

Trails & Open Space Task Force
September 27, 2018: Meeting Minutes

<i>Task Force Members</i>			<i>TD Staff</i>
VJ Bonnard Richard Bothwell Dave Cohen Gayle Dana Kathy Englar Brenda Gilbert Jayne Hahn Jennifer Jennings (BOD)	Guy Joaquin Benjamin Levine (Co-Chair) Paco Lindsay Nan Meek (GPC) Steve Miller (GPC) Scot Nicol Helen Pelster Bill Phelps	Lynette Powell Livia Quan Charlene Simmons Michael Sullivan (GPC) Susan Terrell Julie Thornton Janet Zipkin	Robb Etnyre Forrest Huisman Annie Rosenfeld (Co-Chair) Christina Thayer Brian Yohn
<i>Guests:</i> None			

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At this meeting the Trails & Open Space Task Force (TOSTF) took the following actions:

1. Heard sub-group reports, with highlights noted below:

- *Management, Operations, and Maintenance (9/26)*: TD has grown to become one of the largest land managers in the North Tahoe region (per the TRWC). In the past TD's open spaces were surrounded by off-limits private property and a USFS that was not interested in cooperation or connecting trails. The opposite is true today by virtue of TD expansion, peripheral Land Trust purchases, and a more cooperative USFS. TD's land management organization has a diffuse structure that sometimes leads to conflict, confusion, and inefficiency between departments. At its next meeting, this sub-group will discuss these issues further, and consider options that it might recommend to help TD's land management organization better adapt to this evolution, both in the near term, and (via the TMP update) in the long-term.
- *Dogs and Dog Parks (9/26)*: There are no immediately viable sites for a dog park in TD. As there is no imperative making consideration of a dog park in TD an immediate priority for volunteer attention, for now this group will focus its full attention on developing dog leash policies and programs that it can recommend following the governing documents vote expected in the fall of 2019. There appeared to be consensus that TD's leash policy should be in general alignment with regional leash policies, but that in dangerous areas, ecologically sensitive areas, and around critical habitats, strict on-leash requirements may be warranted.
- *Trailheads & Restrooms (9/25)*: Led by Brian Yohn and Christina Thayer (and joined by Miguel Sloan at Trout Creek), this group visited the Bermgarten, Glacier, and Nature Trail/Trout Creek sites. A comprehensive report is being drafted for absent sub-group members and the task force as a whole.
- *Administrative*: Before the meeting the task force was provided with a copy of the letter Benjamin Levine sent to the GPC chair and co-chair on September 10, 2018 recommending that the McGlashan Springs feasibility study be deprioritized and that its

funding be removed from the 2019 Development Fund budget. At the meeting, additional background was provided, all task force questions were answered, and the task force was informed that the study is now deprioritized and removed from the 2019 budget.

2. Administrative Sub-Group Formation. Because the TOSTF is a large task force with a complex portfolio, Benjamin Levine requested to form an Administrative sub-group to help compile agendas, record minutes, lead regular meetings, coordinate with staff, and deal with any pressing issues that arise between meetings. Sub-group members would, as warranted, also attend GPC and BOD meetings to observe, comment, and report. The request was approved with full consensus. The initial sub-group will consist of Benjamin Levine, Janet Zipkin, and staff.

3. Reviewed and discussed a sketch timeline for the Trails Master Plan update. First, while the TOSTF as a whole concentrates on big-picture issues to provide direction and guidance, TOSTF sub-groups will focus on different areas of the 2013 Trails Master Plan with the goal of producing briefs, memos or white-papers recommending changes or rewrites. Second, those sub-group documents will then form the basis of a task force draft TMP. Third, that task force draft is then expected to be given to an outside consultant who will work with the task force to refine and expand the document into a final product that can be recommended for GPC and Board approval, most likely in the first half of 2020. A question was raised about why we did not plan to enlist the services of a consultant earlier in the process. It was explained that, because of TD's member organization structure, experience has shown that producing a member and/or staff draft before enlisting an outside consultant ultimately generates a stronger product that better accords to TD's unique attributes, and that meets with greater member acceptance.

4. In what is expected to be the first of many big picture discussions, the task force began to explore its intuitions regarding the overall vision and principles that should underlie the TMP update. In particular the task force discussed the vision statement in the 2013 TMP ("The TD trail system supports the varied membership use, [and] encourages continual exploration and stewardship of the community and recreational space"), and compared it to a tagline that had been proposed at the August Member Workshop: "Connecting Tahoe Donner."

Recognizing that sensibilities may change with new information and experience, at this meeting the "Connecting Tahoe Donner" tagline appeared in close alignment with the sensibilities of the assembled. It was pointed out that some may see the 2013 TMP vision statement and the "Connecting Tahoe Donner" tagline as attitudinal opposites, the former being more cloistered, the latter being more open. As consensus appeared to be gravitating toward a substantial shift in direction for TD's trails, some concern was raised about whether a small (and possibly unrepresentative) group could (or should) recommend such change. Further discussion and additional member communication were suggested.

Because TD is not a gated community, and because we have no fencing around our open spaces, there are no practical means to restrict public use of our trails and open spaces. Further, noting that, unlike in 2013, today TD is surrounded by publicly accessible lands, and increasingly connected to ever-expanding regional trail networks, some suggested that the preference for a

more open trail system was less a free-choice than a necessary acceptance of reality: there are no longer any secret trails and the public is already ineradicably here.

Even without official Association promotion or marketing, TD's trails are well known in and beyond the region. They are featured on Strava and Trailforks, as well as other trail apps and resources. TD members regularly extol the quality of our trail system to people outside the Association. The public notoriety and popularity of TD's trails are only expected to increase, perhaps dramatically, with the opening of Land Trust properties to our north, and the continued development of the Donner Lake Rim Trail on the Association's southern edge. It was also noted that several easements either guarantee public access to TD's properties (at least in the summer), or guarantee passage through our property.

Additionally, it was noted that, far from securing control, restricting access to our trails and open space is likely to result in a loss of control. If we do not provide access, then illegal trail builders (so-called "trail fairies") are guaranteed to build bootleg trails into and across TD property. Hence, it was suggested that we can either retain control by choosing where and how the public accesses our trails and open spaces, or we can cede that control and those choices to illegal trail builders.

Finally, discussion turned to the monetary value that the trails and open spaces provide to the members in the form of higher property values. It was noted that while there is value in maintaining a "private preserve," there is also value in being a "gateway community" to a wider recreational area.

A number of questions arose that may provide fodder for future considerations. Are there unique qualities to our trails? Should TD's trail system be distinctive? Should our trail system be visionary or innovative? Should TD be a trails design and operations leader? Are our trails and open spaces TD-centric or regionally-centric? And are those options inherently in conflict or can they be (and should they be) harmonized?

Administrative Addition: In this discussion, no distinctions were considered between non-commercial and commercial public use of TD's trails and open spaces. This is a distinction worth discussing and it may be worth speaking to other major land owners, and the Land Trust in particular, to see what policies and practices they have in place (if any) to regulate and control commercial public use of their accessible open spaces.

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Upcoming TOSTF Meetings

TOSTF Regular Meeting: October 25, 2018, 3:00 – 4:30 PM at The Northwoods Clubhouse.