

Opinion: Lake Tahoe's death by a thousand cuts

To the community,

First of all, what is death by a thousand cuts? It's an ancient form of torture from Imperial China, where a subject was given one cut after another until over an extended period of time he bled to death: The first few hundred cuts wouldn't kill him, but the last few hundred most certainly would.

In modern usage, it's defined (by Wikipedia) as "the way a major negative change which happens slowly in many unnoticed increments is not perceived as objectionable." That's just what's happening at Tahoe right now.

First, it's the Tahoe Keys milfoil disaster (current solution – herbicide? Really?). Then TRPA's Regional Plan update – more height and density in "town centers" to fix our economy and sub-par development.

Now, the first big proposal since the Regional Plan update: urban sprawl on an undeveloped ridgeline above Lake Tahoe and Martis Valley, essentially creating a new town the size of Kings Beach in the middle of the forest.

This is the nightmare proposed by Mountainside Partners (formerly East-West Partners; the developer) and Sierra Pacific Industries (SPI; the land-owner).

I'm glad that SPI, which owns almost 2 million acres in California, and Mountainside Partners, which is planning a \$1 billion expansion at the Mountainside at Northstar, have revealed their true, destructive intent for our area now rather than later.

Sierra Watch and Mountain Area Preservation entered into a

complicated agreement with East-West (now Mountainside Partners), a seasoned developer out of Colorado.

East-West is currently partnering with KSL (Squaw Valley) on a project at the bottom of Snowmass. In the opinion piece written by SW and MAP (Oct. 28, "Setting the Record Straight Regarding Martis Valley") they argue that they only agreed to a new land-use designation on the forested ridge. However, this is semantics.

The result of that land use designation (whatever you may want to call it) is Martis Valley West and the Brockway Campground - and now we know how outrageous the consequences of a new land-use designation can be.

We agree with MAP and Sierra Watch that Truckee shouldn't approve more sprawl, but neither should Tahoe - and why doesn't that reasoning apply to Martis Valley West? Except for this deal, MAP and Sierra Watch have a history of great conservation work, and we're hopeful they will continue that legacy by negotiating a conservation agreement for SPI lands without involving development on our iconic and irreplaceable ridgelines.

Stop Tahoe's bleeding now - or watch her die slowly, one new development at a time.

Ann Nichols, North Tahoe Preservation Alliance