



Media Release



LAHONTAN BOARD APPROVES FOREST SERVICE PLAN TO PROTECT WATER QUALITY DURING FUEL REDUCTION TREATMENTS

For Immediate Release

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The Lahontan Regional Water Board (Water Board) has approved the U.S. Forest Service Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit's (LTBMU) operating plan for fuel reduction and forest health work in South Lake Tahoe for the upcoming summer.

The plan provides detailed, site-specific information on how the Forest Service will comply with its 2012 permit and protect water quality during the project.

Fuel reduction operations, which include thinning trees and brush, are vital in reducing the risk of wildland fires. The project also includes thinning for forest health, which reduces competition among remaining trees for water, sunlight and nutrients.

The Water Board and the LTBMU collaborated over the last several months to develop the plan, assuring that it was completed and approved well in advance of the high fire danger season.

"I am delighted that both agencies have worked cooperatively during the winter months to produce a plan that aggressively targets fuel reduction safety for neighborhoods while protecting water quality," said Patty Z. Kouyoumdjian, the Water Board's Executive Officer.



The 10,000-acre fuels reduction and healthy restoration project is expected to be completed in eight to 10 years. This is the second year of the project. The LTBMU treated about 700 acres last year and hopes to treat 1,300 acres this season.

Catastrophic wild fires also have potential to create landslides and accelerated erosion that could impact Lake Tahoe's famed clarity. Planning of the fuels reduction and healthy forest restoration began after the 2007 Angora Fire which resulted in the loss of 254 homes. That tragic fire heightened the community's concern about future wildfires.

This year's operating plan covers mechanical fuel reduction activities in nine distinct areas near residential neighborhoods in the wildland urban interface areas of South Lake Tahoe. The areas that may be treated this field season include summer cabins in the Spring Creek area, the east and west shores of Fallen Leaf Lake, the Gardner Mountain and South Tahoe High School areas, the North and South Upper Truckee neighborhoods, a large tract of forest between the Golden Bear and Sierra Tract neighborhoods, and the area near Trout Creek south of Pioneer Trail.

The plan also includes hand-thinning of urban lots by chainsaw crews and burning of some biomass piles from previous years' fuel reduction actions.

More information on the South Shore project can be found at <http://www.fs.usda.gov/goto/lbmu/SouthShoreFuelReduction>.

"Our ability to work together has helped expedite these important fuels projects and insure we are meeting the intent of the Multi-Jurisdictional Fuel Reduction and Wildfire Prevention Strategy. This Strategy represents the full array of land management agencies and cooperators in the Lake Tahoe Basin whose responsibility is the protection of life and property in our communities and neighborhoods," said LTBMU forest supervisor Nancy Gibson. "I'm very proud of the work of both LTBMU and Lahontan staff in fulfilling this important need."

The Lahontan Regional Water Board is a State of California office within the State Water Resources Control Board, an agency of the California Environmental Protection Agency. The Lahontan Water Board protects and restores water quality in California east of the Cascade and Sierra Nevada crests from the Oregon border through the Mojave Desert.

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