



SIERRA CLUB
FOUNDED 1892

Tahoe Area Sierra Club

TO EXPLORE AND PROTECT LAKE TAHOE AND THE SIERRA NEVADA

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Spring 2003



TAHOE AREA
SIERRA CLUB

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Summer Issue: Send by 1/07/03

Get on the list!!

As of this issue, the Tahoe Area Sierra Club Newsletter will be available for download on our web site at:

<http://motherlode.sierraclub.org/tahoe>

In the future, we're offering a choice of how you receive your TASC newsletters. We'll continue to mail to you unless you let us know if you prefer to receive via e-mail only. Send an e-mail to our webmaster (bryanbz@charter.net) with your name and physical address. The electronic version will look exactly the same as the printed version, plus you'll help save a tree!

The State of Lake Tahoe

by Michael Donahoe, Conservation Co-Chair,
Tahoe Area Sierra Club Group (TASC)

Recent headlines proclaim that Lake Tahoe's famed clarity is improving. "The clearest the lake has been since 1992," the paper proclaimed 2-26-03. Good news? You bet. So we've turned the corner and the lake is saved? Way too early to tell, according to a conversation with Dr. Charles Goldman, the head of the Tahoe Research Group and the world's foremost authority on lakes. The improvement may be the start of a trend, (wouldn't that be great!) or it could be the result of 2 years of drought, which has meant a much lighter amount of nutrient loading because of lower levels of Spring runoff Or perhaps the improvement is caused by changes in the depth of mixing of the lake's waters. It will take 5 – 10 years of improved statistics for the scientists to proclaim we are on the road to recovery.

At the same time, the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency (TRPA) is just now finishing its 5 year review evaluating how well it's meeting its 9 Thresholds or targets. (The Threshold areas are water quality, air quality/transportation, recreation, scenic resources, wildlife, fisheries, vegetation, soil conservation, and noise.) The news here is not so good. None of the 9 thresholds have been met, and only 7 of the 36 sub-indicators have been achieved. TRPA has established an ambitious work plan to correct this problem. However only 20% of past work plans have been completed and there is no reason to expect any greater ratio of implementation during this next 4 year time span.

In fact, TRPA's attention is already focused on developing the new 20 year Regional Plan – which needs to be in place by 2007. A 1st step is revisiting each of the 9 Thresholds, as well as the 36 sub-indicators, to see if they are still relevant, and to make adjustments, if needed. The Tahoe Area Sierra Club Group (TASC) plans to be part of this planning process, as we fear that the pressure to weaken the current regulations will be intense. We are looking for technical experts in each of the 9 Threshold areas to be our advisors.

(Contact me at donahoe@charter.net if you would like to help with this or know of someone who would.)

The South Shore TASC Conservation Group meets the 3rd Thursday of the month.
Douglas Co. Fire Station at Elks Point
(Round Hill), NV
7:00 – 9:00 p.m.

Chair: Michael Donahoe
775-588-5466 for information

Audubon Scam

by David Kean, Conservation Co-Chair
Tahoe Area Sierra Club Group (TASC)

East West Partners' and Northstar's golf course "habitat" certifications are not by the 600,000 members of The National Audubon Society (Audubon). The certifications are by Audubon International. From Audubon's Website, "Audubon is not associated with Audubon International in any way. Audubon does not certify golf courses, or any development, as being environmentally sound. Indeed, Audubon more often opposes such development."

So who or what is Audubon International (AI)? United States Golf Association turf grass specialist **Ronald G. Dodson** founded AI in 1991. Mr. Dodson also sits or sat on at least two United States Golf Association committees. The 1998/99 program report on the AI website shows that 81% of AI's members are golf courses or golf superintendents. The next largest membership category, backyards, makes up 6%.

The largest sponsor (major donor) listed on AI material is, you guessed it, The United States Golf Association. Again, from the AI website, "10 Years of Support-United States Golf Association. The USGA's financial support and the technical expertise of the USGA...have been invaluable to our organization."

So what does the real Audubon think about this? Your Tahoe Group contacted **John Bianchi**, Director of Communications for Audubon. Mr. Bianchi can shed some light on the relationship between Audubon and AI. "The Audubon Society filed a copyright infringement lawsuit in New York Supreme Court, but lost the lawsuit, with the judge finding that the new organization could cause no harm by the use of the Audubon name. Although invited to appeal, and despite some disagreement within Audubon, the leadership decided not to pursue an appeal."

Golf course subdivisions in the Sierras replace open space that was real habitat. Golf course subdivisions sprawl vacation homes along long thin fairways. Roads, pools, tennis courts, lodges, commercial development, and houses crisscross these long thin fairways. A small island of turf grass bisected by pavement with cars speeding through is not



North American Goshawk

Into the Woods...



The Sierra Nevada Forest Plan Amendment (Framework)

The Forest Service adopted the Framework in 2001 as a regional ecosystem plan that carefully balances protection for the environment with limited logging to reduce the risk of wild-fire. The Bush Administration is proposing major revisions that would significantly increase logging of medium and large trees, threatening wildlife, old growth forests and watershed values.

KEY FRAMEWORK POINTS	FOREST SERVICE	REVISIONS IMPACT
1. Protects all remaining old growth forests & designates over 4 mil. as old forest emphasis areas.	Eliminates old-growth forest reserves.	Greatly reduces habitat for CA spotted owl, goshawk, & Pacific fisher. Decreases old growth forests & large trees.
2. Protects all trees greater than 20" diameter & many trees greater than 12" diameter.	Allows cutting trees up to 30" on virtually all national forest lands.	Annual timber harvest likely to increase dramatically.
3. Creates fuel reduction program with emphasis on controlled burning & thinning of small diameter trees.	Emphasis on intensive logging of medium and large trees over controlled burning to reduce fire risk.	Ignores ecological needs for fire in forest restoration. Diminishes old forests & threatens at-risk wildlife.
4. Retain a minimum of 50% of forest canopy (tree cover).	Retain only 40% of forest canopy.	Damages habitat for CA spotted owl & other wildlife. Increases forest fragmentation.
5. Allows logging only when necessary to lessen fire hazard.	Allows broad discretion to create 2-acre clearcuts in the name of "forest health."	Destroys old growth forests & wildlife habitat. Degrades visual quality & reduces forest beauty.
6. Ensures that environmentally damaging Quincy Library Group project complies with Framework & all environmental laws.	Mandates full implementation of Quincy Library Group project.	Places CA spotted owl, marten & other old forest species at risk of extinction.
7. Allows cutting of approx. 37.5 board-feet annually on QLG forests.	Allows over 250 mil. board-feet annually on QLG forests.	More than 7 times increase of logging resulting in significant degradation of forest & wildlife habitat.

Proposed Kirkwood Expansion

On March 18, the boards of supervisors from Alpine, Amador, and El Dorado Counties held a joint hearing to take testimony on proposed expansion Kirkwood Ski Resort.

The Kirkwood expansion will allow more than 1,400 condos and homes at Kirkwood (under 600 today). It includes 215,000 sq. ft of commercial buildings. The project EIR lists significant, unmitigable impacts to wildlife, scenic beauty, traffic, and nearby public lands. Using the developer's low estimates, the future Kirkwood could house more than 6,100 people. Part of the project involves building into old fir-pine forests. This project has potential to dramatically change the Kirkwood-Caples-Silver Lake area. The developer's alternative of choice is Alternative E. The "environmentally preferred alternative" is Alternative B: allowing Kirkwood to more than double in size, but combined with stronger mitigation measures.

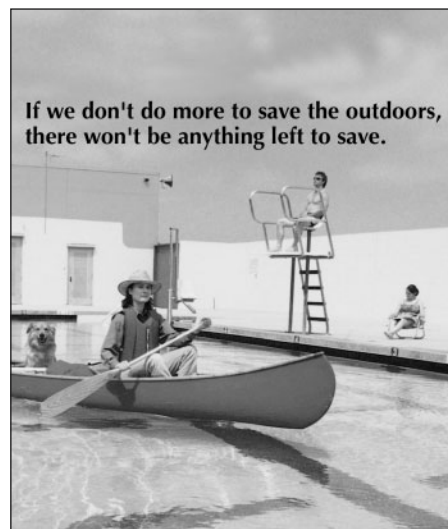
You may wish to contact supervisors from Alpine, Amador, or El Dorado Counties to express your concerns and your support for a smaller future Kirkwood than proposed in Alternative E. Each county will be holding its own hearing later (Alpine's is April 15).

The related expansion of the ski resort facilities (new lifts, acres of land clearing, new snowmaking, and a restaurant on the Caples Crest—visible from the Mokelumne Wilderness—will be considered later by the US Forest Service.

For more information, focusing on the real estate/county land use aspects see the Kirkwood info link at www.foothillconservancy.org.

Tahoe Group working on ad hoc issues:

- **Jerry Yeazell** has been participating in the scoping for an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) involving Tahoe's Shorezone, which will determine the number of buoys and piers allowed at the lake.
- **Carla Ennis** is involved with making sure Subaru's Primal Quest Adventure Race doesn't harm the environment. The 400+ mile race scheduled for September involves 100 teams of 4, support teams, media, checkpoints, about 5 hours of helicopter time a day, etc. As we have just a 5 to 10 year window to save the Lake, we have asked Primal Quest to skirt the Tahoe Basin – at least for the next few years. So far, they seem set on going ahead with current plans.
- Carla is also heading an effort to put a stop to illegal Vacation Rentals which are siphoning off affordable housing stock, which in turn is putting pressure on communities to make it easier to develop undisturbed parcels, which in turn reduces nature's ability to filter out the nutrients that are destroying the lake.
- **Diane Bush** is tracking efforts to build 54 units on 18 acres of undisturbed land next to Burke Creek in Douglas County. TRPA rejected an earlier proposal to build 26 detached units on the site. The new plan involves 26 detached units, but has added 28 affordable housing units as a way to gain approval. The developers propose to do a combination EIS that will evaluate both a change in the Plan Area Statement and the proposed project itself. We are concerned they may try to use previous studies that are now outdated.
- As we didn't get approval for an EPEC Grant, we continue to explore ways to fund a full time Sierra Club organizer at Tahoe. Suggestions are most welcome. We need \$65,000 for the staff position and \$100,000 for our litigation fund.



If we don't do more to save the outdoors, there won't be anything left to save.

**Mother Lode Chapter
Annual Awards Banquet
May 17, 2003
Host: Placer Group Sierra Club
Location: Auburn, CA**

If you would like to nominate someone from the TASC group as a recipient, please contact Shannon Raborn as soon as possible via e-mail at: Scraborn@aol.com

Each year our Annual Awards Banquet honors those who have distinguished themselves in their contributions to their group, to the chapter, and in regional conservation efforts. Also at this event the Sierra Club Sierra Nevada Student Scholarship awards are presented to twenty students from small communities in the Sierra. Last but not least, it is a time to have some fun and celebrate our accomplishments over the past year.

Group Appreciation Awards:

Recipients are selected by their group. These awards are presented annually to people who have shown special dedication to their groups in outings, conservation, or administration. Each group may select up to two people to receive group appreciation awards.

Chapter Awards:

There are a number of awards for those who have made a significant contribution to the chapter and to conservation in a number of categories. Below you will find descriptions of the various awards.

Chapter Service Award:

Presented annually to a person who has made a substantial volunteer contribution to the chapter for many years and in many ways.

Luis Ireland Conservationist of the Year Award:

Presented annually to a person who has shown extraordinary commitment to preserving the environment.

Gary Pichon Wilderness Award:

Presented annually, in honor of the late chapter conservation chair, for outstanding work in the preservation of wild areas. Environmental Journalism Award: Presented to a person who furthers the cause of conservation through the use of the media.

Environmental Whistleblower Award:

Presented to a person who has risked his or her job to protect the environment.

Environmental Education Award

Outings Leadership Award

Given on Occasion:

- Civic Courage Award (1996 only)
- Outstanding Staff Effort (2000 only)
- Environmental Book Award (1996 only)

Our extreme gratitude goes to Bryan Holzbauer for his generous donation toward production of the Newsletter. As a result of his generosity we now have a "non-profit bulk mail permit" for use by the Tahoe Area Sierra Club which will measurably decrease the cost of getting our message and activities out to members and non-members alike. The initial cost of setting up the mailing permit is, by our standards, expensive. Bryan came to the rescue and now that this is established we are able to mail at the non profit rate of 15¢ to 19¢ per piece (weight dependent).

Thank you, thank you, Bryan!



Audubon Scam *Cont'd from Page 1*

habitat. Golf courses do provide a good source of nitrogen for omnivores. How could they not? Take 100-150 acres, bring in a few diesel Caterpillars, mix 1 million gallons of drinking water per day, more fertilizer, pesticides, rodenticides, and fungicides per acre than factory farms, and turf grass will grow in a high alpine desert environment. Is it then habitat? Certainly not!

Animals that can tolerate human presence will be attracted to golf courses because of the artificial food source. What was once true habitat that supported a wide range of indigenous plant and animal life becomes essentially a fragmented manufactured monoculture whose main component is turf grass. In nature diversity is the key. Predators, omnivores, scavengers, and plant life are locked in an intricate dance. Removing any one causes a chain reaction of events that leads to a loss of diversity. Species that gain from human presence increase in number, those that don't die off. In the high Sierra, creating more golf courses will inevitably lead to a loss in biodiversity and aid in the extinction of threatened species. Somehow, the USGA, AI, East West Partners, and Northstar's definition of habitat must allow for the loss of sensitive species. Real natural habitat will promote biodiversity, not destroy it.



Jerry Yeazel

Important North Shore and Truckee Meetings

April 22, Tahoe Group Meeting, North Tahoe Conference Center, 6 PM, 8318 North Lake Blvd., Kings Beach: Topics will include stopping environmental degradation around Lake Tahoe, the Martis Valley, and the Town of Truckee. Citizen involvement works! Lets get involved and help shape our government and our community's future.

May 22, Martis Valley, Planning Commission, Alternative Plan, place and time not yet determined: The people of our community instituted a CEQA letter writing campaign advocating for a conservation alternative for the Martis Valley. Placer County has just released the alternative. Please call or E-Mail Placer County (530-886-3000, planning@placer.ca.gov) and request a copy. We have not received our copy so we cannot at this time make any comments. This meeting is important because we will advocate for a more socially equitable and conservation oriented plan. Please mark your calendars.

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Town of Truckee, 5/7, 5/21, 6/4, 6/18, Town Hall, 6 PM: The General Plan Update is starting. These are important because citizen involvement works. We can help our Town by advocating for an equitable and sustainable society. Truckee has a good website (townoftruckee.com) with information on the GPU.

Contact: **David Kean** with questions.
Phone: (530)587-7258
E-mail: davidmkean@yahoo.com



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Tahoe Area Sierra Club Outings April to July

Information not available at "press time."

Please check the Web Site at

<http://motherlode.sierraclub.org/tahoe>

for information regarding upcoming trips and outings. They will be posted as soon as dates are confirmed and information is available.

Our best wishes to **Glenn Polochko**, Outings Chair,
for a speedy recovery from his illness.
We hope he's up and hiking soon!



California Outing Leader Workshop

Where: Shaffer's High Sierra Camp
Sattley, CA (40 minutes north of Truckee)
When: August 15-17, 2003
Friday: Check-in & dinner from 6 p.m.
7:30 p.m. – Opening Program
Sunday: Ends at 1:15 pm with lunch
Cost: \$45 All meals & bunk-style lodging

If you're a Sierra Club outing leader or you want to become one, this interactive and educational workshop is for you. Space is limited, so sign up soon!

Leader training is a never-ending process, so whether you're an old hand or have never led before, you're invited to attend a weekend of interactive learning, networking with leaders from all outing programs, and of course, lots of fun. Brought to you by the Outdoor Activities Training Program (OATP), managed in the Outings Department of the National office. This is the only OATP core workshop in this region for the year.

REGISTRATION INFO:

Online at <http://www.sierraclub.org/outings/training/>

Limited to 50 people - first come, first served. Questions?

Contact Steven Shewach, Sierra Club Outdoor Activities

Training Manager at steven.shewach@sierraclub.org or phone

at (415) 977-5711