

Editorial: Losing Lake Tahoe to climate change

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As a young reporter, Mark Twain visited Lake Tahoe. Its clear, cobalt blue water so entranced him that he wrote of it later, in "The Innocents Abroad."

"I have fished for trout, in Tahoe," Twain wrote, "and at a measured depth of eighty-four feet I have seen them put their noses to the bait and I could see their gills open and shut."

That was then. One hundred fifty years or so later, a new "state-of-the-lake" report issued last month by researchers at UC Davis has found that climate change has left the lake increasingly opaque and warm.

Surface temperatures are rising faster than scientists have ever recorded. The "deep mixing" that oxygenates the lake bottom hasn't happened in four years. And forget seeing trout 84 feet below the surface. Last year, the 10-inch white disk scientists lower into the lake to gauge that "wonderful transparency," as Twain called it, averaged 73.1 feet before it disappeared into the murk.

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