

# Opinion: Congress must approve and fund LTRA

By Richard Solbrig

In the summer of 2007, the Angora Fire along Lake Tahoe's South Shore scorched almost 5 square miles and destroyed more than 250 homes. A California-Nevada Tahoe Basin Fire Commission Report issued after the Angora Fire included a finding that, "Much of the Tahoe basin public and private water distribution infrastructure is inadequate to provide fire flows necessary to meet fire codes and fire agency needs."

The Lake Tahoe Community Fire Protection Partnership (partnership), a bi-state collaboration, was formed in response to the report's findings. In 2009, with the active leadership of Sen. Dianne Feinstein the partnership began to implement an infrastructure upgrade program that will deliver enhanced fire protection to our bi-state region. The leadership of the congressional delegation and the U.S. Forest Service has provided \$13 million in federal partnership assistance, leveraging local funding to secure improved fire suppression infrastructure for the region.

The partnership funding delivers improved emergency response capabilities. Partnership accomplishments are numerous and include:

- 80,901 linear feet (15.3 miles) of water line with new fire hydrants every 500 lineal feet that deliver reliable fire fighting response;
- 10 water storage tanks with a 3.8 million gallon storage capacity;
- 5 booster pump stations to increase water supply flow; and

- 6 emergency generators to provide backup energy to deliver water supply should energy disruptions occur.

The partnership illustrates the benefits of collaboration of all the public water systems in the Tahoe basin. The just introduced Lake Tahoe Restoration Act (S.1451) takes the lessons learned from the partnership and authorizes water infrastructure improvements for fire suppression, as part of a comprehensive strategy to restore and protect the environment in the Lake Tahoe Basin. The partnership applauds the sponsors of this bill – Sens. Feinstein, Boxer, Reid and Heller.

We urge all communities in the Tahoe basin to join with the partnership and support this important legislation that will deliver increased security for the unique ecosystem that is Lake Tahoe.

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