

Opinion: Thinning project looks more like logging operation

Publisher's note: This letter was read to the California Tahoe Conservancy board on July 15 by the writer. Lake Tahoe News asked for a copy from the writer, which arrived this week and is printed below.

Dear Tahoe Conservancy,

My name is Amber. I was born and raised in South Lake Tahoe and am currently a full-time resident. I am writing because I am very, very concerned about the integrity and professionalism of the Meyers fire protection district.

I have been witnessing it firsthand in the Apache neighborhood. I see harvesting of very big healthy trees going on. Little spindly unhealthy trees are being left, along with big road-like cuts causing erosion through places our wildlife once found refuge. Now it is covered with huge piles of slash, which is more of a fire danger. Some of the trees are left with unhealthy scars and breakage.

My understanding of fire thinning is the cutting of small, dead, or diseased trees, removing the dead underbranches, and the removal of dried underbrush, pine needles and pinecones. This is not what is going on. Honestly, I smell greed as I see logging trucks pulling out with big healthy trees. I am very worried corruption is tainting the need and importance of the Conservancy and Forest Service.

Regulation and respect have gone out the window. I have heard sawing for long periods of time with huge crashes indicating large trees, followed by hooting and hollering by the men. This is very offensive and very, very unprofessional. This

morning [July 15] in my neighbor's yard – who is currently out of town – there is a huge long stump left along with a big mess. This tree was on private property and of no apparent fire danger. This butchering and unskilled cutting can lead to more diseased trees in the future when insects begin to make these unsightly stumps their home, creating an even bigger fire danger.

I have spoken with many of the neighbors and they, too, are very concerned. We feel helpless and this is why we are turning to you for help. There are not very many old trees left in the Tahoe basin. We lost so many during the fire ... it is a deep shame to now cut so many more in the disguise of fire fear when it's obvious someone is benefitting from the lumber.

Tahoe is a place where residents and tourists from all over the world come to enjoy the serenity and purity of our forests and lakes. Please do something to help protect our old trees before it's too late. Thinning is not harvesting big trees for profit. Please send out trained foresters to assess and regulate the situation, ones who are respectful of the health of the forest, wildlife, and residents. Not these untrained disrespectful loggers. There is terrible harm being done to our forest. We again are turning to you for help as people of Tahoe, along with the trees, and wildlife who can't speak out or protect themselves.

Thank you for your time and attention.

Sincerely,

Amber LaPointe, Meyers