

Letter: Pipekeeping – an eye-opening experience

To the community,

I have been volunteering for the League to Save Lake Tahoe's pipekeepers monitoring program for almost two years. Through this opportunity I have witnessed firsthand what I consider the single most influential source of the decline in Lake Tahoe's clarity.

I am by no means an expert on lake clarity, but after personally watching a torrent of dirty water directly flowing into the lake every time there is a substantial amount of rain or from the melting of snow each spring, I have seen the amount of trash, dirt, oil, cigarette butts, fine sediment, etc., spewing into the lake through these drainage pipes.

By sampling and monitoring these pipes we can identify problem areas, decide what needs to be done to improve the filtering of the flow through the upward of 100 pipes and generate the funding needed to implement these stormwater treatment systems.

While gathering samples during the last major waterfall we experienced, I was amazed at how fast the flow of water ranged from a minimal outpouring to a torrential amount of dirty water. Some of you may have also observed this spectacle or noticed that because the water in the lake is at such a low level this year the outflow is filtrating to our beaches. I know the beach where my pipe is located has substantially changed this summer. The water is dark and murky and is depositing a shameful sludge along the shore.

The opportunity to personally experience the effect of washing a car in the street, putting fertilizer on lawns or disposing of unwanted material into our drainage systems has been

impactful for me. As a Tahoe local for over 40 years, I have always thought of myself as a responsible community member who respects our lake. But after witnessing this pollution firsthand, I have realized that I can't just sit idly and watch our beautiful home slowly being destroyed.

I encourage you all to step up and help be part of the solution for protecting our lake. The first step in cleaning the outflow of these pipes is to control what goes directly into the neighborhood storm drains. You can make a difference by not dumping pollutants into our streets.

Being a pipekeeper is another means to help clean up our water and it is a gratifying experience. I strongly urge anyone that wants to help keep Tahoe blue to consider adopting a pipe or teaming up with a group to adopt a pipe. You will be given hands on training. I suggest contacting the League to Save Lake Tahoe to ask how you can help, www.keeptahoeblue.org.

Until something is done to address the influence of this major pollution I feel we are fighting a losing battle in the war on water clarity. Please let your elected officials, Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board and TRPA know that the amount of dirty water entering our beautiful lake is unacceptable.

Linda Goodman, South Lake Tahoe