

# Tahoe fire agencies explain prescribed burns

By Kathryn Reed

Thinning the forest and controlled burns are never going away. Those were two of the messages that were delivered by fire officials last week during an open house at the Forest Supervisors office in South Lake Tahoe.

The Tahoe Fire and Fuels Team has been created to put out a coordinated message to the public about what is happening in the basin in regards to fire – including prescribed fire.

In addition to the fire departments in the basin, other stakeholders like the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency, state parks from California and Nevada, and other public landowners are part of the group.

Representatives from county and state air districts also attended the Nov. 12 meeting.

One of the most common questions the public asks is: Why are the controlled burns occurring on a windy day?



Kit Bailey is the fire guru for the U.S. Forest Service in the Lake Tahoe Basin. Photo/LTN file

“It’s a lot better fire effect when the wind is blowing. You get less scorch and mortality,” Kit Bailey, Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit fire management officer, told *Lake Tahoe News*. “And it gets the smoke out.”

It’s also common to start the fires before precipitation falls.

Bailey said a successful burn requires a great deal of preparation and planning.

There are still critics of the Forest Service for how the Glenbrook burn a couple years ago was handled. Driving east up Spooner Summit the scar from that burn on the left side of the road is still visible.

“Had it burned in an uncontrolled manner, we would have lost the whole canyon,” Bailey said. “That area is still overstocked.”

The thinking is that a good winter will help that hillside look better. The drought is putting stress on all trees because the groundwater is being depleted.

Public questions centered on how much longer burns would be occurring (seasonally, but forever) and if it’s normal to see flames (yes).

The open house was a way for the various agencies to all be in one room and for the public to get their questions answered.