

From: [Elisabeth Lernhardt](#)
To: [Legislative Commission](#)
Subject: TRPA Oversight 2. 27. 2026
Date: Wednesday, February 25, 2026 4:27:40 PM

You don't often get email from elernhardt@yahoo.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

Please make this comment part of the record.

Sincerely

Elisabeth Lernhardt

It's now February 2026—five years after the Tamarack and Caldor fires devastated our region, and 19 years since the Angora Fire. Today, I want to ask: What real progress have we made?

Have our townships become safer? Are there official emergency evacuation plans in place to prevent another eight-hour traffic nightmare like the one we endured during the Caldor evacuation? Are our forests being actively managed to remove excessive fuel buildup? Unfortunately, these questions all point to the same troubling answer: no, not nearly enough.

If we accept that climate change is real—as the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency (TRPA) has repeatedly affirmed—why is there so little effort to mitigate its consequences? Drier seasons and reduced precipitation are heightening wildfire risks, yet as the overseeing agency for Tahoe, TRPA isn't pushing hard enough for true fire resiliency.

Consider the impacts: A single catastrophic fire releases more smoke, carbon, and ash than all combustion vehicles combined. The ashes from the 2021 fires altered Lake Tahoe's ecosystem by boosting nutrient levels, triggering algae blooms, and reducing water clarity. Wildfires burn far hotter than controlled burns, sterilizing soil for decades—just look at the persistent burn scar from the 2002 Gondola Fire above Heavenly. They wipe out wildlife and destroy habitats permanently.

The Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit of the Forest Service has admitted it's 20 years behind on controlled burns, despite a massive backlog of unburned fuel piles that exacerbates fire severity. Yet they receive enormous federal funding—\$415 million over the next 10 years! On top of that, there's a push to repurpose funds from the Santini-Burton Act for vague, unspecified projects. Where are the tangible results? Where is the accountability and transparency? We can't afford complacency. Tahoe deserves better—proactive management, real resiliency, and answers now. Thank you.
