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| **For Immediate Release:** | **Contact:** Megan Taylor |
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**Heller Urges Department of Agriculture to Fund AlertTahoe, Protect Nevadans Against Wildfires**

**WASHINGTON** – U.S. Senator Dean Heller (R-NV) today urged U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to ensure that the Lake Tahoe Basin has the proper tools to protect its communities from the imminent threat of wildfire, and ask the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) to fully fund the AlertTahoe Fire Monitoring and Early Detection Warning System in Nevada. AlertTahoe is an innovative camera system in the Lake Tahoe Area used to help firefighters prevent, monitor, and detect deadly blazes.

“As you know, Nevada experienced devastating wildfires in 2017. With nearly 1.3 million acres burned in my state alone, last year was one of the worst fire seasons in recorded history,” **Heller wrote in a letter to USDA Secretary Sonny Perdue**. “It is my hope that your department will fully fund AlertTahoe’s request in order to further protect the Lake Tahoe Basin from catastrophic wildfire. In conjunction with the U.S. Forest Service, the AlertTahoe system has already prevented more than 50 fires in the Basin from reaching one acre in size. This is a worthwhile investment to ensure wildfires are spotted and snuffed out before reaching disastrous levels.”

Earlier this year, Heller [attended a roundtable discussion](https://www.heller.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/pressreleases?ID=9C11C7A7-ACE7-466E-B777-03D76215A3EF) with U.S. Department of the Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke, USDA Secretary Perdue, and USFS Acting Chief Vicky Christensen as well as other members of Congress to discuss wildfire prevention measure in Nevada and across the West. At the event Heller discussed his bill, [the Emergency Fuel Reduction Act (S.1752)](https://www.heller.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/2017/8/heller-introduces-bill-to-help-prevent-wildfires-in-nevada), which would eliminate timely federal permitting for hazardous fuel reduction projects on public lands. This legislation gives the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and U.S. Forest Service the tools to clean up dead and dying trees on federal lands in an expedited fashion.

As a member of the Senate Western Caucus, Heller has championed several pieces of legislation to combat fires in Nevada and has taken action to support the AlertTahoe program. Most recently, [Heller supported legislation signed into law to provide federal funding for wildfire management and improvements to firefighting](https://www.heller.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/2018/3/heller-secures-nv-priorities-in-spending-measure-bill-now-headed-to-the-president-s-desk) by modernizing aviation, radio, and evacuation system infrastructure and other platforms that detect and monitor fire, which includes projects like AlertTahoe. It also directs the Forest Service to partner with the University of Nevada on wildfire risk mapping.

**The full text of the letter can be found** [**here**](https://www.heller.senate.gov/public/_cache/files/04a730d4-f8bd-4ef2-bc13-23ff8b15f784/AlertTahoe%20Letter%20to%20Secretary%20Perdue.pdf) **and below:**

*Dear Secretary Perdue:*

*I write you today to share my support for the AlertTahoe Fire Monitoring and Early Detection Warning System in my state and to ask the U.S. Forest Service to fully fund this important program to ensure the Lake Tahoe Basin has the proper tools to protect its communities from the imminent threat of wildfire.*

*As you know, Nevada experienced devastating wildfires in 2017. With nearly 1.3 million acres burned in my state alone, last year was one of the worst fire seasons in recorded history. This year, northern Nevada is predicted to be one of the most at-risk areas in the country from May to July.  Given the urgent need for fuel reduction and increased fire suppression activities on federal lands, I introduced my legislation, the Emergency Fuel Reduction Act (S.1752), which would expedite the review process for wildfire prevention projects on public lands that pose a threat to critical infrastructure, private land holders, and endangered species habitats.*

*Another important and cost-effective step in fire suppression is the continued investment in new technologies that reduce fire suppression costs and increase the likelihood of stopping a wildfire before it starts. AlertTahoe combines innovative technology with on-the-ground firefighting efforts to protect communities in the Lake Tahoe Basin from wildfires. By using a fire camera system that remains connected during outages, smoke and fire can be detected more quickly, enabling firefighters to efficiently respond in order to prevent catastrophic fires.*

*I worked with my colleagues in Congress in a bipartisan effort to ensure that the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2018 (Public Law 115-141) included additional funding for wildfire suppression and prevention, including report language that assigns $65,000,000 in funds to modernize fire infrastructure and new platforms that detect and monitor fire. Recently, AlertTahoe submitted a funding request of $226,600 to cover the implementation of four new cameras and upgrade 13 existing cameras in the Basin to better connect to the emergency response network.*

*It is my hope that your department will fully fund AlertTahoe’s request in order to further protect the Lake Tahoe Basin from catastrophic wildfire.  In conjunction with the U.S. Forest Service, the AlertTahoe system has already prevented more than 50 fires in the Basin from reaching one acre in size. This is a worthwhile investment to ensure wildfires are spotted and snuffed out before reaching disastrous levels.*

*Thank you for your attention to this request. Please do not hesitate to contact me or my staff if you have any further questions regarding my support.*

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