



Date: April 8, 2014
To: The Honorable Dianne Feinstein
331 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510
From: The League to Save Lake Tahoe
Re: Lake Tahoe Restoration Act (H.R. 3390 and S. 1451)

Dear Senator Feinstein,

As the oldest and largest environmental group in the Lake Tahoe Basin, we write to express our enthusiastic support for the reauthorization of the Lake Tahoe Restoration Act (H.R. 3390 and S. 1451), which would provide \$415 million in funding for critical programs to protect Lake Tahoe's environment. We applaud your long-term dedication to this important issue, as well as the hard work of the California and Nevada congressional delegations.

The LTRA of 2000 proved immensely successful in funding effective restoration projects throughout the Tahoe Basin. Recent science shows the loss of lake clarity has slowed, which may be a sign that restoration is working to slow the influx of pollution to Lake Tahoe. However, the Lake remains threatened by urban stormwater runoff from aging urban infrastructure, invasive species and wildfire. Continued federal support for the Lake Tahoe Environmental Improvement Program (EIP) is vital to preserve this inspiring national treasure.

The League is proud to be a member of the Lake Tahoe Partnership, a group of diverse interests that includes business, government, science and environmental advocates who have come together to support the LTRA and who over the last 15 years have collaborated to implement the EIP, a nationwide model for environmental restoration. The EIP has helped to reduce hazardous fuels on 54,000 acres, restore 1,509 acres of Stream Environment Zones, acquire 3,100 acres of sensitive land, open 2,500 feet of shoreline for public access and build 134 miles of bike trails. Since 2009, the Aquatic Invasive Species Program has inspected approximately 29,000 watercraft and decontaminated 10,000 vessels, as well as treated 24.09 acres of weeds and Asian clam infestations in the lake bed of Lake Tahoe. We have seen encouraging progress on our environmental standards because of the EIP.

The EIP is truly a cooperative effort. The LTRA will supplement environmental funding commitments from the private sector, state, county and local jurisdictions. All of Lake Tahoe's communities are committed to its restoration and preservation.

We must build on this foundation and keep up the momentum of successful restoration. The League supports all the main funding areas of the LTRA: improving stormwater management, restoring watersheds, reducing wildfire threat, boat inspections to prevent aquatic invasive species and projects to remove existing invasives, introducing Lahontan cutthroat trout, and

supporting scientific research. We agree that these are the top priorities for protecting Lake Tahoe. Lake Tahoe is known throughout the world for its stunning clarity and inspiring views. However, it has lost 30 feet of deepwater clarity since the 1950s and areas along the shoreline are experiencing degradation, where pollution and invasive species are changing the ecosystem and clouding its nearshore waters.

Lake Tahoe's boat inspection program has been very successful at preventing new introductions of aquatic invasive species. However, the threat of infestations from some of the most destructive invasive species still exists, including quagga and zebra mussels that have destroyed lakes in the east and in Southern Nevada. Controlling invasive species will improve water clarity, prevent harmful impacts to native species and protect our economy. LTRA funding will be crucial for these programs.

In addition, the act provides vital funding to restore wetlands and stream zones, which serve as natural filtration systems for water entering Lake Tahoe. It will provide crucial funding for urban stormwater management, the largest source of pollution entering Lake Tahoe. It will help reduce the threat of wildfire, which can have devastating impacts to water quality. It will help fund scientific research that will help identify new threats, create cost-effective projects and help to monitor the success of policies and restoration projects.

Finally, by supporting this legislation, you support the restoration of a national treasure beloved by citizens from every state. Millions of visitors from around the country visit Lake Tahoe each year, whether they are snowbirds or love our warm summer beaches and mountain trails.

The League is a private, member-based organization with over 5,000 members known for our iconic bumper sticker proclaiming "Keep Tahoe Blue." These stickers can be spotted all over the country. We have members from all 50 states showing their support each year for the preservation of this inspiring lake. We also have a Facebook following of over 90,000 fans, which includes fans from all 50 states as well as 44 countries, who frequently express their love for Lake Tahoe and their enthusiasm for keeping it blue. The programs the LTRA would fund are critical to protecting not only Lake Tahoe's environment, but also an economy and communities that depend on a healthy lake for their livelihood.

We are deeply appreciative of your sponsorship of the Lake Tahoe Restoration Act, and thank you for your unparalleled continued support of Lake Tahoe.

Sincerely,

Bob Damaschino, Board President

Darcie Goodman Collins, PhD, Executive Director