# Opinion: TRPA thresholds mostly being met

**By Claire Fortier**

Seven years, countless meetings and 2,500 pages later, the TRPA draft Regional Plan update and supporting documents are finally ready for your reading enjoyment. While not the action-packed read of a Harry Potter or dark pleasure of “Fifty Shades of Grey,” the four tomes of the TRPA have some unexpected plot twists.

Key among those surprises is the Threshold Evaluation Study, a report I consider the prelude to the Regional Plan because understanding what worked well environmentally after the 1987 Regional Plan helps inform us what needs attention in the new plan. This review, which was done at the behest of California, examined 151 standards of measurement for nine threshold categories, which include fish habitat, wildlife habitat, vegetation, soil conservation, scenic resources, air quality, water quality, noise and recreation.



Claire Fortier

What the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency found was comforting, concerning and confounding.

First comforting: 63 percent of the thresholds mandated under the TRPA compact have not further degraded the environment nor were impacted by humans in the basin. Moreover, 29 percent of

indicators were considered improved or improving.

Only 8 percent were labeled as trends of concern. Those focused on water quality and noise. But more on those later.

In the meantime, the fish seem to be swimming and spawning unhampered. With the recent introduction of the Lahontan cutthroat trout, a major TRPA milestone was realized. But the cutthroat presents a new conundrum – every new project or rebuild, from water quality collection to road repairs, will now have to consider its impacts on our newly "endangered" species.

The peregrine falcon is back, as are the osprey and northern goshawk. The goshawk seems to have surprised scientists. They are more seasonal visitors than constant residents, returning when their kind of food is plentiful and leaving when its not.

The vegetation of the Tahoe basin appears to be blooming quite well. Although old-growth forest, essentially eliminated during the Comstock era, is meeting Mother Nature's schedule, it's not adhering to the man-made threshold schedule. It could take a century or more before new growth becomes old-growth.

The other surprise is that the endangered Tahoe yellow cress is only endangered in wet weather or high lake levels. During dry seasons and low lake levels, the yellow cress is as plentiful as the dandelions in my front yard.

Soil conservation has shown great improvement, except in one area, stream restoration zones. Restoring those zones is one of the critical issues in the proposed Regional Plan. But it is very difficult to convince someone to remove their home or business from an SEZ, particularly if it has been there for decades, without significant incentives.

Breathe deeply: our air is even fresher than before, thanks to cleaner burning cars and fewer visitors.

Scenic thresholds are improving, but exactly what that means eludes me. While there are benchmarks for scenic improvement, I still believe beauty or ugly is in the eye of the beholder. While no one in Tahoe is seeking Las Vegas gaudy as a standard for our lake, I do believe this threshold is simply leveraged for anyone who does not want change in the basin.

In short, seven out of the nine thresholds are in good shape and getting better.

Which leaves us with the concerning ones. The first is water quality. Aside from the Secchi dish standard, or mid-lake water clarity, there are significant near shore problems. With all the scientists involved at Lake Tahoe, few, it seems, are dipping their toes in the water that most people see, feel and play in on a daily basis. There is some move afoot to focus on near shore, but this needs far more attention than we have given to it.

The other area that is out of compliance is noise. This topic is extensive and one I hope to address in much more detail. But, in short, any noise, even a single event like a noisy motorcycle or the South Lake Tahoe's air fest, puts us out of compliance with the noise standard.

Noise was a significant area of concern in the threshold peer review, where scientists from outside the basin looked over the threshold study. They thought the noise standard was simply impossible to obtain and poorly measured.

Which brings me to my final category: confounding. What is absolutely confounding to me is the recreation threshold. While every other threshold has a multitude of qualifiers, recreation has two: Are there recreational opportunities and are they available to most people? The answer to both is yes. In other words, as long as people can get to the lake or the woods that threshold is met.

Compared to standards that the goshawks and yellow cress

enjoy, recreation seems an afterthought. But the message is clear. Thresholds were never intended to include humans in the mix, and that is a fundamental flaw of basing all planning on threshold attainment.

*Claire Fortier is mayor of South Lake Tahoe and the city's rep on the TRPA Governing Board.*

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# Opinion: Important to know the rules before construction begins

**By Michael Lavallee**

In general, a building permit is required before doing construction work. This includes building, plumbing, electrical and mechanical work. Section 105.1 of the adopted California Building Code states:

Deck Repairs Require a Permit "Any owner or authorized agent who intends to construct, enlarge, alter, repair, move, demolish, or change the occupancy of a building or structure, or to erect, install, enlarge, alter, repair, remove, convert or replace any electrical, gas, mechanical or plumbing system, the installation of which is regulated by this code, or to cause any such work to be done, shall first make application to the building official and obtain the required permit."

The code also includes a long list of exceptions. Some of the more common ones include, one-story detached tool or storage accessory structures less than 120 square feet, fences not

over six feet in height, retaining walls not over four feet in height from the bottom of the footing to the top of the wall, painting, papering, tiling, carpeting, cabinets, counter tops, similar finish work, cord and plug connected heat, vent or air conditioning appliances, replacement of minor parts, stopping of plumbing leaks, replacing a toilet seal, or emergency work as long as a permit is obtained the next business day.

A complete list of all exceptions can be found on the Truckee website where the Building and Safety Division has prepared a policy. The policy includes specific code wording, code exceptions and additional specific Town of Truckee exceptions. It can be found online.

Work that involves new buildings, additions, bathroom or kitchen remodeling, replacement of building systems including roofs, water heaters, furnaces, siding, windows, plumbing, electrical or mechanical work requires a permit. To assure an erosion hazard is not created, grading or excavation work that disturbs over 500 square feet or that involves over 20 cubic yards of cut or fill requires a permit.

The above are building code requirements only. Work also needs to comply with Town Planning and Engineering standards. Exterior work to buildings located in the historic district requires historic design review by the Town. In all areas, retaining walls are regulated when located within required property setbacks. The Planning Division can be reached at (530) 582.7820, and Engineering can be reached at (530) 582.2911.

Obtaining a permit and required inspections will assure that work is done correctly, is safe, and meets minimum adopted codes. Please be aware that there are penalties for doing construction work without a permit, and if work was done in violation of the code, it may need to be redone. If you are not sure whether or not a permit is required, please call the Building and Safety Division at (530) 582.7820.

*Michael Lavallee is the chief building official for the town of Truckee.*

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# Opinion: Barton board in good hands

**To the community,**

First, I want to thank the members of the Barton Association for their years of support for the hospital and their active participation in the board election. This year, two of our outstanding members, John Cefalu and Dr. Paul Rork, were re-elected for a new three-year-term.

Mr. Cefalu has been a member of the board for 19 years and has distinguished himself as the board's secretary/treasurer for many years, highlighted by his expertise in the financial management of the hospital system.



Guy Lease

Dr. Rork has brought a wealth of experience and knowledge to the board as a medical practitioner, with a long and valued career of serving our community.

I am pleased to welcome Rhonda McFarlane to the board. With her many years as a chief financial officer with local public

entities and her training as a certified public accountant, she will bring a fresh perspective to the financial leadership the board provides to Barton hospital administration.

Ms. McFarlane replaces outgoing board member Hal Cole who has been particularly vital to the board on issues relating to the city of South Lake Tahoe, TRPA, capital projects, budget and boardsmanship.I have greatly appreciated his service and sage counsel during my years on the board. We wish him well as he seeks other avenues of service to the community. We will miss him.

**Guy Lease, Barton Health board of directors chairman**

**Barton Health, Board of Directors as of May 24:**

Guy Lease, chairman

Chuck Scharer, vice chair

John Cefalu, secretary/treasurer

Greg Bergner

Roy “R.J.” Clason Jr.

Paul J. Fry II

Kirk Ledbetter

Rhonda McFarlane

Terry Orr

Paul Rork

Dena Schwarte

# Opinion: Say no to the loop road

**To the community,**

Tahoe Transportation District (part of TRPA) is again pushing to construct the Loop Road. The Loop Road dates back to 1970 and attempted revisions in 1982 and 1987. Original goal was to ease congestion in the casino core.

Included in this era was a “people moving system” from Stateline core to Reagan Beach and “Light Rail” from Kingsbury Grade to South Lake Tahoe airport. Long gone is the “Casino Mecca”.

The present day plan is backed by South Tahoe Alliance of Resorts “STAR” renamed from the former “Gaming Alliance”. STAR has funded $50,000 on “South Shore Vision Plan”.

There is a clear difference from “South Shore” to South Lake Tahoe.

Key to the plan is the construction of the Loop Road.

If you are a South Lake Tahoe resident, property owner and/or business owner – please investigate the Vision Plan/Casino Core and potential Loop Road direction. Highlights: at Pioneer Trail and Highway 50 – the Bottle Shop, Naked Fish and Powderhouse turn into an eight-lane intersection. The road goes around the back of the Village Center/Raley’s to a roundabout at Highway 50 and Park Way. The Loop Road/”California Bypass” deposits visitors to the rebuilt Horizon, new Edgewood Lodge, and remodeled Lakeside Inn Casino property.

The front part of the new Horizon is built with extensive retail and restaurant opportunities – the new "Village Center".

This plan does not benefit the businesses or the tax revenue of South Lake Tahoe. The South Lake Tahoe Chamber of Commerce opposes the Loop Road plan.

Highway 50 runs six miles from the Y to Stateline and only 1.1 miles through the project area. The majority of South Shore's existing population lives in South Lake Tahoe – 21,000; Stateline, Nevada, has a population of 2,300. Highway 50 is the "bloodline" economic main street for the South Lake Tahoe community.

The $65 million projected Loop Road cost needs to be redirected to enhance Highway 50 from Stateline to the Y, not just the Casino Core.

Important meeting are coming up:

May 11 – 9:30am Tahoe Transportation District monthly meeting at Embassy Suites.

May 29 – South Lake Tahoe City Council workshop 6-8pm at Lake Tahoe Airport.

**Mike McKeen, South Lake Tahoe businessman**

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# Opinion: Make healthy food key to farm bill

**By Ken Cook and Kari Hamerschlag**

If you believe the government ought to play an aggressive role in the nation's economic life, admit it: You're a liberal. But you're probably not as liberal as the average Republican member of the House Agriculture Committee.

Thanks to their generosity with your tax dollars, the government has shelled out a quarter of a trillion dollars since 1995 in federal farm subsidies to grain and cotton farmers and landowners. (Go to farm.ewg.org for a list of every recipient and the amount each received.)

Right now, the farm subsidy lobby and its friends on Capitol Hill are on track to write a costly, ill-conceived new chapter to this unhappy history of bankrolling industrial commodity crops. But it doesn't have to be that way. Instead, we can invest in healthier eating and a cleaner environment. In the bargain, we can help keep 20 million kids from going hungry, give a huge boost to California agriculture, save taxpayers money and support family farmers.

What would a "healthy food" bill look like?

It starts with a moral commitment that no children in this country should go to bed hungry because their families can't afford to feed them. Today, more than 45 million Americans, half of them children, receive benefits through the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly "food stamps"), which accounts for more than 70 percent of farm bill spending. Are they deserving? If you're in a household of three and make more than about $24,000 a year, you're too prosperous to qualify.

Next, by redirecting some of the billions we now are spending on industrial crops such as corn and cotton, we could help make a reality of the government's public health advice to cover half our mealtime plates with fruits and vegetables every day.

*Ken Cook is president and Kari Hamerschlag is senior food and*

*agriculture analyst at the Environmental Working Group, a nonprofit research and advocacy organization.*

**Read the whole story**

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# Opinion: S. Tahoe ice rink deal full of cracks

**To the community,**

On May 1, I addressed the City Council. I said to the council that the city manager had screwed up the ice rink contract. The city manager took exception to my statement. But the facts support what I said. Examples are many.

The first contract was trashed because it violated federal tax laws. Presently, the rink is operating under a contract that expired on Feb. 1. On May 1, the city manager pressed the council to accept a new contract that would be for 20 years. The council rejected the deal because the contractor has not presented a business plan to the council. And the contractor has not shown any capital improvement money up front. An argument was made by Councilmember [Tom] Davis that the contractor needs a 20-year deal to carry to a bank to borrow money.



Bill Crawford

Davis' argument suggested that the contractor isn't rolling in dough, doesn't have the necessary finances to operate under a 10-year contract that the council would support. The argument is fallacious. If a borrower can show a bank character, capital and capacity, borrowing shouldn't be a problem.

Bottom line is the council sent the request for a 20-year deal back to staff. The city manager lost the argument after he made a loud contentious statement for the contractor that revealed just how impetuous he is; a character flaw for sure.

**Bill Crawford, South Lake Tahoe**

PS: Where will they put the second sheet of ice? The county owns the nearby land.

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# Opinion: Screening for breast cancer can save lives

**By Joshua Fenton**

When it comes to our health, no one likes to be surprised. Cancer can strike anyone at any age, and breast cancer is most common among women. Although most abnormalities detected in the breast are not cancerous or life-threatening, most breast cancers are invasive, which is why early detection through screening is important. Think about this:

- 230,480 cases of invasive breast cancer in the U.S. were estimated to be diagnosed in 2011 in women and 2,140 in men. And 95 percent of the new cases will occur in women 40 years of age and older.

- According to the California Cancer Registry, 310 new breast cancer cases are expected in 2012 in Placer County and 150 in El Dorado County.
- According to the National Cancer Institute, there is strong evidence that mammography (X-ray of the breast) screenings for women between the ages of 50 and 69 lower the risk of breast cancer by 30 percent, and for women in their 40s, the risk of breast cancer is lowered approximately 17 percent.

However, studies on mammography have shown that false positives (when mammogram results are abnormal but no cancer is present) occur commonly. Meanwhile, the benefits of mammography are similar whether mammograms are performed every year or every other year. Over time, however, women getting mammograms every other year experience fewer false positives. Experts still agree that regular screenings are important for early identification before cancer spreads beyond your breast.

Although radiation exposure is a potential risk of mammography, keep in mind that one mammogram exposes you to roughly the same level of radiation as flying across the U.S. on a commercial jet.

How can you take charge and reduce your risk of breast cancer?

- Know your family history, and share it with your doctor. If your mother or a sister had breast cancer, let your doctor know so they can factor that into recommendations for you. Eat healthfully, be physically active, and drink moderately (no more than one drink per day on average).
- Ask your doctor to thoroughly explain the risks of taking hormones, like estrogen and progestin, if you're considering this treatment option for menopause.
- Take advantage of breast screenings. Talk with your doctor about how often you should get screened, and ensure the plan is tailored to your particular risks and

age. Screening recommendations are based on several factors: age, genetic background or risks, family/personal history and breast density. Current evidence supports the following recommendations:

- If you're between 40 and 50 years old, the decision to begin breast cancer screening is a personal one that should be based on your underlying risk and personal preferences. Your doctor can help you may make the right decision about initiating screening.
- If you're between 50 and 74 years old, get a mammogram approximately every two years. Your doctor may also recommend a screening clinical breast examination prior to the mammogram.
- If you're older than 74, screening may still be beneficial if you are in good health. Ask your doctor whether continuing with mammography makes good clinical sense for you.

While the benefits of breast screening are clear, women can also decrease their breast cancer risk by maintaining an active, healthful lifestyle.

*Joshua Fenton is assistant professor in Family and Community Medicine at UC Davis and a member of the National Cancer Institute-designated UC Davis Comprehensive Cancer Center.*

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# Opinion: Higher education in Nevada shouldn't bow to bullies

**By J. Patrick Coolican, Las Vegas Sun**

The Redfield name can be seen all over campus at UNR. The Nell J. Redfield Foundation has given about $40 million during the past three decades for gems such as the auditorium in the math and science building, a student health clinic and the Redfield Theatre.

So when a director of the foundation, Gerald Smith, wrote a letter to the Board of Regents recommending that interim UNR President Marc Johnson be appointed president permanently, no doubt regents noticed.

The foundation went one step further, however, warning of consequences if Johnson wasn't appointed.

"Should the Regents select a stranger to fill the vacancy, there can be no assurance that current funding discussions will continue or that the projects currently being considered for funding will receive support in the future," the letter said.

More than one regent found the letter threatening.

Dr. Mark Doubrava voted for Johnson and called him a "capable individual who will do a very good job." (The point here isn't about Johnson, who by all accounts is very capable.)

But Doubrava also said he found the letter "threatening" and reflective of a process that "appeared almost orchestrated" to anoint Johnson. The letter was dated April 5, one day after UNR boasted of receiving a $1.6 million gift from the foundation for the medical school.

**Read the whole story**

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# Opinion: Bread & Broth workers recognized for volunteerism

**To the community,**

The Bread & Broth program honored more than 100 loyal volunteers with a meal of their own at Lake Tahoe Golf Course last weekend.

The Rev. John Grace of St. Theresa Church, who started the program 23 years ago, was recognized along with Pauline and Bud Salvato, Wendy David, Susan Baker and Susan Newbre for their faithful service since the program's inception in 1989.

Diane Weidinger, director, expressed gratitude for their devotion and thanked the many who volunteer their time and talent each week. A cumulative total of 4,100 volunteer hours were provided last year.

"It's only through the kindness of our volunteers that we can help feed those who need a meal," Weidinger said. "Week in and week out, wonderful people throughout the community step in and help out."

The non-denominational, all-volunteer program has been serving nearly 150 people every Monday at St. Theresa Catholic Church and every Friday at Lake Tahoe Community Presbyterian Church, all at no charge and without question or judgment.

Bread & Broth also recognized the following businesses for their food and beverage donations that day as well as their continued support throughout the year: Bert's Café, Cakes by Grace, Capisce, Don's Cakes by the Lake, Ernie's Coffee Shop, Fresh Ketch Restaurant, Freshies, Harrah's/Harveys, Heart Rock Herb & Spice Co., Lake Tahoe Community Presbyterian Church,

Lake Tahoe Golf Course, MontBleu, Mott Canyon, Murphy's Rockwater Grill, Nepheles, Orchid's Thai Cuisine, Passaretti's Italian Restaurant, Port of Subs, Primo's Bistro, St. Theresa Catholic Church, Scusa Restaurant, Sugar Pine Bakery, TEP's Villa Roma, Thran's Flower Shop, Weidinger Public Relations, and Yellow Sub.

Anyone interested in providing financial support for Bread & Broth or who is interested in volunteering, positions are available in communications, deep cleaning and volunteer/data base committees. Contact Diane Weidinger at (775) 588.3993 or dianeweidinger@yahoo.com.

**Bread & Broth**

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# Opinion: Cycling is important aspect of transportation

**By Paul Gaffney, Via**

While I do work for an auto club, I still ride a bike. I'm happy to report that I'm not alone. Cycling is on the rise in most parts of the country. People ride for fun, for exercise, and, increasingly, just to get from here to there. According to a Rutgers University study, the number of bike commuters in the United States grew 64 percent over the past two decades.

The two-wheeled, self-propelled commute is especially strong in major cities such as New York, Minneapolis, Chicago, and Portland, pushed on by improvements in cycling infrastructure and bike-friendly public policies and programs. In San Francisco, where an annual city bike count shows a 71 percent jump over the last five years, riders benefit from such

initiatives as Sunday Streets, which closes certain streets to cars and opens them to bicycles and other people-powered modes of transportation.



Paul Gaffney

“There’s also no discounting the importance of word of mouth,” says Kit Hodge, deputy director of the San Francisco Bicycle Coalition, a nonprofit advocacy group. “People are seeing their friends, family, and coworkers ride, and it’s just becoming part of their lives.”

May is National Bike Month, but don’t let the calendar limit when you ride. With the current price of gas, cycling is good for your wallet. It’s also good for your health and good for the environment. It might even put you in a better mood. There’s something liberating about hopping on a bike that brings back a freewheeling sensation of childhood and learning to fly without training wheels.

**Read the whole story**