

California creates another watchdog group for Tahoe

By Kathryn Reed



Another layer of government is encapsulating Lake Tahoe.

In March, members of the California legislative Joint Committee for the Protection of Lake Tahoe were named. The bill was passed last year to create the committee.

Lake Tahoe's two representatives, Assemblyman Ted Gaines and state Sen. Dave Cox, both Republicans from Roseville, are on the panel. Joining them are the man who wanted to create the committee, Sen. Darrell Steinberg, D-Sacramento; along with Sen. Fran Pavley, D-Santa Monica; Assemblywoman Fiona Ma, D-San Francisco; Assemblyman Ira Ruskin, D-Palo Alto; and Assemblywoman Nancy Skinner, D-Oakland.

Members have yet to meet and there is no date for a meeting.

Steinberg chairs the panel.

"The Lake Tahoe region is a vulnerable ecosystem that we must protect while also repairing prior environmental damage," Steinberg said in a press release last year after the legislation was approved. "This committee is essential in this process as it oversees capitol (cq) investments in conservation and restoration measures."

His contention is the state committee will help implement the Environmental Improvement Program that has been operating

without him and the others for more than 10 years.

When Gaines was in South Lake Tahoe last week he chatted with *Lake Tahoe News* about the latest layer of government. He isn't sure what all the committee will do, but he wanted to be on the panel to ensure he had input into anything that might affect his constituents.

Gaines said the language is vague in the statute that was passed by the Legislature.

If nothing else, Gaines hopes the committee could help stimulate the economy in the region, while also helping ensure lake clarity remains a priority.

Because the seven members haven't met, it's unknown what their true collective intentions will be or if the the team was merely created for taxpayers to fund a trip to Tahoe for people who don't represent the area.