

# North Tahoe Citizen Action Alliance

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*Jerry Wotel, Newsletter Editor*

## NTCAA Newsletter –February 2011

### **Biomass Plant is Centerpiece of Tahoe Conservancy Fire Treatments Strategy**

The California Tahoe Conservancy (CTC), originally formed to buy environmentally sensitive lots on the California side of the Tahoe Basin, funded a December 6, 2010 document entitled “A Strategy to Utilize Biomass Generated from Forest Treatments for the Lake Tahoe Basin.” (The entire “Strategies” document and NTCAA’s analysis is available at our website [www.ntcaa.org](http://www.ntcaa.org))

The report suffers from several fundamental flaws; such as, theoretical fuels reduction material estimates (derived only from maps), assumptions that green material is delivered and burned directly at the Kings Beach power plant site, and assumptions that material harvested from South Lake would supply a Kings Beach plant.

With Placer County as a member of the Biomass Working Group it is no wonder the Kings Beach biomass plant proposal is the centerpiece to solve all the barriers to utilization of fuels reduction material in the entire Lake Tahoe Basin. The following sentence (page 40) reiterates Placer County’s talking points which are not based on the facts, and perpetuate misleading inferences, “...*there are some barriers, that if addressed will result in a net increase of biomass collected and removed which will facilitate a net reduction in open burning (reduced air emissions) and a net reduction of fuels treatment costs (due to value-added utilization).*”



Kings Beach was even selected as the reference point for transportation distances instead of Cabin Creek where nearly all the material generated from the north and west shores of Tahoe goes first for processing.

The Strategy is urging all Fire Districts around Lake Tahoe to support the No. 1 recommendation, which is to “Continue support for the proposed LTB biomass facility now planned at Kings Beach.” The Fire District Chiefs meet February 28, 2011 to vote on the recommended strategy. Placer County has a unique ally in the Tahoe Conservancy, as their Board Chairman, Larry Severson, was also recently appointed by Placer County Supervisors to sit on the TRPA Board as Placer County’s representative. The pressure to bring all the Fire Districts in line with Placer County is certainly being exerted, the question is whether they will succumb to the pressure and agree with a deeply flawed and biased report.

## **Biomass Plant Opposed by Congressman Tom McClintock<sup>1</sup>**

Recently, Placer County Supervisors Jim Holmes, Robert Weygandt, and County Executive Officer Tom Miller traveled to Washington, D.C. for four days and, during their rounds of government offices, met with Congressman Tom McClintock to discuss proposed Federal spending cuts affecting Placer County. One issue was the biomass plant construction for Kings Beach that would be affected by spending cuts, described by McClintock as “*unnecessary energy subsidies.*”

*”So those are the funds that the Department of Energy under Sen. Feinstein has given to the Placer County biomass program,”* Holmes said. *“It would kind of put a halt to moving forward with our biomass program.”* McClintock replied *“Holmes must be unaware that the federal government is not only broke but borrowing 40 cents on every dollar we spend. We’re going to have to make dramatic spending reductions to avoid the fate of countries like Greece and Portugal.”*

Holmes told supervisors *“You’ll like this one”* before describing what he said was a McClintock resolution to *“prohibit any of the funding under the Department of Energy’s energy efficiency and renewable energy programs to be used for biomass and biosystems”*. *It’s part of the billions of dollars going to energy companies to pay for expenses that they ought to pay for with their own funds,”* McClintock said. *“If Jim thinks that it (a biomass plant) is important, I’m surprised it’s not at the top of the priority list to fund from county resources.”*

## **New Website Launched Opposing Biomass Plant in Kings Beach and in the Lake Tahoe Basin**

A recently formed organization called the Friends of Lake Tahoe launched its new website at [www.friendsoflaketahoe.org](http://www.friendsoflaketahoe.org). This organization consists of numerous local residents but is focusing on non-resident property owners having a voice on initiatives like the Biomass Power Plant in Kings Beach.



## **Tahoe Manager for Placer County Feeding BOS What they want to Hear**

It is obvious to NTCAA that transferring Tourist Accommodation Units (TAU’s) from the traditional 300 square foot motel room into a 3000 square foot timeshare unit fails to account for the different magnitude of environmental impacts. These local impacts include increased traffic, increased demand on water distribution and sewage collection systems, adequate parking, and other increased demand on recreational facilities especially during peak seasons. Is not this just intuitive?

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<sup>1</sup> Granite Bay Press-Tribune, “Placer County supe Holmes, McClintock at odds over fed spending cuts”  
By Gus Thomson, Journal Staff Writer, February 23, 2011

According to the transcript of a May 18, 2010 BOS meeting as quoted in the NTCAA January newsletter, Jennifer Merchant (Tahoe Manager in Placer County's Executive Office) made the following statement in her report regarding TAU's, ***“There is a concern that by changing a single room motel unit into a larger two, three, and sometimes four bedroom condominium, if you will, is creating greater negative environmental impacts to transportation facilities, etc. And while it seems intuitive that would be the case, actually because of the different trips that people take when they use those kinds of units, whether a small motel room or a large condo, there are actually fewer trips associated with those facilities that have more bedrooms and kitchens in them, than the old 50's or 60's style motel units.”***

Does anyone agree with this statement? Perhaps Jennifer Merchant can provide the facts to substantiate her claim. Carrying her logic further, the more we replace motel units with large condo units the more we reduce traffic and all other environmental impacts. Let's see the science supporting this claim.

### **Homewood Mountain Resort DEIR/EIS Meeting**

On February 23, 2011 the Draft Environmental Impact Study Report was presented at a Tahoe Regional Planning Agency (TRPA) Governing Board meeting in Kings Beach. The evaluation and comment period for public review has been extended 30 days to April 21, 2011. The Homewood Mountain Resort (HMR) is the recipient of public entitlements from the TRPA Community Enhancement Program (CEP). HMR is composed of a North and South development area. The

North Base being primarily for transient visitors and the South Base residential.



There are two goals that the TRPA CEP stated it would accomplish to improve developments within the Tahoe Basin. First, the CEP was to improve and enhance the community within the “Projects” they accepted, such as HMR. Secondly, the CEP was to restore and preserve the watersheds and wetlands through the application of the Environmental Improvement Program (EIP).

HMR was to be within the scale, density/height and character of Homewood. Homewood residents related both verbally and in letters the possible need for some new development such as the hotel and the commercial spaces for business, but were concerned that the size of the hotel and the 99 condominiums proposed would just bring too many people with severe traffic and parking problems. The proposed development would overwhelm the rural town especially in the summer when traffic is backup northbound on Hwy 89 from Sunnyside to Tahoe City. Not one more car is acceptable. The homeowners would be engulfed with tourists in Homewood with this proposal of HMR.

There could be substantial benefits to this proposed development with the implementation of the EIP. Homewood watersheds give rise to three creeks namely Madden, Homewood and Quail Creek. There is one more Stream Environmental Zone (SEZ) which is seasonal but needed resto-

ration in 1997. This SEZ is located on the north end of Tahoe Ski Bowl Way and gives reason for this road not to be extended for homes, especially when they are into the slope of the hill. Homewood Creek has been requested to be restored by TRPA. On Tahoe Ski Bowl Way, the location of Homewood wetlands and SEZ will be the underground parking for the 99 proposed condominiums.

The HMR desired development would not meet the current height limitations without increasing land coverage and density, in violation of the goals of the CEP. Obviously, exceptions to the TRPA Code have been requested and are necessary for the HMR development. Alternates presented basically state that unless the hotel and condominiums are accepted as proposed, the ski resort will cease to exist.

Approximately three years ago, NTCAA took issue with this development and suggested a reduction in size to avoid detrimental impacts on the community.<sup>2</sup> There have been some changes, but the problems have not been alleviated. Review the DEIR/EIS on the TRPA website and offer your comments.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> NTCAA Position Paper, "Homewood Plan", February 5, 2008, available on <http://www.ntcaa.org>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.trpa.org/default.aspx?tabindex=2&tabid=338>

## Upcoming Events/Key Dates

Agendas for TRPA Governing Board and APC, and also Placer County BOS are not available until a few days before the meeting. Therefore, it is difficult to provide a meaningful emphasis to the meetings. Other meetings/events not shown here, or changes, will be announced by email.

March 2, Wednesday	NLTRA Board Meeting	8:30 am, TCPUD Board Room
March 8, Tuesday	NTPUD Board Meeting	10 am, NTEC, Kings Beach
March 9, Wednesday	TRPA APC Meeting	9:30 am, TRPA Stateline Office
March 10, Thursday	NTRAC Meeting	6 pm, TCPUD, Board Room
March 16, Wednesday	NTPFD Board Meeting	6 pm, TCPUD Board Room
March 18, Friday	TCPUD Board Meeting	8:30 am, TCPUD Board Room
March 23, Wednesday	TRPA Governing Board	9:30 am, North Shore Location
March 23, Tuesday	Placer County BOS Mtg	9:00 am, Brd Mtg Room, Auburn

TRPA – Tahoe Regional Planning Agency  
NLTRA – North Lake Tahoe Resort Association  
TCPUD – Tahoe City Public Utility District  
NTEC – North Tahoe Event Center  
BOS – Placer County Board of Supervisors

APC – Advisory Planning Commission  
NTPUD – North Tahoe Public Utility District  
NTPFD – North Tahoe Fire Protection District  
NTRAC- North Tahoe Regional Advisory Council

*“Where is the man who owes nothing to the land in which he lives? Whatever that land may be, he owes to it the most precious thing possessed by man, the morality of his actions and the love of virtue.” ..... Jean Jacques Rousseau, 1762*

Contributors to this newsletter: Dave McClure, and Jerry Wotel

The North Tahoe Citizen Action Alliance (NTCAA) seeks to provide an ongoing voice for ordinary citizens. Planning the future of our communities and providing for communication and education on key issues affecting our communities is of prime importance. We serve the North Lake Tahoe area from Kings Beach to Tahoma. NTCAA is a tax-exempt California Public Benefit Nonprofit Corporation formed in May 2007, staffed by community volunteers. Membership is limited to those who subscribe to the NTCAA Goals and Objectives and are willing to participate in the organization's activities.