

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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NEWS RELEASE

**Legislative Committee for the Review and
Oversight of the Tahoe Regional Planning
Agency and the Marlette Lake Water System
(NRS 218E.555)**

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CALIFORNIA AND NEVADA LEGISLATORS MEET IN SACRAMENTO TO SOLIDIFY THEIR PARTNERSHIP IN THE LAKE TAHOE BASIN

Senator John J. Lee (D-North Las Vegas), Chair of the Legislative Committee for the Review and Oversight of the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency (TRPA) and the Marlette Lake Water System, announced that he and Senator James A. Settelmeier (R-Minden), traveled to Sacramento, California, on Monday, September 24, 2012, to meet with California legislators at the State Capitol.

Senator Settelmeier said, "I believe this was the first time a Nevada delegation of legislators was able to meet with a California delegation in their State Capitol to discuss issues facing Lake Tahoe. I hope there will be more of these bi-state meetings in the future. Nevada is certainly ready and willing to participate." California Senator Ted Gaines (R-Rocklin, CA) echoed those sentiments saying, "We need to hold these meetings every year. There are legislators on both sides of the Lake who are deeply committed to protecting Lake Tahoe for future generations. We need to work together to make that happen."

Senator Lee noted the positive atmosphere at the meeting. He said, "I love Lake Tahoe, and I know there are like-minded legislators in California. This meeting was the first of what I hope will become an annual tradition to build the relationships necessary to support private and public efforts to revitalize the local economy while protecting the environment in the Tahoe Basin. It was encouraging to talk about some of the recent successes."

The group discussed the update of the Regional Plan for the Lake Tahoe Basin. Despite several years of delays, optimism prevailed on Monday, as the legislators voiced their faith that the TRPA Governing Board would approve the Regional Plan Update in December. The possibility that the updated Regional Plan will be litigated weighed on their minds, but the legislators noted the two states have worked diligently to address concerns by interest groups through an informal consultation group convened regularly by Leo M. Drozdoff, Director of Nevada's State Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, and John Laird, California Secretary for Natural Resources. The efforts of the bi-state consultation group complemented the extensive public outreach of the TRPA. Senator Settlemeyer said, "Litigation is a tool that is always available in America. We just wish it was used more sparingly in the Lake Tahoe Basin, as that money would be better spent on economic revitalization projects that benefit the environment rather than on attorneys' fees."

Other good news discussed by the group included the Watercraft Inspection Program and the North Lake Tahoe Water Shuttle. The end of the 2012 boating season is near, and the Watercraft Inspection Program has been successful in keeping the Quagga and Zebra mussels out of Lake Tahoe for another season. Both states have bodies of water infested with these invasive species, and they are committed to working together to keep them out of Lake Tahoe. Another new development at the Lake is the North Lake Tahoe Water Shuttle, which transports passengers between four docks on the North Shore during the summer months for a three-year pilot program.

While many good things are happening in the Lake Tahoe Basin, the legislators observed many ongoing challenges such as the blighted residential and commercial properties and a struggling economy. Senator Lee mentioned his idea of creating an ombudsman position to help Tahoe residents resolve issues with the TRPA without having to resort to litigation.

Senator Gaines was ready to schedule another meeting for the two states' legislators, and Senator Lee suggested, "Maybe the next meeting should be held on the Tahoe Rim Trail, so we have a good view of what we are all working to protect."

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