

Keeping Lake Tahoe Clean



Photo donated by J.T. Ravitz

Lake Tahoe's beauty has always drawn people to its shores, but now that beauty is threatened. Human activities are changing the lake's waters and shores

The lake is losing its sparkle

Lake Tahoe is still one of the world's clearest lakes. But pollution, sediments, and algae growth are clouding its crystal waters.

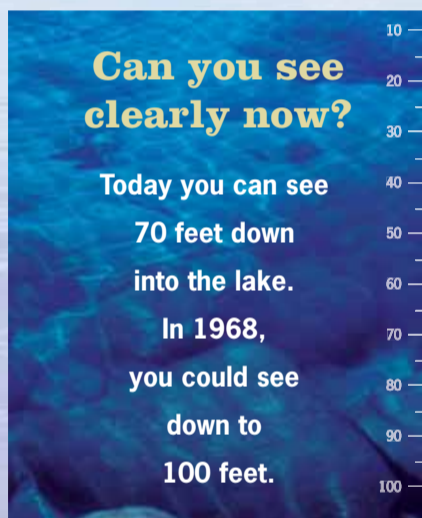


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Each year, we can see a foot less down into the water. Since 1968, the lake has lost one-third of its clarity.

What's the cause?

The trouble begins when forests and wetlands are removed and covered over with buildings, yards, and roads.

Forests and wetlands are natural water filters. With their loss, sediments and pollution flow straight into the lake, clouding the water. Many of the pollutants feed algae, which grow out of control and turn the water green.



Photos courtesy UC Davis Tahoe Environmental Research Center

Pollution Sources

- ◆ Soil erosion
- ◆ Air pollution from cars and fires
- ◆ Runoff from roads and neighborhoods
- ◆ Dust from many sources
- ◆ Fertilizers entering the lake



Invasive species threaten the lake

The lake's fragile ecosystems can be upset when outside species invade and take over. Nonnative plants and animals can kill off native species, increase algae growth, clog waterways, and damage boats and piers.

Eurasian watermilfoil and curlyleaf pondweed

Eurasian watermilfoil and curlyleaf pondweed are already in the lake. These aquatic weeds grow rapidly. When they die, their decay reduces water quality and uses up oxygen needed by the lake's fish.

People are working hard to keep these pests from spreading.



Photo courtesy Robert L. Johnson, Cornell University



Eurasian watermilfoil

Photo courtesy Alison Fox, University of Florida



Curlyleaf pondweed

Photo courtesy Leslie J. Mehrhoff, University of Connecticut

Quagga and zebra mussels

These mussels not only disrupt the native food chain, they colonize underwater surfaces in such numbers they clog water pipes and damage boats and piers.

Lake Tahoe hasn't yet been infested with these invaders, but more and more nearby lakes have them. It will take a great effort to keep them out.



Zebra mussels courtesy 100th Meridian Initiative and Tahoe Resource Conservation District



Photo courtesy Dan Schloesser, US Geological Survey, Biological Resources Division



Photo courtesy Dave K. Britton, US Fish and Wildlife Service