Way is currently used by the public and has been for years.

b. The proposed lake easement can also be accessed from the water.

c. Improving the access route would mitigate runoff and improve accessibility.

3. DANGEROUS PRECEDENT – The proposed abandonment creates a dangerous precedent for the elimination of future public rights of way and lake access easements at Tahoe.

4. PROCESS MUST BE TRANSPARENT –

a. This abandonment process requires an application, a public hearing by both Washoe County and TRPA, and notice to neighbors. County commissioner approval alone is inadequate, as public access to the lake is a TRPA priority and must be heard by the Governing Board.

b. Washoe County has once before required a former owner of this property to submit an abandonment application for the same trail.

c. The application process was never followed.

Laurel Ames, conservation chair Tahoe Area Sierra Club Group