

# Feds reject Nevada plan to refill Incline Lake

By Associated Press

RENO – The U.S. Forest Service has rejected a proposal by Nevada state wildlife officials to refill a drained lake in the mountains above Lake Tahoe and restore the scenic spot as a recreational fishery.

The agency says it intends to stick with its plan to leave Incline Lake empty, remove its dam and return the area to its more natural wet meadows near Mount Rose.

Deputy Regional Forester Ronald Ketter upheld a forest supervisor's earlier decision, the *Reno Gazette-Journal* reported last week.

"The desired condition for this project is to remedy the existing conditions of a high-hazard dam and provide a sustainable hydrological system that supports groundwater and riparian ecosystems," Ketter wrote in a Dec. 2 letter to the Nevada Department of Wildlife.

State wildlife officials are reviewing the Forest Service's response and considering further action, including a possible appeal, department spokesman Chris Healy said.

"We are definitely weighing our options," Healy said. "The local area is losing the opportunity to develop a valuable fishery and recreational resource if this decision stands."

The federal government in 2008 spent \$43.5 million for the once-private property that includes Incline Lake and 777 acres of surrounding land on a forested ridge between Reno and Lake Tahoe.

The lake was drained after inspectors determined its dam could

fail during an earthquake and flood areas of nearby Incline Village.

Ketter agreed with the state that a much safer dam could be built, but he said it wouldn't completely eliminate possible danger. The Forest Service would return most of the \$5.5 million in funding secured through the South Nevada Public Land Management Act for possible reconstruction of the dam, Ketter said.

He also rejected arguments that the public's recreational needs were being ignored.

"While the Forest Service appreciates the public's desire and need for recreational opportunities, the primary purpose and objectives of this project are to provide for public safety and the restoration of an altered aquatic/riparian system," Ketter wrote.