

North Tahoe Citizen Action Alliance

PO Box 289, Tahoe Vista, CA 96148

Office: 530-546-8125

www.ntcaa.org

Jerry Wotel, Newsletter Editor

NTCAA Newsletter – May 2011

In Flanders Fields

By: Lieutenant Colonel John McCrae, MD (1872-1918)

In Flanders Fields the poppies blow
Between the crosses row on row,
That mark our place; and in the sky
The larks, still bravely singing, fly
Scarce heard amid the guns below.

We are the Dead. Short days ago
We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,
Loved and were loved, and now we lie
In Flanders fields.

Take up our quarrel with the foe:
To you from failing hands we throw
The torch; be yours to hold it high.
If ye break faith with us who die
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow
In Flanders fields.

McCrae's "In Flanders Fields" remains to this day one of the most memorable war poems ever written. It is a lasting legacy of the terrible battle in the Ypres salient in the spring of 1915.

Memorial Day, formerly known as **Decoration Day**, commemorates U.S. Service Members who died while in the military service. Begun as a ritual of remembrance and reconciliation after the Civil War, by the early 20th century, Memorial Day was an occasion for more general expressions of memory, as ordinary people visited the graves of their deceased relatives, whether they had served in the military or not.

A Straightforward Viewpoint

The effort to prevent catastrophic wildfires in the Lake Tahoe basin began in earnest after the Angora fire in the summer of 2007. Placer County's Strategic Plan for the Wildfire Protection and Biomass Utilization Program was published in October, 2007, and the California-Nevada Tahoe Basin Fire Commission Report followed in 2008 with recommendations for biomass utilization (combustion to produce power) "in or near the Tahoe basin". For all of us here at the lake it sounded like a win-win program ...produce green power, while reducing the biomass burden that can produce more wildfires.

However, as the plans for construction of a biomass energy plant in Kings Beach on the north shore progressed, we found a flaw in those plans. While it is true that the plant would be close to an over abundance of growing and accumulating forest biomass, it has now become apparent that this material cannot be burned until it is sorted, processed and dried, and that cannot be done on the Kings Beach site. All the material cut and gathered must first be trucked to a processing site on Cabin Creek Road, off highway 89, close to Truckee and outside of the Tahoe Basin. When the material is ready for burning, it must be trucked BACK to Kings Beach.

Given the fragile ecosystem at Lake Tahoe and our continuing efforts to clean up the lake environment, why would Placer County remove the material from the lake basin and then bring it back for burning? Why not burn it at the Cabin Creek processing site outside of the lake basin? Why incur the additional transportation costs and add pollutants to the lake basin?



Placer County Describes Biomass Plant in Kings Beach as "our facility" Is that view shared by the locals, second homeowners, and visitors?

Placer County Staff Memorandum to the Board of Supervisors on May 18, 2010

County staff has reached a point of progressing to the next step in implementing the Board's goal of constructing a biomass-to-energy facility in the Tahoe Basin.

To that end TRPA will be hiring a consultant which the County will reimburse through its Department of Energy (DOE) grant and a reimbursement account to prepare the necessary documents, studies and public review including an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) and an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

Staff expects that this process will still be able to reach the goal of breaking ground in 2012 with full operations starting in 2013 for the facility.

The County has already hired Ascent Environmental Inc. with a short term contract to support their efforts to reach their goal of gaining all necessary permits to construct their facility.

NTCAA has had several inquiries about who is behind Ascent Environmental and what have they done? Placer County Board of Supervisors seems assured that Ascent Environmental will secure all necessary permits to meet their goals of a Kings Beach Biomass Plant. How can they be so sure? NTCAA has been actively researching that and will report our findings next month.

Community Meeting on Biomass Plant Draws Over 100 People

On May 12, 2011 a group of local residents organized a grassroots meeting to inform the community about Placer County's proposed Biomass Plant slated for Kings Beach. The scheduled room at the Kings Beach Event Center (Conference Center) could not contain the crowd, so a second room was made available. Organizers Mike and Dawn Baffone were delighted by the audience which included residents from the west shore to Incline Village.

After introductory remarks the NTCAA Vice President David McClure and Friends of Lake Tahoe founder Roger Patching spoke about the current status of the process and what their organizations are doing. Then an open forum allowed for a lively exchange with questions about technical details and what can be done to oppose a biomass plant in the Tahoe Basin. The most common question was "how can Placer County be spending public funds on this ***** idea?"

It looks like the grassroots effort is launched and moving fast as more parents realize the Kings Beach Elementary School is only two blocks from the proposed two megawatt plant site. That size plant requires 75-100 tons of woody biomass to burn every day. Local realtors are already seeing potential buyers unwilling to risk buying nearby properties, and even several condominium associations are very concerned about air quality, the effect on recreation, and the loss of our pristine Lake Tahoe Basin.

Redevelopment Agency Board OKs North Lake Tahoe Plan

The Placer County Board of Supervisors, sitting as the County Redevelopment Agency Board, approved a Five-Year Implementation Plan for the North Lake Tahoe Redevelopment Area. The Board voted 5-0 to approve the Plan after a public hearing.



As required by state law, the Placer County Redevelopment Agency must adopt implementation plans for redevelopment areas every five years. The Plan addressed by the Board today will be valid into 2016. The Plan includes information on goals, proposed programs, affordable housing, projects and expenditures and explains how the Plan will alleviate blight. The Board's approval of the Plan will give the Agency general direction, but does not authorize any specific projects.

Senate passage of SB271 endangers Lake Tahoe

A coalition of Tahoe conservation groups is calling on the Nevada Assembly to reject SB271, a bill that threatens to withdraw the state from the Tahoe Regional Planning Compact unless environmental protections for Tahoe are weakened. The bill passed the Senate Friday afternoon.

“We are appalled by today’s action by the Nevada Senate,” said Rochelle Nason, executive director of the League to Save Lake Tahoe. “This bill is a cynical ploy by real estate agents and developers upset that the courts are requiring the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency to have a plan in place that achieves and maintains environmental objectives before they can build more piers, hotels, condos, subdivisions and timeshares not allowed under existing plans.”

The League, also known as “Keep Tahoe Blue,” the Nevada Conservation League, the Tahoe Area Sierra Club, the North Tahoe Preservation Alliance, the Friends of Tahoe Vista, the Friends of Crystal Bay/Brockway and the Friends of West Shore join in opposition to SB271.

The bill provides that Nevada will withdraw automatically from the Compact should California and Congress fail to agree to an unreasonable series of terms. The bill deprives each state of its sovereignty by changing the voting procedures of the TRPA. By requiring a simple majority of votes, rather than a majority in each state, California could begin approving development projects in Nevada with just one Nevada vote, and vice versa.



The conservation community at Tahoe supports responsible redevelopment, not overdevelopment. Tahoe’s conservation community supports revitalizing Tahoe’s communities and economy in ways that also enhance the lake’s environment.

“There is no economy if there isn’t a beautiful Lake Tahoe,” said Ann Nichols with NTPA.

The real estate and development community backers of this bill are seeking the dissolution of the Compact – in the guise of seeking reform.

“The fact that they are pushing this through the Legislature at the end of the session, without a meaningful opportunity for public participation, reflects the fact that they realize Nevadans love Lake Tahoe and would not approve of dissolving the bi-state effort to protect the watershed,” Nason said.

“An interim committee already exists that is the proper place for vetting a decision of this magnitude, and these issues should be considered in that venue,” said Kyle Davis with the Nevada Conservation League.

From an economic standpoint, the bill will impose new uncertainties upon small businesses and property owners, who will have even less guidance about what will be permitted on their property in the future. Real estate speculators may see financial opportunities in this bill, but those who

rely on their capital for income and retirement security will be discouraged from investing under such uncertain circumstances, which will likely go on for years. It's a recipe for economic as well as environmental disaster.

Lake Tahoe is a national treasure that must be protected for future generations. Cooperation between the two states and the federal government is essential to ensuring a unified and uniform approach to land-use planning and environmental protection. (*League to Save Lake Tahoe Press Release, May 27, 2011*)

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.

June 1, Wednesday	NLTRA Board Meeting	8:30 am, TCPUD Board Room
June 8, Wednesday	TRPA APC Meeting	9:30 am, TRPA Stateline Office
June 9, Thursday	NTRAC Meeting	6 pm, TCPUD Board Room
June 14, Tuesday	NTPUD Board Meeting	9 am, NTEC, Kings Beach
June 15, Wednesday	NTPFD Board Meeting	6 pm, TCPUD Board Room
June 17, Friday	TCPUD Board Meeting	8:30 am, TCPUD Board Room
June 22, 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

“Tis the business of little minds to shrink; but he whose heart is firm, and whose conscience approves his conduct, will pursue his principles unto death.”Thomas Paine 1776

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.