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NEWS RELEASE

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LAKE TAHOE, NV/CA – An infusion of funding derived through the Southern Nevada Public Land Management Act (SNPLMA) will be used to step up efforts to reduce the threat of catastrophic wildfire at Lake Tahoe, a coalition of Tahoe Basin fire officials and government agencies said today.

Approximately \$4.1 million will be used to jump start the efforts of the Tahoe Fire & Fuels Team, which consists of representatives of Tahoe Basin fire agencies, California and Nevada forestry divisions and related state agencies, the Nevada Fire Safe Council, the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency, the USDA Forest Service, conservation districts from both states, and the Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board.

The group has been collaborating for several years on developing community wildfire protection plans for the Tahoe Basin, said Norb Szczurek, Incident Commander for the multi-agency fire and fuels team, and now has established a formal working relationship to implement the plans beginning this fire season. The group's goal is to accelerate basin-wide fuels reduction efforts by improving interagency coordination and by streamlining the permitting, planning and funding of vegetation management projects.

"Tahoe fire agencies are working together alongside TRPA and other regulatory agencies to speed up the permitting process to help reduce the threat of catastrophic wildfire," Szczurek said. "We've made great strides over the last several months and we're moving forward with this new funding full steam ahead," he said.

The SNPLMA funds for the Tahoe fire agencies will be coordinated and distributed by the Nevada Fire Safe Council, according to Andrew List, Executive Director of the Council. The \$4.1 million will help the Tahoe Fire and Fuels Team implement projects identified in the Tahoe Basin's 10-year fuels reduction plan beginning this spring even as the group finalizes a strategic plan for permitting and completing work in high priority areas.

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Tahoe Fuels Funding

The Tahoe Fire and Fuels Team recently participated in a three-day workshop in Murphys, California to chart a course for getting fuels projects on the ground this field season. The team also discussed future objectives such as identifying a secure, reliable funding source for forest fuels reduction projects for the long term, thereby increasing efficiency and effectiveness of vegetation management programs.

“This is what collaboration and cooperation is all about,” said John Singlaub, Executive Director of the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency. “Reducing the threat of catastrophic wildfire is the Tahoe Basin’s top concern and is TRPA’s number one priority. We’re committed to removing any obstacles that could prevent us from continuing to make real progress in this area and we’re pleased to be working so closely with fire professionals and the Nevada Fire Safe Council.”

SNPLMA was created to apply funds generated from the sale of surplus U.S. public lands in the Las Vegas Valley to various public and environmental causes. For the first time, funds designated for hazardous fuels reduction work may be used on federal as well as other lands in both California and Nevada. The forest fuels reduction money is part of a broader package for Nevada conservation and restoration initiatives to receive funds in the latest round of SNPLMA allocations.

U.S. Interior Secretary Dirk Kempthorne and Nevada Congressional representatives announced the distribution of funds today at a ceremony in Las Vegas.

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