



# Tahoe-Baikal Institute 2009 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.



Lake Baikal



Lake Tahoe



*Message from the Executive Director:*

*As the Tahoe-Baikal Institute's new Executive Director, I would like to express my deep gratitude to our donors, supporters, partners, and exchange participants for making 2009 a fabulous and successful year.*

*I am honored to lead this organization because I am very passionate about the work that we do at TBI. I have deep connections to both Lake Tahoe and Lake Baikal, and I believe that educating people about how to manage fragile resources in places they love is an important key to solving our greater environmental challenges.*

*Over the course of the next year, I hope that I will have the opportunity to talk one-on-one with as many of our supporters as possible, to learn what it is about TBI that you are most passionate about and is the key to why you support our organization. Your ideas and opinions are important to us at TBI.*

*If this booklet is your first introduction to the Tahoe-Baikal Institute, welcome. Please enjoy reading about our recent program successes in the following pages, and feel free to explore our web site—at [www.tahoebaikal.org](http://www.tahoebaikal.org)—for even more information about our organization. We look forward to learning what we can do to gain and keep your support.*

*Thank you again,  
Jennifer Smith-Lee  
Executive Director*

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TBI Executive Director

## Message from the Chair:



On behalf of the TBI Board of Directors, I would like to thank each of the Tahoe-Baikal Institute's supporters for your continued support throughout 2009. We appreciate that charitable giving was more difficult this year for many of our long-time donors, and we are therefore extremely grateful for the support you were able to contribute. The Tahoe-Baikal Institute remained strong throughout this past year despite the economic down turn. We did not need to make any significant program reductions and our Annual Support Campaign generated \$105,000.

In 2009, we conducted our 19th annual Summer Environmental Exchange program. This unique, inter-disciplinary program focused on watershed management has been TBI's flagship program since our founding in 1991. Through the dedicated efforts of our truly talented and dedicated staff, after two decades the program continues to evolve and mature, offering each group of participants a more rigorous academic and cultural learning experience.

In addition to the educational aspect of the program, the research projects—sponsored by local partners at both Lake Tahoe and Lake Baikal—have continued to provide meaningful contributions to environmental protection in both regions. Our young participants gain valuable hands-on skills that will be applicable to their careers in a variety of environmental fields. The objectives and key findings of this year's projects are highlighted for you in this report.

In 2010, the Tahoe-Baikal Institute will be celebrating our 20th Anniversary. Founded as the Cold War era drew to a close to promote collaboration and communication between scientists in the Russian and the United States, our organization still fills an important role in today's society. The program provides an educational focus on interdisciplinary approaches and continues to be a leader in promoting and facilitating international collaboration between Russia, Mongolia, and the United States.

I am pleased to invite you to join us this year for our 20th Anniversary Events. Mark your calendars now for our Annual Friendraiser, to be held Friday, July 2nd, 2010 at Heavenly Mountain Resort in South Lake Tahoe. Additional opportunities to become more involved are included in this report and will also be highlighted on our website ([www.tahoebaikal.org](http://www.tahoebaikal.org)) throughout the year.

Please accept my sincere thanks once again for your continued support. Partners like you allow us to provide quality educational programming and to promote the protection of Lake Tahoe and Lake Baikal while helping to train a new generation of environmentally conscious and motivated students.

Sincerely,  
Charles R. Goldman  
Chairman of the TBI Board

*2009 Summer Environmental Exchange participant Natalia Kravtsova planting seedlings of endangered Tahoe Yellow Cress on the shore of Tahoe*



### 2009 Summer Environmental Exchange (SEE)

TBI's annual Summer Environmental Exchange (SEE) program is a unique hands-on, multi-disciplinary educational program aimed at undergraduate and graduate students as well as young professionals. Participants from various countries spend five weeks in California and five weeks in Siberia studying the current watershed management issues at these two unique alpine 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 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.

#### Participants

In 2009, the SEE program had a very diverse group of exchange participants. The group of 16 young adults was comprised of six Russians from the Baikal region, six Americans from across the US, two Mongolians from the upper reaches of the Baikal-Selenga River Watershed, one Belorussian and one Pakistani. Among the students, there was a professional botanist, a climatologist working on his dissertation about the effect of global warming on glaciers, two California Conservation Corps members, several environmental science students, a Russian Studies major, a linguistics student who volunteers actively with the Great Baikal Trail Association, an Emergency Services specialist, and a recently graduated Environmental Engineer. Of the 16, seven were undergraduate students and eight were working professionals or post-graduate students.

#### Investigative Projects

For two weeks at both Tahoe and Baikal, SEE program participants take part in small group investigative projects, which are 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 2009, participants took part in one of five projects at Tahoe and one of three projects at Baikal. The objectives and key findings of each of these nine projects are listed on pages 3 and 4.



*Lauren Zielinski measuring a vegetation plot in the Upper Truckee Marsh*

*Collecting vegetation samples in the Upper Truckee Marsh*



*Survey station along the Bicycle Trail*



## SEE Program—Tahoe Projects

### Assessment and Survey of Fisheries Stakeholders in the Tahoe Basin (sponsored by California Trout)

**Objective:** To assess fisheries stakeholders in the Tahoe Basin and determine general attitudes towards the current fishery.

**Key findings:** Overall, anglers are moderately satisfied with the Tahoe fishery but indicated that improvement is necessary to maintain popularity of the fishery, to provide economic revenue, and to secure the survival of threatened fish like the Lahontan Cutthroat Trout.

*Participant Rukhsana Saleem and Project Leader Jenny Hatch at an angler education booth*



### Ecological Effects of Forest Fuel Treatments in the 2007 Angora Fire Burn Area (sponsored by US Forest Service and Tahoe Resource Conservation District)

**Objective:** To estimate the effects of forest thinning (post-fire fuel treatments) on plant diversity and the forest's resistance to fire damage and soil erosion.

**Key findings:** More overall species diversity exists within treated (thinned) areas versus untreated areas; tree mortality is higher in untreated areas.



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

**Objective:** Collection of baseline (pre-project) vegetation monitoring data for a large-scale river restoration project along the Upper Truckee River.

**Key findings:** Researchers found a relationship between groundwater level and plant functional group and created a current condition riparian vegetation map for the main channel of the Upper Truckee River.

*Participant Veronika Zhabdorzhieva and Project Leader Melissa Faigeles checking GPS data points along the Upper Truckee River*

### South Lake Tahoe Bicycle Transportation Project (sponsored by the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency)

**Objective:** To survey users about current usage on existing bike trails around Lake Tahoe to inform the update and revision of TRPA's Bicycle/Pedestrian Master Plan

**Key findings:** Survey of bike trail users showed that the general public wants: 1) more bike trails; 2) existing bike trails to be extended; 3) dedicated bike trails and sidewalks; and 4) a dedicated bike trail going all the way around Lake Tahoe.



### Survey of Benthic Species Biodiversity and Fecundity with Respect to Asian Clam (*Corbicula fluminea*) in Lake Tahoe (sponsored by the UC-Davis Tahoe Environmental Research Center and the University of Nevada, Reno)

**Objective:** To investigate the impacts of Asian Clam establishment in Lake Tahoe on benthic taxa through species richness and diversity indices.

**Key findings:** Benthic biodiversity is reduced in areas where Asian Clams are present; the Asian Clam has a much higher potential reproductive capacity than the native Tahoe clam; the Asian Clam invasion is likely to create habitat conditions that are favorable for new invasive species; and the cost of reversing the damage caused by these invasive clams would be astronomical.

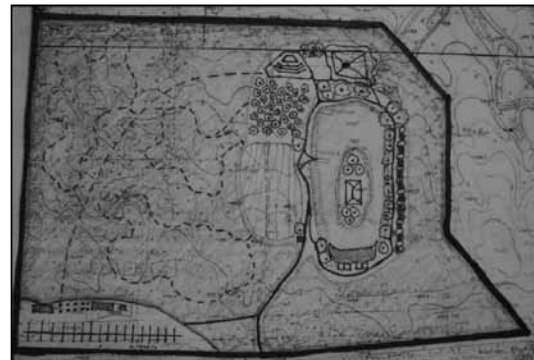
*Participant Usukhbayar Shar examining Asian Clams in the lab*

## SEE Program—Baikal Projects

### Soil Characterization and Rating of Ecosystem Vitality in Anthropogenically Impacted Areas of Baikalsk (sponsored by Irkutsk State University)

**Objectives:** To characterize soils and determine anthropogenic load, estimate the degree of transformation of local ecosystems, and design a city park that provides effective recreation opportunities while minimizing impact to soils.

**Key Findings:** Completion of the first comprehensive soil study of Baikalsk's future city park, establishment of soil monitoring sites for Rosselkhoznadzor (Federal Service for Veterinary and Phytosanitary Surveillance), and completion of a draft design of the future city park based on minimal impact to soil.



Sketch of the design for future city park in Baikalsk



Participants interviewing local resident about the impact of the mill on her garden

### Botanical Investigation of the Rare and Endemic Species of the Baikal Region (sponsored by the Irkutsk State University Botanical Garden)

**Objective:** To study the biology of several rare species of plants endemic to the Baikal region and estimate the influence of several factors on their populations and distribution.

**Key findings:** *Waldsteinia ternata* and *Anemonoides baikalensis* are found in new and atypical habitats, indicating adaptive strategies common to ancient species; *Tridactylina kirilowii*, *Asplenium nessi*, and *Asplenium altajense* prefer rocky and gravel substrates, which make these species extremely vulnerable to climate changes; anthropogenic factors that will influence the future of these species include unregulated tourism, construction development, and climate change.

### Perspectives on the Socioeconomic Development of the City of Baikalsk (sponsored by the Geography Institute of the Siberian Branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences)

**Objective:** To estimate the socioeconomic status of Baikalsk, to find alternative sources of economic activity to the Baikalsk Paper and Pulp Mill (BPPM), and to estimate the perspectives of local citizens through surveys and interviews.

**Key Findings:** The majority of the population favors reopening of the BPPM; there are currently no alternatives for those who are unemployed due to the closing. Some favor remodeling of the plant, believing that it would provide jobs for the local people and would be more environmental friendly. Others believe that tourism is the main prospect in the area. Winter tourism is well developed (successful ski resort) but development of the summer tourism industry needs governmental or federal support.



Baikalsk Pulp and Paper Mill

## Alumni and Partner Programs



### Partner Exchanges and Workshops

The Tahoe-Baikal Institute received a grant from the **USDA Forest Service, International Programs** department to enable TBI to organize and lead a series of workshops and planning sessions focused on fostering collaboration between government agencies that work in the realm of natural resource protection and local community organizations and citizens in the Baikal region. **Joy Barney, Conservation Education Program Specialist at the Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit**, traveled to Irkutsk, Ulan Ude, and Tankhoi (on the southern shore of Lake Baikal) to conduct hands-on trainings about environmental education methods, as well as to give presentations on topics such as “The Forest Service and how we work with partners and volunteers,” “The Forest Service’s Conservation Education Programs,” and “How the Forest Service Protects the Environment.” During her two-week trip to the Baikal region, Barney, along with **TBI Programs Coordinator Jon Green**, met with students of six different universities, representatives of three governmental agencies overseeing natural resource management in the Irkutsk Oblast and the Republic of Buryatia, and a total of more than 200 people eager to hear more about how government agencies in the United States collaborate with schools, nonprofits, and local citizens.

*Environmental educators practice interactive teaching methods during one of Joy Barney’s workshops in Irkutsk, Russia*



### Alumni Connections

Today, TBI has over 350 program alumni living in countries all around the globe. Although the majority of our participants have hailed from North America and Russia, we also have alumni who are now doing important conservation work in Mongolia, Canada, Norway, Cameroon, Iraq, China, Latvia, and other countries.

In order to bring our alumni together so that they can build professional connections, TBI holds two Alumni Weekend Events in California each year, as well as several local alumni gathering in both Ulan Ude and Irkutsk Russia. Another way that we help alumni stay connected with the organization is through our annual alumni newsletter, *Waterbodies* (to obtain a copy, contact the TBI office.)

*As a part of the Spring 2009 Alumni Weekend, TBI Executive Director Jennifer Smith-Lee and alumna Amy Nelson (TBI 2007) learn about coastal life during a tour of the Bodega Bay Marine Lab hosted by Blythe Marshman (TBI 2008)*



# 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.

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*Russian, American, Mongolian, and Pakistani students engage in a team-building activity during the 2009 Summer Environmental Exchange*





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TBI thanks the following for their assistance, time, equipment, homes and facilities, and much more:

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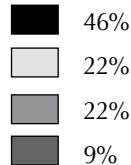
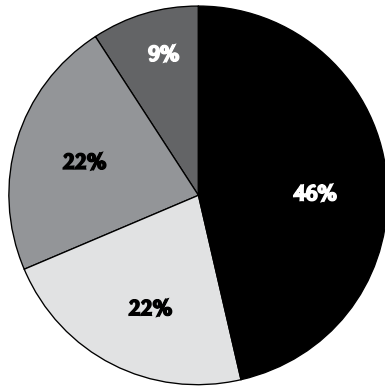
*Alexander, Sharon, and Michael Jones volunteering with TBI at Fredericks' Work Day in May, 2009*



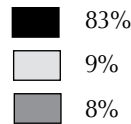
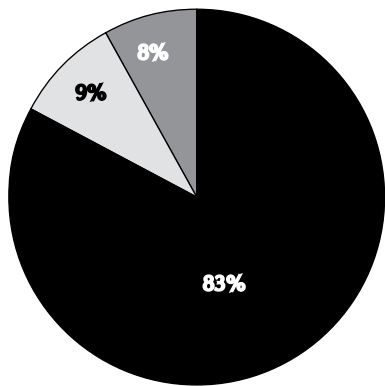
# 2009 Financials

Although 2009 was a difficult year economically for many non-profits, TBI was able to manage expenses and operate under budget, without making any significant program reductions.

TBI's programs are made possible by contributions from individuals, corporations, organizations, and small businesses, organizations through TBI's Annual Campaign (46%), program fees (\$22%), foundation and government grants and participant sponsorships (22%), and special events and other (9%).



2009 Revenue		Dollars
Unrestricted Contributions		\$102,612.00
SEE Program Fees		\$48,490.00
Restricted Grants and Participant Sponsorships		\$49,495.00
Other Revenue (Events & Misc.)		\$20,318.00
<b>Total Revenue</b>		<b>\$220,915.00</b>



2009 Expenses		Dollars
Programs		\$177,497.00
Management and General		\$18,871.00
Fundraising		\$17,645.00
<b>Total Expenses</b>		<b>\$214,013.00</b>



Net Assets	Dollars
Beginning of Year	\$29,508
End of Year	\$36,375
<b>Change</b>	<b>\$6,867</b>

### 2009 Staff List

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*Looking to get more involved with the Tahoe-Baikal Institute?  
Check out these opportunities to help out or get to know  
our exchange participants during 2010!*

### **Volunteer Workday at Fallen Leaf Lake (May)**

Join TBI staff, Board Members, and other volunteers as we prepare the historic Fredericks' site for the arrival of the 2010 exchange participants.

### **Tahoe Snapshot Day (May)**

Volunteer with TBI staff and Board members to help monitor the water quality of the tributaries of Lake Tahoe. (*Snapshot Day is sponsored collaboratively by several of our partner organizations.*)

### **Dinner with SEE Participants (June-July)**

Pick an evening to join the 2010 Summer Environmental Exchange (SEE) program participants for dinner at Fredericks' Cabin and hear about the day's watershed education activities.

### **Join our researchers in the field (July)**

Join our SEE participants in the field as they gather and analyze data for their small group research projects, all of which are led by local agencies and environmental organizations.

### **Participant Homestays (July)**

Open your home to two or three of our International and American SEE program participants. Enjoy an opportunity to learn more about their cultures and day-to-day lives at home, while showing them a more personal view of American culture.

### **Research Project Presentations (July)**

Come listen as the SEE participants present the scientific findings of their small group research projects. Learn about diverse topics such as invasive species, lake clarity, wildfire fuels reduction and restoration, and sustainable communities.

### **International Cook Night (July)**

Join TBI staff, Board members, and alumni for this annual international feast, prepared by our SEE participants.

### **Annual Fundraiser (Friday, July 2nd)**

Join TBI's 2010 participants, staff, Board members, recent program alumni and other supporters at our Annual Fundraiser. Enjoy unique dinner conversation and thought-provoking guest speakers.

***TBI's Annual Support Campaign begins  
March 1st. Contact our office to be a volunteer  
fundraiser or to make your annual pledge!***

*Annual report photo credits: Sarah Bowers, Jon Green, Do Lee, Jennifer Smith-Lee  
and all 2009 SEE program participants.*



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Tahoe-Baikal Institute  
P.O. Box 13587  
South Lake Tahoe, CA 96151-3587

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**Tahoe-Baikal Institute**  
**South Lake Tahoe, California**



**Irkutsk & Ulan Ude, Russia**  
**P.O. Box 13587, South Lake Tahoe, CA 96151-3587**  
**Office (530) 542-5599 • Fax (530) 542-5567**  
**info@tahoebaikal.org**  
**www.tahoebaikal.org**