

Opinion: Time to focus on Tahoe's shoreline

By Joanne S. Marchetta

Millions of people visit our region each year, and the shoreline is where most of them go to enjoy the beauty and the cold, famously clear water of Lake Tahoe.

The shoreline is also where a challenging mix of planning issues converge: Protecting the environment and our lake's awe-inspiring scenery, managing recreation access, and respecting private property rights.



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This year and next, TRPA will be working with the community to draft shoreline policies and regulations. The goal is to protect our lake's environment and scenery and enhance recreation access for people to enjoy it. It will be a difficult balancing act, and we have tried to update these policies before.

Lawsuits, widely varying priorities, difficult questions about science and the environmental impacts of boating, and deeply held interests have thwarted such efforts in the past, leaving shoreline regulations the one element of our Regional Plan where consensus has been elusive.

New pressures confronting Lake Tahoe make it all the more important to update our shoreline regulations, and interviews completed last fall with nearly 50 shoreline stakeholders suggest the time is ripe for success.

More people than ever are traveling to Lake Tahoe each year, and we expect our region's visitation numbers to continue to grow in the decades to come. Visitors and residents want to experience the unique beauty of our lake and we need to make sure that they have convenient, environmentally-friendly ways to do so.

And while an average snowpack this past winter brought Lake Tahoe back up to its natural rim this summer, many piers and boat ramps around the basin are still left high and dry. Climate change and predictions of longer, more frequent, and more severe droughts add a new layer of uncertainty to the shoreline planning initiative and raise difficult questions for the management of marinas, piers, buoy fields, and boat ramps.

TRPA is taking a collaborative and inclusive approach for this planning initiative. We have assembled more than a dozen shoreline stakeholders to work together and steer this process. That includes marina operators, environmental groups, multiple agencies involved in the review and permitting of shoreline projects, and private property owners. We are also reaching out to community members, homeowner associations, and other groups around the lake to get as many people as possible involved in this process and working together on this important issue.

TRPA has contracted with the Consensus Building Institute, a nationally-recognized mediation firm, to help stakeholders find common ground and agreed-upon solutions for managing Lake Tahoe's shoreline in ways that enhance recreation access and protect our environment. We've also put together a team of experts to help stakeholders work through difficult questions

about climate change, environmental impacts, and water quality conditions so policy questions are solved with the best-available science and information.

People can learn more about this ongoing planning process, find out about upcoming community workshops, and share their information and ideas through a **new website**.

Updated shoreline regulations for Lake Tahoe are one of TRPA's highest priorities. As you enjoy Lake Tahoe this summer, please visit the website to learn more about this important planning process and get involved. We are confident that with everyone working together for a common cause—the protection and betterment of our beautiful, environmentally-sensitive mountain lake—we can craft new shoreline regulations that will protect our lake and help people enjoy it responsibly for generations to come.

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