

Opinion: Managing AIS critical for Tahoe

By Joanne Marchetta

Over the last two decades, the Lake Tahoe region has become a national leader in fighting the introduction and spread of aquatic invasive species (AIS) that threaten to harm its world-renowned environment and the \$5 billion recreation-based economy it supports.

The Lake Tahoe region is working with other partners throughout the American West to better safeguard waterbodies and improve national invasive species policies. We are also working with the boating industry to help manufacturers design watercraft that are less likely to carry AIS and are easier to inspect and decontaminate.



Joanne
Marchetta

Ben Franklin said, “An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.” This is especially true for invasive species that outcompete native species, and, once established, become incredibly difficult and costly to manage or eradicate.

Fortunately, Lake Tahoe’s watercraft inspection program has overseen the safe launch of tens of thousands of motorized boats at Lake Tahoe since its creation in 2008. Along with the Tahoe Keepers program that trains people to inspect and

decontaminate their own hand-powered watercraft, it has successfully prevented the introduction of any new invasives in the lake.

With this critically-important frontline prevention program working and sustainably funded through boater fees and contributions from the states of California and Nevada, now is the time to ramp up programs to better manage or eradicate the invasive species that are already in the lake before they can spread or do more harm.

The \$415 million Lake Tahoe Restoration Act that Congress passed in December will help on this front. The legislation authorizes up to \$45 million in federal funding over seven years for projects to combat invasive species at Lake Tahoe, and TRPA and its partners are working to secure those funding appropriations.

We have seen the impacts invasives can have, with invasive aquatic plants like Eurasian watermilfoil and curly leaf pondweed fouling marinas, beaches, and swimming areas. Nonnative warm water fish that follow the spread of these weeds further impact the lake's ecology and populations of native species.

Work done in Emerald Bay shows we can successfully fight the spread and harmful impacts of these invasive aquatic weeds. Through a labor-intensive project with light-blocking bottom barriers and weed pulls by divers, partner agencies restored six acres of shoreline that were being choked by aquatic invasive weeds. Several years later, iconic Emerald Bay remains weed-free.

Today, the Tahoe Keys is ground zero in the fight against these invasive aquatic plants and warm water fish. Weeds have overtaken as much as 90 percent of the 172 acres of canals and lagoons in this South Shore neighborhood. Clearing the canals and lagoons with mechanical harvesters each summer has failed

to stop the spread of the weeds, which have grown back thicker each year. It also creates small fragments of weeds that threaten to carry infestations to other parts of the lake.

Working with numerous public agency partners and researchers, the Tahoe Keys Property Owners Association is creating an integrated management plan that identifies ways to better manage the aquatic weeds.

The plan is looking at improved mechanical harvesting and fragment collection methods, the use of bottom barriers, and scuba-assisted weed pulls. It is also investigating potentially new treatment methods at Lake Tahoe, such as the possible use of aquatic herbicides.

The Tahoe Keys Property Owners Association this month applied for permits from the Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board and TRPA for a pilot project that would test the use of federally-approved aquatic herbicides at nine sites in dead-end lagoons in 2018. The association is proposing to install a barrier between the test sites and the lake and other safety and monitoring measures to ensure that the herbicides, which break down with exposure to sunlight and other natural processes, do not reach the lake.

While these herbicides are used to control invasive aquatic weeds in other parts of California and the United States, they have never been used at Lake Tahoe. And the application for this pilot project to test their use has raised some public questions about the risks it could pose for communities, drinking water, and the environment at Lake Tahoe.

Over the next year, TRPA looks forward to working closely with the Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board, the Tahoe Keys Property Owners Association, other partner agencies and researchers, and the public to fully consider all the risks that could be associated with this potentially new approach to controlling invasive aquatic weeds at Lake Tahoe, as well as

the potential benefits.

To protect the environment, the economy, and the natural resources we all treasure, our Region must continue to work together and innovate for new solutions to better protect Lake Tahoe from the harms of invasive species.

Joanne Marchetta is executive director of the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency.

Why falling home prices could be a good thing

By Conor Dougherty, New York Times

Suppose there were a way to pump up the economy, reduce inequality and put an end to destructive housing bubbles like the one that contributed to the Great Recession. The idea would be simple, but not easy, requiring a wholesale reframing of the United States economy and housing market.

The solution: Americans, together and all at once, would have to stop thinking about their homes as an investment.

The virtues of homeownership are so ingrained in the American psyche that we often forget that housing is also a source of economic stress. Rising milk prices are regarded as a household tragedy for some, and spiking gas prices stoke national outrage. But whenever home prices go up, it's "a recovery," even though that recovery also means millions of people can no longer afford to buy.

[Read the whole story](#)

Tax relief for storm damaged EDC properties

Property damaged in the recent winter storms are eligible for immediate property tax relief, according to El Dorado County Assessor Karl Weiland.

There are provisions of the Revenue & Taxation code that immediately reduce the assessed value in recognition of loss caused by storm damage.

In order to qualify for relief, the loss in value must exceed \$10,000 and a claim filed within 12 months of the damage. The office will also be contacting property owners in an effort to insure all damaged property is reviewed.

Property owners who have questions or need assistance should call 530.621.5719.

Nev. bridges strong, but upgrades needed

By Art Marroquin, Las Vegas Review-Journal

The majority of Nevada's bridges are in good to fair condition, but the state faces a \$133 million shortfall to upgrade a handful of spans, officials said this week.

Of the 2,008 bridges maintained or receiving assistance from

the Nevada Department of Transportation, only 31 are considered to be in poor condition, said Reid Kaiser, NDOT's assistant operations director.

Federal laws require all structures to undergo assessments at least once every two years, leading to \$17 million in repairs for 27 bridges across Nevada in 2015 and 2016, NDOT officials said.

Read the whole story

Truckee children's museum severely damaged

Major structural storm damage to the KidZone Museum in Truckee may force it to close indefinitely.

The 24-year-old nonprofit children's museum is looking for donation to be able to repair the tent structure so it can resume operations.

Tahoe Mountain Resorts Foundation, a donor to the KidZone Museum for more than a decade, has stepped up and contributed \$15,000 in support of programming and the Museum's emergency request.

To donate, go **online**.

Snippets about Lake Tahoe

- Tami Wallace is now executive director of the South Tahoe Chamber of Commerce.
 - Truckee Sanitary District is reminding people it is illegal to connect a sump pump to the sewer system.
 - Word After Word bookshop in downtown Truckee is having a weekend of grand opening events Feb. 18-20, 11am each day.
 - Magician Matt Marcy will be hitting the stage at The Loft in South Lake Tahoe from Feb. 16-28.
 - The Coffeebar Squaw Valley location will host its grand opening celebration Feb. 18-20.
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NTPUD without main water source for 1 month

By Kathryn Reed

This is the first full day North Tahoe Public Utility District has been using its main water source – Lake Tahoe – after a leak was discovered in the intake pipe in mid-January.

Damage to the 18-inch pipe was the result of the age of the pipe – 25 years – and not the weather.

NTPUD, which is the main water supplier for Tahoe Vista and Kings Beach, relied on the well it has while the lake was inaccessible. NTPUD has more than 4,000 customers. This time of year the well has plenty of capacity for the number of

users. It can produce enough water to meet half of the district's daily peak demand, with that date occurring July 4.

A multi-day effort to fix the pipe was completed Feb. 15.

"We cut out about a 10-foot long section that had leaks. We replaced it with an identical piece and have repair bands that go around the two joints," NTPUD project engineer Mike Twomey explained to *Lake Tahoe News*.

The difficult part was the location of the leak, which was right at the water's edge. At least that is where it was when it was first detected. The lake has been rising about a half a foot a week, so the challenge grew each week the weather prevented repairs being made.

Permits had to be secured from Lahontan Water Quality Control Board, Tahoe Regional Planning Agency, Army Corps of Engineers, and state Department of Fish and Wildlife before work began. The threat to the lake wasn't the leak, but the necessity of having to dig right at the shoreline.

"There are probably 2- to 3-foot breakers coming right over the whole worksite where we were. I feel extremely fortunate we got that weather window," Twomey said on Feb. 16.

Tahoe remains affordable destination market

By Theresa Souers

Not only is the median home price in South Lake Tahoe below the state's median, South Lake Tahoe continues to rank as one of the most affordable resort destinations throughout the

country.

According to the California Association of Realtors (CAR), “The percentage of homebuyers who could afford to purchase a median priced, existing single-family home in California in fourth-quarter 2016 remained at 31 percent, unchanged from the third quarter of 2016, but up from 30 percent in fourth-quarter 2015, according to C.A.R.’s Traditional Housing Affordability Index (HAI).”

	<u>Median Home Price</u>	<u>% change</u>	<u>DOM</u>	<u>Month Supply</u>
South Lake Tahoe	\$405,000	+13.3	91	3.6
California (12/31/16)	\$509,060	+1.7	33	2.6

Source: STAR

Key points from the fourth-quarter 2016 Housing Affordability report include:

- Compared to affordability in third-quarter 2016, eight of 29 counties tracked saw an improvement in housing affordability (Contra Costa, Marin, Napa, Los Angeles, Ventura, Monterey, Santa Barbara, and Madera), 10 experienced a decline (San Francisco, Sonoma, Orange County, Riverside, San Bernardino, Santa Cruz, Kern, Kings, Merced, and SanJoaquin), and 11 were unchanged (Alameda, San Mateo, Santa Clara, Solano, San Diego, San Luis Obispo, Fresno, Placer, Sacramento, Stanislaus, and Tulare).

- Only three of nine Bay Area counties (Contra Costa, Marin, Napa) recorded higher affordability numbers than the previous quarter, as higher earning Bay Area workers drove up home prices. Housing affordability results were mixed in Southern California, but largely declined in Central Valley counties.

Theresa Souers is with the South Tahoe Association of Realtors.

Water a key issue for Nevada Legislature

By Sandra Chereb, Las Vegas Review-Journal

CARSON CITY – State lawmakers got a crash course Tuesday on Nevada's complicated water laws as they prepare to consider several bills dealing with the most precious resource in the driest state in the nation.

State Engineer Jason King, whose office has proposed four bills this session, said more proposed laws are expected, including one to address Nevada's long-standing doctrine of "use-it-or-lose it."

He also tried to dispel concerns by domestic well owners that his office wants to take away domestic well rights.

Read the whole story

EDS0 collecting storm damage

reports

El Dorado County Sheriff's Office has Individual Damage Assessment forms for anyone wanting to file a claim from the storms of 2017.

The form allows individuals and other to track their damage from the storms. The information could help California receive a federal disaster declaration.

Completing the form does not guarantee any reimbursement for losses due to the storms.

For more info and to obtain a form, call Deputy Todd Crawford at 530.621.7660.