

Officials promise to protect Lake Tahoe with \$415 million

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Federal officials promised Tuesday to protect Lake Tahoe for future generations, a pledge that one said doesn't rule out also maintaining a robust regional economy. California's junior senator, Kamala Harris, a Democrat who took office in January, said officials can protect the delicate Lake Tahoe Basin and the cold, deep cobalt lake straddling the California and Nevada border without devastating a \$5 billion annual economy that largely caters to tourists, skiers, gamblers and recreation-seekers.

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Harris used the 21st annual Lake Tahoe Summit to call for "rejecting false choices on this issue of the environment and suggesting that you're either in favor of the economy of you're in favor of the environment. That's nonsense. That's a false choice which we just reject. We can do both."

Democratic U.S. Sen. Dianne Feinstein of California and Republican U.S. Sen. Dean Heller of Nevada co-authored the Lake Tahoe Restoration Act that former President Barack Obama signed into law in December. It authorizes \$415 million in federal money over seven years for projects to improve the lake's famed water clarity, reduce the risk of catastrophic wildfires, counter invasive species and protect threatened native species and wildlands.

The 2017 Lake Tahoe Summit will be hosted by California Senator Dianne Feinstein from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. on Tuesday, August 22 at Valhalla Tahoe in South Lake Tahoe

Media: KCRA / KQCA US

Heller noted that part of the new money will go toward nonpolluting transportation projects like new bike trails, along with restoring deteriorating roads and bridges and seeking other means of reducing congestion and protecting the lake.

The first Lake Tahoe Restoration Act, in 2000, authorized the federal government to spend \$415 million over 10 years to restore the lake.

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Feinstein said that helped lead to more than \$2 billion in combined spending by the federal government, California, Nevada, local communities and private businesses. It funded more than 500 improvement and restoration projects, with 139 more in progress.

Feinstein, who hosted the summit along the lake's south shore, said a key focus is on countering the effects of climate change. She noted a recent scientific report from University of California, Davis, researchers that found the lake is warming much faster now than its historical average.

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Democratic U.S. Sen. Catherine Cortez Masto of Nevada said in her prepared remarks that the nation is at a pivotal point not just for the lake, but "for the health and sustainability of our public lands and environment."

She criticized Republican President Donald Trump for considering revoking some national monument designations, a decision she said would "damage our rural economies and destroy our natural heritage."