

Post-Angora permitting rules violate state law

By Matt Weiser, Sacramento Bee

Regulatory reform aimed at reducing fire risk at Lake Tahoe, adopted in the wake of the 2007 Angora fire, has been found in violation of state law.

The reform measure was adopted amid intense political pressure after the fire. It sought to streamline rules governing logging projects to thin overgrown forests at the lake.



Dead trees remain in the Angora Creek area; their future up in the air.
Photo/LTN file

But on June 30, El Dorado Superior Court Judge Steven Bailey ruled in favor of conservation groups, which argued the reforms violated key environmental laws, potentially risking Tahoe's fabled clarity.

"We're not attacking the thinning projects," said Craig Thomas, executive director of Sierra Forest Legacy, which joined the Sierra Club in the lawsuit. "We're saying we want rigorous examination of those treatments."

The Angora fire in June 2007 destroyed 254 homes near South Lake Tahoe.

A special bistate commission appointed after the fire recommended that the Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board, a California state agency, hand over regulatory authority for some 68,000 acres of forest-thinning projects to the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency.

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