

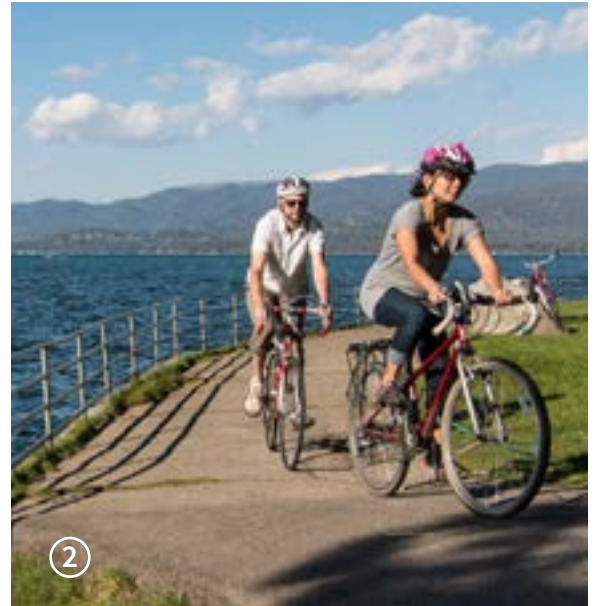


advocate | educate | collaborate



# NEWSLETTER 2017

*Protecting Lake Tahoe since 1957*



Urban stormwater pollution is the largest contributor to clouding Tahoe's waters. Much of the existing infrastructure is outdated and failing, causing more environmental degradation.

WE KEEP TAHOE BLUE BY

# Combating pollution

## ① Where does that drain go?

South Lake Tahoe's Al Tahoe neighborhood stretches along the Lake's shoreline between Highway 50 and the Upper Truckee Marsh. Scattered through its streets are over 60 roadside drains, through which rain and snowmelt flows to Lake Tahoe. This summer, volunteers with the League's Stewards of Stormwater program marked nearly every single Al Tahoe storm drain with metal medallions that say "No Dumping - Keep Tahoe Blue" in English and Spanish.

## ② Spearheading transportation solutions for Tahoe

Millions of cars clogging roadways robs locals and visitors of an enjoyable Lake Tahoe experience. Worse still, traffic degrades the clarity of Tahoe's famed cobalt blue waters. How? Cars crush winter traction materials into fine sediment that enters the Lake through stormwater runoff. Increased traffic also hastens the deterioration of our road surfaces, producing

additional dust and asphalt particles entering the Lake. Tailpipe pollution settles onto Lake Tahoe, providing nutrients that feed excessive algae growth.

Transportation plans take years to implement, but Tahoe needs solutions now. League experts are advocating for pilot programs to reduce traffic, such as a private/public project that would provide a frequent and reliable shuttle system for South Lake Tahoe between Ski Run and Stateline.

This summer, the League collaborated with LimeBike to bring bike sharing to South Tahoe, providing a fun and convenient alternative to sitting in traffic. Riders use smartphone apps to unlock and rent bikes anywhere with LimeBike's dockless system. In its first months, visitors and locals made over 11,000 trips on LimeBikes. The bikes are GPS-tracked, providing data on where people are biking. Average bike rentals were brief, short trips, meaning they likely took cars off the road. Learn more at [keptahoeblue.org/bikeshare](http://keptahoeblue.org/bikeshare).



2 Photo: Office of Sen. Dianne Feinstein

Decades of rampant development have destroyed much of Tahoe's natural filtration systems (meadows and marshes). Climate change adds further stress. Restoration is the best method of bringing back these natural processes.

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# Promoting restoration

## 1 20th annual Tahoe Forest Stewardship Day

In September, nearly 200 community members gathered to help restore the forest watershed habitats that act as natural pollution filters for Lake Tahoe.

Since 1998, the League has hosted our annual hands-on day of environmental restoration—Tahoe Forest Stewardship Day. Each year, the community has thrown itself into vital projects, including stabilizing stream banks, repairing trails and planting trees and shrubs.

This September, volunteers gathered at the site of the 2007 Angora Wildfire for our 20th annual event. Together, they released 2,255 young trees from brush, providing them more sunlight to speed up the forest's recovery. They also restored nearly 5,000 feet of trail, creating safer and better access for the community to enjoy Tahoe's forests. The event was made possible through a partnership with the U.S. Forest Service.

Learn more at [keptahoeblue.org/tfsd](http://keptahoeblue.org/tfsd).

## 2 Informing new Tahoe champions in Washington

Each year, the League visits Washington D.C. to advocate for Tahoe protections. "This year has seen many changes, including two new U.S. senators, who both pledged to join the historic fight to protect Lake Tahoe at the 2017 Lake Tahoe Summit," noted Darcie Goodman Collins, PhD, the League's executive director.

Dr. Collins has met with both California's Sen. Kamala Harris and Nevada's Sen. Catherine Cortez Masto, and she is excited to see them join longtime Tahoe champions, California's Sen. Dianne Feinstein and Nevada's Sen. Dean Heller. Dr. Collins will soon return to Washington, where she's optimistic Tahoe's congressional delegation can secure the first wave of funding under the recently reauthorized Lake Tahoe Restoration Act for critical projects to protect the Jewel of the Sierra. See page 8 to learn more about restoration projects at Tahoe.



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# Tackling invasive species

## ① Tackling the greatest threat to Tahoe's ecology: aquatic invasive plants in the Tahoe Keys

One of the best ways you could get an up-close and in-person experience with aquatic invasive plants would be to fall off a dock in the Tahoe Keys. Aquatic invasive plants have taken over 90 percent of the 172 acres of the Keys' lagoons. These plants are growing out of control and spreading to all corners of Lake Tahoe. Unchecked, they threaten to destroy Tahoe's native ecology and famous clarity.

We can never fully protect Lake Tahoe from aquatic invasive plants without fixing the problem in the Keys, but the current methods of controlling the infestation are actually making matters worse. Supported by \$100,000 in funding from the League, the Keys' property owners association has committed \$2.3 million for a four-year program to test methods new to Tahoe to control the aquatic invasive plants.

One new control tool included in the scientific tests will be technology to inject air into the bottom of the lagoons. In other water bodies, the addition of oxygen to the sediments reduced organic matter and nutrients, which can make it more

challenging for invasive plants to grow. The results of these tests will inform the development of a plan for the long-term control of the Keys infestation.

The League will continue to remain deeply engaged in stakeholder groups that are working to address the rampant plant growth in the Keys, which has become the primary source for infestations elsewhere lakewide.

"Every year that goes by without finding an effective way to stamp out these invasive weeds puts Lake Tahoe at risk for further spread of infestations and even introductions of new species," said Jesse Patterson, the League's deputy director. "The Keys are the breeding grounds and a solution must be found soon."

Aquatic invasive species are already established and spreading in Lake Tahoe. They degrade water quality, harm native species and destroy the Lake's fragile ecology.



WE KEEP TAHOE BLUE BY

# Protecting Tahoe's shoreline

## ① Progress on Tahoe's Shoreline Plan

The collaborative effort to develop a new Shoreline Plan for Lake Tahoe reached a major milestone this past summer with the kickoff of the plan's environmental review process. This Shoreline Plan will provide key guidance around the future construction of boat ramps, piers and buoys, while providing appropriate environmental standards to protect Tahoe's shoreline. League policy experts are helping drive the plan's development and the environmental review process will include multiple opportunities for public input. We hope the new plan will reduce impacts from boating and provide reasonable access during low lake level conditions, which are exacerbated by climate change. The final plan is on track to be implemented by summer 2019.

## ② Capturing the big picture of a watershed's health

From the top of Mount Tallac you can see nearly the whole Tahoe Basin. But how much can you tell about the health of Tahoe's watershed from up there? You would do better to start low and wade into every stream that flows to the Lake to

look at the small details. How cold is the water in the creek? How much oxygen is dissolved and accessible for critters living there? How acidic is the water, which can determine what plants can thrive? Look at key indicators like these at one creek—and then again for every other tributary and lake—and you start to build a true picture of the watershed's health.

Last May, that's precisely what over 100 community members did for the 17<sup>th</sup> annual Snapshot Day. Led by trained volunteer team leaders, participants fanned out and gathered water quality data and visual observations at 33 sites around Lake Tahoe's South Shore. Their citizen science provides a true snapshot of the health of the Tahoe-Truckee watershed.

Tahoe's shoreline is rapidly deteriorating in many areas. Rocks are covered in algae, invasive species are taking over, once pristine areas are marred by trash and the water is getting dirtier.



## CORE VOLUNTEER HIGHLIGHT

# Kim and Phil Metting Van Rijn

Kim and Phil Metting Van Rijn first volunteered with the League in 2015 when they showed up at a training for Pipe Keepers, one of the League's citizen science programs. Since then, they have become a fixture at Keep Tahoe Blue events.

Kim and Phil have participated in every conceivable volunteer role: collecting stormwater samples, surveying for aquatic invasive plants, wielding shovels and picks at environmental restoration days, tabling at community events—the list goes on. Better still, rarely do they attend a League event without bringing along a new friend.

Together, Kim and Phil have given over 200 hours of their time so far. The League recognized them as Volunteers of the Year this summer. Phil joined the League's board of directors a few weeks later. But it didn't stop there.

### Why did you want to get involved with Keep Tahoe Blue?

Kim: I decided to get involved because we had made Tahoe our home and wanted to 'give back' to our new community. What better way than to work with the folks that care for our region's most precious asset!

Phil: Environmental conservation and restoration are extremely important to me, and even before moving to Tahoe, I was looking for an organization that was active in protecting this amazing area that I loved to spend time visiting.

### Phil, why did you want to join the League's board?

As a resident of South Lake Tahoe, I try to stay tuned in to the concerns of our local community, and I wanted to use that insight to provide leadership wherever it's needed. I also have gotten to know the staff and board members over the past year, and I was excited about the opportunity to work with such an outstanding group of people.

### What do you hope comes of your involvement?

Kim: I hope that being involved with the League means raising awareness in others, whether it be my friends or folks I just meet around town.

Phil: A few years ago I was hiking along the shores of Lake Tahoe near Rubicon Point, and I stopped to look out at the breathtaking view and incredible blue color of the Lake. I thought to myself, 'When I'm 80 years old, I want to hike this same trail and see Lake Tahoe looking just as beautiful and blue as it is today!'

Learn more about Kim and Phil and the Core Volunteer program at [keeptahoeblue.org/kim-and-phil](http://keeptahoeblue.org/kim-and-phil).

*Top: Kim and Phil Metting Van Rijn approach a stormwater pipe to collect water quality samples for the League's Pipe Keepers program.*



# The Glenbrook community protects its corner of Tahoe

One morning last July, a diver slipped into the cold waters of Glenbrook Bay to hand pull the last remaining patches of Eurasian watermilfoil from the bottom of the bay. By the middle of the afternoon, the bay was once again free of aquatic invasive plants, thanks to a robust response from Glenbrook community members.

The story of tackling aquatic invasive plants at Glenbrook goes back to 2015, when a volunteer with the League's Eyes on the Lake program first spotted the invasive milfoil growing in the shallow bay waters. In the years since, dozens of Glenbrook homeowners have participated in Eyes on the Lake trainings, learning to distinguish the aquatic invasives—those that most threaten Tahoe's ecology—from the native look-alike plants that call protected bays like Glenbrook home.

In collaboration with League experts, volunteers surveyed the bay and mapped the entire infestation. Removal began in 2016,

when the infestation was still small enough to be pulled by hand by trained community members, and continued in the summer of 2017. Now, Glenbrook is free of invasives and community members are monitoring the waters closely for any that might return. But, like most of Tahoe's shallow waters, Glenbrook Bay remains threatened by other infestations around the Lake, particularly the infestation in the Tahoe Keys (see page 4).

Concerned these invaders may lurk in the shallows near you? Protect your special part of Tahoe. Learn more about Eyes on the Lake at [keptahoeblue.org/eyes](http://keptahoeblue.org/eyes).

*Top: A diver removes the last few patches of invasive Eurasian watermilfoil from the bottom of Glenbrook Bay. This infestation was discovered and removed by community members participating in the League's Eyes on the Lake program.*



# Twenty years of public/ private partnerships

## What is the Tahoe Environmental Improvement Program?

Lake Tahoe's Environmental Improvement Program brings all of the restoration projects at Tahoe under one umbrella effort. Managed by the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency, the EIP serves as the master list of priority restoration projects past, present and future. It forges a partnership of the more than 50 agencies, jurisdictions, nonprofits and private partners who are making these projects a reality.

## What types of restoration projects are in the EIP?

Over 400 "Lake-saving" projects have been completed to date, and they run the gamut of efforts that combat pollution, promote restoration, tackle invasive species and protect Tahoe's shoreline. Notable EIP projects have included the U.S. Forest Service restoring Blackwood Creek, El Dorado County building bicycle trails to connect South Lake Tahoe to Meyers, and the City of South Lake Tahoe creating a community showpiece at Lakeview Commons.

## Where does money for the projects come from?

Since 1997, nearly \$2 billion in private and public funding has been raised for EIP projects. California has contributed nearly 40 percent of all funds, with the federal government providing about a third of the funds and Nevada an additional 17 percent. Tahoe's counties, the City of South Lake Tahoe and private funders—including the League—have rounded out the rest.

## How does the EIP help advocacy for Tahoe?

The League works hard advocating for public funding for EIP projects to protect and restore Lake Tahoe. Without the framework of the EIP, federal and state decision-makers would have a lot of questions about how public dollars are being spent. Under the EIP, League staff can point to a carefully-tracked history of Tahoe restoration, which helps make the case for why continued investment is so important.

## What have EIP projects accomplished for Lake Tahoe?

In the four decades leading up to 1997, when the EIP was launched, Lake Tahoe's water lost 40 feet of clarity. Thanks to EIP projects, we have mostly arrested Tahoe's clarity decline. But we have much work to do to meet the goal of reaching Tahoe's historic clarity of 100 feet.

## What is the League's role in this, historically and today?

The League helped bring President Bill Clinton and Vice President Al Gore to Tahoe for the first Presidential Forum in 1997, which lit a fire under EIP efforts. Our advocacy led to passage of the first Lake Tahoe Restoration Act, which included \$300 million in federal funding for EIP projects. We helped achieve the reauthorization of the LTRA last year, authorizing an additional \$415 million for projects by EIP partners for wildfire prevention, efforts to tackle invasive species and projects to reduce stormwater pollution. We will continue to visit Washington D.C. and our state capitals to advocate for the appropriation of funds to restoration projects. The League's executive director also chairs Lake Tahoe's Federal Advisory Committee, enabling us to act as a watchdog for how EIP funds are spent.

## There is a role for you

Lake Tahoe is a national treasure. We need your help to ensure we build on the progress we have made. Stay current on all things Lake Tahoe by signing up to receive our emails at [keoptahoeblue.org](http://keoptahoeblue.org). Together, we can Keep Tahoe Blue.

Learn more about the EIP at [keoptahoeblue.org/eip](http://keoptahoeblue.org/eip).

*Top: Community members approach South Lake Tahoe's Lakeview Commons by bicycle. The Environmental Improvement Program helped lead to the revitalization of Lakeview Commons and many of Lake Tahoe's bicycle paths. The League advocates for lake-friendly transportation choices and better public access in appropriate places.*





# GoPro helps tell the Tahoe story

Endless words have been written about Tahoe's rare and scenic beauty. But how much more compelling is a picture of the Lake? Since the time of Ansel Adams, conservation advocates have used images to campaign for the protection of America's natural wonders. Years ago, former League board member Jim Hildinger complemented our advocacy with his full-frame black and white photos. More recently, photographer Peter Spain's work illustrated our newsletters. Today, conservationists increasingly rely on video to engage and educate the public.

That's why the League is grateful for the support of GoPro. In addition to donating \$25,000 to support our programs, GoPro has provided \$10,000 in camera equipment and specialized training for League staff.

"Lake Tahoe is one of the greatest icons of the action and adventure lifestyle and GoPro's commitment to protecting the Lake resonates deeply with our global consumer community," says Jeff Brown, GoPro's senior vice president of communications, public affairs and content acquisition. "We chose to support the League because its policies are based on science and backed by action."

League staff have since brought GoPro cameras all over Tahoe, capturing footage of community members engaged in beach cleanups, environmental restoration days and citizen science outings. Our staff produces and edits the content and shares the final videos on Facebook and other social media. These videos have been viewed over a million times, greatly multiplying the reach of our conservation message.

"It's hard to tell the story of Keep Tahoe Blue without compelling visuals," says Darcie Goodman Collins, PhD, the League's executive director. "GoPro has enabled us to communicate the details of our work in a more engaging way, while broadening our audience."

*Jeff Brown is now a member of the League's board.*

*Clockwise from top left: The drone that GoPro donated to the League helps tell the story of our work to restore Tahoe's forests; League core volunteer Kathryn Daly removes litter from Van Sickle Bi-State Park; GoPro staffer Cohen Summers gives League staffer Leila Maloney tips on the new equipment. View our videos: [facebook.com/leaguetosavelaketahoe/videos](https://facebook.com/leaguetosavelaketahoe/videos).*



# Trish Ronald: a leader and mediator for Lake Tahoe

One day in the late 1960s, while waiting for a load of laundry in the laundromat near her family's South Lake Tahoe cabin, Trish Ronald overheard truckers discussing a state proposal to build a massive freeway on Tahoe's west shore, with a bridge over Emerald Bay. That's how she heard for the first time about the group that had formed to fight the freeway: the League to Save Lake Tahoe.

Not long after, Ronald looked up the League and attended the first of many Keep Tahoe Blue meetings.

With her college training in science and anthropology, and with a deep interest in land use planning that she picked up from her father, Ronald had already been asked to watchdog the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency by the California League of Women Voters. She became more and more involved in efforts to turn the tide on the unchecked growth that was threatening the Jewel of the Sierra.

Ronald joined the League's board in the 1980s, and became president in the early 1990s. The League's staff was still quite small, and she attended every meeting of the TRPA. Ronald

helped advocate for stronger land use policies to protect the Lake and also dramatically improved the effectiveness of environmental advocacy at Tahoe.

At the time Ronald joined the board, the League, like many environmental advocacy organizations, still leaned heavily on litigation to advance environmental protections for Lake Tahoe. She saw opportunities to achieve the League's goals without lengthy and costly court battles, through the hard work of personal negotiation.

For example, when one of Tahoe's ski resorts proposed a master plan, League board members and staff recognized flaws that would put the Lake at great risk. Litigation appeared inevitable, until Ronald stepped in and proposed a meeting. She recruited fellow board members Dwight Steele and Fritz

Huntington—two titans of Tahoe's environmental history. The ski resort's owners had to fly in from Japan. When everyone met at the ski resort's San Francisco law offices, tensions couldn't be higher. At first, they couldn't even get the meeting started. "Then Dwight pulled out a cigar and

**"We were able to begin talking honestly and intensely."**

*- Trish Ronald*

told a story that got everyone laughing,” recalls Ronald. “We were able to begin talking honestly and intensely. Our meeting ended with the resort owners instructing their staff to continue meeting with the League until we could iron everything out and with Fritzi inviting everyone to her house for a cocktail party.”

Through the negotiations, the League leaders brokered significant changes to the master plan. As Ronald recalls today, “we made some compromises, but we got major improvements in the plan.” Inspired by her success, League leaders still look first to collaboration and negotiation, with legal action held as a last resort.

By the time Ronald stepped down from the board in 2010, she had left her fingerprints on numerous successful campaigns that led to lasting protections for Lake Tahoe. For example, negotiations that she encouraged regarding the Lake Tahoe Airport still bear fruit today. The City of South Lake Tahoe continues to strengthen environmental management of the airport, with commercial airline service ended and with the City exploring tactics to reduce the airport’s impacts on the surrounding sensitive wetlands.

As another example, Ronald brought stakeholders together to resolve controversy around a flawed mid-1990s transportation plan. They formed a new transportation and land use coalition to iron out better solutions. That coalition led to successful efforts to attract President Clinton and Vice President Gore to Tahoe in 1997 for the first Presidential Forum, kicking off \$2 billion in public and private funds for projects to restore Lake Tahoe. (See more on page 8.)

Ronald remains a presence at Tahoe and a friend and advisor to the League. Remembering well how our greatest successes came from building our advocacy upon the ground-breaking science being conducted by Dr. Charles Goldman of UC Davis, her counsel often begins with a simple, yet powerful, reminder: “follow the science.”

*Previous page: Trish Ronald, seated fifth from left, leads a discussion at a 1990s meeting of the League to Save Lake Tahoe board. Ronald has left a legacy of stronger protections for Lake Tahoe, achieved through patient mediation and negotiation.*

## LEGACY SOCIETY

Legacy Society members like Trish Ronald protect Lake Tahoe now and for the future by including the League in their bequest, will or trust. Estate gifts are the single most effective way to ensure that Lake Tahoe is protected in perpetuity. You, too, can leave a legacy for Lake Tahoe.

Learn more at [keoptahoeblue.org/legacy](https://keoptahoeblue.org/legacy)

## OUR MISSION

The League to Save Lake Tahoe is dedicated to protecting and restoring the environmental health, sustainability and scenic beauty of the Lake Tahoe Basin. We focus on water quality and its clarity for the preservation of a pristine Lake for future generations.

## YOUR KEEP TAHOE BLUE TEAM

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**COME SEE US!**  
Visit us at our headquarters in South Lake Tahoe, which we have renovated and revamped inside and out. Take a stroll through our Tahoe-friendly demonstration garden, check out the Lake Tahoe exhibits in our education center, and meet our friendly and dedicated staff who work hard every day to Keep Tahoe Blue.

**INSIDE**  
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