



2023 Lake Tahoe Litter Summit Breakout Discussion Takeaways

1.

Breakout Discussion Topic: How to Build a Culture of Caretaking in Tahoe

Breakout Host: Noah Shapiro

Notetaker: Stuart Maas

Breakout Discussion Summary:

Challenge(s) Identified: We need to further develop ways to implement more campaigns and programs that support a culture of caring for Tahoe.

Solution(s) Identified: By more resources to help develop a culture of making it “cool to care” for Tahoe we can engage visitors and locals alike in participating in a way of life that embodies a stewardship culture that goes beyond picking up litter but addressing the problem at its source (less single use, more reusable products etc.) Additionally, an expansion of engaging programs for youth education will help create a ripple effect of spreading this stewardship culture and should work to leverage face to face interactions with people to deepen their connection with the Lake and surrounding areas. To tie it all together, it is important to also incorporate and engage local businesses in helping to support the development of stewardship culture through the products they promote and sell.

Key Takeaways:

- Make it "cool to care"
- Expand youth education programs
- Engage local businesses

2.

Breakout Discussion topic: Role of Litter Management in Destination Stewardship

Breakout Host: Devin Middlebrook

Notetaker: Colin West

Breakout Discussion Summary:

Challenge(s) Identified: While there are efforts in various jurisdictions around the basin that are actively working towards ways to eliminate waste at the source and promote more sustainable practices. The challenge is that this is not a consistent theme in all jurisdictions around the Tahoe basin.

Solution(s) Identified: If more jurisdictions around the basin adopted litter prevention regulations, programs and policies there would be a more clear path to eliminating waste at the source and behavioral and cultural changes. For example, programs like the Green box program, food waste diversion and single-use plastic bans in all jurisdictions would create a more unified approach that would put a bigger emphasis on cultural change that visitors and locals alike could engage in.

Key takeaways:

- Eliminate waste at the source
- Behavior and culture change

3.

Breakout Discussion Topic: Data Harmonization: Unifying the Approach to Data Collection

Breakout Host: Monica Arienzo

Notetaker: Eden Foster

Breakout Discussion Summary:

Challenge(s) Identified: There is not enough collaboration among the entities collecting litter data. In order to properly share this data, there must be a recognizable standard between data sets. Another challenge is two organizations accidentally collecting the same data. To avoid redundancy, organizations should communicate and ensure everyone is working on different things. Methods play an important role in the results of the data collection. When every organization is using different methods, the data presented can result in conflicting statements for the general public/media. For example, when it comes to recreational litter v.s. homeowner litter, how can we make a message that works intuitively? How can we teach and spread the message?

Solution(s) Identified: Standardization among data sets will make data more accessible. Geospatial data is helpful in providing an outlet for the public. Maps can easily be read by the general public and are a good way to communicate meaningful statistics. Identifying metrics (volume, mass, count, toxicity) for Tahoe litter can help promote a uniform message. "You don't have to take a big step, just take a step in the right direction." Additionally, this discussion included the idea that groups collecting litter data could identify 3-5 key items that are measured in the same way to have consistent, shareable data that can be shared across different organizations and help inform the public, local stakeholders as well as help inform new policy development.

Key Takeaways:

- Use data to inform policies that encourage behavioral change
- More discussions among like minded groups- identifying key data
- Identifying the intersection of data and policy needs and standardizing across groups

4.

Breakout Discussion topic: Redefining Park Trash Management: Starting with the new Van Sickle Visitor Center and Campground.

Breakout Host: Kevin Fromherz

Notetaker: Cara Hollis

Breakout Discussion Summary:

Challenge(s) Identified: State parks face many difficulties in managing waste and littering in the Tahoe basin. During his presentation Kevin Fromherz shared that Walt Disney figured out that the furthest a patron would walk to throw something away was 30 feet. But, the idea of a trash can every 30 feet in a park seemed pretty impractical from a management standpoint considering for Sand Harbor, they would need 770 trash cans to fit this model. Additionally, the park already has a hard time keeping up with emptying the trash cans they currently have- adding more cans would merely add to the problem. So, the breakout discussions explored ways to approach new trash management ideas for the Van Sickle Visitors Center and Campground.

Solution(s) Identified : The discussion began by identifying that installing more trash cans (1 every 30 feet) would ultimately just encourage more trash. So, the group began to discuss the idea of a Zero Waste Park which created an experience where visitors engaged in not only limiting waste brought into the park but also are required to take all of their waste with them, as there would be no trash cans available.

To enhance this experience and guide the visitor experience the group discussed the idea of having ambassadors at the entrance to provide resources and information about how to interact with a zero waste park. First, being that the one trash can at the front of the park was the last trash can they would see once they enter and that they would need to plan accordingly. Second, these ambassadors would engage with campers and ensure that they were prepared to contain their waste during the trip and were required to pack out their own garbage. Campers without their own trash bags would be given trash bags as needed by the ambassadors.

The discussion also highlighted the general challenge with the zero waste park idea is that the park is surrounded by casinos and businesses that are not currently aligned with anything zero-waste. So, there will have to be efforts to bring these casinos/businesses onboard with the zero waste mentality. This would include providing reusable "keepsake" cups that visitors would have to purchase, and therefore they would be encouraged to keep them. The other model discussed was having patrons put a deposit down on reusable cups, then they would get their deposit back when they returned them to the business. To make the use of reusable items more tangible in the park, they would need to install refill and rinse stations. If the visitors had some sort of reusable container, they could rinse it out and refill it in multiple locations along the trails. (There was discussion of how to keep the water in the refill stations cold. Everyone agreed it was important, no definitive ideas on how to consistently achieve cold water were offered though some examples of how this was done as Spooner were given.) There was also discussion of "advertising" the zero waste nature of the park to casino/business patrons with the help of said casinos and businesses, so that people are prepped before they decide to visit the parts and understand the reusable cup/deposit situation.

While the bulk of the reusable discussions were focused on liquid containers, there was also discussion of carry out food containers and utensils. Again, the deposit and return model was discussed to help eliminate this trash issue. (Apparently Truckee is starting to put these models in place so they can provide some learning opportunities for implementing these efforts in South Lake.) A suggestion was also made to integrate "zero waste" into the interpretive theme of the park. There is a company currently working on the interpretive theme, so this could be a possibility.

Key takeaways:

1. Visitor experience built around zero waste
2. Refill stations, rinsing stations, reusable cups for sale or loan
3. 1 trash can at the entrance with ambassadors and "This is the last trashcan"

5.

Breakout Discussion Topic: Identifying and overcoming hurdles holding back effective litter solutions

Breakout Host: Marilee Movius

Notetaker: Sadye Easler

Breakout Discussion Summary:

Challenge(s) Identified: There are many hurdles that the community is facing in its work towards effective litter solutions. To start, Lake Tahoe is surrounded by two states and five different counties making it difficult for a unified approach to litter management and enforcement. We can continue to work towards better litter management strategies but at the end of the day, the more single-use items are sold and utilized in the region, the more will continue to enter the environment. We need to find ways to 'turn off the faucet' and while there are bans on harmful single-use products in some counties, the rest have yet to get on board- we need better policies. The overarching challenge identified is that all jurisdictions within the basin need to develop a unified approach to enforcement against littering.

Solution(s) Identified: The discussion group covered a lot of ground of varying ways to overcome the hurdles involved with litter management. At the end these items were separated into short and long term solutions.

Short term solutions discussed included messaging and engagement regarding specific problem areas. Putting efforts towards engaging with concessionaires and stores to discourage the sale of specific products, especially single-use plastic items and other harmful plastic toys could help eliminate the opportunity for purchase and ultimately reduce the environmental impact associated with these items. Another idea included implementing conversations/messaging to Airbnb or vacation rental hosts in Tahoe about important information to share with visitors including the quality of our tap water would encourage eco-friendly practices, like opting to bring their reusable water bottles instead of relying on single-use plastic bottles.

Additionally, sharing information with new homeowners about vital information regarding bear safety. This includes instructions on how to properly use bear boxes for storing food, as well as the importance of avoiding food storage in cars. It is also emphasized that during the spring and fall seasons, keeping doors open should be avoided to prevent bear encounters and ensure the safety of residents in their homes. By effectively delivering these messages, a focus on environmental sustainability, eco-friendly practices, and waste reduction measures can be promoted within the community.

Aside from specific message ideas, another conversation was about finding ways to give recreational enthusiasts access to tools that could help them be better stewards during the activities that they engage in. One example was providing mesh bags at the beginning of river rafting sites that floaters could use to contain their trash during their time on the river. This would be a similar model to how boat launches provide life jackets that the public can use and return at will.

For long term solutions the discussions explored unified approaches to enforcement, policy and more funding. Unified enforcement would require that all jurisdictions have access to the same types of resources and standards for litter management education, equipment and enforcement techniques. Many participants agreed that enforcement is needed, while there are signs that warn about littering- there is no enforcement and therefore people do not take it seriously and will continue to litter. Ideas were shared where litter fines could be set up to go back into community litter program sustainability. .

Implementation of more policies directed at eliminating single-use and plastic products was another big topic. The idea that we need to 'turn off the faucet' in order to get a better handle on the litter in our environment was shared. One idea that could help to support a transition of offering different products and having bulk supply stores available throughout the region where community members and visitors can purchase items not wrapped in plastic. This could help support a more waste-free and litter free culture and put Tahoe on the map for setting a new standard.

Furthermore, the topic of sustainable conservation funding was brought to the table. Specifically highlighting the need for operational funding sources to support organizations so they can have stability outside of restricted project funding in order to sustain their services to the community and continue to develop new innovative ways to make a difference.