Opinion: LT Restoration Act must be approved to help Tahoe

By Dianne Feinstein

Anyone doubting that climate change poses a severe threat to Lake Tahoe should read an alarming new report by the UC Davis Tahoe Environmental Research Center.

It was written for the U.S. Forest Service by scientists who have devoted their professional careers to studying Lake Tahoe. And it paints a distinctly bleak picture of the future for the Jewel of the Sierra.

Among its findings: The Tahoe basin's regional snowpack could decline by as much as 60 percent in the next century, with increased floods likely by 2050 and prolonged droughts by 2100.



Dianne Feinstein

Even "under the most optimistic projections," average snowpack in the Sierra Nevada around Tahoe will decline by 40 to 60 percent by 2100, according to the report.

This would likely bankrupt Tahoe's ski industry, threaten the water supply of Reno and other communities and degrade the lake's fabled water clarity. It is devastating.

That’s why it’s vital for the U.S. Senate to pass the Lake Tahoe Restoration Act of 2010, which I co-sponsored with Sens. Harry Reid, D-Nev.; Barbara Boxer, D-Calif. and John Ensign, R-Nev.

This legislation would authorize a broad array of programs to mount an aggressive attack on the many threats facing Lake Tahoe and the Tahoe basin, including invasive species, wildfires and pollution and sedimentation.

According to the UC Davis report, an all-out attack on pollution and sedimentation may be the lake’s last best hope.

Geoff Schladow, director of the UC Davis Tahoe Environmental Research Center and one of the report’s authors, noted the need to restore short-term water quality in Lake Tahoe – while there’s still time to do it.

“Reducing the load of external nutrients entering the lake in the coming decades may be the only possible mitigation measure to reduce the impact of climate change on lake clarity,” the report said.

Without such an effort, the “internal loading of nutrients” could fundamentally change the lake and fuel algal growth, creating a downward spiral in water quality and clarity.

Water clarity is one of the central problems the legislation would address.

Pollution and sedimentation have threatened Lake Tahoe’s water clarity for years. In 1968, the first year UC Davis scientists made measurements using a device called a Secchi disk, clarity was measured at an average depth of 102.4 feet. Clarity declined over the next three decades, hitting a low of 64 feet in 1997.

There has been some improvement in this decade. This year scientists recorded average clarity at 69.6 feet – roughly

within the range of the past eight years. But it is a fragile gain.

Climate change has already made itself apparent at Lake Tahoe. It makes the basin dry and tinder-hot, raising the risks of catastrophic wildfire. Daily air temperatures have increased 4 degrees since 1911. Snow has declined as a fraction of total precipitation, from an average of 52 percent in 1910 to just 34 percent in recent years.

And climate change has caused Lake Tahoe's water temperature to rise 1.5 degrees in 38 years. That means the cyclical deep-water mixing of the lake's waters will occur less frequently, and this could significantly disrupt Lake Tahoe's ecosystem.

Specifically, the legislation would authorize the highest-priority restoration projects. These would include stormwater management and watershed restoration projects scientifically determined to be the most effective ways to improve water clarity.

It also would authorize projects to reduce the threat of wildfire at Lake Tahoe. Wildfires not only destroy the forest and threaten lives, they send ash into the streams that feed into Lake Tahoe, further degrading water clarity.

It would also authorize programs to attack invasive species such as quagga mussels and Asian clams. Just one quagga mussel can lay 1 million eggs, and an infestation could destroy the lake's biology and the local economy.

This legislation would build upon the gains established under the Lake Tahoe Restoration Act of 2000. This earlier law set in motion a partnership among the federal government, the states of California and Nevada, local governments and organizations, and the private sector.

It financed more than 300 projects under the Environmental Improvement Program, with another 183 projects under way.

These programs led to reversals in the slide in water clarity and a reduction in hazardous fuels. The dead, dying and downed trees that fuel wildfires have been treated on 33,549 acres, including 12,256 acres since 2006.

A lot of good work has been done. But this newest report from UC Davis makes it plain as day: There's a lot more work to do, and time is running out.

Dianne Feinstein is the senior U.S. senator from California.

Ski report: Wind, snow, cold — then repeat

It's a powder day on the slopes. Sierra-at-Tahoe expects to makes its debut Tuesday.



Here is the ski report from Curtis Fong, the Guy from Tahoe.

Wind — yes, again — will be the issue for today. A wind advisory has been issued for Lake Tahoe by the National Weather Service in Reno.

A winter storm warning has been issued from 10pm Monday to 4pm Tuesday. Lots of blowing snow is expected, along with frigid temperatures as the Arctic blast drops into the basin as well as lower area like Reno and the Carson Valley.

There could be 8-14 inches at the lake, and 2 feet above 7,000

feet when you wake up Tuesday.

“Whiteout conditions are likely over the ridges and passes becoming widespread for a one- to three-hour period Tuesday morning. Travel delays will occur Tuesday morning,” the NWS forecasts.

LTUSD on snow day; DCSD, TTUSD, LTCC in session

By Kathryn Reed

It’s a snow day for schools in Lake Tahoe Unified School District. It’s a school day for students in Douglas County School District, Tahoe Truckee Unified School District and Lake Tahoe Community College.

The TACCD meeting for Monday has also been canceled.

Ron Christino told *Lake Tahoe News* at 5:45 this morning that all the roads look good, including the top of Kingsbury Grade. Christino is the bus guru at the lake for DCSD.



LTUSD buses won't be leaving the garage today.

Photo/Kathryn
Reed

He said NDOT has everything plowed on the highway and the Kingsbury General Improvement District has the side roads plowed.

“They do the school bus routes first thing in the morning and then they go to the other side streets,” Christino said.

This is not the case with South Lake Tahoe plows on LTUSD routes. *Lake Tahoe News* knows of at least one street on the bus route that often isn’t plowed until after the buses have gone by.

It’s a little windy and blowing snow at the top of the grade, Christino said. He is more worried about what Tuesday will bring. His sources tell him it will be 10 below zero, more snow and ice conditions on the roads when he starts his day.

DCSD is scheduled to be out for the Thanksgiving holiday Wednesday after a half day of classes. LTUSD is supposed to be out Tuesday after a half day.

Tahoe Tails – Adoptable Pets in South Lake Tahoe

Duchess is a sweet, affectionate shorthaired cat, about 1 year old. She likes other cats. And look at those beautiful eyes.



Duchess is at the El Dorado County Animal Services shelter in Meyers, along with many other dogs, cats, and rabbits who are waiting for their new homes.

Call (530) 573.7925 for directions, hours, and other information on adopting a pet.

For spay-neuter assistance for South Tahoe residents, go to the website.

– Karen Kuentz

Opinion: Legislators' junket proves it's business as usual

Publisher's note: *This editorial is from the Nov. 18, 2010, Sacramento Bee.*

More than 20 legislators led by Speaker John A. Pérez are in Maui, courtesy of interest groups and lobbyists who soon will be seeking their votes on legislation.

As the *Bee's* Jim Sanders reported on Wednesday, some and perhaps all of the Assembly members and senators are accepting airfare and lodging paid for by a nonprofit corporation called California Independent Voter Project. The article raises an issue that the newly aggressive Fair Political Practices Commission ought to confront.

The California Independent Voter Project is a brainchild of Steve Peace, a former assemblyman, senator and director of the

California Department of Finance. Because he established his group as a nonprofit, Peace is under no obligation to identify the donors who are footing the bill, or how much they are contributing.

Other nonprofits also sponsor junkets without disclosing who pays. The FPPC should find a way to remove this blind spot from the law, and adopt rules that would require that nonprofit corporations disclose donors who pay for such junkets.

Read the whole story

Harrah's boss says gaming industry gets bad rap

By Amanda Finnegan, Las Vegas Sun

Harrah's Entertainment Chief Executive and President Gary Loveman said a major roadblock in the path of the growth of casino companies is misinformation about the industry.

Rather than talk about the industry's recovery, Loveman used his afternoon keynote address at the Global Gaming Expo Wednesday to campaign against the misconceptions that surround the casino industry. He made no mention of the Las Vegas-based operator's progress or future plans during his address.

"The vast majority of people cannot conveniently access our services, and that is a big problem. People who want to use our services have to get on an airplane, make an international trip or drive hours for something that we could provide," Loveman said.

“It should offend us every day that adults can’t entertain themselves in the way that they want to when they have access to so many other things.”

While products like fast food and liquor that are viewed as unhealthy are available almost everywhere in the U.S., casino companies only operate in 13 states, Loveman pointed out.

Read the whole story

Optimist Christmas tree lot opens Friday

The Optimist Club will set up its annual tree lot at El Dorado Beach in South Lake Tahoe on Nov. 24, with sales beginning Nov. 26.

Normal hours are weekdays noon-8pm and weekends 10am-8pm.

Snow can play a role in the hours. Shaking off the naturally flocked trees and clearing the lot can take some time.

The proceeds go back into the local community.

SNC Concert Choir to perform in December

The Sierra Nevada College Concert Choir translates the spirit of the season into music Dec. 2 and Dec. 4 at 7pm at St.

Patrick’s Episcopal Church in Incline Village.

Forty voices will perform Puccini’s Gloria (messa di Gloria). Puccini’s lyrical melodies and emotionally moving scoring shine brightly in this composition.

Under the direction of Donna Axton, music program chair at SNC, the combined college and community choir will feature solos by two well-known singers – tenor Kevin Beiswenger and baritone David Pierce.

The concert’s second section features Ray Linn’s music and overflows with traditional seasonal carols and songs –including several familiar sing-along selections.

SNC student spotlights include Lauren Upton, Yesenia Ruelas, Valerie McIntyre, Momoko Nishiyama, Danielle Flores and Jill Colbert.

Eunice Marion’s “Incline Choraliers” will be special guests, and Claire Roberts, Josii Johnson, and Kestral Sura will add to the fun. The orchestra for this performance relies on the talent of Katie Lauder (piano), Ben Wallek (bass), Toni Healey (flute), Darrell Moore (clarinet), Ben Benjamin (bassoon), Bruce Kanzelmeyer (horn), Virginia Bowman and Liz Glattly (violin).

Tickets are $12 in advance, $15 at the door, $10 all students and seniors. The are available in Incline at the Potlatch, Artists of Tahoe (in the Village Center), or the SNC bookstore; and in Tahoe City at Pablo’s Gallery.

For more information on the concert, call (775) 881.7586 or email daxton@sierranevada.edu.

Wine tasting event is more than just sipping the grape

By Kathryn Reed

STATELINE – What do more than two dozen wineries, a brewery, a coffeehouse, a bakery and more than a dozen restaurants have in common?

They were all in one room on a recent Friday pouring beverages and dishing up food to hundreds of supporters of Soroptimist International of South Lake Tahoe's at the service club's annual wine tasting.

I finally figured out how to have an even better time than usual and not end up needing to dry clean my outfit because it smelled like smoke. Spending the night at Harrah's Lake Tahoe, where the event was, was the solution to not enduring the cigarette stench of cabs that proliferate the South Shore.



The annual Soroptimist wine tasting at Harrah's is also about food and silent auction bidding. Photos/Kathryn Reed

We've taken a cab to this event for a few years. It's safer. I just can't seem to figure out how much I consume at this event, so I don't want to be behind the wheel. But after last year, I said I would never take a cab in this town again and even if I trusted public transit, my vanity prevents me from getting on a bus in a skirt.

After this experience, I think Harrah's and Soroptimist (and all the service groups that have events at the casinos) should offer a package for their respective events. It would help the economy and make the roads safer.

With all the restaurants and wineries in this one room, it's impossible to sample them all. But partygoers can vote on their favorite, with the winner receiving a plaque that night.

Best Restaurant went to Zephyr Cove Resort. Chef Anthony Lujan created coconut shrimp with a sweet Thai chili sauce. Best Winery went to Macchia.

All of the restaurants are from the South Shore, while the wineries hail from throughout California, including El Dorado, Sonoma and Napa counties, as well as the Paso Robles area.

The vegetarian options are always scarce, so I tend to eat a big lunch before the event. But a nice surprise this year was the abundance of bread Sugar Pine Bakery brought. I had my share and a few other people's.

It's one of those nights where conversations never seem to be completed because just as you get started talking with one person someone else you know walks up. That's also the fun part of the soiree – catching up with people who you haven't seen in a while, hanging with friends, and seeing business associates in a different context.

The thousands of dollars raised from sales of the $65 tickets, multiple silent auction tables and raffle goes back to the community to projects helping women and girls. Here are some

of the recipients who have received money from SISLT.

I always find it interesting when people who are the high bidders say they "won" the silent auction item. I took my "winnings" up to the comfy room, thinking more wine was needed.

Housekeeping at Harrah's graciously brought up a wine opener. Apparently we had had our fill because neither of us could finish another glass.

The sweet potato fries are worth ordering from room service to help absorb the wine. (I have a French fry problem; some may call it an addiction – but that's another story.)

It had been several years since I had stayed at Harrah's. The room was much nicer than what I had remembered – tastefully decorated and spacious – with a partial view of Lake Tahoe. Sunrise hitting the mountains beyond MontBleu was something I don't see out my bedroom window.

Four things that are somewhat minor but scored major points with both of us were: 1) not being able to smell smoke when stepping off the elevator, 2) having a thermostat that was accurate, 3) a heating system that is silent, and 4) having a shampoo-conditioner-soap dispenser instead the wasteful tiny plastic bottles.

The next morning meant needing to go out for breakfast. We walked over to Heavenly Village to eat at Driftwood Café – our first time to do since it moved from the other side of the street. It was as good as we had remembered.

The breakfast-lunch eatery has some different things than other restaurants in the area – like quiche, ugly fries (grilled potatoes, green onions, mushrooms with melted cheddar), as well as Bloody Mary's and carafes of mimosas.

I had the Huevos Del Driftwood ($8.95), but probably could

have gotten the half order. Sue had the Basic American Fare (two eggs, potato pancake or home fries, toast) for $7.25. Javier was an incredible waiter – try too sit in his section.

Staying the night at Harrah's made for the best Soroptimist wine tasting event yet. This could be habit forming.

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Single digits, snow to continue

The National Weather Service in Reno has extended the winter weather advisory for the greater Lake Tahoe area until 10am Nov. 22. A winter storm watch has been issued from Monday evening through Tuesday afternoon.

Moderate snow is expected overnight Sunday. Meteorologists are calling for snow accumulations of 6 to 12 inches along and west of Highway 89 with 3 to 6 inches elsewhere.



Forecast -- Highway 89 about to be even whiter. Photo/Kathryn Reed

Winds will be from the southwest at 15 to 25mph, with gusts to 40mph.

The storm Monday night could bring another 1 to 2 feet at lake level.

This is on top of the more than 2 feet of snow that has already fallen at the lake, multiple feet in the higher elevations, and inches in the Reno-valley areas.

Expect the roads to be nasty as temperatures dip – possibly as low as 5 degrees Sunday night in Reno. The forecast for South Lake Tahoe shows Tuesday's overnight low as zero. Although the sun will return Wednesday, the high is expected to be 21 degrees with an overnight low that night of 8 degrees.

– Kathryn Reed