TAHOE REGIONAL PLANNING AGENCY

Lake Tahoe
ENVIRONMENTAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

Executive Director Report

Julie W. Regan • April 22, 2026

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South Lake Tahoe Recreation Center Open!

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Legislative Update

Nevada:
April 10 Interim Committee Tour

California:
April 14 Golden Mussel Bill Hearing

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Update on endangered wolves in Northern CA. Page 13

Tahoe IN DEPTH

PROTECTING, ENJOYING & EXPLORING THE LAKE TAHOE BASIN

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New goals set for more resilient forests

By Thea Schwartz
Tahoe Regional Planning Agency

When Tahoe local and University of California, Davis Research Ecologist Hugh Safford, Ph.D., returned to his Meyers, Calif., home after evacuating during the 2021 Caldor Fire, he was struck by what he saw.

The fire had scorched more than 220,000 acres, roughly 10,000 within the Tahoe Basin, yet no permanent residences or lives were lost in South Lake Tahoe. For a community that had been surrounded by flames, it was extraordinary. For Safford, it was also a phenomenon worth studying.

Word quickly spread that Tahoe's outcome was not just a streak of luck. It reflected years of fuel reduction work, home hardening, and coordinated efforts by the Tahoe Fire and Fuels Team. Safford's observations led to a detailed study of the burned area to better understand how forest management improved forest health and helped save Tahoe communities.

The research confirmed the effectiveness of forest fuel reduction treatments in reducing fire severity and tree mortality during the Caldor Fire. Specifically, trees in treated areas were three times more likely to survive than those in untreated areas, and fire behavior was less severe, with lower flames and reduced damage where Tahoe Fire and Fuels Team partners had previously completed forest treatments.

Safford and co-author Saba Saberi called it "another fuel treatment success story for the Western U.S.," while also underscoring the increasing urgency of proactive forest and fuel management.

Earlier this year, the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency and Lake Tahoe Environmental Improvement Program (EIP) partners updated Tahoe's forest health goals to do just that. The new goals, or threshold standards, call for accelerating the pace and scale of forest treatments to make our communities safer and our forests more resilient in the face of a growing wildfire threat.

Fire has long shaped Sierra Nevada forests. Historically, frequent, low-intensity burns occurring every decade or two at Tahoe's lower elevations kept fuels in check and maintained open, diverse

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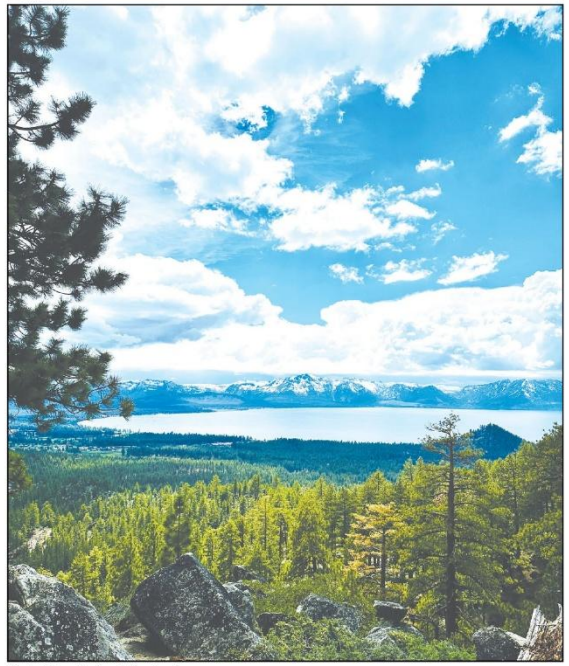

Photo: Tahoe Regional Planning Agency
New forest health threshold standards will address the growing risks posed by forests that are overly dense and uniform in age and size—conditions that increase vulnerability to wildfire, drought, and disease.

Tahoe In Depth
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Governing Board and Staffing Update

- New Governing Board member:
  Vinson Guthreau, Director, NV DCNR
- Recruiting for:
  - Deputy Dir./Chief Planning Officer
  - Permitting and Compliance
    - Inspector
    - Assistant Planner
    - Public Service Specialist
  - Six interns

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Fanny Bridge Ribbon Cutting & Block Party May 17

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What's Coming Up

- **April 30:** Best In Basin nominations due
- **May 4:** Meyers Watercraft Inspection Station Open House
- **May GB:** Reporting and Accountability Department Update
- **May 27-28:** GB meeting and strategic planning session
- **May 29:** Nevada Leg. Oversight Meeting