

# Tahoe embraces food service products made from plants

By Kathryn Reed

Just as businesses were getting accustomed to recycling and using recycled products, compostable is a word and practice that is being thrown at them.

C&M Food Distributors in Reno is helping Lake Tahoe businesses make the switch.

“We show small businesses they can do what big businesses do. It can be done and it can be profitable, too, for everybody,” Tee Branch of C&M said of using compostable products.



Compostable products from C&M Foods that Embassy Suites Lake Tahoe uses.

Photo/Provided

Branch, who lives in the South Lake Tahoe, is the sales rep handling the entire basin and Truckee for C&M.

They have 37 items to choose from and the list keeps growing. Toilet paper and facial tissue are the two most popular items. Branch said this is because every business needs them and the

cost is comparable to other brands.

All of C&M's compostable products are from plant material.

Branch said C&M has stayed away from products made from corn and sugar because of how they are traded on the commodity market and therefore subject to price fluctuations.

It used to be that Sacramento tomato processing plants burned their natural waste to get rid of it. Now it's turned into plates, cups, flatware and other items that businesses can use.

Traditional paper products are made from petroleum. When the consumer is done with the plate or flatware it ends up in their trash and eventually hauled to a landfill.

Using the items made of plant matter or other compostable products means it will be turned into a soil amendment. It's part of the cradle-to-gravel movement where what happens at the end of a product's life is just as important as its birth, or how it was manufactured. Composting is also part of the zero waste movement – meaning nothing ends up in the garbage. It is either recycled or composted.

Kirkwood Mountain Resort and Embassy Suites South Lake Tahoe are two of Branch's biggest buyers of the compostable products.

"We use their cups, a lot of their paper goods and their food trays," said Kelly Groover, food and beverage administrative manager at Kirkwood. "I think it's very important now to people. To a lot of homeowners out here it's important to them."

That's the other thing businesses are finding; their customers are asking what they are doing to be green.

The ski resort separates its compostable products into a dumpster that ACES Waste Services picks up.

C&M has a mix of small and large customers in the Lake Tahoe area. Some of the other businesses using compostable products are Granlibakken, McP's Pub, Driftwood Café, Fresh Ketch, Lakeside Inn and Casino, and Stateline Brewery.

Branch said he talking to many other businesses, including the school districts and Barton Memorial Hospital.

"C&M Foods is the cheapest. As we get more businesses on board is will lower all of our costs," said David Hansen with Embassy Suites.

His hotel has been using the products for more than a year. With breakfast served each morning and a cocktail hour in the evening, plenty of plates, cups, napkins and other food service products are used each day.

Having worked in kitchens most of his life, Branch understands the cost issues as well as the need to educate workers about composting. He said the only item that hasn't successfully been developed is a coffee lid from plant matter. Coffee cups are OK. The problem is the lid then needs to go in one bin and the cup in another.

The other thing C&M boasts about is 98 percent of its compostable products are made in the United States. This then reduces the carbon footprint even more. However, no one in the States is making compostable plates or to-go containers.

**Publisher's note: *On March 31 read Lake Tahoe News to find out what Full Circle Compost is all about.***

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# Tahoe businesses turning food waste into compost

By Kathryn Reed

By separating out food waste for composting, Embassy Suites in South Lake Tahoe last year reduced the amount of trash it produced by 33 percent. Yes, the hotel's occupancy was down in 2009, but only by 8 percent.

David Hansen, director of engineering for the property, has been spearheading all things green at the Stateline area hotel. He is also the key to making Compost Tahoe a reality.



Other members of Compost Tahoe are Joanna Walters, Tom Wendell, Garry Bowen, Chris Taylor and Erik Taylor.

“Compost Tahoe has more of an educational piece to it,” Hansen said of the local compost movement.

He would like more people to use compostable products, which are different than biodegradable.

According to Compost Tahoe's website, “Compostable: means an item will break down completely into soil, water and carbon dioxide with no leftover residue. Biodegradable: means an item will break down into smaller and smaller pieces.”

Another goal is to get people to use the end product – the composted material as a soil amendment. Embassy does this.

For a while Hansen was making two trips a week to Full Circle Compost in Minden to deliver food scraps and other compostable material. With South Tahoe Refuse starting a pilot compost

program and businesses besides Embassy now on board, Hansen can let others do the driving.

Last week Zephyr Cove Resort joined the pilot program. Both Marriott properties on the South Shore are interested. Whittell High School may be another player.

“We are trying to reduce the amount of solid waste refuse we produce,” said Mark Smith, project manager and environmental steward with Aramark. “There are a lot of items that go in this besides just food waste and food prep.”

(Aramark owns the two paddle-wheelers on the South Shore, and Zephyr Cove Lodge.)

Locally, Aramark doesn't use many compostable products besides food. However, coffee grounds, eggshells, nutshells, tea bags without a staple, cardboard without tape, paper towels, napkins and shredded paper are all compostable.

One thing that makes Embassy unique is that it uses compostable plates, flatware and cups – so even more is going into its bin.

“We are using mostly recycled content material. We have not gone full-bore with compostable material. We thought this would be a first step,” Smith said of separating out food waste.

Just like what Embassy had to do, it is a matter of training employees to learn what goes in the compost container and what keeps going into the regular trash.



An employee at Embassy Suites separates food waste for composting. Photos/Provided

“In the bin is a bag that is compostable,” Hansen explained. That bag is then tossed into a dumpster just for composting that STR picks up.

“This is part of integrated recycling. A good amount of weight is in food waste,” said Jeanne Lear with South Tahoe Refuse.

Every city and county in California must divert waste from landfills by 50 percent. South Lake Tahoe has set a goal of 55 percent. STR expects to hit 50 percent when the Resource Recovery Center opens in April. Eliminating some food waste will help hit that target as well.

In the pilot program that started with Embassy in February, the garbage company wants to see how big of a route it could handle, how much compostable material properties will collect, what it’s like to take a front loader to the Minden facility once a week, and the benefits and drawbacks of the program.

Just like normal garbage, the amount of compostable waste will fluctuate with the seasons – another concern of the refuse company’s.

Lear said she envisions bigger properties participating in the composting program. Douglas Disposal, which the group owns in the Carson Valley, is looking at Walmart having a composting bin.

STR’s permit from the state does not allow it to compost on-site in South Tahoe. Residential compost pick up is not likely. Lear also pointed to the difficulty of collecting

compostable material at businesses in strip malls because of space, the greater potential to contaminate the compost bin, and logistics.

A definitive time line to know if the compost route is working hasn't been set.

The other part of the equation is with Full Circle Compost. If the goods being delivered by STR aren't actually compostable, there is no reason for them to keep accepting the matter.

But it's also possible to contaminate the plastic recycling program if large quantities of compostable plastic gets mixed in with recyclable plastic.

It's back to that education component. People need to know what they are using and what to do with it when they are done.

"This is a great for the community. It could make the South Shore sustainable powerhouse that it should be," Hansen said of the compost program.

**Publisher's note: *Read Lake Tahoe News on March 30 to find out what compostable products are all about.***

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## **McClintock rips government, but provides no solutions**

**By Kathryn Reed**

Rep. Tom McClintock rattled off a slew of statistics about how bad the national debt is going to be in the next five and 10 years – mostly because of government bailouts and the week-old national health care plan.

The Republican whose district office is in Granite Bay, but who got elected to the 4th congressional district without living in it, was at South Tahoe High School on Saturday talking to a largely partisan audience of more than 150 people.

“There is twice as much money out there as there was last year,” McClintock said in his 15-minute opening speech. “The federal government should not bail out people who make bad decisions.”



Rep. Tom  
McClintock  
speaks to  
constituents  
Saturday.  
Photos/Kathryn  
Reed

He received a resounding roar of applause to this. Many of his statements were met favorably by his constituents.

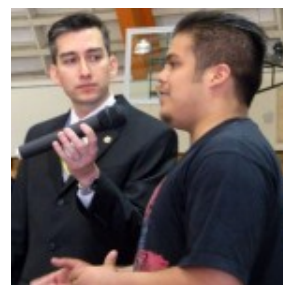
However, “out there” wasn’t exactly defined. Talk to anyone on the South Shore and there is less money out there than a year ago. The state of California has told cities to expect a 20 percent decrease in sales tax this year compared to 2009. Unemployment numbers for South Lake Tahoe are expected to come out Monday, with the figure to hit 18 percent.

“Two-thirds of economic growth depends on consumer spending,” McClintock said.



The congressman didn't have definitive ideas for where the jobs that bring the cash to fill the wallets so the people have something to spend are going to come from.

"You guys have failed us," Jesus Herrera, a junior at STHS, said. "I haven't seen anything from either party that's creating a more secure future."



STHS student Jesus Herrera talks as Norman Gonzales holds the microphone.

McClintock did not defend everything his party has done. He said he was against attacking Iraq and added that it should take an act of Congress to go to war.

"There were some very serious mistakes made by the Bush administration. This administration is doubling down on them," McClintock said.

He said he believes people voted for President Obama not because of his policies, but because they didn't want John McCain for fear it would be like a third Bush term. McClintock said the country is getting a second Jimmy Carter term.

When Larry Green, Lake Tahoe Unified School District member, brought up the inefficiency of the federal No Child Left Behind Act, McClintock said, "I think No Child Left Behind

needs to be repealed.”



Tom McClintock

The congressman believes the difference in education today compared to the 1960s when California had one of the best systems in the country is that teachers were in charge of their classrooms and had more of a say over curriculum.

However, this doesn't explain why other states with a similar structure, as well as having to work within the federal mandates, do better on test scores.

Many people brought up health care and how the costs have affected their lives, how insurance companies are making decisions for them, and how employer plans leave little choice.

To this McClintock said government destroyed freedom of choice because they give tax credits to employers for health care.

McClintock, like the 11 attorneys general who've filed suit against the government, believes the health care plan signed by Obama is unconstitutional. He does not believe the government should force people to have health care.

But the reality is government forces things on people every day. No one has the option to opt out of paying for Social Security or Medicare, though McClintock seems to support that idea.

This pep rally of sorts fired up the believers, who mingled afterward with the congressman and in small clusters. It left

others wondering what this man is going to do about everything he doesn't like and if he is going to stop blaming others for all the ills that consume this country.

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## Chile temblor adds to Tahoe couple's vacation memories



By Kathryn Reed

One month ago today, Marty and Leslie DeTarr's vacation plans got shaken up a bit in a way that could never have been predicted.

The South Lake Tahoe couple was in Chile when the deadly and devastating 8.8 earthquake struck the South American country.

They were supposed to fly back to the States on March 1. That didn't happen.

"We were emailing American Airlines and the travel agent. There was no response," Marty DeTarr said. "(March 2) we got a response from the travel agent who said it might be 10 days."

The airlines said things would be back to normal at the Santiago airport in three days. That didn't happen.

"We heard later the ceiling at the airport terminal had caved in and wiped out all the computers," DeTarr said.

They didn't feel the earth move because they were about 1,000 miles from epicenter down in Patagonia near Torres del Paine.

But many of the people working at the resort they were staying at were from that country's capital and knew of family and friends who had died. One worker relayed stories about the tsunami on the small coastal town of Constitución.

"He said cars were in the street at night and the next morning they were gone. They had rolled out into the ocean," DeTarr said.

With no one coming and going, the Explora Lodge had no problem putting the DeTarrs up for a couple nights – for free.

"We weren't in fear or concerned about our lives," DeTarr said of the experience.

By March 3 their 3.5-week vacation was just about over. It meant riding a bus for more than four hours to Calafate, Argentina; finding their luggage at a different location across the border than where the bus parked; and then paying \$250 for a taxi ride to Buenos Aires. From there, it was a plane ride into Reno.

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## **Bijou school seeks \$300,000 grant to turn scores around**

**By Kathryn Reed**



Money is so often touted as the difference between high and

low academic performing schools.

Bijou Community School might get to test that theory. Bijou expects to receive a nearly \$300,000 grant in May that must be spent by Sept. 30. The grant may prove money does make a difference when it comes to education performance.

Bijou is in the lower socio-economic echelon in the district. For many, English is not their first language nor is it spoken at home.

Bijou is just one of many troubled schools in the state. On Wednesday, the Nation's Report Card was released. California shared last place for reading scores with Louisiana, Arizona, New Mexico and Washington, D.C. New Jersey and New York are at the top. Those states spend close to twice the amount of money per child than the roughly \$8,000 California doles out.

The South Lake Tahoe elementary is one of about 200 schools at the bottom of the rung, according California Department of Education stats released this month. Even so, it has made significant improvements, especially with the 64-point gain on the 2009 Academic Performance Index.

The API is part of the federal No Child Left Behind mandate. NCLB has criteria for schools to meet based on comparing apples to oranges in that this year's fourth-graders' tests will be compared to last year's instead of each grade level showing improvement or a decline from year to year.

It's possible if Bijou does well on this year's tests, it would be off the federal watch list.

It was decided at the Lake Tahoe Unified School District meeting Tuesday that Bijou would bypass going after American Recovery and Reinvestment Act dollars because the strings attached mandate that by the first day of next school year, which begins in August, one of the following intervention models would have to be implemented:

- replace the principal and at least 50 percent of the staff;
- close Bijou and convert it to a charter;
- close Bijou and enroll the students at higher-achieving schools in LTUSD;
- transform the school by changing how students are taught.

“There’s no logic involved. It’s offensive,” Jim Watson, director of Human Resources, said of the intervention models. “(Bijou) has taken on this challenge of improvement wholeheartedly already. It doesn’t make sense to close, disband or give-away that school.”

The \$300,000 the school is going after is a federal School Improvement Grant. The plan is to have 18 days of summer school starting in July for more than half of the 500 students. The school day would be 3.5 hours.

Principal Karen Tinlin and her staff devised a plan last week to bring in Guided Language Acquisition Development trainers to teach the staff for a couple days in this method and then have it used on the students in the summer.

“It’s a program that really does help our English learners, which is where we struggle,” Tinlin said.

Parents would be part of the process. Technology like Netbooks and white boards could be bought with the funds. The grant pays for all supplies, teacher time, necessary meals, support staff and the coaches.

Bijou will know in May if was awarded the grant. Watson said there is no reason to believe the school won’t get the money.

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# Sinatra's old Cal Neva to suspend casino operations

By Dale Kasler, Sacramento Bee



Cal Neva, the legendary but faded Lake Tahoe resort once owned by Frank Sinatra, is closing its casino temporarily.

Canyon Capital Realty Advisors, the firm that has owned the Cal Neva since last spring, said Wednesday that the casino will close Wednesday. Canyon said it is in discussions with several licensed gambling operators, and the plan is to reopen the casino by year's end.

The rest of the property, including restaurants and a showroom named for Sinatra, will remain open.

**Read the whole story**

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# Tahoe Tallac Association fires executive director

By Kathryn Reed



When the 2010 season opens for the Tahoe Tallac Association in five weeks, it will be under the direction of new leadership.

Steve Farnsley, who had been executive director for a little more than two years, was let go earlier this month. In his place on an interim basis is Lori Cramer. Cramer gave up her role as a board member, which she has had on and off for about five years, in order to take the helm.

The association runs festivals and theater performances at the Tallac Site near Camp Richardson off Highway 89 on the South Shore from spring through fall.

The entire Tallac Historic Site is 74 acres. The Valhalla Grand Hall, Boathouse Theatre, and twin cabins that house the gift shop and artists in residence are leased by the association from the U.S. Forest Service. The agreement calls for 20 percent of the association's gross going toward restoration of the site.

At times the association and Forest Service have been at odds. Cramer said she met this week with the federal agency.

"It's a brand new day," she said of the relationship. "We all agreed to act as a team."

Cramer has been spending the last few days making sure everything is in order – which so far it is. She's familiarizing herself with the contracts and festival list. This will be the 31st year of the Valhalla Arts and Music Festival.

"I already know everybody so I don't have to learn the ins and outs of a new community. Hopefully, that will help," Cramer said. "I don't know if you will notice big changes except my goal is to get more community exposure."

One thing she wants to do is have the Valhalla building open when events aren't going on. She would like tours led by



volunteers.

The other thing the new director wants to do is secure more members. She wants so create a sense of ownership for locals of this site and the events.

For the past 15 years Cramer has run Sierra Weddings. She will continue to that for now.

“I’m always trolling for new opportunities out there. I don’t see this as a complete change. I see it as an expansion of events,” Cramer said.

Cramer is the fifth executive director in the association’s history. Carol Spain and a handful of others are credited with making the Tahoe Tallac Association a reality. Spain left for the Bay Area in 2002.

“There’s definitely been a hole since Carol Spain. She was a tremendous woman. To be sitting in her shoes is a huge honor for me,” Cramer said.

Board President Eric Taxer said the board would take a close look this summer at what it wants from an executive director, restructure job duties, look at the salary and seek to hire someone permanently when the season is over in the fall.

Taxer would not elaborate on what led the board to sever relations with Farnsley.

For the Tahoe Tallac Association’s 2010 list of events, click [here](#).

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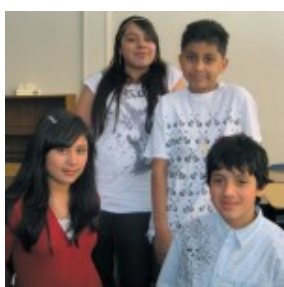
# Tolerance resonates with students after museum visit

By Kathryn Reed

Life-changing. That is how students describe their visit to the Museum of Tolerance in Southern California.

For the second year, Tisha Seims took her seventh-grade language arts students from South Tahoe Middle School to the museum.

It wasn't just the students who came away changed. Seims said she got more out of the museum this year.



Maria Nvarro,  
l-r, Jazmine  
Aragon,  
Armando Reyes  
and Cristian  
Reyes

“The whole responsibility piece really stood out for me this time,” Seims said. “The thing I took from it was owning up to your own choices — not having mom or teachers make your choices.”

Before the 21 students headed south earlier this month Seims taught them about Anne Frank, the Holocaust, the Civil Rights movement and tolerance in general.

After the trip, there was a bit of decompression to go over everything they had seen, read and heard.

“Before (we went) I was not the nicest person,” student Cristian Reyes said. “Now I’m not judging people by how they look.”

One of the lasting impressions for Reyes was a picture of what looked like snow covering the ground. He learned it was really ashes from the gas chambers in Nazi Germany.

Jazmine Aragon said it was hard to learn about the Germans tossing newborns they didn’t want from hospital windows.

Armando Reyes remembers learning about Jews having to dig their own graves at the concentration camps.

Much of the Museum of Tolerance centers on the Holocaust, but it also touches on bullying, homosexuality and tolerating all people.

Reyes reflected on the segment in the museum about what happens if you drink and drive “the impact it has on others, not just the person behind the wheel.

Seeing the word “responsibility” in an array of language stuck with Aragon and Maria Navarro. It was that sense of no matter who you are, where you live or the language you speak, you are responsible for your actions, your choices.

Aragon said the lesson she took from the museum was to be “positive and not make fun of people.”

Another lesson from the museum was how homosexuals are discriminated against and how individuals have been killed solely for their sexual orientation.

Although the students all learned about tolerance and need to be more compassionate, they said hatred and racism are not issues at STMS.

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# Transit infrastructure upgrades planned for basin

By Kathryn Reed

STATELINE – Transportation planners realize not everyone wants to abandon their vehicle. Easing congestion through better driving routes, providing alternatives to passenger vehicles, and creating better connections for walkers and cyclists are the goals.

The idea is the infrastructure improvements will also make walking and cycling a more pleasant experience in the region.

Tahoe Transportation District, which has been around since 1980, is in the business of securing money for the plans various jurisdictions have and helping with the implementation. Because the basin has multiple layers of government and bureaucracy, it's the TTD's job to be the umbrella agency to get things done.



Carl Hasty looks over the map of Lake Tahoe Basin transit plans. Photo/Kathryn

Reed

TTD, though it never went away, had been dormant in many ways for many years. Carl Hasty now manages the district and Alfred Knotts is the transportation projects manager. They work for an 11-member board comprised of representatives from throughout the region, including both state transportation departments.

“We look at system needs for basin transportation,” Hasty said. “This board is focused on implementation and getting things done.”

A map in the conference room of their Stateline offices shows the five projects the TTD is working on.

One is the Loop Road on the South Shore that involves California and Nevada. For decades people have talked about diverting traffic behind the Stateline casinos to make the corridor more pedestrian friendly.

“Right now the concept is not to eliminate all traffic on Highway 50,” Hasty said. “Maybe it will be three lanes with one being for transit and bikes.”

Knotts said the environmental review is the next stage, and working with Caltrans and the Nevada Department of Transportation to development alternatives for the loop road.

With the Heavenly Village project completed in 2002 and the so-called convention center project still on the books, the idea for years has been to divert vehicle traffic so pedestrians would be more comfortable frolicking in the area.

“Stateline is where the bed base is. It is where the congestion is,” Knotts said.

Planners and developers of infrastructure are taking an approach that hasn't often been done at the lake – looking at

the big picture instead of solely on an individual project-by-project basis.

As the Loop Road goes forward, those involved are aware Edgewood Companies wants to develop a hotel on its golf course, that Horizon casino may evolve into something besides a gaming venue when the lease expires, that the Greenway Bike Trail from Meyers will empty at Stateline, that the Van Sickle Bi-State Park has broken ground under the Heavenly Gondola, and that the Stateline-to-Stateline bike trail is well on its way to being a reality.

“They all support getting around by linking places,” Hasty said. “We are looking at building a network that offers choices to get from one place to another.”

All of this is for locals as well as tourists.

The goal is have all future transportation projects be interrelated and not isolated. The car isn't going away, but the idea is people will have more choices.

The Tahoe Transportation District is also involved in the Stateline-to-Stateline bike trail. Work on the South Shore end should begin next year.

([Click here for more details.](#))

Another TTD project involves South Lake Tahoe and Tahoe City – water transit. The goal is connecting the North and South shores via transit. By the end of the year the federal transit analysis should be finished. Out of that will come a recommendation if water transit is viable or not.

Another project in Tahoe City is figuring out what to do with the Fanny Bridge that crosses the Truckee River. The bridge is seismically challenged and could be deemed unusable for certain weight vehicles by 2013.

“It's a lifeline bridge,” Knotts said, meaning no other

crossing exists to keep commerce rolling in that area of Highway 89.

Six options have been proposed. It's possible Fanny Bridge could become a pedestrian-bike only structure. Vehicles might be routed across the river farther up Highway 89, a bit closer to Truckee.

"It would remove a choke point and improve the flow," Hasty said. "Then you design for the character of the place you want."

Not having traffic in that Y intersection could make the area more walkable.

The other project in the basin the Tahoe Transportation District has a hand in is at the junction of highways 431 and 28 in Incline Village.

"It's a scenic byway so we want to improve the aesthetics," Knotts said.

Safety and efficiency of the Mount Rose Highway are also factors. NDOT is designing and building the project, with construction likely to begin in 2011.

A roundabout is being talked about. The plan, which is still in the works, is likely to tie into bike trails and address water quality concerns.

"I think these projects bring needed change and opportunity to the lake," Hasty said.

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# 14 Tahoe forest fuels projects approved by state agency

By Kathryn Reed

Nearly \$1 million was allocated by the California Tahoe Conservancy board to reduce forest fuels, improve habitat and forest restoration.

In that dollar amount is \$200,000 to finish work in the Angora Fire area on CTC land. This includes the urban lots as well as 30 acres the state owns. Many of the trees that were planted after the devastating June 2007 fire have died.



Work in the Angora burn area will take place this summer.

Photo/Kathryn Reed

More trees will be planted, plus the money will pay for two years of monitoring the revegetation project.

When it comes to thinning of the forest, the CTC has seven areas targeted on the South Shore, four on the West Shore and three on the North Shore that will be treated this year. More



than 400 acres will be treated.

It costs about \$3,500 to treat one acre.

The projects that were approved on Thursday by the Conservancy board will be paid for with federal and state money that has already been secured.

The objectives of the plan are to: enhance the health of forest resources, preserve water quality, enhance wildlife habitat, and provide for public safety and protection of property.

“Fire frequency, intensity, severity, and seasonality have a great impact on forest vegetation,” the staff report says. “Studies of fire frequency dating back hundreds of years, known as the fire return interval, have shown that each acre of conifer and ponderosa pine forest burns on an average of every 11 to 15 years. In contrast, it may now be almost 200 years before each acre of this forest type burns as a result of fire suppression causing forest fuels to continue to accumulate.”

The Conservancy is hoping the Lake Tahoe Restoration Act, which is percolating in Washington for reauthorization by Congress, will be approved. In it is millions of dollars dedicated to forest fuels reduction throughout the basin in both states.

The Conservancy has spent about \$1 million on average per year during the last decade on forest fuels management.