

Tahoe works to consolidate environmental education

By Kathryn Reed

Lake Tahoe is one step closer to improving environmental education in the basin for locals and visitors.

It all started about **a year ago** when the California Tahoe Conservancy gave the Tahoe Fund an \$85,000 grant to delve into what visitors' centers should look like in the future.

For Amy Berry, executive director of the Tahoe Fund, it was about "how to move the needle of environmental stewardship in the basin."

She gave an update to the CTC board on Dec. 8 about where things stand today. With her was Devin Middlebrook with the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency. The bi-state regulatory agency is now an active participant in the project and will coordinate the group going forward.

Under Berry's leadership various entities in the basin that have some sort of education component came up with a mission, vision and target audience:

- The purpose of this initiative is to connect people with the basin to nurture a culture of stewardship and sustainability.
- The basin is an environmental success story and global role model for sustainability.
- People who visit more than once a year or live in the basin and have the desire and ability to learn more about the basin.

They worked with Global Studios, the consulting arm of the San

Francisco Exploratorium, to come up with ideas and potential solutions to better coordinate the basin's message.

It was determined that a new paradigm is needed to create "a unified community mission that acts as an anchor for a larger network of educational and environmental organization across the region."

Going forward a website will be created to be a one-stop shop, a 12-month working plan will be developed. A formal name beyond the working names of Tahoe Basin Project and One Tahoe will be developed.

A more long-term goal would be creating an education center that all the agencies – from TRPA, to the U.S. Forest Service, state parks, CTC, resort associations, TERC and others – could be part of. A floating observatory is what is being envisioned. It could be built on a barge – perhaps the fire damaged Tahoe Queen.

CTC Chair Larry Sevinson said it should have a glass bottom. The Queen used to have one.

It would have the ability to travel between marinas, as well as be docked and have people come aboard to see the educational exhibits. This in turn would be an economic driver.