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NEWS RELEASE

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TRPA CELEBRATES 40 YEARS OF POSITIVE PROGRESS AT LAKE TAHOE

Lake Tahoe, CA/NV – The Tahoe Regional Planning Agency celebrates its 40th anniversary this year, a milestone marking a generation of positive progress overseeing protection and restoration of one of the world’s most treasured natural settings.

The original bi-state Tahoe Regional Planning Compact that brought the Agency into being was signed into law by President Richard Nixon on Thursday, December 18, 1969, after having been approved by both California and Nevada and ratified by Congress.

The first TRPA Governing Board meeting was held March 19, 1970, in the Nevada State Supreme Court Chambers in Carson City. In its infancy, the agency was largely focused on land use regulation, as its imminent charge was to prevent inappropriate development from damaging the Lake.

“The Tahoe Regional Planning Agency came into being at a time when plans to develop the Tahoe Basin included building a city the size of San Francisco here, with freeways surrounding the Lake and a bridge across Emerald Bay,” said Joanne Marchetta, TRPA’s 14th Executive Director. “TRPA played a major role in seeing that those things never happened in Tahoe and our 40th anniversary is an appropriate time to hold that up – what could have happened but didn’t – as one of our major accomplishments.”

TRPA was an innovator in implementing land use policies designed to balance environmental concerns with economic activity and property rights. The agency was formed because of concern that rapid and environmentally incompatible development spurred by the 1960 Winter Olympics at Squaw Valley might overrun the Basin.

While Tahoe had been a popular summer recreation spot for decades and was already the location of several resorts, the worldwide attention focused on the region during the 1960s touched off a rush of interest in developable land and the accompanying potential for growth. In particular, the development of the Tahoe Keys on the banks of the Upper Truckee River on the south shore and Incline Village on the north shore were raising eyebrows.

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“In the 1970s, the idea of growth control was a fairly new one. The thought that a regional authority could restrict the amount of private land you could build on and limit growth to manageable levels was largely unprecedented,” Marchetta said.

TRPA’s authority to restrict development has been challenged legally on a number of occasions, including one resulting in a landmark U.S. Supreme Court ruling in favor of TRPA in 2002.

In 1999, to reduce the amount of pollution on the water attributable to inefficient engines, the Agency banned carbureted two-stroke motors on the Lake. The ban is credited not only with significantly reducing fuel-related pollution but also incentivizing the personal watercraft industry to produce cleaner-burning vehicles.

Regulation alone, however, is not looked upon as a panacea for restoring Lake Tahoe’s clarity, improving forest health and air quality, and enhancing recreation and scenic resources. This is why in the mid-90s the Environmental Improvement Program was launched. In 10 years, \$1.1 billion has been invested to help restore the Lake and the Basin. Building on the successes of the EIP, a comprehensive update valued at \$2.5 billion over the next decade is now moving forward. The update was unanimously endorsed by the TRPA Governing Board and the federal agencies in the Tahoe Basin in July.

New and improved science will drive the next phase of environmental improvement at the Lake, especially when it comes to water quality projects.

“Science and technology will play a more significant role in the solutions at Lake Tahoe as we take our work to the next level,” Marchetta said. “We are moving toward an era where we can more effectively and efficiently apply what we know and improve as we move forward.”

In addition to the updated EIP, TRPA is focused on updating the Lake Tahoe Regional Plan. The updated plan will serve as a blueprint for environmental improvement and revitalization efforts over the next two decades.

The Tahoe Regional Planning Agency cooperatively leads the effort to preserve, restore, and enhance the unique natural and human environment of the Lake Tahoe Region now and in the future. For additional information, call Dennis Oliver at (775) 589-5235 or email to doliver@trpa.org.

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