

Economics to be topic at annual Tahoe enviro summit

By Frank X. Mullen Jr., Reno Gazette-Journal

Invasive species, the threat of devastating wildfires and the economic future of Lake Tahoe will be topics at the forefront of the 14th annual Lake Tahoe Summit scheduled for Tuesday at Sand Harbor State Park.

"Environmental gains and economic gains are inextricably linked," said Dennis Oliver, spokesman for the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency. "The conversation at the lake is that the region needs to reinvent itself as a destination in order to come out of our economic doldrums."

Oliver said the area's economic woes predate the national downturn. Over the past decade, increased gaming competition elsewhere has whittled away at the lake's casino-based economy. On Monday, Tahoe business leaders are meeting in a "Prosperity Summit" to discuss ways to diversify the local economy, a theme that will carry over to the next day's event at Sand Harbor, which is hosted by U.S. Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid, D-Nev.

Previous Tahoe Summits focused exclusively on environmental concerns.

The forums began in 1997, when Democratic President Bill Clinton, Democratic Vice President Al Gore and Reid hosted the first summit, a conference aimed at ensuring that the natural beauty of Lake Tahoe would be preserved. At the time, Lake Tahoe was losing its clarity at the rate of about one foot per year.

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