



**LAKE TAHOE**  
ENVIRONMENTAL  
IMPROVEMENT  
PROGRAM

MARCH  
2024

*The Enduring Power of the*  
**LAKE TAHOE  
RESTORATION ACT**

7 YEARS OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS + LOOKING FORWARD



# Tahoe POWER

LOOKING BACK AT 7 YEARS OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS

LOOKING FORWARD TO 10 YEARS OF ONGOING INVESTMENTS IN TAHOE'S FUTURE

**THE LAKE TAHOE RESTORATION ACT (LTRA) OF 2016 EXPIRES IN SEPTEMBER 2024.** Without the Act's extension, projects to thin overstocked forests, tackle aquatic invasive species, and protect the lake's world-famous clarity could slow or stop altogether. Lake Tahoe's spectacular outdoor recreation opportunities and thousands of local jobs depend on protection of the region's cherished natural resources. Failure to extend the Act could have far-reaching consequences for the environment, communities, and economy of the Lake Tahoe Region.

#### IF LTRA IS NOT EXTENDED:

A significant reduction in the amount of forest health and fuel reduction work would result at a time when wildfire is a critical risk.

The region would lose millions in state and local matching funds. Without this match, many projects will face delays or cancellation, jeopardizing critical environmental goals.

Local jurisdictions will struggle to meet stormwater pollution reduction targets set to improve Tahoe's famed clarity and maintain Tahoe as an Outstanding National Resource Water under the federal Clean Water Act.

#### PROTECTING A NATIONAL TREASURE

Lake Tahoe is one of the deepest and clearest lakes in the world and is considered a national treasure. This incredible natural resource is also under constant threat from climate change and increasing recreation pressures. The pristine alpine lake is not a national park, but rather the ancestral and current home of the Washoe Tribe of Nevada and California and a patchwork of public and private land ownership.

With nearly 80 percent of the Lake Tahoe watershed under federal ownership, Congressional support is essential to help its small mountain communities restore and protect the lake for the nation and the generations that follow.

In the 1990s, after witnessing a rapid decline in lake clarity and the surrounding environment, Lake Tahoe leaders came together to launch the Environmental Improvement Program, or EIP, with support from former U.S. Senators Dianne Feinstein (D-CA), Harry Reid (D-NV), Representatives John Dolittle (R-CA) and Jim Gibbons (R-NV), and the Clinton Administration. This bipartisan, collaborative approach to solve Lake Tahoe's most pressing challenges has become a national model for conservation. Congress has supported its role in the region through legislation authorizing funding for restoration activities, including the Lake Tahoe Restoration Act of 2000 and the Lake Tahoe Restoration Act of 2016.

**TODAY, THE EIP HAS GROWN INTO ONE OF THE MOST SUCCESSFUL LANDSCAPE RESTORATION INITIATIVES IN THE NATION.**

## THE FEDERAL *Commitment* TO LAKE TAHOE

The Lake Tahoe Restoration Act of 2016 authorized up to \$415 million over 7 years for the EIP. These federal funds serve as an anchor for the state, local, tribal, and private matching funds necessary to fund environmental restoration and infrastructure improvements.

The Act also includes non-funding provisions that are critical to accelerating the pace and scale of federal investments in the EIP.

#### LTRA APPROPRIATIONS



**THE INVESTMENT OF \$114 MILLION IN LTRA FUNDING SINCE 2016 HAS CATALYZED \$500 MILLION IN STATE, LOCAL, AND PRIVATE MATCHING FUNDS.**

Since 2016, \$114 million out of the \$415 million authorized has been appropriated for Lake Tahoe restoration.

That is **27 percent** of the total authorization.

The extension would allow time to fill the appropriations gap.

THE EIP SUPPORTS  
AN AVERAGE OF  
*1,700 jobs*  
A YEAR.  
EVERY \$1 MILLION  
IN EIP SPENDING GENERATES  
*\$1.6 million*  
IN ECONOMIC OUTPUT.



Photo courtesy: California Tahoe Conservancy





The Environmental Improvement Program (EIP) is implemented by more than 80 partners, with a track record of progress spanning 27 years.

## The Enduring Power of the Lake Tahoe Restoration Act

Go to [www.laketahoeinfo.org](http://www.laketahoeinfo.org) to see EIP project and funding details.

### Snapshot of ACCOMPLISHMENTS SINCE THE 2016 LTRA:

#### FOREST HEALTH

- 37 projects completed
- 21,000 acres treated

In 2021, the Caldor Fire burned through 10,000 acres of South Lake Tahoe forests, requiring the evacuation of more than 30,000 residents. It could have been much worse. Scientific research has found that forest health treatments in the area reduced the fire's 150-foot flames to 15 feet, making it easier for fire crews to control the blaze and avert catastrophic loss.

#### WATER INFRASTRUCTURE TO FIGHT FIRE

- 7 projects accelerated by LTRA
- more than 100 implemented by local water districts

LTRA has funded upgrades to the region's aging and undersized water infrastructure to help fire crews defend communities against catastrophic wildfires. This funding is matched 2 to 1 with local dollars to install fire hydrants, upsize waterlines, and add new water storage tanks. These upgrades allowed firefighters to prevent the Caldor Fire from destroying homes and devastating South Shore communities.

#### WATERSHED RESTORATION

- 17 projects completed
- 342 acres of wetland restored

Restoring the region's meadows, rivers, and streams is essential to protect wildlife habitat, provide healthy drinking water, sequester carbon emissions, and maintain Lake Tahoe's clarity. Since 2016, LTRA has allowed EIP partners to initiate some of the largest wetland restoration projects to date such as Taylor Tallac, Meeks Bay, and the Upper Truckee Marsh.

#### WATER QUALITY

- 39 projects completed
- more than 500,000 lbs of fine sediment and pollution prevented annually from flowing into Lake Tahoe

Local governments have prioritized stormwater treatment projects to capture and remove fine sediment and pollutants from roads and urban areas before they reach Lake Tahoe. Since 2016, lake clarity loss has stabilized but remains affected by extreme weather and lake warming.

#### AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES

- 15 projects completed
- 51,000 boats inspected
- 271 acres treated

LTRA is the cornerstone of funding Lake Tahoe's aquatic invasive species control program. This funding stops the spread of invasive weeds and other species such as the newly discovered New Zealand mudsnail. Partners have made substantial progress to address the Tahoe Keys, the largest weed infestation in the lake.

#### LAHONTAN CUTTHROAT TROUT

- Unfunded

Lahontan cutthroat trout is a threatened native species to Lake Tahoe and holds deep cultural significance to the Washoe Tribe of Nevada and California. Wildlife agencies are working with the Tribe to reintroduce the species to the region but the program remains unfunded under LTRA.

#### ACCOUNTABILITY

- Unfunded

The Tahoe Regional Planning Agency hosts the EIP Project Tracker online to maintain transparency of EIP expenditures and accomplishments. Funding through LTRA is necessary to ensure this platform stays live and dynamic to keep pace with the work occurring on the ground.



LTRA PRIORITIES AND APPROPRIATION NEEDS FOR FEDERAL FISCAL YEAR 2025

The Act requires that EIP partners maintain a priority list of projects and funding needs for LTRA program areas. Appropriation requests for federal fiscal year 2025 total \$72 million.



**FOREST HEALTH: \$21 MILLION**

Priority: Increase the pace and scale of forest fuels treatments to prevent catastrophic wildfire, remove dead and dying trees, and restore areas burned by the Caldor Fire. Federal funding is critical to reach the goal of treating 9,000 more acres by 2025.

**WATER INFRASTRUCTURE TO FIGHT FIRE: \$15 MILLION**

Priority: Accelerate projects to upgrade aging and undersized water systems to protect communities from wildfire.

**AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES: \$7 MILLION**

Priority: Continue the removal of aquatic invasive weeds and expand the prevention program to include permanent inspection stations and more non-motorized watercraft decontaminations. Without LTRA, the program is at risk of losing the progress made to date to combat invasive weeds and protect lake clarity.



**WATERSHED RESTORATION + WATER QUALITY: \$20 MILLION**

Priority: Complete large-scale projects underway to restore meadows and wetlands and protect biodiversity. Reduce stormwater pollution to reach the Lake Tahoe clarity goal of nearly 100 feet.



**LAHONTAN CUTTHROAT TROUT: \$7 MILLION**

Priority: Build a sustainable population of Lahontan cutthroat trout in the watershed to maintain the native ecosystem.

**ACCOUNTABILITY: \$2 MILLION**

Priority: Expand Lake Tahoe's online tracking system (laketahoeinfo.org) to ensure transparency and real-time reporting.

**TOTAL FY 2025 APPROPRIATIONS REQUEST: \$72 MILLION**



**CONTINUED FEDERAL INVESTMENT IN THE EIP IS CRITICAL TO BUILDING A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE FOR THE REGION.**

The Lake Tahoe Restoration Act is essential to ensuring Lake Tahoe remains a national treasure. Without it, crucial support is in jeopardy for conservation projects aimed at protecting Tahoe's famed clear waters, managing invasive species, preventing wildfires, and restoring wetlands. Without this work, Lake Tahoe's environment, communities, and economy will suffer.

**BIPARTISAN SUPPORT FOR EXTENDING THE LAKE TAHOE RESTORATION ACT**

In 2023, Senator Catherine Cortez Masto (D-NV), Senator Dianne Feinstein (D-CA), Senator Jacky Rosen (D-NV), and Senator Alex Padilla (D-CA) joined together to introduce bipartisan legislation to extend authorization of the Act.

Companion legislation on the House side is supported by Reps. Mark Amodei (R-NV), Kevin Kiley (R-CA), John Garamendi (D-CA), Dina Titus (D-NV), Susie Lee (D-NV), Steven Horsford (D-NV) and Rep. John Duarte (D-CA).





[www.laketahoeinfo.org](http://www.laketahoeinfo.org)

Published by the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency  
March 2024