

TRPA changing approach regarding individual BMPs

By Kathryn Reed

STATELINE – A communal approach to BMPs may save individual property owners money and angst, while also keeping more sediment from reaching Lake Tahoe.

While the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency is not doing away with best management practices, it is headed toward being less focused on what individuals (those 43,000 parcels) are doing and more focused on communitywide efforts.

Through the total maximum daily load protocols mandated by the Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board on the California side of the lake and Nevada Department of Environmental Protection in the Silver State, TRPA in part will be using the data they collect to help measure the volume of sediment reaching the lake.



Drip lines will still be required, but the emphasis by

TRPA on
individual BMPs
is likely to
decrease.
Photo/LTN

John Hester, who is overseeing the Regional Plan update for TRPA, said staff is proposing being less focused on monitoring individual projects and instead looking at larger areas, including subwatersheds. He said the idea is to get away from a one-size fits all approach.

During a multi-hour presentation to the TRPA Governing Board last week, reps from both states and the TRPA outlined how using the total maximum daily load will be incorporated into the Regional Plan update. That update is expected to be voted on in December.

But it was stressed that the TMDL is not the sole mechanism for achieving lake clarity.

"There is some sense that TMDL is all there is," Joanne Marchetta, TRPA executive director, said. She said that's not accurate. "The whole system is much larger than that."

She said the TMDL is one component of the stormwater management system, which in itself is just part of the bigger picture. After all, particles floating in the air also contribute to water quality issues.

"Fifteen percent of fine sediment is from atmospheric deposition," Bob Larson with Lahontan told the TRPA board. "But we don't know exactly where it is from."

He said it is most likely dust from paved and unpaved roads. While past theories put the blame on the Sacramento Valley and Gobi Desert for polluting Lake Tahoe, Larson said that is not the case.

Road improvements – including better street sweepers, along with improved public transportation are ways the road dust could be decreased.

Marchetta went through the evolution of water quality programs in the basin starting in the 1970s.

She admitted the introduction of parcel-by-parcel best management practices “was not driven by science. It was driven by policy.”

The theory was every drop of water needed to stay on the property it landed on.

BMPs have cost homeowners and businesses a tremendous amount of money in the last couple decades with no measurement as to whether they did any good. It meant redoing driveways, putting in drip lines so the runoff from roofs didn't cause erosion, and covering bare soil.

“Simple erosion control practices will continue to be required around roof drip lines and to stabilize bare soil, but area-wide solutions are being recommended to help property owners with things like their driveways,” Kristi Boosman, spokeswoman for TRPA, told *Lake Tahoe News* after the meeting. “The draft Regional Plan proposes to coordinate TRPA's BMP implementation efforts with local jurisdictions so that limited resources are focused in the areas that achieve the greatest pollutant load reduction. These areas would be determined by load reduction plans and Lake Clarity Crediting Program load reduction strategies local jurisdictions have to prepare as part of the TMDL.”

Besides stormwater concerns, water quality is impacted by watershed management, invasive species, how threatened-endangered-sensitive species are handled, and whether it was a dry or wet winter.

Through the TMDL program, the five counties, one city, U.S.

Forest Service, and two state transportation departments collectively are tasked with reducing fine sediment particles reaching the lake by 10 percent in the next five years and by 33 percent in 15 years.

Larson said if a switch were flipped today that stopped the sediment from reaching Lake Tahoe, it is estimated it would take five years for the lake to respond – to be at the desired clarity level of water officials.

LA teachers to be judged partially on student achievement

By Teresa Watanabe, Los Angeles Times

In a potentially groundbreaking decision, Los Angeles teachers and administrators agreed with the school district for the first time to use student test scores as part of performance reviews beginning this school year.

But an attorney for United Teachers Los Angeles later said the commitment he made during a court hearing Tuesday was contingent on whether the union and L.A. Unified School District could successfully negotiate an agreement on exactly how such scores would be used in the teacher evaluations.

That drew criticism from an attorney who sought the pledge in a case he brought on behalf of Los Angeles parents, who successfully sued the district for violating a 41-year-old state law that requires evaluations to include measures of student achievement, such as test scores.

“This is exactly what we were concerned about – that [UTLA] would say one thing in court and change their position thereafter,” said Scott Witlin, an attorney for the group of unidentified parents.

In the case, which could transform teacher evaluations in California, Los Angeles County Superior Court Judge James C. Chalfant ruled last month that L.A. Unified had violated the law, known as the Stull Act. The plaintiffs’ attorneys had argued that the absence of a rigorous evaluation system that effectively identifies weak teachers for improvement or, if necessary, dismissal, deprives students of their constitutional right to educational equality.

Read the whole story

Foreign travelers flocking to U.S.

By Alex Kowalski, Bloomberg

For Leon Goldberg, the used clothes piling up at the lost-and-found at the New York Marriott Marquis hotel on Times Square are the latest sign tourists are spending.

“People come over with empty suitcases, and we see them leave with full suitcases,” while abandoning their older garments,

said Goldberg, the director of sales and marketing at the 1,957-room hotel.

Spending by overseas visitors on everything from airfares to hotel stays climbed 8.1 percent over the 12 months ended in May to \$13.9 billion, figures from the U.S. Commerce Department show. The increase was almost double the 4.2 percent gain in total exports. Purchases by foreign tourists count as exports, which have been among the mainstays of the three-year economic expansion.

More Latin American and Asian visitors are offsetting a slowdown in trips from Europe, where a weaker euro is making travel to the U.S. more expensive. The pickup in tourism, which Federal Reserve Chairman Ben S. Bernanke called a “bright spot” in the economy, is benefiting companies such as Marriott International Inc. (MAR), City Pass and San Francisco Shuttle Tours and bolstering the labor market.

“Tourism has been an over-performer,” said Chris Lafakis, a senior economist at Moody’s Analytics Inc. in West Chester, Pennsylvania. “This is an industry that’s fully recovered from recession.”

Victoria Varraza, who is visiting Washington from Culiacan, Mexico, said yesterday her family comes to the U.S. to shop. The 22-year-old said her parents book their hotel, airfare and activities with Expedia Inc. or Travelocity Holdings Inc.

Read the whole story

1 arrest in shooting in S. Tahoe, 2 others sought

One South Lake Tahoe resident was arrested July 27 in connection with an alleged gang shooting and two other residents are being sought.

The shooting was on June 27 in the area of Bonanza and B streets. During the investigation officers said they determined a shooting had occurred and there was an exchange of gunfire between a pedestrian and the occupant of a vehicle that was driving past him.

"It does not appear that anyone was injured in this incident and no one has sought medical attention at the local hospitals for a gunshot wound," officers said in a press release.

Felony arrest warrants were obtained for Jahem Barton, 19, and Cesar Caro, 19. Jamal Darrion Coffey, 21, was also identified as being involved in this incident and a search warrant was obtained for his residence as well.

In the early morning hours of July 25, officers attempted to arrest Barton at his residence and served the search warrants at Barton and Coffey's residences located in an apartment complex on B Street. Barton and Coffey were not at home and appear to have fled the area.

During the search of the residences evidence of gang affiliation was found, however, no firearms were recovered. Officers are not saying what the evidence is.

On July 27, Caro was located at his residence in the area of Glenwood and Fairway area. He was arrested on the outstanding felony arrest warrant. Similar gang evidence was found, but no guns, officers said.

Caro was booked into the El Dorado County Jail on a charge of attempted murder with bail set at \$150,000.

A felony arrest warrant has been issued for Barton who is wanted on charges of participating in a criminal street gang and a criminal street gang member carrying a concealed firearm.

Coffer is wanted for questioning in this case.

Anyone with information on the whereabouts of Barton and Coffer should call the South Lake Tahoe Police Department at (530) 542.6100 or Secret Witness at (530) 541.6800.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Lousy economy means older recruits for military

By Diana Lambert, Sacramento Bee

Military recruiters may be the only people happy about the faltering economy because the high unemployment rate in Northern California is buoying recruitment numbers despite a dearth of eligible candidates.

Rampant obesity and a lack of education has made it difficult nationally for the U.S. military to find fresh recruits for several years.

But a relentlessly poor economy has the eligible lining up for

spots in the Army, Navy, Marines and Air Force for salaries that start at \$1,491 a month, medical benefits and a monthly housing allowance.

“Here in Northern California, Stockton and Modesto has some of the highest unemployment in the nation, making the military a more viable option,” said Rod Kise, spokesman for the U.S. Army’s Recruiting Battalion – Sacramento, which covers Northern California, southern Oregon and parts of Nevada.

Air Force officials report the same trend nationwide. “When the economy dipped down we saw an increase of traffic in our office,” said Christa D’Andrea, a spokeswoman at the Air Force Recruiting Service headquarters in San Antonio. “It’s very competitive to join the Air Force right now.”

The result: Recruits are getting older.

Kise said that more men and women in their mid-20s are signing up instead of the 17- to 24-year-olds that usually make up the bulk of new recruits.

“We are seeing more families – husbands and wives,” Kise said. They are looking for paychecks and benefits to help care for their families, he said.

Lt. Col. Eric Espino, commander of the 364th Air Force Recruiting Squadron at Mather Park in Sacramento, said the recent influx of candidates also can be attributed to the high cost of college and an expanded GI Bill that helps veterans pay for college.

Read the whole story

El Dorado County DA files charges against consulting firm

By Kathryn Reed

Consultants with ties to a slew of El Dorado County officials, including a Superior Court judge, face civil complaints stemming from a contract with the Pioneer Fire Protection District.

Dan Dellinger and Cris Alarcon, who operate Dellinger Consulting, are the target of El Dorado County District Attorney Vern Pierson's complaint that was filed July 27.

"Under the terms of the agreement between defendants and PFPD it is abundantly clear that Dan Dellinger and Christopher Alarcon were hired and paid, at taxpayer expense, to expressly advocate a position in favor of a ballot measure to raise taxes," the DA's office said in a statement.

The 2012 grand jury report that came out last month has an item about this whole subject matter that *Lake Tahoe News* wrote about June 25.

The county wants the consulting firm to pay back the early \$30,000 it received from the fire district. The DA alleges, as did the grand jury, that Dellinger illegally used taxpayer dollars in a campaign.

While testimony and evidence obtained by a grand jury is usually confidential, because of the nature of the allegations the grand jury made against the consulting firm, Superior Court Judge Suzanne Kingsbury released the evidence to the District Attorney's Office.

The DA's complaint requests restitution to the county for the

\$10,000 which was allegedly illegally obtained by Dellinger and Alarcon; a civil penalty of \$1,000 for each day of violation of the government code plus three times the value of the unlawful use of public resources; a civil penalty of \$2,500 for each day of violation of the business and profession code; and to enjoin the defendants from any further payments of taxpayer money which may be due under what is being called an illegal contract with Pioneer Fire.

Alarcon has also had recent criminal issues to contend with. Earlier this month he pleaded no contest to nine charges.

California failing to ensure health and well being of children

By Theresa Harrington, Contra Costa Times

California has the largest child population, but the state ranks near the bottom – 41st in the nation – when it comes to children's well-being, according to a report released Wednesday.

In fact, California is failing in three of four measures that gauge health and well-being, says a report by the Annie E. Casey Foundation's 2012 Kids Count Data Book, released in partnership with Children Now, an Oakland-based nonprofit advocacy group. Each state was graded according to 16 indicators of economic well-being, education, health and family and community

California ranked 23rd in health but failed to rise above the bottom 10 in the other categories. It came in last in the percentage of household income available for living necessities other than housing, and last for heads of households with high school diplomas.

“These numbers are particularly disturbing, given over one in 10 of the nation’s children lives in California,” said Ted Lempert, president of Children Now. “The last couple of years have seen California children bearing the brunt of the state’s budget cuts. We must hold the state’s policymakers more accountable for failing to invest in children, because their poor decisions will certainly have a lasting effect on the economic and civic fabric of our state.”

The Golden State earned its lowest ranking – 45th – in economic well being.

According to the research, more than half of California’s children live in households that spend at least 30 percent of their income on housing, leaving many families struggling to pay for food, clothing and health care. Due in part to the economic recession, more than a third of parents lack secure employment, and 22 percent of children live in poverty.

Read the whole story

Nevada not a sure bet for Obama

By Mitchell Landsberg, Los Angeles Times

RENO – Women are bowling in the middle of a downtown street.

Men are climbing the sides of a high-rise hotel. As necks crane and bowling balls skitter into pins, a loudspeaker blares Bruce Springsteen's "Glory Days."

There is, it would seem, almost nothing this town wouldn't do to revive a moribund gambling economy and bring back its glory days. For decades, casinos were the golden key to prosperity, luring in tourists, cranking out jobs around the clock and flooding the state treasury with a perpetual stream of cash.

Those days are over, and all the outdoor bowling championships and climbing walls installed to attract visitors probably won't change that. The local economy is in shambles, done in by the double whammy of the national recession and the rise of Indian casinos in California. Unemployment is rampant.

That presents a serious challenge to President Obama as he tries to repeat his 2008 victory in Nevada, a key swing state then and now.

Read the whole story

Low interest rates affect El Dorado Savings' bottom line

By Mark Glover, Sacramento Bee

Placerville-based El Dorado Savings Bank reported a profit of \$2.1 million for the second quarter ended June 30, down nearly 10 percent from last year's second quarter.

"The drop in earnings was due to the continued record-low interest rates available on new loans and investments," said Thomas Meuser, chairman and CEO. "As older loans, bonds and

securities continue to prepay, the funds are reinvested at shorter terms and lower yields.

“Loan volume is steady, but not sufficient to absorb the excess cash flow.”

Through six months this year, the bank had a profit of nearly \$4.3 million, down slightly from \$4.4 million in the first half of 2011.

El Dorado reported total assets of \$1.77 billion and savings deposits of \$1.58 billion as of June 30.

The bank operates 32 branches in California and three in Nevada.

Restaurant industry on hiring spree

By Darrell Smith, Sacramento Bee

Restaurant hiring outpaced overall employment growth nationwide year-over-year, and one in five eateries plans to increase its staffing in the second half of the year, according to the National Restaurant Association.

The industry trade group, in its quarterly employment report, said restaurant employment rose 2.7 percent nationally from June 2011 to last month, compared with the 1.3 percent overall increase in total employment nationwide.

Hudson Rhiele, an association senior vice president, called the hiring climate in his industry “an improved, but not optimal, environment.”

Still, there are positive takeaways for California's \$64 billion restaurant industry, the nation's largest with more than 1.4 million employees.

Rhiele said restaurant hiring in California outpaced national hiring both in the industry and overall year-over-year.

Read the whole story