

TAHOE:
**STATE
OF THE
LAKE**
REPORT
2025

EDUCATION AND OUTREACH



UC DAVIS
Tahoe Environmental
Research Center

Education and outreach

In 2024

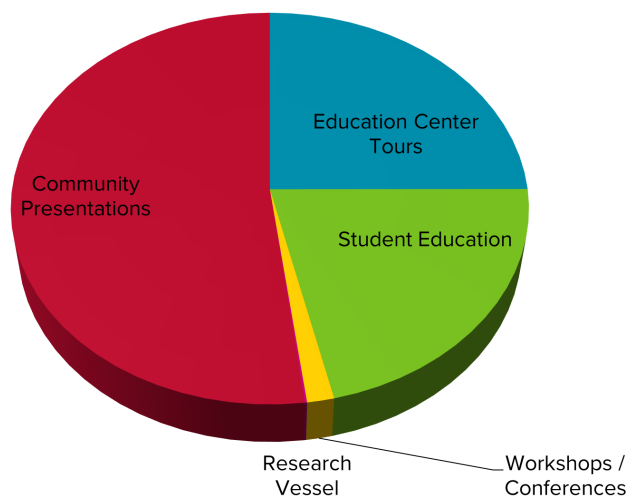
Education and outreach play a complementary role with UC Davis Tahoe Environmental Research Center (TERC) science and research providing access to educational content developed from technical reports, peer-reviewed publications, and ongoing research. Science and research inform tours, school field trips, community programs, exhibits, outreach events, and other educational initiatives. By increasing access to science, TERC aims to cultivate a better-informed local and visiting population and empower people to take meaningful action to protect Lake Tahoe.

In 2024, TERC interacted with 10,994 visitors through tours, school programs, lectures, and community outreach activities. The TERC Education Team provided engaging, place-based learning experiences through 66 field trips for 2,353 students, covering topics focused on lake ecology, climate change, forest health, geology, and microplastics in 2024. TERC educated the public through lectures, community presentations, and outdoor programming. The monthly lecture series continued to be a popular offering, providing science-rich content to 807 community members through 11 lectures featuring researchers from

UC Davis and beyond. These programs were made possible by dedicated TERC staff and AmeriCorps members, who maintained TERC's core educational offerings and kept science accessible across the Tahoe basin.

While these numbers reflect continued demand for TERC's educational programming, the recent loss of AmeriCorps funding (May 2025) has had a substantial impact on capacity moving forward. The termination of the 2024-25 AmeriCorps program resulted in the loss of several service members who had been essential to the delivery of school programs, community outreach, and event staffing. Thanks to the generous donations from community members, we were able to hire those AmeriCorps members with new job descriptions that are 50 percent education and 50 percent research and keep them with a living stipend and previously promised education award. As a result, the 2025 engagement numbers will reflect the effort and difficult choices that TERC's education team has made to reduce its community programming footprint and align with the current staffing reality.

TOTAL VISITOR CONTACTS = 10,994



Educational exhibits

In 2025

UC Davis TERC continues to expand its educational offerings through exhibits and public engagement initiatives. In 2025, the League to Save Lake Tahoe's new education center in South Lake Tahoe held its grand opening, featuring TERC's research and education content as part of the exhibit experience. A highlight of 2025 is the launch of a new Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) Prevention exhibit, which combines a physical kayak and paddle set-up with "hidden" scavenger hunt AIS items partnered with an interactive iPad exhibit. Visitors to the UC Davis Tahoe Science Center™ are invited to explore tactile clues and discover how AIS can spread through recreation, reinforcing the importance of the "Clean, Drain, Dry" prevention message.

Another exciting development is the new Little Limnologist

activity booklet, created as a younger visitor companion to our Junior Limnologist program. This version introduces early learners to lake science through age-appropriate activities designed to spark curiosity and foundational understanding of freshwater ecosystems.

Additionally, TERC is developing a tree cross-section exhibit from a Ponderosa pine from a Tahoe City tree estimated to be several hundred years old. This exhibit will highlight tree physiology, climate variability, and forest change over time. Work has also begun on a Climate Change exhibit, which will feature community narratives to illustrate the local impacts of climate change and foster connection through shared experiences. Both exhibits are being developed with support from TERC's summer interns and are expected to be unveiled in Fall 2025.



Mahren Hudson, Maggie Anderson, and Soffia Ramsey (left to right) test the Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) exhibit. Visitors can climb into a kayak, search for invaders, discover how AIS spread, and, most importantly, learn how to keep non-motorized watercraft Clean, Drain, Dry. (Alison Toy, UC Davis TERC)



First grade students from Tahoe Expeditionary Academy visited the Tahoe Science Center™ for a field trip, where they helped beta test the Little Limnologist Challenge. Feedback from the students and their teachers is helping TERC educators better tailor the advanced content to be age-appropriate. (Alison Toy, UC Davis TERC)



Education summer intern Chloe Cervenka points to branch growth in a cross-section of a Ponderosa pine measuring approximately four feet in diameter. She will decipher the tree's life cycle and connect it to key events in Tahoe's history. Once complete, her work will be featured in the Tahoe Science Center™. (Heather Segale, UC Davis TERC)

Educational programs

In 2025

TERC education programs continue to engage the public through a wide variety of science opportunities. Eight undergraduates from UC Davis, UCLA, UC Berkeley, University of Utah, and Dartmouth joined TERC for the summer as part of the TERC Internships for Scholars program. The ever-popular TERC Monthly Science Speaks Lecture Series featured a diverse lineup of topics, drawing strong attendance. Topics and themes are chosen for their ability to expand public awareness and knowledge of environmental issues at Lake Tahoe. Highlights included *Freshwater on a Changing Planet* with new TERC Director, Dr. Stephanie Hampton, *Performance Nutrition for the Everyday Athlete* with Dr. Dana Lis, *Algae Blooms at Lake Tahoe: TERC, Tech, and You* with Dr. Samantha Sharp and TERC staff members Katie Senft and Alison Toy.

2025 also marked the launch of a new winter outreach program,

Ski with a Scientist, designed to bring informal science education to the slopes. In this pilot series, TERC researcher gave short, engaging presentations on skis and snowboards at Tahoe Palisades Alpine allowing for casual Q&A sessions on the chairlift. This new program allowed TERC educators and scientists to connect with community members in a place-based education format.

Due to the challenges posed by the termination of the AmeriCorps program, in 2025, for the first time since its inception, the annual Science Expo, typically educating around a thousand local students, was not held. The 3rd Grow Your Own Festival held at the Tahoe City Field Station, still provided education and location-appropriate plants for community members to enjoy.

Despite these challenges, TERC continues to provide engaging, place-based learning experiences through lectures, exhibits, and more.



Faith Shortridge and Sydney Griscavage during a summer intern group seminar, show off new skills tracking existing planting sites and testing for soil moisture content. They shared these skills with their fellow interns in the field while monitoring seedlings that were planted 2 to 3 years ago. (Soffia Ramsey, UC Davis TERC)



Aaron Vanderpool discusses soil moisture and forest ecology to a fully booked Ski with a Scientist tour. In total, six sessions were held at Palisades Tahoe Alpine, highlighting the interdisciplinary work of TERC through these slopeside presentations by its scientists, staff, and educators. (Alison Toy, UC Davis TERC)



Volunteer and Lake Tahoe Master Gardener Dave Long shares the science behind the humble potato at the Grow Your Own - High Elevation Gardening event at the Tahoe City Field Station. This scaled-down event replaced the original Grow Your Own Festival following the termination of the AmeriCorps program. (Alison Toy, UC Davis TERC)

Educational programs

In 2025

A new and exciting outreach opportunity was presented to TERC in 2025 by the UC Davis Athletics Department. Aggie Athletics has partnered with TERC to celebrate our bold scientific breakthroughs with a bold new color and logo to match. Nine UC Davis athletics teams, including both men's and women's, will wear special Tahoe-themed sports jerseys in several games this upcoming season. The partnership will extend beyond the kits on the field as student-athletes will have opportunities to visit the facilities located on Tahoe's north and west shores for on-site learning and team retreats. Merchandise sporting the new logo is available in the Aggie Sideline Store.

This unique partnership will provide TERC with an opportunity to reach audiences that we would not normally reach, especially during nationally televised football games. This will raise TERC's profile on campus and off, expose more students to research opportunities in the

basin, and set us apart from other institutions in the basin.

Student athletes have already had one visit to Lake Tahoe to capture promotional images and video. We look forward to more opportunities to bring athletes to experience the beauty of Lake Tahoe.



UC Davis football players show off their new Lake Tahoe uniforms in the UC Davis Tahoe Science Center™ in the Kids' Zone. (Heather Segale, UC Davis TERC)



UC Davis mascot Gunrock hams it up in front of the Virtual Research Vessel exhibit at the UC Davis Tahoe Science Center™. (Heather Segale, UC Davis TERC)



UC Davis soccer players pose in their new Lake Tahoe uniforms in the theater of the UC Davis Tahoe Science Center™. (Cara Hollis, UC Davis TERC)