

North Tahoe Citizen Action Alliance

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NTCAA Newsletter –March 2011

Lake Tahoe Fire Chiefs Cool to the Proposed Kings Beach Biomass Plant

At the February 29th meeting of the Lake Tahoe Multi-Agency Coordinating Group (MAC) the issue of endorsing the “Strategies for Biomass Utilization” document was on the table. As reported here last month the California Tahoe Conservancy funded a biomass utilization strategy document prepared by TSS Consultants. The document was in response to Senator Diane Feinstein’s request for a strategy, and the document preparation was administered by the Tahoe Conservancy.

The Nevada Fire Safe Council contributed federal funds as well. NTCAA and Friends of Lake Tahoe representatives stated several concerns; such as, the facts supporting the rationale for the #1 recommendation to “continue support for the proposed Lake Tahoe Basin (LTB) biomass facility now planned at Kings Beach.

The common thread among members was that it was not their responsibility to endorse a specific project for utilization of the biomass material. Their work is to fund and administer fuels reduction projects that generate the raw biomass product. Only¹ these projects can reduce open burning in some circumstances. The level of funding determines how much fuel reduction activity can be done. The actual processing of the raw product and how it is finally utilized is a later stage in the process.



After the MAC meeting Tahoe Conservancy staff member admitted no knowledge of Cabin Creek (Eastern Regional Landfill and Materials Recycling Center) as the local biomass processing facility serving the north and west shores of Lake Tahoe as well as the Truckee area.

Thank you Fire Chiefs for staying out of the political fray, and sticking to the vision and mission statements described on the website of the Tahoe Fire and Fuels Team (<http://www.tahoefft.org/>)

Homewood Mountain Resort Ski Area Master Plan, Community Enhancement Program Project¹

Placer County released the Combined EIS/EIR without having a complete EIR. This is illegal according to CEQA. Placer County’s efforts to make the documents referenced in the draft

¹ **Inadequacy of Notice of Availability and Request for Documents Pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act and Public Records Act**, Michael Lozeau, Lozeau Drury LLP, March 4, 2011

EIR/EIS prepared for the Homewood Mountain Ski Resort Project available to the public as well as the agencies' including the extension of the comment period until April 21, 2011, have come up short in identifying the current location of the documents accessible to the public to review documents prepared specifically for the Homewood project. This is especially true for one of the key sections of the draft EIR/EIS – the Hydrology, Water Rights, Surface Water Quality and Groundwater section. One project document also remains missing from the Soils, Geology, and Seismicity section. Therefore, the Notice of Availability by the County is inaccurate and not in compliance to the California Environmental Quality Act and Public Records Act, and should be re-issued with another evaluation period.

Each of the above documents is neither posted nor available at the County's office or online. Instead, each of these documents is tagged with a notification which reads that *"Staff can contact the specific technical professional to retrieve this reference if requested."*

Cabin Creek : The Best Location for a Biomass Power Plant and Other Utilization

Cabin Creek is the name of the road off Highway 89 three miles south of Truckee where several Placer County facilities are located. This site is the location of the Eastern Regional Landfill, the Materials Recycling Center, the Tahoe Area Rapid Transit (TART) Center, and soon to be the Department of Public Works Road Division's vehicles and equipment, now located at Burton Creek. The location is strategically located and easily accessible from the north and west shores of Lake Tahoe on a level Highway 89 that follows the Truckee River outlet.

This is an industrial site with no residential subdivisions or schools nearby and has numerous buildings needing electricity and heat. Noise and odors are not an issue as there are already industrial processes and equipment that generate these conditions.



The site is the only processing facility for woody biomass serving the Lake Tahoe Basin and greater Truckee area. The infrastructure for processing forest material is already in place, including a diesel powered grinder and plenty of land area to treat, store, and dry the biomass products. The diesel grinder could be replaced with an electric grinder providing offsets for emissions from a power plant.

Since transporting biomass is expensive and it must undergo processing at Cabin Creek, final utilization at the same site eliminates any further transportation. An appropriately sized combustion power plant could supply the site with power and heat improving the efficiency of this utilization. The technology for producing biodiesel from woody biomass is improving and could ultimately produce biodiesel for the urban waste collection vehicles, the TART buses, and DPW vehicles. In terms of environmental impact of various technologies for utilization, the impacts are insignificant and the end uses are on site producing the highest efficiencies.

There are overwhelming technical and practical reasons for a biomass incinerator/generator to be located at the Cabin Creek processing facility where the fuel resource is collected region wide, processed into fuel grade material, and stored for year round supply.

Why Placer County continues to promote unnecessary transport and incineration in the Lake Tahoe Basin raises suspicion of an ulterior political motive. The facts on the ground do not correspond to environmental or economic realities. Cabin Creek is an evolving solid waste and materials recycling center serving Placer County and the Truckee area. With the addition of TART and DPW vehicles and equipment maintenance and storage functions the site is becoming the area's industrial/utility cluster. Future opportunities exist for other uses of biomass which dovetail with the Cabin Creek site.

Northern Nevada Correctional Center (NNCC) Biomass Cogeneration Heat and Power Plant - Lessons Learned

Some conclusions from the evaluation of the failure of the Carson City Biomass Plant report prepared by the State of Nevada.

“The NNCC Biomass Plant had potential for success but was plagued by a poor design that lacked economies of scale and operational efficiencies. Fuel supplies were not adequately secured for the plant that was reliable and affordable prior to design and construction of the plant. The regulatory environment was not adequately evaluated, and a financially viable contract with the Power Company prior to design and construction of the plant was not secured.”

“Plants are great investments when they are attached to wood producing industries (wood mills, logging operations, paper factories, etc.), and there are many successful plants that have turned wood waste into green energy.”



(These are some conclusions that were found in the evaluation of the Carson City Biomass Plant closure. Complete report will be in the NTCAA April newsletter.)

Nevada Lawmakers Seek to Sever Ties With TRPA – Reno Gazette Journal, March 22, 2011

Characterizing the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency as a heavy-handed bureaucracy treading on property rights and overly influenced by California, Nevada lawmakers are seeking to pull the state from the organization.

Legislators from Southern Nevada, Washoe County and Douglas County are backing legislation to withdraw Nevada from the Tahoe Regional Planning Compact, ratified by Congress in 1969 as a needed step to protect an endangered Lake Tahoe.

Supporters insist a pullout is needed to allow long-stifled property improvements on Tahoe's Nevada side. Detractors say the bill stands to endanger a carefully engineered approach to regulating land use while protecting the environment.

SB 271 — the seventh attempt to distance Nevada from TRPA — is needed to rescue Tahoe’s Nevada side from a stifling regulatory environment largely controlled by California interests, said the bill’s primary sponsor, Sen. John Lee, D-North Las Vegas.

“The pendulum has swung so far it won’t swing back,” Lee said. “We no longer want to be told by California what we can and cannot do. The thrust of this is Nevada just wants to control Nevada.”

The Legislation would create a new Nevada-based planning body, with members appointed by the governor, lieutenant governor, state forester, administrator of state lands, and Washoe, Douglas and Carson City counties. Another member would represent the public.



The panel, Lee said, would likely work in coordination with a similar California-appointed commission but would give Nevada greater control over its own land use.

In its current structure, Lee said, TRPA is “stopping growth, stopping business, stopping everything.”

Assemblyman Randy Kirner, R-Reno, said he is co-sponsoring the bill because the agency is over regulating to the point of seizing property rights.

“Arguably, the agency is appropriating property by making development impossible,” Kirner said. “There is a lot of angst and consternation over the level of control the agency exerts.”

“The Tahoe Regional Planning Compact is critical to ensuring the states work together with the federal government and local communities for the future of Lake Tahoe,” said Rochelle Nason, the league’s executive director. “Destroying that cooperation would be a grave error. We need everyone on the same page in the effort to keep Tahoe blue.”

Julie Regan, TRPA’s external affairs chief, expressed concern an unintended consequence of the move could “tie Lake Tahoe up in knots of litigation” similar to what occurred in the 1980s, when the Tahoe Basin suffered under a court-ordered building moratorium.

Regan said TRPA hopes to use the legislative process to educate Nevada lawmakers on steps the agency has taken in recent years to be more accountable and to better serve the public while still protecting the environment.

Have you heard?

- Nicole Rinke, TRPA General Counsel, has resigned with the Shorezone project still under appeal.
- The Placer County Fire Safe Council is participating in a region-wide program to help eradicate a non-native plant, the Scotch Broom. The invasive plant, introduced in the mid-1800s, is hearty and excellent for erosion control. However, those same traits also make it a fire hazard and difficult to eradicate.

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.

April 6, Wednesday	NLTRA Board Meeting	8:30 am, TCPUD Board Room
April 12, Tuesday	NTPUD Board Meeting	9 am, NTEC, Kings Beach
April 13, Wednesday	TRPA APC Meeting	9:30 am, TRPA Stateline Office
April 14, Thursday	NTRAC Meeting	6 pm, TCPUD, Board Room
April 15, Friday	TCPUD Board Meeting	8:30 am, TCPUD Board Room
April 20, Wednesday	NTPFD Board Meeting	6 pm, TCPUD Board Room
April 27, Wednesday	TRPA Governing Board	9:30 am, To Be Announced

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

“It is better to offer no excuse than a bad one.”.....George Washington, 1791

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.