

**Technical Supplement and Appendix
for
PATHWAY 2007 Evaluation Report
Scenic Quality**

DRAFT

January 2007

Scenic Quality Core Team:

John Hitchcock, Scenic Resource Planner, TRPA
Bob King, Landscape Architect, USFS
Tom Packard, Landscape Architect
Jerry Mosier, Landscape Architect, USFS

Table of Contents

| | |
|---|-----------|
| TABLE OF CONTENTS..... | 2 |
| LIST OF TABLES..... | 2 |
| LIST OF FIGURES..... | 2 |
| 11.0 SCENIC QUALITY OVERVIEW..... | 3 |
| 11.1 SCENIC QUALITY INTRODUCTION..... | 3 |
| 11.1.1 Background..... | 3 |
| 11.2 EXISTING MANAGEMENT DIRECTION AND NEED FOR CHANGE..... | 3 |
| 11.2.1 Existing Desired Conditions, Standards and Indicators..... | 3 |
| 11.2.3 Deleted and Modified Desired Condition..... | 7 |
| 11.2.4 Changes to Indicators and Standards..... | 8 |
| 11.2.5 Need for Change..... | 12 |
| 11.3 PROPOSAL FOR SCENIC QUALITY DESIRED CONDITION, INDICATORS AND STANDARDS..... | 16 |
| 11.3.1 Proposed Vision Statement and Diagrams..... | 18 |
| 11.3.2 Proposed Desired Condition: Natural Environment..... | 20 |
| 11.3.2.1 Proposed Indicator: Scenic Integrity..... | 21 |
| 11.3.2.2 Current Condition and Trend..... | 30 |
| 11.3.2.3 Legal Requirements and Standard..... | 30 |
| 11.3.2.4 Public Input..... | 32 |
| 11.3.2.5 Technical Input..... | 32 |
| 11.3.2.6 Proposed Desired Condition and Standard..... | 33 |
| 11.3.2.7 Potential Use..... | 35 |
| 11.3.2.8 Linkages with Other Resources..... | 35 |
| 11.3.2.9 Influencing Factors..... | 36 |
| 11.3.2.10 Linkages with Other Resources..... | 37 |
| 11.3.3 Proposed Desired Condition: Community Design..... | 37 |
| 11.3.3.1 Proposed Indicator: Development and Design Standards..... | 38 |
| 11.3.3.2 Current Condition and Trend..... | 41 |
| 11.3.3.3 Legal Requirements and Current Standard..... | 41 |
| 11.3.3.4 Public Input..... | 41 |
| 11.3.3.5 Technical Input..... | 41 |
| 11.3.3.6 Proposed Desired Condition, Indicators, and Standard..... | 41 |
| 11.3.3.7 Linkages with Other Resource Areas..... | 43 |
| 11.3.3.8 Influencing Factors..... | 44 |
| 11.4 FURTHER CONSIDERATIONS AND INVESTIGATIONS REGARDING SCENIC QUALITY..... | 46 |
| SCENIC QUALITY TECHNICAL APPENDIX..... | 46 |
| APPENDIX SECTION A: ACRONYMS..... | 46 |
| APPENDIX SECTION B: ACRONYMS..... | 46 |
| APPENDIX SECTION C: REFERENCES CITED..... | 51 |

List of Tables

| | |
|--|----|
| TABLE 11-1. SUMMARY OF EXISTING DCs, INDICATORS, AND STANDARDS | 5 |
| TABLE 11.2. SCENIC INTEGRITY LEVEL EVALUATION CRITERIA | 26 |

List of Figures

| | |
|---|----|
| Figure 11-1. Scenic Quality Summary | 19 |
| Figure 11-2. Scenic Quality Desired Conditions and Attributes Heirarchy | 20 |
| Figure 11-3. Proposed Scenic Indicators for the Natural Environment | 23 |
| Figure 11-4. Proposed Threshold Standards for the Natural Environment | 34 |
| Figure 11-5. Propooosed Threshold Standards for the Community Design Desired Condition | 42 |

11.0 Scenic Quality Overview

11.1 Scenic Quality Introduction

11.1.1 Background

There are viable, yet competing interests within the sphere of scenic resources. On the one hand, there is a public desire for high scenic quality that appears natural. The other side of the equation is the fact that development has a place in the Tahoe region and will continue to do so in the future. That is, there is a strong connection between the region's high scenic quality and the quality of the natural environment and built environment. It's the blue lake, the natural appearing forest, clear skies, and panoramic vistas that draw millions of visitors to the basin each year. Therefore, the proposed desired conditions reflect the dependency of the region's high scenic quality with its environmental setting which includes the natural as well as the built.

Essentially there are two, sometimes competing resource issues for land management agencies to consider: 1, the restoration and preservation of the natural environment; and 2, balancing those restoration and preservation goals with the provision for development in the Tahoe Basin.

11.2 Existing Management Direction and Need for Change

11.2.1 Existing Desired Conditions, Standards and Indicators

The existing desired conditions are taken directly from the management goals and statements contained in the USDA Forest Service, Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit's

Land and Resources Management Plan (LRMP), the Forest Service Strategic Plan, the Sierra Nevada Forest Plan Amendment 2004, the Lahontan Water Quality Control Board Basin Plan, Nevada Division of Environmental Protection Plan and the value statements in the TRPA Compact, 1982 Threshold Study Report and Goals and Policies document as the sources for existing desired conditions and attributes.

Broad, general statements and value statements contained in the various plans were taken to be equivalent to desired condition statements of each agency. These include TRPA's 1982 Threshold Study Report value statement; USFS statements on scenic and visual values found in the Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit's LRMP; the Lahontan Water Quality Control Board's goal to attain the highest water quality, consideration of beneficial uses, potential detrimental impact and social values; and the NDEP goal statement on beneficial uses, higher quality waters, water quality protection, waters of extraordinary ecological or aesthetic value, and that the unique ecological or aesthetic values of the water must be maintained. The next section discusses the Scenic Core Group Recommendations for modification of the existing desired conditions.

Table 11-1, below, shows the existing desired conditions and attributes, along with notations where modifications or deletions were made based on the Pathway 2007 process (NC represents no or minor change, M represents modified and D represents deleted). Notations are applied in the merged existing column since there were no conflicts among the four agencies' existing DCs or attributes.

Table 11-1. Summary of Existing DCs, Indicators, and Standards

| Existing Desired Conditions | | | | |
|-----------------------------|--|--|--|---|
| | TRPA | USFS | Lahontan | NDEP |
| SR Desired Condition 1 | <p>Maintain and enhance the dominant natural-appearing landscape for the vast majority of views and lands in the basin.</p> <p>M – Proposed SR DC 1</p> | <p>Maintain an attractive forest appearance by meeting or exceeding established visual quality objectives.</p> <p>M- Proposed SR DC 1</p> | <p>Beneficial uses of waters used for recreational activities involving proximity to water, but not normally involving body contact with water were ingestion of water is reasonably possible. These uses include, but are not limited to, picnicking, sunbathing, hiking, beachcombing, camping, boating, tide pool and marine life study, hunting, sightseeing, and aesthetic enjoyment in conjunction with the above statement.</p> <p>NC – Proposed SR DC 1</p> | <p>All waters in the State support their beneficial uses and higher quality waters are maintained. All Nevadans are making the best possible water quality protection and management decisions, in coordination with others in their watersheds. Waters of extraordinary ecological or aesthetic value. The unique ecological or aesthetic value of the water must be maintained.</p> <p>Waters of extraordinary ecological or aesthetic value. The unique ecological or aesthetic value of the water must be maintained.</p> <p>NC - Proposed SR DC 1</p> |
| SR Desired Condition 2 | <p>Maintain and/or improve the aesthetic characteristics of the man-made environment to be compatible with the natural environment.</p> <p>M – Proposed SR DC 2</p> | <p>Vegetative Treatments or structural Improvements visible in the foreground will be designed to retain the natural or rural mountain appearance of the setting.</p> <p>M – Proposed SR DC 2</p> | N/A | N/A |

| Existing Desired Conditions | | | | |
|-----------------------------|--|--|----------|------|
| | TRPA | USFS | Lahontan | NDEP |
| SR Desired Condition 3 | Restore, whenever possible, damaged natural landscapes. D – Proposed SR DC 1 | Restore the appearance of land or facilities where they are diminished below the desired standards or where there are opportunities to improve visual variety of the landscape or create vistas of interesting natural features. The primary purpose is to assure pleasing landscapes for visitors to or people residing in the vicinity of the forest. D – Proposed SR DC 2 | | |

NC = No Change, **M** = Modified and **D** = Deleted

11.2.2 No Change to Desired Condition

No changes are proposed for the desired conditions for Lahontan and NDEP. These desired conditions generally relate more to the beneficial uses of Lake Tahoe to scenic resources and not a desired condition of how the natural or urban environment should be appear. However, the Group is proposing to modify and consolidate the existing TRPA and USFS desired conditions SR-1, SR-2, and SR-3 due to their similarities.

11.2.3 Deleted and Modified Desired Condition

There are three TRPA desired condition for scenic resources in the 1982 Threshold Study Report (expressed as a value statement). The Forest Service, LTBMU has three which were regional in nature, but also have sub-regional desired conditions expressed as visual quality objectives for the various management areas of the basin.

Modification and consolidation of the TRPA and USFS desired condition statements SR-1 and SR-2 are proposed as they deal with the same scenic issues. TRPA desired conditions deals with scenic quality region wide while the USFS system mainly deals with scenic resource management only within the forested areas of the basin. The modified desired conditions represent an integration of the existing desired conditions in order to provide a consistent goal for the scenic quality in the Tahoe Basin for lands in private as well as public ownership and incorporate input received from the public workshops, surveys, and Scenic Technical Working Group Only SR-3 is proposed for deletion by the Core Group.

Existing SR-1, Naturally Appearing Landscapes

Maintain and enhance the dominant natural-appearing landscape for the vast majority of views and lands in the Basin.

Maintain an attractive forest appearance by meeting or exceeding established visual quality objectives.

The existing desired conditions for the protection of the Basin's natural appearing forest are both similar for TRPA and the USFS. Through the public visioning workshop, it was stated that the natural appearing forest was still an important resources that needs to be maintained and enhanced. The Core Group is proposing the TRPA and USFS existing desired conditions are integrated and updated to include input from the public and the Scenic TWG. In addition the Core Group is proposing an updated indicator and standard for SR Desired Condition 1

Existing SR-2, Man-made Environment (Community Design)

Maintain and/or improve the aesthetic characteristics of the man-made environment to be compatible with the natural environment.

Vegetative Treatments or structural Improvements visible in the foreground will be designed to retain the natural or rural mountain appearance of the setting.

The existing desired conditions for enhancement of the built environment to be compatible with the natural environment continue to be an important element for maintaining scenic quality in the Tahoe Region. The existing desired conditions are policy statements that are fairly broad and generally do not talk to maintaining the valued attributes of a community. The Core Group is proposing the TRPA and USFS existing desired conditions are integrated and updated to include the concept of ‘place making’ and providing for flexibility in design for different communities. This is consistent with the input received from the public and the Scenic TWG.

Existing SR-3, Landscape Restoration

Restore, whenever possible, damaged natural landscapes.

Restore the appearance of land or facilities where they are diminished below the desired standards or where there are opportunities to improve visual variety of the landscape or create vistas of interesting natural features. The primary purpose is to assure pleasing landscapes for visitors to or people residing in the vicinity of the forest.

SR-3 is an existing desired condition for restoration of damaged natural landscape. Discussion among the Core Group and the Steering Team resulted in the reclassification of this desired conditions as a management strategy and should be included in the goals and policies document rather than as a desired condition. Therefore this existing desired condition is proposed for deletion.

11.2.4 Changes to Indicators and Standards

The TRPA Compact provided for the development and implementation of environmental threshold carrying capacities or ‘thresholds’ and indicators. In 1982, the threshold study team completed work necessary to define and establish threshold standards for preservation of scenic quality. At that time numerical standards were established for roadway and shoreline travel route ratings, and roadway and shoreline scenic quality ratings. Additionally, TRPA adopted a management standard policy statement for overall community design elements and in 1993, TRPA adopted numeric standards for designated public recreation areas and bike trails.

The Core Group is proposing to only modify the standards and indicators for the Threshold Travel Routes and for Community Design.

Existing SR-1, Naturally Appearing Landscapes

Threshold Travel Route Ratings

Numeric Standard: Maintain the 1982 ratings for all roadway and shoreline units as shown in Tables 13-6 and 13-7 of the Draft Study report (TRPA, 1982c). Restore scenic quality in roadway units rated 15 or below and shoreline units rated 7 or below. Based the scenic mentors comments in the threshold evaluations, the Core Group is proposing that the threshold travel route rating standards be modified to reflect the

deletion of indicators that are not sensitive to change or in some cases not measurable and account for the ability of different landscape types absorption capabilities. See detailed discussion in the Need for Change section.

Indicator: Travel route ratings are measured by a numeric composite index (score) of relative scenic quality of the entire view seen from the travel routes, using the following indicators:

- Man-made features along the roadway and shoreline;
- Physical distractions to driving along the roadways;
- Roadway characteristics;
- View of the Lake from the roadways;
- General landscape views from the roadways and shoreline; and
- Variety of scenery from the roadways and shoreline.
- Roadway ratings use all six indicators. Shoreline ratings use criteria 1, 5, and 6. Each indicator is rated from one (low or absent) to five (high or significant feature present).

The Core team recommends that the Travel Route Ratings be modified to account for the different landscape themes present in the Tahoe Basin replace the exiting standard with Scenic Integrity Levels and replace the existing indicators with one indicator that that measure visual disturbance and dominance (see detail discussion below).

Scenic Quality Ratings

The Scenic Quality Rating, to focus on the relative scenic quality of individual scenic resources that could be seen from the same travel routes (Wayne et al, 1992). The purpose of a scenic quality standard is to maintain or enhance existing scenic resources. There are 205 scenic resources visible from the roadway units and 185 from shoreline units, including three roadways and one shoreline resource added in 2001.

Numerical Standard: Maintain or improve the numerical rating assigned each unit, including the scenic quality rating of the individual resources within each unit, as recorded in the Scenic Resources Inventory and shown in Tables 13-3, 13-5, 13-8, and 13-9 of the Draft Study report (TRPA, 1982c).

The issue of individual scenic resource protection continues to be of critical importance to providing visual access to natural endowments of the region .In many public workshops the public has identified that protection of views to the Lake was of critical importance and that regulations should be adopted to prevent further loss of critical viewsheds, therefore the proposal is to maintain this standard and related indicators..

Public Recreation Areas and Bike Trails Scenic Quality

The Public Recreation Area and Bike Trails standard applies to 37 public recreation areas including beaches, campgrounds, and ski areas. It also applies to 11 segments of Class I and Class II bicycle trails. Views and scenic resources visible from these areas were considered of value because they are major public gathering places, they are generally highly scenic to begin with, and they are places where people are static (compared to the

travel routes) and have more time to linger and focus attention on the views and resources.

Numeric Standard: Maintain or improve the numerical rating assigned to each identified scenic resource, including individual subcomponent numerical ratings, for views from bike paths and other recreation areas open to the general public as recorded in the 1993 Lake Tahoe Basin Scenic Resource Evaluation.

Similar to the Scenic Quality Ratings, protection of scenic resources at public recreation areas is also critical in that in many cases these areas provide the only visual access to the Lake and the Region's scenic quality. The Core team recommends maintaining the existing standard and related indicators with no modifications

Visual Management System

Standard: Maintain or improve the Adopted Visual Quality Objective of Preservation for wilderness areas, Retention to Partial Retention as recorded on the 1988 LRMP Map.

The groundbreaking USFS Visual Management System (VMS) of 1973 was the most advanced of its time, by achieving "visual quality" within National Forests through its program to minimize visible disturbance to prescribed levels. Since that time, other important scenery considerations have been identified, such as public validation of the scenery values to be protected, and the longevity of scenery values within an ever changing ecological context. To accommodate these and other scenery issues, the VMS has been improved, expanded and approved for phased implementation nationwide, as the USFS Scenery Management System (SMS) of 1997. SMS is best fully implemented during a revision of a Forest Plan, which will occur for the USFS Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit during the Pathway 2007 planning.

Existing SR-2, Man-made Environment (Community Design)

Community Design

The visual quality of the built environment has also become an issue of increasing importance to residents, local businesses, and community leaders. Because of the early design and signage policies of the local governments and TRPA were inadequate; there was a critical need to develop greater sensitivity to site design and visual impacts to protect the lake's future as a premiere vacation area.

The Community Design threshold is a policy statement, which applies to the built environment, and is not restricted to roadways or shoreline units. The Goals and Policies contain a Community Design Subelement within the Land Use Element, which sets forth policies for new and existing development.

Policy Statement: It shall be the policy of the TRPA Governing Board in the development of the Regional Plan, in cooperation with local jurisdictions, to insure the height, bulk,

texture, form, materials, colors, lighting, signing and other design elements of new, remodeled and redeveloped buildings be compatible with the natural, scenic and recreational values of the region.

The following goals in the Regional Plan guide implementation of the threshold.

Goal #1 - Insure preservation and enhancement of the natural features and qualities of the region provide public access to scenic views, and enhance the quality of the built environment.

Goal #2 - Regional building and community design criteria shall be established to ensure attainment of the scenic thresholds, maintenance of desired community character, compatibility of land uses, and the coordinated project review.

The Core group and the Scenic Technical Working Group agree that the community design and aesthetic quality of the built environment continues to be an important element for maintaining scenic quality in the Tahoe Region. This is supported by input from the public visioning process that states the appropriate design and character that are valued by the community should be maintained and encouraged. However, this threshold policy standard has been hard to measure in the past and the policy in itself is a management strategy rather than a threshold standard. Therefore, the Core team is recommending that this threshold policy standard be replaced with the proposed with updated standards that is based on the Scenic Integrity levels for each landscape type and the percentage of design elements that are implemented. In addition to the change in standards and indicators the Core Group is recommends an added emphasize on the use of “place making” as a tool to identify the valued attributes of the Region and at the community level to develop a set of attributes for community design that should be encouraged and maintained. This will provide flexibility in the system that will take into account that no two communities are alike and should be alike.

USFS. The Built Environment Image Guide (BEIG) for National Forests and Grasslands.

It is the Policy of the Forest Service to employ the BEIG to establish architectural character guidelines for administrative and recreational buildings, landscape structures, site furnishings, structures on roads and trails, and signs installed or operated by the USDA Forest Service, it's cooperators or permittees. These elements will:

Be located, planned, and designed with respect for the natural systems in which they reside.

Aesthetically integrate their natural, cultural, and experiential context.

Contain design elements, including appropriate signs that reinforce a national agency identity.

Emphasize efficiency of energy and materials consumption in construction and operation.

Serve as premier examples to interpret conservation of natural resources and sustainable development.

Create environments for people to enjoy and gain increased appreciation for the natural environment, and in which employees work productively, experiencing the connection to

the resources they manage. In so doing, the USDA Forest Service built environment will strengthen and reinforce the image of the agency as an international conservation leader.

Existing SR -3 Landscape Restoration

SR-3 is an existing desired condition for restoration of damaged natural landscape. No specific indicator or standard was adopted for this desired condition, however, damaged landscapes in the basin were inventoried and identified for restoration in the Scenic Quality Improvement Program. Discussion among the Core Group and the Steering Team resulted in the reclassification of this desired conditions as a management strategy and should be included in the goals and policies document rather than as a desired condition. Therefore this existing desired condition is proposed for deletion.

11.2.5 Need for Change

TRPA

Overall, the Tahoe Scenic Threshold System should be recognized as a unique approach for many other regions grappling with complex scenic quality issues. Not many places in the country have attempted to document scenic conditions on private lands so systematically over a quarter of a century, nor to set firm, quantitative, cumulative thresholds for scenic resource management to protect the economic and quality of life values. The system has worked to constrain some development trends which would otherwise have irrevocably damaged the scenic quality of the Basin, and has led to significant improvements to the look of key commercial areas in the Basin. However, as the system has evolved over 30 years to meet many new trends, it has grown incrementally and is in urgent need of reorganization and streamlining. This next section assesses the advantages and shortcomings of the current system, and discusses a basis for substantive amendment of the system as part of the Regional Plan update in 2007, based on key principles for appropriate scenic resource management in the Basin.

The following list contains some key areas of difficulty identified over time in the travel route rating methodology, which forms the backbone of the larger system. Many of the problems with the system have long been identified.

1. The original system of Roadway and Shoreline travel route ratings of 1-5 for each criterion was not sensitive enough to adequately reflect changes in the five year monitoring period.
2. There are also criticisms of the overall system, which includes not only the shoreline and roadway travel route ratings (described above), but also scenic resources within the travelways, public recreation areas/bike trails, and community design standards. In particular, the overall system exhibits:
 - Complexity in understanding the overlap and relationships between thresholds and the policy, regulatory, and guideline tools available in protecting these thresholds.

- The standards are set up in a manner that anticipates all roadway and shoreline units will achieve or exceed a similar acceptable rating despite differences in the inherent landscape character of each unit and capability to visually absorb development. This is not the case. No two units of the roadway or the shoreline have exactly the same inherent scenic quality or visual absorption capability.

This does not appear to be equitable as all units of roadway are expected to achieve a minimum numerical rating of 16 for and 8 for shoreline units. Although it is ideal to have a high degree of scenic quality in all units, those which do not have views of the lake or are dominated by development are in essence penalized under the current system.

A possible way to resolve this problem would be to analyze the units' inherent capability to provide scenic lake and landscape views, its scenic attractiveness, and its visual absorption capability. A scenic standard would then be set to reflect the goal for each unit with these inherent conditions in mind.

3. There are now three different zones for scenic resources in Lake Tahoe Basin--- Urban, Transition, and Natural. Until the Urban, Transition and Natural Visual Environment Types were established in 1989, there was no difference in expectations for the differing areas. With the establishment of such Visual Environment Types, different design guidelines set up for each type. However, there is no allowance in the standards for varying degrees of dominance of the natural appearing landscape or of compatibility/degree of dominance of the man-made environment. All roadway zones are expected to achieve a rating of 16 no matter if they are in a Natural, Transition or Urban Environment Type. This flaw in the system needs to be addressed and corrected.
4. The Travel Route Ratings which were adopted as one of the threshold measures are based on a mix of factors not specifically designed to reflect the needs of the scenic thresholds. They can be separated as follows:
 - Factors dealing solely with the effect of man-made alterations of the landscape---Man-made Features, Physical Distractions, and Road Structure relate entirely to this. In project review, there is normally little opportunity to assess changes in Road Structure unless it is a major highway project. That factor is generally insensitive to change.
 - Factors dealing with the blockage of views---Lake Views and Landscape Views. Some of the views may be blocked by natural features and some are created by humans.

- Factors dealing with inherent scenic quality---Variety. Variety includes inherent characteristics of the landscape and man-made features. In its original Forest Service concept at the time of the development of the system in 1971, variety was largely judged on the basis of the landforms, waterforms and vegetative forms of the landscape---inherent landscape characteristics.

The standards as adopted call for the maintenance or improvement of the numerical rating of each unit. This was most certainly decided without consideration of the degree of build-out of the units at the time of adoption. Taken literally, this would imply that any development within a Unit should similarly work towards maintaining or improving the numerical rating. It would be virtually impossible to develop a property which was formerly undeveloped natural forest land and yet maintain the same degree of scenic quality with regard to the rating of Man-made Features. A possible way to resolve this problem would be to analyze the units' inherent capability to provide scenic lake and landscape views, its scenic attractiveness, and its visual absorption capability. The standards would then be set to reflect the goal for each unit with these inherent conditions in mind.

Urban, Transition, and Natural were established as Visual Environment Types in 1989 as a part of the scenic management system and is a valid concept. The degree of visual dominance of development in foreground views would logically vary within each type. To employ Visual Environment Types in managing scenic quality, development of scenic character or scenic integrity goals for each type will be necessary. It will also be necessary to identify a set of valued attributes that are desired for each Visual Environment Type, and to develop definitive criteria for allowable degrees of scenic impact (visual disturbance) in each of the three Visual Environments.

As noted above, the scenic standards are set up in a manner that anticipates all roadway and shoreline units will achieve or exceed a similar acceptable rating despite differences in the inherent landscape character of each unit and capability to visually absorb development. This is not the case. No two units of the roadway or the shoreline have exactly the same inherent scenic quality or visual absorption capability.

This does not appear to be equitable as all units of roadway are expected to achieve a minimum numerical rating of 16 for and 8 for shoreline units. Although it is ideal to have a high degree of scenic quality in all units, those which do not have views of the lake or are dominated by development are in essence penalized under the current system.

While the goal is to maintain or improve the scenic quality of the Lake Tahoe Basin, it seems that every developable property should have the right to a fair share of visual impact, as long as it is in line with that allowed in the Visual Environment Type. To expect that a number of adjacent and recently developed projects will not cause some scenic degradation seems unreasonable.

Rather, it would be appropriate to establish some reasonable degree of "fair share" of visual impact for development and redevelopment tied to the Visual Environment Type's

goals. In such a case the ratings of some units might be allowed to drop slightly over time until fully built out. The overall, cumulative scenic quality ratings of all units, however, should reflect improvement over that same time period. This could happen as a result of improved ratings in areas that are redeveloped or undergoing scenic improvement.

There needs to be some allowance for the scenic impact of legal developments on yet undeveloped land. Since every owner of a parcel of legally developable land should have the right to a fair share of scenic impact on the natural environment, fair share should be based upon the visual absorption capability of the land and the options for placement of the development.

When there is only one possible location for development and the visual absorption capability of the land is low, then it would be the responsibility of the property owner to use creative design to minimize the impact and utilize mitigation measures such as landscaped earth berms and planting of large, boxed trees. Such design, construction, finishing, and landscaping should be required only to allow the development to reach a fair share threshold. However, all property owners should be encouraged to take less than their fair share or mitigate scenic impacts to less than their fair share and be given recognition and/or incentives for doing so.

Under the proposed modified system discussed above, the management of scenic impacts of individual properties would require the following components:

1. Retention of the existing defined landscape units would be valid and necessary, to ensure continuity with earlier ratings and also to provide a cumulative setting for individual property evaluations. Such landscape units would need to be broken down by Visual Environment Types. The threshold standards must be clearly defined and illustrated with photographic examples of the threshold level, as well as degrees of deviation beyond acceptable standards.
2. In order to utilize a fair share of scenic impact concept, it would be necessary to rate and monitor scenic quality by individual properties, or in the case of large properties, by specific scenic impact sites. With this concept, it would not be necessary to identify and rate the degree of scenic impact of any property or site except those causing more than their fair share of scenic impacts.

The proposed changes to the scenic threshold are consistent with Resolution No. 82-11, a resolution adopting the environmental threshold carrying capacities in 1982. A provision of the resolution permits the TRPA Governing Board to amend or adopt new threshold standards based on new scientific or technical information that indicates a threshold standard is insufficient to main a significant value of region or if additional standards are required. As discussed above, there is a need to amend the existing threshold standards and indicators based on technical information that illustrates the current system is insensitive to change, does not account for differing landscape themes present in the basin and generally is not sensitive to the desired vision of a community as it relates to the built environment.

US Forest Service-LTBMU

The groundbreaking USFS Visual Management System (VMS) of 1973 was the most advanced of its time, by achieving "visual quality" within National Forests through its program to minimize visible disturbance to prescribed levels. Since that time, other important scenery considerations have been identified, such as public validation of the scenery values to be protected, and the longevity of scenery values within an ever changing ecological context. To accommodate these and other scenery issues, the VMS has been improved, expanded and approved for phased implementation nationwide, as the USFS Scenery Management System (SMS) of 1997. SMS is best fully implemented during a revision of a Forest Plan, which will occur for the USFS Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit during the Pathway 2007 planning. The SMS update represents a significant expansion from VMS, in terms of incorporating human values into ecosystem management. The principal changes required by SMS are to:

- 1) Apply focused public involvement to better identify and perpetuate the socially valued scenery within the many diverse Places of the Lake Tahoe basin.
- 2) Apply ecosystem opportunities (physical - biological - social / structures - processes - functions) to ensure that the valued scenery can be sustained through time.
- 3) Provide effective, state-of-the-art methods, terminology and data (to inventory, measure, communicate and integrate the scenic resource considerations into the Tahoe Basin's overall Desired Conditions, and implement and monitor its scenic resource accomplishments through time).

11.3 Proposal for Scenic Quality Desired Condition, Indicators and Standards

Scenic quality of the natural and built environment has been cited by visitors and residents as an important attribute of the Tahoe Basin and recognized for its importance to the basin's economy. People are concerned with the quality of the built environment and have stated that the Tahoe Basin should serve as a model for integrating the built and natural environment. Efforts must be made to provide natural-appearing forests, minimize impacts to scenic views when possible, and encourage appropriately scaled development for the Tahoe Basin that encourages a sense of community. There is overall support for input from local communities, as well as application of regional guidelines, in determining what the visual character of individual communities should be, provide incentives, and consider public-private partnerships to effectively guide redevelopment projects (CCP Public Survey).

Economists recognize that tourism is becoming the leading industry in many regions in the United States and in many foreign countries. In numerous communities adjacent to national forests, tourism and recreation are replacing the former leading roles of timber

harvesting, mining, ranching, and farming. Scenic landscapes and recreational settings help to determine the success of recreation and tourism.

Scenic resource management includes two main areas of focus: 1) preserving the portions of the Tahoe landscape that currently have a natural appearing setting, and 2) ensuring that development, when it does occur, is appropriate for the area it will be located in terms of its size, mass, architectural style, and density. The vision and desired conditions for soil scenic resources were developed over a period of several months, and include public input as well as input from the Scenic Resources Core Group and Technical Working Group. Indicator and standard development are not complete at this time; the plans for developing indicators and standards are described later in this section. The proposal for the vision and desired conditions is structured according to the following diagrams.

In development of the proposed desired conditions, indicators, and standards, the following principles, which were derived from public visioning workshops, the Threshold Evaluations Recommendations, and the Scenic Technical Working Group, aided the Scenic Core Group in developing recommendations for updating the scenic threshold system:

- Standards should be based upon the full range of established goals, addressing both the natural setting and built environment.
- Standards should reflect measurements of all the landscape conditions which have been documented as being pertinent to and aligned to public perceptions of scenic character and quality in the Lake Tahoe Basin.
- Standards should be well enough defined so as to be measurable and defensible.
- A threshold should provide a measurable point, condition, or quality that can be monitored, replicated by other qualified professionals to a reasonable degree, and be sensitive enough to reflect incremental landscape changes.
- The landscape conditions associated with all scenic standards, as well as their range of variance, should be capable of being illustrated by photographs and photo-simulations. Standards should be simple enough in concept to be understood by lay persons
- Standards should be applicable to any portion of land on which the relevant condition or quality has importance.
- Standards should be designed to allow fair shares of required scenic improvements across individual properties within a scenic unit.

This section draws upon a closer analysis of the existing scenic threshold system and the existing scenic goals in the context of visual environment types (Natural, Transition, and

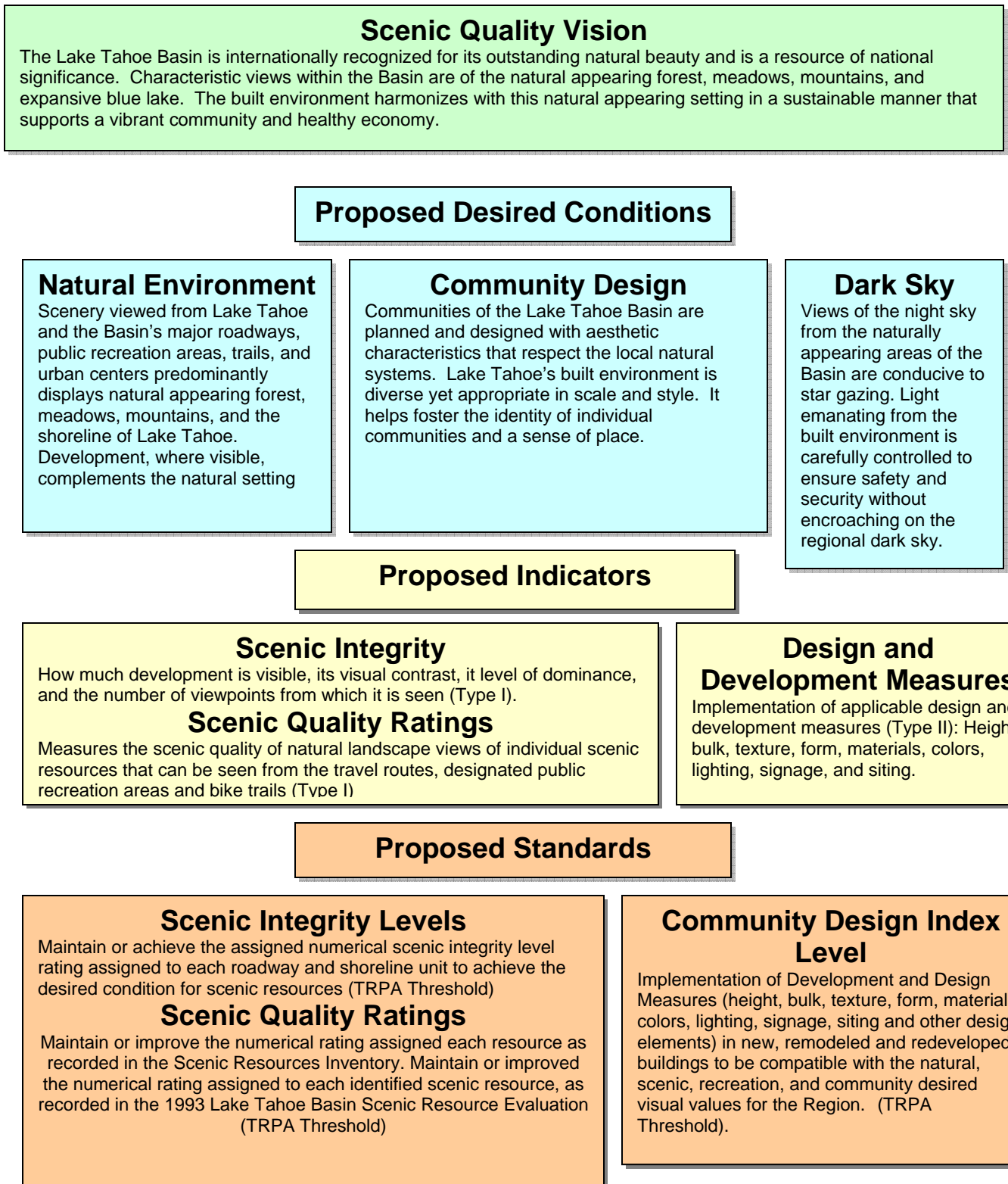
Urban), as a framework for implementing the above principles in an updated scenic threshold system. There is a clear guide in TRPA's Compact for protection of the basin's natural appearing landscape for scenic resource purposes and for accommodating growth and development that is consistent with scenic resource protection. Natural appearing can be defined as a landscape condition in which the general impression is that the natural landscape dominates and is sustainable ecologically. Yet, in some locations the visual dominance of development in foreground views is almost impossible to prevent, and has come to be accepted by most people.

11.3.1 Proposed Vision Statement and Diagrams

The overarching vision for the Scenic Resource area resulting from expert and public input is:

The Lake Tahoe Basin is internationally recognized for its outstanding natural beauty and is a resource of national significance. Characteristic views within the Basin are of the natural appearing forest, meadows, mountains, and expansive blue lake. The built environment harmonizes with this natural appearing setting in a sustainable manner that supports a vibrant community and healthy economy.

Figure 11-1. Scenic Quality Summary



11.3.2 Proposed Desired Condition: Natural Environment

Scenic Resource Desired Condition SR DC 1

Natural Environment: Scenery viewed from Lake Tahoe and the Basin's major roadways, public recreation areas, trails, and urban centers predominantly displays natural appearing forest, meadows, mountains, and the shoreline of Lake Tahoe. Development, where visible, complements the natural setting

People are concerned about the quality of their environment, including aesthetic values of landscapes, particularly scenery. People need natural-appearing landscapes to serve as psychological and physiological "safety valves," Research has shown that high-quality scenery especially that related to natural-appearing forests, enhances people's lives and benefits society. Research findings support the logic that scenic quality and naturalness of the landscape directly enhance human well-being, both physically and psychologically, and contribute to other important human benefits. It can be concluded that preserving the natural appearing scenery benefits people who are recreating, traveling for business, or are otherwise passing through natural appearing environments.

The natural appearing landscape and the Lake is perhaps the most identified natural resource of the Lake Tahoe Basin. Visitors to the area enjoy views of a magnificent lake setting within a forested mountainous environment. The Tahoe Basin is unique in that it combines visual elements normally found in several different landscape settings into one clearly defined region exhibiting exceptionally high aesthetic values. Distinctive mountain landforms surround the flat plane of the Lake, creating an enclosed type of landscape. The edges between sky and ridge tops, between water and shore, and between vegetation and rock all add interest to the scenic landscape. Finally, numerous smaller features such as streams, rock formations, sandy beaches, and rocky shorelines each create landscapes on a more intimate scale. It is the natural features of views offered from the region's scenic corridors, recreation areas and bike trails that the TRPA Compact talks to when it states, "Maintenance of the social and economic health of the region depends on maintaining the significant scenic values provided by the Lake Tahoe Basin." (TRPA Compact, Public Law 96-551-Dec. 19, 1980, Article I).

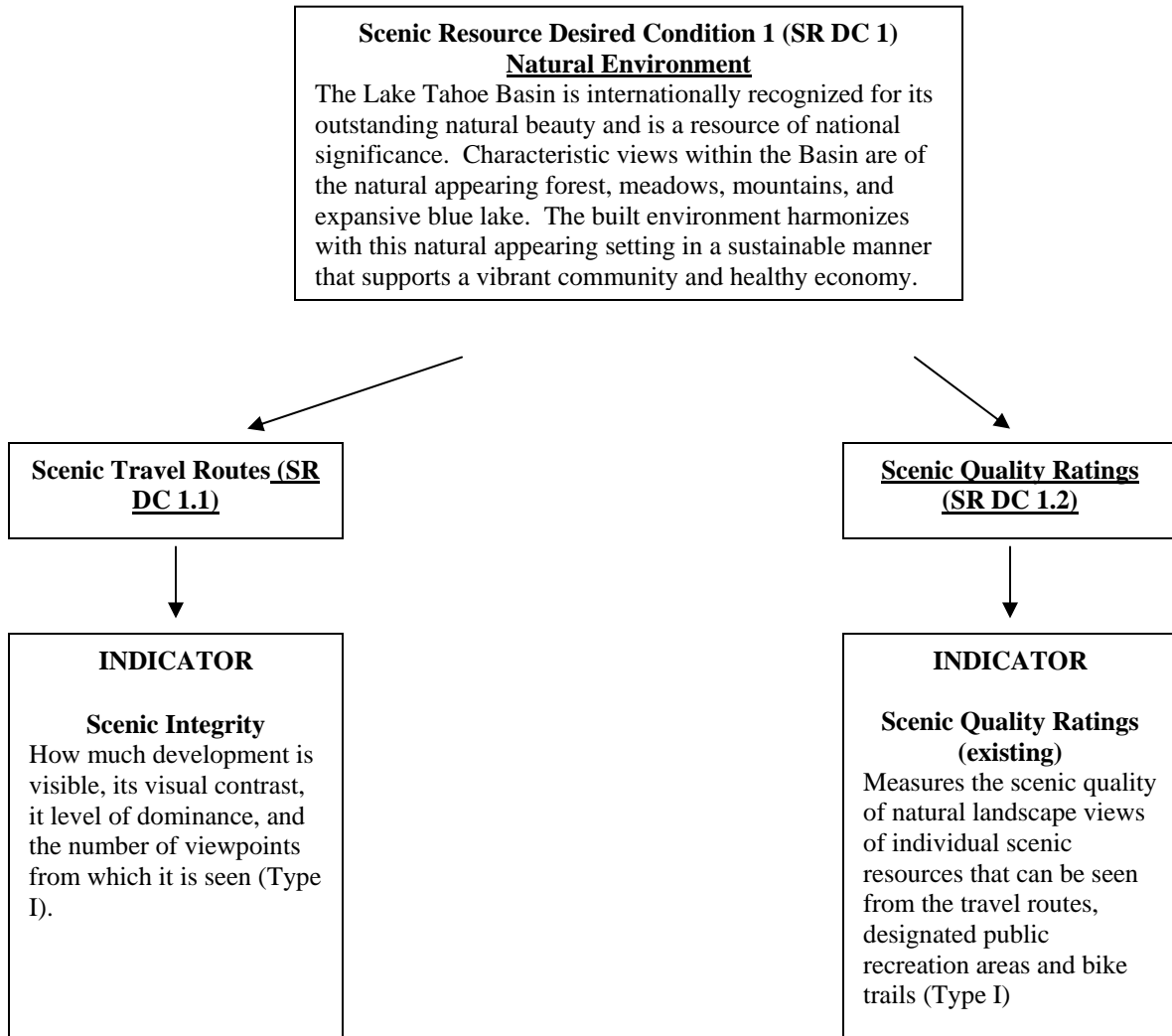
The natural appearing landscape of the Tahoe Basin is the very feature that draws so many yet at the same time is easily impacted by development. Through public workshops and public input, we know that the preservation of the natural appearing landscape continues to be an important and relevant issue, that it should be protected, and that it has direct benefits to visitors, local communities, and the entire economy of the basin. By continuing to preserve and enhance views of the natural appearing forest, meadows, and lake we continue to maintain the resource that makes the Tahoe Basin unique.

11.3.2.1 Proposed Indicator: Scenic Integrity

Because of the complexity of the travel route rating system discussed in the Need for Change section, The Core Group is proposing to that TRPA adopt Scenic Integrity as currently adopted in the USFS Scenery Management System (SMS) as a new indicator for the Threshold Travel Route Ratings. Scenic Integrity measures the level of disturbance or deviation in form, line, color, and texture in a natural appearing landscape. It measures the degree to which a landscape is visually perceived to be “complete” between the natural and developed environment and can be expressed in terms of dominance. The use of Scenic Integrity as an indicator would permit the Core Group to propose the elimination of the current system which relies on five indicators. The indicator would be the measurement of the visual dominance of the natural landscape by development.

The Core group is proposing that the existing key indicators for Scenic Quality from travel routes, bicycle trails, and recreation remains intact and is proposed as is. The Core group believes that an indicator for the Healthy Forest Ecosystem desired condition is best handled by the Vegetation Threshold program, therefore the Core group is deferring the development of this indicator.

Figure 11-3. Proposed Scenic Indicators for the Natural Environment



Rationale

As discussed in previous sections, the scenic quality of the naturally appearing landscape and backdrop is one of the main attractions of traveling to and around Tahoe. Given the importance of the natural scenery and the scenic integrity of the Tahoe Basin to the many activities that occur here it is logical to use scenic integrity as an indicator that measures the disturbance or deviation from the valued landscape character as a result of development.

Limitations

Few limitations exist for scenic integrity as a key indicator. Generally, the issue revolves around how one perceives the disturbance. Although it is easy to identify disturbance in the landscape, it may be harder to agree on what level that disturbance represents. Consequently, it is vital that levels of disturbance be defined through public perceptions studies and correlated with expert opinions.

Methodology

It is necessary to have a standard of how much visual evidence of development can occur in different areas throughout the basin if Tahoe's scenic beauty is to be preserved. This standard should represent how much visual evidence of development is acceptable in a given area in order to produce the desired condition for scenic resources. This notion can be thought of as Scenic Integrity Level. As an initial step in setting standards for Scenic Integrity Levels, the entire Tahoe Basin will be inventoried according to Scenic Character Themes, as visually distinctive types of land use and development. This will be in addition to the current shoreline and roadway travel analysis units, which do not fully encompass the basin's valued scenic features and viewsheds. The Scenic Character Themes proposed for the Tahoe Basin include 1) "Natural-Appearing" theme, where visual influences from urban/community land uses are minute or nonexistent; 2) "Transition" theme, where visual influences from urban/community land uses exist yet are typically minor to moderate, expressing a blended scenic identity of natural appearance and typically subtle human influences; and 3) "Urban/Community" theme, where human urban/community development is the dominant scenic identity. Theme areas would be further subdivided into unique "Places", wherever a unique socially valued scenic image and identity exists. Standards for acceptable levels of Scenic Integrity within each Scenic Character Theme area and each "Place" will be established and applied. Therefore, the standard established for each Scenic Character Theme area and each Place may be above, below, or equal to current conditions. Unlike the current standard for roadway travel units which is the same for all units, the new threshold standards will vary by Theme area and Place.

An ideal indicator of Scenic Integrity Levels is the level of visual dominance exhibited by development with respect to the surrounding setting. The standards for Scenic Integrity will be articulated three ways; verbally, pictorially, and numerically. The verbal descriptions will consist of written definitions of the conditions that meet the threshold standard. The pictorial descriptions will consist of sets of photographs taken within the basin that illustrate the conditions associated with each threshold. Several examples of each threshold level will be included. The numerical descriptions will simply consist of

the numbers 1 through 5 since the proposed system will employ five possible levels of visual dominance and presence of development. The verbal and pictorial descriptions provide the public with a quick and easy to understand reference as to the development conditions considered acceptable in each area. The numerical descriptions of the standards will be used for future monitoring, making determinations of cumulative threshold attainment for either single or multiple projects, and in the process of permitting specific proposed projects.

One of five levels of Scenic Integrity will be applied to each one of the mapped Theme and Place units throughout the basin. The five possible levels of this threshold are:

1. Scenic Integrity Level 1: undisturbed conditions such as federal designated wilderness areas
2. Scenic Integrity Level 2: development must be visually non-evident,
3. Scenic Integrity Level 3: development must appear subordinate or be non-evident,
4. Scenic Integrity Level 4: development must appear visually co-dominant or less,
5. Scenic Integrity Level 5: development appears visually dominant

In order to provide sensitivity and flexibility in response to local conditions and needs, the Scenic Integrity threshold standards will be applied to each individual mapped Theme unit and Place in the basin, but will also apply to specific views that occur within each area. To be considered in attainment, the unit as a whole must exhibit the conditions associated with the prescribed threshold level, and individual views within the unit must also meet the established threshold standard. This will ensure that individual projects meet the threshold and that the cumulative effect of numerous projects within the same unit will also collectively meet the threshold and not be detrimental to scenic quality.

Baseline Conditions

There is a clear relationship between the current scenic threshold system applied to roadway and shoreline travel units and the system proposed herein. In the current system, one of the variables rated within roadway and shoreline travel units, among several others, is man-made features. This variable correlates very well with visual dominance of development utilized in the proposed system. The relationship is strong enough that the ratings for man-made development compiled during several cycles of the 5-year monitoring program can be reliably used as an expression of the baseline condition for visual dominance of development with the proposed system.

Future Monitoring

Monitoring changes and trends in Scenic Integrity and determining whether the related threshold standards are attained or not will be accomplished using the same general approach that has been utilized in the past. However, future monitoring efforts will involve rating the visual dominance of development with a single variable. Other than man-made features, the variables that were previously rated were found to be generally

insensitive and not directly relevant to potential degradation of scenic quality today. Therefore they will no longer be rated.

Monitoring efforts in the future will be conducted within the Scenic Character Theme areas and Places as well as the current roadway and shoreline travel route units. For the sake of efficiency, the primary monitoring effort may be focused on those areas where development projects have occurred during the previous five years (since the last round of monitoring). These areas can be identified from TRPA and USFS permit records.

Ratings of visual dominance of development under the proposed system will take into account how much development is visible, its visual contrast, and how frequently it is viewed including the number of viewpoints from which it is seen. A Scenic Integrity Level of 1 to 5 will be given according to the level of visual dominance exhibited by development. During the rating process, the verbal and pictorial descriptions of the five possible levels will be utilized and compared to the conditions observed in the field. The number of the level that matches the existing or predicted field conditions will be assigned as the rating for that area.

The visual dominance of development ratings obtained through future monitoring will be directly compared to previous ratings of man-made features to determine upward or downward trends. They will also be directly compared to the new Scenic Integrity threshold standard established for each Theme area and Place. A difference between the rating and the threshold standard will indicate the standard is either exceeded or not attained under current conditions. Where non attainment is the case, specific views within the area that fail to meet the standard can be identified, along with specific opportunities and strategies for restoration.

Table 11-2. Scenic Integrity Level Evaluation Criteria

| Scenic Integrity Level Evaluation Criteria | | | |
|---|--|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Landscape Theme | Criteria | Visual Dominance Level | Scenic Integrity Level |
| Wilderness | Development is prohibited | NA | 1 |
| Natural | <p>Development is minimally visible from public viewpoints. Its elements contrast weakly with the surrounding landscape. Development can be seen but do not attract attention. Elements of development exhibit the same or similar color, texture, form as seen in the surrounding setting.</p> <p>The character of the built environment is maintained, enhanced and restored consistent with the natural landscape theme setting. Natural elements and processes are the principal features and characteristics of the setting in Natural-appearing Areas. Development (built structures) or human-induced landscape modifications are absent or not readily evident.</p> | Development is visually non-evident | 2 |
| | | Development is visually subordinate | 3 |
| Transition | <p>Co-dominant, development is visible from public viewpoints, appearing as one component among many of the view. Elements of development attract attention equal to that of other features of the scene. Form, line, color, and texture are consistent with existing, nearby development and complement the surrounding landscape.</p> <p>The character of the built environment is maintained, enhanced and restored consistent with the transition landscape theme setting. Development (built structures) or landscape modifications are visible but are minor elements of the otherwise natural-appearing setting of Transition Areas. Development is not extensive. It appears well integrated and compatible with the</p> | Development is visually co-dominant | 4 |

| | | | |
|-------|---|----------------------------------|---|
| | predominant natural character of the setting. | | |
| Urban | <p>Development is readily visible from public viewpoints and is the primary feature of the scene when viewed at close range or from within. Elements clearly stand out against the more distant background setting and command the attention of viewers. Form, line, color, and texture are consistent with existing, nearby development and complement the natural setting of Lake Tahoe.</p> <p>The character of the built environment is maintained, enhanced and restored consistent with the urban landscape theme setting. Development (built structures and related elements) is extensive and concentrated within Urban and Community Areas and is the principal feature of the setting. Within the urban boundary, space between denser developments creates a sense of both openness and community. Commercial development is clustered where appropriate. Enterprises that provide needed specialties are encouraged. There is an emphasis on redevelopment in areas already developed and harmonious inclusion within existing valued developments. Appropriate redevelopment encourages a sense of community, including creation of town center(s). The height and mass of buildings are controlled to ensure an appropriate scale and</p> | Development is visually dominant | 5 |

Technical discussion

Scenic integrity was chosen because it better represents the actual physical disturbance that is occurring in the basin. It is a true measurement of change in the landscape and can be easily measured and quantified. Additionally, scenic integrity is an indicator currently used by the USFS Scenery Management System. In the interest of providing consistency between TRPA and the USFS system, the Core Team is recommending that scenic integrity is used as the indicator for the scenic resource threshold standard.

The Core Team discussed using the current indicators which measure a series of indices but decided against it. The team believes that the current indicators are not specifically designed to reflect the needs of the scenic thresholds and the varying level of development types and landscape character in the basin. An example is the index for Road Structure. This index is meant to measure how a road alignment positively or negatively impacts scenic quality. However, in practical purposes, a change to a highway alignment is unlikely to occur and the construction of a new highway in the basin is highly unlikely. Therefore this index is not sensitive to change and cannot be used as an area for improvement within the scenic highway corridor.

The index dealing with Lake Views also has problems. Not all units are on equal footing when it comes to measuring this index. In particular scenic units within urban areas generally do not have views of the Lake but nevertheless are evaluated on this factor. The lowest rating is given to this index and opportunities to change (improve) this rating are not possible. This does not appear to be equitable as all units of roadway are to be rated for Lake Views although not all units provide lake views.

It should also be recognized that the problem in ratings is exacerbated by the fact that units having poor ratings on Lake and Landscape Views were often rated low in Variety. This might be considered to be double counting of negative attributes.

The standards are set up in a manner that would anticipate that all roadway and shoreline units should achieve or exceed a similar acceptable rating despite differences in the inherent landscape character and capability to visually absorb development. This is not the case. No two units of the roadway or the shoreline have exactly the same inherent scenic quality or visual absorption capability. This does not appear to be equitable as all units of roadway are to achieve a minimum numerical rating of 16 for and 8 for shoreline units. Although it is ideal to have a high degree of scenic quality in all units, those which were not blessed with natural "good looks" seem to be penalized.

The results from monitoring of the indicators can probably be used by the recreation and vegetation thresholds. The results of the monitoring could help inform recreation providers when developing or expanding recreation facilities of potential impacts. Vegetation may use the indicators to inform them of whether management activities are impacting or enhancing the scenery of the natural appearing forest.

Indicator Type I, II or III

Scenic Integrity is a Type I indicator. Adequate data is available to establish a current status and objective standard for resource managers to achieve. Existing data collected under the current scenic threshold system already represents the necessary data for this indicator and therefore monitoring efforts are already in place.

Although adequate data exist for this indicator, the Scenic Core Group and the TWG believes it is necessary to ground truth the indicator with public perception. Therefore the Core Group is proposing a public perception study to develop a picture of the range of disturbance as measured by this indicator. Currently, funding of \$21,000 has been acquired to complete this task. This work can be done over the next 6 month period. It is anticipated that the survey methodology would be developed in collaboration with Scenic Experts and the Scenic Technical Working Group.

In addition to the perception survey, additional work is required of the Scenic Core Group and the Technical Working Group to classify the shoreline into landscape themes similar to the existing designations currently used along the scenic highways. This is needed and is critical to the success of proposed threshold standards since it will allow differing levels of impacts depending on landscape types. This additional work will rely on current inventory work being conducted to identify the existing landscape and developed character of the shoreline.

- **Scenic Integrity Level Perception Study**

Timeline:

10/05 – 12/05

Expertise Needed:

Scenic Technical Working Group

Cost:

\$21,000 (fully funded)

Tasks and Analyses:

- Develop survey methodology
- Develop survey instrument
- Select survey sample
- Test survey instrument
- Conduct Survey
- Analyze survey results
- Develop and adopt Scenic Integrity Levels

Associated Attributes

- **Views from the roadway, shoreline, bicycle trails, and public recreation areas.**

In many instances the ability to enjoy views of the natural scenery and the Lake are only available from the Region's roadways, shoreline, and bicycle trails and recreation areas. Bicycling and walking along the region's bike trails allow users

an opportunity to enjoy the Lake. The same is true from the region's public recreation sites, which in many cases provide the only access available to the general public. A major activity cited in many of the recreation surveys include sight-seeing by driving on the Region's highways.

- **Native plant species and seral stages are present in the Tahoe Basin forest. SEZs and meadows are in their natural state.**

The condition of the natural ecosystem in the basin is critical to the quality of the scenic experience. Functioning meadows and healthy, sustainable forests provide the dominating natural appearing landscapes that are valued for recreation and economic reasons.

11.3.2.2 Current Condition and Trend

Currently, scenic quality within the natural forested areas has generally been rated with a high to very high level of scenic quality. This is due in part as a result of the lands being predominantly in public ownership. However, in those areas defined as transitions areas where the natural areas and the built environment compete, a decline in scenic quality has been noted in the threshold evaluations. As noted in Sections 1-4, the scenic quality in urban corridors has dramatically improved through public and private redevelopment efforts. Much of the improvement can directly attributed to improvement in the aesthetic quality of the built environment.

The opposite trend has occurred within the shoreline scenic units. As discuss in earlier sections, increased urbanization and the trend towards larger residential structures has decreased scenic quality along the shoreline. Since the adoption of the Shoreland Ordinances to halt the decline of scenic quality the data is still in

11.3.2.3 Legal Requirements and Standard

Legal Requirements

TRPA is legislatively mandated to protect the significant scenic resources of the region as stated in the Compact. In 1980, the States of California and Nevada and the federal government substantially amended the Tahoe Regional Planning Compact ("Compact"). In adopting the amended Compact, the states and Congress found that the Lake Tahoe region "exhibits unique environmental and ecological values" and that the "waters of Lake Tahoe and other resources of the region are threatened with deterioration and degeneration, which endangers the **natural beauty** and economic productivity of the region." These entities found that "[m]aintenance of the social and economic health of the region depends upon maintaining the significant **scenic**, recreational, education, scientific, natural and public health values provided by the Lake Tahoe Basin." And, "[i]n order to preserve the **scenic beauty** and outdoor recreational opportunities of the region, there is a need to insure an equilibrium between the region's natural endowment and its manmade environment." (Emphasis added)

As the first step in protecting Lake Tahoe, Article V(b) of the Compact directs TRPA to adopt thresholds. The Compact defines thresholds as “**an environmental standard necessary to maintain a significant scenic, recreational, educational, scientific or natural value of the region, or to maintain public health and safety within the region.**” Article II(i) (emphasis added). The Compact further states that “[s]uch standards shall include but not be limited to standards for air quality, water quality, soil conservation, vegetation preservation, and noise.”

Articles II(e) and V(b) require that TRPA, at a minimum, adopt thresholds for five specifically enumerated “significant” environmental or public health values: air quality, water quality, soil conservation, vegetation preservation and noise. Thus, of the adopted TRPA’s adopted thresholds – scenic, is not specifically enumerated by the Compact.

Under the Compact, if an environmental standard is “necessary to maintain a significant” environmental or public health value, its adoption is required regardless of whether it is one of the five enumerated thresholds.

As noted above, the Article I legislative findings of the Compact provide the broad outlines of what Congress and the states referenced as values normally associated with Lake Tahoe: water quality, scenic beauty, recreation, along with more generic references to “educational,” “scientific,” “educational” or “natural” values of the region. A value that falls within these parameters will likely be held to be significant. Moreover, values like scenic beauty may be difficult to be labeled “insignificant” given their consistent and insistent treatment in Article I.

Perhaps more importantly, Article V (Planning) appears to presuppose some objectives (i.e., values) for the specified elements of the required plan elements. For example, Article V(c)(3) mandates that TRPA adopt a conservation plan “for the preservation, development, utilization, and management of the scenic and other natural resources within the basin, including but not limited to, soils, shoreline and submerged lands, scenic corridors along transportation routes, open spaces, [and] recreational and historic facilities.” Relying on this and other sections, a federal District Court judge recently found that “. . . the Compact specifically mentions scenic resources and values, and actually mandates that TRPA protect such scenic resources” Committee for the Reasonable Regulation of Lake Tahoe v. TRPA, 311 F.Supp.2d 972, 986 (D. Nev. 2004); see also id. at 985.

Therefore, the significance of a particular value will be guided mainly by the structure and text of the Compact. The scenic threshold addresses values that are easily recognizable as significant under the Compact. More importantly, it addresses values that will be very difficult to characterize as insignificant. Finally, in Resolution 82-11, the Governing Board concluded that “[e]vidence in the record . . . , which evidence is hereby determined to be substantial, establishes that each of the [thresholds] adopted by this resolution is necessary to maintain significant scenic, recreational, educational, scientific or natural value of the Lake Tahoe region”

Current Standard

The UFSF established scenic resource objectives in the Lake Tahoe Basin Management Plan implementing management practices that maintain or enhance high visual quality in areas surrounding recreation developments. Restore areas where visual quality has degraded and increase opportunities to view Lake Tahoe from highways, vista points, and other planned locations

TRPA has adopted three thresholds standards that protect the basin's scenic resources as viewed from the roadway, shoreline, bicycle trails, and public recreation areas. The fourth threshold standard is a policy standard that relates to the aesthetic quality of the built environment.

11.3.2.4 Public Input

Desired Condition statements were directly gathered from the public through the public visioning workshops and surveys conducted by the Center for Collaborative Planning (CCP). In addition the Scenic Core Group extrapolated from the management strategies that were being articulated by the public into the proposed desired conditions. The public expressed their desire for protection of the views of the lake, encourage appropriate architecture that integrated with the natural landscape and provide flexibility in design that is appropriate to the community character trying to be achieved.

11.3.2.5 Technical Input

The Scenic Core Group conducted three meetings of the Scenic Technical Working Group to solicit input from the technical members regarding their desired conditions for scenic resources. The Scenic Core Group presented the proposed desired conditions, indicators and standards in July, 2005 to the Scenic TWG. Many of the proposed desired conditions were consistent with the agency's existing desired conditions; however, the TWG members as well as the Core Group suggested improvements in the statements expressing these desired conditions. Members suggested removing desired conditions that were deemed to be management strategies and agreed with the Core Group that a number of desired attributes could be consolidated.

The Core Group presented the proposed key indicator and threshold standard to the TWG for input and comment. The TWG agreed that the use of scenic integrity/visual disturbance was an ideal universal indicator of change in the landscape and would work with the proposed threshold standards put forth by the Core Group. Members did express concerns with the proposed perception study to ground truth the scenic integrity levels. They mentioned that it was 1) important to get the public perception, 2) that Scenic Expert and the TWG is involved in development of the survey instrument. The Core Group will work with the TWG on the continue refinement of the indicator, the standards and the development of the survey instrument.

11.3.2.6 Proposed Desired Condition and Standard

Desired conditions for scenic resources focus on two main aspects, 1) preserving the portions of the Tahoe landscape that currently have a natural appearing setting, and 2) ensuring that development, when it does occur, is appropriate for the area it will be located in terms of its size, mass, architectural style, and density. The Scenic Core Team with input from the Technical Working Group recommends the following modified desired conditions and standards for the natural environment (See Figure 11-4).

Proposed Desired Conditions

SR DC 1: Natural Environment

Scenery viewed from Lake Tahoe and the Basin's major roadways, public recreation areas, trails, and urban centers predominantly displays natural appearing forest, meadows, mountains, and the shoreline of Lake Tahoe. Development, where visible, complements the natural setting

Proposed Standards

SR DC 1.1: Natural Environment: Scenic Travel Routes

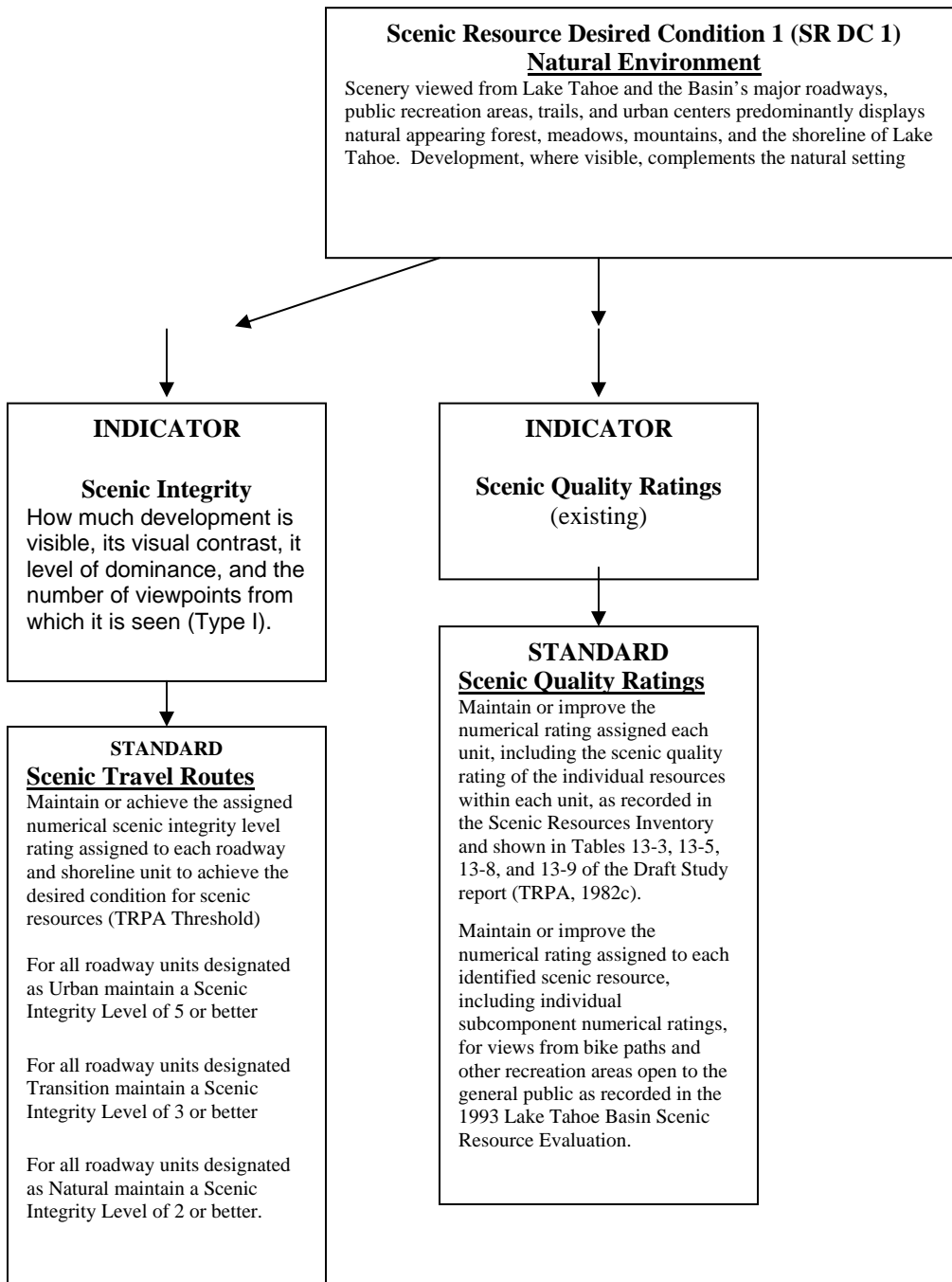
Maintain or achieve the assigned numerical scenic integrity level rating assigned to each roadway and shoreline unit to achieve the desired condition for scenic resources (TRPA Threshold)

- For all roadway units designated as Urban maintain a Scenic Integrity Level of 5 or better
- For all roadway units designated Transition maintain a Scenic Integrity Level of 3 or better
- For all roadway units designated as Natural maintain a Scenic Integrity Level of 2 or better.

SR DC 1.2: Scenic Quality

- Maintain or improve the numerical rating assigned each unit, including the scenic quality rating of the individual resources within each unit, as recorded in the Scenic Resources Inventory and shown in Tables 13-3, 13-5, 13-8, and 13-9 of the Draft Study report (TRPA, 1982c).
- Maintain or improve the numerical rating assigned to each identified scenic resource, including individual subcomponent numerical ratings, for views from bike paths and other recreation areas open to the general public as recorded in the 1993 Lake Tahoe Basin Scenic Resource Evaluation.

Figure 11-4. Proposed Threshold Standards for the Natural Environment Desired Condition



11.3.2.7 Potential Use

It is envisioned that the LTBMU Forest Service will use the desired condition statement as a guiding principal for development of the Forest Plan and for providing consistency between TRPA Scenic Threshold and the Forest Service Scenery Management System; however, the standard will not likely be adopted by the Forest Service as a legally binding criteria for success but rather as a landscape character goal to achieve.

11.3.2.8 Linkages with Other Resources

It can be argued that that scenic quality is the window to the health of the Tahoe ecosystem in that scenic quality can be defined as how we perceived the environment around us. If it is perceived that the ecosystem is functioning naturally and is sustainable, it generally results high scenic quality while an impaired system may result in reduced visual quality (i.e., wildlife scars). Therefore, all the threshold resources, with the exception of noise, directly affect scenic quality either positively or negatively. However, the strongest relationships to scenic resources are with recreation, socio-economics, soils/SEZ, water quality, and vegetation. Recreation, such as sight seeing, is closely correlated to the scenic integrity of the basin, and is a main contributor to the economy of the Tahoe basin. The other resources are part of the natural ecosystem that makes up the landscape that is viewed and valued in the basin. As stated above, these resources can have positive and negative impacts.

- **Recreation:** Sight-seeing is a recreation activity mostly identified with Lake Tahoe and providing a natural setting and visual access to the natural appearing forest, the lake and scenic backdrops from all locations around the basin is critical to meeting people's expectation of what Tahoe is known for.

The negative side of this relation can be the need to develop and expand existing recreation opportunities in the basin to meet growing demands. This may result in alterations of the natural landscape that ultimately impact the natural scenery. An example may be the need to develop new ski runs to meet demand. In many cases the new ski runs require removal and alteration of the natural forested backdrop and may impact the natural appearing forest.

- **Socio-economics:** There is direct relationship between socio-economics and the quality of our scenic resource. Many of the activities in the basin that drive the economy revolve around the natural ecosystem: camping, hiking, sight-seeing, boating. Therefore it is critical that the resources that directly influence these activities are maintained and enhanced.
- **Soils/SEZ:** Stream Environment Zones (SEZ) are component of the viewshed that contributes directly to aesthetic characteristic of the landscape. In many instances the SEZ has been designated as a scenic resource.

- **Vegetation:** Except for the Lake itself, vegetation is by far the largest component and direct influence of scenic quality in the Tahoe Basin. The vegetation type, patterns, and textures in the basin provide the natural appearing backdrop that frames many of the views in the basin that people have come to expect. Therefore this resource area has a large influence on the scenic quality of the basin. Forest management techniques can have short-term and long term impacts on scenic resources, especially the removal of excess fuels for the prevention of large, catastrophic wildfires. However, forest fuels reduction and long term scenic sustainability is achievable. Past practices in the Tahoe Basin have resulted in establishing an ecosystem that is likely out of balance due to decades of fire suppression. This can have significant impacts on scenic quality (i.e., dead and dying trees). Ecosystems that are out of balance cannot sustain certain values, including the native scenery.

Conversely, the public's perception of scenic quality in the basin may not reflect a sustainable healthy forest. Expected image of Lake Tahoe's landscape character may be one of dense, monoculture stands that exist today but are highly vulnerable to disease and wildfires. This change in perception will require educating the public and gathering public support for a sustainable forest, sustaining the valued native scenic character, and achieving a natural appearing landscape.

- **Air Quality:** The dominant natural environment supports a very diverse suite of recreational opportunities. Some activities, such as sight-seeing, rely on clear air and good air quality levels. The ability to view the lake and mountains are dependent on having clear skies.
- **Water Quality:** The clarity and color of the lake itself is directly influence the scenic quality experience in the Tahoe Basin. The ability to see the blue lake from long distances and the clarity along the shoreline from the traveling scenic corridors are all important to he scenic experiences. Comments received from the public visioning workshops and surveys indicated that views of the lake from the region's scenic corridor are important resources that should be protected and enhanced.

11.3.2.9 Influencing Factors

Two main factors influence the level of scenic quality of the natural landscape in the basin, activities related to ecosystem management and development pressure. Both factors can influence scenic resources both positively and negatively depending on the amount, scale and location.

As noted previously, development is part of the Tahoe landscape; however, past practices and certain present activities continue to degrade scenic quality in the basin.

11.3.2.10 Linkages with Other Resources

Scenic integrity and design standards as an indicator reliably measure the state of scenic quality in the Tahoe Basin. However, it is important to understand and use monitoring data from other key indicators of the other resource areas to help fully evaluate scenic quality. The various attributes of vegetation, soils/SEZ, water quality, air quality, and recreation are ideal in evaluating scenic quality. Unmitigated soil erosion impacts vegetation, which potentially may cause changes in the landscape that could potentially impact the aesthetic and recreational values of the natural appearing landscape. Subsequently, the change in the natural appearing landscape may be perceived to degrade the scenic and recreation experience in the basin.

Increased air pollution may degrade the quality of the viewshed as seen from many locations from the scenic corridors and designated vista points. This loss of clear views of the basin natural endowments may further have direct and indirect impacts on the basin economics and the quality of the scenic views is degraded over time.

11.3.3 Proposed Desired Condition: Community Design

Scenic Resource Desired Condition SR-2

Community Design: Communities of the Lake Tahoe Basin are planned and designed with aesthetic characteristics that respect the local natural systems. Lake Tahoe's built environment is diverse yet appropriate in scale and style. It helps foster the identity of individual communities and a sense of place.

The components of the built environment are located, planned, and designed with aesthetic characteristics that respect the natural systems in which they reside. The built environment of the Lake Tahoe Basin serves as a model for successfully integrating natural landscape attributes and cultural community-valued aesthetic attributes. The built environment features architecture that is diverse yet appropriate in scale and style for the Tahoe Region, and that fosters and expresses the individual identity of communities within the Basin. The Tahoe built environment reflects and harmonizes with the attributes of Tahoe's natural scenery, and the valued aesthetic attributes of its communities.

In recent years, the built environment in the Tahoe Basin has shown major improvements in design and aesthetics. Substantial public and private investment in redevelopment is occurring in the Lake Tahoe Region and almost without exception; new projects utilize high quality materials and exhibit superior design. Often, commercial and residential properties are redeveloped using architectural styles commonly referred to as "Tahoe rustic", "Old Tahoe", or "National Park" and tend to create regionally appropriate designs compared to the structures they replace.

However, not all redeveloped structures produce positive effects on the scenic quality or community design standards. Decreased setbacks, substantially larger and more massive structures, use of large window area and other reflective materials such as metal roofs, and the use of light-colored exterior siding materials all tend to increase the visual dominance and obtrusiveness of man-made elements. Thus, while an individual new structure may have pleasing and interesting elements, in some cases the cumulative impact of new structures may have negative effects on the area's natural-appearing character.

Throughout the region, public and joint public/private investments in new projects have produced substantial improvements in community character. These projects include several sidewalk/landscaping projects, erosion control and water quality improvement projects, land purchases by public agencies and subsequent removal of decrepit structures, and numerous projects in the South Lake Tahoe redevelopment area. Without exception, these projects have improved the sense of place and functionality of the core community areas. Public leadership in these projects has often encouraged and motivated private investment on nearby properties, expanding the benefits beyond the public project area boundaries.

11.3.3.1 Proposed Indicator: Development and Design Standards

The Core group and the Scenic Technical Working Group agree that the community design and aesthetic quality of the built environment continues to be an important element for maintaining scenic quality in the Tahoe Region. This is supported by input from the public visioning process that states the appropriate design and character that are valued by the community should be maintained and encouraged. To address this issue, a modification of the current Community Design Standard is proposed. Therefore the Core Group is proposing the implementation of the following design and development measures: height, bulk, texture, form, materials, colors, lighting, signage, and siting, as indicators for the Community Design Threshold Standard.

Rationale

Because development either already exists or is anticipated at some level in certain areas in the basin, it is necessary to ensure that when it does occur, development is appropriate in terms of its size, mass, architecture, and density for the area (i.e. landscape type) and reflect the desired valued attributes of the community in which it will be located. To address this issue, a modification of the current Community Design Standard is proposed. A specific set of development and design standards would apply depending on the area where the development would be located. The Development and Design Standards for each town or community would be formulated with substantial local public input through the Pathway 2007 planning process. The ideal indicator of this standard would be simple compliance (or failure to comply) with the applicable Development and Design Standards. The design standards would be based on the valued attributes that are desired by a community and identified through "place making" planning process. This will provide flexibility in the system that will take into account that no two communities are alike and should be alike. Determination of this indicator, recorded as compliance or

non-compliance, would be made as a finding and measured in terms of what percentage of items listed in the standards are implemented by a particular project, or exhibited within the area as a whole. Findings would be based on based on field inspections or photo documentation.

Limitations

Few limitations exist for this key indicator. It is relatively an easy process to require the implementation of development design standards in the project review process that reflects the values attributes that are desired in a community.

General Methodology

In order to provide sensitivity and flexibility in response to local conditions and needs, the community design threshold standards will be applied to each individual mapped Theme area and Place in the basin, and also to specific views that occur within each area. To be considered in attainment, the unit as a whole must exhibit the visual dominance of development conditions associated with the prescribed threshold, while individual views within that unit must also meet the established threshold standard. This will ensure that individual projects meet the threshold and that the cumulative effect of numerous projects within the same unit will also collectively meet the threshold and not be detrimental to scenic quality. The actual assignment of Scenic Integrity Level standards cannot occur until the areas and places to which they will apply are mapped.

For each area in the basin where development is desirable and expected, a set of development and design standards will be formulated and applied. The set of standards for each area will be tailored to contain the physical and visual attributes relating to development that the local community decides as necessary. Treated as a threshold, compliance with the applicable development and design standards will ensure that each community exhibits its own desired visual character. The indicator of this standard would be compliance (or failure to comply) with the applicable Development and Design Standards. Determination of this indicator would be made by inspecting individual project sites or areas as a whole and recording the presence or absence of items listed in the applicable standard using a checklist approach. In more sensitive locations, the threshold may require a higher percentage of items contained in the standard be implemented and present in order for the area (or site) to be considered in attainment. In less sensitive locations, the threshold may be set at a lower required percentage.

The list of specific items contained in each area's design and development standards will be formulated with input from the local residents of each area. Also, the percentage of compliance required for threshold attainment would be set with input from the public. This approach is consistent with the public identifying and articulating desired community character as part of the Community Plan process within the basin.

Technical discussion

See technical discussion in SR Desired Condition 1.

Indicator Type I, II or III

Development Design Standards is a Type II indicator. Type II indicators are full or partial data generated by ongoing, systematic monitoring and/or collection are available, but further data analysis or management is needed in order to present a status or trend. Although adequate data exist to describe the existing community character and the desired character, much of the data is old and potentially outdated. The existing data can be found in the locally adopted community plan documents and the TRPA Goals and Policies which is over twenty years old. However, new statements of desired conditions and vision of community character is needed. Currently, developing an updated vision statement for community character is proposed as part of the Pathway 2007 planning process. Through the public visioning process, additional data can be used to identify specific attributes that different communities desired. This additional dataset would be used to set a threshold standard for Community Design that is flexible and responsive to local needs.

Associated Attributes

- **Natural-appearing Landscape Themes:** The character of the built environment is maintained, enhanced and restored consistent with the natural landscape theme setting. Natural elements and processes are the principal features and characteristics of the setting in Natural-appearing Areas. Development (built structures) or human-induced landscape modifications are absent or not readily evident.
- **Transition Landscape Themes:** The character of the built environment is maintained, enhanced and restored consistent with the transition landscape theme setting. Development (built structures) or landscape modifications are visible but are minor elements of the otherwise natural-appearing setting of Transition Areas. Development is not extensive. It appears well integrated and compatible with the predominant natural character of the setting.
- **Urban Landscape Themes:** The character of the built environment is maintained, enhanced and restored consistent with the urban landscape theme setting. Development (built structures and related elements) is extensive and concentrated within Urban and Community Areas and is the principal feature of the setting. Within the urban boundary, space between denser developments creates a sense of both openness and community. Commercial development is clustered where appropriate. Enterprises that provide needed specialties are encouraged. There is an emphasis on redevelopment in areas already developed and harmonious inclusion within existing valued developments. Appropriate redevelopment encourages a sense of community, including creation of town center(s). The height and mass of buildings are controlled to ensure an appropriate scale and diversity. Vegetation is maintained and incorporated in the built environment to enhance scenic quality and provide for effective defensible space.

- Night Lighting: Night time light pollution is minimized.

11.3.3.2 Current Condition and Trend

The scenic quality in urban corridors has dramatically improved through public and private redevelopment efforts. Much of the improvement can directly attributed to improvement in the aesthetic quality of the built environment. However, the public visioning has illustrated that there is a public desire to allow additional flexible in community design standards that reflect the values desired by a community while ensuring compatibility and harmony with the overall natural setting of the Lake Tahoe Basin.

11.3.3.3 Legal Requirements and Current Standard

Current Standard

TRPA has adopted a policy standard is a policy standard that relates to the aesthetic quality of the built environment. The policy states that the built environment should be compatible with the scenic and recreational values of the region.

Legal Requirements

See legal requirement discussion in SR Desired Condition 1

11.3.3.4 Public Input

See public input discussion in SR Desired Condition 1

11.3.3.5 Technical Input

See technical input discussion in SR Desired Condition 1

11.3.3.6 Proposed Desired Condition and Standard

Desired conditions for scenic resources focus on two main aspects, 1) preserving the portions of the Tahoe landscape that currently have a natural appearing setting, and 2) ensuring that development, when it does occur, is appropriate for the area it will be located in terms of its size, mass, architectural style, and density. The Scenic Core Team with input from the Technical Working Group recommends the following modified desired conditions and threshold standard for the community design (See Figure 11-5).

Proposed Desired Conditions

SR DC 2: Community Design

Implementation of applicable design and development measures (Type II): Height, bulk, texture, form, materials, colors, lighting, signage, and siting.

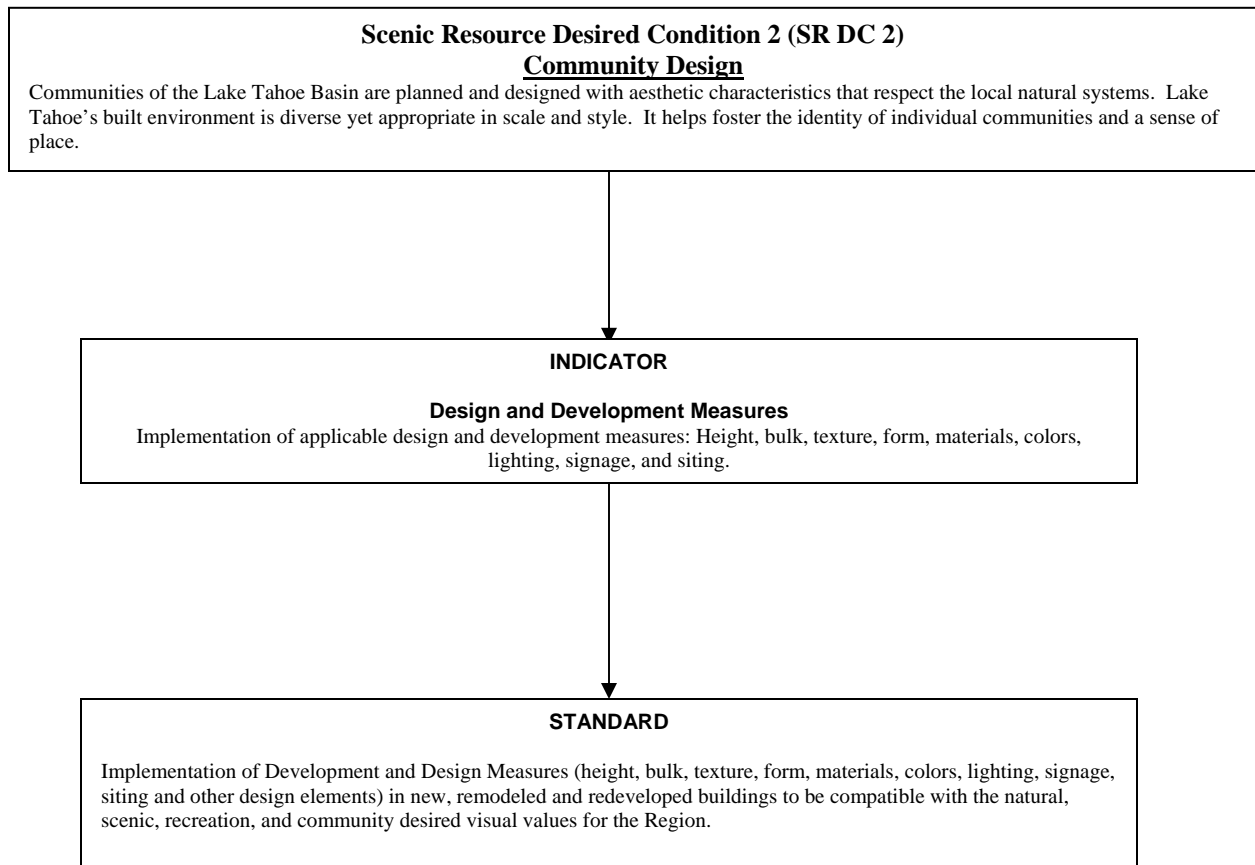
Proposed Standards

SR DC 2: Community Design

Implementation of Development and Design Measures (height, bulk, texture, form, materials, colors, lighting, signage, siting and other design elements) in new, remodeled and redeveloped buildings to be compatible with the natural, scenic, recreation, and community desired visual values for the Region.

As discussed in General Methodology above, the specific threshold standard for community design has yet to be determined. The proposed threshold standard will be developed through the public visioning process of the Pathway 2007 planning phase. This will allow the development of a standard that is sensitive and flexible in response to local conditions and needs of a community. The community design threshold standards will then be applied to each individual mapped Theme area and Place in the basin, and also to specific views that occur within each area. To be considered in attainment, the unit as a whole must exhibit the visual dominance of development conditions associated with the prescribed threshold for the landscape theme as describe above and implement a given percentage of the desired value attributes established through the visioning process.

Figure 11-5. Proposed Threshold Standards for the Community Design Desired Condition



11.3.3.7 Linkages with Other Resource Areas

It can be argued that that scenic quality is the window to the health of the Tahoe ecosystem in that scenic quality can be defined as how we perceived the environment around us. If it is perceived that the ecosystem is functioning naturally and is sustainable, it generally results high scenic quality while an impaired system may result in reduced visual quality (i.e., wildlife scars). Therefore, all the threshold resources, with the exception of noise, directly affect scenic quality either positively or negatively. However, the strongest relationships to scenic resources are with recreation, socio-economics, soils/SEZ, water quality, and vegetation. Recreation, such as sight seeing, is closely correlated to the scenic integrity of the basin, and is a main contributor to the economy of the Tahoe basin. The other resources are part of the natural ecosystem that makes up the landscape that is viewed and valued in the basin. As stated above, these resources can have positive and negative impacts.

- **Recreation:** Sight-seeing is a recreation activity mostly identified with Lake Tahoe and providing a natural setting and visual access to the natural appearing forest, the lake and scenic backdrops from all locations around the basin is critical to meeting people's expectation of what Tahoe is known for.

The negative side of this relation can be the need to develop and expand existing recreation opportunities in the basin to meet growing demands. This may result in alterations of the natural landscape that ultimately impact the natural scenery. An example may be the need to develop new ski runs to meet demand. In many cases the new ski runs require removal and alteration of the natural forested backdrop and may impact the natural appearing forest.

- **Socio-economics:** There is direct relationship between socio-economics and the quality of our scenic resource. Many of the activities in the basin that drive the economy revolve around the natural ecosystem: camping, hiking, sight-seeing, boating. Therefore it is critical that the resources that directly influence these activities are maintained and enhanced.
-
- **Soils/SEZ:** Stream Environment Zones (SEZ) are component of the viewshed that contributes directly to aesthetic characteristic of the landscape. In many instances the SEZ has been designated as a scenic resource.
- **Vegetation:** Except for the Lake itself, vegetation is by far the largest component and direct influence of scenic quality in the Tahoe Basin. The vegetation type, patterns, and textures in the basin provide the natural appearing backdrop that

frames many of the views in the basin that people have come to expect. Therefore this resource area has a large influence on the scenic quality of the basin. Forest management techniques can have short-term and long term impacts on scenic resources, especially the removal of excess fuels for the prevention of large, catastrophic wildfires. However, forest fuels reduction and long term scenic sustainability is achievable. Past practices in the Tahoe Basin have resulted in establishing an ecosystem that is likely out of balance due to decades of fire suppression. This can have significant impacts on scenic quality (i.e., dead and dying trees). Ecosystems that are out of balance cannot sustain certain values, including the native scenery.

Conversely, the public's perception of scenic quality in the basin may not reflect a sustainable healthy forest. Expected image of Lake Tahoe's landscape character may be one of dense, monoculture stands that exist today but are highly vulnerable to disease and wildfires. This change in perception will require educating the public and gathering public support for a sustainable forest, sustaining the valued native scenic character, and achieving a natural appearing landscape.

- **Air Quality:** The dominant natural environment supports a very diverse suite of recreational opportunities. Some activities, such as sight-seeing, rely on clear air and good air quality levels. The ability to view the lake and mountains are dependent on having clear skies.
- **Water Quality:** The clarity and color of the lake itself is directly influence the scenic quality experience in the Tahoe Basin. The ability to see the blue lake from long distances and the clarity along the shoreline from the traveling scenic corridors are all important to he scenic experiences. Comments received from the public visioning workshops and surveys indicated that views of the lake from the region's scenic corridor are important resources that should be protected and enhanced.

11.3.3.8 Influencing Factors

Two main factors influence the level of scenic quality of the natural landscape in the basin, activities related to ecosystem management and development pressure. Both factors can influence scenic resources both positively and negatively depending on the amount, scale and location.

As noted previously, development is part of the Tahoe landscape; however, past practices and certain present activities continue to degrade scenic quality in the basin.

11.4 Further Considerations and Investigations Regarding Scenic Quality

Federal, regional, and local planning policy mandates the conservation of significant scenic resources. For this purpose a comprehensive scenic management plan has been in place in the Tahoe Basin for over twenty years. The plan has attempted to systematically maintain and improve the quality of one of the most scenic areas in the world, thus helping to assure a healthy tourism economy and healthy natural ecosystem for the future.

Working with the management plan has increased sensitivity to the visual impacts of individual development projects and has resulted in consensus building solutions at the local level. Examples include completed private and public projects that use both conceptual and specific elements of the scenic resource management plan. Projects include the City of South Lake Tahoe Redevelopment Project, Tahoe City Urban Improvements, and numerous private remodels around the Basin in residential and commercial cores.

However the scenic resource management plan is becoming outdated. Recent monitoring data illustrates that that the system has inherent problems and is not sensitive enough to reflect changes in desired community character, new technologies, and natural processes in the landscape. A revised system must provide additional flexibility and respond to community-desired and natural changes in the landscape. Developing and implementing an updated scenic resource management plan is vital to attaining twenty-year visual quality goals in the Tahoe Region. Scenic resources are highly valued in the Tahoe Basin and are essential to the Region's image as one of the world's most memorable places.

TECHNICAL APPENDIX

PATHWAY 2007 Evaluation Report

SCENIC QUALITY

DRAFT

January 2007

Section A: Acronyms

| Acronym | Description |
|----------------|--|
| BMP – | Best Management Practices |
| EIP – | Environmental Improvement Program |
| EMS – | Environmental Management System |
| ETCC – | Environmental Threshold Carrying Capacity (TRPA) |
| LRMP – | Land and Resource Management Plan (USFS Forest Plan) |
| LTBMU – | Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit (USFS) |
| MS – | Management System |
| NDEP – | Nevada Division of Environmental Protection |
| SMS – | Scenery Management System (USFS) |
| TRPA – | Tahoe Regional Planning Agency |
| TWG – | Technical Working Group |
| USFS – | USDA Forest Service |
| VMS – | Visual Management System (USFS) |

Section B: Glossary of Terms

Attribute – A specific characteristic or element of a system or desired condition. Attributes are used to describe element of desired conditions. Like desired conditions they are phrased as outcome statements. An attribute of a functioning stream system is appropriate riparian vegetation. *See also: Desired Condition*

Desired Condition – Desired Conditions describe the ecological, economic, physical, and social attributes that characterize or exemplify the outcomes of land management and, or land use regulations.

Goals – General statements of desired ends, or values, to be achieved in the long-term through the implementation of policies and management strategies.

Indicator – A measurable parameter (metric) or an index of multiple measurable parameters (metrics) used to track progress toward achieving a desired condition and/or standard. Indicators are measures that change in response to human activity and can be used to assess the quality of resource or experience conditions.

Management Indicators – Measurable parameters or metrics that track activity or measure the effects of specific project or management actions. Management indicators are used to show progress in implementing programs and evaluating effectiveness of management activities, such as environmental improvement projects.

Management Strategies – Policy, regulatory and programmatic strategies implemented in order to reach desired conditions. Examples of management strategies may include education programs, environmental improvement projects and land use policies.

Management System – A set of processes and practices that direct and coordinate the collection and use of information for adaptive management.

Objectives – Specific measurable results that one seeks to attain by a certain point in time.

Pathway 2007 – Resource management project for the Lake Tahoe Basin among the U.S. Forest Service, Tahoe Regional Planning Agency, Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board, and the Nevada Division of Environmental Protection; the common vision and strategy of environmental and community goals involves multiple steps to build upon current regulatory framework in order to define and achieve desired management goals.

Scenery Management System (SMS) – USFS visual quality management system of 1997; revises the previous VMS system (see Visual Management System), and is implemented during a Forest Plan revision, to incorporate human values into ecosystem management.

Scenic Character Themes – Visually distinctive types of land use and development proposed as a means to inventory a given area in order to produce the desired condition for scenic resources; Themes are classified as:

- **Natural-appearing theme** – visual influences from urban/community land uses are minute or nonexistent,
- **Transition theme** – visual influences from urban/community land uses exist yet are typically minor to moderate, and
- **Urban/Community theme** – human urban/community development is the dominant scenic identity.

Scenic Integrity Level – Indication of the visual evidence of development that is acceptable in a given area in order to produce the desired condition for scenic resources. The proposed standards for Scenic Integrity would be applied to each Theme and Place unit throughout the Basin, and articulated verbally, pictorially, and numerically. See: *Scenic Character Themes*.

Skylines – Scenic resource term for horizontal divide (often ridgelines) that define the earth-sky silhouette.

Standard – A numerical target related to an indicator that defines successful achievement of a desired condition. For purposes of this document the term standard does not imply that the numeric target is legally binding or enforceable. See *also: Desired Condition*

Type – Refers to level of development of each indicator and standard combination according to the following descriptions:

Type I - The indicator directly represents the condition with respect to the desired condition, has well established monitoring and analysis protocols and a historic

dataset to show current condition. A measurable standard can be directly linked to the desired condition without further investigation.

Type II - The indicator directly represents the condition with respect to the desired condition; monitoring and analysis protocols are established with minor adjustments potentially necessary; baseline or background information may be needed to establish a numeric level for current conditions. A measurable standard will directly link to the desired condition; however some additional investigation may be required to determine the appropriate measurable standard.

Type III - The indicator is expected to represent the condition with respect to the desired condition; monitoring and analysis protocols and specific parameters may still require further investigation to develop the indicator; baseline data may need to be collected to establish a numeric level for current conditions. Further analysis is required to develop a measurable standard that will directly link to the desired condition.

Visual Management System (VMS) – USFS visual quality system, established in 1973, to consider public validation of the scenery values to be protected, and the longevity of scenery values with the context of ecology on national forest lands.

Section C: List of References Cited

Burton, L.R.; Shiozawa, K. 1971. Visual Landscape Units of the Lake Tahoe Region. In: Scenic Analyses of the Lake Tahoe Region: A Guide to Planning. Tahoe Regional Planning Agency and U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service. CA: South Lake Tahoe. pp. 6-14.

Hagermeier, J.; Ostergaard, C., Noble, G. et al. 1971. A Scenic Analysis of Principal Travel Routes in the Lake Tahoe Basin. In: Scenic Analyses of the Lake Tahoe Region: A Guide to Planning. Tahoe Regional Planning Agency and U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service. CA: South Lake Tahoe. pp. 15-37.

Iverson, W.D.; Sheppard, S.R.; and Strain, R.A. 1992. Managing Regional Scenic Quality in the Lake Tahoe Basin. *Landscape Journal*, pp. 23-39

TRPA (Tahoe Regional Planning Agency). 1982a. Lake Tahoe Basin Scenic Resource Inventory. NV: Zephyr Cove.

TRPA (Tahoe Regional Planning Agency). 1982b. Environmental Impact Statement for the Establishment of Environmental Threshold Carrying Capacities. NV: Zephyr Cove.

TRPA (Tahoe Regional Planning Agency). 1982c. Study Report for the Establishment of Environmental Threshold Carrying Capacities, chapter 13, NV: Zephyr Cove. pp. 1-22.

TRPA (Tahoe Regional Planning Agency). 1986a. Regional Plan for the Lake Tahoe Basin, Goals and Policies, chapter ii, Chapter iv. NV: Zephyr Cove. pp.18-23.

TRPA (Tahoe Regional Planning Agency). 1986b. Regional Plan for the Lake Tahoe Basin: Goals and Policies. NV: Zephyr Cove. pp.47-49;

TRPA (Tahoe Regional Planning Agency). 1989a. Final Environmental Impact Statement: Scenic Resources Management Plan. NV: Zephyr Cove.

TRPA (Tahoe Regional Planning Agency). 1989b. Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement: Scenic Resources Management Plan. NV: Zephyr Cove.

TRPA (Tahoe Regional Planning Agency). 1989c. Regional Plan for the Lake Tahoe Basin, Design Review Guidelines. NV: Zephyr Cove.

TRPA (Tahoe Regional Planning Agency). 1989d. Regional Plan for the Lake Tahoe Basin, Scenic Quality Improvement Program. NV: Zephyr Cove.

TRPA (Tahoe Regional Planning Agency). 1993. Regional Plan for the Lake Tahoe Basin, 1993 Lake Tahoe Basin Scenic Resources Evaluation. NV: Zephyr Cove.

TRPA (Tahoe Regional Planning Agency). 1991. 1991 Evaluation: Environmental Threshold Carrying Capacities and the Regional Plan Package, Chapter 8: Scenic Resources, pp. 224-249. NV: Zephyr Cove.

TRPA (Tahoe Regional Planning Agency). 1996. 1996 Evaluation Report: Environmental Threshold Carrying Capacities and the Regional Plan Package for the Lake Tahoe Region, Chapter 8, pp. 1-29; appendix c-3. NV: Zephyr Cove. pp. 44-59.

TRPA (Tahoe Regional Planning Agency). 2002. Regional Plan for the Lake Tahoe Basin: 2001 Threshold Evaluation, chapter 8, pp. 1-78; appendix 1, pp. 1-20; appendix 2, pp. 1-4; appendix 3, pp. 1-28; appendix 4, pp. 1-3; appendix 5, NV: Zephyr Cove. pp. 1-2.

USFS (U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service). 1974. National Forest Landscape Management, Vol. 2, Chapter 1: The Visual Management System. The Big Eye Book. Washington, DC: USDA Forest Service.

USFS (U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service). 1987. National Forest Landscape Management, Volume 2, Chapter 8, Recreation. Agriculture Handbook 666, Washington, DC: USDA

USFS (U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service). 1988. Land and Resource Management Plan. Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit. CA: South Lake Tahoe.

USFS (U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service). 1996. Landscape Aesthetics: A Handbook for Scenery Management. Agriculture Handbook 701: USDA Washington, DC. VA: Springfield: National Technical Information Service.