

Memo



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Date: July 24, 2017

To: Joint Fact Finding Committee

From: Ascent Environmental

Subject: Shoreline Plan EIS – Proposed Recreation Analysis Approach

This memo summarizes the proposed approach for preparing the recreation chapter of the EIS for the Shoreline Plan, which incorporates input provided by the Joint Fact Findings Committee at the May 10, 2017 meeting.

The EIS will evaluate the effects of the Shoreline Plan effects on recreation, including TRPA’s recreation threshold. The adopted threshold standards for recreation are statements of policy rather than numerical standards. The threshold standard includes two separate policy statements. One directs TRPA to “...preserve and enhance high quality recreational experiences and provide additional access to the shorezone and other areas for dispersed recreational uses.” The second directs TRPA to “...establish and ensure a fair share of the total basin capacity for outdoor recreation is available to the general public.” Any effect that would reduce the ability to maintain the recreation thresholds would be considered a significant impact. The EIS will include feasible mitigation measures for any significant impact(s). The recreation chapter will include two primary sections: Setting, and Environmental Impacts and Mitigation Measures, as described below.

Setting

This section will summarize applicable laws, regulations, and policies that govern recreation on Lake Tahoe and along the shoreline. It will also describe the TRPA Recreation Threshold, including its current and historic status and evaluation metrics.

Existing recreational conditions, uses, facilities, and trends in the shoreline and on Lake Tahoe will be described. Information used in the 2015 Recreation Threshold Evaluation, inventories of structures developed to support the Shoreline Plan, and other available information on recreation patterns, facilities, shoreline access opportunities, and recreational experiences will be incorporated. The section will summarize existing shoreline facilities, including public access facilities and private facilities, and discuss how each facility type affects recreational experience. The setting will also document existing conditions and trends in watercraft usage with a discussion of how watercraft usage affects recreational experiences.

Environmental Impacts and Mitigation Measures

The Environmental Impacts and Mitigation Measures section will evaluate the number and type of new facilities, design standards, and other regulatory requirements of the Shoreline Plan alternatives to

determine if implementation of the alternatives would result in a significant impact related to recreation. The analysis will evaluate the following potential impacts of each alternative at an equal level of detail:

Alter the Character of Recreational Experiences or Create User Conflicts

This impact will consider whether and how changes to the number, location, and design of structures; and/or changes in motorized watercraft use would degrade the quality of the recreation experience for dispersed recreationists along the shoreline or watercraft users (both motorized and non-motorized). The analysis will evaluate build-out scenarios that depict, using reasonable assumptions, the number and location of new structures that would be authorized under each alternative. It will consider the number of expected new structures within each shoreline character type to determine whether build out of the alternatives would alter the character of the shoreline experienced by recreationists. The analysis will also quantify existing and projected motorized watercraft use on a peak day to estimate changes in crowding that could affect recreational experiences as a result of build out of the alternatives. The analysis will consider whether the location or number of structures and recreational uses could create conflicts between different user types (e.g., motorized boating and paddle boarding).

This impact will also incorporate analysis included in the scenic and noise chapters of the EIS. If those chapters identify a significant impact related to scenic quality or noise, then the magnitude and extent of the significant impact will be considered in determining whether the impact would also alter the character of recreational experiences.

Affect Navigation for Non-Motorized Activities

This impact will consider whether changes in the number, location, and design of piers and buoys allowed by each alternative would degrade the quality of recreation by impairing the ability of small non-motorized watercraft (e.g., kayaks, paddleboards) or distance swimmers to navigate parallel to the shore. The analysis will review the number of new piers and buoys, as well as location and design standards to determine whether new or rebuilt structures assumed under each alternative would result in a significant barrier to non-motorized navigation. This evaluation will consider the extent to which the alternative design standards would allow passage under piers at various lake levels. It will also assess the extent to which the size and location of buoy fields, and the length and location of piers authorized by the alternatives would impair the ability of non-motorized watercraft or distance swimmers to safely navigate around structures (e.g., by forcing non-motorized craft to travel outside of the 600-foot no wake zone), or require substantial detours.

Affect Access or Opportunities for Motorized Watercraft

This impact will analyze whether the alternatives would reduce opportunities for motorized watercraft or large non-motorized craft (i.e., sailboats) to access Lake Tahoe. It will also consider whether shoreline structures or regulatory provisions of the alternatives would substantially reduce recreational opportunities for users of these watercraft. The analysis will quantify changes in the launch capacity and distribution of launching opportunities likely to occur under each alternative. This impact will also include a review of proposed boating regulations and shoreline development standards to determine if regulatory provisions or new structures assumed in each alternative would degrade recreational opportunities for motorized watercraft. A variety of recreational activities will be considered, including topline fishing (i.e., trolling) and waterskiing/wakeboarding/tubing.

Change Access to or along the Shoreline

This impact will evaluate whether new structures or other provisions of the alternatives would change public access to the shoreline or lateral pedestrian access along the shoreline. The analysis will review proposed design standards for piers, break walls, and other structures to determine whether the alternatives would

allow structures that would impede pedestrian access along or to the shoreline, where legal access otherwise exists (e.g., within lands held in public trust by the California State Lands Commission). The proposed permitting process and enforcement mechanisms will be reviewed to determine if the alternatives include adequate procedures to protect legal access. This impact will also consider whether the alternatives would indirectly promote upland land use changes that would reduce legal public access to the shoreline. Such upland changes could include the conversion of public facilities to private facilities, the closure of public access facilities, or the abandonment of access easements by local governments.

Affect the Fair Share Distribution of Recreation Capacity

This impact will evaluate whether the alternatives would promote private access over public recreational access, and thereby not maintain a fair share of the total lake and shoreline recreational capacity for the public. The number of allowable public and private lake access facilities (e.g., piers, buoys) under each alternative will be quantified and compared. Future trends in public shoreline acquisition or access improvements will be estimated based provisions included in the alternatives. The watercraft capacity of new private and public facilities will be quantified and compared to determine if the alternatives would provide more or less equivalent public and private access capacity, or whether an alternative would result in a substantial change.