



# Tahoe-Baikal Institute 2010 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 at the Baikal Day celebration in Irkutsk, September 2010.*

## **Message from the Executive Director:**

During my academic training as an environmental educator, one of the concepts that resonated most deeply with me was that of "Sense of Place." The idea is that building a connection to a certain place—a back yard, a local hiking area, a favorite vacation destination, or even a more famous natural wonder like Yosemite—can significantly increase a person's motivation to protect other places and participate in conservation behaviors.

Although it is not explicitly part of our mission statement or formal goals, I believe that instilling a "sense of place" is one of the most important things we do at the Tahoe-Baikal Institute. Although our educational programs are designed to give participants skills that will be applicable in any watershed around the world, one of the keys to our success is the connection that our participants are able to make with Lake Tahoe and Lake Baikal. As you can see from our alumni who are quoted throughout this report, the emotional bonds formed during our programs are often just as important an influence in their future careers as the technical skills they gain.

As I look back on the path that led me to my position as Executive Director at the Tahoe-Baikal Institute, there are many places that have helped motivate me and have made me passionate about water issues and the environment. Interestingly, most of these places are lakes: tiny Galway Lake in upstate New York, where I spent summer afternoons swimming with my cousins as a child; Hapgood Pond in Vermont where I had my first job, working as a campground caretaker; Lake Champlain in Vermont, where I had my first opportunities to delve into field work and the natural sciences, and Lake Baikal, where I spent a year and a half conducting my graduate research. As you can see, my connections to these various places have culminated in a deep passion for the work I do today.

As the Tahoe-Baikal Institute enters our next decade of programming, I encourage each of you—our supporters—to consider the places that you feel the deepest connection to in your heart. Is it Lake Tahoe? Or perhaps Lake Baikal? Or maybe it is a smaller, more personal site. No matter where that place is, by supporting our work, you are helping to preserve and protect that place...and all the others like it that are loved by each of the individuals who participates in one of our educational programs.

*Thank you for your passion and support,*

Jennifer Smith-Lee  
TBI Executive Director



*One of Jennifer's newest favorite places, Frolikha River, which flows into the northern end of Lake Baikal.*

## **2010 Staff List**

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Russian Programs Director: Natalia Luzhkova  
Irkutsk Programs Coordinator: Vera Kuklina  
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*TBI Board Chair Bruce Ledesma with his family.*

## Message from the Chair:

Dear TBI Supporters,

In 1988 a group of Soviet and American students met at a Helenski bilateral youth conference. There they forged strong bonds and became inspired to pursue a novel concept to build cultural understanding between their nations in the waning days of the Cold War. Navigating through complex political headwinds, the students ultimately managed to win separate endorsements of their idea from Gorbachev and Reagan themselves, as well as Perez de Cuellar, the then-Secretary General of the United Nations. The first exchange of delegations took place in the summer and fall of 1990 at spectacular lakes in each country. The Tahoe-Baikal Institute was born.

2010 marked the 20th Anniversary of TBI, a milestone representing longevity and success nonprofits rarely achieve. Of course, your support and involvement contributed enormously to our success.

To date, more than 380 young environmental leaders have taken part in our educational exchanges. These participants have completed more than 120 on-the-ground research and restoration projects, through collaboration with more than 40 local partner agencies at Tahoe and Baikal. After completing our programs, our alumni have gone on to hold decision-making positions in government agencies, educational institutions, and environmental industries throughout the world. Your charitable support of TBI has allowed us to attract extremely talented and motivated young applicants and provide them with a life-changing experience that influences their professional career-decisions.

Although we were proud to celebrate the accomplishments of the previous 20 years, we also had numerous noteworthy achievements during 2010. For example, we made significant strides towards our goals of contributing to on-the-ground protection of the two lakes where we work.

- Our Summer Environmental Exchange (SEE) participants conducted 192 hours of labor doing hands-on restoration work with the California Tahoe Conservancy and trail-building work with the Tahoe Rim trail, as well as 48 hours of restoration work in Yosemite National Park.
- At Lake Baikal, our participants conducted 192 hours of labor helping to build and maintain hiking trails in the Baikalskii Reserve (Zapovednik), in collaboration with the Great Baikal Trail Association.
- Additionally, this year's SEE took part in nine short-term research projects, which are detailed on pages 4-6 of this report.

These numbers represent one year out of the 20 that we have worked hard to improve and protect the natural environment at Lakes Tahoe and Baikal through on-site projects. Our professional and highly capable TBI staff work tirelessly to deliver remarkable results each year, and 2011 is shaping up to represent another banner year for the organization.

TBI enjoyed hosting so many of you at the 20th Anniversary Gala, which was held at Heavenly's Lakeview Lodge in July 2010. Mark your calendars now for this year's Annual Friendraiser, to be held in the same spectacular location on July 1, 2011.

We look forward to another 20 years of success and collaboration!

Bruce Ledesma  
Chairman of the Board



*TBI alum and former Executive Director Tony Brunello discusses his current work on climate change issues in California with the 2010 SEE program participants.*



*Nadya Tsareva recording the locations of invasive Cheat Grass*

## Programs Overview

During 2010, the Tahoe-Baikal Institute conducted four diverse educational programs, each successfully reaching a distinct audience and helping to promote greater understanding and collaboration related to watershed management at Lake Tahoe and Lake Baikal. Our 2010 programs included:

- The annual Summer Environmental Exchange (SEE), focused primarily on watershed and environmental education and science;
- Environmental Education Workshops in the Baikal Region, taught by USFS Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit representative Joy Barney and TBI Executive Director Jennifer Smith-Lee for local teachers and other educators in the Baikal region;
- A Buryat-Washoe Exchange program, focused on a cultural exchange between the native people of Tahoe and Baikal;
- A weekend workshop at Tahoe exploring professional careers in Natural Resource Management for Mongolian immigrant youth living in Sacramento.

All together, more than 130 people from three countries participated directly in our educational programs and workshops in 2010. Additionally, these 130 participants interacted with numerous local community members (program presenters, homestay hosts, event attendees, classroom students) in California and Nevada, as well as multiple communities around Lake Baikal in Russia.

Each of the programs is summarized on this page, with additional details about the results of the SEE Program Research Projects on the following pages.

## Summer Environmental Exchange (SEE)

**Location:** Lake Tahoe—USA and Lake Baikal—Russia

**Audience:** 12 young environmental leaders, including two Mongolians, five Russians (all from the Baikal region), and five Americans from across the USA.

**Program Summary:** This annual program is a unique hands-on, multi-disciplinary educational program aimed at undergraduate and graduate students as well as young professionals. Each year, participants from Russia, Mongolia, and the USA spend several weeks in California followed by several weeks in Siberia studying the current watershed management issues at these two unique lakes. The curriculum includes small group investigative projects, restoration work, meetings with local experts, and interactive workshops. The program integrates environmental, economic, and social concerns by blending scientific work, restoration work, and training. Participants are guided by top scientists, policy makers, and business people in both countries. 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.

**Please see pages 4 through 6 for detailed descriptions of the investigative projects conducted by this year's SEE participants.**

## Environmental Education Workshops in the Baikal Region

**Location:** Lake Baikal region, including Irkutsk, Tankoi, Ulan Ude, and Severobaikalsk

**Audience:** Over 100 school teachers and environmental educators from protected areas and NGO's

**Program Summary:** In September 2010, Tahoe-Baikal Institute Executive Director, Jennifer Smith-Lee, and US Forest Service Conservation Education Specialist Joy Barney traveled to the Lake Baikal region of Russia to help local partners develop capacity for planning and conducting short- and long-term environmental awareness events at Lake Baikal in the coming years.

There were three main aspects to the trip funded by this grant: 1) teaching environmental education methods to teachers and other educators for use in their lessons, 2) "Training the Trainers"—teaching educators already aware of these methods how to train others in their effective use, and 3) helping our colleagues at the Great Baikal Trail and Tahoe-Baikal Institute create interactive educational activities designed for the Baikal Day festivities, a large community celebration organized by the local natural resource management agency.



*Top: Joy Barney presenting a lesson about "indicator species." Bottom: students in Severobaikalsk taking part in one of Joy's lessons.*

## Mongolian Youth Workshop: Career Paths in Natural Resources

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 are now residing in California and other areas of the US. It is in large part thanks to these new partnerships that we have been able to develop the capacity to include eight days in Mongolia within the curriculum of our Summer Environmental Exchange in 2011.

**Location:** Lake Tahoe, California

**Audience:** Eleven teenagers from Mongolian immigrant families.

**Program Summary:** In August, TBI hosted a weekend “retreat” program at Fallen Leaf Lake for Mongolian immigrant teens living in the Sacramento area. The goal of the program was to connect the youth, who are currently living in an urbanized area, with nature, as well as to show them possible career paths within the field of Natural Resource Management. 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 high school students are rarely exposed to careers that would allow them to develop their interest in the outdoors into a viable profession. The participating students received an understanding of the Tahoe environment and the challenges to the region’s protection and restoration; they learned about



Participants of the Career Paths Workshop at Taylor Creek Visitor Center.

*The people I interacted with during my time in TBI, without a doubt, changed my life and helped me to become the person I am today. That goes for both the participants themselves and the TBI staff who I became close with.*

Mason Thomas (TBI '08), Graduate Deck Officer, Great Lakes Maritime Academy; Kingsley, MI

professions that it takes to do resource projects and environmental education; they experienced the Taylor Creek Rainbow Trail with a naturalist who taught them about wetland functions and aquatic/fish habitats. They also experienced “camping out” with evening fireside meals and recreating along the shoreline of Fallen Leaf Lake.

## Washoe-Buryat Exchange

**Location:** Lake Tahoe and Northern Nevada

**Audience:** Five Buryat cultural leaders from the Baikal Region

**Program Summary:** Through the generous support of a grant from the Christensen Fund, the Tahoe-Baikal Institute facilitated an exchange between indigenous peoples of Lake Baikal region (Buryat) and Lake Tahoe region (Washoe). In October, a small group of Buryat cultural leaders traveled from Siberia to northern Nevada to meet with representatives of the Washoe Tribe. The goal of the exchange was to support the development of long-term collaboration for the purpose of reviving indigenous natural resource management systems, strengthening of their traditional self-governance institutions and educating the youth of their respective nations.

A current concern for the Buryat people is how to effectively work with government agencies to ensure the protection and preservation of their sacred sites. The Buryat delegation benefited from the opportunity to hear about successes and challenges from the Washoe’s experiences with similar issues, as well as from the opportunity to meet with and learn about the State and Federal agencies who are responsible for promoting Native American Interests in the United States. During their visit with the Paiute Tribe at Pyramid Lake, the Buryat delegation also received valuable information about approaching development issues with various levels of government. This experience also reinforced the bonding of Buryat with Native Americans because of the similarities in values, ceremonies and culture. An added outcome was the establishment of a “sister school” project connecting the Diamond Valley School of Markleeville with a Russian K-6 school in Ust-Ordynsky. Both schools have a mix of indigenous and non-indigenous people providing similar environments for experiencing multi-cultural learning. Over time this may lead to long-term relationships of those students involved.

In addition to the technical lessons learned during the exchange, the program also fostered long-term cultural ties between the Buryat and Washoe people. The delegates and local representatives bonded through discussions of mutual efforts to revitalize their native language, traditional culture and youth engagement. In the longer term, the Buryat and Washoe people have now established a strong network of key leaders who are actively engaged in working with their respective governments, and who are enhancing their traditional learning programs.



From Left: TBI Board Members Bob Harris and Lana Hicks with Erjen Khamaganova (TBI '97) and exchange participant in traditional Buryat dress.

## 2010 Research Projects

For two weeks at both Tahoe and Baikal, our Summer Environmental Exchange (SEE) program participants took part in small group investigative projects, which were sponsored and led by TBI's local partners. A key component of the SEE program curriculum, these projects are meant to be a hands-on learning experience for the participants, exposing them to current scientific field methods and analytical techniques. The projects also benefit the sponsoring agencies and local communities by providing meaningful scientific data that can be applied to contemporary conservation issues. In 2010, participants took part in one of four projects at Tahoe and one of three projects at Baikal. The objectives and results of each of these nine projects are listed on the following pages.

### Tahoe Projects



Project Leader Shelby Perry (California Tahoe Conservancy) helps participants measure soil layers along the Upper Truckee River.

#### Baseline Monitoring for Upper Truckee River Restoration Project (Sponsored by the California Tahoe Conservancy)

**Objectives:** The primary goals of this project were to collect baseline (pre-project) vegetation monitoring data for a large-scale river restoration project along the Upper Truckee River, providing project planners with information about soil layers, plant diversity, and remnant channels within the project site.

**Results:** The project group conducted a soil survey to assess the depth of the lacustrine layer in meadow areas. Additionally, their vegetation monitoring showed a relationship between the ground water level and the distribution of plant functional groups. Using GIS software, they created a map showing the depths to this soil layer as well as the remnant channels in the meadow including all potential blockages and a suggested route for channel reactivation.

#### Upper Truckee Marsh Vegetation Survey (sponsored by the California Tahoe Conservancy and the Tahoe Resource Conservation District)

**Objectives:** The data collected during the project will assist the project planning of an upcoming restoration project on the Upper Truckee Marsh in order to restore natural ecosystem functions and to improve water quality, terrestrial and aquatic habitats, and vegetation.

**Results:** By conducting an Aquatic Invasive Species survey, the project group found that invasive species are present and often in abundance in the marsh. They discussed the impact on permitting and planning and concluded that adaptive management would be necessary. After doing vegetation monitoring, they concluded that it should be done on an annual basis throughout and after the restoration project. The changes they expect to occur are changes in species composition and biomass as well as an increase in groundwater. Lastly, they created both excavation and non-excavation water flow path proposals for the Upper Truckee Marsh.



A specimen found during the Aquatic Invasives Survey.



Project participants walk the beach along the Upper Truckee Marsh looking for aquatic invasive species.

*My participation in TBI was one of the most memorable experiences in my life: new friends, new impressions, knowledge, social interactions, professional connections, English language practice and an introduction to a different culture. During those 10 weeks, I learned more things than any other 10 weeks in my life.*

Elena Sanets, PhD (TBI '03), Senior Researcher, Institute for Nature Management of the National Academy of Sciences; Belarus



Project participants working on designs for their interpretive panels.

## Forest Restoration Multimedia Production (sponsored by the US Forest Service-Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit)

**Objectives:** The goal of this project was to create interpretive signs that will help the general public to understand management practices on the USFS Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit, specifically on the Blackwood Creek Restoration Project.

**Results:** The project group designed five informative interpretive signs, which explain the importance of watershed conservation in the Lake Tahoe Basin, specifically the history and restoration of Blackwood Creek. The panels designed by the group will be constructed and installed on-site to educate the general public.



One of the interpretive panels designed for the Blackwood Creek Restoration Project.

## Flammable Invasive Species Mapping (sponsored by the Tahoe Resource Conservation District)

**Objectives:** The goal of this project was to create a complete GIS map displaying the current distribution of flammable invasive weed species in the south shore area of Lake Tahoe [specifically Cheat Grass (*Bromus tectorum* L)]. This map will be used to raise awareness of what role these flammable plants may play in the fire regime of the Tahoe area, as well as to inform management decisions about the removability of these plants.

**Results:** The project group found that cheat grass grows in all soil types in Tahoe, although its distribution in each area varies. In meadows it is established only in disturbed areas, and has not yet out-competed native species otherwise; in forests, there is no major establishment of cheat grass and it is only found on trails; on beaches there are sparse patches with no major establishment; in the Angora burn area it is equally as prevalent as in other non-disturbed soil areas; it is extremely prevalent in wet marshland areas. Due to the prevalence in marshland areas and along roadways, total eradication of this invasive species is very unlikely.

*My TBI experience has helped me consider all sides of an issue or on-the-ground situation when dealing with the logistical, political, and scientific aspects of salmon habitat restoration.*

Jason Anderson (TBI' 02), Habitat Program Manager, Stilly-Snohomish Fisheries Enhancement Task Force; Arlington, WA

## Baikal Projects (continued on next page)



Tankhoi map depicting local points of interest developed by project participants.

## Local Map of Cultural Interests for the Village of Tankhoi (sponsored by the Irkutsk V.B. Sochava Institute of Geography)

**Objectives:** The objective of this project was to create a tourist brochure with points of local and historical interest in the village of Tankhoi. The brochure will be available to visitors through the local nature preserve and will serve as a guide for visitors to the village. Additionally, the project aimed to assess the opportunities and challenges for tourism development in the village.

**Results:** In addition to designing the map (shown to the right) and the brochure, the project group made the following recommendations for how the village might draw more tourists: 1) Include local stakeholders in tourism development, 2) Establish informational signs at the locations of local and historical interests throughout the village, 3) Enlarge the map created for the "Discovering Tankhoi" brochure and make signs to place at either end of the village for incoming tourists to see, 4) Increase local resident knowledge about

potential tourism opportunities (cafes, home-stays, organized excursions, water sports, equipment rentals, souvenir shops, etc), 5) Establish more trash cans along the shore of Lake Baikal, and 6) Improve infrastructure along the shore for better tourism organization (construction of toilets, fire pits, as well as solid and liquid waste containers).

## SEE Program Research Projects

### Assessment of Present Anthropogenic Impacts on the “Jungles of Khamar-Daban” Eco-Trail (sponsored by the Irkutsk V.B. Sochava Institute of Geography)

**Objectives:** The goal of this project was to determine the anthropogenic load on the eco-trail by examining the current environmental conditions and determining the mitigation measures necessary to offset impacts of trail construction and use by tourists.

**Results:** The project group determined that the trail could have a number of potential impacts on the soil, the vegetation, and landscape, including loss of topsoil, change in the depth of the organic layer, root loss due to soil compaction, increased erosion, introduction of invasive species and loss of species diversity, and a possibility of “anthropogenic swamps” developing in depressions through wet meadows. To lessen these impacts, the group recommended regular monitoring of erosion and soil compaction, as well as plant species diversity, along the trail and highly sensitive areas should be protected from over use. The anthropogenic impact can also be lessened by creating designated toilets and by creating rest areas made of rock. There should be an attempt to maintain the balance between ecological preservation and the promotion of eco-tourism.



*TBI's Russian Program Coordinators giving participants an orientation to the environmental issues of the Baikal Region.*

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*TBI helped me think about the many facets of both social/cultural and physical knowledge that truly go into making conservation effective. I hope to bring that awareness to my graduate work at UNC.*

Pavithra Kathanadhi (TBI '08), Graduate Student, Department of Geography, University of North Carolina; Chapel Hill, NC

### Landscape and Tour Research on the Vydrinnaya River Interpretive Trail at the Baikal State Nature Biosphere Preserve (sponsored by the Irkutsk Institute of Geography)

**Objective:** The goals of this project were to create geo-botanical descriptions of the landscapes found on the Vydrinnaya River Interpretive Trail, to identify sections of trail that may be of particular interest to visitors, to suggest sections of trail that need improvement, and to recommend environmental education programs or activities to be conducted on the trail. The results of the project will enable the Preserve lessen the load on existing interpretive trails and also attract new or more visitors to the Preserve.

**Results:** The group created an official document describing the trail and documented points of interest in words and photographs.



*Soil measurements are an indicator of anthropogenic impact.*

They found that the geo-botanical landscapes on this section of the trail contain little diversity in terrain but greater diversity of plant species and that in its current state, the trail is serviceable for small groups up to the second rest site. They recommended widening and clearing of the trail to soil, installation of two bridges, rerouting of certain portions of the trail (such as through extremely wet and marshy areas), creation of switchbacks on steep sections to lessen erosion and make the trail safer, upgrading the existing fire rings, and installation of interpretive signage along the trail.

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*I really appreciated my time with TBI and the perspective that it provided me regarding watershed-scale management. Throughout my participation, I learned that it takes all kinds of people, comprised of various interests and priorities, and all kinds of organizations to maintain the necessary checks and balances of watershed/water resource management.*

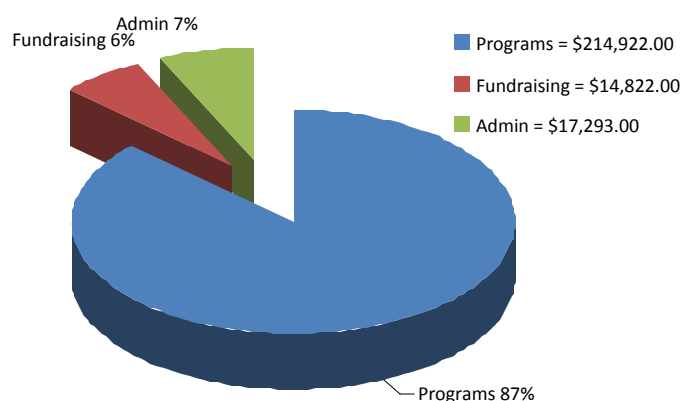
Kayla Berry (TBI '10), Graduate Student (Hydrogeology), University of Nevada Reno; Reno, NV



*Creation of switchbacks would minimize trail erosion.*

TBI's programs are made possible by contributions from individuals, corporations, organizations, and small businesses, organizations through charitable donations, program fees, foundation and government grants and participant sponsorships, and special events and other contributions.

Tahoe Baikal Institute  
Program Allocations  
Fiscal Year 2010



## 2010 Balance Sheet

<b>Assets:</b>	
Cash in Bank	\$56,188.36
Accounts Receivable	\$5,745.00
Prepaid/Deposits	\$12,045.31
<b>Total Assets:</b>	<b>\$73,978.67</b>
<b>Liabilities:</b>	
Accounts Payable	\$12,180.00
Deferred Revenue	\$24,406.19
Prior Year Fund Balance	\$36,340.00
Current Year Excess	\$1,052.48
<b>Total Liabilities &amp; Fund Balance:</b>	<b>\$73,978.67</b>

## 2010 Revenues & Expenses

<b>Revenue:</b>	
Unrestricted Revenue	\$128,156.24
SEE Program Fees	\$39,585.00
Bequests	\$20,000.00
Restricted Revenue	\$60,387.66
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>\$248,128.90</b>
<b>Expenses:</b>	
Payroll & Benefits	\$87,822.17
Subcontractors	\$19,370.20
Americorp Volunteer	\$7,000.00
Operating Expenses	\$31,839.18
Restricted Expense SEE Program	\$21,348.58
Expenses	\$79,696.29
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$247,076.42</b>
<b>Net Excess</b>	<b>\$1,052.48</b>

*I learned how team work is crucial for the success of a project. It was enlightening to solve problems in an international team, with different input and attitudes coming together to create a better effect. My TBI experience was an unforgettable and formative one."*

Oleg Lyubinskiy (TBI '96), Post Doctoral Student,  
Max-Delbruck Center for Molecular Medicine; Berlin,  
Germany

**TBI's Annual Support Campaign begins  
March 1st. Contact our office to be a volunteer  
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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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SEE program participants Chimgee Ganbold (Mongolia) and Kayla Berry (USA) recording data points in the Upper Truckee Marsh.

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