



TAHOE AGENCIES APPLAUD RESTORATION BILL

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newsrelease

LAKE TAHOE CA/NV – Public agency partners whose collaborative work over the past 15 years has been a driving force for advancing Lake Tahoe restoration efforts applauded congressional leaders Tuesday for introducing a \$415 million reauthorization of the federal Lake Tahoe Restoration Act.

The legislation sponsored by Senator Harry Reid of Nevada, and cosponsored by Senator Dianne Feinstein of California, Senator John Ensign of Nevada, and Senator Barbara Boxer of California, spells out eight years of federal government investment in the newly updated Tahoe Environmental Improvement Program. The EIP outlines \$2.5 billion for improving water quality and restoring lake clarity, reducing the risk of catastrophic wildfire, and preventing the introduction of aquatic invasive species at the Lake, along with other environmental restoration efforts.

The EIP is to be funded jointly by federal, state, local, and private sector partners. Federal agencies named in the bill to implement the legislative direction include the US Forest Service, Environmental Protection Agency and the US Fish and Wildlife Service.

“Recommitting to restoration efforts at Lake Tahoe is critical to the continued improvement and preservation of this special place,” said Allen Biaggi, Tahoe Regional Planning Agency board chairman and Director of Nevada Dept. of Conservation & Natural Resources. “I am very proud that the State of Nevada is leading the way with its \$100 million commitment for the next ten years. I applaud the Congressional delegations of both states for moving forward with legislation to fulfill the federal government’s commitment to the program.”

The Lake Tahoe Restoration Act of 2009 includes authorization for \$238 million for priority projects including water quality improvements, \$136 million to help reduce wildfire threats and implement ecosystem restoration, \$20 million for aquatic invasive species prevention/management, and \$20 million to support the reintroduction of native Lahontan Cutthroat Trout. Since the mid-1990s, \$1.4 billion has been invested to improve environmental conditions at Lake Tahoe.

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"As managers of 75 percent of the land in the Lake Tahoe Basin, we are committed to continuing to reduce hazardous forest fuels, improve forest health and restore habitat, including stream environment zones, and we welcome any tools that will help us," said Terri Marceron, Lake Tahoe Basin Management Forest Supervisor. "The original Lake Tahoe Restoration Act played a critical role in helping the Forest Service and its partners make vital progress in restoring this beautiful lake and the lands around it."

The EIP, one of the most ambitious restoration efforts in the nation, addresses water quality, air quality, transportation, forest management, recreation and scenic beauty at Lake Tahoe by funding and implementing capital improvement projects targeting these key areas. While improving Lake Tahoe's legendary clarity is a top concern, the program takes a holistic watershed-based approach to delivering a range of environmentally beneficial projects. The EIP update was unanimously endorsed by the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency Governing Board in July.

"The Tahoe Basin Fire Chiefs are extremely supportive of this bill and are pleased to see such emphasis placed on reducing the risk of catastrophic wildfire at Lake Tahoe and better protecting life, property and the environment," said Duane Whitelaw, North Tahoe Fire Protection District Chief.

The updated EIP builds on more than a decade of successful restoration at Lake Tahoe credited with a host of environmental improvements such as flattening the decline of lake clarity loss.

"We have made a great deal of progress over the past decade but our work is not finished. Lake Tahoe faces new challenges," said Julie Regan, TRPA's Communications and Legislative Affairs Chief. "This gives all of us at Lake Tahoe the opportunity to focus on our areas of agreement for continued progress."

As envisioned, the EIP update targets a \$523 million contribution from the federal government, \$415 million from California, \$100 million from Nevada, \$107 million from local governments, and \$364 million from the private sector. Embedded in the private share are required erosion control improvements and fire defensible space work on residential and commercial parcels.

"This bill is essential to maintain our strong partnership with the federal agencies, and will help maintain California's continued investments in the Lake Tahoe Basin," said Patrick Wright, Executive Director of the California Tahoe Conservancy. The California legislature is now considering water bond legislation that would help provide the state's share of funding for the EIP.

The proposed legislation includes authorization for:

- \$72 million in stormwater management and watershed restoration projects.
- \$136 million for priority restoration projects.
- \$136 million for forest fuels reduction projects.
- \$20 million to prevent the introduction of new invasive species, ongoing watercraft inspections and removal of existing aquatic invasive species.
- \$20 million for reintroduction of the Lahontan Cutthroat Trout.
- \$30 million for scientific programs and research which will produce information on long-term trends in the Basin and inform the most cost-effective projects.
- Authorized funding for public outreach and education.

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