

Testimony to the Nevada Legislative Committee for the Review and Oversight to the Tahoe
Regional Planning Agency (TRPA) and the Marlette Lake Water System
Update on the TRPA Governing Board Activities
Comments by Casey Beyer
TRPA Board, California Governor Appointee
January 30, 2012

Dear Chairman Lee and members of the Committee:

Good morning, it is with pleasure that I come before the committee this morning to discuss Lake Tahoe and my role as one member of a 15-member Board. Like you, I am a public servant. I represent the State of California and the Governor of California as a member of TRPA board with our mission to promote and protect Lake Tahoe. I was appointed to the board in September 2009, but I am not new to the Lake Tahoe Basin. In fact, I have a long history of family, personal and professional ties to Lake Tahoe and I am a native Nevadan.

I have been involved in the development of public policy at all levels of government -- in the US Congress, the California State Legislature, and at the regional and local level county and city government. I have been in the private, public and non-profit **sectors** for nearly three decades in this line of work.

Not in my three decades of public service has there been a more important assignment than the one presented to me when **I was appointed to** the TRPA board. As such, I work hard at being an effective advocate for Lake Tahoe and TRPA's mission.

Unfortunately, during my two plus years on the Board, it has been my observation that the unproductive model of interaction between the different stakeholders of the Lake (businesses, developers, conservation (environmental) advocates and residents of both California and Nevada have produced an obstructive criticism of TRPA that does very little to improve the environmental quality of the Lake or foster threshold attainment. I am the first to underscore that the TRPA role as a steward of the Lake **sometimes** places the Agency staff and the Board at odds with these stakeholders. That is the effective benefit of our democracy, the ability to agree to disagree from time to time, but in the interest of our respective missions – Lake Tahoe's future – I believe it is necessary to remove the barriers that stand in the way of our working together. The Nevada Legislature **took significant action with the passage of SB 271** last year. I want to offer here today to work with this Committee and others in Nevada on a positive result rather than a negative construct between the two states. But before I begin, let me share my personal history.

I am a native Nevadan, born and raised in Reno. My family owned a Crystal Bay cabin in the 1940s and 1950s and, legend has it, my father spent many late night hours with Nevada business leaders when gaming was just getting its grounding at the Lake. In the 1960s, as I grew up, I

spent every spare moment traversing the Lake's shoreline – from Crystal Bay to Sand Harbor, from Chimney Beach to Nevada Beach on the east shore and along the west shore from Homewood to Meeks Bay and Rubicon Point. As with so many natives of the region, swimming and skiing in Lake Tahoe's startlingly clear waters and hiking the Rim Trail (before it was recognized as a recreation wonder) were part of growing up for me. I hiked up in Desolation Wilderness spending a week or more fishing in clear and cold mountain lakes. On those excursions, we would see no other hiker until we traveled back down the Eagle Falls trail to the Lake. I rode a 10-speed bike around the Lake before it was a common practice. During my formative youth, Lake Tahoe was my playground and backyard. It is where I played and worked. I took summer jobs working at the casinos on the North and South shores. I worked in the construction industry pounding nails into some of the custom homes that today are the summer homes of both Nevadans and Californians who call this 'their second home.' In the late 1970s, my family owned three small residential lots in the Crystal Bay Highlands, all with lake views. But as TRPA re-zoned land under the Bailey System my private residential lots were designated as unbuildable in stream zones -- even though there was no significant evidence of a stream. The choice was limited. File suit against the government, or have deep financial resources to buy your permit. Those properties remain open space today. You also may be interested to know that my mother, Betty Browne Beyer was the Northern Nevada director for US Senator Howard W. Cannon from the mid 1960s until her passing in 1978 prior to the land designation that affected our property. One of her assignments as director was handling all communication and community relations for the Senator in Northern Nevada. She worked on the first memorandum of understanding in the late 1960s that led to the creation of the TRPA. I was honored to be a young student of environmental protection and was fortunate to attend the signing ceremony that created the TRPA. If she were alive today, my mother would be the strongest advocate for the protection of the Lake. She clearly understood the balance between environmental protection and economic vitality. To her, Lake Tahoe was not a Nevada lake or a California lake – it was OUR Lake to promote and protect for the next generation.

I have a keen personal interest in making sure the future of TRPA's role as steward of the Lake continues in balance between environmental enhancement and economic vitality. The two are linked, and it is that fine balance over the last 40 years that drives us all to protect this magnificent wonder.

As the Nevada Legislature has concluded, it is a critical time for Lake Tahoe, and it is necessary that the TRPA Board delivers a Regional Plan Update for the benefit of the Lake, residents, and all of the visitors of the Basin. The TRPA staff and the many stakeholders (environmentalists, land developers, employers of Tahoe's businesses, the employees, the residents of the Lake) who wish to **come and see the Jewel of the Sierra** need to be a part of the discussion. To call the Regional Plan Update a huge undertaking is an understatement. The bold action of the TRPA Governing Board and the community participants will set the environmental and economic

standards **for decades to come**. Our Governing Board is taking this assignment with the rigor and intensity that it so requires. We also know that the discussions that will transpire in the process will bring out diverse opinions. But we are committed to and will deliver a Regional Plan on time and with respect to all stakeholders – and the two states that share this responsibility together.

The Regional Plan Update process, specifically, the issues of land use, transportation, transect zoning, and addressing blight requires an open dialogue from all participants. As one board member, (and a member in a unique position of being a California Governor appointee, yet a native Nevadan) my natural role is to be a consensus builder and deliver solutions for the best interest of all stakeholders. Furthermore, I can attest that we encourage and want broad public participation, and we want it conducted in a civil manner. There is great opportunity to offer positive criticism and provide viable and constructive suggestions to improve the final product. And, this is the time where civil discourse rather than mere opposition advocacy can lead to a Regional Plan we all **believe** merits implementation. In short, we can agree to disagree but never lose sight of the ultimate goal – a Regional Plan that all of us own!

As longtime Tahoe Basin residents know, the TRPA was the first bi-state regional environmental planning agency in the country. The survival of TRPA, despite the controversy over its 40 years, is a tribute to the men and women and the greater community who had the vision and the courage to try something that had never been attempted—**protecting Lake Tahoe's pristine waters while also promoting economic vitality**. The popularity of the Lake Tahoe Basin has created an altered watershed – and we face new challenges such as aquatic invasive species, while at the same time the region's socioeconomic fabric is in precipitous decline and is at risk of permanent failure. We have work to do to find the balance that we all share to protect this wonderful place. Land Use planning and all it entails requires an open and pragmatic, solution-oriented public process. We can achieve economic growth and vitality through protective measures to maintain a healthy watershed. But we need to work together to accomplish these goals. I am very humbled that this Nevada Legislative Committee has asked me to share an update from one TRPA board **member's** perspective. But most importantly, it is my desire to drive a firm message home as a California board member and native Nevadan – that to accomplish the lofty goals that Governors Laxalt and Reagan set forth more than 40 years ago: To bridge the divide between two states and work together in the completion of a Regional Plan that will be our generation's legacy to pass along to the next generation. This can and will be accomplished.

With my deepest respect for Lake Tahoe's future.