

**Presentation by  
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Before the  
Nevada Legislative Committee for the Review and Oversight of the  
Tahoe Regional Planning Agency and the Marlette Lake Water System  
May 21, 2010**

Good afternoon, Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee. My name is Terri Marceron and I am the Forest Supervisor of the Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit. Thank you for providing me the opportunity to inform you on our status of projects associated with the Environmental Improvement Program on National Forest System lands within the Lake Tahoe Basin.

The Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit is a unique part of the National Forest System. Our focus and operations are within and slightly outside of the Lake Tahoe Basin watershed. We manage about 75% of the Basin or about 153,000 acres, which lies in two states, five counties, one incorporated city, and works with multiple regulatory agencies. I appreciate the relationship we have with Nevada and your agency officials that work with us to maintain a smooth, positive relationship.

I know some of you are new to this committee, so I'd like to share a little context in relationship to our organization as we are sometimes confused with the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest. The Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit is a separate, individual forest and is part of the Pacific Southwest Region, headquartered in Vallejo, CA. We share boundaries with the Humboldt-Toiyabe (H-T) National Forest and have a good working relationship with them even though we are in different regions. One way to remember the difference is the LTBMU begins at the west ridge of the Sierra and goes down to the Lake; the H-T covers the area from the ridge east to Washoe and Carson Valleys and Carson City. Being close geographically and having forest boundaries in common gives us an opportunity to coordinate and work with the H-T on many issues, including recreation, hazardous fuels reduction and forest health.

We are a key player in implementing the Environmental Improvement Program, or EIP, the on-the-ground effort coordinated by the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency to attain regional environmental quality standards. I'd like to take this opportunity to highlight some key EIP projects on the Nevada side of the Lake. The majority of the projects I am sharing with you today are funded through the Southern Nevada Public Land Management Act (SNPLMA) which was amended in 2003 to appropriate the \$300 million federal share of the EIP. The LTBMU has been approved approximately \$166 million to complete work under the EIP. The projects I'm sharing with you today reflect this funding.

First, I'd like to highlight our Erosion Control Grants Program, which funds local governments to plan, design and implement urban erosion control and water quality treatment projects. We are in the process of awarding 2010 grants, which will include five projects totaling more than \$2.1 million in Nevada, including stormwater treatment planning for the portion of Douglas and Washoe counties within the Lake Tahoe Basin.

The LTBMU is at the forefront of providing outdoor recreation experiences, offering an amazing array of recreational activities on public lands throughout the year. I'd like to share how we are improving opportunities and experiences.

This summer, we will continue work on the spectacular new segment of the Tahoe Rim Trail traversing Daggett Summit at the top of Kingsbury Grade. This is a partnership effort involving the Tahoe Rim Trail Association, Nevada Division of State Lands, Nevada State Parks, Douglas County, and the Heavenly Homeowners Association. To fund this year's work, the LTBMU received \$500,000 from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, which will fund a contract to complete the most difficult sections of the 13 mile. I've provided some pictures of last summer's work that shows just how hard trail crews worked to create a spectacular trail through difficult terrain.

The LTBMU places a priority on encouraging alternative means of transportation to access Forest Service recreation sites around the Lake. We are working with Douglas County and the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency to complete planning for a segment of the Stateline to Stateline bike path that will link the casino corridor in Stateline, Nevada to our Round Hill Pines Resort.

In a project that combines recreation with water quality improvements, we will upgrade Nevada Beach Campground by installing erosion control features and water quality best management practices, making improvements to accessibility and replacing the restrooms with modern facilities.

We are reconstructing our fire station at Spooner Summit this summer that supports our wildland firefighting services on the East Shore of the Lake. The construction will incorporate green technology and remedy serious safety deficiencies in the previous station, which was demolished earlier this week. Zephyr Cove Resort is a partner in the project and will be basing their snowmobile concession out of the facility. We will base this season's fire operations out of the Tahoe Douglas Fire Protection District facilities until construction is complete in early December.

Talking about the construction of a new fire station leads me into an update on our hazardous fuels reduction and forest health projects in the Lake Tahoe Basin, one of our biggest programs. There are a variety of ways we reduce fuels and restore forest health: hand thinning and mechanical thinning, chipping; mastication, and prescribed burning (includes pile and under burning). There is a copy of a map in your packet that shows you where treatments have been done, what is being planned and implemented now, and where we are planning future projects. Although I'm focusing on the projects in Nevada, as you can see from the map, we are doing work all around the Lake.

In 2009, Basin-wide, we completed 1,104 hand-thinned acres and 709 mechanical acres. Of those, approximately 392 acres were in Nevada in the Round Hill and Slaughterhouse projects. This includes our urban lot thinning program. There are 3,438 urban lots in the Basin, 1,113 lots are in Nevada. All of the USFS lots in Nevada have had initial treatment and are now on a maintenance schedule. We fund North Lake Tahoe Fire Protection District and Tahoe-Douglas Fire Protection District, to complete a lot of these treatments (thinning and/or burning).

We also work with private homeowners. Most recently we entered into a stewardship agreement with Tahoe-Douglas to extend residential defensible space treatments from a home onto National Forest System lands up to 100 feet, as needed.

We have three large fuel reduction projects being implemented this summer: Round Hill, Slaughterhouse, and Spooner. We are finishing up the final 10 acres of mechanical thinning on the Round Hill project, which we expect to complete prior to Memorial Day weekend. You will find before and after pictures of last year's work on this project in your packet. In early June, we expect to start mechanical thinning on 88 acres adjacent to the Prey Meadows area of Slaughterhouse Canyon, a project which will take about one and a half months to complete.

We plan to mechanically treat 165 acres in the Spooner project from Spooner Summit north to Marlette Creek, which should take about two months. This work is part of the 3,755 acre Spooner Hazardous Fuels Reduction and Healthy Forest Restoration Project, which focuses on reducing the risk of catastrophic wildfire surrounding the communities of Logan Shoals, Cedarbrook and Glenbrook.

Finally, we are initiating our planning on about 5,000 acres in/surrounding Incline Village with public comment expected to begin late fall/early winter. Our plans are to begin implementation next summer.

After we complete thinning, we utilize prescribed fire to further reduce fuel loading and to bring fire back into this fire-adapted ecosystem. Fire returns natural processes back to the forest which is critical to vegetation and habitat. We use two types of prescribed fire – pile and understory burns. As we complete initial fuels treatments throughout the forest, we anticipate moving from burning piles of woody materials from fuels reduction projects to conducting understory burns that move toward restoring the role of fire in maintaining forest health.

We've been fortunate this spring to have had good conditions to make progress on our scheduled burns. So far in 2010, we've burned more than 900 acres in Nevada, compared to just over 500 in all of 2009.

During a recent prescribed fire operation in Slaughterhouse Canyon on Lake Tahoe's East Shore, we completed 245 acres of pile burning in two days. I've provided pictures in your packet of the burning. We burn under specific prescriptions which account for

fuel moistures, air temperature, relative humidity and winds (direction, mid-flame wind speed, higher elevation winds for transport/mixing). These prescriptions are designed to meet and comply with ambient air quality standards set by Nevada (Nevada Division Environmental Protection) and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. We plan and design the burning considering smoke, though all fires produce smoke.

Prior to burning, we notify other fire agencies, air quality officials, media and residents near the planned burn. We are always working to improve our coordination and communication.

For Slaughterhouse, we've waited a couple years to get within our burning "window". We recognize that these windows vary and can be very short in duration which was the case for Slaughterhouse. We burned on April 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup>. We reduced the number of piles and have begun to bring fire back into this landscape to restore forest function. This includes recognizing that the scorch created by this burning will result in some trees having their needles turn brown and fall off making them less susceptible to being killed in a wildfire. Scorch doesn't kill most trees. You will see them green in 1 to 2 years with their lowest branches much higher up.

One question we're often asked is why we don't remove materials from fuels products as biomass instead of piling. The answer is "we do where we can." Based on access and product value, we are working with our partners and contractors to have them haul away the wood instead of having us pile, burn or chip it. In 2009, approximately 603 loads, totaling 14,725, tons went to the Northern Nevada Correctional Center in Carson City.

In all, projects on the LTBMU resulted in the delivery of 31,380 tons of biomass to regional facilities in Nevada and California. Commercial and personal fuel wood sales totaling 2,087 cords and the sale of 3,000 Christmas trees also helped with removal of biomass from the forest.

In addition, we provided technical support and donated mats to keep soil from mixing with clean chip at a transfer station established last year on the East Shore. Transfer stations permit smaller loads of biomass to be consolidated and stored until enough material is available to fill a larger truck, reducing transport costs.

Steep slopes, sensitive terrain and lack of road access pose challenges to biomass removal in much of the Lake Tahoe Basin. In the Spooner project, which I mentioned earlier, we may treat one steeper unit using cable yarding, in which logs are partially or fully suspended and removed from the forest. If the monitoring results from this unit are favorable, we may apply this same system in other units, which means more potential for biomass removal and fewer piles to burn.

Our fuels work is guided through the 10-year Lake Tahoe Basin Multi-Jurisdictional Fuel Reduction and Wildfire Prevention Strategy completed in December of 2007. We coordinate and implement this Strategy with 15 agencies including three State agencies

(the Nevada Tahoe Resource Team, Nevada Division of Forestry, and Nevada Division of State Lands).

We coordinate projects with our partners on when and where based on readiness in order to maximize treatments. The project proposed for the Spooner area is a good example. We will be treating LTBMU lands adjacent to where work is being done in Clear Creek by the Humboldt-Toiyabe, and where Nevada State Parks is doing work just north of Forest Service lands. Independently, they are good projects. Done together in coordination, we can share resources and complete an area in a comprehensive, holistic manner.

To expedite our work on the ground, the LTBMU has cooperative agreements in place with the Nevada Division of Forestry, Nevada Conservation Corps, and Nevada honor camps, North Lake Tahoe Fire Protection District, the Tahoe-Douglas Fire Protection District and the Nevada Fire Safe Council.

One of the ways we help our partners is by helping them to obtain federal grants. The Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit has served to pass through grant monies to local and state agencies on the Nevada side. Last year, more than \$2.7 million in federal funds supported fuels reduction projects on the Nevada side through grants administered by the Nevada Fire Safe Council. Also in 2009, the State Clearinghouse grant program administered by Region 5 of the Forest Service provided federal funds to three projects in Nevada – at Chimney Rock, Zephyr Heights and Incline Creek -- for a total of nearly \$230,000. For 2010, 18 proposals have been submitted from the Lake Tahoe Basin for funding through this program and are under agency review. Selections on which proposals will be funded should be made this month.

Thank you for allowing me to highlight our current EIP projects located on National Forest System lands. If you would like to tour any of our projects, or visit any of our facilities, we would love to host you.