

Lake Tahoe

CONTINUING THE COMMITMENT



ENVIRONMENTAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS & ACCOMPLISHMENTS | AUGUST 2011



Launched in 1997, the Lake Tahoe Environmental Improvement Program (EIP) is implemented through a partnership of federal, state, and local agencies, private interests, and the Washoe Tribe, and was created to protect the extraordinary natural and recreational resources of the Lake Tahoe Basin.

Everyone has a role to play in protecting the Tahoe Basin and collaborative partnerships are the key to this shared responsibility. This report shares highlights of the 366 completed and 166 ongoing EIP projects since 1997, while discussing future challenges and opportunities.

EIP ACCOUNTABILITY

Transparency and accountability are tenets of the EIP. Because coordinating the work of approximately 50 organizations is challenging and complex, EIP partners have made it a high priority to develop tools to improve transparency of funded investments.

EIP Implementation Framework – EIP Partners have developed a more efficient and effective framework to organize the partnership around the implementation of the updated EIP which helps ensure projects funded are the very highest priorities.

EIP Performance Measures Project – With funding from the Environmental Protection Agency, this project resulted in the development of a set of 33 performance measures that help demonstrate the return on funds invested. These measures enable project implementers to report EIP accomplishments clearly and consistently and were used to report EIP accomplishments for 2010.

EIP Tracking and Reporting Tool – This central web-based system was developed through funding provided by the US Army Corps of Engineers to track and report on EIP progress on an annual basis for agency partners.

These tools will allow the EIP to better track program and project implementation by showing how investments support the attainment of environmental threshold standards at Lake Tahoe.

Accountability

RESTORATION HIGHLIGHTS

Watersheds, Habitat, and Water Quality

Stormwater runoff from roads and dense urban areas, vehicle exhaust, altered wetlands and streams, and inadequate stormwater pollution control has significantly impacted Lake Tahoe's famous clarity and the health of its watersheds. Many of these impacts occurred decades ago. EIP watershed restoration, air pollution controls, and aggressively implementing proper stormwater controls and best management practices are essential to restore the Lake's clarity and the Basin's wetlands and wildlife.

Accomplishments:

- Treated stormwater runoff on 501 miles of roadways
- Managed the installation of BMPs for 13,444 private properties to reduce stormwater runoff
- Completed and planned 25 projects to help restore the Upper Truckee River watershed

Guiding Policy: Lake Tahoe Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL)



Water Clarity



Special Status Species

Recovery efforts are underway for two of Tahoe's iconic species: Lahontan cutthroat trout and the Tahoe Yellow Cress.

Accomplishments:

- Restored, reestablished, or protected Tahoe Yellow Cress habitat
- Reintroduced 33,500 Lahontan cutthroat trout into Fallen Leaf Lake in 2010 as part of the plan to bring this species back to Lake Tahoe

Guiding Policies: Conservation Strategy for Tahoe Yellow Cress; Lahontan Cutthroat Trout Recovery Plan

Special Status

Aquatic Invasive Species

Aquatic invasive species (AIS) pose a major threat to the environment and the economy in the Tahoe Basin. AIS projects focus on both preventing new introductions and controlling aquatic invasive species.

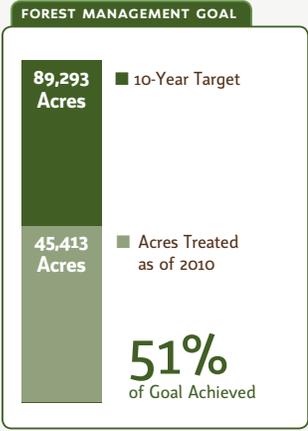
2010 Accomplishments:

- Conducted over 8,000 watercraft inspections for all invasive species
- Checked in 19,000 previously inspected watercraft
- Performed 1,200 watercraft decontaminations for all invasive species

Guiding Policy: AIS Management Plan

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Forest Management

After decades of fire suppression, the Tahoe Basin's overstocked forests are highly vulnerable to insect, disease and catastrophic wildfire, and lack the diversity in species and age structure to support a healthy forest ecosystem. Forest management projects are essential to the safety of Tahoe's communities and the health of its forests.

Accomplishments:

- Treated 45,413 acres to improve forest health and reduce wildfire risk
- Inspected approximately 4,000 private properties for defensible space in 2010

Guiding Policy: 10-Year Multi-Jurisdictional Fuel Reduction and Wildfire Prevention Strategy

Forest Fuels

Air Quality and Transportation

Visitors come to Lake Tahoe predominantly by automobile, which pollutes the air and impacts Lake clarity. EIP air quality and transportation projects efficiently connect Tahoe's communities and reduce automobile usage.

Accomplishments:

- Acquired or in the process of acquiring high-efficiency street sweepers to significantly reduce particulate matter by local jurisdictions and state transportation departments
- Continued to operate a seasonal transit service on the West Shore of Lake Tahoe to connect existing transit services on the North and South Shores
- Completed or improved 128 miles of bike and pedestrian trails as of 2010

Guiding Policy: Regional Transportation Plan

Bike Trails



Recreation and Scenic Resources

Public access and recreation are the foundation of the Basin's green economy. To support Lake Tahoe's increased focus on ecotourism, these projects will help provide high-quality recreation experiences.

Accomplishments:

- Completed the Tamarack Lodge at Heavenly Mountain Resort, which represents a high-quality outdoor recreation experience and an important public/private partnership
- Acquired 2,579 linear feet of shoreline for public access
- Constructed or rehabilitated 93 facilities as of 2010

Guiding Policy: Recreation Element of the TRPA Regional Plan

Recreation Scenic

Applied Science Program

Activities carried out under the EIP Science Program serve to inform the management, conservation, and restoration of the environment and natural resources, and include three core components: monitoring, applied research, and data application.

Accomplishments:

- Conducted cutting-edge research on Asian clam management and eradication
- Initiation of a TMDL management system to support efforts to restore Lake Tahoe

Guiding Policy: An Integrated Science Plan for the Lake Tahoe Basin: Conceptual framework and research strategies.

Science



CREATING A SUSTAINABLE TAHOE



In the 1960s, visionary leaders successfully prevented Lake Tahoe from becoming a city the size of San Francisco. Even so, before conservation standards were the norm at Tahoe, uncontrolled development took a toll on the area's fragile ecosystem and this land-use legacy plagues the Tahoe Basin today.

Stormwater runoff from the aging urban landscape is causing the loss of the Lake's world-famous clarity. Water quality challenges, combined with threats from aquatic invasive species and catastrophic wildfire, continue to be high priorities for the Lake Tahoe Environmental Improvement Program (EIP). EIP partner organizations have invested \$1.5 billion into the restoration of the Lake's ecosystem since 1997, and while progress has been extensive, challenges lie ahead.

While Lake Tahoe's unparalleled beauty continues to be an aesthetic and spiritual jewel, the reality is the Lake supports a \$5 billion economy for the two states that share its border. That economy, like others throughout the United States, is in relative crisis.

The Tahoe Basin's economic struggle began more than a decade ago when markets shifted. The local gaming industry—a significant economic driver—has declined substantially. The current national economic downturn has exacerbated Tahoe's declining economy to the point where unemployment levels run up to 16 percent.

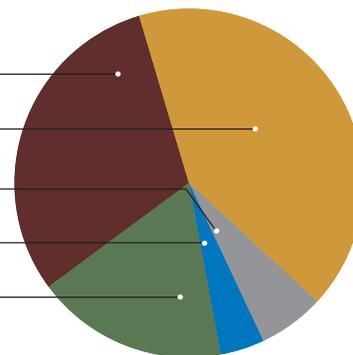
The good news is that Tahoe's problems can be solved, and we have a growing collective vision of actions that will set solutions in motion. Four core areas are aligned to provide a once-in-a-generation opportunity to transform Tahoe's dated land-use pattern and aging infrastructure into a world-class sustainable community.

- Water quality science shows that fine sediment particles in stormwater runoff from developed areas are largely responsible for Tahoe's declining clarity;
- Aging infrastructure can be environmentally redeveloped;
- Residents and visitors have expressed their vision for more walkable, safe, transit-friendly communities;
- Tahoe is transitioning to an economy based on eco and geotourism, green environmental innovation, and health and wellness services, as identified in the Lake Tahoe Basin Prosperity Plan.

Public-private partnerships are a crucial component of Tahoe's path to prosperity. The EIP has long embraced this model and must continue doing so if we are to address our environmental, economic, and community-wide challenges. With the momentum created by the understanding of the root causes of Tahoe's environmental degradation, a sustainable future is in sight.

EIP CAPITAL INVESTMENT IN PROJECTS BY FUNDING SECTOR: 1997-2010

● Federal:	\$490 million (32%)
● State of CA:	\$621 million (40%)
● State of NV:	\$93 million (6%)
● Local:	\$65 million (4%)
● Private:	\$286 million (18%)
TOTAL:	\$1.55 billion*



* Data is through December 31, 2010 (federal FYs 09 & 10 and state FY 10 and Q1 & Q2 of FY11)

Funds reflected in this graph represent projects completed or in progress.



Partnerships make the EIP possible. From the federal government to the states of California and Nevada, to local governments and the private sector, it takes all of us doing our part to conserve Lake Tahoe.



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