**Heller: “Lake Tahoe is once again a national priority.”**

*Water Bill including LTRA to be considered by Congress before adjournment*

**(Washington, DC)** – United States Senator Dean Heller (R-NV) announced the House and Senate have agreed to include the bipartisan *Lake Tahoe Restoration Act* ([S. 1724](http://www.heller.senate.gov/public/_cache/files/6bb61667-92cc-43a8-b91f-7ea86fa1303f/Lake%20Tahoe%20Restoration%20Act%202015.pdf)) in the final bicameral *Water Resources Development Act of 2106 (WRDA)*. The Heller-sponsored bill was crafted to improve water clarity, reduce wildfire threats, jumpstart transportation and infrastructure projects, and combating invasive species at the Lake.

**“This is a monumental step in the legislative process for the Tahoe Basin. After fighting for years to refocus federal policy on the twenty-first century threats to the Lake, we have ensured important work that will preserve the Jewel of the Sierras for future generations will advance. This was a total team effort by both the Nevada and California delegations which required bicameral and bipartisan support. As we look forward to a final vote, Nevadans can rest assured, Lake Tahoe is once again a national priority,”** said United States Senator Dean Heller.

**Background:**

The Nevada and California Congressional Delegations have been working to reauthorize the Lake Tahoe Restoration Act (LTRA) since the original law (Public Law No: 106-506) expired in 2009. On July 5, 2015, Senators Heller, Feinstein, Reid, and Boxer [introduced the S.1724](http://www.heller.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/pressreleases?ID=b34df278-63bc-4bdd-9505-30db51d68929) in the 114th Congress, the first time Senator Heller was the lead sponsor of this bipartisan initiative.

After navigating the bill through the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee on [January 20, 2016](http://www.heller.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/pressreleases?ID=4517CAF9-D021-4E4F-8662-8EA1F7827890), without any Republican opposition for the first time since reauthorization efforts began, the delegations’ efforts were focused on new legislative routes to enact the LTRA. S.1724 was ultimately attached to the Water Resources Development Act of 2016 (S.2848), broader national legislation focused on infrastructure that mitigates flood risks, improve routes for the movement of goods, and invests in aging infrastructure for drinking water and wastewater. S.2848 [passed the full United States Senate on September 15, 2016](http://www.heller.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/pressreleases?ID=9261CE4B-E597-4A7B-ACA0-43C0F9D8EFFF), marking the first time the Lake Tahoe reauthorization bill has ever been approved by the full U.S. Senate.

Over the past two months, Senate and House members worked to reach a bicameral agreement rectifying the differences between their two respective Water Resources Development Acts of 2016 (S.2848/H.R.5303). On November 3, [Senator Heller led a bipartisan coalition of over 50 members in both the House and Senate in writing a letter](http://www.heller.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/pressreleases?ID=BD05E74C-9377-4C35-916C-B4EB8BA41A25) to the leaders of the committees negotiating the final WRDA legislation. Heller stressed the importance of including the Lake Tahoe Restoration Act language in the final legislation, since the House-passed bill did not include any Lake Tahoe-related provisions.

The final bicameral agreement, – link when public –, which is expected to be voted on by both the House and Senate next week, includes nearly all of the original Senate-passed Lake Tahoe language. Specifically, the bill invests $415 million in the Tahoe Basin over the next 7 years toward:

* **Wildfire Prevention** – Provides $150 million for fire risk reduction and forest management. These dollars go toward fuel reduction projects in high-risk areas like South Shore, Carnelian Bay, Incline, and West shore stewardship contracts to restore forest health and wildlife habitat, and municipal water infrastructure to support improved flows for firefighting. A House provision focused on streamlining approvals for these types of activities was also included.
* **The Environmental Improvement Program (EIP)**– Provides$80 million to jumpstart projects spanning from new bike trails to creek restoration and fire treatment. Some previous EIP projects that have benefited the region include the Heavenly Gondola and Village, the Angora Fire rehabilitation, Lake View Commons, the Sand Harbor Visitor Center, and the Incline Creek Restoration.
* **The Invasive Species Management Program**– Provides $45 million to prevent the introduction of the quagga mussel and manage other harmful invasive species like the Asian clam. This includes lake-wide aquatic invasive species control and a watercraft inspection program.
* **Stormwater Projects** – Sets aside $113 million to implement storm water management, erosion control, and watershed restoration projects. Storm water runoff from roads and the urban areas in the basin, vehicle exhaust, altered wetlands and streams, and inadequate storm water pollution control have significantly impacted Lake Tahoe’s famous clarity.
* **The Lahontan Cutthroat Trout Recovery Program** – Allocates $20 million to recover the Lahontan cutthroat trout – a federally threatened species and Nevada’s state fish.
* **Increases Accountability and Oversight** – Provides $5 million to ensure projects will have monitoring and assessment in order to determine the most cost-effective projects and ensure dollars are properly utilized.
* **Overall Management Improvement** – Sets aside $2 million to cover the cost of land exchanges and sales on both the California and Nevada sides of the Tahoe Basin that will improve efficiencies of public land management.

The federal government owns nearly 80 percent of the land in the Lake Tahoe Basin, creating a significant responsibility for its agencies to contribute to the ongoing management of its natural resources. The $415 million authorized under the Senate bill ensures the federal government’s share of this responsibility is met.

Additionally, the final bicameral agreement also includes a [Heller-Heinrich rural water initiative](http://www.heller.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/pressreleases?ID=C697B072-ECDD-4A89-854C-113893769A51), which passed the Senate in September. Senator Heller spoke on the Senate floor about both that amendment and the Lake Tahoe Restoration Act. The remarks as prepared and the video can both be found [here](http://www.heller.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/videos?ID=F8B00BD2-B152-4291-A150-E0564305A801).