

# 1 INTRODUCTION

Consistent with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) requirements, the Tahoe City Public Utility District (TCPUD) is the lead agency under CEQA for the preparation of this environmental impact report (EIR) for the Tahoe Cross-Country Lodge Replacement and Expansion Project (Project). The Project area is located along the northwest shore of Lake Tahoe near Tahoe City in Placer County (see Figure 2-1). The proposed Project (Site D – Full Project) would relocate recreation and community uses currently provided at the existing Tahoe Cross-Country lodge to a new lodge site off Polaris Road adjacent to the North Tahoe High School and North Tahoe Middle School (see Figure 2-2), approximately 0.65 miles away from the existing lodge.

The proposed Project would address existing operational deficiencies relative to circulation and parking, storage, staff facilities, and community space; better accommodate existing and future recreation demand; and improve the quality of the recreation user experience. Additionally, the proposed Project would consolidate the existing accessory buildings (primarily storage) into a single facility, eliminate or minimize spillover parking on adjacent residential streets, and provide more amenities to serve guests and employees. These improvements would better serve additional recreational opportunities and community needs, especially in non-winter seasons. With construction of the proposed Project, the existing Highlands Community Center building would remain in its current location and continue to service existing community and TCPUD functions. No changes are proposed to the existing Highlands Park trail system or adjacent trails on state property.

## 1.1 PURPOSE AND INTENDED USES OF THIS DRAFT EIR

In accordance with CEQA, preparation of an environmental impact report (EIR) is required whenever it can be fairly argued, based on substantial evidence that a proposed project may result in a significant effect on the environment. An EIR is an informational document used to inform public-agency decision makers and the general public of the significant environmental impacts of a project, identify possible ways to minimize the significant impacts, and describe reasonable alternatives to the Project that could feasibly attain most of the basic objectives of the Project while substantially lessening or avoiding any of the significant environmental impacts. Public agencies are required to consider the information presented in the EIR when determining whether to approve a project. This Draft EIR has been prepared to meet the requirements of a project EIR as defined by Section 15161 of the State CEQA Guidelines. A project EIR focuses on the changes in the physical environment that would result from the implementation of a project, including its planning, construction, and operation. As described above, TCPUD is the lead agency for the EIR, and it is TCPUD's intention in preparing a project EIR is that no further environmental analysis would be required for additional regulatory approvals following TCPUD approval of the Project, absent conditions requiring a subsequent EIR, a supplement to the EIR, or an addendum. (See State CEQA Guidelines Sections 15162–15164.)

While this Draft EIR satisfies the requirements of CEQA, it is also intended to address resources regulated by the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency (TRPA) and discussed in its Initial Environmental Checklist. This EIR is intended to facilitate subsequent environmental review and permitting by TRPA pursuant to its regulations.

## 1.2 SCOPE OF THIS DRAFT EIR

This Draft EIR includes a detailed evaluation of the following 10 environmental issue areas as well as other CEQA- and TRPA-mandated issues (e.g., cumulative impacts, growth-inducing impacts, significant unavoidable impacts, alternatives):

- ▶ Biological Resources;
- ▶ Archaeological, Historical, and Tribal Cultural Resources;
- ▶ Transportation;

- ▶ Air Quality;
- ▶ Greenhouse Gas Emissions and Climate Change;
- ▶ Noise;
- ▶ Geology, Soils, Land Capability, and Coverage;
- ▶ Hydrology and Water Quality;
- ▶ Utilities; and
- ▶ Energy.

Under the CEQA statutes and the State CEQA Guidelines, a lead agency may limit an EIR's discussion of environmental effects when such effects are not considered potentially significant (Public Resources Code [PRC] Section 21002.1[e]; State CEQA Guidelines Sections 15128, 15143). As a result of the review of existing information and the scoping process, it was determined that each of the issue areas listed above should be evaluated fully in this Draft EIR.

### 1.3 REQUIRED PERMITS AND APPROVALS

This EIR will be used in the planning and decision-making process for adoption and implementation of the proposed Project. After reviewing this EIR and other information related to the Project, the TCPUD Board of Directors will consider EIR certification and Project approval. Additional permits and authorizations that are likely to be required for Project implementation are listed in Table 1-1.

A responsible agency under CEQA is a public agency with some discretionary authority over a project or a portion of it, but which has not been designated the lead agency (State CEQA Guidelines Section 15381). If a project would require discretionary actions by more than one agency, one may be selected as the lead agency pursuant to State CEQA Guidelines Section 15051, and the others would become responsible agencies that could rely on a CEQA document prepared by the Lead Agency to meet their CEQA compliance requirements. Responsible agencies for the proposed Project include the California Tahoe Conservancy, Placer County, and Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board.

**Table 1-1 Expected Permits and Authorizations**

Agency	Permit/Authorization	Action Requiring Permit Approval or Review
TRPA	TRPA Project Permit	TRPA Code compliance
California Tahoe Conservancy	Land exchange	Approval of the land exchange between the Conservancy and TCPUD
Placer County	Minor Use Permit	Required for certain land uses; triggers review by Placer County Planning Services and Zoning staff
	Design Review	Review the design elements of the Project for consistency with the design standards and guidelines for the area
	Improvement Plans	Grading and engineering work
	Building Permit	Building design compliance with building code
Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board	Section 401 Water Quality Certification	Potential impacts to state water quality; required when a federal permit is issued
	Board Order No. R6T-2011-0019 – Renewed Waste Discharge Requirements and NPDES General Permit for Limited Threat Discharges to Surface Waters	Dewatering of excavations to surface waters (if overland discharge is not feasible)

**Table 1-1 Expected Permits and Authorizations**

Agency	Permit/Authorization	Action Requiring Permit Approval or Review
Placer County Air Pollution Control District	Dust Control Plan	Disturbance of more than 1 acre of topsoil
State Historic Preservation Officer	Consultation	TRPA requirements for designation of the Schilling Residence as a historic resource and reuse of the structure for public use
North Tahoe Fire Protection District	Plan Review	Compliance with California State Fire, Building, Residential Codes, Placer County Building, Fire Codes and North Tahoe Fire Protection District Fire Code Amendments
TCPUD	Sewer Permit Water Permit	Authorization for sewer connections Authorization for water connections
Tahoe-Truckee Sanitation Agency	Sewer Permit	Authorization for wastewater treatment services

Source: Compiled by Ascent Environmental in 2019

## 1.4 PUBLIC REVIEW PROCESS

The public review process for this EIR began with efforts to gather information to establish the breadth, or scope, of environmental review. A notice of preparation (NOP) was issued to inform agencies and the public that an EIR would be prepared for the Project, and to solicit views of agencies and the public as to the scope and content of the document. Scoping meetings and public workshops were held to allow oral expression of those views, provide information about the proposal, and to answer questions. A summary of the written and oral comments and issues raised by the public, agencies, and organizations, and the comment letters in their entirety, are included in Appendix A.

In accordance with the State CEQA Guidelines, an NOP was distributed to responsible agencies, interested parties and organizations, and private organizations and individuals that could have interest in the Project. The NOP was released on June 22, 2018 for a 34-day scoping period that concluded on July 25, 2018, and was available at the Project website at <https://www.tcpud.org/capital-improvement-projects/tahoe-cross-country-lodge-replacement-and-expansion>. The NOP was submitted to the California Governor's Office of Planning and Research, State Clearinghouse and distributed to interested and affected federal, state, and local agencies; interested parties; and organizations. The NOP was also mailed to all TCPUD customer addresses for all properties located in the Highlands sub-division and emailed to all individuals who have expressed interest in this project and have provided their email addresses.

This Draft EIR is being circulated for public review and comment for a period of 49 days. During this period, comments from the general public as well as organizations and agencies on environmental issues may be submitted to the lead agency, TCPUD. Copies of the Draft EIR may be reviewed online at, or downloaded from, <https://www.tcpud.org/capital-improvement-projects/tahoe-cross-country-lodge-replacement-and-expansion>. Because the TCPUD's offices are closed due to COVID-19 pandemic emergency, one paper copy of the document will be left outside the offices at 221 Fairway Drive in Tahoe City, California during business hours between 9:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. on weekdays. Comments on the Draft EIR may be made either in writing before the end of the review period or at a public meeting. Dates, times, and locations of the public hearings are provided below and in the notice of availability accompanying this Draft EIR. Written comments on the Draft EIR should be mailed or emailed to:

Tahoe City Public Utility District  
 PO Box 5249, Tahoe City, CA 96145  
 Contact: Kim Boyd, Senior Management Analyst  
 Phone: (530) 580-6286  
[kboyd@tcpud.org](mailto:kboyd@tcpud.org)

An opportunity to provide oral comments on the project and Draft EIR is scheduled as follows:

**Friday, July 17, 2020**

Time certain at 9:00 a.m. or thereafter

Please refer to the meeting agenda during the week prior to the meeting for updated information on participation details at the following link: <https://www.tcpud.org/your-district/board-directors/boardcommittee-agendas-and-minutes>. TCPUD staff and consultants will attend present at the meeting and record any oral comments on the Draft EIR that are received.

Following the public and agency review and comment period, comments relating to the environmental analysis will be reviewed and written responses will be prepared. The Draft EIR, together with responses to comments and other CEQA-mandated information, will constitute the Final EIR. Before considering Project approval, the lead agency, is required to certify that the EIR has been completed in compliance with CEQA, that the decision-making body reviewed and considered the information in the EIR, and that the EIR reflects the independent judgment of the lead agency.

## 1.5 ORGANIZATION OF THIS EIR

This Draft EIR is organized into chapters, as identified and briefly described below. Chapters are further divided into sections (e.g., Chapter 3, Environmental Setting, Environmental Impacts, and Mitigation Measures; and Section 3.3, Biological Resources).

**Executive Summary:** This chapter introduces the Tahoe Cross-Country Lodge Replacement and Expansion Project; areas of controversy; and a summary of the environmental impacts and mitigation measures associated with the Project.

**Chapter 1, Introduction:** This chapter provides a description of the lead and responsible agencies, the legal authority and purpose for the document, the scope of the document, and the public review process.

**Chapter 2, Description of Proposed Project and Alternative Evaluated in Detail:** This chapter describes the location, background, and goals and objectives for the Project, and describes the Project elements in detail. It also describes the one alternative that is evaluated at an equal level of detail as the proposed Project.

**Chapter 3, Environmental Setting, Environmental Impacts, and Mitigation Measures:** The sections within this chapter evaluate the expected environmental impacts generated by the Project, arranged by subject area (e.g., Transportation, Hydrology and Water Quality). Within each subsection of Chapter 3, the regulatory background, existing conditions, analysis methodology, and thresholds of significance are described. The anticipated changes to the existing conditions after development of the Project are then evaluated for each subject area. For any significant or potentially significant impact that would result from Project implementation, mitigation measures are presented and the level of impact significance after mitigation is identified. Environmental impacts are numbered sequentially within each section (e.g., Impact 3.3-1, Impact 3.3-2, etc.). Any required mitigation measures are numbered to correspond to the impact numbering; therefore, the mitigation measure for Impact 3.3-2 would be Mitigation Measure 3.3-2.

**Chapter 4, Alternatives:** This chapter evaluates alternatives to the proposed Project, including alternatives considered but eliminated from further consideration, the No Project Alternative, and two alternative development options. The environmentally superior alternative is identified.

**Chapter 5, Other CEQA-Mandated Sections:** This chapter evaluates growth-inducing impacts, the relationship between the short-term uses of the environment and the maintenance and enhancement of long-term productivity, irreversible and irretrievable commitment of resources, and discloses effects found not to be significant and any significant and unavoidable adverse impacts.

**Chapter 6, References:** This chapter identifies the documents and individuals used as sources for the analysis in this Draft EIR.

**Chapter 7, Report Preparers:** This chapter identifies the preparers of the document.

## 1.6 TERMINOLOGY USED IN THIS EIR

This Draft EIR uses the following standard terminology to denote the significance of environmental impacts of the Project:

- ▶ “No impact” means no change from existing conditions (no mitigation is needed).
- ▶ “Less-than-significant impact” means no substantial adverse change in the physical environment (no mitigation is needed).
- ▶ “Potentially significant impact” means an impact that might cause a substantial adverse change in the environment (mitigation is recommended because potentially significant impacts are treated as significant).
- ▶ “Significant impact” means an impact that would cause a substantial adverse change in the physical environment (mitigation is recommended).
- ▶ “Significant and unavoidable impact” means an impact that would cause a substantial adverse change in the physical environment and that cannot be avoided, even with the implementation of all feasible mitigation.

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