



**LAKE TAHOE**  
ENVIRONMENTAL  
IMPROVEMENT  
PROGRAM

AUGUST  
2024

*The Enduring Power of the*  
**LAKE TAHOE  
RESTORATION ACT**

7 YEARS OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS + LOOKING FORWARD

# Tahoe

## LOOKING BACK AT 7 YEARS OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS

# POWER

## LOOKING FORWARD TO 10 YEARS OF ONGOING INVESTMENTS IN TAHOE'S FUTURE

**THE LAKE TAHOE RESTORATION ACT (LTRA) OF 2016 EXPIRES IN SEPTEMBER 2024.** Without the Act's extension, projects to thin overstocked forests, tackle aquatic invasive species, and protect the lake's world-famous clarity could slow or stop altogether. Lake Tahoe's spectacular outdoor recreation opportunities and thousands of local jobs depend on protection of the region's cherished natural resources. Failure to extend the Act could have far-reaching consequences for the environment, communities, and economy of the Lake Tahoe Region.

### IF LTRA IS NOT EXTENDED:

A significant reduction in the amount of forest health and fuel reduction work would result at a time when wildfire is a critical risk.

The region would lose millions in state and local matching funds. Without this match, many projects will face delays or cancellation, jeopardizing critical environmental goals.

Local jurisdictions will struggle to meet stormwater pollution reduction targets set to improve Tahoe's famed clarity and maintain Tahoe as an Outstanding National Resource Water under the federal Clean Water Act.

### PROTECTING A NATIONAL TREASURE

Lake Tahoe is one of the deepest and clearest lakes in the world and is considered a national treasure. This incredible natural resource is also under constant threat from climate change and increasing recreation pressures. The pristine alpine lake is not a national park, but rather the ancestral and current home of the Washoe Tribe of Nevada and California and a patchwork of public and private land ownership.

With nearly 80 percent of the Lake Tahoe watershed under federal ownership, Congressional support is essential to help its small mountain communities restore and protect the lake for the nation and the generations that follow.

In the 1990s, after witnessing a rapid decline in lake clarity and the surrounding environment, Lake Tahoe leaders came together to launch the Environmental Improvement Program, or EIP, with support from former U.S. Senators Dianne Feinstein (D-CA), Harry Reid (D-NV), Representatives John Dolittle (R-CA) and Jim Gibbons (R-NV), and the Clinton Administration. This bipartisan, collaborative approach to solve Lake Tahoe's most pressing challenges has become a national model for conservation. Congress has supported its role in the region through legislation authorizing funding for restoration activities, including the Lake Tahoe Restoration Act of 2000 and the Lake Tahoe Restoration Act of 2016.

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**TODAY, THE EIP HAS GROWN INTO ONE OF THE MOST SUCCESSFUL LANDSCAPE RESTORATION INITIATIVES IN THE NATION.**

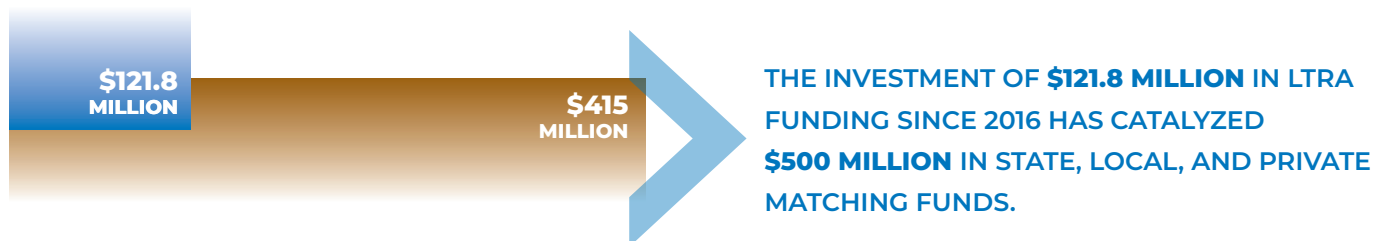


# THE FEDERAL *Commitment* TO LAKE TAHOE

The Lake Tahoe Restoration Act of 2016 authorized up to \$415 million over 7 years for the EIP. These federal funds serve as an anchor for the state, local, tribal, and private matching funds necessary to fund environmental restoration and infrastructure improvements.

The Act also includes non-funding provisions that are critical to accelerating the pace and scale of federal investments in the EIP.

## LTRA APPROPRIATIONS



Since 2016, **\$121.8 million** out of the \$415 million authorized has been appropriated for Lake Tahoe restoration.

That is **29 percent** of the total authorization.

The extension would allow time to fill the appropriations gap.

THE EIP SUPPORTS  
AN AVERAGE OF  
*1,700 jobs*  
A YEAR.  
EVERY \$1 MILLION  
IN EIP SPENDING GENERATES  
*\$1.6 million*  
IN ECONOMIC OUTPUT.



Photo courtesy: California Tahoe Conservancy



**LAKE TAHOE**  
ENVIRONMENTAL  
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## The Enduring Power of the Lake Tahoe Restoration Act

### *Snapshot of* **ACCOMPLISHMENTS** **SINCE THE 2016 LTRA:**

#### **FOREST HEALTH**

- **37** projects completed
- **21,000** acres treated

In 2021, the Caldor Fire burned through 10,000 acres of South Lake Tahoe forests, requiring the evacuation of more than 30,000 residents. It could have been much worse. Scientific research has found that forest health treatments in the area reduced the fire's 150-foot flames to 15 feet, making it easier for fire crews to control the blaze and avert catastrophic loss.

#### **WATER INFRASTRUCTURE TO FIGHT FIRE**

- **7** projects accelerated by LTRA
- **more than 100** implemented by local water districts

LTRA has funded upgrades to the region's aging and under-sized water infrastructure to help fire crews defend communities against catastrophic wildfires. This funding is matched 2 to 1 with local dollars to install fire hydrants, upsize waterlines, and add new water storage tanks. These upgrades allowed firefighters to prevent the Caldor Fire from destroying homes and devastating South Shore communities.

#### **WATERSHED RESTORATION**

- **17** projects completed
- **342** acres of wetland restored

Restoring the region's meadows, rivers, and streams is essential to protect wildlife habitat, provide healthy drinking water, sequester carbon emissions, and maintain Lake Tahoe's clarity. Since 2016, LTRA has allowed EIP partners to initiate some of the largest wetland restoration projects to date such as Taylor Tallac, Meeks Bay, and the Upper Truckee Marsh.





The Environmental Improvement Program (EIP) is implemented by more than 80 partners, with a track record of progress spanning 27 years.

Go to [www.laketahoeinfo.org](http://www.laketahoeinfo.org) to see EIP project and funding details.

#### **WATER QUALITY**

- 39 projects completed
- more than 500,000 lbs of fine sediment and pollution prevented annually from flowing into Lake Tahoe

Local governments have prioritized stormwater treatment projects to capture and remove fine sediment and pollutants from roads and urban areas before they reach Lake Tahoe. Since 2016, lake clarity loss has stabilized but remains affected by extreme weather and lake warming.

#### **AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES**

- 15 projects completed
- 51,000 boats inspected
- 271 acres treated

LTRA is the cornerstone of funding Lake Tahoe's aquatic invasive species control program. This funding stops the spread of invasive weeds and other species such as the newly discovered New Zealand mudsnail. Partners have made substantial progress to address the Tahoe Keys, the largest weed infestation in the lake.

#### **LAHONTAN CUTTHROAT TROUT**

- Unfunded

Lahontan cutthroat trout is a threatened native species to Lake Tahoe and holds deep cultural significance to the Washoe Tribe of Nevada and California. Wildlife agencies are working with the Tribe to reintroduce the species to the region but the program remains unfunded under LTRA.

#### **ACCOUNTABILITY**

- Unfunded

The Tahoe Regional Planning Agency hosts the EIP Project Tracker online to maintain transparency of EIP expenditures and accomplishments. Funding through LTRA is necessary to ensure this platform stays live and dynamic to keep pace with the work occurring on the ground.

# LTRA PRIORITIES AND APPROPRIATION NEEDS FOR FEDERAL FISCAL YEAR 2025

The Act requires that EIP partners maintain a priority list of projects and funding needs for LTRA program areas. Appropriation requests for federal fiscal year 2025 total \$72 million.



## **FOREST HEALTH: \$21 MILLION**

Priority: Increase the pace and scale of forest fuels treatments to prevent catastrophic wildfire, remove dead and dying trees, and restore areas burned by the Caldor Fire. Federal funding is critical to reach the goal of treating 9,000 more acres by 2025.

## **WATER INFRASTRUCTURE TO FIGHT FIRE: \$15 MILLION**

Priority: Accelerate projects to upgrade aging and undersized water systems to protect communities from wildfire.

## **AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES: \$7 MILLION**

Priority: Continue the removal of aquatic invasive weeds and expand the prevention program to include permanent inspection stations and more non-motorized watercraft decontaminations. Without LTRA, the program is at risk of losing the progress made to date to combat invasive weeds and protect lake clarity.



## **WATERSHED RESTORATION + WATER QUALITY: \$20 MILLION**

Priority: Complete large-scale projects underway to restore meadows and wetlands and protect biodiversity. Reduce stormwater pollution to reach the Lake Tahoe clarity goal of nearly 100 feet.



## **LAHONTAN CUTTHROAT TROUT: \$7 MILLION**

Priority: Build a sustainable population of Lahontan cutthroat trout in the watershed to maintain the native ecosystem.

## **ACCOUNTABILITY: \$2 MILLION**

Priority: Expand Lake Tahoe's online tracking system ([laketahoeinfo.org](http://laketahoeinfo.org)) to ensure transparency and real-time reporting.

**TOTAL FY 2025 APPROPRIATIONS REQUEST: \$72 MILLION**





# Future OF THE REGION



## CONTINUED FEDERAL INVESTMENT IN THE EIP IS CRITICAL TO BUILDING A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE FOR THE REGION.

The Lake Tahoe Restoration Act is essential to ensuring Lake Tahoe remains a national treasure. Without it, crucial support is in jeopardy for conservation projects aimed at protecting Tahoe's famed clear waters, managing invasive species, preventing wildfires, and restoring wetlands. Without this work, Lake Tahoe's environment, communities, and economy will suffer.

## BIPARTISAN SUPPORT FOR EXTENDING THE LAKE TAHOE RESTORATION ACT

In 2023, Senator Catherine Cortez Masto (D-NV), Senator Jacky Rosen (D-NV), Senator Alex Padilla (D-CA), and Senator Laphonza Butler (D-CA) joined together to introduce bipartisan legislation to extend authorization of the Act. The bill was introduced in March 2023 with the late Senator Dianne Feinstein (D-CA) as an original cosponsor.

Companion legislation on the House side is supported by Reps. Mark Amodei (R-NV), Kevin Kiley (R-CA), John Garamendi (D-CA), Dina Titus (D-NV), Susie Lee (D-NV), Steven Horsford (D-NV), and John Duarte (R-CA).



[www.laketahoeinfo.org](http://www.laketahoeinfo.org)

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*Lake Tahoe*

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

2023-24 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Credit: Twilight & Rust



# PROTECTING A NATIONAL TREASURE



*Lake Tahoe* is one of the deepest and clearest lakes in the world and is considered a national treasure. This incredible natural resource is under constant threat from climate change and increasing recreation pressures. The pristine alpine lake is the ancestral and current home of the Washoe Tribe of Nevada and California and a patchwork of public and private land ownership.

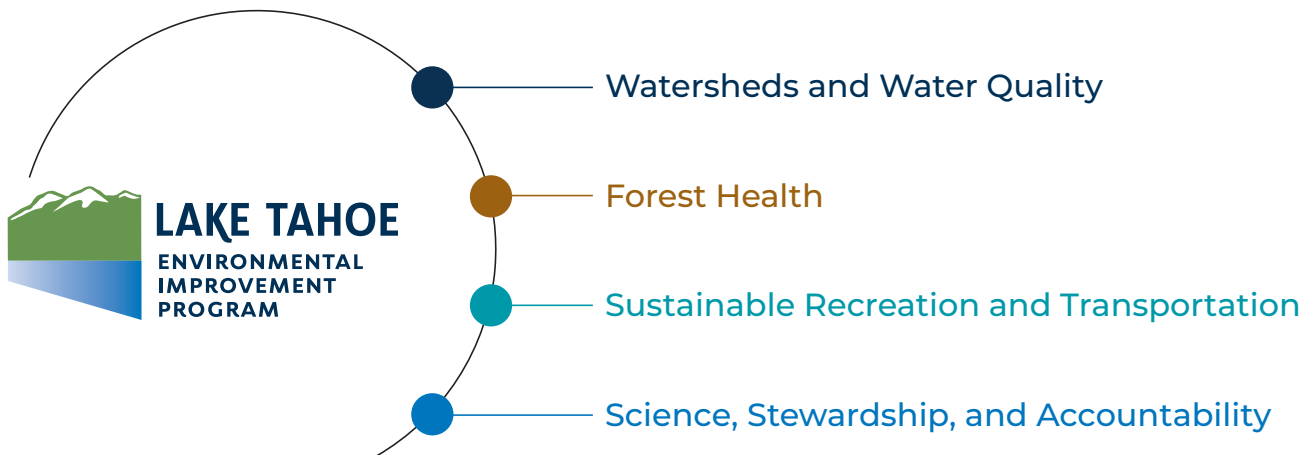
In the 1990s, after witnessing a rapid decline in lake clarity and the surrounding environment, Lake Tahoe leaders came together to launch the Environmental Improvement Program, or EIP. To date, this collaboration of more than 80 public and private organizations has completed more than 800 projects to restore and enhance Lake Tahoe and its communities.

*Today, the EIP has grown into one of the most successful landscape restoration initiatives in the nation.*



## EIP OVERVIEW

The Environmental Improvement Program includes four focus areas to improve lake clarity and achieve the region's environmental goals.

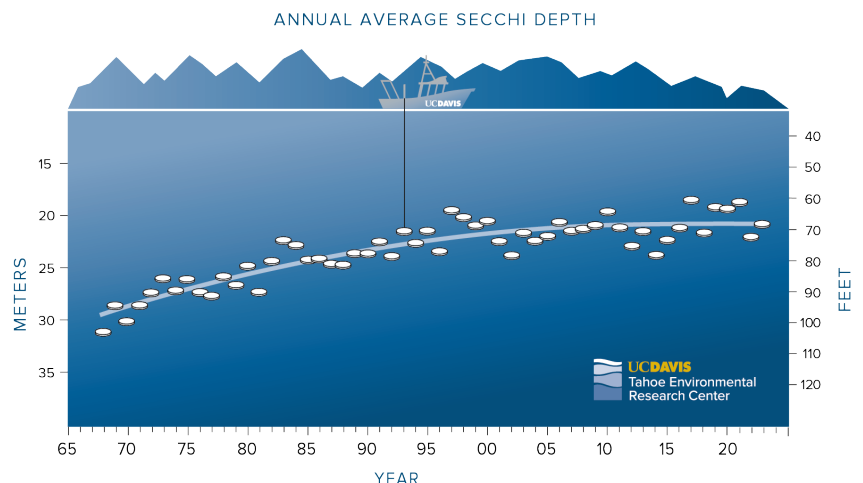


A central goal of the  
EIP is to restore Lake  
Tahoe's famed clarity to  
its historic level of nearly

*100 feet*

Partners have implemented hundreds of projects around the lake to reduce stormwater pollution from roads and urbanized areas, restore wetlands, improve forest health, and upgrade transportation and recreation infrastructure. As a result, scientists have reported a stabilization in the lake's clarity.

The 2023 average lake clarity was 68.2 feet, continuing the years-long trend of improving during the winter and deteriorating during the summer. Research institutions are guiding our scientific understanding of the dynamics of lake clarity, while EIP partners continue to prioritize water quality projects and meet pollutant load reduction targets.



## WATERSHEDS AND WATER QUALITY

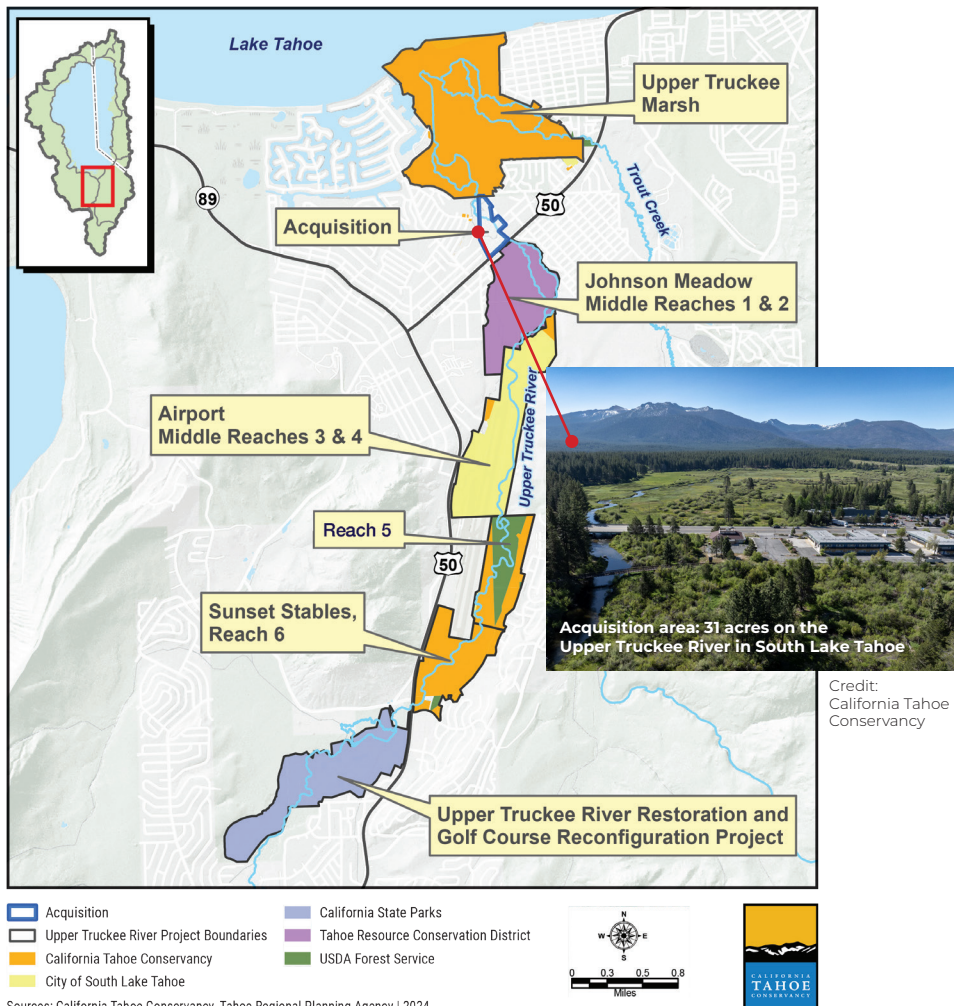
Large-scale ecosystem restoration, aquatic invasive species prevention and control, and stormwater treatment projects play a critical role in improving Tahoe's resilience to climate change. By restoring ecosystem health and reducing the flow of pollutants and fine sediment from urban areas, EIP partners are regaining the lake's lost clarity and improving wildlife habitat and biodiversity.

### THE FINAL PIECE

Fulfilling an environmental goal that was decades in the making, the California Tahoe Conservancy teamed up with many EIP partners to acquire 31 acres on the Upper Truckee River in South Lake Tahoe. The Conservancy will remove the vacant Motel 6 and restaurant buildings and restore the site to its former wetland habitat.

"This environmental acquisition may be the most important in a generation to protect Lake Tahoe," said California Natural Resources Secretary Wade Crowfoot. "By reconnecting the most important wetland that filters water flowing into the lake, this investment protects the lake's precious water quality and also provides an important corridor for local wildlife."

With this purchase, 96 percent of the lower section of the Upper Truckee River is now in public ownership. The river drains a third of the Lake Tahoe Basin's land area and has been the largest source of clarity-harming sediment. The land purchase protects critical wetland and meadow habitat while presenting opportunities to improve climate resilience, public access, and the river corridor.



Credit: Placer County

### LOWER SECLINE WATER QUALITY IMPROVEMENT PROJECT

Placer County constructed the Lower Secline Water Quality Improvement Project in a neighborhood directly adjacent to Lake Tahoe. As part of the project, eroding parking areas and unpaved roads were improved to reduce the amount of sediment reaching the lake.



Credit: M. Rydel-Fortner, Marine Taxonomic Services

### AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES CONTROL

In 2023, divers treated over 100 acres of aquatic invasive weeds in Lake Tahoe including key sites like Emerald Bay and the Tahoe Keys. Removing invasive weeds is critical to protect water quality and maintain a healthy ecosystem. The Tahoe Regional Planning Agency is the federally-designated lead on the Aquatic Invasive Species Program in partnership with nearly 40 organizations.



## FOREST HEALTH

The Tahoe Fire and Fuels Team, comprised of federal, tribal, state, and local organizations, prepares and protects communities from damaging wildfires and improves forest health. They accomplish this by conducting fuels reduction projects and improving water infrastructure for fire suppression. They also work with local communities to implement defensible space and streamline tree removal permitting.



### **PRESCRIBED UNDERSTORY BURNING IN BURTON CREEK STATE PARK**

California State Parks conducted prescribed fire understory burning on 60 acres in Burton Creek State Park to improve forest health. Managing and maintaining this forest landscape will provide additional protection to adjacent homes and structures in the event of a wildfire.

Credit: Rich Adams, California State Parks



Credit: Bloomberg

### **TAHOE FOREST PRODUCTS SAWMILL**

This new sawmill in Carson City, Nevada is the first of its size in the Tahoe Region in over a century. The Tahoe Fund worked with Tahoe Forest Products and Washoe Development Corporation, an affiliate of the Washoe Tribe of Nevada and California, to bring the new sawmill to life on Washoe Trust Land. The new facility will make it easier to remove excess fuel from the Tahoe Basin and bolster the restoration economy.



Credit: Nanette Hansel, Ascent Environmental

### **ENERGY RESILIENCE CORRIDORS**

Liberty Utilities and NV Energy worked in partnership with the USDA Forest Service and local fire districts to thin 383 acres of forest along powerlines. These projects go beyond defensible space around utility infrastructure by thinning a much wider area to improve forest health.



Credit: North Tahoe Public Utility District

### **WATER INFRASTRUCTURE FOR FIRE SUPPRESSION**

The North Tahoe Public Utility District installed over 7,500 feet of new 8-inch watermain and 12 new fire hydrants in Kings Beach. This project improves water delivery and provides adequate supply for fire suppression to residential neighborhoods along the North Shore of Lake Tahoe.



## SUSTAINABLE RECREATION AND TRANSPORTATION

Lake Tahoe's world-class outdoor recreation opportunities connect people with nature and drive Lake Tahoe's \$5 billion annual economy. Continued investment in the transportation system is needed to create a fully connected multi-modal transportation system that will protect the lake, provide safe recreation access, and reduce reliance on the personal automobile.

### TAKING CARE OF TAHOE

EIP partners collaborated to create the award-winning Lake Tahoe Destination Stewardship Plan. The plan established a shared vision for the region's outdoor recreation and tourism and launched a stewardship council to ensure outdoor recreation and tourism enhances community well-being, supports local businesses and workers, and protects the lake.



## Connecting Tahoe

TRANSIT, TRAILS, TECHNOLOGY, TOWNS

Tahoe's transportation system is a top priority for investment to protect Lake Tahoe and better serve communities.



### SAN BERNADINO CLASS 1 BIKE PATH

El Dorado County constructed a multi-use path over the Upper Truckee River to provide a critical link between the North Upper Truckee neighborhood and the Meyers community. The pathway and bridge provide safe access to Washoe Meadows State Park, Tahoe Paradise Park, and the Meyers Elementary School.



### EAST SHORE CORRIDOR IMPROVEMENTS

Partners are working together to expand the East Shore Trail beyond Sand Harbor to provide more sustainable recreation access along State Route 28. The \$24 million federal RAISE grant will fund the next section of this popular trail. The Corridor Plan aims to relocate dangerous on-highway shoulder parking to safer off-highway locations such as the newly constructed Chimney Beach parking lot. Other improvements will include trash receptacles, restrooms, signage, transit, and pedestrian crossings.



## SCIENCE, STEWARDSHIP, AND ACCOUNTABILITY

The bi-state Tahoe Science Advisory Council provides an important venue for scientists and resource managers to work together and use data to guide management decisions. EIP partners are also expanding science and nature-based stewardship programs to engage residents and visitors in protecting the environment. Pairing science and stewardship together has resulted in action on the ground to address the region's emerging threats.

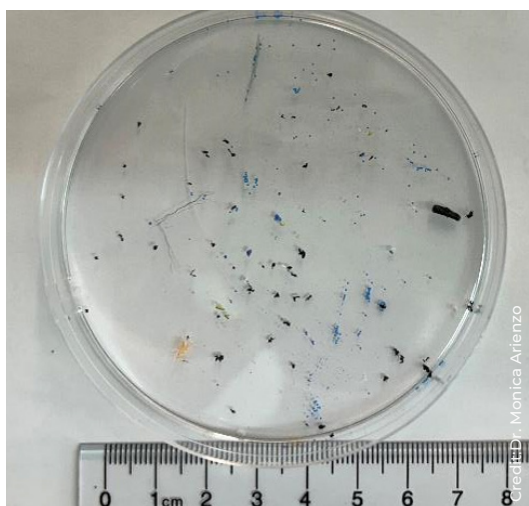
**79%**

REDUCTION IN  
POUNDS OF TRASH  
SINCE LAST 5th OF  
JULY CLEANUP



### CULTIVATING ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDS

The League to Save Lake Tahoe's July 5th Beach Cleanup has engaged volunteers in trash pickup for the past 11 years. In 2024, a record 789 volunteers collected only a fraction of the trash gathered the year prior, thanks to better stewardship and the new Tahoe Blue Beaches program. The League's community engagement programs educate and inspire thousands of volunteers every year with events such as Forest Stewardship Days, which is hosted alongside the Washoe Tribe (pictured at left).



### MICROPLASTICS

Driven by the growing awareness of global microplastic pollution, EIP partners and the Tahoe Science Advisory Council established a work group to understand how microplastics are affecting Lake Tahoe, and what can be done. By summarizing the state of knowledge and identifying plastic pollution sources, the group is setting the foundation for both further scientific inquiry and management response.



### NEW ZEALAND MUDSNAIL RESPONSE

The strength of the EIP to quickly translate science to management actions proved invaluable when New Zealand mudsnails were discovered in the lake in September. The Tahoe Science Advisory Council quickly convened a group of regional and local experts to guide management actions. In response, the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency and Tahoe Resource Conservation District deployed lake-wide surveys and strengthened programs to inspect non-motorized watercraft such as kayaks and paddleboards.



*Lake Tahoe's Environmental Improvement Program (EIP) is a shared responsibility with investment from the federal, state, local, tribal, and private sectors. The Lake Tahoe Restoration Act is a critical federal funding authorization that expires in September 2024. Extending the Act and continuing the investment in the EIP is essential to ensuring Lake Tahoe remains a national treasure.*

[restoretahoe.org](https://restoretahoe.org)



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*In 1969, the U.S. Congress ratified the bi-state compact between the states of Nevada and California to create the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency (TRPA). TRPA leads the collaborative effort to protect and restore Lake Tahoe, and proudly leads the Environmental Improvement Program collaboration of more than 80 public and private organizations.*