

Cooperation key to improving Placer County

By Kathryn Reed

Partnerships and collaboration are making a difference in Placer County.

The California Tahoe Conservancy has been a huge player in getting water quality projects, bike trails and other improvements established. In all, the CTC has poured about \$62 million into the lake portion Placer County.

At the state agency's board meeting last week in South Lake Tahoe reps from the CTC, Placer County, North Tahoe Public Utility District, Tahoe City Public Utility District, California State Parks and North Lake Tahoe Resort Association talked about what has been accomplished and the work that is left to do. Many projects overlap jurisdictions, with funding coming from multiple sources, with benefits to all.

"We are looking at it from a watershed scale," Kansas McGahan with Placer County said of projects. It means looking at water quality, stream environmental zone, air quality, and economics among other criteria together. This approach gives more depth to projects.

Sixteen multi-benefit watershed projects have been completed since 2001. That was the year the county established the Tahoe Engineering Division. A key purpose to doing so was to work specifically on environmental improvement projects as they relate to the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency's Regional Plan.

Placer would like to see transportation projects be considered under the EIP umbrella.



Lakeside Trail in Tahoe City is decorative, has interpretive signs, seating and endless views of the lake. Photo/LTN file

McGahan said the county's current focus is the Griff Creek corridor, which includes putting in a roundabout at highways 267 and 28, and cleaning up the corner and making the creek more viable. Fanny Bridge replacement is also high on the list, as are completing the Dollar Creek trail and the North Tahoe bike trail.

For Kim Boyd with the Tahoe City PUD she called completion of the Lakeside Trail the "missing link." Funding is a stumbling block, though the exact route has also not been finalized.

The public utility districts on the North Shore have recreation as one of their main objectives, in addition to water and sewer obligations. TCPUD operates the only public boat ramp on the North Shore at Lake Forest.

Reps talked about Pomin Park in Tahoe City, in TCPUD's jurisdiction, being ripe for water quality projects. While people are talking about possibilities to move the field out of what is essentially a wetland, just wiping out the recreation facilities and not replacing them is not a viable option.

TCPUD and NTPUD officials are worried about having proper firefighting capacity. It's one thing to have enough water and pressure to fight a house fire, it's another to go into the wildland urban interface to douse flames.

Duane Whitelaw, general manager of NTPUD, is a former fire chief in the basin. He'd like some of the firefighting issues to fall under the EIP program.

Regulatory agencies like TRPA and Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board track EIP projects and then reward/penalize jurisdictions based on accomplishments.

The next big project in the Tahoe basin for State Parks will be work in Kings Beach, most notably the pier replacement. The draft environmental documents are expected to be released for public comment just after the first of the year.

The North Lake Tahoe Resort Association is a big player because it is the recommending body for Placer County for how 2 percent of the hotel tax collected in the Tahoe area is then invested back into the community.

NLTRA is looking at how to raise more money. Increasing the transient occupancy tax, which is at 10 percent, and hiking the $7\frac{1}{4}$ percent sales tax are under serious consideration.