

---

on the  
**HOMEFRONT**

VOLUME 10

---



## HOMWOOD, YESTERDAY AND TOMORROW

BY MICHAEL HOGAN, SOIL SCIENTIST, RESTORATION SPECIALIST  
INTEGRATED ENVIRONMENTAL RESTORATION SERVICES, INC. TAHOE CITY, CA

Old Homewood evokes thoughts of days gone by; a 'better time' when things were slower, when neighbors had time to say hello to each other on the street, a time when the natural world was a bit less impacted, trees were a bit greener and taller. It's a good image to hold and perhaps even one that can define a future vision.

There is an additional vision of that past, and one whose effects are with us still. The 'Old Tahoe' and 'Old Homewood' era, the heyday that prototypically shows up in photos and postcards, took place between 1910 and 1940's, give or take a few years. During that era,

forests were re-growing from the decimation of the logging of the late 1800s, which effectively buried much of Tahoe's old growth timber in the Virginia City mines. By the 1940's, second growth timber was already being logged off, with at least one lumber mill in the Tahoma area and probably many more. Between the 1920's and the early 1960's, Henry Kaiser had moved Blackwood Creek and Tahoe Cedars had been criss-crossed with streets, optioned and then defaulted on by Aimee Semple McPherson of the Four Square Gospel Church. Any numbers of actual and hoped for developments were begun in the '60s in an effort to cash in on the focus that the

Winter Olympics brought to the area. It was in this era that Homewood Ski Hill was begun. And like nearly every other 'improvement' that occurred in those days, roads, utilities, grading and other civil improvements had few if any environmental protections. The focus was to turn the landscape into something more 'useable'. Bulldozers created streets, dirt roads, building pads. Streams and water courses were moved if their location was inconvenient. Roads were blazed right through water courses. And if those roads washed out during spring runoff, more dirt was pushed into them the next summer. Environmental protection was not a primary topic of discussion around most dinner tables. It was within this context that Homewood Ski Hill was built.

Now fast forward forty-plus years: TRPA, Lahontan Water Quality Control Board, the League to Save Lake Tahoe, the Sierra Club, and other regulatory and public interest groups are alive and well. But Lake Tahoe is less clear than it was back in the '60's. JMA Ventures purchases Homewood Resort and began to assess what they had to work with. One of the things, aside from one of the most scenic sites on Lake Tahoe, is some tired infrastructure and a great number of 'legacy' impacts. Legacy impacts are those things described earlier and might have come from a conversation such as: "We need a road over there. Let me get the bulldozer." Logging, mining, ski resort operations all had their turn with the steep land that was to become Homewood Mountain Resort. The question for Homewood and JMA became: What can we do to improve the land that we have accepted stewardship of? Actually, this might be the question that all land owners in the Tahoe area might ask. It is a question that land managers all through the country are beginning to ask. Asking the question and being able to answer the question on the ground are not the same thing, however.

In the case of Homewood, when JMA purchased the resort, the question was asked with an additional mandate: "What WILL we do and how can we raise the bar environmentally?" JMA contacted Integrated Environmental Restoration Services and together we immediately began working on a number of initiatives that would add substance to our work. Work began on development of an integrated watershed plan and assessment that targeted erosion hot-spots so that we could begin treatment on those sites. The process is similar to how an emergency physician might triage a patient. We installed some test treatments in year one (2006), expanded treatment in 2007 and are now embarking on year three treatments. As interesting and fulfilling as doing the work might be, we are constantly trying to raise the bar. And just as a physician will affect a treatment and then monitor the patient, we have monitored the work we've done at Homewood since the first test treatments in

2006 in order to understand how well those treatments work and also to help improve the treatments themselves. This may be one of the first large scale private projects where this level of monitoring has been done.

Who would notice this sort of thing, you might ask? Well, the Federal Government, for one. In 1972, the Clean Water Act was created. It included a requirement to put all water bodies that had problems (were 'impaired') on a list, known as the 303d list. Once a water body got on that list, a TMDL was supposed to be prepared. (TMDL stands for 'Total Maximum Daily Load' and refers to the total load of a pollutant that a water body can handle without being permanently impaired.) Nobody took action until citizen groups began to sue. Now, Lake Tahoe has a TMDL. And while few even know what TMDL means, fewer still have any idea of how to implement it. This situation has frightened a few folks. Fear of the unknown is a difficult situation. But Homewood saw it as an opportunity to lead the way if we could find the right partners. The Federal Government noticed the work we were doing. We asked them for a grant to help us determine how to implement the Tahoe TMDL and they agreed. Much of their interest was based on our work and especially our monitoring. So we have become partners with the Tahoe Resource Conservation District and the Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board as well as the EPA in this process of figuring out how to implement this initiative.

Why go through all this detail? Partly because the Tahoe TMDL will be on most landowners minds before long, wondering what it is, how it will affect them and so on. Homewood is stepping up to the plate and helping to answer the question. Homewood Mountain Resort has already removed and restored over 100,000 square feet of roads. With this TMDL grant, work will continue on that process and will, over the next two years, we will do at least 125,000 additional square feet of restoration, including damaged water courses and other areas. Homewood will build off of what has been done and will continue to lead the way. It is our hope that others will follow our lead and together we will proactively help turn the lake clarity and water quality issues around. It is our belief that the private sector should be major players in this effort. After all, what do we have as our major asset? Location and Lake Tahoe. We believe that protecting Lake Tahoe, one of the most special places on the planet, is or should be a priority. Maybe in that way, we will be able to look at these as the good old days, the real glory days of Tahoe and a fitting analogue of the 'Old Homewood' era. We need to make sure that the next generations look back fondly and with high regard on what we are doing now and how we are doing it. *Stay tuned!*



[skihomewood.com](http://skihomewood.com)

530.525.2992 P.O. Box 165, HOMEWOOD, CA 96141

---