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STAFF REPORT

Date: July 21, 2021

To: TRPA Forest Health and Wildfire Committee

From: TRPA Staff

Subject: Briefing on Watershed Erosion Prediction Project (WEPP) and Forest Treatments Steep Slopes within the Tahoe Basin

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Summary and Staff Recommendation:

Agency partners and staff will provide an overview presentation on the Watershed Erosion Prediction Project (WEPP) modeling completed for the Lake Tahoe basin. This item is for informational purposes and no action is required.

Background:

The Lake Tahoe West Restoration Partnership, which includes TRPA staff and agency partners, is working together to plan forest health treatments and conduct an environmental review of approximately 60,000 acres across the west shore of Lake Tahoe. Last year, the LTW team engaged researchers and scientists to model and predict potential erosion impacts of forest treatments on Lake Tahoe watersheds basin wide. This model predicts what erosion may occur from different treatment types on various slopes.

The University of Idaho and US Forest Service- Pacific Southwest Research Station will present on their initial findings regarding various forest treatments (mechanical thinning, hand thinning, prescribed fire, etc.) on a variety of hillslopes and soil types across watersheds. Researchers used the Watershed Erosion Prediction Project (WEPP) model, which integrates hydrology, plant science, hydraulics, and erosion mechanics to predict erosion at the hillslope and watershed scale. These results and analysis will help inform the Lake Tahoe West environmental document and will aid in determining if an expansion of innovative ground-based mechanical treatments on slopes between 30%-50% should be considered within the basin.

Contact Information:

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