United States Department of Agriculture
Forest Service
Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit
35 College Drive
South Lake Tahoe, CA 96150
(530) 543-2600
(530) 543-0956 TTY

File Code: 1950
Date: October 17, 2014

Scoping Respondents and other Individuals, Organizations and Agencies

Subject: Taylor and Tallac Restoration Project

Dear Scoping Interested Parties:

The U.S. Forest Service Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit (LTBMU) is seeking comments on the enclosed Proposed Action for the Taylor and Tallac Restoration Project.

As the Taylor and Tallac Restoration Project continues through the environmental analysis process, the Forest Service will be lead agency for the NEPA process. The Forest Service will work closely with the Washoe Tribe of California and Nevada, Tahoe Regional Planning Agency (TRPA), and Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board (LRWQCB) to meet applicable regulations.

How to Comment and Timeframe

This Project is in the initial (scoping) stage of National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) analysis. We are asking for your comments on this Proposed Action. This scoping notice is intended to provide those interested in or affected by this project with an opportunity to make their concerns known. If you have information the Forest Service may not be aware of, or believe you have issues regarding potential effects of this Proposed Action, please submit your written, facsimile, hand-delivered, oral, or electronic comments by **December 5, 2014**.
The office business hours for those providing hand-delivered comments are 8:00 am to 4:30 pm Monday through Friday, excluding holidays. Oral comments may be provided during normal business hours via telephone (530) 543-2835. Electronic comments must be submitted in a format such as an email message, plain text (.txt), rich text format (.rtf), or Word (.doc) to comments-pacificsouthwest-ltbmu@fs.fed.us using subject: Taylor and Tallac Restoration Project.

If you would like to review the Proposed Action and maps, they are posted on the Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit website, http://www.fs.usda.gov/goto/ltbmu/TaylorTallac. For further information regarding this Proposed Action, contact Sarah Muskopf at (530) 543-2835, email smuskopf@fs.fed.us.

Sincerely,

NANCY J. GIBSON
Forest Supervisor

Enclosures:
Summary of proposed action and map

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Taylor and Tallac Restoration Project

US Forest Service Pacific Southwest Region
Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit
El Dorado County, California

Location

The Taylor and Tallac Restoration Project is located on the Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit, South Lake Tahoe, California, in El Dorado County in the southwest portion of the Lake Tahoe Basin (Figure 1).

Legal Description: Sections 25, 26, 34, 35, & 36 of T13N R17E, MDM and Sections 1, 2, 3, 10, & 11 of T12N R17E MDM

Existing Condition

The proposed Taylor and Tallac Restoration project area is approximately 2,600 acres and includes a complex of wetlands, meadows, stream channels, barrier beaches, and riparian and coniferous forest. This area provides current and historic habitat for a variety of Threatened, Endangered, Sensitive, Proposed, and Candidate species (TESPC). The area also includes some of the most heavily visited recreation sites in the Lake Tahoe basin. Visitors to the area engage in swimming, motorized and non-motorized boating, beach activities, biking, wildlife viewing, camping, hiking, mountain biking, relaxing in the scenery, and picnicking. The Baldwin Beach recreation area (part of the proposed project area) alone serves an annual summertime visitation of approximately 2.5 million visitors.

The proposed project area is bordered by Tallac and Taylor Creeks. Historically, these two channels were connected through a series of four swales forming a large wetland complex (Figure 1). These swales are now disconnected by infrastructure (e.g., culverts, roads) and this disruption of flow alters the hydrologic conditions of the area. A portion of the project area is designated as a waterfowl management area and bald eagle wintering habitat management zone by Tahoe Regional Planning Agency (TRPA), and is within historic habitat for Sierra Nevada yellow-legged frog, an endangered species under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). Most recent surveys for willow flycatcher, a Forest Service Sensitive (FSS) species for the LTBMU, indicate that this area is the only current occupied nesting habitat in the Lake Tahoe basin. Lahontan cutthroat trout (LCT), listed as threatened under the ESA, occur in Fallen Leaf Lake and are spawning in Glen Alpine creek, which flows into Fallen Leaf Lake. There is no downstream barrier preventing LCT migration from Fallen Leaf Lake into Taylor creek. Both creeks and associated wetlands have known infestations of aquatic invasive species (AIS) including but not limited to American bullfrog, Eurasian water milfoil, curly leaf pond weed, brown bullhead, and bluegill. Additionally, bio-assessment surveys conducted from 1999-2007 found that Taylor Creek was the most degraded of 10 sampled creeks in the Lake Tahoe basin.

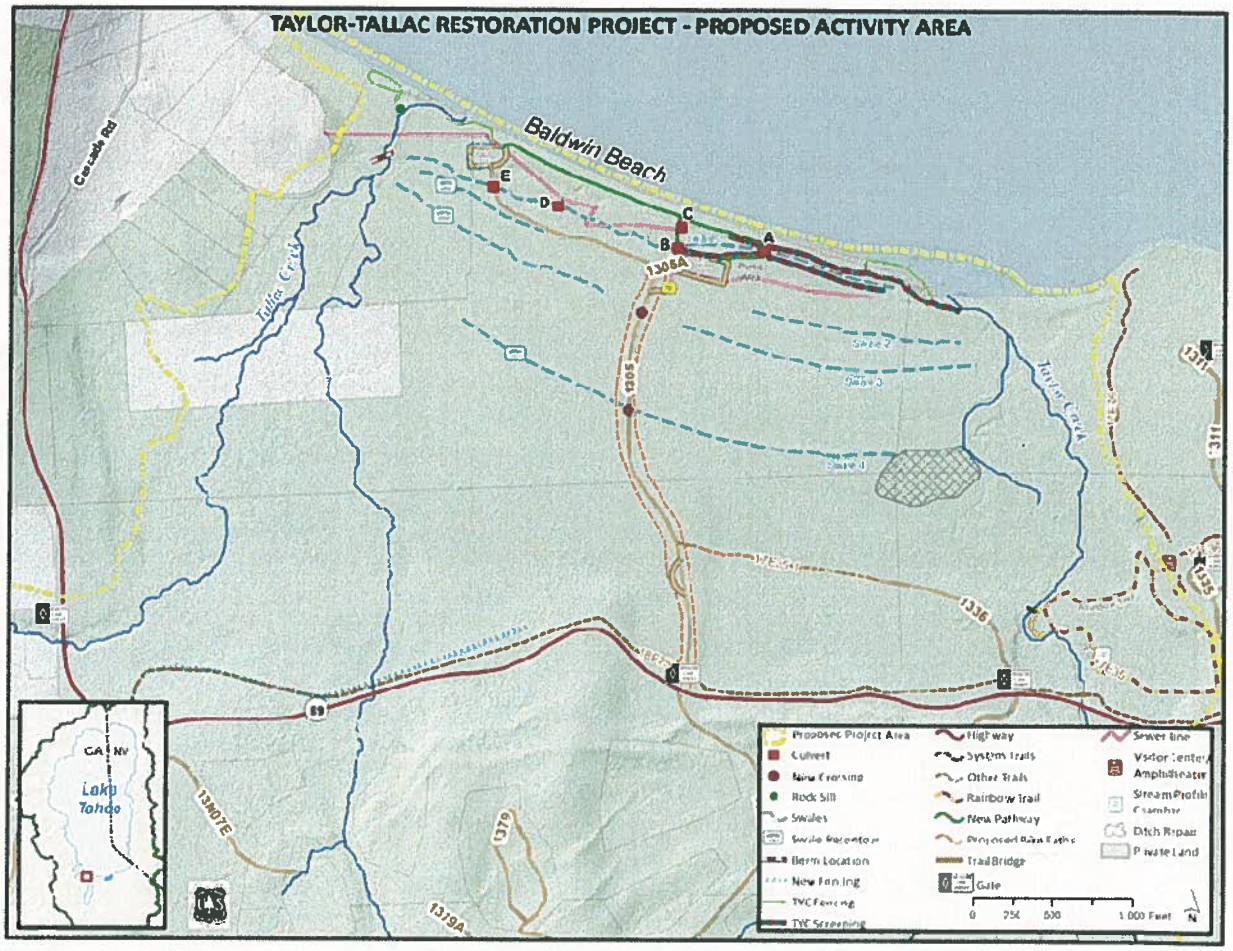

Figure 1: Taylor Tallac Activity Area and Proposed Actions.

Tahoe yellow cress (TYC), a FSS and ESA Candidate species, is known to occur along Kiva Point beach and Baldwin beach within the proposed project area. Previous efforts at protection of the species included fencing off sections of the beach and wetland areas to prevent human trampling and the installation of informational signs along the fences. The construction materials for the TYC fence and signs were not durable, are aesthetically unpleasing, and have fallen into a state of disrepair, significantly degrading the visual quality of the area. TYC has also lived up to its transitory reputation by following hydrological shifts and seasonal changes often growing in higher populations outside of the enclosures than within.

Interwoven within these systems is a network of Forest Service authorized and unauthorized (user-created) trails, as well as privately owned and Forest Service-managed utility infrastructure. This area has approximately $100 million in Forest Service infrastructure including a Class 1 bike trail, pubic day-use beaches, a 200-unit campground (only a portion of which is within the project boundary), two organization camps, and 138 recreation residences.

Historically, the Washoe Tribe camped along the shoreline in the project area. The area served as an important fishing and plant gathering area. The current use of the Taylor, Tallac, and Spring

Creek watershed is centered on maintaining elements of traditional practices and passing down technical and spiritual knowledge to future generations.

Purpose and Need

The goal of the project is to restore ecological processes and functions while maintaining or enhancing existing recreational facilities and infrastructure. This can be achieved by meeting the following needs:

- Restore and enhance stream channel, lagoon, wetland, and swale habitat (including floodplain connectivity) to support future LCT recovery objectives, enhance habitat for native species, and improve water quality.
- Ensure stream flow characteristics are supporting native species life history requirements and historic lagoon/wetland functions, specifically during late season or dry conditions.
- Restore wetland and meadow function and process, thereby protecting groundwater resources and increasing resilience to a changing climate.
- Restore and enhance riparian and meadow habitats to support life history requirements, such as foraging and nesting, for riparian dependent wildlife species.
- Enhance species of value to the Washoe tribe.
- Enhance existing recreational facilities and infrastructure to provide quality recreation experience while protecting sensitive habitat.
- Improve the visual quality of the landscape features, including existing fencing and interpretive signage.
- Enhance public access to high-use recreation sites.
- Enhance educational and interpretive opportunities.

Proposed Action

The Taylor Tallac Restoration Project intends to restore ecological processes and functions while maintaining or enhancing existing recreational facilities and infrastructure. The following actions are proposed to meet these intentions.

- Swale Restoration to restore hydrologic connectivity.
    - Swale 1:
        - Remove the five existing culverts (A-E) and associated fill. Re-contour portions of swale impacted by existing culverts (Figure 1).
        - Replace culverts A, B, C and E with crossing structures with the following criteria: pedestrian access for all crossing structures and vehicle access for

the crossing structure at B (for sewer line easement) and E. Do not replace culvert D.

- Re-vegetate portions of swale 1 with native vegetation (primarily willow). Existing native vegetation will be salvaged and transplanted to the extent feasible.

- Swales 2 and 3: Re-contour portions of swale 2 and 3 west of the Baldwin Beach access road (near Tallac creek) where old roads and stock trails have impacted form and function (Figure 1). Install crossing at swale 3 under Baldwin beach access road (Figure 1).
- Swale 4:
  - Install crossing structure where swale crosses Baldwin Beach access road (Figure 1). Re-contour portions of swale that have been impacted by road creation and fill.
  - Re-contour portions of swale 4 west of the Baldwin Beach access road (near Tallac creek) where old roads and stock trails have impacted form and function (Figure 1).
  - Fill man made ditches near Taylor Creek to match surrounding contours. (Figure 1).

- Stream Restoration:
  - Taylor creek:
    - Install large wood in creek to improve aquatic habitat.
    - Re-vegetate riparian area with native vegetation within the floodplain adjacent to the creek.
    - Renovate fish ladder at the Fallen Leaf Lake dam to restore function that could support future Lahontan cutthroat trout recovery actions. Activities could include, but are not limited to, installing flash boards, excavating directly upstream of ladder, and removing concrete wall on the upstream portion of ladder (Figure 2)..
    - Remove portions of the Lucky Baldwin dam to restore hydrologic connectivity between Fallen Leaf Lake and Fallen Leaf Lake dam (Figure 2).
    - Modify existing flow releases at Fallen Leaf Lake Dam to mimic natural flow regimes, within the parameters of the existing Memorandum of Understanding with Fallen Leaf Lake Homeowners Association, while providing minimum flows needed to ensure Stream Profile Chamber has water and stream along Rainbow trail has flow until October 15 (or until Visitor Center closes).

- Repair scouring and streambank failure near the Pope-Baldwin Bike Path Bridge and the Rainbow Trail Bridge (Figure 1). Repairs may include but are not limited to stabilization of banks, repair of existing failing concrete and replacement with armoring material.

- Tallac creek:
  - Re-vegetate native riparian species along the floodplain adjacent to the creek.
  - Remove lateral grade control structure (rock sill) downstream of existing sewer-line (Figure 1). Re-contour and re-vegetate streambank.

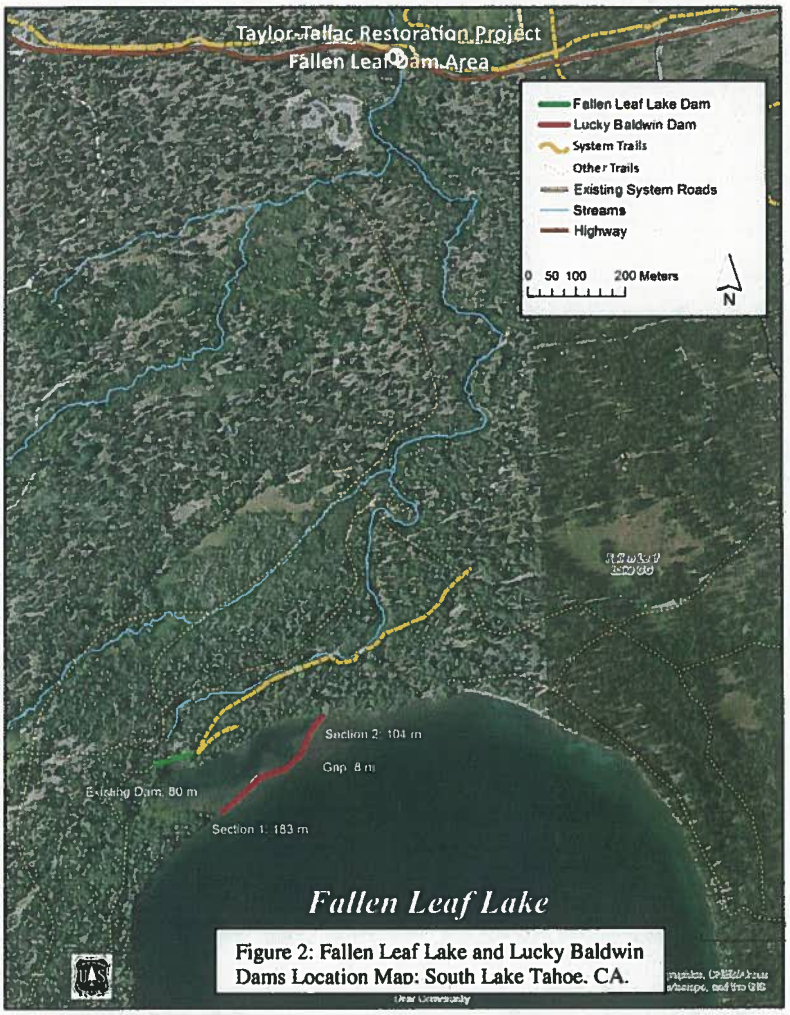

Figure 2: Fallen Leaf Lake and Lucky Baldwin Dams Location Map: South Lake Tahoe, CA.

- Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) Control/Removal: Control or eradicate AIS (e.g., warm water fish, American bullfrogs, aquatic invasive weeds) from the project area using manual (chemical free) methods.
- Tahoe Yellow Cress (TYC): Remove existing fencing and install new fencing or create other types of barriers (e.g., vegetation screens) around select occurrences of the species within the TYC areas shown on Figure 1.
- Fencing: Install fencing in areas as indicated on Figure 1.
- Install nest/perch structures for waterfowl and sensitive raptors, install bat boxes, and plant willow in select locations for willow flycatcher.
- Beach Circulation:
  - Construct a pedestrian pathway along Baldwin Beach between the west and east parking areas as indicated in Figure 1.

- Install pathways to connect users from the parking areas to the beach pathways
- Install multi-use pathway from Highway 89 to east parking area and adjacent (up to 25 foot disturbance buffer on one side) to existing Baldwin Beach access road (Figure 1).

- Recreation Amenities:
  - Formalize and upgrade the picnic area at Baldwin Beach.
    - Install a pavilion or other overhead structure and hardened surface. (Design could be similar to the pavilion at Nevada Beach, large timber construction with a gable roof). The maximum hardened surface (including the pavilion roof and any hardened pad that extends past the roof line) would be a maximum of 4000 ft2. Pavilion height would be a maximum of 20 feet.
    - Install necessary pathways for accessibility and connectivity to picnic area, parking area and restrooms.
  - Install foot washing stations at each restroom.
  - Install BMPs in the parking lot areas, restrooms, and formalized picnic area to capture and infiltrate stormwater following Regional standards.
    - This may include installation of infiltration basins, re-contouring and repaving of the parking areas to ensure proper drainage of stormwater off paved surfaces, drip-line trenches, or other means of directing and infiltrating stormwater.

- Stream Profile Chamber and Rainbow Trail:
  - Upgrade the stream profile chamber building to meet contemporary building codes and provide a more natural aquatic habitat.
  - Upgrade or replace the stream diversion weir and associated physical infrastructure, and excavate the stream diversion in areas where blockage has occurred to a level that meets the original engineering specifications for width and depth.
  - Upgrade, raise in elevation, or replace with boardwalk portions of the rainbow trail. Reroute small portions to higher capability land (typically within 20 feet of existing trail).
  - Move and formalize the user-created trail that leads to the gravel bar by Taylor Creek (Figure 1).

Anticipated level of NEPA:

At this time, the Analysis is expected to be documented in an Environmental Assessment. Scoping analysis will be used to make the final determination of NEPA analysis.