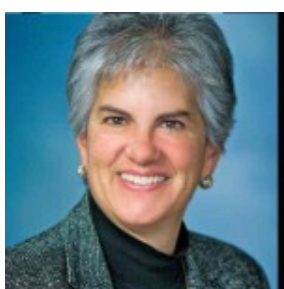


Opinion: Every day can be Earth Day at Tahoe

By Joanne Marchetta

Earth Day at Lake Tahoe has a special meaning. Working together through the Lake Tahoe Environmental Improvement Program, more than 50 local, state, federal, nonprofit, and private sector partners are implementing projects and programs to conserve the Tahoe basin's environment and fix past environmental harms.

Public and private organizations have completed more than 500 projects over the last 20 years and that partnership and collaboration continues. Projects are restoring Lake Tahoe's streams and wetlands, reducing storm water pollution from roads and urban areas, fighting invasive species, upgrading bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure, improving recreation opportunities, and thinning forests to improve their resilience to drought, bark beetles, and catastrophic wildfire.



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These projects are helping create a healthier Tahoe watershed. Scientists have said if this public-private partnership wasn't formed more than two decades ago we may have lost the ability to restore the lake to its former splendor. Yet, so many new threats abound for our beautiful mountain home.

As the 48th annual Earth Day approaches this April, let's not lose sight of the importance of individual environmental stewardship. We as private citizens can take important steps for the environment to leave behind a Lake Tahoe that is healthier than we found it.

Earth Day was launched in 1970 to raise awareness about environmental problems and our role in solving them. More than one billion people in 192 countries around the world now participate in Earth Day events each year. Volunteers at Lake Tahoe are again bringing Earth Day events and activities right into our own communities.

South Lake Tahoe Earth Day is scheduled for 10am-3pm at Bijou Community Park on April 28. The annual event is a way for families, friends, and children to learn more about Lake Tahoe's sensitive environment and unique natural beauty and how to help protect it. Tahoe Truckee Earth Day offers similar opportunities for North Shore residents on April 21, from 11am-5pm at the Village at Squaw Valley.

With so many people and nonprofit groups passionate about Lake Tahoe and its environment, there is no shortage of volunteer opportunities for people interested in making a difference.

Clean Tahoe and the city of South Lake Tahoe are recruiting volunteers and "cleanup captains" for neighborhoods around the South Shore for a third annual Spring Cleanup Day from 9am-noon on May 12, followed by a free lunch for volunteers at Bijou Community Park. To get involved, go **online** or call 530.544.4210. Last year, 118 volunteers picked up more than 1,500 pounds of litter.

There are countless other ways to help protect Lake Tahoe's natural resources and environment. The League to Save Lake Tahoe has launched two innovative programs in recent years: Pipe Keepers, in which volunteers monitor storm water outfalls around Tahoe to identify areas with storm water pollution, and

Eyes on the Lake, which trains people to identify and report harmful aquatic invasive species like Asian clams, Eurasian watermilfoil, and curlyleaf pondweed so they can be targeted for removal.

There are many simple steps each of us can take to help Lake Tahoe's environment.

Bike, walk, take the bus, or carpool. Reduce, reuse, or recycle items to limit landfill waste. Don't litter. Take care of trash at your home to keep it from wildlife. Garden and landscape with native plants that don't need watering or fertilizer. Replace your old wood stove or fireplace with a more efficient unit to reduce air pollution and remember that rebate programs are available to help reduce the cost. Pick up after your dog to keep its waste from harming other pets, wildlife, and water quality and to preserve a more enjoyable trail experience for others. Install best management practices on your property to reduce erosion and storm water runoff that harms Lake Tahoe's water clarity. Manage vegetation to create defensible space on your property to better protect your home and help reduce the risk of catastrophic wildfire.

These are just a few of the things that each of us can do today and every day. Don't fall into the trap of believing that no individual act can make a meaningful difference. Every positive act counts. Please also remember that all TRPA Governing Board meetings are open to the public and livestreamed online, allowing each of us an opportunity to weigh in on many important issues facing Lake Tahoe.

We are fortunate to live in a special place and we each have a responsibility to help care for it. Nearly 55,000 people live in the Tahoe basin and millions more visit to enjoy its natural splendor and outdoor recreation opportunities. Our individual actions collectively have an impact. Let's all work together to leave Lake Tahoe healthier than we found it so future generations are able to enjoy this natural treasure we

are fortunate enough to call home.

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