Opinion: North and South Shore chambers plot Tahoe's future

By Casey Blann

As a long-time resident of Lake Tahoe, my family and I have witnessed many changes. In fact, I am a strong proponent of change as it challenges status quo and requires us to look at situations in a whole new way; but it can also bring fear to some. It has been my experience that the only way to address these fears is through education.

Possessing the necessary information to make educated decisions has always been a challenge in Tahoe. Often, we are reading information from a variety of sources and it is impossible to determine whether it is factual, or biased. Faced with this situation, we decided to create a website that spoke to the scientific and verifiable facts of the issues that are facing us in the very near future; this site is TahoeFuture.org.

The TahoeChamber, (in conjunction with the North Lake Tahoe Chamber) have launched the regionwide campaign to help better inform the people of Lake Tahoe. The concept is simple – to get more people in-the-know in the most user-friendly way possible. Basically, we want more people to have a voice in Tahoe's critical planning issues to create a brighter future for Lake Tahoe. The focal point is the TahoeFuture.org website which will quickly link community members to easy-to-understand, straightforward information streamlining "getting involved".



Casey Blann

Over the next seven months, TahoeFuture.org will connect people to important information on two critical land use and transportation plans that create a blueprint for a revitalized Lake Tahoe. The overarching goal of these two plans, Tahoe Regional Planning Agency Regional Plan Update (RPU) and Regional Transportation Plan (RTP)/Mobility 2035, is to restore Lake Tahoe.

The draft environmental impact statement period for the RPU and RTP closed June 28. More than 70 people participated via speaking at hearings and writing letters to TRPA. Over the next few months, public comment in person and in writing will continue to be accepted on both plans.

We know the South Shore is sorely in need of change. And as many locals already know, there’s a movement under way via various efforts, all around Lake Tahoe to shift the direction of Lake Tahoe away from one of continued decline toward one of environmental and human health, prosperity and sustainability. TahoeFuture.org is linked directly to these numerous efforts happening simultaneously around Lake Tahoe to chart a new direction.

The new direction and brighter future is about effectively integrating accelerated environmental restoration with community revitalization and a new economic model for prosperity for residents, second homeowners and visitors.

Lake Tahoe continues to suffer from damaging runoff and one of the worst periods of economic decline in its history. The environment and the economy are intertwined; and without change, the lake’s clarity and the future of the region remain

in serious peril. We must do something about it. Take a look at some facts:

• 72 percent of the fine sediment and pollutants clouding Tahoe's water clarity are the result of untreated runoff from the old built environment (before water quality standards were put in place) of roadways and aging infrastructure.

• The economic decline started in 1997 at Lake Tahoe and unemployment rates have averaged 16 percent for the past three years. Due to the loss of jobs and local services, families have opted to move. The result has been a 15 percent drop in permanent population (and still falling) and a sharp decrease in business levels. In 2011, the average occupancy rate for Lake Tahoe lodging properties – large and small combined – was 30 percent or less. In short, the outlook for our future is anything but bright.

Here's a quick description of additional collaborative efforts going on around the Region which are all aimed at fixing the mistakes of the past in order to achieve the goal of a healthier Lake Tahoe.

Regional Plan Update (RPU) is a blueprint for innovative, smart land use and transportation policy. About 4,500 citizens provided input that ultimately guided the TRPA RPU. The overarching objective is to restore Lake Tahoe and deliver environmental gains through a host of policy changes such as incentives for environmental redevelopment and the removal of existing development from the most sensitive areas. Expected to be approved at the end of 2012, its innovative new approaches include: creating livable walkable town centers, moving away from burdensome regulations that inhibit environmental redevelopment gains and investment in efforts to clean up blighted areas that have contributed to economic and environmental decline over the past 30 years. As a foundation for this effort, TRPA will maintain the existing regional growth control systems that stopped the rampant

overdevelopment that was a product of the 1960s and early 1970s.

Regional Transportation Plan (RTP)/Mobility 2035 is a blueprint for connecting communities and stopping pollution impacts. In conjunction with the RPU, the RTP/Mobility 2035 is being updated to support the goals of improving lake clarity and air quality by boosting alternative forms of transportation as well as reconfiguring communities to be more walkable. Highlights of the Mobility 2035 Plan include: implementation of 160 miles of new bicycle and walking trails, programs to catch sediment on approximately 78 miles of roads and garnering federal and state transportation investments.

Tahoe Prosperity Center is a regionwide collaborative economic prosperity strategy for enhancing environmental quality and living standards for all residents. The plan aims to move the region away from a gaming and tourism only reliant model to one that focuses on three clusters: Outdoor Recreation-based Tourism; Health and Wellness; and Environmental Innovation. Board members are developing strategies related to their region-wide 'pillar initiatives' to drive leadership, planning and policy, infrastructure, capital generation and economic development.

Pathways to Prosperity Trek took local leaders to study comparable community models for inspiration. We visited other communities that have faced similar challenges and in response, have implemented smart, creative, collaborative solutions to turn their region around. Specifically, when Monterey and Livermore faced economic and community decline, local political and community leaders took bold steps to reverse this decline including the development of a new economy (geotourism and downtown revitalization) along with transportation and community improvements. 2012 Trekkers represented a diverse group of Tahoe basin leaders across various sectors including tourism, science, government, transportation, economic, business, health care, and

recreation.

I believe now is the time for more people to get involved and join this energizing momentum toward positive change. Together we can bring back our economic wellbeing and chart the path toward environmental improvements and community vitality.

I invite each and every person who cares about Lake Tahoe to visit TahoeFuture and become more informed and involved. Let’s work together and actively participate in the process to build a healthier Lake Tahoe future. Let’s make Lake Tahoe more walkable and bikeable and maybe it will be a place where our kids can return to work, play and raise a family.

Casey Blann is chairman of TahoeChamber and vice president-general manager of Kirkwood Mountain Resort.

Opinion: A big thank you for a successful July 4 parade

To the community,

Golden Bear Events would like to thank the community of South Lake Tahoe for the success of the inaugural communitywide 4th of July Parade and Celebration. Parade participants and

vendors came from primarily Meyers, Stateline, and South Lake Tahoe.

Several new businesses, like The Oven, the Yum Truck, and Lake Tahoe Custom Cycles were happy to be a part of something as new as they.

Golden Bear Events always arranges free giveaways for the kids with stickers and tattoos. Robert Humason, owner of our local McDonald's, gave out free gift certificates, while A Hand at Home offered a make-a-hat activity.

Honeybee Ice Cream truck sold their favorites while the Cash Only Band played all the way down the highway and then for a few hours for the adults at the Recreation Complex and Senior Center sites.

A few vendors that had never done anything like this, notably Essex Hair and Nail Salon, Noon Soroptimist Fighting Chance Car and Les Schwab Tires enjoyed the event and parade.

Repeat participants included South Tahoe Refuse, the Beachcomber Inn, Affordable Construction, Decorative Overlays, Jamba Juice, and Lake Tahoe Holidays, who had fun decorating and dressing up in the spirit of the day. Out of town vendors who came for the cool camping, saw the ads and joined in with Native Vibes and All About Signs 2.

The American Legion Post No. 795 came out in full glory with vintage cars and a dozen or more veterans to ride "point." Veterans traveled several hours to renew their connections to our town and joined in the VFW Post No. 2627 cars. The American Legion Auxiliary, incredible supporters of our veterans and events that honor them, had three cars in the parade. Active, but off-duty, military came in a privately owned vintage Army truck. Families of our fallen heroes were honored with the families of Spec. Garrett Fant and Sgt. Timothy Smith in the parade. All the fallen were honored at the celebration. The Patriot Guard came to show their support

as well.

Brooke Laine and the South Tahoe Alumni Association stepped up with vintage cars to carry the veterans, including a World War II veteran and a POW survivor.

Mayor Claire Fortier, Mayor Pro Tem Tom Davis, Councilman Hal Cole, Councilman Bruce Grego, and Councilwoman Angela Swanson joined county Supervisor Norma Santiago in this event. Their combined presence was noted and appreciated by several, who commented it was good to see these representatives support a community event in this manner.

Spectators from as far away as Missouri called to find out details and were excited to see we were doing a parade this year. All along the route, children were waving flags, families were shouting “thank you for doing this” and some of the older ones in the crowd appeared to be fighting back tears. Locals joined us to cheer, participate, and come to the celebration.

Our sponsors stepped up to help this dream become a reality. The South Tahoe Chamber of Commerce did extra email blasts and helped with the insurance. The city of South Lake Tahoe helped with advertising and made the signs for the cars carrying the veterans. The SLT Fire Department and Police Department delighted the kids while making this a safe and efficient event. The STAR volunteers helped with site and crowd control, as well as signage. K-Tahoe radio ran ads the week before the event to heighten interest.

A parade is a lot of work, and special thanks go out to Mr. Bob Albertazzi and Sgt. Shannon Laney, who helped advise on best practices to make the event safe. Stan Sherer with the Recreation Department helped with the site for the celebration, Nancy Kerry and Tracy Franklin helped coordinate the efforts of the city’s sponsorship, and Tracy recorded the event in pictures. Marilyn and Kow at Caltrans were very easy

to work with as we waded through the paperwork and requirements to be on Highway 50. Krista at EDC Environmental Health is a pleasure to work with to make sure our food vendors comply with safe practices to protect the public. Every media outlet around the Lake gave us press: *Tahoe Daily Tribune, Tahoe Business Monitor*, Southtahoenow.com, the *Mountain News, Lake Tahoe News*, K-Tahoe and KRLT radio, RSN TV, and the City Council TV. The Substitute Personnel office was a convenient drop off location, answered questions and received applications for the event. Theresa Brown Bookkeeping volunteered at the information booth for Golden Bear Events.

We are very touched by the display of support and the level of participation. In addition to the personal thanks individuals and groups gave us at the event, Golden Bear Events has received a number of supportive emails, blog posts, and phone calls asking if we would please do this again.

Thank you, South Lake Tahoe.

We will produce this event again next 4th of July.

JoAnn Conner, Golden Bear Events

Opinion: Time to abandon Loop Road reconfiguration

Publisher's note: ***The following letter was sent to the South Lake Tahoe City Council and Lake Tahoe News on July 19 in advance of the July 20 10am Tahoe Transportation District meeting at the TRPA office in Stateline.***

Dear Mayor (Claire) Fortier and Council Members:

I am writing to you to offer a few thoughts regarding how city government can further increase confidence in the community in regard to the “Loop Road” and still continue to pursue options that create a more transportation and pedestrian-friendly area in and around Heavenly Village. Those of us who oppose the existing TTD road alignment and massive destruction of private property support the City Council’s existing policy opposing the TTD road alignment and the use of eminent domain.

In addition, I wanted to share with you all information contained in the city’s adopted General Plan that precludes city government from allowing or approving the construction of the TTD project in its present configuration.



Dave Jinkens

The city’s existing General Plan, adopted in May 2011**, contains the following language regarding relocation of Highway 50:

Existing City General Plan Transportation and Circulation Element Language

Policy TC-1.7: Highway 50 Relocation Project

“The city shall coordinate efforts with Caltrans and the Tahoe Transportation District to relocate Highway 50 to south of Heavenly Village in the Stateline Community Plan area. This will allow for reduced numbers of travel lanes on Highway 50 between Pioneer Trail and Stateline, creation of a dedicated transit lane, and enhancement of bicycle and pedestrian amenities.”

Comment on the current language

The goal of the policy has been expressed recently and publicly to create a more transportation and pedestrian-friendly area between at Heavenly Village and the proposed convention center/hotel/commercial project and to encourage use of public transportation. The existing policy does not propose a specific street alignment but speaks to the subject in general. General plan policies are intentionally general and seldom speak to a specific project in detail but rather to goals and objectives of a particular issue. The present language in the General Plan could be clarified to explain that the present General Plan policy does not contemplate massive destruction of private property and displacement of hundreds of low income and minority residents. Even if the existing language could be somehow interpreted by an overly imaginative mind to allow for the proposed specific road alignment (which it does not) it would still be inconsistent with other parts of the city's General Plan as noted below. Clarifying the existing General Plan Transportation and Circulation Element language would help to avoid misunderstanding and promote public confidence in city government policies.

Proposed new language to clarify the city's General Plan Transportation and Circulation Element:

"The city shall coordinate efforts with Caltrans and the Tahoe Transportation District (as may be needed) to develop programs and improvements that create a more transit and pedestrian-friendly venue in and around the existing Heavenly Village and proposed conference center/hotel/commercial area. Proposals for rerouting of traffic and creating pedestrian bridge linkages should be evaluated and examined in this regard. Any proposed actions or projects in this area must be consistent with the City's adopted Housing Element and be financially feasible."

As you know, the city’s General Plan may be amended by the City Council by resolution or by initiative of the electors of the city.

Existing TTD Loop Road alignment is inconsistent with the city’s adopted General Plan.

In addition to the numerous and substantive reasons why the proposed alignment of the Loop Road is bad public policy, the City Council and the Tahoe Transportation District need to consider the following. The proposed TTD Specific Loop Road alignment is inconsistent with the City’s General Plan Housing Element. It discourages and destroys affordable and workforce housing in the area and diminishes the supply of such housing. The City Council and Planning Commission cannot make a finding of consistency of the proposed TTD Loop Road alignment with the city’s General Plan (that it is required to do under state law) for the construction of such a project because it violates at a minimum the following adopted policies in the City’s Housing Element (HE).

HE-1

To provide housing opportunities for South Lake Tahoe residents of all economic level

HE- 2

To encourage construction and maintenance of affordable and/or workforce housing in South Lake Tahoe.

HE-3

To preserve and enhance the existing supply of housing.

HE-5

To provide decent housing and quality living environment for all South Lake Tahoe residents regardless of age, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, marital status,

ancestry, national origin, disability, or economic level.

HE-7

To provide for a variety of housing types, sizes, price ranges, and densities compatible with the existing character and integrity of residential neighborhoods.”

Conclusion

All of us in opposition to the TTD Loop Road alignment want to be in a position to support measures that promote the use of public transportation, pedestrian facilities and bicycle use in the area in and around Heavenly Village. We look forward to working with all parties to achieve these objectives when evaluating possible new road and/or pedestrian bridge and bicycle route options.

Sincerely,

Dave Jinkens, South Lake Tahoe

Opinion: Live at Lakeview is the place to be Thursdays

To the community,

I went to the first Live at Lakeview free concert series. I had to leave early to get back home to cook my son and I dinner, but just want to say that from what I witnessed, this event was a total success.

My guess is that there was at least 500-plus people there, all

seeming to enjoy themselves and emanating a wonderful vibe.

The venue worked perfectly for this event and I look forward to making Thursdays at Lakeview Commons a regular stop on Ian’s (my youngest) and my summer fun tour!

Toogee Sielsch, South Lake Tahoe

Opinion: Fed up with 40 years of hypocrisy in Tahoe

By David Triano

I moved to South Lake Tahoe as an 8-year-old in 1973. After college and eight years of professional pursuits, I chose my hometown of South Lake Tahoe as the place to raise my two sons. Simply put, I love Lake Tahoe.

Over the years, I have seen the many special interest groups clambering for attention in our town. I was here when the TRPA initiated their building moratorium, when they fined us for cutting down trees on our own land, and other blunders. I was here to see our once-successful airport be run into the ground by a city council hungry for revenue.

Heck, I was even here to see a nascent “domestic terrorist” blow up Harveys.

I am probably one of the most “environmentally appreciative” and careful residents of this town. I do my best to be a good steward of this area when I am hiking with our Boy Scout troop (I am an assistant Scout master), mountain biking the ascent of Oneidas, or enjoying our beaches. As I said, I love Lake Tahoe.

And so it is that I am stepping out on a limb, so to speak, to alert our community to a situation of grave environmental impact that has continued since I was a boy. In 1974, my parents Ron and Carolyn purchased Lot 2, TK1 in the Tahoe Keys area. The lot is on Dover Drive, a tiny side road off of Tahoe Keys Boulevard. It backs up to a beautiful designated wildfowl refuge, the meadow on the west side of the Upper Truckee River. The whole area is also designated a 10-year flood plain, which means that when water levels are high from spring runoff, the meadow floods from the Truckee, and the contents of the meadow empty directly into the lake.

The only downside to my parent's lot was that at the time (1974), Dover Drive was also the access road to a long dirt road leading to the Tahoe Keys Property Owners Maintenance Yard. My parents were assured that this was a temporary situation, and that the yard would be phased out "soon".

For almost 40 years now, our family has tolerated 100 passages of this dirt road each day, and many days quite a few more, I have counted over 250 passages in one day. The vehicles using this silt road range from passenger cars speeding along as high as 30 mph to huge semi-trucks pulling double trailers, full size loaders, and every type of utility truck. Each one of them trails a huge column of dust and silt. Are you beginning to see the issue here?

We are all encouraged to "do your BMPs", park on paved lots only so as not to disturb the dust, practice "leave no trace" ethics in virtually every aspect of our lives here in Lake Tahoe and so many other small things, all in the push to maintain a certain clarity level in the lake, while the Tahoe Keys Property Owners Maintenance Yard has produced massive dust and silt that goes directly into a designated 10-year flood plain, a wildfowl refuge. In the winter, all runoff from the dirt road goes directly into the meadow. Their yard contains a drainage culvert that drains right into this environmentally sensitive area, and for 40 years the TKPOA has

“enlarged” their yard by dumping dirt, yard waste, and other detritus on the fringes of the yard. I remember what the yard was like when I was a kid, and to see how big it is it now is quite shocking. For 40 years, various general managers at the TKPOA have promised my parents that the road would be paved, that the yard would be closed, all statements that have proved to be lies.

Here’s where some really distasteful hypocrisy comes into view: The land the yard and its silt access road are on are owned by the California Tahoe Conservancy. They gave the TKPOA a 99-year lease, and for decades have turned a blind eye to the pollution occurring on their own property. What exactly are they conserving?

Also disgusting is the lack of attention to this yard by the TRPA and Lahontan. You see, the practices of the TKPOA yard grossly violate TRPA and Lahontan codes and regulations, and for decades both organizations have also ignored this fact and allowed the TKPOA yard to keep pumping pollution into our lake. My family has complained to all of the organizations I have listed for decades, with no substantive action. The issue always gets shuffled under the table, the workers in the yard are told to slow down, or (as they have done in the last day) they spread stone gravel on the silt road. I guess this is supposed to be their BMPs. In three weeks the gravel will have all sublimated into the silt and migrated into the meadow. The gravel does little to mitigate the billowing clouds of silt, and I have lots of video and still photography that document this fact. I will soon upload the videos to YouTube, so look for “Tahoe Gross Polluter” to judge for yourself.

CTC, TRPA, and Lahontan: You are the worst kind of hypocrites, and you are not enforcing the regulations that your existence mandates.

I would invite anyone in the community out to view this circus of environmental destruction. Come on by Dover Drive, have a

lemonade with me (if you can tolerate the dust) and watch how our wonderful watchdog organizations ignore their mandates. They do this while claiming to be working for the health of the lake. Pure environmental hypocrisy is the result of their existence. My latest efforts to contact the TRPA have gone without a return call. The only organizations that have stepped forward to see this travesty for what it is are the Sierra Club and the League to Save Lake Tahoe, who I am now actively engaged with to fight for this wholesale pollution to finally end.

I am a resident of South Lake Tahoe who loves his community. I love the beauty that surrounds us. I am a man who believes that I can best determine my own fate and way in the world, without government intervention. I will not tolerate the blatant abuse of my childhood home by local agencies and the TKPOA any longer.

Opinion: Public lands being neglected

To the community,

All ecological conflicts are over space. Whose is it? What can or will be done with space? In the Tahoe basin we have creatures great and small. There are bears and mountain cottontails (three reside in my yard). And of course there’s man who wants the basin’s space to use for this and that and other things.

And there is the Forest Service ad the CTC. Government

agencies that own land in the basin. They own many lots in the city of South Lake Tahoe. What do the agencies do with the land? Nothing except let the grass and weeds grow. And now is the season for fire. And the agencies will not make their property safe from fire. Especially the Forest Service.



Bill Crawford

Why the neglect? Why allow the overgrown space be a threat to life great and small? There has been a house fire across the street from my house and trees on a CTC lot next to the house fire caught fire. The city fire department (three engines) put the fire out.

We were lucky then. But the next time, who knows?

Bill Crawford, South Lake Tahoe

Opinion: City officials should have known San Bernardino was on the ropes

Publisher's note: ***This editorial is from the July 11, 2012, San Bernardino Sun.***

San Bernardino appears poised to become the third California city to file for bankruptcy protection so far this year.

Citing the ongoing economic downturn, lack of recovery in the housing market and state funding take-aways, the City Council voted Tuesday to file Chapter 9. Without filing for bankruptcy, officials said, the city probably could not meet its Aug. 15 payroll.

In recent weeks, the cities of Stockton and Mammoth Lakes made similar moves.

If San Bernardino's decision seems sudden, however, it's really not.

The city has been struggling to reinvent itself for years and has been particularly hard hit by the recession. At the same time, city leaders have spent too much time politicking and feuding and obviously not enough time scrutinizing the city's finances.

Were they surprised when Acting City Manager Andrea Travis-Miller and Finance Director Jason Simpson reported to the council only two weeks ago that San Bernardino has a $45 million budget deficit?

City Attorney James Penman said at the meeting Tuesday that for 13 of the past 16 years, the council had been given falsified budget documents – showing the city in the black when it was actually in the red. Did they just discover this?

Read the whole story

Opinion: Non-believers as generous as people of faith

By Richard Dawkins, Washington Post

Freethinkers, atheists, agnostics, secular humanists – whatever name non-believers go under, are not America's most popular minority. They are also, not a small minority. According to Gallup, in 2011, and Pew in 2012, they comfortably outnumber Mormons, Muslims, Jews, Hindus and Buddhists all put together. One reason for our unpopularity is the widespread belief that you need God in order to be good. Going along with that misconception is further belief that atheists are less generous than religious people, less philanthropic, less likely to donate to charity. Even if that were the case it would, of course, have no bearing on the truth of religious beliefs.

I would hypothesize that the difference in giving between the religion and nonreligious is negligible if you only count donations to pure charity and discount donations to atheist advocacy organizations, or to churches (including tithes) and "charities" that unscrupulously use their resources to proselytize rather than bestow real charitable benefits.

Incidentally, because churches are automatically classified as charities for taxation purposes is a disgrace. Nobody denies that some churches do charitable work. But that doesn't mean that any organization should automatically qualify for tax-free status simply by calling itself a church. Each church organization separately should make the case that it does charitable work, just as anybody else has to when seeking tax exemption.

Read the whole story

Opinion: Court issues charter cities a break on prevailing wage

Publisher's note: ***This editorial is from the July 11, 2012, Sacramento Bee.***

In a landmark decision handed down last week, the state Supreme Court has ruled that charter cities in California that use their own money to build new fire stations, libraries, sewer systems or other municipal facilities can ignore the state's prevailing wage law.

The ruling is a blow to organized labor but a boon to taxpayers. If they have the political will to take advantage of it, struggling municipal governments can save a lot of money.

Unlike most states, the prevailing wage law in California is not calculated based on a weighted average of all wages paid but almost always on the collectively bargained union rate instead – generally the highest wage paid by far for construction work in any jurisdiction. For example, a laborer – typically the worker who waves the flag at a road construction site or digs ditches – is paid $43 per hour in Sacramento under the state's prevailing wage law. The market rate for that same worker on a private construction project is $25 an hour.

Statewide, only some 15 percent of the state's construction workers belong to unions, but in most cases the state considers only union wages when setting prevailing wage rates. Prevailing wage requirements inflate labor costs on government

construction projects in California well beyond what the private sector pays, by 10 to 30 percent according to some estimates.

Read the whole story

Opinion: A way forward in California's water wars

Publisher's note: ***This editorial is from the July 8, 2012, Los Angeles Times***

Southern California's most important lake is located in a distant part of the state and has a name most of us wouldn't recognize. Clifton Court Forebay, between Oakland and Stockton, forms the manufactured headwaters of the manufactured river known as the California Aqueduct, which over four decades has supplied millions of residents from the Bay Area to the Mexican border with drinking water and thousands of growers from Santa Clara to Santa Maria to San Diego with irrigation. Engineers warn that in the event of a major earthquake, Clifton Court could fail and the aqueduct could run dry, leaving much of the state without that water for three years or more.

Even without a big quake, though, the forebay, the aqueduct and the water they bring are under threat.

Clifton Court is at the southern end of the remarkable region known as the Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta, where the snowmelt from the western Sierra drains into the San Pablo and San Francisco bays and forms the briny heart and lungs of the state. For thousands of years the delta was intermittently

marsh and dry land, shallow sea and freshwater wetland, changing with the daily rise and fall of the tides, the annual patterns of mountain precipitation and the more mysterious rhythms of drought, flooding and seismic upheaval. The delta we know today was created in the 19th and early 20th centuries when Chinese laborers began building levees of dirt and tule, letting dry land appear and allowing farmers to grow asparagus, grain and fruit trees.

Read the whole story