

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

August 2, 2022

The Honorable Tom Vilsack
Secretary
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20250

Dear Secretary Vilsack:

Lake Tahoe is the largest alpine lake in North America, and is truly a national treasure. As you know, the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) manages more than 75% of the land in the Lake Tahoe Basin and plays a central role in protecting and restoring the basin in partnership with the states of Nevada and California, the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency, local governments, and private and non-profit sector partners. We would like to make you aware of two emerging concerns where your leadership and attention would help ensure continued success for the region: recruiting and retaining senior USFS leadership and reestablishing the Lake Tahoe Basin Federal Advisory Committee (LTBFAC).

USFS' Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit (LTBMU) was created in 1973 and has served the region well in managing the unique needs of Lake Tahoe, including forest health, recreation, and wildfire threats. For nearly 50 years, LTBMU has seen a number of transformative Forest Supervisors at its helm. However, the increased attrition rate of LTBMU senior leadership is concerning. While we were pleased to see the appointment of Erick Walker as the new Forest Supervisor, his appointment came after the second search for a new Supervisor in recent years. We would like to work with you and the Service to explore opportunities to maintain the unique role and stature of the Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit, including making Forest Service positions more attractive for future applicants looking to take on and stay in these important roles for the long-term.

Additionally, we are concerned that the Lake Tahoe Basin Federal Advisory Committee (LTBFAC), which served as a national model for how engaged citizens can collaborate with federal, state, tribal, and local partners to establish consensus on issues, was allowed to expire in 2017. As the community continues to work together to address the environmental and economic challenges in the region, we urge you and USFS to quickly reestablish the LTBFAC.

The LTBFAC is a vital component of public engagement in decisions affecting the region and a key resource during LTBMU leadership transition. No other structure exists that enables a broad representation of local, regional, tribal, and federal interests to provide the kind of advice the Federal Interagency Partnership needs. The LTBFAC was first established by the Secretary of Agriculture and chartered under the Federal Advisory Committee Act (5 U.S.C. App.) on July 17, 1998 in order to provide advice based on the consensus of its members to the Federal Interagency Partnership established by Executive Order 13057.


The LTBFAC worked cooperatively to help protect the extraordinary natural, recreational, and ecological resources in the Lake Tahoe Region and decided how to facilitate the integration and coordination of appropriate federal programs and funds to help achieve the goals of the Lake Tahoe Regional Environmental Improvement Program (EIP). The EIP is codified as the region's capital investment program to achieve environmental standards designed to protect the region's environment and economy set forth in the Tahoe Regional Planning Compact (PL-96-551 as amended).

The LTBFAC also played a vital role in developing consensus for the Tahoe program funding from the Southern Nevada Public Land Management Act (SNPLMA). The LTBFAC was identified by the Lake Tahoe Restoration Act (Pub. L. No. 106-506) and the implementation agreement for the Southern Nevada Public Land Management Act of 1998 (Pub. L. No. 105-263) as essential in providing advice and recommendations. In the absence of an active federal advisory committee, regional stakeholders are no longer able to collaborate on prioritizing projects for SNPLMA in any official way resembling an advisory committee.

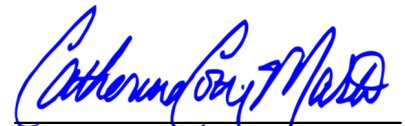
Lake Tahoe is a scenic and ecological treasure and we need strong stewardship to protect it into the future. We urge you to prioritize the recruitment and retention of senior leadership at the LTBMU as well as reestablishing the LTBFAC so the community can better collaborate on the most pressing issues and thrive for generations to come.

Thank you for your consideration and we look forward to receiving your response.


Sincerely,



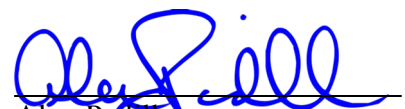
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