

Letter: Important to get involved at Tahoe

To the community,

For decades, Lake Tahoe has been viewed as one of the clearest and most beautiful lakes in North America. In the past 50 years, however, Lake Tahoe's water clarity levels have dropped from about thirty meters of clarity to just over 20 meters of clarity today.¹

This lack of clarity makes the lake less appealing, and it can be harmful for native species living in the lake. One of the main causes of this lack of clarity is urban stormwater runoff.

My name is Sam Ross and I am 15 years old. I have been coming up to Tahoe each summer for as long as I can remember and I always loved and still do love swimming in Lake Tahoe and enjoying its beautiful beaches. This past summer, I resolved that I wanted to help preserve the lake that I love so much. So, I decided to join the League to Save Lake Tahoe as its natural resources student intern.

At the League, one of the most important things I learned was that stormwater runoff is harming Lake Tahoe. Many stormwater pipes simply drain directly into the lake or into streams running into the lake. The water from these pipes is a murky brown color and often has a putrid smell. The fine sediments from

this runoff disperse into the lake, causing lake clarity to decrease which in turn makes the lake less attractive. In addition, these sediments often contain nutrients that can cause algae growth. Excessive algae growth can also decrease clarity and can be harmful to native species.²

Although this situation is pressing, it is not hopeless. The

League to Save Lake Tahoe has organized a program called Pipe Keepers. In this program volunteers monitor stormwater pipes by taking observations of the pipes' runoff and reporting the data that they find to the League. The League can then push for

these pipes to be better controlled and can report the data to the proper authorities.

Hopefully, if enough volunteers join the League's efforts, the stormwater drains will be controlled and the lake will be kept blue.

Sincerely,

Sam Ross, Burlingame and South Lake Tahoe

1 Anon, "Fun Facts & History", League to Save Lake Tahoe, Accessed August 9, 2015, <https://keptahoeblue.org/abouttahoe/history-facts/>.

2 Anon, "Why should we protect Tahoe's shoreline?", League to Save Lake Tahoe, Accessed August 9, 2015, <https://keptahoeblue.org/protect/shorelinebeauty>.