



**ENVIRONMENTAL
IMPROVEMENT
PROGRAM**
PROGRESS REPORT

1997-2007

THE LAKE TAHOE
BASIN'S EXTRAORDINARY
MOUNTAIN BEAUTY IS
A NATIONAL TREASURE.

The Lake itself is one of the largest and deepest in the world and the startling clarity of the water has drawn people to its shores for centuries. Over the last 50 years, our enjoyment of this special place has caused changes in the ecosystem. The Lake has lost an average of 1 foot per year of water clarity since the 1960s because of urbanization.

More than 50 public and private organizations joined together nearly 10 years ago to restore and protect Lake Tahoe. This report summarizes our progress to date.

The Environmental Improvement Program is a strategy to achieve the environmental goals for the Lake Tahoe Basin by healing past environmental damage, one project at a time.

LAKE TAHOE'S TURNING POINT: THE EIP

The American public has made an important commitment—to protect, preserve and enhance the Lake Tahoe Basin by supporting the Environmental Improvement Program. This commitment benefits not only the environment, but also the social and economic health of the Region. Most importantly, it ensures the future of Lake Tahoe for the enjoyment of generations to come.

Our commitment to the Lake's conservation takes shape in the form of EIP projects. These projects repair damage to water and air quality, forest health, fish and wildlife, recreation and scenic views. Cooperation and contributions from the federal, state, local and private sectors make the EIP, and the American public's commitment, a reality. In order to achieve the goals of the EIP, this commitment must continue.



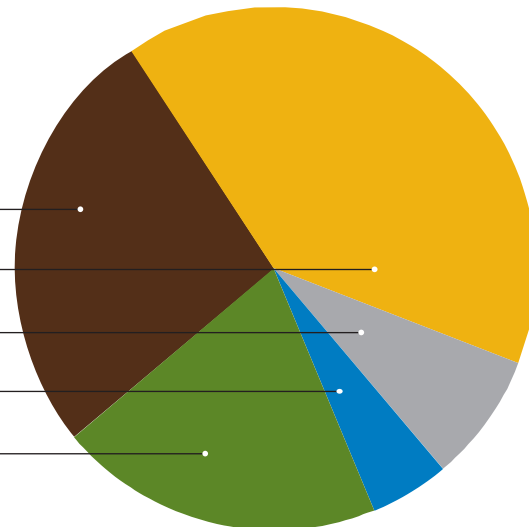
STEWARDS OF THE LAKE TAHOE BASIN

The 1997 Lake Tahoe Presidential Forum was a turning point in Tahoe's history. The event inspired renewed commitment to restore the Lake's ecosystem and spurred the creation of the EIP. As of 2006, \$1.1 billion has been invested by Congress, the California and Nevada state legislatures, local governments, and the private sector to implement the EIP. Now that we have reached the 10-year anniversary of the EIP, new commitments must be made.

CAPITAL INVESTMENT IN EIP PROJECTS BY FUNDING SECTOR: 1997-2006

Amounts reflected in this graph represent projects completed or in progress.

● Federal:	\$293 million (27%)
● State of CA:	\$446 million (40%)
● State of NV:	\$82 million (8%)
● Local:	\$53.4 million (5%)
● Private:	\$216 million (20%)
TOTAL:	\$1.1 billion



ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN CONSERVING LAKE TAHOE

A Conservation Plan for Lake Tahoe: The Environmental Improvement Program

- The EIP is a public-private partnership that rivals some of the largest collaborative restoration initiatives in the United States
- Approximately 266 EIP capital projects have been constructed and many more are in the planning stages
- The next phase of the EIP will have a planning horizon through 2017.

EIP Research/Monitoring and Technical Assistance:

- Funded \$48 million in research/monitoring
- Established the Tahoe Science Consortium to better inform agency decision-making
- Federal agencies have provided nearly \$15.5 million in technical assistance to EIP partners.

Watershed & Habitat:

- Acquired more than 3,064 acres of sensitive land
- Improved over 13,000 acres for wildlife habitat
- Restored more than 739 acres of wetlands
- Treated stormwater runoff from 26 miles of state highways
- Revegetated or removed 55 miles of dirt road in forests
- Completed and planned nearly 25 projects to help restore the Upper Truckee River watershed which delivers more sediment into Lake Tahoe than any other tributary.

Vegetation and Fire Fuels Management:

- 21,293 acres have been treated to achieve ecosystem restoration and/or forest fuel reduction goals
- Revegetated 374 acres
- Completed the "Fuels Reduction & Forest Restoration Plan for the Lake Tahoe Basin Wildland Urban Interface" including Community Wildfire Protection Plans which qualifies Lake Tahoe to receive funding authorized under the Healthy Forests Restoration Act.

Air Quality and Transportation:

- Achieved a 20% reduction in vehicle traffic near Stateline, Nevada since 2001 because of transit-oriented redevelopment
- Constructed or rehabilitated 20 transit facilities and increased transit ridership to 1.5 million passengers annually
- Replaced 18 vehicles in the public transit fleet with clean-burning vehicles.

Recreation and Scenic:

- Constructed or rehabilitated 82 public facilities to increase accessibility and the quality of the recreational experience
- Relocated more than 4 miles of overhead utility lines under-ground along highway corridors
- Acquired 2,388 linear feet of Lake shoreline for public use
- Constructed or planned 127 miles of new multi-purpose trails.

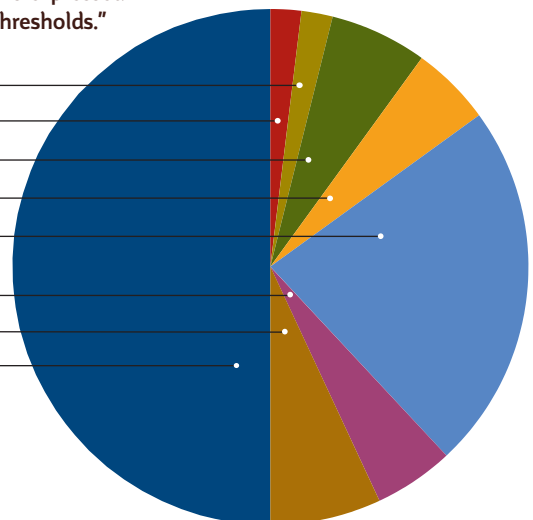


EIP INVESTMENT BY ENVIRONMENTAL THRESHOLD

Categories of Investment

The environmental and ecological value of the Basin is expressed in terms of nine categories called the "Environmental Thresholds."

● Fisheries:	2%
● Wildlife:	2%
● Vegetation:	6%
● Recreation:	5%
● Air Quality/Transportation:	23%
● Scenic Resources:	5%
● Soil Conservation:	7%
● Water Quality:	50%



Over the last three years, funding for forest health and vegetation projects has increased dramatically and will continue to help reduce the threat of catastrophic wildfire.



ANGORA FIRE OF JUNE 2007

The Lake Tahoe community has worked diligently to reduce the risk of catastrophic wildfire over the last decade. A common mantra has been “it’s not a matter of if, but when” a serious wildfire will occur at Lake Tahoe. The Angora Fire of June 2007 in South Lake Tahoe, California brought the harsh reality to bear. The fire destroyed 254 homes and structures and environmental impacts are extensive.

Fuels reduction projects are critical to reducing the risk of catastrophic wildfire at Lake Tahoe. The Angora Fire demonstrated that neighborhoods benefited from the areas of forest which had been treated. Other EIP projects constructed over the last several years in the burn area helped mitigate the effects of the fire on the watershed. The next phase of the EIP will include aggressive efforts to help reduce the risk of another catastrophic wildfire at Lake Tahoe.

WHAT’S AHEAD?

Significant accomplishments have been made in improving the Tahoe Basin, but more must be done.

An update of the Environmental Improvement Program is underway and will be a strategy to help achieve the goals of a new Regional Plan for the Lake Tahoe Basin in 2008.

THE COMMITMENT AND THE CHALLENGE

The Environmental Improvement Program allows us to be part of something larger than ourselves—the conservation of an irreplaceable icon.

Meadows and streams have been restored. Transportation has improved. Urban pollution has been reduced and EIP partners are striving to turn the corner on declining Lake clarity. We’ve established a culture of cooperation and mutual support essential to streamlining the current and future implementation of the EIP. However, a tremendous amount of work lies ahead.

Future challenges include escalating construction costs which are raising the bar for future projects. Additionally, more recent information tells us that a greater sustained commitment is required to make measurable progress. To ensure the health of the Lake Tahoe Basin, continued cooperation among funding and implementing entities is essential to completing the EIP.

The future looks bright for Lake Tahoe. Recent science indicates that Lake clarity can be achieved with sustained investment. The past decade of research will guide our policy choices to ensure the Tahoe legacy. The Environmental Improvement Program is the key to repairing past damage and minimizing today’s impacts.



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