

Opinion: TERC's importance 10 years later

By Geoff Schladow

I have spent the last week observing the impacts of poor land management, uncontrolled invasive species, and degrading aquatic resources in one of the most unique and idyllic places on earth. I also saw really big crocodiles, so I wasn't at Lake Tahoe. Rather, I was in the Northern Territory in Australia, a region that is starkly different than Tahoe, but sharing many of the same challenges.



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In the last 50 years this region has been opened up to the world, in the same way that Tahoe was opened up after the Squaw Valley Olympics.

Where Lake Tahoe has outdone the Northern Territory is that it has built on a continuous science presence for over 55 years, with the greatest advances in the last decade. It is hard to believe that it was 10 years ago that the finishing touches were being installed on TERC's new labs and offices at Incline Village. That was an exciting time. After years of getting by in makeshift houses and buildings, we finally had the home we needed: a facility where research, public engagement and the science to guide restoration had a base in the Tahoe basin.

Looking back at all that has been accomplished it becomes clear how monumental an achievement this really was. Over

100,000 people of all ages have walked through the doors to learn about solving Tahoe's challenges. Scores of research grants have launched the careers of young scientists and helped unravel the lake's secrets. International conferences have brought hundreds of visiting scientists from every continent to help us understand Lake Tahoe and have launched new collaborations on lakes around the world.

Most importantly, it has created a permanent home for research and science here in the Tahoe basin. The nature and the complexity of Lake Tahoe and its ecosystem will never stop changing and we need institutional memory, experienced researchers who know what was learned 40 years ago and where the knowledge gaps lie, and new cohorts of students, to keep abreast of these changes and to take on future conditions.

This home for research and science was built through philanthropy. To the many people and foundations in the greater

Tahoe community who had the foresight and vision to invest in science when UC Davis launched its campaign for TERC in the 1990s, we once again thank you for your generosity. We hope that on our 10-year anniversary you will again step forward and renew your commitment to Lake Tahoe and to science, and help provide the resources we need to sustain independent science.

Geoff Schladow is director of Tahoe Environmental Research Center.