

# Lake Tahoe Being Threatened With Pollution From Sewage

By GEORGE SKELTON  
 United Press International  
 ALTAHORE, Calif. (UPI) — Mark Twain once called Lake Tahoe "the loveliest sight the whole earth affords."  
 People don't speak that way any more — especially about Lake Tahoe.  
 Justly or not, this famed Sierra resort 6,225 feet high on the California-Nevada border is being dubbed everything from "a cesspool for gambling joints," "a recreational slum" and "a city with a hole in the middle" to "a Sierra Coney Island."

At the same time, it's being acclaimed as Nevada's new "it" resort, the "coming Vegas," "the pinnacle of success" for entertainers and "America's all-year playground."

**Top Performers**  
 Tahoe boasts the world's top night club performers, some of its most exquisite beauty, enough gambling to satisfy anybody and more business than it can handle. Add these up and they total trouble.

The 21.6 mile long lake, one of the three clearest in the world, is threatened by sewage pollution. Along the shore, neon motor lodge signs dangle from pine limbs. "Buy now" billboards replace timber in the forests. "Indian trading posts," "carnivals," hamburger joints, overrun lots — they're everywhere. California plans to ring its side of the lake with a freeway or "parkway." And, although Lake Tahoe has 71 miles of shoreline, only seven are public.

From Mark Twain's day until a decade ago urbanization of Tahoe's wilderness moved slowly. Civilized life at the sleepy lake consisted mainly of a few millionaires' homes, some summer cabins. Scattered resorts and camp grounds. The trip was long and hard.

But gambling, freeways, winter sports and plenty of promotion changed all that in the early 1950s.

Now thousands arrive daily by airplane or on two transcontinental highways. Whereas the trip from San Francisco formerly took days, the 200 plus miles now are traveled before lunch.

In summer, tourists bring swimming suits, boats, fishing gear and hiking boots. In winter, they lash skies to the car roof and head for nearby Squaw Valley, site of the 1960 winter Olympics, or Heavenly Valley, to ride a new tramway.

Expenses  
 But always they bring their wallets. And, as if drawn magnetically by the razzle-dazzle atmosphere of gaming tables and showgirls, and jingle-jangle of slot machines and honky-tonk, they scurry to one of a dozen Nevada casinos that separate the two states at either end of the lake.

By far the most popular and successful of these are the two big clubs at south shore — Harrah's and Harvey's Wagon Wheel.

Although official figures never are divulged, informed sources say Harrah's Tahoe operation is the biggest in Nevada. They say Harveys is number three. And these two, they add, operate more slot machines than the entire Las Vegas "strip."

"We had no idea of getting as big as we are," Bill Harrah says. "But we get lucky once in awhile."

Harrah's popularity stems largely from the top drawer entertainment he books. For \$440, including tax, a person may sit in Harrah's luxurious South Shore Room with four drinks of his choice and watch the world's top talent.

And no wonder. Harrah provides his top stars with a beach house, motel suites, speed boats and even a Rolls-Royce.

"Favors"  
 Harrah's "favors" don't stop with the performers. He offers babysitting service for children of all ages, and virtually free round trip bus transportation from the San Francisco Bay Area. These trips average about \$4 daily.

Across the street, Harvey Gross opened shop in 1946 with six slot machines and a small bar. Last year he completed an 11-story, \$8.5 million hotel and got so big he decided to discontinue as "unnecessary" all chartered bus trips.

"We've had 89 conventions since April and have 101 booked between now and next June," explains publicist Lou Hardy. Harvey offers unique services: He buses hundreds of vacationers to church each Sunday. At north shore, one of Tahoe's top attractions for the past two years has been Frank Sinatra's Cal-Neva Club. Here one often found everybody from Sammy Davis twisting in the lounge to Dean Martin and Sinatra clowning it up on stage. However, too many people once saw Cosa Nostra boss Sam Giancana, the type of clientele frowned on by Nevada state officials. So Sinatra doesn't operate at the Cal-Neva any longer.

**Tourist Types**  
 What kind of tourists come to Tahoe?

A Harrah's official says "they're generally from the middle class up. The average person here is a guy who is not trying to make his fortune, but someone who is out for an evening or a weekend — you know, having a ball."

Edward Olsen, the Nevada Gaming Control Board chairman says Tahoe is "certainly not" replacing Vegas as the hang-out for the so-called "high-rollers."  
 "Tahoe is coming and is growing, no questions about that, but it's a different type of thing than Vegas," Olsen says. "It's more like Reno. There are proportionately more middle income people coming to Tahoe and Reno than to Vegas. Vegas seemingly has more people with a little extra wealth."

**Interesting Report**  
 However, the latest quarterly gross winnings released by the state, for April through June, are interesting. Although Las Vegas' lake still was 3 1/2 times that of south shore Tahoe, the desert oasis was down about three per cent compared to the

same period a year before. Meanwhile, Tahoe south shore was up about 6.7 per cent.

Many theories are advanced at Tahoe as to why "the lake in the sky" changed from a quiet, Alpine wilderness Shangri-la to a brightly lit, skyscrapered gambling center beset with countless problems.

But a Nevada consulting engineer hit it right on the button recently when he said: "The problem at Lake Tahoe is not sewage or gambling, it is people."

In 1950, the permanent all-year population of the entire 506 square mile Tahoe basin was only 2,700. Now it's 17,000 and growing at the fantastic annual rate of 30 per cent. On peak tourist days, the population hits about 150,000.

And by 1980, there'll be more than 400,000 here on big week-

ends. By comparison, neighboring Alpine County in California has a population of around 400.  
 To make matters worse, the federal government, two states, five counties and 76 smaller agencies all have some jurisdiction over the lake. Efforts to place a bi-state commission in charge of public recreation so far have failed. And the lake lacks even one incorporated city, although there is a move to form one on the south shore.

**Controversy**  
 The most controversial problem at present is south shore sewage — what to do with it. When the sewage, even treated to highest standards, is pumped to spreading grounds, it has a way of seeping back into streams which flow into Tahoe. This causes algae and threatens to ruin the lake's clarity.

The Lake Tahoe Area Council, a private organization, financed a \$125,000 sewage engineering study which recommended that existing disposal methods be abandoned. Since then there has been a suggestion that a \$16 million, 2 1/2 mile tunnel be drilled through a mountain into Nevada's Carson Valley. This could house a two-lane highway and also carry away Tahoe's sewage problem.

One of Tahoe's biggest critics has been California Gov. Edmund G. Brown, who in turn has been charged with issuing

"reckless publicity releases" that "destroy the worldwide image" of the lake.  
 Brown says south shore already is virtually "a recreational slum." And he has asked his agencies to come up with a way to "save" the rest of the lake.

"To build more gambling joints on the Lake Tahoe shore is to my mind sacrilegious," Brown says. "Let them have their gambling at Las Vegas or Reno, but they ought to stay away from Lake Tahoe."

Meanwhile, Harrah's is going ahead with plans to build a 25-story hotel costing anywhere from \$12 to \$25 million. A similar structure is being constructed nearby by the Del Webb Corp.

And an eight-story hotel soon will rise on the California side. Thomas Wolfe once said "you can't go home again."

And the same applies here. Right now the big questions are: "Where do we go from here?" and "Will success spoil Lake Tahoe?"

### STAR GAZER

By CLAY R. POLLAN  
 Your Daily Activity Guide  
 According to the Stars  
 To develop message for Sunday, read words corresponding to numbers of your Zodiac birth sign.

ARIES	TAURUS	GEMINI	CANCER	LEO	VIRGO
APR. 20 7-12-24-34 45-57-78	APR. 21 MAY 21 30-41-42-71 74-77-83-89	MAY 22 JUNE 22 5-15-23-33 47-56-67	JUNE 23 JULY 23 3- 8- 9-53 54-55-66	JULY 24 AUG. 23 17-18-27-28 29-32-82-87	AUG. 24 SEPT. 22 2-32-44-63 65-72-81-86

LIBRA	SCORPIO	SAGITTARIUS	CAPRICORN
SEPT. 23 OCT. 23 4- 6-19-36 48-68-80-90	OCT. 24 NOV. 22 10-22-33-52 64-75-84-88	NOV. 23 DEC. 22 11-13-25-37 46-58-69	DEC. 23 JAN. 20 1-16-29-40 50-62-76

All To  32 Carefully  62 And  
 2 Deal  33 Del  43 Money  
 3 Buy  34 Spend  44 Good  
 4 Excellent  35 Opinions  65 Mixed  
 5 Cling  36 Dates  66 Aggressive  
 6 Fear  37 Guide  67 Disrupt  
 7 Trick  38 Run  68 Seeking  
 8 Tellers  39 May  69 Actions  
 9 To  40 New  70 Change  
 10 Something  41 Invitations  71 Enter  
 11 Don't  42 Or  72 People  
 12 How  43 Seeing  73 Drive  
 13 Let  44 With  74 Them  
 14 You  45 In  75 Note  
 15 To  46 Decisions  76 Wisdom  
 16 Advantage  47 H  77 Close  
 17 Diplomacy  48 And  78 Matters  
 18 Seasoned  49 Into  79 Insist  
 19 Making  50 Knowledge  80 Impersonal  
 20 Be  51 "NO"  81 Especially  
 21 Firm  52 A  82 You  
 22 Ends  53 Favorable  83 Away  
 23 Your  54 Justice  84 Rewards  
 24 You  55 Be  85 Fix  
 25 Emotions  56 Others  86 Relatives  
 26 Might  57 Money  87 Well  
 27 Worry  58 Or  88 You  
 28 Subtly  59 A  89 Distress  
 29 Of  60 Advice  90 If  
 30 Good  61 Sizable  91  
 31 Accept  62 Neutral

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