

# 5 Lakes Trail in Squaw-Alpine ski gondola battle zone



The gondola's impacts to the adjacent wilderness area are being questioned.  
Photo/LTN file

**By Tom Stienstra, San Francisco Chronicle**

From a Sierra crag at north Tahoe, with one sweep of the eye you can look across towering peaks and down into a valley – and take in a landscape shaping up as the next big turf battleground in California.

On one side are the world-renowned Squaw Valley and Alpine Meadows ski areas and their lodging, restaurants and shops. On the other side is the Granite Chief Wilderness, which abuts land where a contested 13,000-foot gondola is proposed to rise up to the ridge and link the ski areas.

In the middle, the Five Lakes Trail rises through a section of Alpine Meadows, including one stretch in which hikers walk beneath a ski lift trolley line and base. The trail then tops the ridge at 7,400 feet, passes the wilderness boundary and feeds hikers to a mosaic of five lakes, small and jeweled. It

is one of the best short hikes in the High Sierra. For extended trips, the trail then connects a few miles beyond to the Pacific Crest Trail.

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