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NEWS RELEASE

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TAHOE LEADERS HAIL HOUSE INTRODUCTION OF RESTORATION ACT

Lake Tahoe, CA/NV—The reauthorization of the Lake Tahoe Restoration Act was introduced yesterday in the U.S. House of Representatives, following the Senate’s introduction of the bill in August.

The legislation, sponsored by Nevada Congressman Mark Amodei, co-sponsored by California Representative John Garamendi, and Nevada Representatives Joe Heck, Dina Titus, and Steven Horsford, would continue another 10 years of federal government investment in the Tahoe Environmental Improvement Program (EIP). The EIP targets improvements in water quality and lake clarity, reduction of catastrophic wildfire risk, and protections against aquatic invasive species, along with other environmental restoration efforts. The EIP is funded jointly by federal, state, local, and private sector partners.

“Lake Tahoe is a shared resource with a robust partnership for restoration with funding from all sectors ranging from the federal government to private property owners,” said Joanne S. Marchetta, Executive Director of the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency. “Science is showing that our restoration programs are making progress protecting Tahoe’s air, water, and forests and this legislation provides an important commitment to continuing the work.”

The legislation authorizes \$415 million over 10 years for the highest-priority restoration projects based on scientific data in areas such as stormwater management and watershed restoration, hazardous fuels reduction and forest management, invasive species prevention and control, and science and monitoring. Since the mid-1990s, \$1.7 billion in federal, state, local, and private dollars has been invested to improve environmental conditions at Lake Tahoe.

“The business community has long understood the interrelationship between the environment and the economy, as neither thrives without the care and nurturing of the other, and we stand ready to continue this ever important partnership in our quest to protect America’s treasured lake for future generations,” said Betty “B” Gorman, President and CEO of the Tahoe Chamber of Commerce.

The private sector commitment to Tahoe’s restoration is provided through environmental upgrades called for in the Lake Tahoe Regional Plan that include water quality erosion control

measures and fire safety defensible space on tens of thousands of private properties, as well as recreation improvements by resorts and private funders.

"Lake Tahoe has seen the measurable benefits of continued federal support due in large part to the original Lake Tahoe Restoration Act," said Tahoe Fund Board Chair Tim Cashman. "We are thankful to our Representatives in Washington D.C. for advancing this important new bill that will continue to protect this national treasure for generations to come."

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 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 second phase of the 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 received good news this year that restoration work funded by the first LTRA could be slowing Tahoe's clarity loss," said Jesse Patterson, deputy director of the League to Save Lake Tahoe. "But we still have a long way to go. A new infusion of funding is crucial to protecting Tahoe's natural assets for all to enjoy. We applaud the two states' Congressional leaders for uniting behind the lake for this important piece of legislation."

With increased threats from warming lake and air temperatures, scientists have sounded alerts about the lake's future. Catastrophic wildfire remains a top concern.

"Investments authorized by the Act represent the federal responsibility and share of the Lake Tahoe Multi-Jurisdictional Fuels Reduction and Wildfire Prevention Strategy," said Chief Benjamin P. Sharit of the Tahoe Douglas Fire Protection District based in Zephyr Cove, Nevada. "Federal funds are leveraged with state and local dollars to support our collaborative efforts to protect the environment, people, and visitors from the devastation of catastrophic wildfire," Sharit said.

The proposed authorization over 10 years would accomplish the following:

- Restore Lake Tahoe's water quality with stormwater management and watershed projects based on scientific data.
- Reduce the threat of wildfire in the Tahoe Basin by authorizing funds for hazardous fuels reduction projects along with water infrastructure improvements.
- Support reintroduction of the native, threatened Lahontan Cutthroat Trout.
- Protect Lake Tahoe from the threat of quagga mussels and other aquatic invasive species.
- Support scientific programs and research that will produce information on long-term trends in the Basin and inform the most cost-effective projects.
- Increase accountability and oversight of funds invested at Tahoe, and provide for public outreach and education.

- Allow for increased efficiency in the management of public land by authorizing land exchanges between the USFS and the California Tahoe Conservancy. Currently, the Forest Service manages more than 3,200 urban parcels spread throughout the Basin.

“The original Lake Tahoe Restoration Act has proven invaluable in helping the Forest Service and its federal, state, and local partners implement projects that restore and protect Lake Tahoe and its surrounding forests,” said Nancy Gibson, forest supervisor for the Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit. “We look forward to continuing to work with our partners to ensure that the great beauty and rich resources of Lake Tahoe outlast us all.”

Since 1997, EIP accomplishments include:

- Fuels reduction treatment of more than 54,000 acres
- Wildlife habitat improvements on more than 15,000 acres of land, including 1,509 acres of marsh and wetlands restoration
- Approximately 29,000 watercraft inspections with more than 10,000 watercraft decontaminations for aquatic invasive species
- Treatment of more than 24 acres of weeds and Asian clam infestations in Lake Tahoe
- Construction of 136 miles of bike and pedestrian routes

The Tahoe Regional Planning Agency leads the cooperative effort to preserve, restore, and enhance the unique natural and human environment of the Lake Tahoe Region, while improving local communities, and people’s interactions with our irreplaceable environment. For additional information, call Jeff Cowen at (775) 589-5278 or email him at jcowen@trpa.org.

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