



# Lake Tahoe Non-Motorized Boating Framework

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*Study and Recommendations for Support, June, 2011*

The Lake Tahoe Non-Motorized Boat Working Group studied existing non-motorized boating at Lake Tahoe and created recommendations to address use issues and support paddling and other non-motorized boat access.

The ***Lake Tahoe Non-Motorized Boating Framework*** presents a picture of paddling on Lake Tahoe in 2011. The framework includes information about current non-motorized boater or paddler use, paddler preferences and needs, and summarizes key issues. A collaborative Working Group of public agency and private interests considered this information and created a toolkit to guide future actions that support non-motorized boating, addressing the major issues identified. Framework elements include recommendations for capital improvements, management and operations, and education and outreach. Public recreation agencies, user groups, community interests, businesses, and others interested in non-motorized boating are invited to use this framework as a background document and as a guide in future planning.

The Lake Tahoe Non-Motorized Boat Working Group was coordinated by Sue Rae Irelan, California Tahoe Conservancy, with support provided by Barbara Rice through the National Park Service - Rivers, Trails, & Conservation Assistance Program.

# Lake Tahoe Non-Motorized Boating Framework

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- C. Public Input Summaries and Notes
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## INTRODUCTION

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Non-motorized paddle sports experienced a burst in popularity throughout the country and in the Lake Tahoe Region in the last 15-20 years. Prompted in part by improved watercraft technology, pursuit of healthy lifestyles, and growing interest in environmental values, paddle craft users have become a common part of the Region's boating recreation mix. In response to this, recreation providers need to understand this user group and how to meet their needs.

Along with rapid growth of this highly mobile recreation activity came concerns from other user groups. Negotiating shared water space with motorized boating, shared beach space with beach users and public access/trespass along privately owned shoreline parcels created tensions. Even the terminology of a "water trail" became a concern.

Formation of the Lake Tahoe Non-Motorized Boat Working Group provided the format to evaluate and develop strategies needed to support paddling uses and to address issues and concerns.

## WORKING GROUP DESCRIPTION

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The Lake Tahoe Non-Motorized Boat Working Group (Working Group) organized in 2007 to better understand and support kayaking, canoeing, rowing, paddle boarding, and other non-motorized boating. The initial group included representatives of public agencies with lakefront land, boating responsibilities, or outdoor recreation interests. It quickly expanded to include paddling advocates and lakefront property owner representatives. Representatives from business groups and the Washoe tribe were also invited, but did not participate regularly.

### A. Working Group Participants

Representatives from the following agencies/interests participated in the Working Group:

| <u>Working Group Member Organization</u>                                  | <u>Representative</u>                                 |
|---|---|
| California Department of Boating and Waterways                            | Steve Watanabe  |
| California State Parks  | Susan Grove   |
| California Tahoe Conservancy  | Sue Rae Irelan  |
| US Forest Service, Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit (USFS)                | Don Lane  |
| Lake Tahoe Water Trail Committee  | Niobe Burden, Dennis Liebl, Jeff Miner, MaryAnn Clark |
| Nevada Department of Wildlife   | Ed Lyngar   |
| Nevada Division of State Parks  | Peter Maholland                                       |
| Tahoe Lakefront Owner's Association                                       | Jan Brisco, Lenoir De Monte                           |
| Tahoe Regional Planning Agency  | Melissa Shaw, Dennis Oliver                           |
| <br>  |   |
| <u>Facilitator</u>  |   |
| National Park Service, Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program | Barbara Rice  |
| <br>  |   |
| <u>Interested Agencies (not regular participants)</u>                     |   |
| California State Lands Commission   | Mary Hays   |
| Nevada Department of State Lands  | Charlie Donohue                                       |

## B. Working Group Role

The Working Group developed as a collaborative team brought together to facilitate community involvement and guide completion of the group's work plan consistent with its guiding principles. The group reflected:

- ❖ Shared purpose: Working group participants share an interest in non-motorized boating uses and travel at Lake Tahoe.
- ❖ Collaboration: Working group participants are creative problem solvers, openly communicating and contributing positively in support of the group's work.
- ❖ Professional and volunteer commitment: Working group participants actively contribute knowledge, expertise, and/or other resources.

## C. Working Group Principles

In a series of meetings, members of the Working Group developed common statements that help to frame the scope and nature of the work. The effort began with a visioning exercise that produced the following important themes. Appendix A contains the full notes from these exercises.

- Balance
- Nature... flourish
- Use connection
- Experience.... sustainable
- Positive experience
- Resource values
- Shared place
- Stewardship
- Environmentally sensitive awareness
- Experience .... connection
- Realistic
- Contact with resources ... stewardship
- Health
- Discovery
- Joint management
- Managing experience
- Sustainable
- Stewardship, intimate connections, appreciation
- Connection
- Environmentally acceptable
- Public access
- Awareness
- Link to lake
- Balance experience
- Resources ... stewardship..... respect
- Reconnect
- Connect ... spirit
- Respect
- Giving back
- Integrate
- Protect ... place. Educate
- Safe fun
- Minimize conflict
- Unique paddling opportunity
- Ecologically sustainable recreation alternative
- Respect ... enjoy nature
- Nature ... people together, common experience
- Connection resources
- Non-motorized use

From these themes and statements, submitted by participants as part of the visioning exercise, the following shared values and guiding principles emerged.

### *Shared Values*

The group worked together to guide ecologically sustainable management of non-motorized boating at Lake Tahoe. This effort integrated and reflected these values:

- Ecological sustainability
- Uniqueness of the recreational experience around Lake Tahoe
- Community stewardship

- Collaboration and partnership
- Importance of a shared place and connections to nature
- Health of the lake, land and people... in balance
- Respectful, environmentally sensitive use
- Natural, cultural, and historic resource appreciation and protection
- Education, outreach and engagement as cornerstones for success

### *Guiding Principles*

The Working Group concluded its visioning steps by developing a series of guiding principles. The principles provided a basis for discussion of non-motorized boating at Lake Tahoe.

1. Lake Tahoe is a unique natural environment with outstanding opportunities for ecologically sustainable nature based kayaking, canoeing and other non-motorized recreation alternatives.
2. The protection of the natural environment of Lake Tahoe-- its land, air, and water is central to the management and stewardship of this use.
3. The coordinated management of non-motorized boating will consider the interests of public and private property owners, environmental and resource managers, resort and business owners, and the recreational user to assure ecologically sustainable, responsible, and balanced use.
4. Non-motorized recreational use including day and overnight opportunities will be environmentally sensitive and respectful of nature and the human environment.
5. Lake Tahoe education, resource interpretation, and outreach will complement management objectives to promote community awareness, engagement and resource stewardship.

### **D. Work Plan**

The Working Group developed a work plan to produce meaningful strategies to implement the Vision and Guiding Principles developed. Appendix B contains the entire work plan. Its principle elements included:

1. Create and Support Working Group
2. Develop Nature and Scope of Process
3. Complete Management/Facility Assessment
4. Conduct User Survey
5. Develop Shared Management and Facility Objectives (Framework)
6. Develop Outreach Strategy

### **CONSIDERATIONS TO BE ADDRESSED** \_\_\_\_\_

The Framework process began with an investigation into the national recreational trend of paddling activities and local perspectives on how those activities fit into life, business and the environment in the Tahoe Region. After formation of the Working Group, the team sought additional input from specific interests to better define the range of issues to be studied and discussed. The following sections summarize input received from this diversity of sources. Appendix C, Public Input Summaries and Notes, contains more complete information.

## **A. Targeted Interviews**

The input process began by interviewing representatives from diverse interest groups including recreation providers, business and tourism representatives, paddlers, environmentalists and lakefront property owners. These contacts involved conversations based on the following questions:

- How does kayaking or other non-motorized boating benefit your interest? What changes could be made to enhance that benefit?
- How does kayaking or other non-motorized boating impact your interest? What changes could be made to reduce that impact?

These conversations resulted in helping to create the Working Group membership and work plan.

## **B. Listening Session Summaries**

The Framework process used a “listening session” strategy to offer an opportunity for in-depth comment from specific interest groups. The Working Group defined the purpose of these sessions as: “To broaden input and refine issue development related to non-motorized boat access and use. This effort will build from the targeted interviews already conducted and compliment the information gathered in the user survey.”

The Working Group envisioned listening sessions targeted to six groups: businesses, residential property owners, other boater interests, non-motorized boaters, local recreation providers, and environmentalists. The session format involved a short initial presentation as an orientation, followed by facilitated group discussion. Appendix C includes the notes taken during these sessions.

While three Listening Sessions were scheduled, only two were well attended. Representatives of residential property interests and other boat type users offered detailed input and clear concerns. No interest in participation from the business or environmental community surfaced. The Working Group concluded that the Listening Session format and schedule did not encourage broad participation beyond those groups with specific concerns. The Working Group determined that members could outreach to representatives of other interest groups throughout the process to solicit input.

## **C. User Survey**

The Working Group directed the first ever non-motorized boat user survey at Lake Tahoe. The team of Chuck Nozicka Consulting and the University of Nevada, Reno, Department of Resource Economics collected data during the summer and early fall 2008 travel season. The research project design provided an accurate profile of non-motorized boat use patterns on Lake Tahoe. The boating pattern analysis specifically addressed use by boat type, years of participation in the activity, participating persons per household party, day versus overnight paddle trips, and time spent during each portion of the trip. The report also gathered boater facility ratings, motivations for boating Lake Tahoe and provided a respondent demographic profile and visitation characteristics. Appendix C contains the Executive Summary of user survey results.

## **D. Issues Summary**

The study process included outreach to user and special interest groups, and targeted data collection including a user survey. The considerations identified through this input process important to creating a management and facilities assessment and framework fit into four general categories.

*Supporting non-motorized boating drives the need to:*

- Support/enhance user experience. Input from paddlers throughout the process demonstrated the current high quality of the paddling experience at Lake Tahoe and specific needs for access and support facilities.
- Improve paddling safety. As use grows, boating safety concerns increase. These concerns relate to how paddlers protect themselves - with life vests, rescue training, and awareness of local wave and weather conditions - and how they interact safely with other lake users.
- Resolve use conflicts. The process identified some areas of deeply felt conflict between user groups. The most often discussed include public recreation access and its relation to nearby private property, and differing regulatory approaches to motorized and non-motorized boating.
- Resolve resource conflicts. Kayaking and paddle boarding are very mobile uses, allowing an intimate contact with natural resources such as wildlife habitats. While paddling can increase the stewardship response to natural resources, human access can also produce unacceptable impacts on those resources.

The following list describes the specific issues studied that are supported by the data assessment.

Facility/Access. Specific facility and access improvements can support a continued high quality recreation experience and reduce specific conflicts.

1. **Parking**. Need to improve/expand access to parking or information about parking to address:
  - seasonal public parking lot congestion/crowding,
  - unpermitted parking; and
  - proximity to beach launch sites
2. **Wayfinding/Interpretation**. Need to provide more information and better direction for:
  - users at launch sites. Users need to know how to access the lake easily and legally, restrictions related to launching (e.g. boat inspections, parking fees, etc.), safety, and interpretive information about nearby cultural, historical, and natural resources.
  - paddlers while on the water. Users need to know where public access is allowed, what facilities are available, and interpretive information about nearby cultural, historical, and natural resources.
3. **Restrooms**. Paddlers need:
  - more restroom facilities along the shoreline; and
  - restrooms available throughout the year.
4. **Public access**. The preferred user experience is in small groups in uncongested areas. This results in pressures on existing areas and creates demand for:

- more access to (or simply better information related to) public lands for launching, landing, and camping in all seasons. Related to this concern is the need to protect private facilities from trespass and protect natural resources from disturbance (see below).
- more use of existing facilities during off-peak times to avoid crowded conditions.

Management/Operational Public land management agencies with lakefront property face changing management and operational challenges to accommodate and support non-motorized boat access.

5. Safety. Safety concerns for paddlers and other users include:
  - reducing power boat/paddle craft conflicts, specifically related to watercraft speeds, wakes, and collision potential;
  - the potential for inexperienced kayakers getting into dangerous situations, particularly in light of poor information available concerning weather patterns, waves, and distance to desirable destinations; and
  - kayakers and paddle boarders not using safety features such as life vests, board tethers, and lights.
6. Public/Private Interests. The interface between public and private interests generates conflicts related to:
  - public trespass on private beaches, piers and swim platforms, increasing concerns related to litter, security, and privacy;
  - maintaining existing legal public access, recognizing differences between the two states related to access; and
  - recognizing and enforcing regulatory requirements for all lake access uses equally, including non-motorized boat storage, launch, and landing activities.

### Stewardship/Resources

7. Biological Conflicts. Non-motorized boat use presents potential conflict with certain natural resources including:
  - paddle craft proximity to sensitive wildlife sites such as osprey nests or waterfowl nesting sites;
  - trampling concern for shoreline vegetation, including Tahoe Yellow Cress; and
  - potential to spread invasive species.

Some issues identified drove substantial additional data collection to develop framework elements. The next several sections of this report include details. For other concerns, Working Group participants provided input that responds to the issues. These concerns informed some of the data collection and framework element development, but were often outside the scope of the current study effort. They include:

- Concern about increasing kayaking or support for kayaking resulting in preference for this use over other uses.

#### *Discussion:*

Federal, state, regional, and local regulatory structures currently treat non-motorized and motorized recreational uses differently in recognition of their differing needs and impacts. This applies to water based and land based recreation and is reflected throughout the TRPA Code and Plan Area Statements, boat licensing and regulatory requirements in both states,

and existing public land management and operational policies at all levels. (For example, increased regulations exist for snow mobilers than cross country skiers, for off road vehicle users than hikers, and for motorized boaters than kayakers.) While this is true, different regulatory approaches do not convey preference. All the public entities with interests related to boating at Lake Tahoe incorporate strong multi-use commitments. Federal, state, and local law support these commitments, maintained throughout many changes to recreation uses over the years. Nothing in this study process, nor in the potential future implementation of improvements for non-motorized boat use, changes these commitments.

- Concern related to creating increased regulatory hurdles to private shoreline development if non-motorized boat use increases.

*Discussion:*

The current study process identifies the steady growth in use of small, maneuverable non-motorized watercraft, representing a legitimate use of the public recreation resource. Consideration of public access in all its forms has been a feature of TRPA and state regulations for many years. The essential balance between public access and private property is constantly under tension and is resolved at any given time in the regulatory requirements of the TRPA, state lands agencies, and others with statutory responsibility. Decision makers charged with responsibility for development regulations have and will continue to consider both public use and private rights when considering regulations for shoreline development.

- Concern about increased non-motorized boating leading to changes in legal protections for private property.

*Discussion:*

Legal protections for private property exist in local, state and national law. This framework process, as essentially a study and recommendation effort, cannot result in actions by public land management agencies to amend or remove these protections.

- Concern related to paddling safety and the quality of experience resulting in proposals to eliminate or dramatically reduce motor boat activity on Lake Tahoe.

*Discussion:*

As noted above, strong commitment exists within participating entities to the multi-use nature of Lake Tahoe. As recreation uses change, accommodation by all user groups is often necessary. A key feature of this study process involves developing strategies to reduce conflicts between motor boat and paddle craft users; no consideration for eliminating or severely restricting either use was incorporated.

- Concern about the relationship between this newer and growing use (paddling) to existing beach uses and capacities.

*Discussion:*

Defining recreation area capacity considers many elements well beyond the scope of the current study effort. Land management agencies involved in this process recognize capacity limitations at existing public sites and will use the information, analysis, and framework elements developed here as inputs into the on-going management and site improvement planning process.

## MANAGEMENT AND FACILITIES INVENTORY \_\_\_\_\_

### A. Inventory Database

Public access to Lake Tahoe for non-motorized use primarily occurs from lakeside parcels owned by public agencies. This includes public beaches owned or operated by the U.S. Forest Service, public land management agencies from both states including state parks, and local county or city government. Public access for non-motorized, car-top watercraft can also occur from public marinas, although many marina owners restrict access to trailered boat launching. Three public marina operators - Sunnyside, Obexer's, and Timber Cove - reported management policies that allow launching of car-top watercraft from their marina sites. Actual experience indicates that non-motorized launching sometimes occurs at other public marinas during off-peak times when competition for limited parking is reduced.

Other users gain access to Lake Tahoe through a variety of private or quasi-private lakefront arrangements. Private landowners or those belonging to other group ownership arrangements with lakefront access are numerous. Although these access opportunities increase overall participation, this study effort examined only those access opportunities for the general public.

Appendix D includes the access/facility database created for this effort. Figure 1 locates the public launching sites included and the well-known landing sites on public land around the lake.

Inventory Implications Consideration of this data includes:

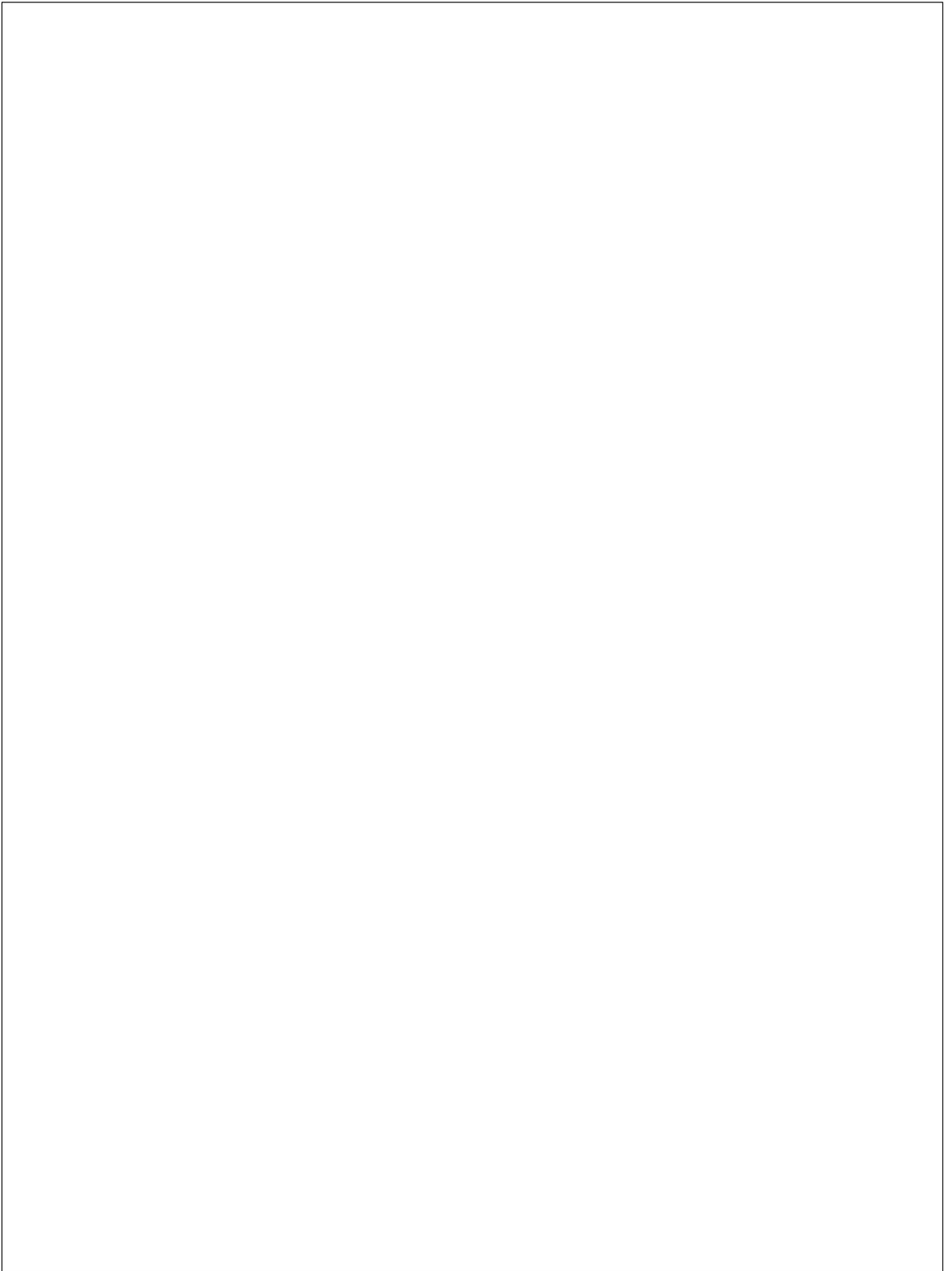
- Public access for non-motorized boating occurs throughout the lake in both states.
- The northeast and east areas offer the fewest access locations with the north/northwest and south offering the highest concentrations of access points.

### B. Supplementary Information -- Legal Framework

#### Use Definitions/Regulatory Requirements

The Tahoe Regional Planning Agency maintains the most comprehensive land use regulation in the Tahoe Basin through its Regional Plan elements. This study process identified the following non-motorized boat activities related to land use regulation: launching, landing, lake use, rental/concessions, overnight use (camping), and boat storage. TRPA use definitions for these activities are as follows:

1. Non-motorized launching
  - *Day-use Areas*: (Section 18.4) Land or premises, other than participant sports, designated by the owner to be used by individuals or the general public, for a fee or otherwise, for outdoor recreation purposes on a daily basis such as regional and local parks, picnic sites, vista points, snow play areas, rafting facilities, and playgrounds.
2. Non-motorized landing
  - *Beach Recreation (Dispersed)*: (Chapter 2) Recreation activities associated with a beach that do not require developed support facilities such as road access, picnic sites, or concessions. Dispersed beach recreation usually includes the use of undeveloped shorelines by sunbathers and swimmers where access is limited to foot trails. Dispersed recreation may be supported by sanitation facilities.





3. Non-motorized lake use
  - *Recreation (Dispersed)*: (Chapter 2, and 18.1.F) Involves such activities as hiking, jogging, primitive camping, nature study, fishing, cross country skiing, rafting/kayaking, and swimming. Does not usually involve the use of developed facilities.
4. Rental/Concessions
  - *Outdoor Recreation Concessions*: (Section 18.4) Facilities which are dependent on the use of outdoor recreation areas such as onsite food and beverage sales, onsite recreational equipment rentals, para-sailing, rafting, and onsite recreation instruction. ... Outside storage or display is included as part of the use.
5. Campgrounds
  - *Developed Campgrounds*: (Section 18.4) Land or premises designed to be used, let, or rented for temporary occupancy by campers traveling by motorized vehicle and which contain such facilities as camp sites with parking area, barbecue grills, tables, restrooms, and at least some utilities.
  - *Undeveloped Campgrounds*: (Section 18.4) Land permanently established to be used for temporary occupancy by campers traveling by foot or horse, which may contain tent sites, fire rings, and sanitary facilities, but does not contain utilities.
6. Storage (seasonal storage)
  - *Accessory Outside Storage*: (Section 18.2.D(1)) Storage of materials and equipment outside of a walled building or under the roof of non walled building and which storage constitutes secondary storage.

TRPA regulates land use through the Plan Area Statements (PAS). Recreation uses such as those identified above must be listed in each applicable PAS as permissible to be considered conforming uses. Additionally, new public recreation projects are subject to development restrictions found in Code of Ordinance provisions. Key issues identified in this study effort involving TRPA Code provisions relate to: expansion of non-motorized boating, seasonal storage of kayaks/canoes/paddleboards on beach property, and expanded use of rental concessions to increase public access. Information related to each of these follows.

1. *Increased non-motorized boating*. No TRPA restrictions exist to limit increased non-motorized boating from existing developed day use areas or boat launching facilities. Land management entities are free to establish day use management controls in response to individual priorities, but no TRPA Code restrictions direct individual day uses. Physical expansion of developed facilities that increases overall public recreation capacity can require compliance with Code Section 33.6.C for Persons-At-One-Time (PAOT) allocation. Expansion projects that change or increase land disturbance also must comply with all Code development provisions.
2. *Seasonal storage of non-motorized boats on beach property*. This study identified the desirability and increased use of seasonal storage near the water as a way to support non-motorized boating. In many cases such storage can be considered accessory to the developed day use area and permitted following standard requirements for land coverage, scenic impacts, traffic generation and parking, etc. Seasonal storage as part of day use developments operated by state or federal agencies, if an increase in overall recreation capacity results, are also subject to PAOT allocations.

3. *Expanded use of rental concessions.* Recreation concessions such as renting kayaks and paddleboards are usually accessory uses to day use areas. Under most situations, TRPA permits are required to address site development and capacity questions such as parking, traffic generation, scenic issues, etc.

### US Forest Service (USFS)

The US Forest Service, Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit, manages over 75% of the land area in the Tahoe Region to provide access for the public and to protect the natural resources of the area. The 1988 Land and Resource Management Plan (1988 Forest Plan) currently provides both general forest and specific area policy direction, including at developed and undeveloped lakefront USFS property. Revisions to the 1988 Forest Plan are under development at this time; implementation of any framework proposals on USFS land will conform to provisions applicable at the time of project review.

### Other Agencies

Within the Tahoe Region, lakefront public land is owned and managed by many other agencies. These include local and county governments, special purpose districts, and state agencies. All these agencies respond to the regulatory requirements of the TRPA and their individual governing bodies, adhering to the most restrictive requirements for any given project. Therefore, implementation of any framework element will proceed in compliance with multiple regulations.

### Legal Environment for Boating Requirements, Access Issues

Throughout the study process, participants from all interest groups expressed views, sometimes widely divergent, related to legal provisions of boating and waterways on Lake Tahoe. Issues related to regulating boating activity and access to lakefront land for different purposes animated many discussions. Public input summaries found in Appendix C highlight some of these viewpoints. Some legal protections and practices are widely accepted settled law and others are the subject of disagreements. It is well beyond the scope of the current effort to resolve most of these conflicts. However, Working Group participants relied on several key legal understandings to develop framework provisions. They are:

1. The California Department of Boating and Waterways and the Nevada Department of Wildlife establish regulations and restrictions related to watercraft licenses and boating safety. Neither state requires non-motorized boats to obtain a license, but both states require all watercraft operators to comply with safety requirements such as use of life vests, night lighting, etc.
2. In both states, littoral property owners own private land on Lake Tahoe extending below the high water line. The State of California holds an easement in public trust lakeward of the high water line. The uses associated with this easement are not established in state law; in practice this easement has been reserved for "public use". The State of Nevada does not hold a comparable easement and access in private frontage is subject to the control of private property owners.
3. Non-motorized watercraft are "watercraft" as defined by both states and the TRPA. As such, laws and regulations related to watercraft inspection and decontamination to prevent the spread of aquatic invasive species apply to the boating types studied here.

4. All public agency actions are subject to Federal, State and Regional provisions for environmental review and public disclosure. This framework process will result in recommendations for future actions that can support non-motorized boating. Participating public entities will subject each action considered for implementation to required environmental evaluation as necessary.
5. Lake Tahoe is a multi-use waterway accommodating motorized and non-motorized users. Any public facilities developed for boat use cannot be reserved for a single boat type. For example, access to public beaches from the water occurs when paddlers land their watercraft on the beach or motorized boat users anchor off-shore and swim or wade in. Some framework elements developed in this effort, therefore, will accommodate or address all boater types.

## **MANAGEMENT AND FACILITIES ASSESSMENT**

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The Working Group considered input as described above and collected relevant data for existing public access sites. The next step in creating a framework for improved support involved developing assessment criteria and applying them to the inventory data. This work recognized two basic ways of experiencing Lake Tahoe in a paddle craft: day trips and overnight trips.

### **A. Day Trip Inventory/Assessment**

The 2008 Lake Tahoe Non-Motorized Boat User Survey (User Survey) found the vast majority of current users launch their boats at a single location, paddle for a certain distance, and return to that same location. This pattern closely follows the experience for most day hikers on land trails, so the terminology of a day trip will be used in this framework.

#### **1. Launching Area Inventory/Assessment**

Each day trip must begin at a launching point. The inventory includes all general public lakefront parcels that can serve to launch a car-top craft. (Figure 1 identifies all public sites considered in the inventory.) The User Survey provides insights into satisfaction with current launch area development characteristics meaningful to facility managers. Most of the respondents found current facilities acceptable or better. Of the facility ratings that show the highest level of dissatisfaction for day users, parking tops the list, followed by launch site crowding, signs to sites, special needs access, and restrooms. This assessment collected data related to these issues.

- **Parking.** The survey identifies parking shortages for paddlers as a limiting factor and parking lot crowding as a degradation to the overall experience. Of the launch sites with the highest developed capacity noted here, several are well known for their seasonal parking limitations, including: Sand Harbor, Pope and Baldwin Beaches, and D.L. Bliss-Lester Beach. Although some parking lots fill before others, parking shortages and parking lot crowding during long portions of the peak summer months exist at every launch site. In fact, parking availability is a universal limiting factor for lake access for all types of users, including beach goers and motorized boaters. As no comprehensive parking lot accumulation data exists to allow an empirical comparison between launch sites, this assessment does not consider parking limitations in assessing each site. Survey data and other public input also identified dissatisfaction with the limited access to parking during the off season. Weather

conditions permit paddling during Spring, Fall and Winter, yet many public beach areas are closed at these times. Figure 2 identifies those launch sites available year-round.

- Launch Site Crowding. In addition to crowding in the parking lot, users can experience crowding at the actual launch site for kayaks and paddleboards. Competition for beach space at peak times exists with beach goers, swimmers, and picnickers at some sites, and competition for launching at ramp sites exists for others. The Inventory Database contains information related to launch site crowding, although no quantitative data exists that allows a comparison between sites.
- Signs to Sites and Special Needs Access. The User Survey noted some dissatisfaction with both of these facility features. Indeed, no public facility in the Lake Tahoe Region provides signage for paddle craft launching sites. (No site provides signs visible from the lake identifying public landing sites either. This is identified as it relates to the day trip experience, below.) The inventory also identifies only two sites with low dock access or full ADA access to a launching/landing site: Zephyr Cove Resort and Emerald Bay State Park Boat-in Campground.

At the most basic level, public paddle craft launching access to Lake Tahoe requires a parking spot close enough to the water's edge to provide reasonable access.<sup>1</sup> On-site restrooms also provide a needed service for most day trips. These two basic criteria allow a simple assessment of the capacity for non-motorized launching. (This does NOT reflect the actual number of launches at any given site; no data exists to quantify number of launches.) Figure 3 illustrates three different levels of development found at the public launching sites using the following criteria:

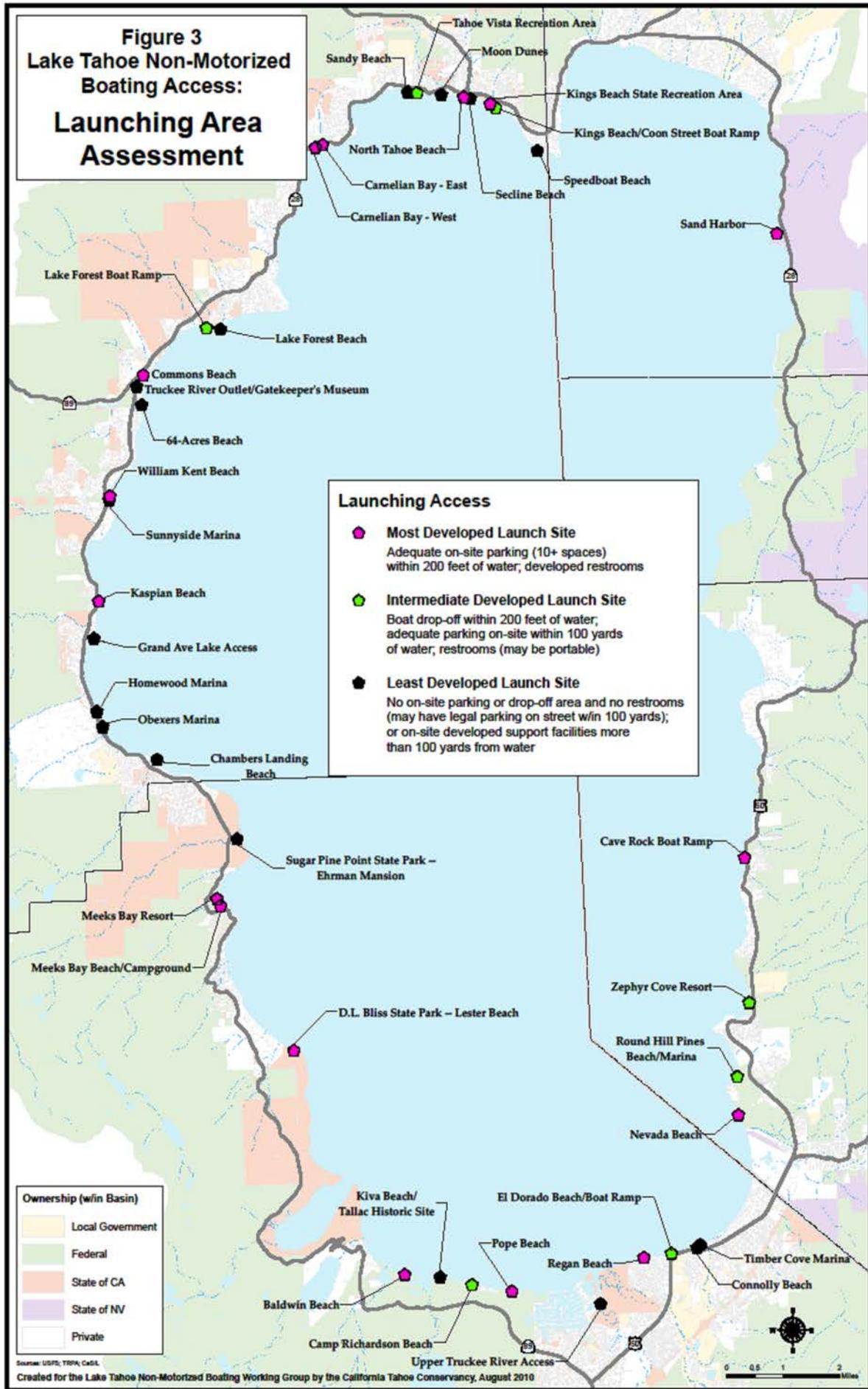
1. Most Developed Capacity - Adequate on-site parking (more than 10 spaces) within 200' of water, developed restrooms
2. Intermediate Developed Capacity - Drop off area within 200' of the beach, adequate parking on-site within 100 yards, restrooms (may be portable)
3. Least Developed Capacity - No on-site parking, but legal parking within 100 yards of beach, no restrooms. (Also includes public access sites with available parking or drop-off location more than 200' from the water.)

This assessment recognized that use patterns can be affected by the presence and quantity of user fees. Day use and/or parking fees exist at most launch opportunities in Lake Tahoe at developed state park and USFS beaches. Undoubtedly some users, particularly frequent users, will seek out less developed facilities with no user fees. While this is true, Working Group participants and User Survey observations conclude that the level of developed on-site facilities and/or services is a stronger predictor of general access. Although this assessment does not include cost in determining the level of launch site capacity, some recommendations recognize cost as one way to influence use between similarly developed sites.

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<sup>1</sup> Nearby parking is required for launching a kayak or paddle board. Public users can also rent a kayak from on-site concessionaires or store their boat in a seasonal storage area near the water. In these latter situations, users could access their boat in ways not requiring a parking space (i.e. take public transit or ride a bike to the beach). This is discussed in more detail in other sections of this Framework.

**Figure 3  
Lake Tahoe Non-Motorized  
Boating Access:  
Launching Area  
Assessment**



Launching Area Assessment Implications This assessment identifies those public sites with existing facilities best suited for kayak and paddleboard launching. Important information resulting from consideration of this information:

- Some of the facilities without existing on-site parking offer limited or no opportunity to improve access. These include public street rights-of-way that dead end at the lake, surrounded by existing residential development. While these sites provide important neighborhood access and limited access for others, additional use should not be directed there and these sites are excluded from further consideration in the current framework effort.
- Future management improvements at public sites could better support non-motorized lake uses in a variety of ways, including: a) highlighting launching opportunities in all user information (signs, brochures, website, etc.), or b) developing fee structure to direct users to best facilities and/or times of day.
- Future facilities improvements at public sites could better support non-motorized lake uses in a variety of ways, including: a) expanding/reconfiguring parking to decrease distance to the beach (within recognized environmental limitations), b) expanding/reconfiguring drop off areas to decrease distance to the beach, or c) providing boat wheels to increase ease of access for parking located at a distance from the beach.

## **2. Day Trip Inventory**

The User Survey identifies the average day trip as out and back from a single location and average time on the water as 1 hour, 46 minutes (53 minutes each way). Using a range of travel speeds (2 mph - 6 mph), the typical day trip could extend 1.6 - 4.8 miles from each launching point. Therefore, it is possible to identify zones around each launching site that represent the area most likely to be used by slower and faster paddlers or watercraft. The range also represents the different areas around each launch site where beginner and more experienced paddlers recreate. Mapping these zones, or routes, illustrates the areas of the lake best served with existing access and helps to identify the locations with a potential for high kayak or paddle board concentrations.

- Figure 4a, Day Trip Inventory, Slower/Beginner illustrates day routes within 1.6 miles from the launch sites with adequate public launching access (shown on Figure 3 as highest and intermediate developed capacity). The three different shades of green represent those portions of the beginner routes accessible from one, two, or more than two launch sites.<sup>2</sup>
- Figure 4b, Day Trip Inventory, Faster/Experienced uses the same approach, but illustrates the routes used by faster and/or more experienced paddlers (within 4.8 miles of a launch site) in differing shades of blue.
- Figure 4c, Day Trip Inventory, All Users combines the two data sets to show those portions of the lake accessible for faster paddlers only (blue) and faster and slower paddlers (green).

This information specifically evaluates average speeds/distances from public launch opportunities. Some of these public sites also offer kayak and paddleboard rental, and this information remains relevant for those users. Readers must be aware that kayak rentals or

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<sup>2</sup> To improve readability, the figures simplify some of the overlap between day routes.

other high concentrations of non-motorized boats occur from private parcels (e.g. homeowner associate beaches). These public launch sites are not included in the day trip inventory and concentrations of paddlers from these locations are not shown on the figures.

Day Use Trip Inventory Implications Consideration of the information presented on Figures 4a-c includes:

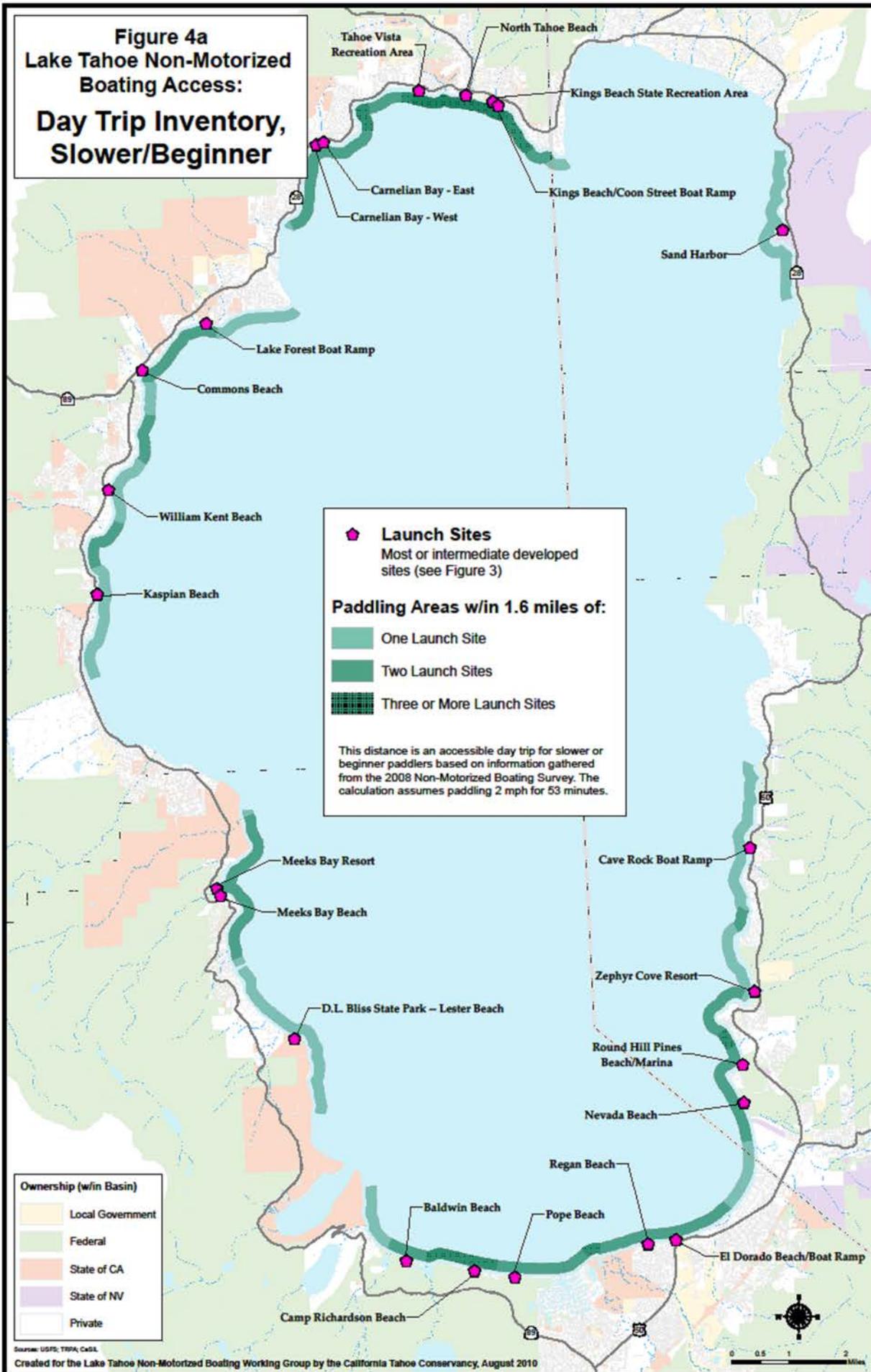
- Nearly 90% of the Lake Tahoe near shore paddle area is accessible for day trips. This information can be the basis of better communication with residents and visitors to promote non-motorized boating.
- Nearly 70% of the lake is easily accessible for beginner paddles. This finding can direct land managers to target safety, wayfinding and interpretive information important for less experienced paddlers.
- Approximately 30% of the lake requires faster paddling to access. Users need this important information to plan a safe, enjoyable outing. Land managers can improve outreach concerning this situation.
- The concentration of slower/beginner paddlers around launch sites can inform motorized boating outreach efforts. These are the locations where the highest potential for safety conflicts between motorized and non-motorized users exist.
- Emerald Bay presents a unique circumstance at Lake Tahoe. A simple evaluation of boating concentrations as shown in the figures would conclude few kayakers reach Emerald Bay. Experience during the peak summer paddling season contradicts that conclusion. However, the assessment presented in Figures 4a-c uses *average* time on the water and *average* paddle speeds and it does not account for the high desirability of Emerald Bay as a destination. This encourages longer paddle trips, some by less experienced paddlers, to reach this high profile destination.

### **3. Day Trip Assessment**

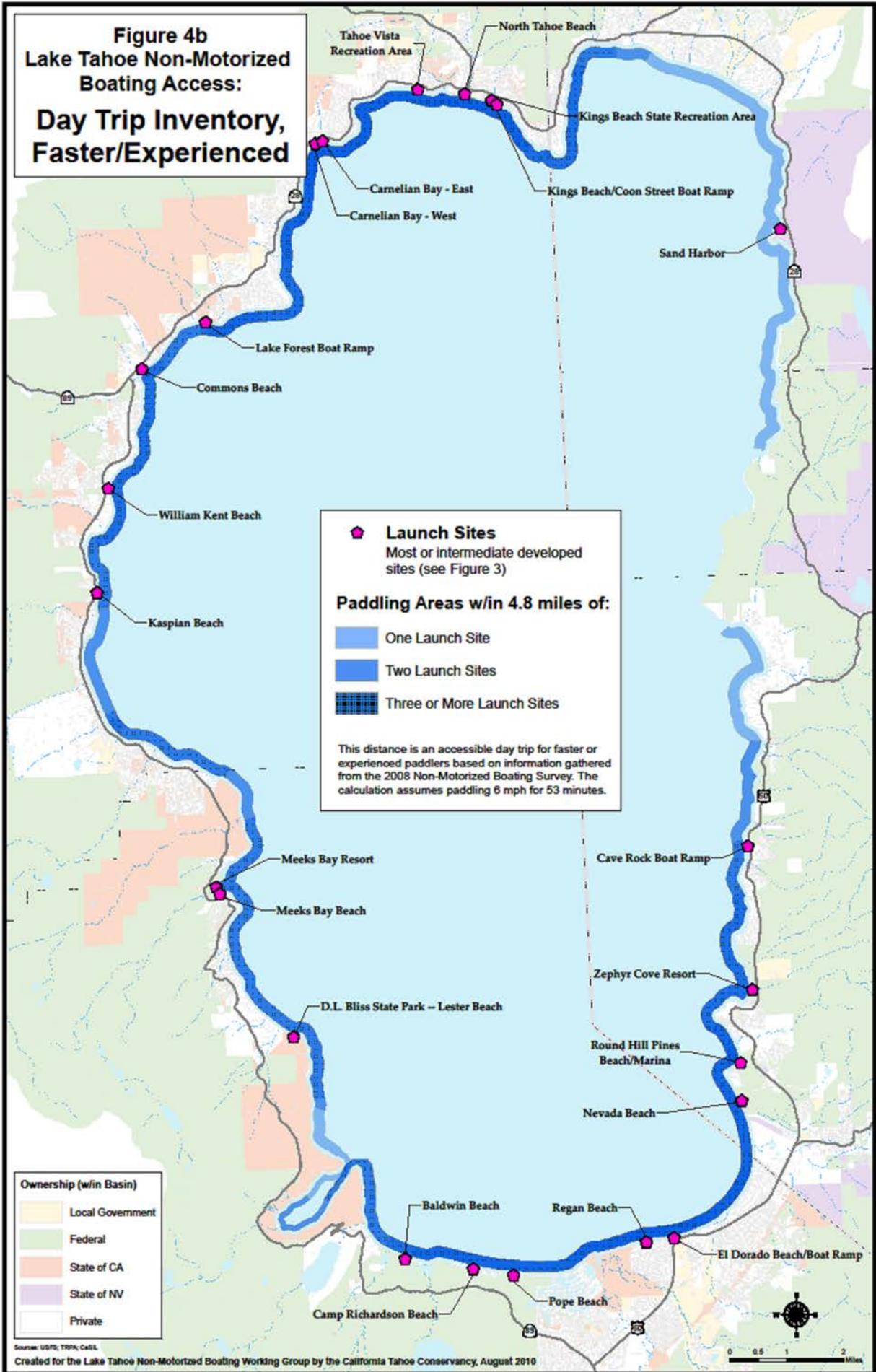
The User Survey provides insights for characteristics of the paddling experience important for non-motorized users at Lake Tahoe. Overwhelmingly, when they get on the water, paddlers look for scenic beauty, exercise, and leisure time with friends or family. These qualities exist or can be created everywhere on Lake Tahoe, resulting in a high degree of satisfaction with the paddling experience in every part of the lake. A more nuanced consideration of the data, however, allows a comparison of day trip quality based on specific characteristics unique to different parts of the lake.

Survey respondents also report concerns related to some parts of the paddle experience, particularly conflicts with motorized watercraft. Data exists to provide some guidance related to reduced trip quality in a conflict assessment.

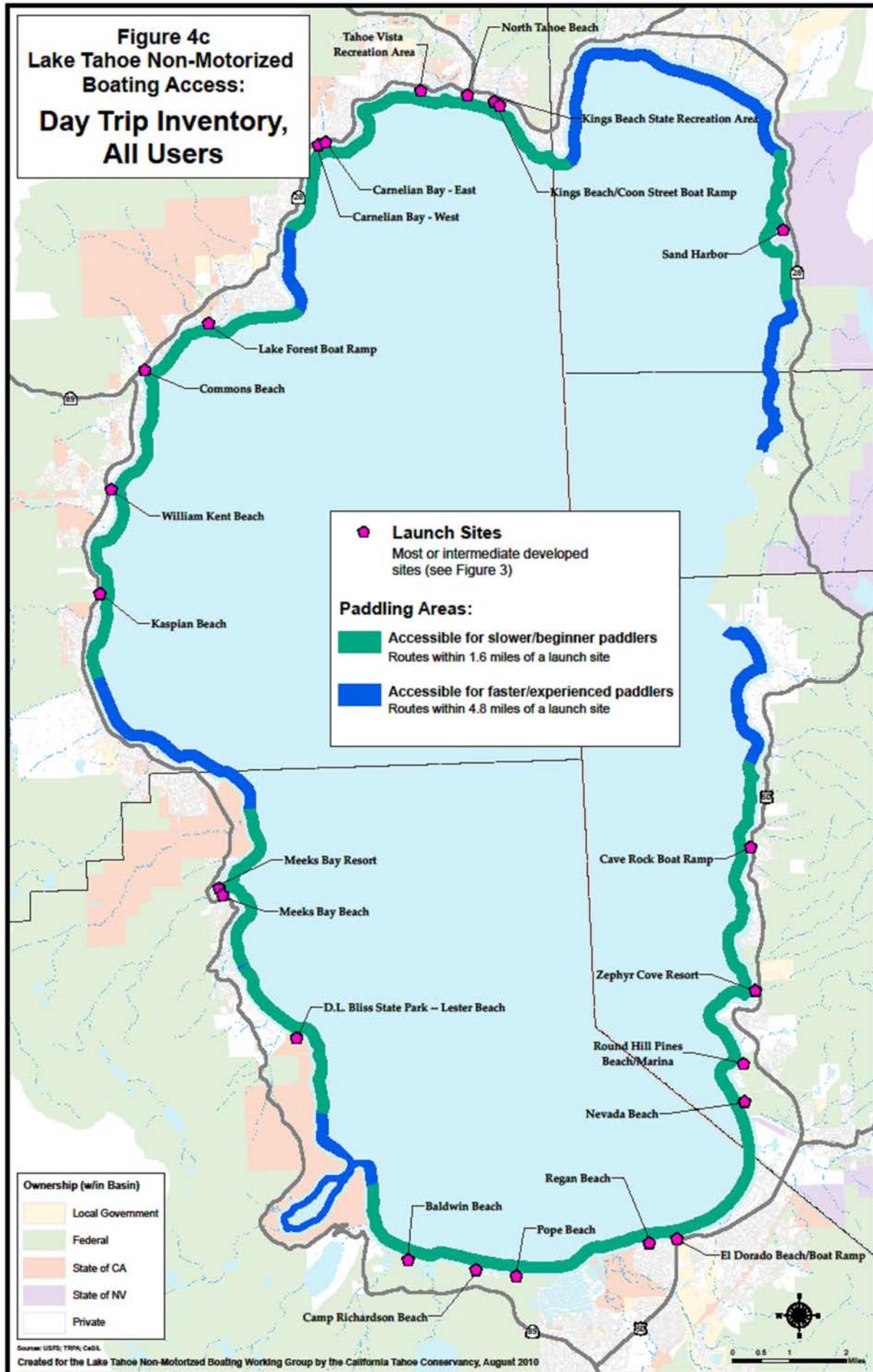
**Figure 4a**  
**Lake Tahoe Non-Motorized**  
**Boating Access:**  
**Day Trip Inventory,**  
**Slower/Beginner**



**Figure 4b**  
**Lake Tahoe Non-Motorized**  
**Boating Access:**  
**Day Trip Inventory,**  
**Faster/Experienced**



**Figure 4c**  
**Lake Tahoe Non-Motorized**  
**Boating Access:**  
**Day Trip Inventory,**  
**All Users**



Source: USFS, TRPA, CAGIL  
 Created for the Lake Tahoe Non-Motorized Boating Working Group by the California Tahoe Conservancy, August 2010

## Day Trip Quality Assessment

The User Survey provides general guidance for evaluating the quality of the non-motorized boating experience in different areas of Lake Tahoe. Of the top six positive reasons for paddling (cited 70% or more often in the survey), four are location related. They include scenic beauty, access to public beaches, solitude, and wildlife viewing. (The other two are exercise and being with friends/family.) Data from TRPA and others exists to provide the basis for a simple analysis of the day use routes based on the relative abundance of these items.

1. Scenic. TRPA maintains an extensive and well researched visual quality inventory for shoreline scenic units. This inventory includes individual features such as Cave Rock, and views of the shoreline with distinctive attributes such as rock outcrops or areas of diverse vegetation. (The inventory includes background views of mountains and ridges also, although as these views are available from all near shore paddle areas, this feature does not offer sufficient distinction to be included in the analysis.) This assessment includes the number of high quality scenic features or views of the shoreline for each day trip identified above.<sup>3</sup>
2. Beach Access. Up to 97% of day trips noted in the user survey involved out/back trips and most involved stopping at a landing site during the outing. This analysis counts the number of public landing sites noted in the inventory (Figure 2) within each day trip route. (Additional public landing sites along the undeveloped public East Shore were considered as explained in Table 2, following.)
3. Wildlife viewing. Survey respondents identified the opportunity to view wildlife as an important characteristic of the Lake Tahoe paddling experience. Wildlife are mobile, of course, and can be seen everywhere around Lake Tahoe. However, the presence of riparian vegetation and specific nesting sites can increase the likelihood of finding wildlife on any given outing. This simple analysis tabulated the presence of stream mouths, riparian vegetation, and raptor nesting sites within each day trip route identified above.
4. Solitude. Paddlers value solitude as part of their experience. Solitude can be found on Lake Tahoe by paddling during off peak times or seasons or by paddling in less crowded parts of the lake. This characteristic is poorly captured with existing data sources, however. The high mobility of all boating types reduces the physical locations that can be considered remote, thereby offering opportunity for solitude; indeed some of the most remote beaches of the East Shore are crowded during peak times. So while this analysis excludes consideration of quality assessment based on solitude, some of the motorized/non-motorized issues are captured in the conflict assessment in the following section.

This analysis performed a simple tabulation of the number of positive attributes identified above that lie within each day trip route, describing them in terms of richness of the experience. Tables 1 and 2, following, identify three broad groupings that express richness of the experience for slower/beginner and faster/experienced routes. The routes with the highest number of attributes reflect the most richly diverse potential experience. Figure 5

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<sup>3</sup> High quality includes those features rated 10 or above in the TRPA visual quality inventory (with targeted inclusions of lower rated views based on more intimate contact from slower paced paddle craft).

locates the day trip routes with the most diverse positive attributes experienced by the most diverse group of paddlers.<sup>4</sup>

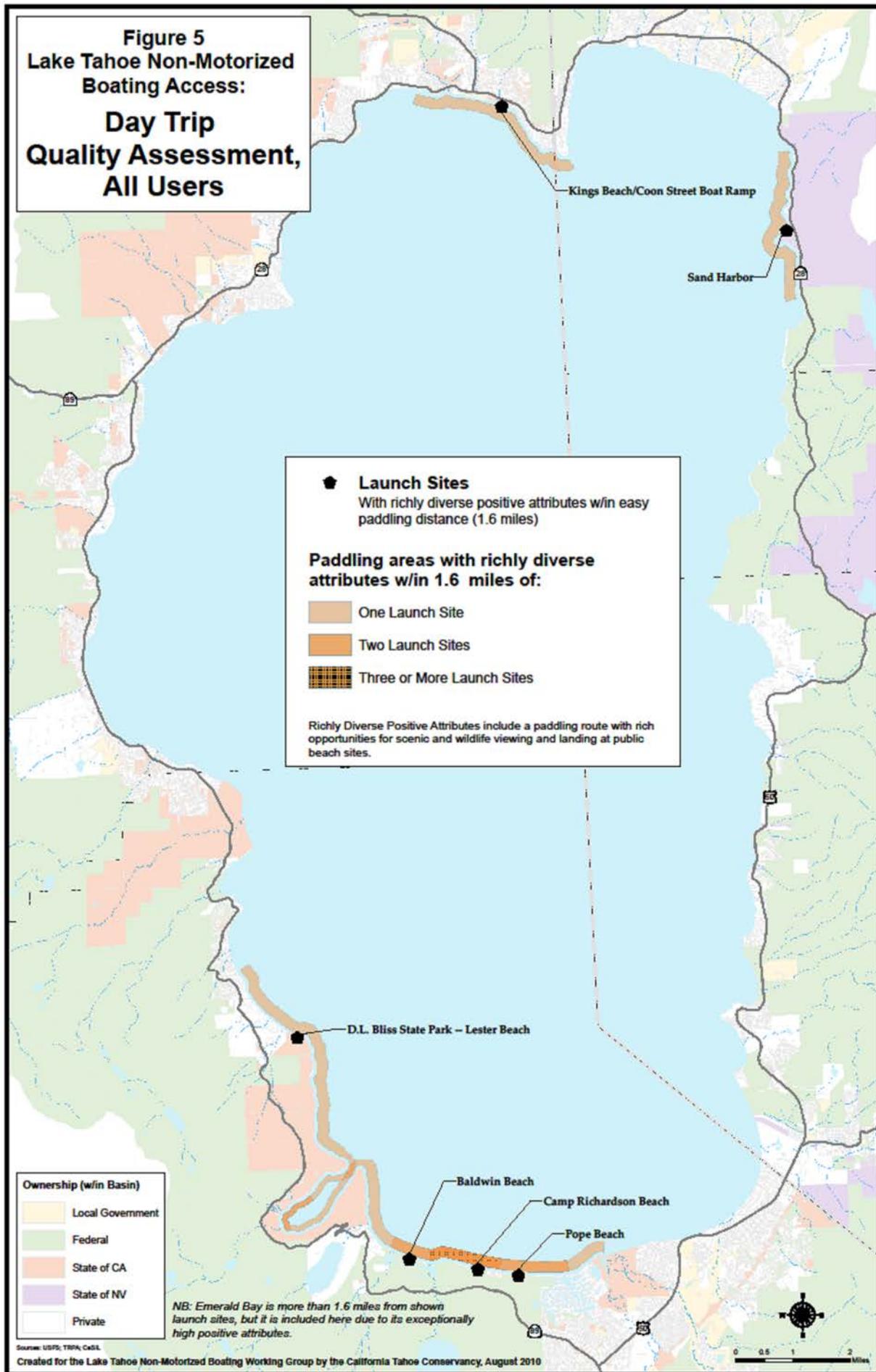
Other day trip routes offer a somewhat less diverse experience. Generally, the routes that encompass long spans of private shoreline development offer fewer opportunities for the criteria included in the analysis and therefore, offer a less richly diverse experience. The assessment technique is rudimentary, however, and can only define very general quality distinctions between routes. For example, this assessment assumes the three analysis categories are of equal value to the paddler. No survey or other data exists to refine that assumption. Also, survey data show high satisfaction with all paddling experiences at Lake Tahoe; the draw of the large blue lake, rimmed with mountains and a blue sky can be experienced everywhere.

| <b>Table 1</b>   |  |   |
|--|--|---|
| <b>Day Trip Route Quality Assessment - Slower/Beginner Routes<sup>1</sup></b>  |  |   |
| <i>Richly Diverse Positive Attributes</i>  | <i>Diverse Positive Attributes</i>   | <i>Less Diverse Positive Attributes</i>   |
| D.L. Bliss State Park - Lester Beach<br>Sand Harbor<br>Camp Richardson Beach<br>Kings Beach/Coon Street Boat Ramp<br>Pope Beach<br>Baldwin Beach | Zephyr Cove Resort<br>Meeks Bay Beach<br>Meeks Bay Resort<br>Tahoe Vista Recreation Area<br>Regan Beach<br>Commons Beach<br>Lake Forest Boat Ramp<br>North Tahoe Beach<br>Kings Beach<br>El Dorado Boat Ramp | William Kent Beach<br>Carnelian Bay - West<br>Carnelian Bay - East<br>Kaspian Beach<br>Cave Rock Boat Ramp<br>Nevada Beach<br>Round Hill Pines Beach/Marina |
| <sup>1</sup> Routes located within 1.6 miles of launching sites.   |  |   |

| <b>Table 2</b>  |  |  |
|---|--|--|
| <b>Day Trip Route Quality Assessment - Faster/Experienced Routes<sup>1</sup></b>  |  |  |
| <i>Richly Diverse Positive Attributes</i>   | <i>Diverse Positive Attributes</i>   | <i>Less Diverse Positive Attributes</i>  |
| Sand Harbor <sup>2</sup><br>Nevada Beach<br>Meeks Bay Resort<br>Regan Beach<br>Camp Richardson Beach<br>D.L. Bliss State Park - Lester Beach<br>Pope Beach<br>Baldwin Beach   | Zephyr Cove Resort<br>Commons Beach<br>Carnelian Bay - West<br>Carnelian Bay - East<br>Lake Forest Boat Ramp<br>Cave Rock Boat Ramp<br>Meeks Bay Beach<br>Round Hill Pines Beach/Marina<br>El Dorado Boat Ramp | North Tahoe Beach<br>Tahoe Vista Recreation Area<br>Kings Beach/Coon Street Boat Ramp<br>Kaspian Beach |
| <sup>1</sup> Routes located within 4.8 miles of launching sites.<br><sup>2</sup> The raw tally for this facility does not place it in the most diverse group, due to a relatively lower number of landing sites noted in the inventory. However, many more small landing opportunities exist on the East Shore than are named and included in this analysis, justifying its identification as richly diverse. |  |  |

<sup>4</sup> This figure uses the day routes for the slower/beginner paddlers as a basis because all paddlers who launch from a given site travel along the shoreline in these areas. The exception is Emerald Bay; the rich diversity of Emerald Bay draws paddlers of all ability levels.

**Figure 5**  
**Lake Tahoe Non-Motorized**  
**Boating Access:**  
**Day Trip**  
**Quality Assessment,**  
**All Users**



Day Trip Conflict Assessment

In addition to those features that contribute to a more enriched experience, the User Survey identified elements that contribute to the degradation of the paddling experience. Several of these items, such as parking availability, relate to the launch site itself and are discussed above. One survey finding identifies potential for conflict during the day trip experience on the water- conflicts with motor boats. Survey comments noted fast moving motorized craft, motor noise, and channel crowding along some lake areas as primary conflicts. During the Listening Sessions, users of motorized craft also noted conflicts with paddlers as an area of high concern, including the poor visibility of paddle craft and the lack of knowledge concerning boating rules and regulations displayed by many kayakers.

While nearly all areas of the lake are accessible to both motorized and non-motorized users, areas within day trip distances of multiple kayak launching sites and high concentrations of motor boat mooring represent one way to distinguish conflict potential. The analysis included mooring data from TRPA sources<sup>5</sup> to perform a simple tabulation of the motorized boat concentration information within each day trip route.

Tables 3 and 4 identify the day trip routes with the highest potential for conflict with motorized boats.

| <b>Table 3</b>   |  |  |
|--|--|--|
| <b>Day Trip Conflict Assessment- Slower/Beginner Day Trip Routes<sup>1</sup></b> |  |  |
| <i>Highest Concentrations of Motorized Activity</i>                              | <i>Intermediate Concentrations of Motorized Activity</i> | <i>Lowest Concentrations of Motorized Activity</i> |
| Lake Forest Boat Ramp  | Nevada Beach   | Sand Harbor  |
| North Tahoe Beach  | Meeks Bay Beach  | D.L. Bliss State Park Beach                        |
| Kings Beach  | Meeks bay Resort   | Kaspian Beach                                      |
| Kings Beach/Coon St. Boat Ramp   | William Kent Beach                                       | Cave Rock Boat Ramp                                |
| Regan Beach  | Carnelian Bay - West                                     | Round Hills Pines Beach/Marina                     |
| Tahoe Vista Recreation Area  | Carnelian Bay - East                                     | Zephyr Cove Resort                                 |
| El Dorado Boat Ramp  | Pope Beach   | Baldwin Beach                                      |
| Commons Beach  | Camp Richardson Beach                                    |  |
| <sup>1</sup> Routes located within 1.6 miles of launching sites.                 |  |  |

<sup>5</sup> Data sources include GIS-generated buoy locations and marina slips and buoys, and 2009 aquatic invasive species inspection launch survey results for boat ramps. Additional information from boat ramp operators refined the data to better reflect non-drought launch conditions.

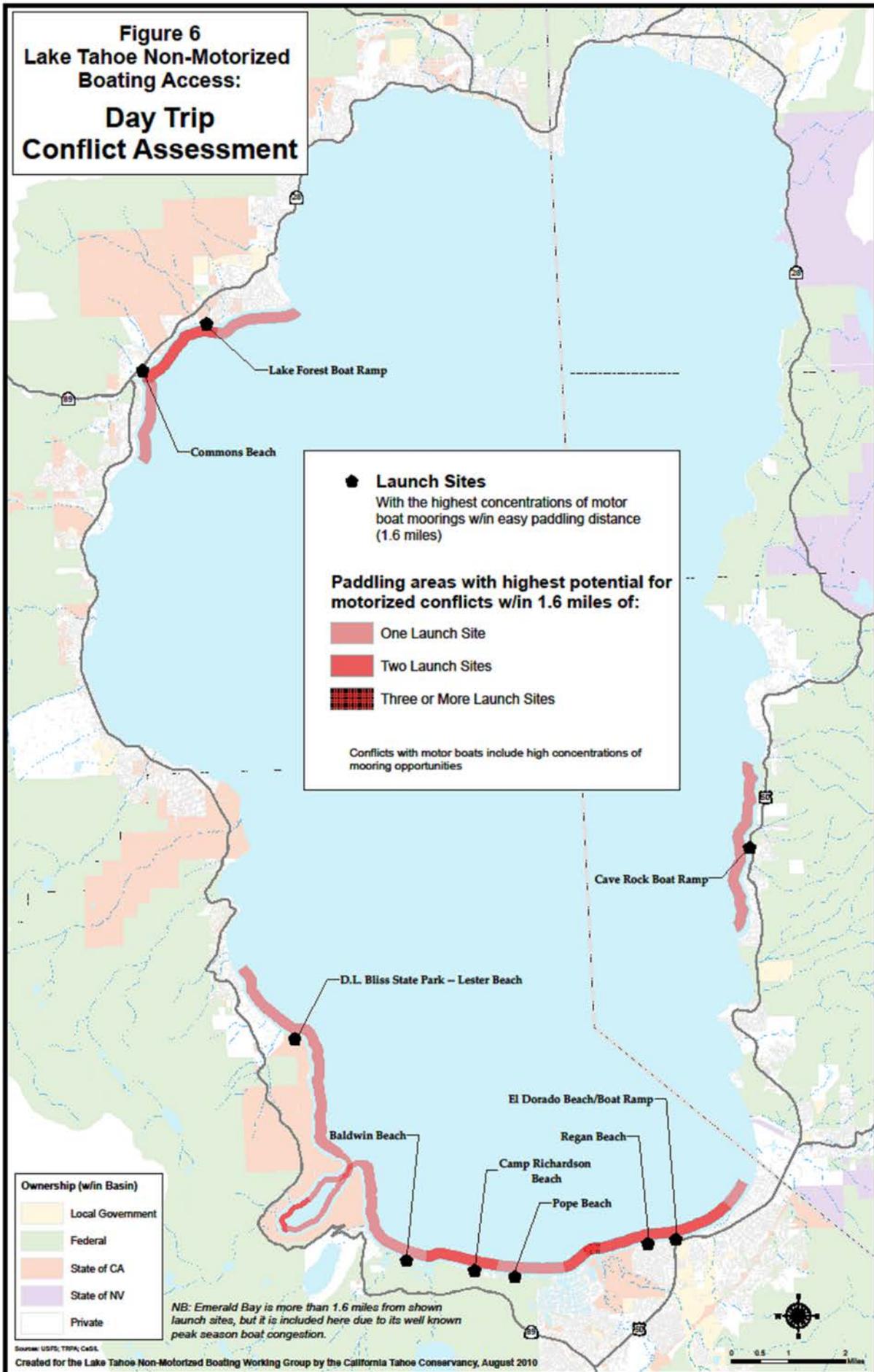
| <b>Table 4</b>   |   |   |
|--|---|---|
| <b>Day Trip Conflict Assessment - Faster/Experienced Day Trip Routes<sup>1</sup></b>   |   |   |
| <i>Highest Concentrations of Motorized Activity</i>  | <i>Intermediate Concentrations of Motorized Activity</i>  | <i>Lowest Concentrations of Motorized Activity</i>  |
| Tahoe Vista Recreation Area<br>Kaspian Beach<br>Commons Beach<br>Carnelian Bay - West<br>Carnelian Bay - East<br>Lake Forest Boat Ramp<br>William Kent Beach | Camp Richardson Beach<br>Round Hill Pines Beach/Marina<br>Nevada Beach<br>North Tahoe Beach<br>Kings Beach/Coon Street Boat Ramp<br>Kings Beach<br>El Dorado Boat Ramp<br>Regan Beach | Sand Harbor<br>D.L. Bliss State Park -- Lester Beach<br>Baldwin Beach<br>Zephyr Cove Resort<br>Cave Rock Boat Ramp<br>Meeks Bay Beach<br>Meeks Bay Resort<br>Pope Beach |
| <sup>1</sup> Routes located within 4.8 miles of launching sites.   |   |   |

Figure 6 locates the lake areas with the highest concentrations of paddlers and the highest concentrations of motorized boat moorings as those areas with the highest potential for conflict between these user groups. This assessment method offers insight into potential paddler/motor boater conflicts at the point of motor boat trip origin. Motor boats travel long distances, however, to reach desirable destinations and this methodology does not capture those locations. Long experience identifies other lake areas with high concentrations of all boater types: Emerald Bay, Meeks Bay, and Skunk Harbor are most often identified.

*Day Use Trip Quality and Conflict Assessment Implications* Consideration of this data offers the following insights.

- Land managers with non-motorized launch opportunities close to motor boat mooring concentrations bear increased outreach responsibilities concerning safe paddle craft recreation. Helping to craft this outreach message and promoting it at launch sites will reduce use conflicts and improve the quality of the recreation experience.
- Motor boat launch locations near lake zones with high concentrations of slower/beginner paddlers bear increased outreach responsibilities concerning safe recreational use. The motorized boat community could help craft an outreach message concerning safe multi-use and promote it to their users.

**Figure 6**  
**Lake Tahoe Non-Motorized**  
**Boating Access:**  
**Day Trip**  
**Conflict Assessment**



## **B. Overnight Trip Assessment**

The preceding section in this report examines non-motorized boat day use on Lake Tahoe. Paddling from one camping opportunity to another is another way to experience outdoor recreation on the lake.

Part of the kayaking phenomenon seen in this country over the last 20 years involves paddling to remote camping locations. Overnight use of paddling routes mimics the outdoor experience sought by those who camp or backpack, with the added attraction of travel on the water. At Lake Tahoe, existing developed campgrounds near the lake support overnight non-motorized boat trips. Although the User Survey identified overnight users as a very small component of overall non-motorized use (5.2% of the total), these trips are sometimes high profile. For example, during 2008, three organized circumnavigations of Lake Tahoe occurred as fundraising or promotional activities for non-profit causes such as handicap and animal welfare awareness. These trips, reported in local and regional news sources, serve to familiarize recreationists with opportunities at Lake Tahoe.

While the general awareness of overnight camping trips grows, some of the current limitations for this experience at Lake Tahoe are less well known. These include:

- Wilderness Image. Many overnight paddlers seek a near wilderness experience; the iconic image of a campsite in the sand on a remote beach is strong. Lake Tahoe does *not* offer this type of camping experience for paddlers. Existing public management plans prohibit lakeside camping outside of developed campgrounds in all areas of Lake Tahoe. None of the developed campgrounds near the water allow camping directly on the beach.
- Availability. Developed campgrounds near the lake lie within fairly easy paddle distance apart along the West and South shores and are available during the warm summer season. However, between Lake Forest and Zephyr Cove (along the north/east shore), nearly half of the total distance around the lake, camping prohibitions exist. During the inventory stage of this assessment, many data sources confirmed unpermitted overnight use of remote parts of the lake, particularly along the East Shore. This unpermitted activity presents several problems: scarcity of sanitary facilities threatens water quality and increases litter, illegal campfires raise wildfire threats, and camp sites that lie hidden from view endanger lakeside vegetation. The Targeted Interview sessions also collected reports of trespass on private property for overnight use.

Considering both the attractiveness and the limitations of overnight camping trips at Lake Tahoe, the challenge of framework development involves assessment of the existing experience, and identification of how that experience can be enhanced and potential users educated to encourage high quality, legal, and safe use.

Another national recreational trend in high profile paddle areas is increasing at Lake Tahoe. This involves paddling between lodging opportunities, not solely camping opportunities. Several parts of the data collection effort identified this use as occurring, sometimes combined with a camping trip and sometimes as a lodge-to-lodge experience alone. For example, the Lake Tahoe Water Trail Team reports increased inquiries about how an overnight stay in a hotel can support circumnavigation. Also, private guide services offer tour packages for travel between lakefront lodging opportunities. While this private business concern lies outside the scope of

public agencies to address, recognition of this opportunity as it relates to overnight trips on Lake Tahoe should be understood.

### **1. Overnight Trip Inventory**

Data collection for this assessment identifies camping opportunities near Lake Tahoe. Figure 7, Overnight Inventory, locates those campgrounds with at least some accessibility from the water. Kayak or canoe camping requires a place to land the boat and a campsite within reasonable distance to carry the boat (or at least the camping gear from the boat). This inventory includes public lakefront parcels offering at least 10 campsites, identifying their ease of access related to differing distances from the beach. The easiest access campsites lie within 120 yards of the beach. Campgrounds with more difficult access locate the campsites more than 120 yards away, or require crossing a major street / highway or encountering steep grades to access.

As noted above, overnight access can occur by staying in a lakefront lodging property. This can be part of a combined camping/hotel trip for a more urban, developed experience. Figure 7 uses land use data to identify those locations with lakefront tourist accommodations. The map scale precludes identification of each property individually. It locates one or more lodging properties within ½ mile of each symbol shown.

### **2. Overnight Assessment: Camping**

The User Survey shows most multi-day paddles did not involve circumnavigation of the lake. Most overnight trips were 1-3 nights, beginning and ending in the same location. The survey also identifies that paddlers on an overnight trip spent more total time on the water each day. Using average slow-fast paddle speeds and assuming a total of 2.5 hours of time on the water each day, this assessment can distinguish those portions of the lake with camping facilities accessible for slower and faster paddlers. Following this calculation<sup>6</sup>:

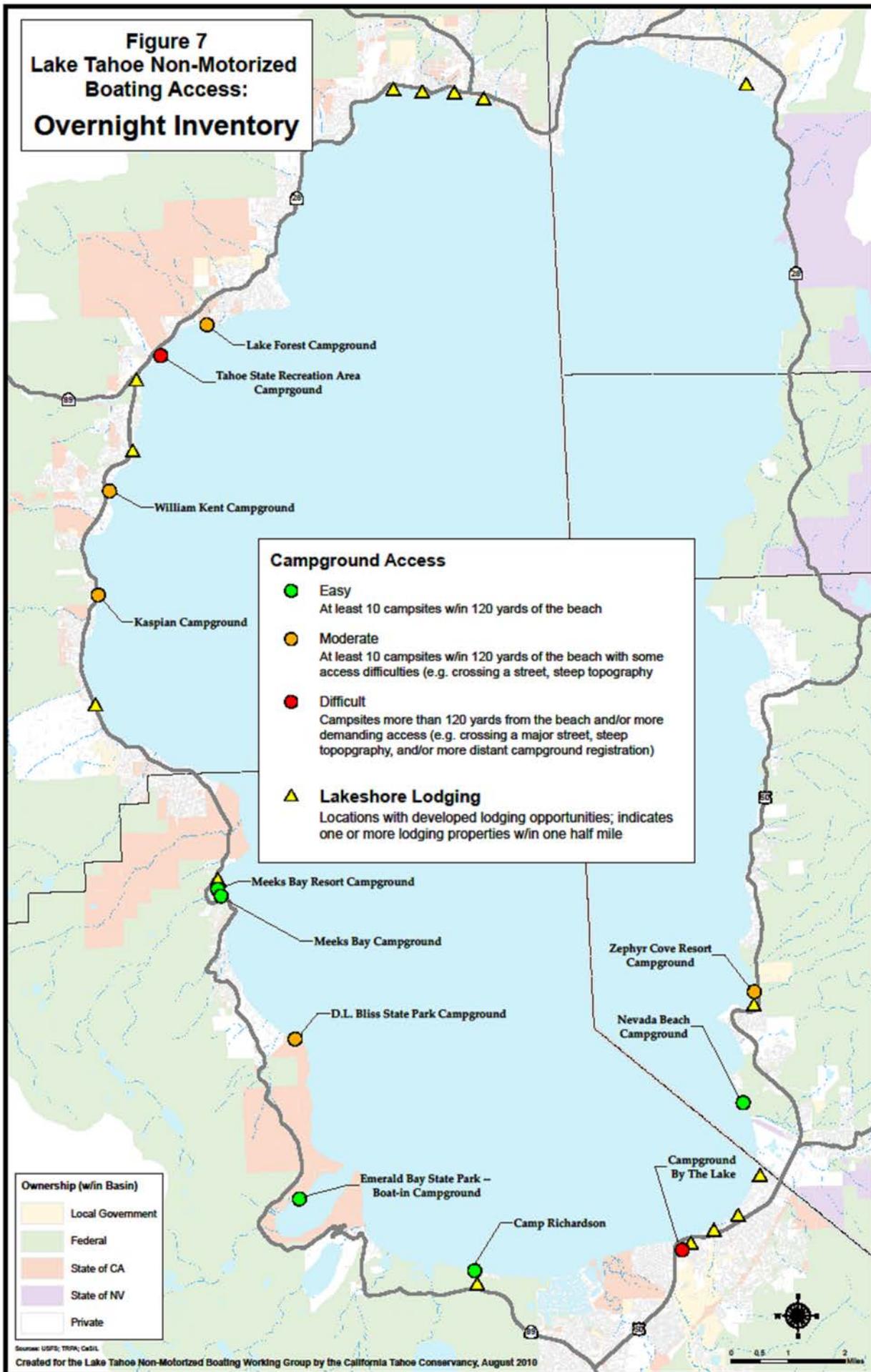
- slower paddlers require camping access every 7.5 miles (paddling 3 mph for 2.5 hours)
- faster paddlers require access every 10 miles (paddling 4 mph for 2.5 hours).

This assessment also evaluated potential for circumnavigation of Lake Tahoe. As identified previously, no legal camping opportunities exist between Lake Forest on the north shore and Zephyr Cove on the southeast shore. This nearly 32 mile stretch (measured by cutting the larger bays) exceeds a reasonable length for even the fastest paddlers in a single day. However, if the circumnavigation begins/ends at Sand Harbor, that distance is cut in half. An advanced kayaker can travel approximately 16 miles, paddling an average speed of 4 mph for 4 hours. This route presents more safety concerns - the longer time on the water increases the chance of encountering difficult wind/wave conditions and a portion of the distance offers no public support facilities such as restrooms - yet matches the abilities of skilled athletes.

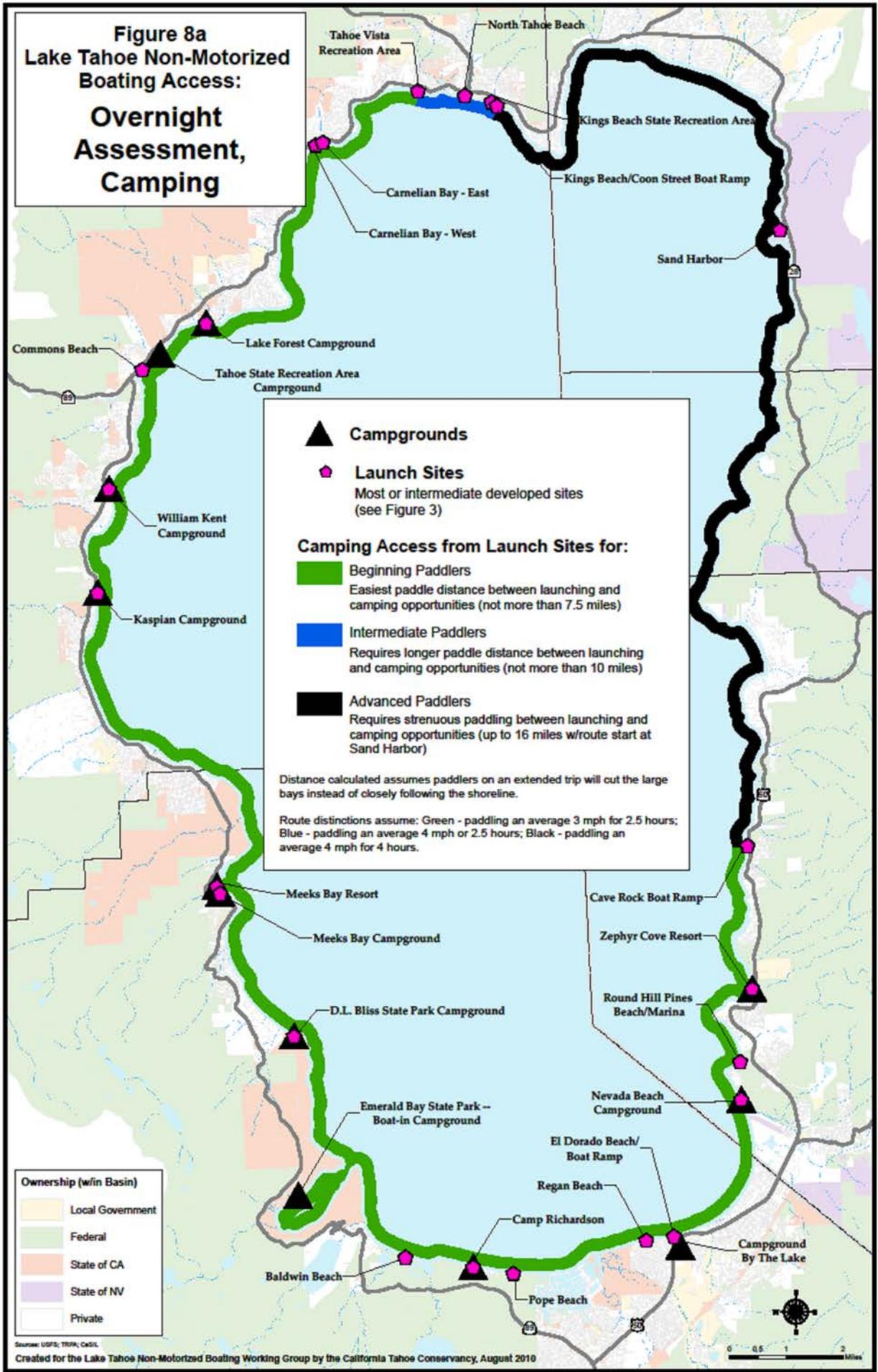
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<sup>6</sup> Paddlers tend to follow the shoreline more closely for shorter paddles and to cut the bays during longer paddles. The distances calculated for this overnight analysis, therefore, assume routes cutting across large bays, not following the shoreline.

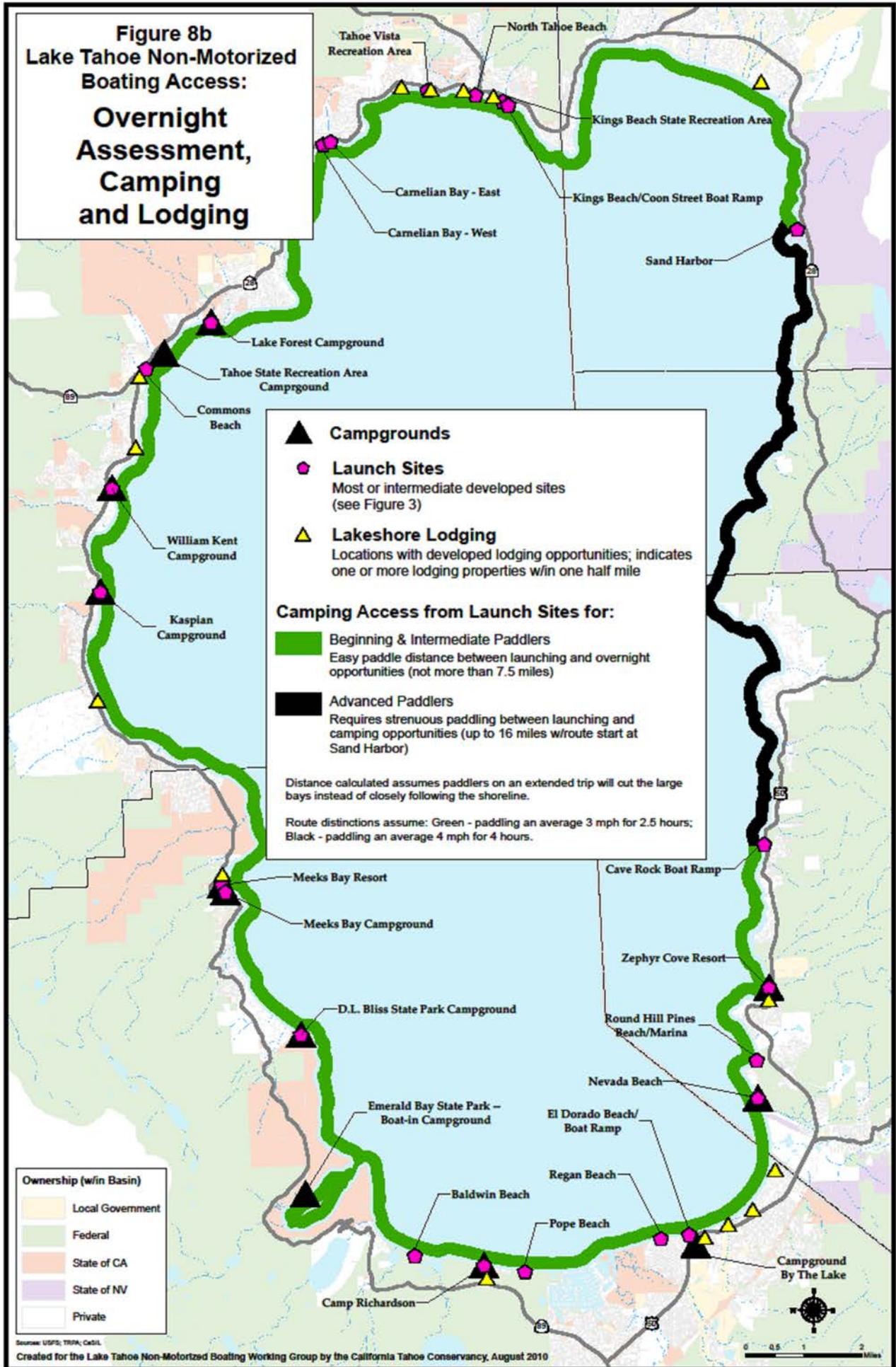
**Figure 7  
Lake Tahoe Non-Motorized  
Boating Access:  
Overnight Inventory**



**Figure 8a  
Lake Tahoe Non-Motorized  
Boating Access:  
Overnight  
Assessment,  
Camping**



**Figure 8b  
Lake Tahoe Non-Motorized  
Boating Access:  
Overnight  
Assessment,  
Camping  
and Lodging**



Overnight Trip Assessment Implications Consideration of this data offers the following insights.

- Public recreation agencies have an opportunity to support short multi-day overnight paddle trips for a broad cross section of non-motorized users at existing campgrounds along the North, West and South shores.
- The image of the type of overnight experience available at Lake Tahoe should be focused on the existing opportunities at developed campgrounds and lakefront lodges. This should be presented as an alternative to the wilderness experience possible in other locations to better align users expectations and reduce the incidence of illegal camping.
- Circumnavigation is best suited for skilled athletes and information sources for overnight paddling should identify this.

## **FRAMEWORK ELEMENTS**

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The Non-Motorized Boat Working Group considered the purpose of the study effort, data collected and assessed, and input from users and other interest groups. The resulting discussions identified specific outcomes that address the issues studied throughout the collaborative process. If implemented, these actions are expected to improve accessibility and enhance the experience for non-motorized boaters and reduce concerns and conflicts associated with this use.

This framework presents the collective concepts and ideas of the Working Group participants, but does not establish requirements or standards for promoting non-motorized boating. Public shoreline land manager agencies, as well as private parties, should consider framework elements as tools available to incorporate into future planning and decision making processes. Additionally, this framework is not definitive in its scope. Other enhancements or support opportunities could arise not envisioned in this process and should be pursued if possible.

Development of the Lake Tahoe Non-Motorized Boating Framework is not in and of itself a project that requires approval or environmental review. At this time, Working Group members do not expect Framework implementation will require changes to the TRPA Code of Ordinances, although specific projects could emerge that drive planning or zoning changes requiring further evaluation.

### **A. Framework Elements Discussion**

#### **1. Facilities/Amenities**

The framework elements recognize facility needs generated by non-motorized boat users. The elements also recognize those needs exist within the context of existing user groups and environmental sensitivity of lakefront areas.

*Parking.* Lake access parking is in very limited supply during peak use periods and serves a wide diversity of recreational needs. Creating additional parking near Lake Tahoe, however, runs contrary to the environmental values and standards of the Region. Therefore, framework elements related to launching focus on reconfiguring existing parking lots to allow

easier launching, directing launching to off peak times to reduce parking competition, and increased use of boat wheels, shuttles from existing parking off-site, on-site kayak and board storage, and other strategies to allow lake access without generating the need for nearby parking.

*Wayfinding.* Input from all interest groups and the User Survey identified confusion and conflicts resulting from a poor awareness of access issues. All the framework elements related to wayfinding address the need for paddlers to know where to access the lake, where to access needed and desirable destinations, what the rules and regulations are for any given public beach area, and how to access this outdoor recreation experience safely and enjoyably. A primary purpose of these elements is to direct users to those lakefront facilities best suited to meet their needs,

*Other.* Other facilities and amenities needed by paddlers include expanded access to restrooms and improved access for disabled paddlers. Framework recommendations also seek to expand support services available throughout the year, and highlight the locations where access in the winter is currently available. More interpretive information about the diverse natural and cultural heritage of the Lake Tahoe Region will support an enjoyable experience. This information can become part of an outreach strategy that can include signage, information on brochures and websites, events, or an on-water docent program.

## **2. Public Access**

Framework elements recognize non-motorized boating as part of the existing mix of boating uses at Lake Tahoe and its unique opportunities and needs. The framework also recognizes the challenges that accompany accommodating different user types, different ownership patterns, and increasing access capacity.

*Day Use.* Framework elements to support high-quality day use paddling include increasing the number of ways to access the lake without increasing shoreline parking. This includes use of on-site boat storage, increased use of boat rental opportunities, off- peak launching use to reduce parking competition, and use of shuttles between parking and launch or landing sites. Public/private partnerships may accomplish these elements. Implementation of access improvements must comply with development regulations in the Region and consider the access needs of all user groups.

Improving information to paddlers is another critical element in supporting better access. This information will direct users to the launch and landing sites that offer facilities most suited to their needs and that reduce conflicts with other users, private property owners, and sensitive environmental resources.

*Overnight Use.* Framework elements directly address the issues identified by encouraging and improving legal access to existing developed campgrounds for short multi-day trips. The framework identified circumnavigation as an activity suited to skilled athletes and includes recommendations for better outreach related to the challenges and restrictions associated with this use. The framework also identifies the need for legal overnight parking to support both short and longer multi-day trips. Both public agencies and private businesses should recognize the potential for combining lakefront lodging and camping into a single multi-day trip to extend and enrich the recreation experience.

Substantial challenges exist to increasing lakefront camping opportunities, particularly along the North and East Shores where camping is now prohibited. Along the East Shore, existing public land is remote from needed services (e.g. sanitation, fire control, management), often environmentally sensitive, and already serves other recreation user groups. While recognizing these challenges, this framework process, along with many other recreation use studies, identifies sustained public interest in improving access to this area. As a result, framework elements recommend public agencies be vigilant to opportunities to meet this demonstrated need, including pursuing public lands purchase or public/private opportunities to provide camping.

### **3. Safety**

Framework recommendations focus on education as a means to improve paddler safety. Much of the safety responsibility lies with non-motorized boat users, although increased awareness between all boat users is necessary to support safe boating at Lake Tahoe. Education and outreach messages concerning current local, regional and state laws about boating access (i.e. private property and public recreation) and on-water activities (e.g. boating under the influence, adherence to the 600' no-wake zone, etc.) will improve safety for all parties.

### **4. Public/Private Coordination**

The study process highlighted the need for framework elements to address protecting both public recreation access and private property rights. Recommendations that will reduce conflicts include better accommodating paddlers at public sites for launching and landing, and better educating both paddlers and land owners concerning access rights and responsibilities. A key feature of these recommendations includes fostering on-going specific dialogue between paddlers and property owners to generate a shared Code of Respect that can reduce conflicts and improve the use experience. This framework does not include recommendations that alter established rights for either property owners or members of the public.

### **5. Resource Stewardship**

The Framework builds on the stewardship values of most paddlers, focusing future effort on creating the educational message and outreach strategy that can reduce impacts on sensitive biological resources. Key to this outreach will be implementing the emerging strategy for aquatic invasive species watercraft inspection and decontamination, coordination with Regional plans for raptor and waterfowl nesting sites protection and protection of Tahoe Yellow Cress populations. The outreach strategy should include information at launch sites and consider using buoys or other on-water devices to alert boaters when they are approaching sensitive sites.

## **B. Framework Elements**

The following table presents general objectives and specific recommendations to address five major issue areas related to facilities, management and operational needs, and education/outreach strategies.

**NON-MOTORIZED BOATING FRAMEWORK ELEMENTS: TOOLKIT FOR SUPPORT**

|  |                   | <b>Capital Improvements</b>  | <b>Management/ Operational</b>  | <b>Education / Outreach</b>   |
|--|-------------------|--|---|---|
| <p><b>Facilities / Amenities</b></p> <p><i>The study and outreach process identified improvements to public facilities desirable to support non-motorized boating.</i></p> | <i>Parking</i>    | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Redesign existing parking lots for improved drop-off locations.</li> <li>2. Encourage on-site seasonal kayak storage where permissible to reduce parking needs.</li> </ol>   | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Establish early hours programs to encourage use during off-peak, calmer wind periods.</li> <li>2. Support development of shuttle services (through promotions, fee structures, or other means).</li> <li>3. Increase launching access during the winter in all locations possible.</li> <li>4. Encourage shared use of existing parking lots, perhaps supported by shuttle services, to increase day use and multi-day access.</li> </ol> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Promote off peak use, including directing paddlers to available winter launch locations.</li> </ol>   |
|  | <i>Wayfinding</i> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Upgrade public access signs at beach entrances to reflect launching opportunity.</li> <li>2. Develop coordinated wayfinding program and install markers visible from the water to identify public sites. May include signs, buoys, or other features to identify waypoints. Coordinate lake-side and land-side markers with the developing Regional wayfinding program.</li> </ol> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Add information to all agency websites concerning suitable facilities and route segments. Include info important to paddlers related to site amenities as well as general site restrictions (time of use, dog policies, fees, etc.)</li> <li>2. Develop downloadable list of GPS coordinates for facilities/amenities.</li> </ol>   | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Develop coordinated promotional/ educational message about facilities and route segments.</li> <li>2. Develop route-specific interpretive information for use at launch sites, on outreach material, and on the web to enhance the user experience.</li> </ol>  |
|  | <i>Other</i>      | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Where possible, provide permanent or portable restrooms accessible from the water in all seasons of the year.</li> <li>2. Increase ADA accessibility for launching and landing at suitable sites (see below).</li> <li>3. Increase interpretive display opportunities at launch sites related to natural and cultural features in the nearby day trip areas.</li> </ol>            | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Encourage partnerships with lakeside businesses to allow public use of restrooms and promote these partnerships in outreach material</li> </ol>   | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Promote those locations where restrooms are already available year-round.</li> <li>2. Increase interpretive information for paddlers about the natural and cultural heritage in the Region to support a high quality recreation experience. Work collaboratively with others to develop on-site displays, brochures and websites, events, or docent programs to promote.</li> </ol> |

Lake Tahoe Non-Motorized Boat Working Group  
**Non-Motorized Boating Framework**

|  |                             | <b>Capital Improvements</b>  | <b>Management/ Operational</b>  | <b>Education / Outreach</b>   |
|--|-----------------------------|--|---|---|
| <p><b>Public Access</b></p> <p><i>The framework process identified key elements to improve public access and resolve conflicts related to public access.</i></p> | <p><i>Day Use</i></p>       | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Increase quality and number of existing public sites usable as launch sites by improving parking, supporting shuttle services, or providing boat wheels.</li> <li>2. Encourage rental opportunities on appropriate sites.</li> <li>3. Encourage seasonal boat storage on-sites that conform to TRPA Code provisions and public land manager requirements to improve access while reducing parking needs.</li> <li>4. Provide low docks at launch sites with current ADA accessibility to meet needs of users with disabilities. Where possible, improve overall site accessibility.</li> <li>5. Pursue opportunities to secure additional public day use access sites where possible.</li> </ol> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Better utilize existing sites by encouraging use of less crowded launch sites and off peak use (see other categories)</li> </ol>  | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Promote day use of launch facilities with adequate capacity.</li> </ol>   |
|  | <p><i>Overnight Use</i></p> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Improve access to existing camping opportunities (e.g. providing boat locks near the water, boat wheels, etc).</li> <li>2. Provide facilities for ADA accessibility at campgrounds with paddler access where possible.</li> <li>3. Pursue opportunities to secure additional public camping sites where possible.</li> </ol>   | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Encourage overnight trips using existing camping opportunities that do not circumnavigate the lake through campground management strategies.</li> <li>2. Where environmental standard and public agency policies allow, consider public/private partnerships to manage or operate camping accessible from the water.</li> </ol> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Make overnight trip rating system part of outreach message to promote use of legal camping.</li> <li>2. Develop partnership with private and non-profit organizations to support awareness of overnight lodging opportunities to reduce illegal camping.</li> </ol> |

*Lake Tahoe Non-Motorized Boat Working Group*  
**Non-Motorized Boating Framework**

|  | <b>Capital Improvements</b>  | <b>Management/ Operational</b>   | <b>Education / Outreach</b>   |
|--|--|--|---|
| <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Safety</b></p> <p><i>Framework participants identified many specific features that will improve non-motorized boating safety, as well as safety for other lake users.</i></p>                        | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Develop coordinated signage identified by the safety program (see Management/Operational) for use at non-motorized launch sites.</li> </ol>  | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Develop coordinated safety program about regulatory requirements at launch sites that recognizes non-motorized launches as boat launches. Program to address: overall paddling safety (including safety classes for self -rescue and t-rescue techniques), specific Tahoe weather/water conditions, safety related user conflicts, wayfinding and route information.</li> <li>2. Collaborate with organized groups like the US Coast Guard Auxiliary to support safety awareness.</li> </ol> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Incorporate elements of safety program in all outreach media.</li> <li>2. Work with paddlers and motor boat users to develop appropriate safety messages for both user groups to improve safety for each.</li> <li>3. Encourage paddlers to take responsibility for safety through measures such as: improving boat visibility, paddling in the no-wake zone, paddling in groups in open water areas.</li> <li>4. Increase motor boat user awareness and compliance with the no-wake zone.</li> </ol> |
| <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Public/Private Coordination</b></p> <p><i>The framework process incorporated proposals from public and private interests that can improve the quality of the experience for all user groups.</i></p> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Develop and implement signage program so paddlers know where public lands are.</li> <li>2. Implement improvements to public facilities noted to attract users away from private beaches.</li> <li>3. Increase information at launch sites concerning land ownership in the nearby route segments, highlighting the location of public landing opportunities.</li> </ol>      | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Develop program to educate paddlers concerning trespass. Program to include: access from the land (prohibit trespass over private property to access the lake), access from the water (different access allowances/ restrictions in different states), prevent access on private facilities such as buoys, swim platforms and piers, and safe harbor rights and limitations.</li> </ol>  | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Work with paddlers and landowners to develop Code of Respect to recognize legitimate needs of each group. Work with all groups to increase understanding of legal limits.</li> <li>2. Develop education message to direct paddlers to public facilities. Include GPS points in outreach materials to improve wayfinding.</li> <li>3. Education message to specifically identify limits of private property, and public trust easement differences in California and Nevada..</li> </ol>               |
| <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Resource Stewardship</b></p> <p><i>The framework process identified opportunities to develop and reinforce stewardship values relative to sensitive resources.</i></p>                               | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Monitor Tahoe Yellow Cress (TYC) protection fencing on landing sites for adequate signage/maintenance.</li> <li>2. Direct paddle craft landing away from new sites with signage or fencing as TYC populations move.</li> <li>3. Increase interpretive information at launching sites and near sensitive resources related to appropriate access in habitat areas.</li> </ol> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Support aquatic invasive species (AIS) control program developed by others at all public launch sites.</li> <li>2. Work with wildlife scientists and fisheries biologists to develop/ implement wildlife protection measures (avoid approach during sensitive times, maintain minimum distance, etc.)</li> <li>3. Incorporate public paddle access areas into monitoring/ surveying protocols for sensitive species to identify emerging conflicts if they occur.</li> </ol>                 | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Support AIS control program through websites, launch site info, etc.</li> <li>2. Develop/promote interpretive message specific to paddlers related to sensitive species.</li> <li>3. Promote paddler-specific Leave No Trace elements in all outreach material.</li> </ol>  |

## **NEXT STEPS**

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### **A. Public Agency Processes**

The Working Group produced this Framework in a collaborative process designed to create the information and relationships necessary to support non-motorized boating and address issues. Creating positive change will involve public recreation agencies, whether they participated on the Working Group or not, working alone and with other public and private interests.

#### **1. Individual Agency Processes**

Every public agency in the Lake Tahoe Region with lakefront access and recreation responsibilities follows specific processes to implement management and facility changes. The Framework presented here should be used to inform these processes and provide a toolkit for improvements. This effort is well timed as several area agencies are in the process of considering new plans or policies with recreation elements. For example, the TRPA and USFS are now in the process of updating their regional plans (the TRPA Regional Plan and Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit Forest Plan, respectively). These and every agency with interests related to non-motorized boating will consider their individual mandates, specific property characteristics, and institutional capacity when deciding to pursue any individual recommendation.

Additionally, implementation of some framework elements will require further study and/or project approval. Indeed, although important consultation and extensive discussion often occurred related to individual framework elements, the current study effort made no attempt to provide complete analysis of its recommendations. Further review may alter the nature of those recommendations as more detailed information is considered.

#### **2. Collaborative Process**

Working Group members agree that continued collaboration between public and private interests will create the best opportunity for non-motorized boating support. Framework recommendations, in fact, often rely on multiple partners for their implementation. Members of the Working Group intend to continue to work together on implementation of specific elements as a means of strengthening the collaboration.

The first element to be the subject of additional work will be creating a public access image for paddlers as the basis of a wayfinding strategy. This will involve members of the Working Group and others working on related wayfinding programs in the Region.

### **B. Continuing Commitments**

The agencies involved in the Working Group will continue to collaborate on specific additional studies and/or individual framework elements. Periodic check-ins, including an annual workshop examining progress, will occur.