

# TAHOE REGIONAL PLANNING AGENCY

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## PUBLIC HEARING SCHEDULED

**Wednesday, Sept. 25, 2002**  
**TRPA Governing Board**  
**9:30 a.m. North Tahoe Community Conference Center**  
**Kings Beach, California**

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### **Proposed Ordinance Revisions to Address Declining Shorezone Scenic Quality at Lake Tahoe**

As outlined within the attached Fact Sheet, action is needed to ensure that the stunning natural landscape remains the dominant feature when viewing the shoreline of Lake Tahoe. The TRPA Governing Board will be holding a public hearing and discussing the proposal of implementing a more quantifiable scenic review system at its regular monthly meeting Sept. 25, 2002, at the North Tahoe Community Conference Center.

### **Background**

Mark Twain could hardly contain himself in describing his first visit to the lake ...

*“At last the lake burst upon us – a noble sheet of blue water lifted 6300 feet above the level of the sea, and wailed in by a rim of snow-clad mountain peaks that towered aloft 3000 feet higher still! It was a vast oval... As it lay there with the shadows of the mountains brilliantly photographed upon its still surface, I thought it must surely be the fairest picture the whole earth affords.”*

The TRPA is proposing that property owners incorporate design features to minimize the stark contrast and dominance of new and expanded shoreline structures compared to the natural background. These features include color, surface plane, texture, visible perimeter, and can be incorporated into a variety of architectural styles. To ease the burden of the permit process, the proposed system will provide a mechanism to assess projects based on the visual magnitude and design features. Projects that maximize the use of standard design features to reduce the man-made dominance and contrast will be handled using an expedited permit process. The greater the visual magnitude of the project, the more extensive the review process will be.

The TRPA staff has been working with stakeholders for more than six months and is proposing a solution that is balanced, fair and will protect the valuable scenic resources of Lake Tahoe for visitors, residents and property owners alike.

Studies clearly show that we must be more diligent in protecting the natural landscape dominance of Lake Tahoe's shoreline. What brought us to this beautiful place and what

continues to hold us spell-bound is the unique natural beauty of Lake Tahoe. Much has changed since Mark Twain wrote down his impressions of Lake Tahoe. At TRPA, we are mandated to ensure future generations do more than just read about it ... our job is to make certain that our children and their children can see and experience the beauty and serenity for themselves.

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## Shorezone Scenic Quality Fact Sheet #1

### WHAT IS THE PROPOSED ACTION?

- To reverse a negative trend in the scenic quality of Lake Tahoe by adopting a review system for development along the shoreline that is designed to better integrate and blend the built environment into the natural landscape.
- To be consistent with its legal mandate, TRPA must either adopt a project review system that protects the scenic resources or stop approving structures that cause the degradation.
- Variations of the proposed system have been tried and tested in other locations throughout the country to ensure dominance of the natural landscape in developed scenic areas.

### WHERE DOES TRPA GET THE AUTHORITY TO MAKE THESE RULES?

- In 1968, Congress mandated the TRPA to maintain and enhance the scenic qualities of Lake Tahoe (TRPA Compact, 1968). **The Compact** was last amended by the states of California and Nevada and the US Congress in 1980 (**Public Law 96-551**) and has been reaffirmed throughout the years, including the 1997 Presidential Forum.
- The Compact requires the TRPA to establish scenic thresholds, and adopt ordinances that will achieve and maintain those thresholds.

### HAS TRPA CHANGED THE SCENIC THRESHOLD OR HOW IT IS MEASURED?

- The **threshold standards** were adopted by the TRPA Board in 1982 after extensive professional studies and public review. These standards have remained consistent and require TRPA to maintain or improve the 1982 Travel Route Ratings published in the Threshold Study Report (TRPA 1982).
- A team of independent recognized experts developed the **evaluation criteria and methodology** to determine scenic quality ratings for each of the 33 shoreline units. This criteria has remained consistent over the last 20 years.

### CURRENT STATUS ON SCENIC THRESHOLD

- 1991, 1996, and 2001 Threshold Evaluations have shown a **consistent decline in the number of areas meeting the scenic standard**. Lake Tahoe has gone from 29 out of 33 in compliance in 1982 to 19 out of 33 in 2001.
- Recommendations to address this problem in the past have met with resistance and have not been fully implemented.

### WHY ARE SHORELINE SCENIC RATINGS DECLINING?

- The 2001 Threshold Evaluation identifies these factors: 1) a dramatic **increase in the scale** and mass of residential structures, 2) structures are placed **close to the lake**, 3) architectural features have **increased visibility**, and 4) the unauthorized **removal of trees** and other vegetation have added to the visual dominance of shoreline structures.
- The shoreline scenic resources are being degraded through the approval of large-scale residential structures close to the lake that **contrast rather than integrate** with Tahoe's natural beauty.

- The current TRPA compliance measures and subjective and qualitative project review tools are not effective towards attainment of scenic threshold standards for the Lake Tahoe shoreline.

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION AND DOCUMENTS AVAILABLE UPON REQUEST.**