

Opinion: Edge-of-Tahoe developments would increase gridlock

By Darcie Goodman Collins

Traffic congestion at Lake Tahoe and the associated pollution due to projects being developed just outside the Tahoe basin present a critical threat to Lake Tahoe clarity. Projects near the lake that are in the final stages of approval circumvent the standards that protect the Lake and will flood the area with pollution and gridlock.

Placer County records show that the large new projects at Martis Valley West, on a ridge overlooking Lake Tahoe, and Squaw Valley include units that will draw thousands of people to Tahoe but do not fall under the direct oversight of the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency.

The projects, located near the edges of the Tahoe basin aimed at Tahoe visitors and second home buyers, will deeply impact the lake. The project developers are offering no solutions to what they admit will be huge traffic impacts at Tahoe.

Additional traffic seriously threatens Lake Tahoe's health by dramatically increasing air pollution that feeds algae. Recent science also found that the top cause of clarity loss in Lake Tahoe is fine sediment pollution, caused by cars crushing the road sands used to make winter driving safer.

Developer plans admit that their projects combined may add over 36,000 vehicle miles traveled per day in and around the Tahoe basin, comparable to 2,000 cars driving 18 miles each to get to lake destinations.

The League is concerned that nearby developments that

circumvent Tahoe standards will become a new tactic for those looking to make a profit but hesitant to provide environmental benefits to the lake as required by the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency. Local government agencies and TRPA must insist on developers providing reasonable solutions – such as direct financial support for high quality public transportation – for the negative impacts to Tahoe posed by their projects.

Darcie Goodman Collins is executive director of the League to Save Lake Tahoe, also known by the slogan Keep Tahoe Blue. The League is Tahoe's oldest and largest nonprofit environmental advocacy organization.