

## Federal stimulus funds on way for Calif. side of Tahoe

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SIERRA SUN,

TAHOE CITY, Calif. — The U.S. Forest Service will fund about \$89 million in fuels reduction and forest health projects nationally with federal stimulus funds, with about \$10 million coming to California and \$500,000 to Nevada.

According to a Sept. 9 announcement, only the California projects will affect Lake Tahoe Basin counties, as the forest service in Placer and El Dorado share a \$5 million fuels reduction project with two other counties. Placer is set to get a cut of \$2.1 million from another fuels project shared with two other counties, and all California counties share another \$2 million for reduction work.

Out of that pot about \$3.5 is expected to fund projects on the California side of Lake Tahoe, said officials with the forest service.

"These (American Recovery and Reinvestment Act) projects will put people to work and advance the (Barack) Obama Administration's vision for a balanced and cooperative approach to forest management that will provide for public health and safety by restoring forestlands and rangelands damaged by insects, disease, and invasive species," said U.S. Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack in a release. "Proper forest management helps protect our forests for the benefit of current and future generations by restoring the vitality and productivity of the land."

Cheva Heck, a public affairs officer with USFS, said the roughly \$3.5 million coming to the California side of Lake Tahoe will be funneled through the Nevada Fire Safe Council to fund fuels reduction projects among the basin's five California fire agencies.

### In Nevada

None of the newly-awarded stimulus money is set aside for Nevada's share of the Lake Tahoe basin, though Washoe County has been given a share of \$2.7 million in stimulus funds awarded earlier in the year.

Congressman Dean Heller, R- Nev., expressed disappointment that Washington, D.C., collected roughly \$2.7 million for fuels reductions projects, while none are headed to the Nevada side of Lake Tahoe.

"During my time in Congress I have made wildfires suppression and fuels reductions my priorities. The Angora fire underscored the need for greater fuels reduction in the Tahoe Basin. The fact that millions of dollars are reserved for wildfire management in Washington, DC and none is directed to Lake Tahoe is another example of the misguided priorities of the stimulus bill," Heller said in an e-mail to the Sun. "I am committed to working with the Nevada delegation to explore new avenues that will bring the needed fuels reduction projects to the Tahoe Basin."

The more than \$2.7 million slated for D.C. is to fund the Mayor's Green Summer Job Corps, a program which puts area youth to work around the city in "green collar jobs," according to the project's website.

The federal government has issued Nevada about \$8.25 million in stimulus funds so far this year.

### In California

The Truckee Ranger District of Tahoe National Forest didn't get any of the new federal funds, said Scott Conway, vegetation management officer for Tahoe National Forest, but instead got a bigger piece of the forest service's regular budget because so many other areas got money from the stimulus.

"I was just able to award a contract for thousands of acres of forest treatment from the north side of Tahoe Donner to Sagehen Creek," Conway said.

Tahoe National Forest did get funding for Perazzo Meadows restoration work from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, to be used to rehabilitate the meadow ecosystem and relocate the stream channel.

"This is one of the most beautiful and important meadow ecosystems in the Tahoe National Forest and we are excited to be able to start this restoration project with ARRA funding and support from the Truckee River Watershed Council," said Quentin Youngblood, Sierraville District Ranger in a press release.

California has been the recipient of about \$56.2 in stimulus funds this year for fuels reduction work.

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