

FOWS Comments to USFS re: Meeks Bay DEIS/R 7/4/2022  
(Submitted to online USFS comment portal)

Dear Ms. Sibr:

The Friends of the West Shore (FOWS) appreciates the opportunity to provide comments on the Meeks Bay Restoration Project Draft EIS/R (DEIS/R). FOWS mission is to work toward the preservation, protection, and conservation of the West Shore, our watersheds, wildlife, and rural quality of life, for today and future generations. FOWS represents community interests from Emerald Bay to south of Tahoe City.

FOWS would like to express our support for the Preferred Alternative. As the DEIR/S concludes, this Alternative will provide significant environmental benefits associated with restoration of the lagoon and other improvements, in addition to enhancing opportunities for and enjoyment of non-motorized recreational uses and preserving the unique scenic beauty of Meeks Bay.

Specifically, in response to public feedback during the multi-year process, the Preferred Alternative:

- Results in beneficial impacts related to recreational user access (and beneficial impacts to non-motorized recreational uses, although this is not evaluated as a separate significance criteria);
- Avoids any significant impact to scenic quality from all viewpoints - in fact, we believe the impact conclusion should be *beneficial* due to removal of the marina sheet piles and preservation of the views of the remaining Bay;
- Results in beneficial environmental impacts associated with air and water quality and reductions in boat noise from removal of the boating infrastructure;
- Retains the existing location for south beach day use parking, which provides for the most convenient access for day users of the beach;
- Excludes the opportunity-based proposal for a fire boat that would degrade the beneficial impacts noted above and instead has led to a separate analysis regarding the most appropriate location for a fire boat along the West Shore.

We appreciate the comprehensive effort that went into the environmental analysis, including researching user information, analyzing the number of people who participate in non-motorized vs. motorized recreation and making that distinction in the DEIS/R, and other informational requests that were included in our comments on the NOP. As members of the Stakeholder Forum, FOWS has been pleased to see the USFS and partners put extensive time and energy toward engaging the public and adjusting the alternatives to reflect feedback throughout the public process. Brief comments regarding the scenic analysis are attached.

Thank you for considering these comments.

Sincerely,

Judith Tornese,  
President

Enclosure: Annotated Viewpoint Figure

Additional comments regarding Scenic Analysis:

The DEIS/R analysis of the impacts of the Views of Lake Tahoe from the Project Area (Impact 3.2-2) relies on just two Viewpoints (VP); VP 1 is based on looking toward Meeks Bay from 0.25 mile offshore and VP 2 is based on a lateral view looking south across the Bay from an area on the northern end (Figure 3.2-8). The DEIS/R states that:

“Figure 3.2-11 shows the existing and future views under Alternative 1 from Viewpoint 2 on the northern end of Meeks Bay facing south toward southern Meeks Bay and Lake Tahoe. While visitors experience views of Lake Tahoe from multiple points along the beach, this viewpoint provides for a representative assessment of changes in views affecting all viewers along the beach. This viewpoint provides views of the majority of the beach and the major features that would be visible from the beach; it provides a view of the proposed pier at an appropriate distance to view the entire structure and its visual context; and it is within the TRPA-designated scenic recreation area for Meeks Bay Resort.” [emphasis added]. (p. 3.2-28)

However, as the DEIS/R notes, most beach users will be located along the beach and will view Lake Tahoe by looking east toward the lake and north/south along the Bay from these locations (not from the location of VP 2). Without a pier, views from these other locations would include natural beaches and the lake *uninterrupted by development*. As a result, the scenic analysis fails to include locations representing what most users will see and value. We request the FEIS/R include an analysis of impacts to additional viewpoints which represent the views toward Lake Tahoe and other portions of Meeks Bay as will be seen from the north and south beaches where most users will recreate. An annotated Figure 3.2-8 showing proposed viewpoint locations will be uploaded as an attachment to this submittal. We believe this analysis will show unavoidable scenic impacts as a result of Alt. 2. Viewpoints for the other alternatives should also be updated to include the recommended lateral beach-goer viewpoints so the public and decisionmakers can adequately compare the alternatives and weigh the benefits and consequences of each.



Source: Prepared by Ascent Environmental in 2021.

Figure 3.2-8 Viewpoint Locations