

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

July 18, 2025

The Honorable Brooke Rollins
Secretary
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue SW
Washington, DC 20250

The Honorable Doug Burgum
Secretary
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Secretary Rollins and Secretary Burgum:

We write to you jointly as the four Senators representing the Lake Tahoe Basin to respectfully request that you work with us to ensure Lake Tahoe benefits from the bipartisan Expanding Public Lands Outdoor Recreation Experiences (EXPLORE) Act enacted last Congress. We hope that you consider acting on the opportunities below to protect and enhance the jewel of the Sierra as we draw closer to the 2025 Tahoe Summit on August 6, 2025.

As you know, the EXPLORE Act, sponsored by Chairman of the House Committee on Natural Resources Bruce Westerman, is a comprehensive bipartisan law aimed at expanding and improving outdoor recreation access on public lands across the United States. The law consolidates multiple outdoor recreation initiatives that expand and modernize outdoor recreation access and infrastructure on public lands, support gateway communities, and strengthen conservation efforts, all while boosting the outdoor recreation economy nationwide.

Lake Tahoe is a beautiful, unique environment that both our states cherish and enjoy for its plentiful outdoor recreation opportunities and its precious natural resource value. We follow a line of previous California and Nevada Senators who have worked with numerous administrations across decades to preserve and protect Lake Tahoe for Californians, Nevadans, and the millions of people from beyond our states who visit Tahoe every year. To ensure that we continue to balance the natural environment and the built environment that is needed to handle the visitation Tahoe receives, we request that you consider taking action on the following opportunities presented by the EXPLORE Act:

- *Sec. 121. Biking on Long-Distance Trails* requires the Secretaries of the Interior and Agriculture to identify ten or more potential sites for long-distance bike trails. We respectfully request that DOI and USDA select Tahoe's long-distance biking trails for designation. Specifically, the Tahoe Regional Trails Strategy calls for a new unpaved biking trail that circumnavigates the Tahoe Region.
- *Sec. 131. Gateway Communities* requires USDA and DOI to assess the needs of gateway communities in relation to housing, municipal infrastructure, visitation, and expansion of visitation on federal recreational land and water. This section directs USDA and DOI to work with state and local governments, tribes, housing authorities, and nonprofit and

trade organizations to identify needs, and it encourages your departments to enter into public-private partnerships, cooperative agreements, or memoranda of understanding. Tahoe is a unique gateway community that is located in the middle of the public lands of the Tahoe Basin, not outside like many other gateway communities. This presents a great need to engage with DOI and USDA to identify the unique needs of Tahoe. We request that the agencies consider the unique needs of communities like Tahoe in this assessment.

- *Sec. 151. Lodging Options Developed for Government Employees* amends existing authorities to lease underutilized USFS administrative land for housing. We request that USFS work with us and with entities like the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency to identify potential USFS lands in the Lake Tahoe Basin to help meet Tahoe's housing needs.
- *Sec. 155. Pay-for-Performance Projects* directs USDA to establish a pilot program featuring a pay-for-performance financing model for recreation projects on or benefiting Forest Service lands. The pilot program allows states, Tribes, local governments, nonprofit organizations, or private entities to pay upfront for projects that would create or enhance recreational opportunities on or benefiting Forest Service lands and then repay those costs based on performance outcomes. The Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit conducted a feasibility study for the State Route 89 corridor on Tahoe's West Shore under a pay-for-performance framework in 2019. We ask that USFS use its authority under this section to reconsider and update this study.
- *Sec. 156. Outdoor Recreation Legacy Partnership Program* codifies the Outdoor Recreation Legacy Partnership Program, which allows the Secretary of the Interior to provide grants to eligible entities to improve recreational opportunities in certain urban communities. We request that DOI affirm with our offices that Lake Tahoe qualifies as a participant in the Outdoor Recreation Legacy Partnership Program.

Thank you for your consideration of these opportunities to protect the Tahoe Basin. We respectfully request that your agencies provide a response that explains the agencies' views on these items in advance of this year's Tahoe Summit. We look forward to working with you to protect Lake Tahoe, one of America's greatest natural treasures.

Sincerely,



Adam B. Schiff
United States Senator



Catherine Cortez Masto
United States Senator



Alex Padilla
United States Senator



Jacky Rosen
United States Senator