

# Letter: USFS wrong to remove Camp Rich trees

To the community,

The U.S. Forest Service has begun implementing plans to “improve” the Camp Richardson area north of Highway 89. The purpose of this plan is to meet standards for water quality and universal access.

Campsites and roads are being reorganized. The campground will get a new entrance. The bike path that is now along the edge of the highway will be moved away from the road. These plans include the removal of 250 beautiful trees from the camp.

This article protests the removal of so many trees. People come to Tahoe to be closer to nature and to camp amongst the trees under a starry night sky. Tall Jeffries, Ponderosa’s and firs give Tahoe an identity that is different from the populated lowlands. It seems everywhere we are losing trees for one reason or another, to widen roads, to clear lots for housing, to reduce fire hazards, to disease and bugs, or they simply die from lack of water. The USFS should endeavor to improve the campground in a less destructive fashion by trying to accommodate as many trees as possible while achieving their goals. For instance they could make entertaining, little curvy camp roads that go around trees and also slow people down.

Deforestation is a global problem contributing to climate change happening not just in some far off place, but also at Tahoe. The USFS has already ruined many forests in the Tahoe basin with their excessive mandate of fuel reduction and reckless burning of slash. We need to protect and appreciate trees. A 100 year old tree is a marvel. No amount of money can buy it back once it is cut down. It will take 100

years to replace it. Climate change is a concern because it appears to be causing extremities in weather that makes life uncomfortable for people, such as extreme heat and drought, flooding and more severe storms. It will have a profound effect on agriculture. We need to help, preserve and plant trees.

There are many benefits to trees. They play an important role in the global carbon cycle. A tree can absorb 48 pounds of carbon dioxide in a year. This amounts to 1 ton in 40 years. One large tree can provide a supply of oxygen for 2 people. Trees provide shade, lower evaporation and reduce air conditioning needs around buildings. They reduce storm water runoff. They provide wildlife habitat and beautify our environment.

For the first time ever, the CO<sub>2</sub> level in the atmosphere has reached 400 ppm (parts per million). Pre-industrial concentration around 1800 has been estimated at 260-270 ppm. According to the Department of Energy, the average American produces annually 17.2 tons of CO<sub>2</sub> from the burning of fossil fuels and cement production. Each gallon of gasoline burned produces 20 pounds of CO<sub>2</sub>. If we assume about half of human generated emissions are absorbed by the world's oceans and other plant life, then 344 trees are needed by every American every day to offset his personal CO<sub>2</sub> production.

The trees at Camp Richardson are to be be prized and treated with care. The destruction of so many trees in order to "improve" the campground is terribly disappointing. Camp Richardson is visited and loved by many people. The USFS could do much better to preserve the beauty and character of this special place while achieving their goals. They are leaving a legacy we will be living with for decades to come.

**Liana Zambresky, South Lake Tahoe**