

# Tahoe funding restored to federal water act

By Kathryn Reed

The Lake Tahoe Restoration Act, once thought unable to be approved by Congress this session, has been resurrected.

It was announced Monday that it is now part of the final bicameral Water Resources Development Act (WRDA), titled the Water Infrastructure Improvements for the Nation Act.

**In October**, it had been removed from the House version of the WRDA.

The House and Senate still need to vote on it, and the president must sign the legislation.

“This is a monumental step in the legislative process for the Tahoe basin. After fighting for years to refocus federal policy on the twenty-first century threats to the Lake, we have ensured important work that preserves the Jewel of the Sierra for future generations will advance. This was a total team effort by both the Nevada and California delegations which required bicameral and bipartisan support,” Sen. Dean Heller, R-Nev., said in a statement.

He was the lead sponsor on the legislation.

The bill would deliver \$415 million to the Lake Tahoe Basin across seven years. The money would be used for wildfire prevention, the environmental improvement program, invasive species management, stormwater projects, Lahontan cutthroat trout recover, and other projects.

“This is great news for Lake Tahoe. TRPA is excited to see such strong and widespread bipartisan support for this comprehensive legislation that is so important for continued

environmental conservation and restoration work at Lake Tahoe, one of America's natural treasures," Tom Lotshaw with TRPA told *Lake Tahoe News*.

The original Lake Tahoe Restoration Act was passed by Congress in 2000, three years after President Bill Clinton was here for the initial Lake Tahoe Environmental Summit. The bill brought \$300 million in federal money to the basin in 10 years.

Since the 1997 summit more than \$2 billion has been spent in the basin on what officials call environmental projects. This is a combination of federal, state, local and private dollars.

With the U.S. government owning about 80 percent of the land in the basin, that has always been one of the leading arguments that the feds should have a major role in the upkeep of the area.