

4.6 HAZARDS AND HAZARDOUS MATERIALS

This chapter describes the existing environment in the Town of Truckee in regards to hazards and hazardous materials, and analyzes the potential impacts of the 2025 General Plan. In addition to the information on hazardous materials, other hazards addressed in this section include wildland fire, avalanche and airport safety. Flooding hazards are addressed in Section 4.8: Hydrology and Water Quality

A. Existing Setting

The following section summarizes regulations and information on hazardous materials and other hazards within the Town of Truckee and evaluates existing environmental conditions within the area.

1. Regulatory Setting

Various federal, State, County and local agencies oversee hazards and hazardous materials issues in the Town of Truckee, and have established regulations designed to protect human health and the environment from the effects of hazards and hazardous materials. The Town of Truckee itself does not have direct authority over most hazardous materials, but has adopted local policies to ensure local compliance with hazards and hazardous material regulations and to limit risk presented by the handling of such materials.

a. Federal

Following are the national agencies which oversee hazards and hazardous materials.

i. Environmental Protection Agency

The United States Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) laws and regulations ensure the safe production, handling, disposal and transportation of hazardous materials. Laws and regulations established by the EPA are enforced in Truckee by the California Environmental Protection Agency (Cal EPA).

ii. U.S. Department of Transportation

The United States Department of Transportation (DOT) regulates transportation of hazardous materials by truck and rail. This department also establishes criteria for safe handling procedures of hazardous materials.

b. State

Following are the State agencies which oversee hazards and hazardous materials.

i. California Environmental Protection Agency

One of the primary hazardous materials regulatory agencies is the Cal EPA, which is authorized by the Federal EPA to enforce and implement federal hazardous materials laws and regulations. The following organizations are departments of the Cal EPA:

- ◆ **Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC).** DTSC protects California and Californians from exposures to hazardous waste, primarily under the authority of the Federal Resource Conservation Recovery Act of 1976 and the California Health and Safety Code. DTSC programs include dealing with aftermath clean-ups of improper hazardous waste management, evaluation of samples taken from sites, enforcement of regulations regarding use, storage and disposal of hazardous materials, and encouragement of pollution prevention.
- ◆ **Department of Pesticide Regulation (DPR).** DPR regulates pesticide sales and use in the state and fosters reduced-risk pest management. The DPR's oversight includes product evaluation and registration, environmental monitoring, residue testing of fresh produce and local use enforcement through County agricultural commissioners. The DPR provides training, coordination, supervision, and technical and legal support for the County Agricultural Commission.

c. Nevada County

There are a number of agencies that oversee hazards and hazardous materials in Nevada County:

i. Hazardous Material Area Plan

Nevada County maintains a Hazardous Material Area Plan, in accordance with the California Health and Safety Code (HSC) (Division 20, Chapter 6.95, §25500 et seq.) and the California Code of Regulations (CCR) (Title 19, Article 3, §2270 et seq.). The Plan is updated every three years. It protects human health and the environment through hazardous materials emergency planning, response and agency coordination, and community right-to-know programs. The Plan outlines the roles and responsibilities of federal, State, County and local agencies in responding to hazardous material releases and incidents.

The Nevada County Environmental Health Department monitors commercial storage and use of hazardous materials, and issues permits for use and storage of significant quantities of hazardous materials or substances.¹

ii. Emergency Operations Plan

Nevada County has an established plan to reduce the impacts of hazards by preventing injury, loss of life and damage to homes, businesses and neighborhoods. The Nevada County Emergency Operations Plan was written in March 2005 and identifies threats to public safety and strategies to reduce the dangers presented by earthquakes, landslides, dam failures, floods and wild-fire.²

iii. Department of Environmental Health

Nevada County Department of Environmental Health is the recognized Certified Unified Program Agency (CUPA). The Department maintains a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the State DTSC to complete all site inspections and to enforce State-established regulations concerning the

¹ Tracy Gidel, Nevada County Department of Environmental Health Program Manager, Hazardous Materials Division, Personal Communication, Ted Heyd, April 12, 2006.

² Tracy Gidel, Nevada County Department of Environmental Health Program Manager, Hazardous Materials Division, Personal Communication, Ted Heyd, April 12, 2006.

handling, storage, transport, and disposal of hazardous materials. The Department is also responsible for responding to hazardous materials spill incidents in coordination with other agencies. The Department's level of involvement in response to a spill depends on the location and the nature of the incident.³

iv. Nevada County Fire Plan

The Truckee Fire Protection District was an active participant in the development of the Nevada County Fire Plan, which was accepted by the Nevada County Board of Supervisors in May 2005. The Fire Plan includes an extensive series of recommendations aimed at reducing wildland fire risk in the county, including fuel management and defensible space enforcement strategies, public education, infrastructure improvements to increase fire-fighting capacity, and coordination with local fire agencies to ensure consistent and effective wildland fire mitigation efforts.

d. Town of Truckee

The Town of Truckee has the following plans in place to address risks involving hazards and hazardous materials.

i. Truckee Emergency Operations Plan

The Town of Truckee is currently drafting its own Emergency Operations Plan (EOP), which identifies the Town's emergency planning, organization, and response policies and procedures. The plan also addresses the integration and coordination with other governmental levels when required. The EOP addresses how the Town will respond to extraordinary events or disasters, from preparation through recovery, and identifies the responsibility of each department based on each identified hazard or threat.⁴

³ Janet Mann, Nevada County Department of Environmental Health (Truckee Field Office), Environmental Specialist IV, Personal Communication, Ted Heyd, March 29, 2006.

⁴ Town of Truckee Draft Emergency Operations Plan, 2003.

Special districts serving the Town of Truckee are responsible for following this plan and developing procedures to fulfill their stated responsibilities. The EOP will ultimately be approved by the Town Council and signed by the Mayor.⁵

ii. Truckee Fire Protection District

The Truckee Fire Protection District has adopted several provisions of the Uniform Fire Code, which is established at the State level. Article 80 of the Code includes multiple provisions concerning the storage, transport, and accidental release of hazardous materials. The Truckee Fire Protection District is responsible for overseeing enforcement of the provisions in Article 80 that have been adopted by the Fire Protection District.⁶

iii. Conditions of Approval

The Town has conditions of approval that it uses to regulate new construction by placing development requirements on new development. These standards work to ensure that public safety is considered in the designs of new development, as well as during project construction. For example, Chapters 18.34 and 18.36 of the Town's Development Code contain specific conditions related to development within areas designated as flood plain or in hillside areas, respectively.

iv. Truckee Fire Code

The Town of Truckee has adopted the Uniform Fire Code with some amendments as part of its Development Code. The amendments are intended to address the specific conditions and fire risks in Truckee and to ensure that development occurs in a manner that reduces the threat of urban and wild-land fire.⁷

⁵ Town of Truckee Draft Emergency Operations Plan, 2003.

⁶ Chuck Thomas, Truckee Fire Protection District, Assistant Fire Marshall, Personal Communication, Ted Heyd, March 29, 2006.

⁷ Chuck Thomas, Truckee Fire Protection District, Assistant Fire Marshall, Personal Communication, Ted Heyd, March 29, 2006.

v. Truckee-Tahoe Airport

The Foothill Airport Land Use Commission adopted an updated Comprehensive Land Use Plan (CLUP) entitled the Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan, in December, 2004. The CLUP describes a series of land use safety and compatibility zones and associated guidelines for development around the Truckee-Tahoe Airport that are intended to safeguard against incompatible development adjacent to the airport.⁸ Public Utilities Code Section 21676 requires Truckee's General Plan to be in conformance with the land use plan and policies of an adopted CLUP, unless the Town Council finds reason to overrule the CLUP or portions of it.

2. Existing Hazards

Both natural conditions and human activities can create risk to individuals and properties within the Town of Truckee. The following section considers existing hazards in the Town of Truckee and its Sphere of Influence, including the potential hazards related to hazardous materials, wildfires and airports.⁹

a. Hazardous Materials and Wastes

A search of the EPA website determined that there are currently no Superfund sites within Truckee and its Sphere.¹⁰ A search of the DTSC's EnviroS-tor database that contains information on properties in California where hazardous substances have been released, or where the potential for a release ex-

⁸ Truckee-Tahoe *Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan*, Mead and Hunt, December 2004.

⁹ Chuck Thomas, Assistant Fire Marshall, Truckee Fire Protection District, Personal Communication, Ted Heyd, March 29, 2006

¹⁰<http://134.67.99.113/sf/emsuperfund.asp?xl=-120.209399&yt=39.345871&xr=-120.161099&yb=39.309646>, accessed March 24, 2006.

ists, did not identify any sites within the three Truckee zip codes that were searched.¹¹

Hazardous materials used in Truckee include a wide variety of substances commonly used in households and businesses. Used motor oil, paint, solvents, lawn care and gardening products, household cleaners, gasoline and refrigerants are among the diverse range of substances classified as hazardous materials. Nearly all businesses and residences generate some amount of hazardous waste; certain businesses and industries generate larger amounts of such substances, including gas stations, automotive service and repair shops, printers, dry cleaners and photo processors. Hospitals, clinics and laboratories generate medical waste which is also potentially hazardous. The handling, transportation and disposal of such materials and wastes are of concern in all communities, including Truckee. Improper handling of hazardous materials or wastes may result in significant effects to human health and the environment.

The Town encourages safe and proper disposal of household hazardous materials. Placer County operates the Eastern Regional Landfill on Cabin Creek Road off SR 89. Tahoe Truckee Sierra Disposal staffs the facility for receiving materials from the public and Phillip Services is the subcontractor responsible for bulking and disposal. The facility is open by appointment only spring through fall. The Town does not operate any other hazardous waste disposal facilities.¹²

In addition to hazardous materials used and generated within Truckee, hazardous materials and waste also pass through the community enroute to other

¹¹California Department of Toxic Substances Control, http://www.envirostor.dtsc.ca.gov/public/search.asp?cmd=search&city=&zip=96161&county=&federal_superfund=True&state_response=True&voluntar_cleanup=True&school_cleanup=True&display_results=Report&pub=True, accessed March 24, 2006.

¹² Nichole Dorr, Recycling Coordinator, Town of Truckee, email correspondence, Ted Heyd, March 28, 2006.

destinations via the railroad and major regional routes, including I-80, SR 267 and SR 89. The Town does not have direct authority over the transport of hazardous materials on the major roads and rail line within Truckee. As mentioned above, transportation of hazardous materials by truck and rail is regulated by the DOT.

b. Wildfires

The entire Truckee area is considered to be in a high fire hazard severity zone, as defined by the California Department of Forestry (CDF), although risks are pronounced in certain parts of the community, particularly where homes are located within areas of dense vegetation and forest land, and where steep slopes and other similar conditions exist.¹³ Calculation of threat from wildfire hazard is based on a number of combining factors including fuel loading (vegetation), topography, and climatic conditions such as winds, humidity and temperature. Figure 4.6-1 shows areas of potential risk from wildland fire based on the proximity of population density to those areas most likely to be at risk due to prevailing physical and climatic conditions.

In 2001, the Martis Fire burned approximately 15,000 acres east of Truckee. Authorities closed I-80 in both directions to minimize danger to public safety. The community of Floriston, which is located approximately 10 miles to the northeast of Truckee was evacuated as a result of the incident.¹⁴

c. Airports and Airstrips

The Truckee-Tahoe Airport, which is located outside of Truckee Town limits on the boundary between Placer and Nevada Counties, serves as a regional center for private and charter flights. Identifying and maintaining land uses that are compatible with safe airport operations is an important consideration.

¹³ California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, Fire Hazards Severity Zones Map, <http://frap.cdf.ca.gov/webdata/maps/statewide/fhszmap.pdf>, accessed April 11, 2006.

¹⁴ SFGate.com website, <http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2001/06/18/MN5447.DTL>, accessed on March 3, 2006.

d. Avalanches

The degree of potential hazard from snow avalanche in Truckee is related to a number of localized conditions, including steepness of slope, exposure, snow pack composition, wind, temperature, rate of snowfall and other interacting factors. Three avalanche hazard areas are mapped in Truckee; these are shown in Figure 4.6-2. They include an area at the west end of Donner Lake, and another south of the lake just west of the Donner Memorial State Park, as well as a smaller area at the southeast edge of Tahoe Donner.

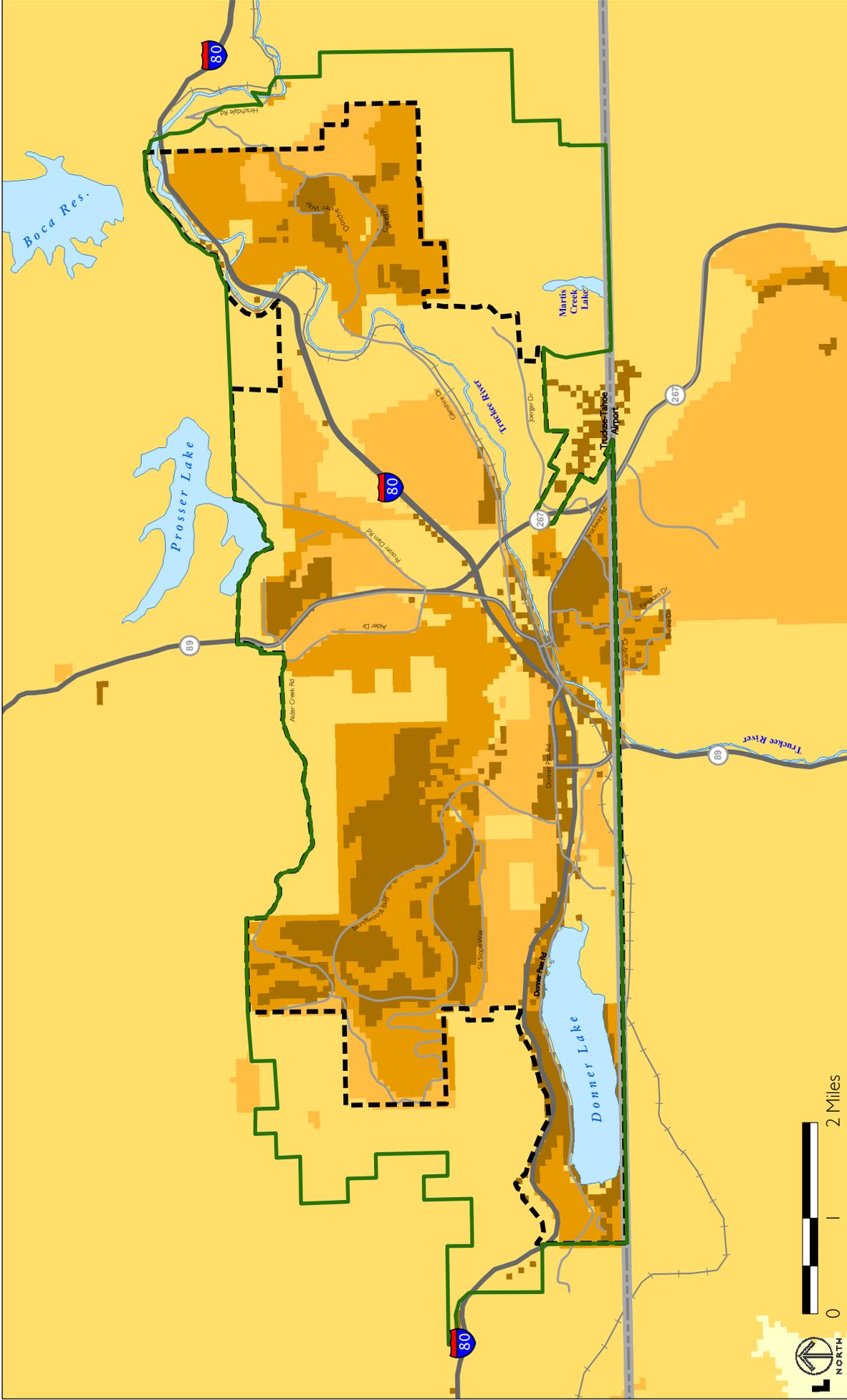
3. Emergency Preparedness

As discussed under the Regulatory Setting, the County has established an Emergency Operation Plan to ensure that Truckee and other communities in Nevada County are prepared for natural and human-caused disasters. In addition, the Town has drafted its own EOP to address similar hazards at the local level, although this plan is still in the draft stages.

B. Standards of Significance

The 2005 General Plan would have an impact related to hazards or hazardous materials if it would:

- ◆ Create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through the routine transport, use or disposal of hazardous materials.
- ◆ Create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through reasonably foreseeable upset and accident conditions involving the release of hazardous materials into the environment.
- ◆ Emit hazardous emissions or handle hazardous materials, substances or waste within one-quarter mile of an existing or proposed school.
- ◆ Be located on a site which is included on a list of hazardous material sites compiled pursuant to Government Code Section 65962.5 and, as a result would create a significant hazard to the public or the environment.



Source: California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, 2003

- Truckee Town Limits
- Proposed Sphere of Influence

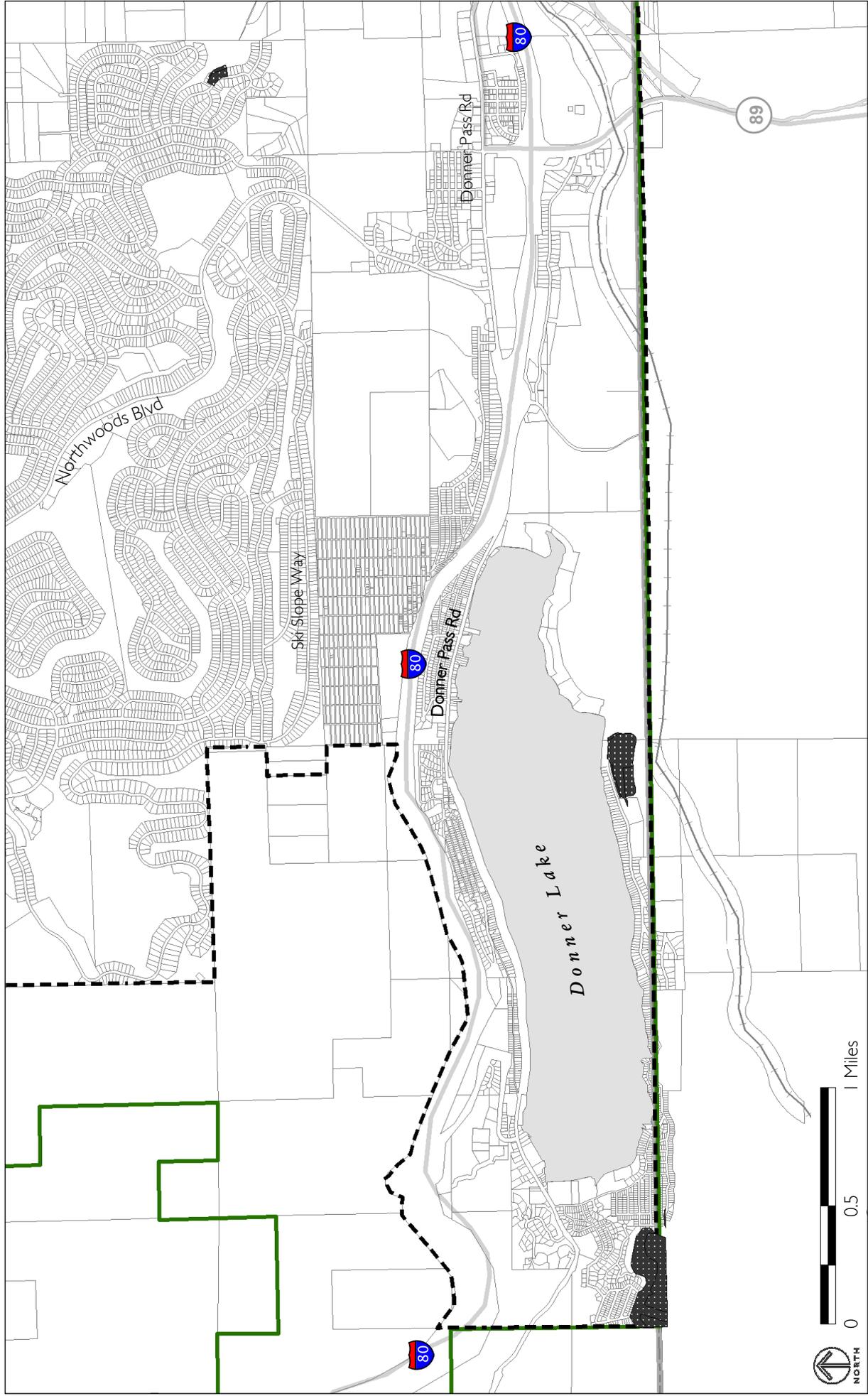
Community Threat from Wildland Fire



Notes: CDF wildland/urban interface threat mapping reflects relative risk to areas of population density from wildfire. Risk is expressed in terms of a "Threat to Community" value, with potential values ranging from -14 (Little or no Threat to community areas with average density of 1 housing unit per 20 acres or less) to +44 (Extreme Threat to community areas with average density of 1 unit per acre or more. Threat values in the Truckee area range from 14 to 34, which are all between the Moderate and Very High level, with most places classified as High or Very High threat.

FIGURE 4.6-1

COMMUNITY AREAS AT RISK FROM WILDLAND FIRE



Source: Town of Truckee

-  Potential Snow Avalanche Area
-  Truckee Town Limits
-  Proposed Sphere of Influence
-  County Boundary

FIGURE 4.6-2

AVALANCHE HAZARD AREAS

- ◆ Expose people or structures to a significant risk of loss, injury or death involving wildland fires, including where wildlands are adjacent to urbanized areas or where residences are intermixed with wildlands.
- ◆ Expose people or structures to a significant risk of loss, injury or death involving avalanche.
- ◆ For a project within an airport land use plan or, where such a plan has not been adopted, within two miles of a public airport or public use airport, result in a safety hazard for people living or working in the project area.
- ◆ For a project within the vicinity of a private airstrip, result in a safety hazard for people living or working in the project area.
- ◆ Impair implementation of or physically interfere with an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan.

C. Impact Discussion

This section discusses the potential hazards and hazardous materials impacts associated with adoption and implementation of the 2025 General Plan. Implementation of this General Plan would allow for the development of new residential, commercial, office and industrial uses. This could increase the amount of hazardous materials used and waste generated, as well as the number of people and structures exposed to natural and human made hazards.

1. Hazardous Materials and Waste

The following specifically address the potential hazards associated with the use, transportation and disposal of hazardous materials and waste within the Truckee area.

a. Transportation, Use and Disposal

The potential increase in development could result in more hazardous materials being used, stored, transported through and discarded within Truckee, which would increase the potential risk associated with hazardous materials and waste. As a result, the 2025 General Plan includes policies and actions that are intended to limit the impact hazardous materials could have on the population and environment.

i. Industrial and Commercial Uses

Potential increases in industrial and commercial use of hazardous materials would primarily be regulated by federal, State and County agencies, as discussed above, which would ensure that hazardous material use and transportation would be safety controlled. As stated in Policy P5.1 of the 2025 General Plan Safety Element, the Town shall continue to coordinate with the Nevada County Environmental Health Department in the review of all projects which require the use, storage or transport of hazardous waste to ensure necessary measures are taken to protect public health and safety.

Combined with federal, State, and County requirements and standards, as well as the policies and actions contained in the 2005 General Plan, adoption and implementation of the Plan would have a *less than significant* impact related to industrial and commercial use of hazardous materials.

ii. Household Use

Residential growth that may occur over the lifetime of the 2025 General Plan could result in increased use of household hazardous materials. Household use of hazardous materials is generally limited and is not generally considered a major hazard. However, to facilitate the proper disposal of household hazardous waste within the area, residents would have seasonal access to the household hazardous materials drop-off facility at the Eastern Regional Landfill. As stated in Policy P5.2 of the 2025 General Plan, the Town shall continue to cooperate with Tahoe Truckee Sierra Disposal to facilitate opportunities for safe disposal of household hazardous waste. Due to the limited amount of hazardous materials that would be generated by individual house-

holds, the availability of proper disposal facilities, and implementation of Policy P.18, the risk of increase household hazardous materials would be *less than significant*.

b. Hazardous Materials Accidents

With the potential increase of use, transportation and disposal of hazardous materials and wastes in and about Truckee due to the increase in population and non-residential land uses, there is the potential for an increase in the risk of hazardous materials accidents such as spills. Although accidents involving hazardous materials cannot be completely avoided, the threat of accidents is maintained at a *less than significant* level by existing federal, State, County and local regulations that direct the production, use, emissions and transportation of hazardous materials. For example, the transport of hazardous materials by truck and rail is regulated by the DOT and the Cal EPA is responsible for implementing federal hazardous materials laws and regulations. The County's and Town's EOPs also plan for response to potential hazardous materials incidents, in the event one were to occur.

By following federally- and State-mandated guidelines for the handling of hazardous materials, the risk associated with the potential for accidental release of hazardous materials into the environment would be *less than significant*.

c. Hazardous Materials Around Schools

The majority of schools in the Town of Truckee would not be located within a quarter mile of land designated for industrial uses. However, the Alder Creek School located near the intersection of Alder Drive and SR 89, would be within a quarter mile of land designated for industrial uses at Pioneer Commerce Center.

Although most schools would generally be at least a quarter mile from industrial land uses where hazardous materials might be present, Truckee Elementary, Sierra Middle School, Sierra High School, and Tahoe Truckee High School may be within a quarter mile of non-industrial hazardous materials uses in commercial areas along Donner Pass Road in the Gateway Area. Ex-

isting schools, which are already within a quarter mile of industrial and commercial uses, may be further exposed to hazardous materials generators as the Town develops.

However, all users of hazardous materials are subject to federal, State, County and local laws which ensure that hazardous material use, emission and transportation are controlled to a safe level. The combination of federal, State, County and local regulations described in previous sections, and 2025 General Plan policies and land use patterns would ensure that the risk to schools of hazardous materials or emissions would be *less than significant*.

d. Hazardous Materials Sites

As mentioned previously in this section, there are no Superfund or other hazardous materials sites in the Town of Truckee that currently require DTSC action. As a result, there is a *less than significant* impact associated with hazardous materials sites, as compiled pursuant to Government Code Section 65962.5

However, there are many properties in Truckee where past uses could have produced localized contamination or concentrations of hazardous substances. Use or storage of petroleum-based or inorganic chemicals, solvents, or other substances may have left residues in site soils, which could expose people to those substances if the site were to be redeveloped or excavated. Although no inventory of such sites has been compiled, many industrial uses were formerly located in Truckee, particularly on sites within the Downtown. The 2025 General Plan envisions a significant amount of redevelopment in the Downtown in particular, including the Railyard and along West River Street, where many industrial uses were, and are, located.

To address these concerns, the 2025 General Plan includes policies among those for Downtown Truckee that would ensure that all critical sites in the Downtown with potential for contamination are appropriately studied prior to redevelopment, and that adequate measures to address identified problems

be taken (Land Use Element Policy DSA-P14, and Action A6.3). This policy and action would reduce any potential impacts to a *less-than-significant* level.

2. Wildland Fires

As discussed earlier, according to the California Department of Forestry (CDF), the Truckee area is considered to be in a high fire hazard severity zone. The risks associated with wildfires are pronounced for Truckee's rural residential areas where homes are often located within areas of dense vegetation and forest land, and where steep slopes and other similar conditions exist. These areas are often more difficult to access with fire-fighting equipment and personnel due to more narrow rural roads and hilly terrain. New development, particularly in more outlying and rural areas of the Town and proposed Sphere of Influence could expose new populations to wildfire hazards.

Goal SAF-4 of the Safety Element calls for the protection of lives and property from risks associated with wildland and urban fire. There are several policies in support of this goal. For example, Policy P4.3 calls for promotion of fire hazard reduction through activities such as identifying and implementing opportunities for fuel breaks in very high fire hazard severity zones, and ensuring that fire breaks are provided where necessary and appropriate. Policy P4.4 is to require new development to incorporate adequate emergency water flow, emergency vehicle access and evacuation routes. Policy P4.7 is to ensure that the development review process addresses wildland fire risk, including assessment of both construction- and project-related fire risks, particularly in areas of the Town most susceptible to fire hazards.

The identified goal and policies under the 2025 General Plan, which are aimed at minimizing loss of life and property from wildfires, would reduce potential impacts to a *less than significant* level.

3. Airport and Airstrip Safety

Implementation of the 2025 General Plan would result in development within two miles of the Truckee-Tahoe Airport. As a result, there are potential impacts related to airports or airstrip safety. However, Goal SAF-6 of the

Safety Element is to minimize risks associated with operations at the Truckee-Tahoe Airport. Policy 6.1 in support of this goal is to maintain land use and development patterns in the vicinity of the airport that are consistent with the adopted Comprehensive Land Use Plan, which includes setbacks and height requirements to protect public safety. Action A6.1, also in support of this goal, is to amend the Town's Development Code to reflect revised safety areas established in the airport's adopted Comprehensive Land Use Plan.

As a result of these policies, implementation of the proposed 2025 General Plan would *not result in a significant* impact on safety related to operation of the airport or airstrip.

4. Avalanches

There is potential for avalanches to occur in the areas identified on Figure 4.6-2. Given that these hazard areas are immediately adjacent to areas identified for residential uses in the 2025 General Plan, an avalanche event could result in significant impacts to public health and safety. However, Goal SAF-3 in the Safety Element is to reduce risks associated with avalanche hazards. Policies in support of this goal include P3.1, which is to locate new buildings associated with new discretionary development outside of avalanche hazard areas. Policy P3.2 is to continue to identify avalanche hazard areas, and to enforce special standards for construction in avalanche hazard areas. Action A3.1 in support of this goal is to update avalanche zoning studies and modify the Development Code as necessary to respond to updated avalanche information.

As a result of this goal, these policies, and this action, potential impacts related to avalanche hazards would be reduced to a *less than significant* level.

5. Emergency Preparedness

The 2025 General Plan could result in new development and population growth, which could affect the implementation of adopted emergency response and evacuations plans during disasters. Recognizing the need to plan for adequate emergency response to protect existing and future development

in Truckee, the Safety Element includes Policies P7.1 and P7.2 that call for identification of appropriate emergency access routes through the Town when I-80 is closed because of weather. These policies also support the Truckee Fire Protection District, Nevada County Office of Emergency Services, and other agencies in their efforts to educate the public about emergency preparedness and response.

In addition, Safety Element Actions A7.1 and A7.2 are intended to ensure development of an Emergency Response Plan for Truckee and to create a web page that includes a list of agencies and contacts for emergency situations, information about emergency preparedness, and links to useful resources. Taken together, proposed policies and actions would reduce the potential emergency preparedness impact to a *less than significant* level.

D. Cumulative Impact Discussion

Development associated with implementation of the 2025 General Plan, together with other growth in the Truckee/Lake Tahoe region, would likely expose an increased number of people to hazards such as hazardous materials spills, wildlife and avalanche. However, the goals, policies, and actions set forth in the Safety Element of the General Plan, several of which have been identified in this chapter, as well as the local, regional, State and federal regulations such as those that control the production, use and transportation of hazardous materials, would reduce potentially significant project-level impacts to a less than significant level. Similarly, as growth occurs elsewhere in the region, local, regional, State and federal regulations would apply to this development, thereby reducing the potential for cumulative impacts associated with hazards and hazardous materials to a *less-than-significant* level.

E. Impacts and Mitigation Measures

Since the implementation of the 2025 General Plan would result in *less than significant* impacts from hazards and hazardous materials, no mitigation measures are required.

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HAZARDS AND HAZARDOUS MATERIALS