

Opinion: Is era of cooperation over at Lake Tahoe?

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The upcoming annual Lake Tahoe Summit, to be hosted this year by U.S. Sen. Dianne Feinstein of California on Aug. 16, promises to be a doozy. The challenges to the lake's legendary clarity and to cooperation between California and Nevada are greater than ever.

- **Water quality.** Lake Tahoe remains one of the clearest large lakes in the world. But its famed clarity has been declining since the post-World War II building boom. Homes, casinos and golf courses brought sedimentation, pollution, and algae growth. University of California, Davis, scientists measured the lake's clarity at 102 feet in 1968, reaching a low of 64 feet in 1997. In 2009, it was 68 feet. Aggressive measures to attack pollution and sedimentation remain necessary.

- **Governance.** In a serious threat to two-state cooperation, the Nevada Legislature in June passed and the governor signed a bill to withdraw from the two-state compact governing Lake Tahoe by 2015 – unless California and the U.S. Congress adopt amendments to the compact to give Nevada greater voting power. Currently, the two states have equal representation, with seven members each on the governing board.

To approve changes to the regional plan, currently a majority of members (four) from each state must vote "aye," a fair process. Nevada wants to change that – to nine of 14 votes without regard to state. It also wants to change the voting requirements for particular projects.

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