



# Tahoe-Baikal Institute 2011 Annual Report

# Mission

The Tahoe-Baikal Institute (TBI) develops future environmental leaders and promotes international cultural understanding and global cooperation in meeting environmental challenges through inspiring, place-based watershed education exchanges between two of the world's premiere freshwater ecosystems: Lake Tahoe in the Sierra Nevada and Lake Baikal in southern Siberia.



*Jennifer on the shore of Lake Baikal, June 2011.*

Dear colleagues and supporters,

Six years ago, my husband and I moved to Tahoe when I accepted the position of Programs Director for TBI. After three years in that position, I was honored to be promoted to Executive Director. During my tenure as a full time staff member, I have watched TBI grow and improve in many ways.

One of our most significant achievements is the extent to which we have increased the quality and academic rigor of our annual Summer Environmental Exchange. This program has a long and rich history, but there is always room for improvement. Some of the key enhancements we've instituted include: hands-on research projects that are more applied and relevant to the local communities; a strong commitment to improving on-the-ground environmental conditions and taking part in hands-on restoration work at each lake; and a more comprehensive look at both watersheds, including following the Truckee River from Lake Tahoe to Pyramid Lake as a part of our "Watershed Tour" and the inclusion of the Mongolian portion of the Baikal watershed in the official itinerary of the program.

Another area where we have made important advancements is in our partnership with the USFS International Programs office. We have moved away from organizing technical conferences aimed only at foresters and towards building an understanding of how natural resource agencies can work with local citizens and communities to more effectively reach conservation goals. We have begun to focus on how citizens interact with the environment and what agencies can do to foster behaviors that help protect resources.

Another significant accomplishment of the past few years is that we have maintained a diverse fund raising portfolio—a healthy mix of charitable contributions, foundation and government grants, special events, and program participation fees—which has allowed us to survive in a difficult economy without cutting any programs or staff positions. In fact, the last six years have seen an important increase in TBI's workforce, with the addition of an AmeriCorps position through the Sierra Nevada AmeriCorps Partnership. The four AmeriCorps members who have served with TBI since 2007 have brought increased capacity, creativity, and energy to our work.

My husband and I relocated to New York City this past fall to pursue new opportunities, but I remain involved with the organization and its important work. I am proud of all we have accomplished together over the past six years.

*Thank you for your passion and support,*

Jennifer Smith-Lee  
outgoing TBI Executive Director



*Jennifer Smith-Lee and Darcie Collins at the 2011 Annual Friendraiser Gala.*

## 2011 Staff List

Executive Director: Jennifer Smith-Lee  
Programs Director: Sarah Buck  
Asst. Programs Coordinator, Sierra Nevada AmeriCorps member: Adam Zeender  
Russian Programs Director: Natalia Luzhkova  
Irkutsk Programs Coordinator: Vera Kuklina  
Ulan Ude Program Coordinator: Zhargalma Alymbaeva  
Financial Manager: Karen Hodges  
Campaign Administrator: Silke Rover

## Cover Photos

Clockwise from Top Left: Igor Moroldoev hunting for Tiger Beetles on shore of Tahoe, credit Will Richardson; Buddhist Datsan in Ulan Bataar, credit Paloma Jeretic; 2011 SEE participants at Lake Baikal sacred site, credit Sarah Buck; Lake Baikal shoreline, credit Jennifer Smith-Lee; 2011 SEE participant examining Tahoe's water, credit Adam Zeender

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Former Attorney General of Nevada

**Helen Pickering (Advisor)**  
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**Patricia Ronald (Advisor)**  
Tahoe Fund Board Member

## Message from the Chair:

Dear TBI Supporters,

I have been involved with the Tahoe-Baikal Institute in some capacity for ten years. I am not unique in the profound impact the Tahoe-Baikal Institute has made in my professional and personal life. As a participant of the Summer Environmental Exchange in 2001, I had the fortune to see both Lakes in one summer and recognize the quality of the education and research of the Institute's programs.



TBI Board Chair,  
Darcie Collins

Over the past ten years I have been amazed at the growth in programs, outreach and engagement that we have experienced. We have added an amazing Alumni Internship Program, we are developing youth environmental education projects, and we have expanded our partnerships with local and international organizations. As current Board Chair, I am in constant awe at the wide-spread support we receive from our partners, founding Board Members and participants. The support we receive throughout local communities and those in Russia and internationally is remarkable. We would not be where we were today without the loyalty and generosity of our partners and supporters like you.

I am extremely proud of the impact we have made on all of those who have taken part in one of our multiple environmental educational programs and the progress we are making in working to protect our world's great lakes. I am grateful for the 21 years of successes we have experienced and the over 400 program participants who have gone on to accomplish amazing things following their tenure in our Summer Environmental Exchange Program.

I am delighted that this year's Annual Report reflects our accomplishments. This report is an opportunity to reflect on the successes we have made over the past 21 years, but it is also time to rededicate ourselves to building a sustainable Institute that will continue to provide quality experiences and cultural exchange for generations to come. I am confident that we will continue to educate and inspire environmentalists and scientists to lead us into the next era of conservation.

Thank you again for your support.

Darcie Goodman Collins, PhD  
Chair, Tahoe-Baikal Institute Board of Directors



TBI's Programs Director Sarah Buck joined the staff in January of 2011. She is eager to share her passion for Tahoe and her enthusiasm for Russian culture with program participants of all ages and backgrounds.



*SEE program participant Javier Rodriguez learns about the unique tufa formations at Mono Lake. Credit: Adam Zeender*

## Programs Overview

The Tahoe-Baikal Institute experienced wonderful success in 2011. The year was characterized by new program developments that both increase the diversity of our offerings and bring us closer to some of our strategic visions. The five innovative programs we offered in 2011 included:

- A weekend workshop at Tahoe exploring professional careers in Natural Resource Management for Mongolian immigrant youth living in Sacramento;
- The annual Summer Environmental Exchange (SEE), focused on providing participants with a holistic, interdisciplinary overview of the Tahoe and Baikal watersheds;
- A two-week study tour sponsored by USAID for a group of young hydrologists from Russia ;
- Recreation Planning and Interpretive Design Trainings for natural resource managers of the Baikal region led by US Forest Service representatives and TBI Executive Director Jennifer Smith-Lee;
- A new program for the alumni of our SEE program: the Alumni Internship Program.

Together, these diverse projects allowed us to run year-round programming of the highest caliber, helping our organization take its place as the premiere watershed education provider for the regions where we work. The diversity of our programs also enabled TBI to reach new audiences, as well as to increase the depth of our programming for existing audiences.

In total, approximately 90 people participated in our programs in 2011; 30 young professionals took part in our international exchanges and internships, and an additional 60 took part in local workshops and trainings in their home watershed. On the following pages, we hope you enjoy reading about the valuable learning experiences gained by these participants through our programs.

## Mongolian Youth Workshop: Getting out in Nature

**Location:** Fredericks' Site, Fallen Leaf Lake, South Lake Tahoe, California

**Audience:** Teens from the Sacramento area Mongolian Community

**Program Background:** As a part of our effort to increase our connections to the Mongolian portion of the Baikal watershed, TBI has been reaching out to recent immigrants from Mongolia who now reside in California and other areas of the US. Leaders of the Mongolian Immigrant Community in Sacramento are concerned that the youth of their community are losing the connection to nature that plays an important role in their native culture, and that these students are rarely exposed to careers that would allow them to develop their interest in the outdoors into a viable profession. This was TBI's second year of hosting this group at the Fredericks' Site on Fallen Leaf Lake to help bridge the gap between their current urban lifestyles and their more traditional Mongolian culture.

**Program Summary:** In early June, TBI hosted a weekend "retreat" program at Fallen Leaf Lake for Mongolian teens from the Sacramento area, as well as their families. The goal of the program was to allow the youth, who are currently living in an urbanized area, to connect with nature. TBI's staff facilitators employed multiple activities taken from Project WET and Nature's Classroom conservation and environmental education curricula to teach the group about the ecosystem at Fallen Leaf Lake. Additional activities allowed the group to explore possible career paths within the field of Natural Resource Management. The participating students, as well as their entire families, received a better understanding of the environment and the challenges to protection and restoration of Lake Tahoe and other cherished ecosystems; they experienced Taylor Creek and the first annual "Wild Tahoe Weekend", showcasing Tahoe's native flora and fauna, and they also experienced "camping out" with a traditional Mongolian fireside meal and recreational activities along the shoreline of Fallen Leaf Lake. The program was thoroughly enjoyed by all staff, board members and participants involved.



*2011 Summer Environmental Exchange group overlooking the Tahoe watershed. Credit: Adam Zeender*

## USAID-FORECAST Watershed Management Exchange

**Location:** Lake Tahoe Watershed in California and Nevada; Lake Mead, Nevada

**Audience:** Fifteen young Russian students, researchers and lecturers within the field of Hydrological Sciences

**Program Summary:** This exchange program was designed to advance US-Russia cooperation within the framework of the Water Subgroup of the Environmental Working Group under the Bilateral Presidential Commission, and was planned with input from USAID, Moscow State University's Department of Terrestrial Hydrology, and the Russian Academy of Science's Institute for Water Problems. The exchange took place between January 29th and February 12th, 2011 in Northern California and Nevada.

The program aimed to provide the 15 students, researchers and lecturers an opportunity to investigate the characteristics of water bodies and ecosystems that are under the influence of natural and industrial factors. The program was designed to give the delegates a broad and interdisciplinary overview of watershed management techniques and practices in the United States, including aspects such as technical monitoring programs, resource management approaches, and typical paths through which policy decisions are made. In this way, the exchange not only showed the Russian visitors how scientists in their own field work in the US, but also helped them understand how hydrological data is utilized by resource managers and policy makers. The delegates met with a wide variety of researchers and managers.



*Top: Participants learn about the Lahontan Cutthroat Trout at the Paiute Tribe's fish hatchery near Pyramid Lake. Bottom: Group in front of the Hoover Dam, after a detailed tour of its inner workings. Credits: Jennifer Smith-Lee*



An important accomplishment of the exchange pertains to the observation the participants made about how scientists and resource managers collaborate in the US. By the end of the exchange, the participants had gained an understanding of the complex resource management scheme typical to many areas in the USA: scientists from universities and research institutions work together with government agencies and advocacy organizations to collaboratively determine the best management strategies for the given water body, forest, or other special area.

The Tahoe-Baikal Institute now has strong new contacts with three Russian scientific institutes with which we had not worked in the past, and we will be able to correspond with these new partners about other ideas and program opportunities over the upcoming months and years. This program, sponsored by USAID's FORECAST program, was an extremely important opportunity for our small organization to expand our programming and reach out to new partners in both the US and Russia.



*Top: Participants learn about the water chemistry of Pyramid Lake, the terminus of the Tahoe-Truckee Watershed. Bottom: Researchers at the Desert Research Institute in Las Vegas teach participants about invasive zebra mussels, which are a serious management issue at Lake Mead. Credits: Jennifer Smith-Lee*

## Recreation Planning and Interpretive Design Trainings for Baikal's Protected Areas

**Location:** Lake Baikal region, including Pribaikalski National Park and Baikalski Biosphere Reserve

**Audience:** Over 15 managers from Baikal region Protected Areas, as well as 30 local citizens and NGO supporters

**Program Background:** Russia's extensive network of Protected Areas began in 1916 with the establishment of the first Zapovednik (strictly protected federal reserve). Most Zapovedniks were set aside for scientific exploration and protection, with access generally limited to scientific researchers for the purpose of data collection. The first National Parks in Russia were established in the 1980s and include recreational use as an important aspect of their mission and management. Despite the fact that recreational use is a relatively new phenomenon within the Protected Areas system (which includes both the National Parks and the Zapovedniks), in late 2010 Russia's President instructed the Russian Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment to become more engaged in promoting tourism and to work to provide for greater public access to Protected Areas. The aim of these efforts is to increase recreation and education opportunities while improving infrastructure and sustainable economic development. Some stakeholders, however, are concerned that if not properly implemented, the proposed projects could allow construction and recreational access in previously 'wild' and restricted areas and that funding mechanisms could provide incentive for unsustainable development.

**Program Summary:** In an effort to provide technical support and expertise to natural resource managers in the Baikal region, the USFS International Programs Office provided a grant to TBI to organize and lead a series of workshops, public discussions, and expert consultations at two of the Baikal regions most visited Protected areas: Pribaikalski National Park and Baikalski Reserve.

In June, TBI hosted two recreational planning experts, Liz Close and Chris Hartman, as well as Bella Gordon of the USFS's International Programs office for a two week visit to the Baikal region. At both Pribaikalski National Park and Baikalski Zapovednik, the experts spent several days providing consultation to the recreation management staff and other administrators. The USFS experts also led discussions on principles of planning strategies and visitor communication. Additionally, the experts and TBI staff helped facilitate a Round Table session with local residents, business owners, and non-profit organizations. This meeting was designed to allow the Protected Areas to communicate their plans about ecotourism development and to give the local stakeholders an opportunity to respond and voice their concerns.



*US Forest Service Representative Liz Close, right, points out key features of an interpretive brochure to staff of the Pribaikalski National Park and a Great Baikal Trail Crew Leader. Credit: Jennifer Smith-Lee*



*The delegation studied existing visitor signs and made suggestions for possible improvements. Credits: Jennifer Smith-Lee*



To compliment the consultations with the managers of the two Protected Areas, TBI and the Baikalski Zapovednik jointly hosted a training about Recreation Planning and Interpretive Design for managers from all of the Protected Areas around Baikal. The training included presentations from the Director of Baikalski Zapovednik, TBI, the Great Baikal Trail Association, and several academics who study recreation planning and anthropogenic impacts from ecotourism activities. These presentations were followed by training sessions led by Chris Hartman and Liz Close detailing specific principles of Interpretation Planning and Design.

The primary outcome of this project was a detailed trip report compiled by the USFS delegates and presented to our Russian partners, specifically the Directors of Pribaikalski National Park and Baikalski Preserve. The report contains a summary of Chris Hartman and Liz Close's observations and recommendations for interpretive design and planning for improved visitor experiences. TBI is in the process of planning a follow-up trip in 2012.

## Summer Environmental Exchange (SEE)

**Location:** Lake Tahoe Watershed—USA; Lake Baikal Watershed—Mongolia and Russia

**Audience:** 12 young environmental leaders from the USA, Russia, France, and Argentina

**Program Summary:** For over 21 years, the Tahoe-Baikal Institute has been bringing together a small group of talented young environmental scientists each summer to study the interdisciplinary practice of watershed management through our Summer Environmental Exchange. This annual program is a unique hands-on, multi-disciplinary learning experience aimed at undergraduate and graduate students as well as young professionals. This year, participants from Russia, France, Argentina, and the USA spent three weeks in California followed by eight days in Mongolia and three weeks in Siberia studying the current watershed management issues at Lake Tahoe and Lake Baikal.

For this first time this year, TBI included the Mongolian portion of the Upper Baikal Watershed in our planned curriculum. This has been a long term goal which TBI has been working towards for many years, gradually increasing the size and strength of our alumni network in Mongolia. Adding the Mongolian portion of the watershed to our program was important on many levels. First of all, approximately 40% of the water in Lake Baikal originates in Mongolia, and thus studying the management practices of this country is important to understanding the overall water quality issues of Lake Baikal. Second, because Mongolia is a smaller country that has largely had to “start from scratch” after the collapse of Soviet influence, their political systems and natural resource management challenges provide an interesting contrast to the observations our participants are able to make in the USA and in Russia. By including Mongolia, we are able to introduce topics into our curriculum such as desertification, mining, and overgrazing. Additionally, because Mongolia is a small country and because the national Capitol of Ulaan Baatar is located within the Baikal watershed, our group had access to policy makers and scientists working at the national and international level.

Although the program itinerary in the US And Russia was shortened to accommodate travel through Mongolia, we continue to include a variety of learning formats in our curriculum, such as small group investigative projects, hands-on restoration work, meetings with local experts, and interactive workshops. In 2011, our participants collaborated with scientific leaders from four agencies in Tahoe and two Russian research institutes to conduct a total of nine applied research projects, which are listed below.

### Tahoe Projects

- Tahoe Pines: Pre-Project Assessment and Design. *Sponsor: California Tahoe Conservancy*
- Sugar Pine Restoration Project. *Sponsor: The Sugar Pine Foundation*
- Interpretive Sign Design: Sawmill Pond Project. *Sponsor: US Forest Service, Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit*
- Erosion Assessment in Montgomery Estates. *Sponsor: Tahoe Resource Conservation District*
- Invasive Weed Identification and Management. *Sponsors: California Tahoe Conservancy and Tahoe Resource Conservation District*

### Baikal Projects:

- Geobotanical Profile: A Continued Study of the Landscapes of the Ecological Trail along the River Vydrinnaya. *Sponsor: Irkutsk State University*
- Interpretive Signs along the Cedar Alley Trail (Baikalski Biosphere Reserve). *Sponsor: Irkutsk State University*
- Sociological Research of the Attitudes of Locals Towards Eco-tourism in the Baikalsky Preserve. *Sponsors: RGTEU and V.B Sochava Geography Institute of the Siberian Branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences*
- Assessment of Human Impact Along the Trail “Jungle of Khamar-Daban.” *Sponsor: V.B Sochava Geography Institute of the Siberian Branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences*



*TBI's Summer Exchange Participants build a watershed model. Credit: Sarah Buck*



*Participant Brianna Juhrend and TBI Board member Bob Harris enjoy one of Mongolia's three national sports: horseback riding. Credit: Sarah Buck*

As always, the 2011 SEE program integrated environmental, economic, and social concerns by blending scientific research, restoration work, and training. The cultural and intellectual exchange that takes place among participants facilitates exploration of new perspectives and provokes creative thinking about approaches to today's watershed management challenges.

# NEW: Alumni Internship Program

## Alumni Internship Program

**Location:** Lake Tahoe Watershed

**Audience:** Three Russian Alumni of TBI's Summer Environmental Exchanges

**Program Summary:** TBI is dedicated to maintaining ties with the alumni of our programs and to continuing to support their professional development. In 2011, the Tahoe-Baikal Institute organized and ran its first ever Alumni Internship Exchange, selecting three Russian alumni of our past Summer Environmental Exchanges to return to the US for a month-long, profession-specific internship with local agencies.

As profound an experience the SEE program is for TBI's participants, it is also quite general and interdisciplinary. This new internship program gave these extremely qualified young professionals the opportunity to be matched with a US agency or organization with a similar specialty. The work that three of them performed during their internships not only benefits Lake Tahoe, but also gave each participant new knowledge and skill-sets to take back to Baikal to make an even bigger impact there.



*TBI's first group of Alumni Interns, Anastasia Myadzelets, Igor Moroldoev, and Ksenia Kustanovich, ready to lend a hand on the Tahoe Rim Trail. Credit: Sarah Buck*

The participants and their research projects were as follows:

- Igor Moroldoev (SEE '08) worked side by side with Tahoe Institute for Natural Science co-director, Will Richardson, researching the effect of native Tahoe yellowcress exclosures on Tiger Beetle and other insect populations around the Tahoe basin. He learned a number of new entomological research and analysis methods and will be able to reproduce similar experiments more specific to species in the Baikal region.
- Anastasia Myadzelets (SEE '02) worked under the supervision of TBI board member and Tahoe Environmental Research Center Director, Geoff Schladow, where she produced a series of comprehensive comparative maps of the Tahoe and Baikal watersheds highlighting issues such as land use, population density and fire history. Anastasia was able to become competent with a new GIS software program (ArcGIS) was able to utilize Tahoe research and her own organizational research to truly compare and contrast myriad aspects of the two lakes.
- Ksenia Kustanovich (SEE '10) interned with Conservation Education Specialist Joy Barney at the USFS Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit. Ksenia learned many skills crucial to conservation education and interpretive work, putting together curriculum standards for "Wonders of Water Week", reviewing and revising interpretive signs made by past SEE participants, witnessing agency/organization collaboration via the South Tahoe Environmental Education Coalition and learning how to build websites (through additional work with one of TBI's partners, the Tahoe Rim Trail Association). She was able to get a complete picture of the many facets of conservation education.

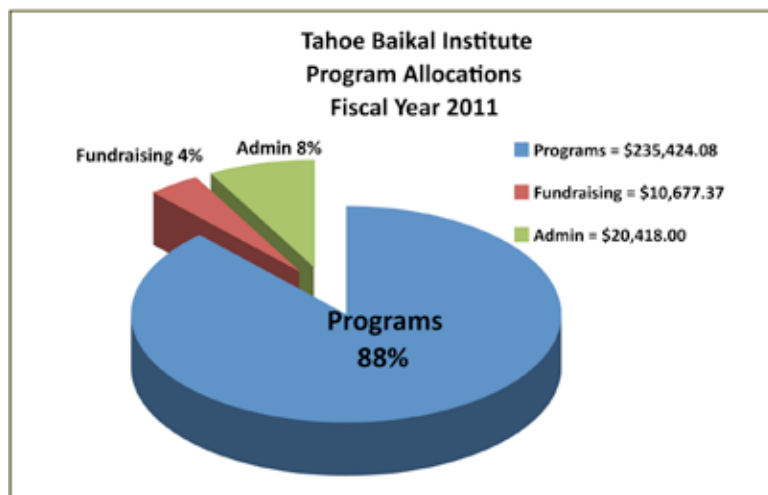


*Igor Moroldoev gives a public presentation about the results of his internship with the Tahoe Institute for Natural Science. Credit: Sarah Buck*

One of the most important lessons the three alumni shared that they learned through their internships was that you are never too old or too experienced to learn more: two of the three have PhD's but still took a new and improved skill set home with them. They also described a renewed realization of the importance of places like Lake Tahoe and Lake Baikal and how much exchanges and partnerships between the regions benefit preservation efforts in both countries.

In general, TBI's alumni continue to stay involved in the environmental movement as well as with our organization, volunteering their time to act as project leaders and home-stay hosts for the SEE program. They also help with fund raising, logistics, and generating ideas to improve current programs and help develop new programming. As a part of the agreement to participate in this alumni exchange, each of these three participants will contribute 120 hours of volunteering each for TBI-Russia in the 2012 calendar year, which will further help build the capacity of our organization in the Baikal region.

The diverse and innovative programs you have read about in this report are made possible by contributions from individuals, corporations, organizations, and small businesses. TBI's funding portfolio includes charitable donations, program fees, foundation and government grants, participant sponsorships, special events, and other contributions; this multi-faceted array of resources allows the organization the flexibility to respond to short-term opportunities as well as to pursue long-term strategic goals.



<b>Tahoe Baikal Institute Revenue &amp; Expense December 31, 2011</b>	
<b>Revenue:</b>	
Unrestricted Revenue	\$ 109,784.28
SEE Program Fees	\$ 59,180.42
Bequests	\$ -
Restricted Revenue	\$ 101,588.99
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>\$ 270,553.69</b>
<b>Expenses:</b>	
Payroll & Benefits	\$ 77,169.54
Subcontractors	\$ 20,289.88
Americorp Volunteer	\$ 7,856.60
Operating Expenses	\$ 22,670.35
Restricted Expense	\$ 49,786.67
SEE Program Expenses	\$ 88,746.41
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$ 266,519.45</b>
<b>Net Excess</b>	<b>\$ 4,034.24</b>

<b>Tahoe Baikal Institute Balance Sheet December 31, 2011</b>	
<b>Assets:</b>	
Cash in Bank	\$ 52,947.25
Accounts Receivable	\$ 12,490.00
Prepaid/Deposits	\$ 3,202.99
<b>Total Assets:</b>	<b>\$ 68,640.24</b>
<b>Liabilities:</b>	
Accounts Payable	\$ 8,413.52
Deferred Revenue	\$ 18,800.00
Prior Year Fund Balance	\$ 37,392.48
Current Year Excess	\$ 4,034.24
<b>Total Liabilities &amp; Fund Balance:</b>	<b>\$ 68,640.24</b>

***TBI's Annual Support Campaign begins  
March 1st. If you'd like to be a volunteer  
fundraiser or to make your annual pledge,  
send an email to [campaign@tahoebaikal.org](mailto:campaign@tahoebaikal.org)!***

# Contributors

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Thanks to the support of the following individuals, foundations, organizations, and businesses, TBI continues to inspire young people and professionals from all over the world. Names in **bold** are program alumni who continue to support our work.

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2011 SEE participant Irina Bilichenko studies an interpretive brochure in the Mariposa Sequoia Grove in Yosemite National Park. Credit: Adam Zeender.

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 Pamela Ronald  
**Ruth Rouvier**  
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 S. Geoff and Sharon Schladow  
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*The 2012 Annual Friendraiser Gala will be held on June 29th. If you would like to contribute something for the Silent Auction or Raffle, please send an email to [gala@tahoebaikal.org](mailto:gala@tahoebaikal.org).*

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