

Chapter 12 – RECREATION

Figure 12-1. Pathway Recommendations for Recreation

Recreation Vision

The Lake Tahoe Basin's unique natural, cultural and human environments provide sustainable recreation opportunities consistent with public desires and natural resource capacities. Recreation is linked to irreplaceable natural assets, the regional economy, and social well-being.

Proposed Desired Conditions

1: Opportunity

Provide a suitable spectrum of high-quality recreational opportunities while sustaining the Lake Tahoe Basin's natural setting as an outstanding recreation destination.

2: Access

Provide additional high-quality access where lawful and feasible to natural areas and shorezone consistent with desired resource conditions and user expectations.

3. Education

Residents and visitors are educated about the recreation opportunities, appropriate behavior and the unique natural and cultural environments of the Lake Tahoe Basin.

NOTE: No indicators or standards recommended.

Proposed Indicators

Opportunity

1. Rec Survey: Quality of opportunities (Type I)
2. Number of recreation opportunities (Type I and II)
3. Implementing adopted recreation plans (Type III)

Access

1. Available access to public land, shorezone, and trails (Types I and II)
2. Rec Survey: Access quality (Type I)

Education

No indicators are proposed.

Proposed Standards

Opportunity

1. - Response demonstrates that the majority of opportunity attributes indicate high quality experiences.

- Recreation providers respond when recreation quality does not meet D.C.

2. Maintain existing # of inventoried Lake Tahoe Basin resource-dependent public recreation facilities & opportunities and improve or create 10% of that baseline # of facilities every five years.

3. Specific recreation providers shall identify their top priority projects that meet the D.C. from adopted recreation plans and pursue implementing 50% of their list during the plan period.

Access

1. Maintain and increase quantity of land available for public recreation access by:

- Continuing federal and state public land acquisition programs. *Target: 20,275 additional acres*

- Increasing public shoreline ownership to 50% for Lake Tahoe. *Target: 9,701.34 additional linear feet*

- Ensuring no net loss of shoreline that currently provides public or quasi-public access to Lake Tahoe. *Target: 100% retained (linear feet)*

- Retaining all existing acreage associated with public ROWs and easements that provide access to public lands and waterways. *Target: 100% retained (acres)*

- Trails built, designated, relocated or improved/ upgraded: *Target: 50 miles every 5 years, paved; 20 miles every 5 years, unpaved*

- Number of new trailheads developed, or existing trail heads improved or newly served by transit: *Target: One every two years*

2. Response indicates that the majority of recreation access attributes indicate high quality access.

Education

No Standards are pro

12.0 RECREATION

The Bi-State Compact requires the Regional Plan to include “a recreation plan for the development, utilization, and management of the recreational resources of the region, including but not limited to, wilderness and forested lands, parks and parkways, riding and hiking trails, beaches and playgrounds, marinas, areas for skiing and other recreational facilities.” The importance of recreation to the social and economic health of the Lake Tahoe Basin is specifically called out, and the area’s recreational values are recognized in the Compact to be of national significance.

Recreation is included among the Lake Tahoe Basin’s original Environmental Threshold Carrying Capacities in order to maintain the Lake Tahoe Basin’s significant recreational values.

R-1 Threshold: *“It shall be the policy of the TRPA Governing Body in development of the Regional Plan to preserve and enhance the high-quality recreational experience including preservation of high-quality undeveloped shorezone and other natural areas. In developing the Regional Plan, the staff and Governing Body shall consider provisions for additional access, where lawful and feasible, to the shorezone and high-quality undeveloped areas for low density recreational uses.”*

R-2 Threshold: *“It shall be the policy of the TRPA Governing Body in development of the Regional Plan to establish and insure a fair share of the total Basin capacity for outdoor recreation is available to the general public.”*

Thus, implementation of the Recreation Thresholds have focused primarily on outdoor recreation opportunities and access that focus on the unique natural attributes of the Lake Tahoe Basin. Outdoor recreation is increasingly popular and significant in people’s lifestyles. The U.S. Forest Service reports that more than 90 percent of Americans participate in outdoor recreation. Seasonal outdoor attractions draw visitors from near and far to the Lake Tahoe Basin. Winter sports are supported by downhill skiing and snowboarding resorts. Cross country skiing and snowmobiling takes place both on groomed trails at fee facilities and in the backcountry. Similarly, snowshoeing and snowplay occur at designated areas and on other undeveloped land. Summer outdoor activities include: primitive camping while backpacking to RV camping with all the amenities in the middle of town; hiking in the backcountry including in the nation’s most heavily used Wilderness area – Desolation Wilderness; and playing beach volleyball with throngs of people or throwing a stick for the dog on the undeveloped shoreline. Fishing, kayaking, boating, sightseeing, rock climbing and even Shakespeare in the sand dunes comprise popular activities during the summer. Three million annual visitors, 75% of whom are neighbors from the two home states of California and Nevada, throng to the Lake Tahoe Basin, primarily in peak summer and winter months.

Since TRPA is not a land manager for any of the basin’s over 201,000 acres of land, achievement of the Compact’s recreation goals is reliant upon the success of the Region’s public recreation providers, including: the USDA Forest Service; Nevada Division of State Parks; California Department of Parks and Recreation; California Tahoe Conservancy; Nevada Division of State Lands; Local Governments/Special Districts; and private sector recreation providers.

12.1 RECREATION VISION

Recreation Vision

The Lake Tahoe Basin's unique natural, cultural and human environments provide sustainable recreation opportunities consistent with public desires and natural resource capacities. Recreation is linked to irreplaceable natural assets, the regional economy, and social well-being.

12.2 NEED FOR CHANGE

Lake Tahoe's natural environment and vast public land acreage supports a wide range of recreational activities for a variety of physical abilities. The current Recreation Thresholds are qualitative in nature with non-numeric indicators. They apply to both the 1987 TRPA Regional Plan and the 1988 LTBMU Forest Plan, which supports the attainment of the Environmental Thresholds regardless of the status of regional government in the Basin. The 1988 Forest Plan states that while no determination has been made that legally binds the Forest Service to the Recreation Thresholds, that Forest Service programs and projects are reviewed against them.

Nature-based, dispersed recreation (including undeveloped settings), built environments that reinforce natural character, facilities important to local communities in urban environments and wildland settings that complement enjoyment of Tahoe's special places...there is a need to align facilities and programs to the specific recreation "niche" being addressed by the opportunity or facility. Some recreation activities are not compatible with the resiliency of the ecosystem or are inappropriate with the desired social setting. Each place cannot provide for every recreation activity. However, the spectrum of opportunities, from dispersed to urban, all should be accounted for in determining threshold attainment.

The lack of quantifiable standards has previously been discussed as problematic for Recreation Threshold reporting and determinations regarding threshold attainment, especially when contrasted with other thresholds that have more "black and white," numeric indicators. There is an interest in defining measurable (numeric) threshold standards for Recreation resources. They would serve as assessment benchmarks in order to better understand the Recreation "state of the Basin." The proposed threshold modifications and associated desired conditions, indicators and standards attempt to provide clearer quantification for future evaluations so there is a clearer understanding of if there is a problem or if actions are moving the Recreation threshold in the correct direction.

The *Need for Change* related to the two Recreation thresholds fall into the following categories:

R-1 High Quality Recreational Experience; Additional Access to Undeveloped Lands:

Attainment status for the R-1 threshold has traditionally been measured by:

RECREATION SURVEY TOOL: The focus of the existing threshold policy is the quality of the recreation experience, which is a subjective concept that depends largely upon individual expectations. The determination of "standard attainment" has not focused on any one activity; instead, user satisfaction for a number of activities is considered. Satisfaction is based upon the performance of selected attributes as disclosed by recreation users in surveys.

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Satisfaction surveys only address the people who chose that moment of experience at a particular recreation site. They do not address visitors displaced from an area for capacity-related or other reasons. Recreation surveys do not directly ask respondents to rate a particular activity; rather, they are asked about those things (attributes) that influence the experience of the activity, such as, availability of parking or transit or cleanliness of facilities. If respondents were asked if they had a quality recreation experience for an activity, and the response was 'no,' the manager would only know that people were disappointed, but not what those attributes are that led to disappointment. Refer to the Technical Report for a full discussion of the survey instrument and methodology.

The results of the National Visitor Use Monitoring (NVUM) survey tool, administered by the Forest Service and applicable to National Forest System Lands only, and TRPA Recreation Threshold User Perception Surveys, which apply to all lands, have been the key indicators for assessing the quality of recreation opportunities within the Tahoe Region. Other information is also gathered, such as activity participation rates, use of transit operations, length of stay, number in party, standard demographic information, mode of travel, etc.

In assessing whether to modify use of the recreation survey as tools for threshold measurement and in considering options for assessment, retention of the survey tool has been determined to be preferred for one tier of measure for determining both high quality recreation opportunities and high-quality access. Surveys are superior methods for determining trend changes for recreation and this benefit cannot be replicated by any replacement method.

ADDITIONAL ACCESS: Threshold requirements for additional access to Lake Tahoe and other natural features by the general public have been measured by public land acquisition program accomplishments, additional trailheads and supporting amenities, additional trails and additional bicycle trail segments. Numerical interim targets were set for the R-1 threshold for bicycle and multi-use trails and public shoreline acquisition. Additional numerical measures, transcending public land acquisition and number of new trails, are needed in order to assess both maintenance of existing access opportunities and creation of new ones.

Not all recreation activities have the same impact, desirability or future opportunity. Continual expansion of recreation opportunities is not sustainable from a spatial and practical perspective. To date, new public land acquisitions have proven the primary method for the public to obtain new facility opportunities. Such public acquisitions are likely to become more expensive and complex, limiting future opportunities.

In general, the emphasis by the Forest Service as a recreation provider in recent years has been on updating and sometimes expanding infrastructure at existing sites to meet the expectations of today's visitors, often with the assistance of private sector concessionaires. However, some private facilities that have historically provided public lake access or "niche" visitor opportunities have closed their "public doors." Further, some previously existing public access opportunities have been modified or lost in recent years as public access easements and associated requirements have been modified or not enforced, or as public land has been transferred out of public ownership or closed for access due to conflicting resource management concerns.

GAPS: The current projection from the National Visitor Use Monitoring (NVUM) analysis for recreation demand is an increase of 1.6% per year, or 50,000 additional visitors each year for the next 20 years. With 19.7 visits per acre, the Forest service's Lake Tahoe unit already has the highest concentration of use of any National Forest. Further, the emphasis of the Forest Service at Lake Tahoe has not been on expanding site capacity, but on repairing worn out facilities, improving visitor service and implementing water quality best management practices. Most capital investment was directed at meeting current codes and standards, such as universal

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03-20-07 draft – for discussion purposes only – do not cite or quote accessibility requirements. For other recreation providers, particularly on the North Shore, removal of existing development and replacement with public recreation and lake access facilities has been key. The focus on improving quality and projects that increase the quantity of opportunities are both important to threshold attainment.

Measures that account for retrofit and enhancement of existing facilities should be treated as importantly as creation of new facilities. Consultation with recreation representatives serving on the Forum's Recreation Subcommittee has resulted in additional recreation opportunity measures. Specifically, they want to ensure that important existing recreation opportunities are not lost without replacement. They further seek to have implementation of their adopted recreation plans factor into the evaluation of threshold attainment. Further, additional measures responding to the above-described trends are needed for assessing threshold attainment.

SUMMARY OF NEED FOR CHANGE FOR R-1 THRESHOLD: Recreation “opportunity” and “access” are proposed for bifurcation into separate Recreation Thresholds. Additional indicators and standards are proposed in order to fully capture observed trends not currently considered during past threshold evaluations. They are also needed in order to better assess basinwide progress related to threshold attainment and should strive to be numeric so that the conclusions reached may be replicated regardless of who conducts the assessment. Finally, there is a need to account the spectrum of recreation opportunities, beyond undeveloped shorezone and natural areas. While the recreation opportunity should be consistent with the desired setting and resource conditions, provision of the full range should be considered contributing towards achievement of the desired conditions.

R-2 Outdoor Recreation Capacity Available to the General Public:

This threshold sought to reserve “resource capacity” – sewer, water, land coverage, etc. -- in order to ensure the ability to provide for future recreation expansion. The concern was that private development could exhaust available capacity at a pace faster than recreation facilities are provided. The experience during the planning period is that the supply of resource capacity has not proven the limiting factor for new recreation facility development. The main limitations on outdoor recreation facility development have been available funding for capital expenditures, operation, maintenance and staffing, and land acquisition. Attainment status for the R-2 threshold has been measured by:

PAOT DISPOSITION: The existing recreation capacity system for recreation development, People-at-One-Time or “PAOTs,” attempts to both promote and control recreation facility development. PAOTs have the advantage of being a quantifiable, numeric indicator. Certain types of facilities have a design capacity of so many persons at one point in time based upon Forest Service standards; for example, campgrounds are calculated as five occupants for each campsite. However, the TRPA Code does not provide similar direction regarding how to assign PAOT capacity to various applicable uses during project review.

PAOTs are generally not a management tool and they do not provide an indication of the overall use of a site, as it does not account for the total visitation or turnover over a day, month or season, nor does it measure impacts. PAOT capacity is useful for designing a ‘closed system’ facility where there is a designated point of entry and do not apply to dispersed recreation activities, certain developed recreation uses, and specific providers.

The use of PAOTs, alone, as the only numeric Basinwide recreation capacity measure “under reports” the good recreation work being done because some many of the recreation projects or providers do not require PAOT assignment. Because of this, they do not provide an effective target or ceiling under the current rules, as indicated by the fact that only 8.1% of summer day

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NON- PAOT PROJECTS: Not all facilities which increase public recreation capacity are captured under the current PAOT allocation system. Such projects do not fall within the Code definition of needing PAOTs, such as dispersed recreation or facilities owned by certain operators. In the latter case, no PAOT assignment occurs, including for all urban recreation facilities operated by local governments for which the Fire Marshal sets the facility capacity. Capacity of new non-PAOT recreation development does not provide a numeric, “apples for apples” comparison to the PAOT system in terms of measuring Threshold attainment.

PUBLIC LAND ACQUISITION SUPPORTING RECREATION: Refer to “*Additional Access*” discussion under the R-1 threshold.

GAPS: The ability to monitor the development of future recreation projects, both private and public, by measuring the number of recreation opportunities that the project would provide is an ideal that has suffered from inconsistent application by the TRPA Code. The lack of a measure for dispersed activities and urban facilities, plus disparity between whether the PAOT measure is applied depending upon ownership are key limitations. However, a superior, definable numerical methodology has not been found.

Further, the place-based planning process disclosed peak period “operational” recreation site capacity and the role recreation plays in the regional social and economic systems as public issues. There has been interest expressed in a recreation measure equivalent to the TMDL for water quality. This “ongoing” or “management” type of capacity measure has historically been the role of the site operator or land manager, not the TRPA. Advances in research for the social sciences, including recreation, continue. The Forest Service has the only Federal research program that focuses on outdoor recreation and the Tahoe Science Consortium, which includes a Social Science Theme Area that addresses recreation, intends to create and prioritize a research agenda that produces data, monitoring, and models that are directly useful to recreation providers. Clearly, the issue of recreation capacity must be addressed during land management.

Summary of Need for Change for R-2 Threshold

The proposed Desired Conditions for Recreation no longer incorporate the “fair share” principle. The new Opportunity and Access desired conditions need not and do not incorporate either PAOTs, nor does it require a specific substitute measure as threshold indicators. However, the appropriate capacity measure will still be used for project review purposes or by recreation providers, themselves, as they identify and monitor their desired recreation settings for the recreation sites that they operate or lands that they manage. In any case, ensuring provision of new, or improved existing, recreation opportunities and access is important to providing a diverse range of recreation opportunities for residents and visitors and that measure is addressed under the proposed new Opportunity and Access standards and indicators.

12.3 RECREATION OPPORTUNITY

A “recreation opportunity” is the chance for a person to participate in a particular recreational activity in a specific setting in order to realize a preferred type of experience. The Forest Service Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) system provides a useful means of classifying recreation settings by the kind of facilities offered and the degree of contact with other visitors one experiences. Four primary ROS classes may be experienced in the Lake Tahoe Basin include: Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized; Semi-Primitive Motorized; Roaded Natural; and Rural.

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Recreation opportunities offered by the Forest Service must be appropriate to the desired ROS setting.

The TRPA's currently employs three broad recreation classifications: Developed; Dispersed; and Urban ("local" or "community" recreation). The TRPA classifications are consistent with Forest Service management prescriptions and can be applied to the appropriate ROS class.

Providing a wide variety of recreation opportunities year-round is crucial to the recreation experiences for both residents and visitors. However, maintaining recreation quality in the face of limited budgets and sometimes increasing visitor use provides challenges for land management agencies. Their need to limit resource impacts, minimize user conflicts, provide a satisfying experience, stay on top of user trends, and ensure adequate access to recreation destinations requires constant vigilance and the ability to adapt within a responsive timeframe. By identifying desired resource and social conditions, land managers may compare current conditions to the identified desired conditions and take action to mitigate the use attributed to be the cause of any unacceptable changes.

12.3.1 Proposed Indicators for Recreation Opportunity

Proposed Indicators for Recreation Opportunity

1. Rec Survey: Quality of opportunities (Type I)
2. Number of recreation opportunities (Type I and II)
3. Implementing adopted recreation plans (Type III)

The survey instrument is intended to translate a subjective resource – high-quality recreation opportunities -- into statistically valid and meaningful information regarding the performance of various attributes associated with recreation opportunities. The survey methodology can be employed at various scales, such as regional, sub-regional or facility level. The results demonstrate visitor satisfaction, showing not only whether activities meet or exceed expectations, but also providing insight into those attributes that are underachieving and identifying trends.

The number of recreation opportunities as an indicator would set both a baseline to maintain and a target for maintenance, enhancement or expansion of opportunities. It is not intended to encompass every recreation facility and activity that currently exists in the Lake Tahoe Basin. Rather, additional work on the Recreation Facilities Database is required to have an accurate, unambiguous record of those specific recreation opportunities and facilities that are most important to retain to have a range of diverse opportunities in order to ensure the availability of the recreation spectrum in the future. The facilities to be identified in the inventory would be comprised of those that are needed for resource-dependent recreation activities, and are likely to be beaches, campgrounds, picnic areas, and developed winter resorts.

The final proposed indicator involves assessment of the implementation of adopted recreation plans. Since achievement of the Compact's recreation goals is reliant upon the success of the Region's recreation providers, both public and private, their identified priorities should factor into threshold attainment. When they have adopted a plan through a public process, whether a local Recreation Facilities Master Plan, a private Marina Master Plan, or the Management Plan for a Wilderness area, successful implementation will be assessed. Such projects would need to be dependent on the

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12.3.2 Current Conditions Related to Recreation Opportunity

Attainability of the current policy standards has depended upon the availability of funding for expansion, operation and maintenance of facilities and land acquisition. Current survey results indicate 40% of winter and 48% of summer attributes are high performing. Actions taken to achieve other environmental thresholds or to address resource concerns have in some cases imposed constraints upon or removed recreation opportunities.

12.3.3 Technical Range of Feasibility Regarding Recreation Opportunity

Surveys: Long-term monitoring of user perceptions using the surveys is feasible. It is also feasible to realize high quality recreation opportunities of a majority of summer and of winter recreation attributes. It is beyond anticipated political or financial feasibility to require all activity attributes to have high performance.

Number of Opportunities: This proposal represents an attempt to rank recreation facilities according to their relative priority or public benefit. Underlying this attempt is the notion of limited resources, a condition which clearly drives policy debate within the geographically constrained Lake Tahoe Basin. Accordingly, this perspective assumes that not all recreation facilities or recreation resources are of equal importance or benefit to the public-at-large.

TRPA’s existing Recreation Facility Database should be verified to ensure completeness. An “opportunity” rating system would be applied to the current inventory of recreation sites. Those uses/facilities that meet the desired condition by being dependent on the natural setting as an outstanding recreation destination should be highlighted on a list for retention (or no net loss). Their enhancement would count equally towards threshold attainment with the provision of new facilities.

Implementation of adopted recreation plans: It would first be necessary to determine what public and private recreation providers and types of plans would be appropriate to evaluate for threshold attainment. Then the specific types of eligible (and ineligible) projects would have to be determined. Recreation provider interest/willingness to participate, both initially and with accomplishment reporting, should be ascertained. The Environmental Improvement Program would account for community recreation facilities, perhaps providing new funding sources for accomplishments, but also counting towards “local share” and opening new grant possibilities. Further, identified priority projects that prove infeasible during project planning could report barriers to accomplishment that could be considered for correction (adaptive management). Typical accomplishment reports prepared for the providers’ boards, higher level offices, etc. could facilitate preparation. Pursuing implementation would contribute towards threshold accomplishment as much as actual implementation. Consequently, implementation is conceptually feasible, but the idea needs to be tested with affected providers to determine interest and the previously identified steps completed.

12.3.4 Proposed Desired Condition and Standards for Recreation

Proposed Desired Condition 1: Recreation Opportunity

Provide a suitable spectrum of high-quality recreational opportunities while sustaining Lake Tahoe’s natural setting as an outstanding recreation

Opportunity

This proposed desired condition is a departure from the existing recreation threshold policy statement in that the focus is placed on providing high-quality opportunities, rather than the quality of the individual's experience. The logic of this shift is that high-quality recreation opportunities lead to high-quality recreation experiences. Additionally, the desired condition acknowledges that not all recreation activities are suitable for the Lake Tahoe Basin in general, or within environmentally sensitive lands specifically. If the unique natural setting of Tahoe is not maintained, recreation opportunity goals will not be met and the achievement of other natural resource goals will also be at risk. The range of opportunities would need to be appropriate to the desired setting. Lastly, the proposed shift from high-quality recreation experiences to high-quality recreation opportunities maintains the relative level of recognition of the public investment and multistate and national significance of the recreational values of the Lake Tahoe Basin, as identified in the TRPA Compact.

Proposed Standards for Recreation Opportunity

1. - Response demonstrates that the majority of opportunity attributes indicate high quality experiences.
- Recreation providers respond when recreation quality does not meet D.C.
2. Maintain existing # of inventoried resource-dependent public recreation facilities & opportunities and improve or create 10% of that baseline # of facilities every five years.
3. Specific recreation providers shall identify their top priority projects that meet the D.C. from adopted recreation plans and pursue implementing 50% of their list during the plan period.

The proposed standards would serve as threshold assessment standards, not required numerical targets, in order to determine trends towards meeting the Desired Condition for Recreation Opportunity. Compliance would not be the responsibility of any one specific agency, but rather the combined public/private effort to provide important recreation opportunities for the public. The proposed Types II and III Standards require further development and refinement. In addition to the information provided in the Technical Range of Feasibility discussion, the following describes the standards:

Recreation Survey

Seasonal standards should be established for winter and summer recreation attribute performance. It is further recommended that the perceived performance of the selected attributes be reported for both residents and visitors. This standard would be considered "in attainment" if the majority (51% or more) of attributes are high-performing for both winter and summer in order to provide for a numeric review opportunity of a qualitative

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Number of Recreation Opportunities

Once the baseline is established as previously discussed, this proposal provides a numerical standard for evaluation. “No net loss” would require replacement (mitigation) for loss of an identified facility, whether public or private, if a change of use is proposed. It is proposed that a reasonable deviation be identified and provided as this standard is developed and the specific sites identified. For example, retention of a contributing campground but the slight reduction in number of sites to facilitate a restoration project should not require mitigation. However, replacement of a campground with another use or simply the removal of the use should. Eliminating a 1970’s vintage par course and replacing it with a more popular disc golf opportunity should be considered adaptive management and an improvement responding to recreation trends rather than a project requiring mitigation.

Recreation Plan Implementation

The purpose of this standard is to more directly involve key recreation providers in threshold monitoring for the areas for which there are adopted plans. The specific recreation providers to be included must first be identified. Reporting full project accomplishment of 50% of the project, by provider, clearly achieves the standard. However, some projects are complex and take years to accomplish. Consequently, “pursuit” of the project would also be evaluated as any of the following in any one year:

- Completion of a CEQA, NEPA, or TRPA environmental document;
- Application for funding; or
- Submittal of a complete project application to a permitting agency.

If a project stalls or fails at one of these steps, identification of barriers to accomplishment that may be able to be corrected (adaptive management) should be considered as part of the evaluation.

The appropriate types of plans to be assessed needs to be specifically identified. However, it is intended that the plans included be officially adopted as part of a public process, such as by the Board of a special district or county or a City Council. If it is a plan for private land, it should be a TRPA-adopted Master Plan. It is not intended that a private business plan be considered for inclusion.

12.4 RECREATION ACCESS

12.4.1 Proposed Indicators for Recreation Access

Proposed Indicators for Recreation Access

1. Available access to public land, shorezone, and trails (Types I and II)
2. Rec Survey: Access quality (Type I)

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There are two primary means of evaluating recreational access. The first is quantification of the amount of access via the summation of land ownership and facilities and gauging the perception of recreation users as to the quality of that access.

Numerical access indicators, such as acres of public land available to recreationists and miles of public shoreline, are by definition quantifiable and thus communicate well as assessment indicators for attainment of the Desired Condition and Standards for Recreation Access. Setting the specific access “commodities” to be measured and identifying the target number for the unit of measure, however, is more subjective. The survey instrument is intended to translate a subjective resource – high-quality recreation access -- into statistically valid and meaningful information regarding the performance of various attributes associated with recreation opportunities. The survey methodology can be employed at various scales, such as regional, sub-regional or facility level. The Access survey is the same survey described for the Opportunity indicator, with only the access-related attributes evaluated.

12.4.2 Current Condition and Trend for Recreation Access

There is not one indicator for access that can be used to determine the status of overall access to recreation opportunities. There are, however, commodities that can be summed to report to the public and decision makers regarding the quantity of accessible lands. For example, in 1971, about 18% of the 75 miles of Lake Tahoe’s shoreline was publicly owned. Due to land acquisitions of littoral parcels since then, public ownership along the shoreline of Lake Tahoe has increased to over 44% (TRPA GIS, 2006), or about 33 of 75 miles. Future public land acquisitions will be more challenging due to rising land prices (especially along the shoreline), the fact that the most eager of the willing sellers have already sold to public agencies, and changes to land acquisition funding sources.

In considering the positive trend regarding the total percentage of linear public shoreline described above, it is important to assess the factors that affect the ability of the public to have access to it. First, the difference between high and low water levels dramatically affects the amount of beach available for use by recreationists. Especially at low water, when more beach is exposed, the public is physically excluded from use of some of the shoreline because of adverse environmental impacts to the endangered Tahoe Yellow Cress, a plant whose habitat is only Lake Tahoe’s shoreline. In addition, seasonal closures to protect important wildlife habitat also affects public use.

Second, some public easements or rights of way have been relinquished by local governments, either voluntarily or by court order. Sometimes these easements provide the only access to public shorelines or other natural features. Occasionally, legal easements are forgotten over time. Private encroachments, or sometimes permitted private recreation improvements, on public land provide a perception that the lands are not available for public access.

Trail use is one activity that has been demonstrated in surveys as a common preference for both resident and visitor recreationists. There are approximately 484 miles of trail on National Forest System lands alone, of which 245 miles are actively managed by the Forest Service. That agency is actively preparing Access and Travel Management Plans, which will evaluate each trail and Forest Development Road for inclusion in the maintained system, or close them if determined inappropriate system additions. Rerouting trails to avoid sensitive areas has become a large part of the Forest Service

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12.4.3 Technical Range of Feasibility Regarding Recreation Access

The Access quantity commodity targets and the Desired Condition are achievable. Achieving the specific targets described in the standards requires the efforts of numerous agencies and is subject to funding (appropriations) decisions made above the local agency unit level. There are management actions that can be taken to ensure that surveyed Access Quality attributes perform according to the expectations of residents and visitors. Recreation EIP implementation assists implementing agencies in gaining funding and project priority.

12.3.4 Proposed Desired Condition and Standards for Recreation Access

Proposed Desired Condition 2: Access

Provide additional high-quality access where lawful and feasible to natural areas and shorezone consistent with desired resource conditions and user expectations.

This Desired Condition statement modifies the existing threshold policy language regarding additional access. The focus is being shifted away from merely gaining additional land for access by people - although that remains a vital component - to also emphasize the equitable, efficient and environmentally harmonious accessibility of natural areas that can offer recreation opportunities. The concept of balancing recreation access and environmental protection is a goal for the success of this Desired Condition.

Proposed Standards for Recreation Access

1. Maintain and increase quantity of land available for public recreation access by:

- Continuing federal and state public land acquisition programs. *Target: 20,275 additional acres*
- Increasing public shoreline ownership to 50% for Lake Tahoe. *Target: 9,701.34 additional linear feet*
- Ensuring no net loss of shoreline that currently provides public or quasi-public access to Lake Tahoe. *Target: 100% retained (linear feet)*
- Retaining all existing acreage associated with public ROWs and easements that provide access to public lands and waterways. *Target: 100% retained (acres)*
- Trails built, designated, relocated or improved/ upgraded: *Target: 50 miles every 5 years, paved; 20 miles every 5 years, unpaved*
- Number of new trailheads developed, or existing trail heads improved or newly served by transit: *Target: One every two years*

2. Response indicates that the majority of recreation access attributes indicate high quality access.

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The proposed standards would serve as assessment standards (targets, not requirements), in order to determine trends towards meeting the Desired Conditions. Compliance will not be the responsibility of any one specific agency, but rather the combined public/private effort to provide important recreation opportunities. The proposed Types II and III Recreation Standards require further development.

Continuing public land acquisition programs. Target 20,275 additional acres:

Public land acquisition has been the primary mechanism for obtaining new public access opportunities. To meet the target number, it is proposed that the acreage of all private lands located in Recreation or Conservation land use classifications was determined through a GIS query. Eighty percent of that number comprises the twenty-year target. Because agencies are also purchasing lands in other land use classifications, the 80% number appears feasible.

Increasing public shoreline ownership to 50% for Lake Tahoe. Target: 9,701.34 additional linear feet.

This number carries forward from the last planning period, which would have been the 2011 target. It is not increased because rising land, the fact that the most eager of the willing sellers have already sold to public agencies, and changes to land acquisition funding sources reduce the probability of future public land acquisitions continuing at the past pace.

Ensuring no net loss of shoreline that currently provides public or quasi-public access to Lake Tahoe. Target: 100% retained (linear feet).

This number would be derived from an inventory of parcels that currently provide public access (public land plus marinas, commercial, etc.). The specific use categories to apply need to be determined. Should such the use on parcels be closed or otherwise proposed for a use change, a strategy would be created to protect the public's (or quasi-public membership's) right of access.

Retaining all existing acreage associated with public ROWs and easements that provide access to public lands and waterways. Target: 100% retained (acres).

Maintenance of existing legal access requires retention of public easements and ROWs for public access to public lands and waterways. There is a need to inventory all easements and ROWs that exist for public access to public lands and waterways so that they may be protected.

Trails built, designated, relocated or improved/ upgraded: Target: 50 miles every 5 years, paved; 20 miles every 5 years, unpaved.

The paved trail development goals contained in the Lake Tahoe Regional Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan (Tahoe Metropolitan Planning Organization) led to the paved trail assessment target. The unpaved trail target was derived from past work. It is important to recognize that this proposed threshold standard credits all good trail work of land managers, which includes improvements to existing trail systems, including trail relocation. It complements the Forest Service's Access and Travel Management Plans program (a national priority) and the programs of other land management agencies.

Number of new trailheads developed, or existing trailheads improved or newly served by transit: Target: One every two years

Trailhead improvements, including installation of BMPs, at existing trailheads, have benefited users. Service by transit was a key theme heard from the Place-based Planning Process. These provisions are as important to public trail access as the provision of new trailheads and are recognized as such.

Survey response indicates that the majority of recreation access attributes indicate high quality access.

Recreation survey (described previously) responses regarding the quality of recreation access would indicate attainment with this standard if the majority (51%) of visitor and resident responses indicate high quality access.

12.5 RECREATION EDUCATION

12.5.1 Proposed Indicators for Recreation Education

None recommended.

Pathway efforts have determined education to be an important issue that should be considered by the decision making bodies of Pathway agencies. Recreation education is recognized as a primary tool to inform and encourage appropriate behaviors. A good educational program will also reduce the need for implementing any punitive actions and reduce the need to adopt more restrictions or regulations. Education with consistent, key messages that are used by all agencies (such as “Leave No Trace” ethics) will support achievement of the recreation and other resource thresholds.

Education also provides recreation visitors full information about recreation opportunities and expected experiences. Visitor capacity is a function of information and visitor knowledge. Visitors might redistribute themselves and reduce congestion if they were provided information about optional recreational opportunities.

Since education is a component to all desired conditions, no specific Recreation indicators or standards are recommended.

12.5.2 Current Condition Related to Recreation Education

Most recreation providers do provide some level of education for their patrons. Much of this education is in the form of interpretive plaques and kiosks. Other programs typically include staff members leading hikes, nature talks, campfire programs, interpretive seminars and other such interactive curriculum. Education is a component to picking up Wilderness permits and campfire permits. The challenge is to provide consistent messages as to the expected behavior of individuals and groups, the vulnerability of the environment of the Lake Tahoe Basin and the best means for accessing their desired recreation opportunities.

12.5.3 Technical Range of Feasibility Regarding Recreation Education

Coordinating messages for recreation providers to disseminate among visitors and residents is a feasible and worthy strategy that requires development of effective working relationships among the resource management professionals and the private sector recreation providers in order to improve awareness of recreation opportunities, recreation-appropriate behavior and environmental knowledge.

12.5.4 Proposed Desired Condition and Standards for Recreation Education

Proposed Desired Condition 3: Recreation Education

Residents and visitors are educated about the recreation opportunities, appropriate behavior and the unique natural and cultural environments of the Lake Tahoe Basin.

The Desired Condition language has three focus areas: recreation opportunity information; expected recreation user behavior; and environmental awareness. The issue of public education has also been discussed with regard to other resource areas. Most of those discussions were centered around the concept that people need/want more education on environmental topics. Since it is the recreation providers which directly interact with the vast majority of the public, recreation providers are already in place to disseminate consistent messages regarding environmental stewardship, opportunity availability, and general education.

Proposed Standard for Education

None recommended.

12.6 FURTHER CONSIDERATIONS REGARDING RECREATION

Through the Pathway planning effort, many differing perspectives are voiced and alternative futures deliberated. The two recreation threshold standards proposed herein center on the key recreation issues over the last 20 years of experience: quality recreation opportunities and access to those opportunities for that quality experience.

Closely connected to the quality of recreation experiences is the means and ease of access to the various recreation opportunities available in the Lake Tahoe Basin. While it is informative to understand the various access commodities, such as miles of trail, those commodities only tell half the story. That is why the other indicator proposed to monitor recreation access is the user perception survey. Recreation is all about people, and gaining an understanding of the recreating publics' perception is exceedingly important for recreation providers to understand the expectations and reactions that recreation users have. Both elements are discussed in the desired conditions.