

Opinion: Future progress requires more money

By Joanne Marchetta

“A breakdown can pave the way for a breakthrough,” Gov. Jerry Brown said at the Lake Tahoe Summit on Aug. 19.

The governor was speaking about the challenges people face in looking beyond their differences for common ground, whether that’s working to craft the \$7.5 billion water bond California voters will consider in November or working across state lines to protect and restore Lake Tahoe.



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Several years ago, California and Nevada faced a breakdown over a long-needed update to the Tahoe Regional Plan. Working together, we forged a common vision and found our needed breakthrough. Less than two years after adopting the Regional Plan update, progress toward that common vision is evident.

The challenge is sustaining that progress, and bringing our creativity to bear on looming funding shortfalls.

The Bijou Erosion Control Project under construction in South Lake Tahoe will reduce the amount of fine sediment washing into Lake Tahoe by more than 20,000 pounds per year. The Harrison Avenue Streetscape Improvement Project, a partnership

between the city and private property owners, is not only beautifying that street and improving its pedestrian routes, but also improving stormwater drainage. On the North Shore, the Kings Beach Commercial Core Improvement Project is beautifying streetscapes, upgrading bicycle and pedestrian routes and calming traffic. It's expected to reduce fine sediment flows that carry pollutants into Lake Tahoe by another 45,000 pounds per year.

More than six miles of bike and pedestrian routes have been built since the Regional Plan update was approved in December 2012. Another three miles are on track to be completed by the end of summer or early next year.

Every local government around the Lake Tahoe Basin is embracing its responsibilities for environmental progress, local planning and economic revitalization under the new area plan framework. Douglas County adopted the South Shore Area Plan. South Lake Tahoe adopted the Tourist Core Area Plan. Five more area plans are under way, meaning every jurisdiction in the basin – South Lake Tahoe and El Dorado, Placer, Douglas and Washoe counties – is working to meet our new standards for environmental gain and economic revitalization.

Progress is being made. But funding for many of our major projects and some of our most critical programs has come from federal and state funding sources that are sunseting. Tahoe is standing on a fiscal cliff and the ground is sloughing off beneath our feet. Finding ways to secure sustainable funding is our biggest challenge for continued implementation of the Regional Plan update.

That includes finding funding for our watercraft inspection program to keep aquatic invasive species out of the lake. The program has been called a model for the nation by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Gap funding has been secured to sustain the inspection program for at least one more year, but we need to find a way to sustain it in the long-term.

Continued environmental restoration at Lake Tahoe will require sustainable investments shared by all of our partners. We need continued vigilance pushing for congressional reauthorization of the \$415 million Lake Tahoe Restoration Act and concerted efforts to pass the \$7.5 billion California Water Bond initiative. Also key is working with Nevada to prioritize already authorized bond funds over the next decade.

Without progress in securing additional funds we risk backsliding in our efforts. Staring straight into an impending breakdown in funding, we are seeking another breakthrough. To that end, we are bringing our best creative thinking, our greatest drives toward innovation, our entrepreneurial spirit, and our strongest collaborative skills to imagining new funding sources, new collaborations and partnerships, and new solutions to the problems facing Tahoe.

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