

Tahoe funding survives final federal water bill

By Sarah D. Wire and Bettina Boxall, Los Angeles Times

Over Sen. Barbara Boxer's objections, the Senate voted 78 to 21 Friday evening to pass sweeping water infrastructure legislation that changes how much water is pumped from the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta to San Joaquin Valley farmers and Southern California.

The bill – co-authored by Boxer – authorizes hundreds of water projects across the country, including new infrastructure to fix lead issues in Flint, Mich., and millions of dollars for projects connected to the Los Angeles River, Salton Sea and Lake Tahoe.

Earlier in the week, House Majority Leader Kevin McCarthy inserted 90 pages of California water policy that drew Boxer's opposition, negotiated over the past year by the state's 14 GOP members, Sen. Dianne Feinstein, D-Calif., and a handful of House Democrats.

Now it goes to President Obama for his signature.

The bill would bring \$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.

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.

“I’m thrilled that the Lake Tahoe Restoration Act is included in this bill. We’ve been working to pass an updated Tahoe restoration bill for seven years,” Feinstein said in a statement. “This bill authorizes \$415 million to carry on the work of the original bill, improving water quality, reducing hazardous fuels to prevent wildfires, fighting the spread of invasive species and restoring critical habitat throughout the Tahoe basin.”

Lake Tahoe News contributed to this story.

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