

Letter: Memorial forest felled for Hwy. 28 rerouting

To the community,

A Penny Pine Memorial Tree Plantation which once existed within the 64-acre recreational area in Tahoe City has been devastated forever. Close to 100 garden clubs throughout Northern and Central California planted a Penny Pine Tree Plantation in conjunction with the National Forest Lands – Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit in memory of over 120 individuals including remembrance of the New York City firefighters and police who lost their lives on 9/11.



The planned devastation of the memorial forest for the construction of the Highway 89 bypass highway through 64 acres was never disclosed during public meetings held by the Tahoe Transportation District. It was not until members of the community brought the

planned devastation to the attention of the Tahoe Transportation District that the devastation was even acknowledged. At minimal concern at best.

The community didn't stop there; the request for involvement to preserve or relocate the memorial forest was brought to the attention of the Central Federal Lands Highway Division, Placer County Board of Supervisors, TRPA, Tahoe City PUD, Assemblyman Brian Dahle, Rep. Tom McClintock, California Tahoe Conservancy, Caltrans, U.S. Forest Service, Washoe Tribe and

Sen. Dianne Feinstein. Members of the community were extremely disappointed in the lack of involvement on the part of Sen. Feinstein based on her authorization on the Lake Tahoe Restoration Act which proudly acknowledges her stats on restoring fire roads back to the natural environment when the Highway 89 Bypass Project removes a natural forest to construct a highway.

After contacting several of the garden clubs, the following letter was submitted on May 25, 2015, to gain further attention: "My name is Bertina Marcelo. I am currently the president of the South San Francisco Woman's Club. It has been devastating for our members and representatives to learn about the project of taking down our pines to build a highway. The pines were planted through the organization Penny Pines and represent our deceased members. Our members are very upset that your organization feels that it is more important to build a highway then to respect the conservation of the pines that were planted in memory of our members. We are totally against this highway going up and destroying our 64 acres of beautiful pines that were donated by members and planted with so much love and care. We wish that you come up with a better plan then going through our Plantation of Pines. If you have any questions, feel free to contact me. Sincerely, Bertina Marcelo, president."

No formal response was ever provided. The Tahoe Transportation District stated that since there were no individual plaques installed on the trees they weren't sure which trees to save.

After reading the article in the Dec. 7, 2016, *Sierra Sun* titled Tree removal set for the Fanny Bridge Project, the noted locations for tree removal included: trees along Highway 89 heading into Tahoe City from Truckee near the Caltrans yard, the Tahoe City Y and area south of Fanny Bridge along West Lake Boulevard. All of the areas but where the trees were actually removed from. When visiting the project site for the

Highway 89 Highway Bypass Project, covered up under the name Fanny Bridge Project, it was determined that all of the Penny Pine memorial trees were devastated for the new quarter mile on highway for \$25 million within 64 acres between the Caltrans yard and West Lake Boulevard. All that remains of the memorial is the sign.

Similar to promises made by Placer County that the \$12 million transit center will serve as a "park and ride" facility to reduce traffic congestion at the Tahoe City Y, it still remains to be proven four years after operation if the "park and ride" facility will ever function as promised. On the infrequent days of heavy traffic, the bypass highway through 64 acres will have no effect on the traffic through the main downtown business district. Use of the personal automobile will be encouraged based on the expanded highway system.

I would like to thank all of the many community members, business owners, Friends of the West Shore, Sierra Club and the League to Save Lake Tahoe who supported my efforts to minimize the impact of this truly unnecessary section of highway through 64 acres.

Hopefully this letter will spark interest within the community to require the project partners to replant the memorial trees. It's heart breaking to see a field of stumps which just a week ago was a plantation of memorial Penny Pine trees on forest land with no acknowledgment to the letter written by the South San Francisco Women's Club.

Jim Sajdak, Tahoe City