

TRPA confident shoreline plan on solid ground

By Kathryn Reed

STATELINE – Increasing the number of boats on Lake Tahoe and where they can dock once on the water are anticipated outcomes of the shoreline plan that is being considered by the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency.

The Governing Board on May 23 received a presentation about the draft environmental impact statement. Comments are being taken on the document until July 9, with the goal of having a final EIS to the bi-state regulatory board in October.

This all-encompassing document regulates piers, buoys, slips, marinas and ramps.

This is the seventh iteration of the shoreline plan since the early 1990s. Executive Director Joanne Marchetta gave a brief history about the process, explaining why this topic was not part of the original Regional Plan in 1987. At that time studies were still being conducted regarding the impact of piers on fish habitat.

Lawsuits derailed the 2008 shorezone plan approved by the TRPA. The hope is that by inviting the League to Save Lake Tahoe – one of the litigants in the case – to the table along with a slew of other stakeholders that this latest version will sail through without a lawsuit being filed. The Sierra Club was also part of the lawsuit, but not part of the stakeholders meetings in the last two-plus years.

Based on the comments at Wednesday's meeting, it isn't a sure bet this will be a slam dunk. Nine people spoke, many who were involved in the process up to this point. Those questioning the document represented the California Attorney General's

Office, local Sierra Club chapter, and Friends of the West Shore. Impacts on non-motorized users, including those just at the beach, were brought up.

While there has been a 600-foot no wake zone in place for years, seldom has it been enforced. TRPA said increased enforcement is part of the plan. Ensuring all of Emerald Bay is a no-wake zone is another goal.

Staff anticipates the following issues to be controversial in the draft EIS:

- The number and location of new shoreline structures.
- Processes for allocating new shorezone structures.
- Effects of structures and boating on non-motorized water recreation.
- Visual effects of shoreline structures.
- Water and air pollution from boating.
- Effects on public access along the shoreline.

Recognizing that the lake could be at low levels as climate change takes a stronger hold, officials know there needs to be flexibility with pier construction. This means allowing floating piers so the structures can actually be used instead of people walking under them as was the case during the latest drought.

As it stands today there is essentially a prohibition on new construction of piers.

There would be an 18 percent increase in piers and 24 percent increase in moorings if alternative one is adopted.

Ultimately boating activity is expected to increase 16 percent in the next 20 or so years.

At build out, which is expected to be 2040 at the soonest, the preferred alternative would allow up to 2,116 new moorings (buoys, lifts or public slips), 128 new private piers, 10 new public piers, and two new public boat ramps. Some new and existing buoys could be converted to slips, and vice versa at marinas.

The 2008 plan also called for 128 private piers as well as 1,822 buoys. At that time 768 piers and nearly 4,500 buoys existed.

Darcie Collins, executive director of the League, told the Governing Board her agency supports the draft document, but will be most interested in making sure the mitigation measures will be sufficient. She did not express what has changed for her agency in the last decade. What the League wanted at the time of the lawsuit was better science to prove TRPA's assertions.

It was noted by Adam Lewandowsky with Ascent, the firm that wrote the environmental document, that boat manufacturers don't regulate greenhouse gas emissions. This is an ongoing concern.

On the flip side, this process has brought the marina operators together. They have formed the Lake Tahoe Marina Association, which includes all 14 commercial marinas in the basin. They are behind the preferred alternative and welcome the opportunity to implement to clean marina certificate program.

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Notes:

- The environmental document is **online**.
- Public workshop on June 4, 5:30-7:30pm, TRPA offices, Stateline.

- Public workshop on June 6, 5:30-7:30pm, North Tahoe Event Center, Kings Beach.
- Public hearing, June 13, on draft EIS, TRPA offices.
- July 9, deadline to comment on draft EIS.