



Lake Tahoe Restoration Act Land Transfer Provisions

Summary

The Lake Tahoe Restoration Act (LTRA) of 2013, pending ratification by Congress authorizes the U.S. Forest Service (USFS), and the State of California through the California Tahoe Conservancy (Conservancy) and California State Parks (Parks), to consolidate their extensive, intermixed land holdings in the Lake Tahoe Basin.

The legislation allows the Secretary of Agriculture to accept State lands as a donation, triggering conveyance by the Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit to State agencies as follows:

- USFS- Conservancy Exchange: The USFS would transfer approximately 2,032 parcels totaling 1,995 acres to the Conservancy; the Conservancy would transfer approximately 88 parcels, totalling about 1,981 acres, of mostly general forest land to the USFS.
- USFS- Parks Exchange: Parks would transfer a parcel to the USFS in the Ward Creek watershed, and the USFS would transfer an inholding in D.L. Bliss State Park to Parks.

Need for and Summary of LTRA Provisions

- Under Section 10 of the LTRA reauthorization, the Santini-Burton Act would be amended to authorize the transfer of these lands for management efficiencies.
- All current uses, environmental protections and rights of access would be maintained.
- The parcels transferred from the USFS would be subject to the same environmental protections as other parcels previously acquired under the Santini-Burton Act, and to any other restrictions deemed necessary by the Secretary of Agriculture. In addition, their development rights would be permanently retired.
- Section 10 also authorizes \$1 million each for the USFS and the Conservancy to facilitate the transfer process and address management costs related to the transferred lands.

Background on Federal and State Urban Lot Programs in California

- Through the Santini-Burton Act in 1980, the USFS has acquired roughly 3,200 “urban intermix lots,” totaling about 3,500 acres, including about 2,200 lots in California.
- The Conservancy launched a similar program in 1984, initially funded from an \$85 million State Bond Act passed in 1982. The Conservancy has acquired over 4,850 parcels, totaling more than 6,500 acres, and also provided several million dollars to the USFS to sustain its program.
- Approximately 94% of these State and federal parcels are one acre or less in size and are located in residential and commercial subdivisions throughout the California side of the Basin.



- While these acquisitions have protected thousands of acres from the threat of development and related traffic congestion and air and water quality impacts, they have also created a “checkerboard” pattern of State and federal ownership of small lots within most residential and commercial areas.
- This ownership pattern has required both the USFS and the Conservancy to develop separate urban lot management programs, operating side by side within the same neighborhoods, at an approximate annual cost of \$1.2-2.1 million to each agency.
- The intermixed public ownerships are also confusing to the public, and to local agencies and public utilities, and often require both State and federal environmental reviews and permitting processes for projects occurring on adjoining parcels.
- In response to these concerns, a 2000 USDA Office of Inspector General (OIG) Audit Report and several subsequent USDA reports to Congress have recommended a consolidation of public land ownership interests in the Tahoe Basin to improve the management effectiveness and efficiency of these lands.

Key Benefits of the LTRA Land Transfers

The transfers authorized by the LTRA will:

- Eliminate duplicative land management costs of separate State and federal urban lot programs by consolidating public ownership of thousands of parcels;
 - Streamline environmental reviews, permitting, and monitoring of projects that are now under multiple ownerships;
 - Eliminate the need for police, fire, utility, and other local agencies to negotiate multiple agreements for access to these lands; and
 - Eliminate public confusion over ownership and allowable uses.
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- For the USFS, the transfers would receive 88 Conservancy parcels, including several now completely surrounded by USFS land, that adjoin its current holdings and that could be efficiently integrated into its forest management plans, and would help the USFS better meet its environmental and recreational goals in the Basin. The transfers would also eliminate (on the California side of the Basin) a costly urban lot management program that does not have a dedicated or reliable source of funding.
 - For the Conservancy, the transfers would increase the effectiveness of its urban lot program in meeting various goals in the Basin, e.g., by increasing the scope of its projects to include adjacent lands now in federal ownership, and to integrate them with local agency fuels management, watershed restoration, public access, and recreation projects.
 - For CA State Parks, the transfer provides an opportunity to acquire a long sought after inholding of USFS land within the boundaries of DL Bliss State Park.

For more information please visit: www.feinstein.senate.gov