



September 8, 2010

To: Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board

Fr: Steve Teshara, Principal

Re: Verbal Testimony - Proposed Basin Plan Amendments to Incorporate the Tahoe TMDL

My name is Steve Teshara, owner and Principal of Sustainable Community Advocates.

My interest and perspective is on the ability of Lake Tahoe communities to successfully integrate environment, economic and community needs and to be sustainable.

I appreciate the role and responsibilities of this Board and staff in terms of water clarity and quality.

I understand the challenges being faced by our local governments in terms of trying to meet many mandates. These are particularly difficult in a highly regulated environment like Lake Tahoe.

It's important for all us of to understand that the complex issues and huge sums of money we are talking about today in connection with the Tahoe TMDL represent just one element of the overall Lake Tahoe Environmental Improvement Program. Our local governments, our state and federal partners, our businesses and community have a seemingly overwhelming task to fund environmental improvements.

Here are some realisms we need to take into account:

- Vital federal and state funding for environmental improvements will be decreasing. This trend has already begun. If not for the Southern Nevada Public Land Management Act, the federal government would likely not have met its

share of the first EIP. The Lake Tahoe SNPLMA program is now moving into its final full cycle.

- California state funding, for nearly everything, including local government assistance and support is in a free fall. None of us sitting here today knows where the bottom may be.
- Private sector investment is struggling everywhere, but particularly here at Lake Tahoe. Many in the private sector want to invest in the redevelopment of Tahoe's tired and outdated commercial infrastructure, but the private sector is handcuffed by complex regulatory and project review requirements. This is particularly ominous for the TMDL and Tahoe Clarity Challenge. We need to unlock private sector investment to help drive and fund the redevelopment of our communities that will have a meaningful, positive impact on both Tahoe clarity and water quality. As we sit here today, one of our most important partners has been regulated to the sidelines.

In terms of going to local voters around the Basin with a proposed Stormwater Utility Fee, a couple of observations –

- Unemployment in the City of South Lake Tahoe is now over 17%, some say headed for 20%. Elsewhere around the Basin, it is over 15% and rising.
- The Basin has lost some 9,500 permanent residents over the past 10 years, much of that loss here on the South Shore. Our residential and commercial tax base is shrinking dramatically.
- There are several stark indicators of poverty in our schools and community.
- While we here in this room may understand the benefits of a Stormwater Utility Fee, there has been no consistent education in the community about such benefits, and, in such uncertain economic times, the concept of a Stormwater Utility Fee is likely dead before arrival.

I urge this Board and your staff to redouble your efforts to help provide and guide more details about the TMDL Implementation Plan. You're asking a lot of everyone, particularly the permittees, to support your proposed Basin Plan Amendments without understanding the implications of doing so. And, please, let's not use the silos of agency authorities as an excuse for not being more clear about implementation.

Questions:

- Do Lahontan/NDEP plan to collaborate and prepare at least general written guidelines to help the permittees - "urban jurisdictions" for the development of pollutant load baselines and the potential for pollutant load reductions? This would seem to be important from the standpoint of consistency.
- What process will Lahontan/NDEP use to consider and approve the technical methodology used by the urban jurisdictions to develop baseline loads and estimate potential load reduction?

I will be submitting written comments and questions.

Thank you for your time and consideration.