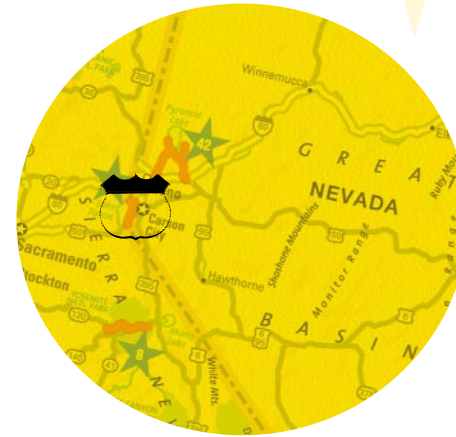


VALUING THE RESOURCE AND SERVING VISITORS



BYWAY LENGTH: 28 MILES



IN NEVADA, THE STATE PARKS DIVISION AND THE DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION JOINED FORCES TO CONSTRUCT A MUCH NEEDED VISITOR FACILITY ALONG THE BANKS OF LAKE TAHOE. THROUGH CAREFUL PLANNING AND DESIGN, THE FACILITY STRIKES AN EFFECTIVE BALANCE BETWEEN PROVIDING VISITORS WITH THE RESOURCES THEY NEED AND PRESERVING THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT.

SURROUNDED BY NATIONAL FOREST LANDS, wilderness, and state parks, Lake Tahoe possess some of the country's most spectacular scenery. Eastshore Drive, "the most beautiful drive in America," skirts the edges of Lake Tahoe, providing breathtaking views of the Lake Tahoe Basin. The pristine alpine lake is surrounded by the snowcapped mountains of the Sierras.

Located along the Eastshore Drive National Scenic Byway, the original Memorial Point Overlook provided a spectacular view of Lake Tahoe and its environs but offered no visitor facilities. As tourism continued to increase, the site suffered the effects of intense public use with visitors totaling 250,000 annually. Over time, this resulted in significant environmental degradation to the area. In 1998, construction began to provide visitor facilities and interpretive amenities on the site formerly occupied by an unsightly parking area.

Prior to construction of the scenic overlook, no restrooms were available within several miles of the project site. This and the desire of the public to experience the Lake up close had resulted in the creation of informal trails on the slope leading from the parking area to the Lake.

- PROJECT: Memorial Point Overlook
- BYWAY: Lake Tahoe – Eastshore Drive National Scenic Byway
- STATE: Nevada
- STARTED: 1998
- COMPLETED: 1999
- TOTAL COST: \$783,726
- NEVADA DIVISION OF STATE PARKS AND NEVADA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION: \$107,115
- PRIVATE DONORS AND THE NEVADA STATE PARKS COOPERATIVE ASSOCIATION: \$ 10,526
- ISTEA TRANSPORTATION ENHANCEMENT PROGRAM: \$666,085
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Nevada overlook parking, as accessible public outdoor facilities in heavily used location (250,000 visitors annually with only limited parking before the project was implemented)

Restroom structure is mounted on four concrete pillars, which into an existing grove of large pine trees, requiring the removal of just one tree.

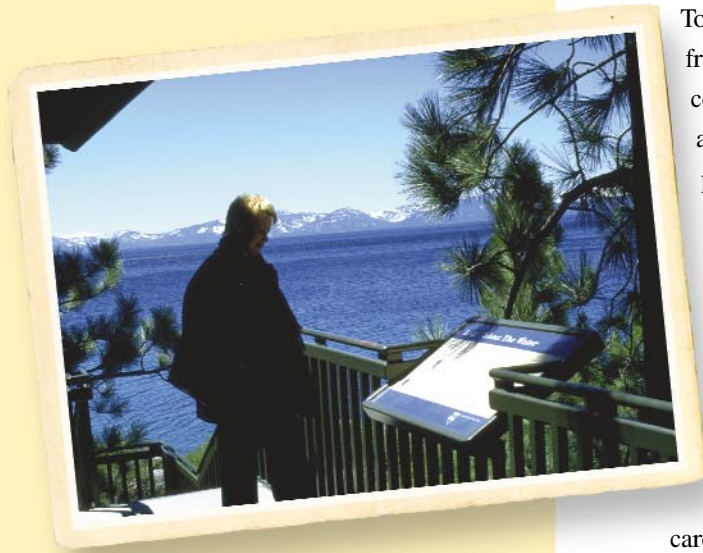
An elevated, tree house, balcony that provides magnificent views, framed by the large pine trees

Independent restroom structure located adjacent to the parking lot sidewalk



PROJECT FEATURES:

- Overlook, parking, and accessible public restroom facilities in heavily used location (two hundred fifty-thousand visitors annually with only limited parking before the project was implemented)
- Restroom structure is mounted on four concrete pillars, tucked into an existing grove of large pine trees, requiring the removal of just one tree
- An elevated, "tree house," balcony that provides magnificent views, framed by the large pine trees
- Underground wastewater treatment plant is located under the parking lot sidewalk



Concerned about the amount of damage caused by the trampling of native vegetation and the creation of a series of gullies, the Nevada State Parks Division and the Nevada Department of Transportation worked together to design a facility that would limit further destruction to the natural environment. Given the pristine nature of the landscape and the steepness of the site, this posed considerable challenges.

What Happened

The need for visitor facilities and interpretation along the byway stemmed from The Lake Tahoe Nevada State Park Master Plan and the Corridor Management Plan. Both of these plans were developed through extensive public involvement and focused on the need to provide access to the resources of the area while preserving the natural habitat.

From beginning to end, this project was defined by a dedication to design excellence and the need to maintain and, where possible, enhance the scenic beauty of the site. This objective was accomplished in a variety of ways.

To minimize the environmental impact on the steep and fragile site, the restroom facility was mounted on four large concrete pillars that required a minimum of excavation and ground disturbance. A large crane was set up on the parking lot to pour the concrete pillars and footings of the structure. This approach eliminated the need for the use of heavy equipment on the densely vegetated slope below the parking lot and minimized environmental destruction. Thanks to careful planning, only one tree was removed during construction.

Early on, a five-foot maximum vegetation clearance zone was established. As a result, the building is carefully tucked into an existing grove of large pine trees.

PARTNERS

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Nevada Department of Transportation,
Nevada State Parks Cooperative Association
Family of Harry J. & Marie R. Kennedy

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From the lakeshore, the structure has the appearance of a largely obscured tree house. Colors were carefully chosen to blend with the natural environment and to conceal the structure from the byway. Small touches such as capping the green roof of the facility with a white peak to mirror the nearby Sierras enhance this effect.

The structure is surrounded by an elevated "tree house" balcony that provides magnificent views framed by the surrounding pine trees. This observation deck also provides easy access to the site for people of all abilities.

To provide public restrooms, a well and water system, a package sewer treatment plant and electrical utilities had to be installed. To preserve the visual integrity of the area, these systems were installed underground. As a result, the sewage treatment plant is cleverly concealed immediately adjacent to the parking area under the concrete sidewalk. This provides ready access for maintenance without impinging on the beauty of the site.

Also needed were accessible sidewalks and easily negotiated stairways down the steep slope towards the lakeshore, unobscured observation platforms, and interpretive exhibits. Additionally, the barren quality of the asphalt parking lot and abutting chain link fence needed to be addressed.

To enhance the appearance of the parking area, a vegetated island and two landscaped peninsulas were added. Landscaping included the use of native shrubs, trees and natural granite boulders. A chain link fence that once stood parallel to the edge of the parking lot has been removed and replaced with a steel picket fence with wooden support posts. While much more pleasing to the eye, the fence also effectively serves to guide visitors to the restroom facility and the newly created trails leading to the lakeshore.

Two trails hardened with heavy timber stairs provide ease of access while stabilizing the slopes. The top stairway landing on each of the two trails extending from the parking lot were designed to provide unrestricted views of the scenic lake and its surroundings. Stairs consist of treated timbers pinned together with steel rods. The tread depth of each stairway is set to a standard dimension designed to fit the natural slope of the ground on which the stairway is constructed, allowing the stairs to be literally imbedded into the slope.

To further enhance the visitor experience, the overlook features interpretation of both Lake Tahoe and the Tahoe Basin. Information on the natural and cultural history of the area is illustrated on the imbedded fiberglass exhibits featured on the interpretive kiosk near the "bridge" that connects the parking lot with the restroom facility and along the interpretative trails to the lakeshore.

Through careful planning, the Memorial Point Overlook touches lightly on the land in terms of its aesthetics and its impact on the environment.



Project Benefits

Preservation of the quality of the Lake's waters has long been a concern. At twenty-two miles long and eleven miles wide, Lake Tahoe is the largest alpine lake in North America attracting over 3.5 million people each year. The provision of this environmentally sensitive scenic overlook represents a significant contribution toward maintaining the pristine water quality of the Lake and addressing the need for resource protection outlined in the corridor management plan.

The new public restrooms provide welcome relief to the hundreds of thousands of visitors to the site. Carefully placed fencing serves to guide visitors to established trails and stairways, limiting damage to the slope from random public access. By designating specific access points to the landscape, the project has permitted the revegetation and stabilization of gullies caused by large numbers of people traveling down the unprotected slope from the parking area to the lakeshore.

In addition to providing public access to the spectacular scenic features of Lake Tahoe and the Tahoe Basin, the overlook offers one of the most outstanding views and features interpretation of both the Lake and the Basin. These exhibits address the geological history of the lake, flora and fauna of the Basin and cultural history of the area.

Factors to be Considered

DESIGN WITH GOALS IN MIND. The design solution mitigated the environmental impact of the project. By dropping the four pillars to support the facility into place, only one tree was lost. Carefully placed fencing and designated trails limit access down the steep slope to the Lake, thereby limiting degradation to the natural landscape.

ANTICIPATE DEMAND. Whatever sewer treatment capacity you think you need; double it. Be prepared to be inundated by visitors in search of public facilities.

MAKE PROVISIONS FOR MAINTENANCE. If you install an underground treatment plant adjacent to or under a parking area, designate a "reserved for maintenance" area to avoid limited access during routine maintenance visits.

TELL THE STORY. People appreciate good natural and cultural history interpretation at a scenic rest stop.

RESPECT THE BEAUTY OF THE SURROUNDING ENVIRONMENT. Great care was given to color selection to complement the natural environment. Small touches such as capping the green roof of the restroom facility with a white peak to mirror the nearby Sierras helps the facility blend with the landscape.

