

Law requires USFS to increase use of volunteers

By Kathryn Reed

President Obama last week signed the National Forest System Trails Stewardship Act.

“The act places increased focus on the need for maintenance of the more than 158,000 miles of trails managed by the Forest Service. Specific details of how various requirements of the act will be implemented will be determined as the agency begins to explore and consider the most effective methods for addressing each component and requirement,” Babete Anderson, national press officer with the U.S. Forest Service, told *Lake Tahoe News*.

She said at this time it is too soon to know specifically how it will affect Lake Tahoe and the surrounding forests.

A main component of the legislation is for the Forest Service to partner with more organizations and volunteers when it comes to trail maintenance.

The Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit has been doing that very thing in recent years. Work with TAMBA to build bike trails is a primary example.

According to the American Hiking Society, “In 2013, the Government Accountability Office conducted a study of U.S. Forest Service trails that revealed a \$314 million backlog in trail maintenance and that only one-fourth of all Forest Service trails met the agency’s standards for trail maintenance. Having more miles of trails (158,000) than any other federal agency, the U.S. Forest Service trail maintenance backlog has been a significant concern to American Hiking Society and our members. This new law will help address

the backlog, restore trails that are either closed or on the cusp of closing, and connect more Americans with their public lands.”

This was a bipartisan bill in the Senate and House.