

Letter: United effort to help Lake Tahoe

To the community,

We welcome President Obama to Lake Tahoe, which is admired for its great depth and clarity and beautiful alpine surroundings. As Tahoe's public water agencies, we are hard at work on a water infrastructure initiative to enhance critical preparedness needs and hazard mitigation in the wildland urban interface against the threat of catastrophic wildfire.

Our bi-state Lake Tahoe Community Fire Protection Partnership is an extraordinary collaboration between public water agencies and the U.S. Forest Service. The efforts of the partnership align with the objectives of the Lake Tahoe Restoration Act to address forest health, storm water management, invasive species management, and native fish recovery. Since 2009, the partnership has installed more than 16 miles of improved water line with 180 fire hydrants every 500 lineal feet, 10 water storage tanks with a 4.7 million-gallon storage capacity, five booster pump stations to increase water flow, and strategically placed emergency generators to provide continued water supply during catastrophic events.

This local-federal effort to enhance water infrastructure specifically to reduce the impact of wildfire is in effect an insurance policy to protect the investment from the public and private sectors since that first Tahoe Summit in 1997. As Sen. Dianne Feinstein, D-Calif., has expressed, a catastrophic fire here – and the subsequent impact on the lake from ash, debris and sedimentation – could set efforts back years.

We join our partners here – federal, state, local, and private – in renewing their commitment to this great lake and support

the passage of a comprehensive Lake Tahoe Restoration Act.

Randy Vogelgesang, South Tahoe Public Utility District board president