

SMARTEST FOREST FUND



BOTH CALIFORNIA AND NEVADA have experienced record-breaking wildfires in recent years. In 2021, the 222,000-acre Caldor Fire came within miles of destroying homes, businesses and natural resources right here in the Lake Tahoe Basin.

The threat of catastrophic wildfire is rising throughout the West for a number of reasons, including increasingly unhealthy, overly-dense forests which force trees to compete with each other for precious natural resources like water. This leaves them prone to disease and death, which makes them even more potent fuel for wildfire.

The U.S. Forest Service estimates that there are 1.7 million dead trees across 66,000 acres in the Tahoe Basin alone.

With this in mind, the Tahoe Fund has made forest health our number one priority. In 2019, we launched the Smartest Forest Fund, a sub-fund of our Environmental Venture Trust, to use philanthropy to drive innovation through seed funding. Through this Fund, we are investing in promising new ideas and pilot projects. Some will work; some may not. But supporting them is critical to finding and scaling meaningful solutions.



PROJECTS FUNDDED

Working alongside our public agency partners and donors, we plan to make Tahoe the smartest forest on the planet. To date, the Smartest Forest Fund has supported the following projects with more than \$1 million in grants and investments.

INNOVATION & TECHNOLOGY

■ FIRE SMART COMMUNITY PILOTS

The Tahoe Fund helped launch the Fire Smart Community Pilots in spring 2025 to create the most fire-ready neighborhoods on the planet – starting right here in Lake Tahoe. These pilots bring together cutting-edge technology, homeowners and fire districts in a way that's never been done before to quickly and cost-effectively identify and implement mitigations that will have the greatest impact on protecting people and property in the wildland urban interface.

■ TAHOE-TRUCKEE BURNBOT PILOT

We helped bring BurnBot's remotely-operated mastication and prescribed fire tools to the region to increase the pace and scale of forest restoration. These innovative technologies allow crews to complete fuels reduction work more safely and in a fraction of the time, with less impact to the environment. During phase one of the pilot, crews completed a 22-acre treatment in three days rather than three weeks.

■ FIREASIDE

The Tahoe Fund teamed up with the Parasol Tahoe Community Foundation to make FireAside available to all fire districts in the Basin. FireAside is a tech platform streamlining the process of creating and implementing defensible space and home hardening prescriptions for fire officials and residents.

■ LAND TENDER

We provided the seed funding to launch this new, state-of-the-art software in Tahoe. It uses high-definition imaging and artificial intelligence to map forest landscapes and treatments, reducing planning time from years to months.



■ KODAMA

We made our first ever investment in Kodama, a company that is automating fuels reduction work through satellites and robotics to help speed up projects and address workforce shortages. It hopes to use its one-of-a-kind machinery to treat 500,000 acres by 2030.

■ CALIFORNIA FOREST OBSERVATORY

A joint funding effort with the Gordon & Betty Moore Foundation helped build the first aggregated data platform to map wildfire risk in real-time. This reduces planning time for treatments and supports emergency operations.

■ ACOUSTIC OWL MONITORING

We awarded a grant to the USDA Forest Service Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit to develop a more effective automated owl monitoring protocol that cuts detection time in half. This reduces permitting time and helps speed up forest health projects.



WOOD UTILIZATION

■ TAHOE FOREST PRODUCTS SAWMILL IN CARSON CITY, NV

The Tahoe Fund brought together a private funder and the Washoe Tribe to help stand up the first sawmill in the area in decades. The mill will process 40-50 million board feet of timber per year, providing a critical offtake solution for fuels reduction projects across the region.

■ NORTHSTAR COMMUNITY SERVICES DISTRICT BIOMASS-TO-HEAT PLANTS

A joint grant with Vail Resorts—made possible by dollar donations from guests—to help build a biomass plant that will provide heat to the Village at Northstar Ski Resort using wood waste from nearby forest health treatments. This plant will replace six natural-gas-fired boilers and reduce emissions.

■ LOG RESOURCE STUDY

We commissioned a study of the 75-mile radius around the Loyalton Biomass Facility to show investors that new wood utilization facilities near Tahoe would have access to enough material to be profitable. Investors have since cited this study in their decisions to move forward with these types of projects.

■ NATIONAL FOREST FOUNDATION LIBERTY UTILITIES CORRIDOR PROJECT

We closed a funding gap on a 1,250-acre fuels reduction project in the Tahoe Basin, allowing 2,300 tons of woody biomass to be taken to a cogeneration plant and turned into electricity, instead of being piled and left on the forest floor.

■ WOOD UTILIZATION GROUPS

The Tahoe Fund facilitated two wood utilization working groups: one for Senator Cortez Masto, and the other for the California Tahoe Conservancy and Tahoe Regional Planning Agency. The goal is to identify funding, policy and regulatory needs, and to generate support for more wood utilization facilities.

WORKFORCE & EDUCATION

■ LAKE TAHOE COMMUNITY COLLEGE (LTCC) SCHOLARSHIPS & ADMINISTRATOR

For the third year in a row, we are offering scholarships to students in LTCC's Forestry and Fire Academy programs. We also provided a private match to hire an administrator to oversee student success in both.

■ WASHOE TRIBE FIREFIGHTER TRAINING

We helped fund a wildland firefighter training led by the Washoe Tribe of California & Nevada focused on cultural knowledge and practices. This laid the groundwork for forming Washoe fire crews that can help increase the region's capacity for fuels reduction and intentional fire, while reconnecting with ancestral practices and homelands.

■ FIREUP

The Tahoe Fund awarded a grant to help launch FireUp, a new online platform that connects the forestry and fire workforce with employers, and provides that workforce with mental health and wellness resources. FireUp's goal is to connect 1 million fire and forestry employees to 100,000+ employers, 10,000+ coaches, and 1,000+ well-being services by 2030.

■ CALDOR FOREST TREATMENT STUDY

We co-funded a study to determine the impact of different forest health treatments on Caldor Fire behavior. The results showed which methods were effective in lowering flame intensity, stopping forward progress and saving trees in the burn scar. They will help inform future treatments and policy.



■ SOCIAL SCIENCE WORKSHOP FOR THE TAHOE FIRE & FUELS TEAM

With the generous support of NV Energy, we sponsored a workshop for 75+ fire officials, focused on more effectively engaging with the community around wildfire.

■ WHITEBARK PINE RESEARCH INITIATIVE

The Tahoe Fund and the Nevada Division of State Lands provided matching funds for a study of the rapidly dying Whitebark Pine in the Tahoe Basin to help inform land management and wildfire prevention practices.

COMMUNITY PREPAREDNESS & ADVOCACY

■ COMMUNITY & RESIDENT WILDFIRE PREPAREDNESS

The Tahoe Fund awarded a grant to the Tahoe Resource Conservation District to help revamp its community hardening and preparedness programs, with an emphasis on providing support to our most vulnerable populations.

■ EXPEDITING HAZARDOUS FUELS REDUCTION IN SOUTH SHORE

We helped purchase equipment that will allow South Shore fire districts and residents to increase the pace and scale of hazardous fuels removal in their neighborhoods by 2-3 times, while also reducing costs.

■ GLENBROOK UNDERGROUNDING

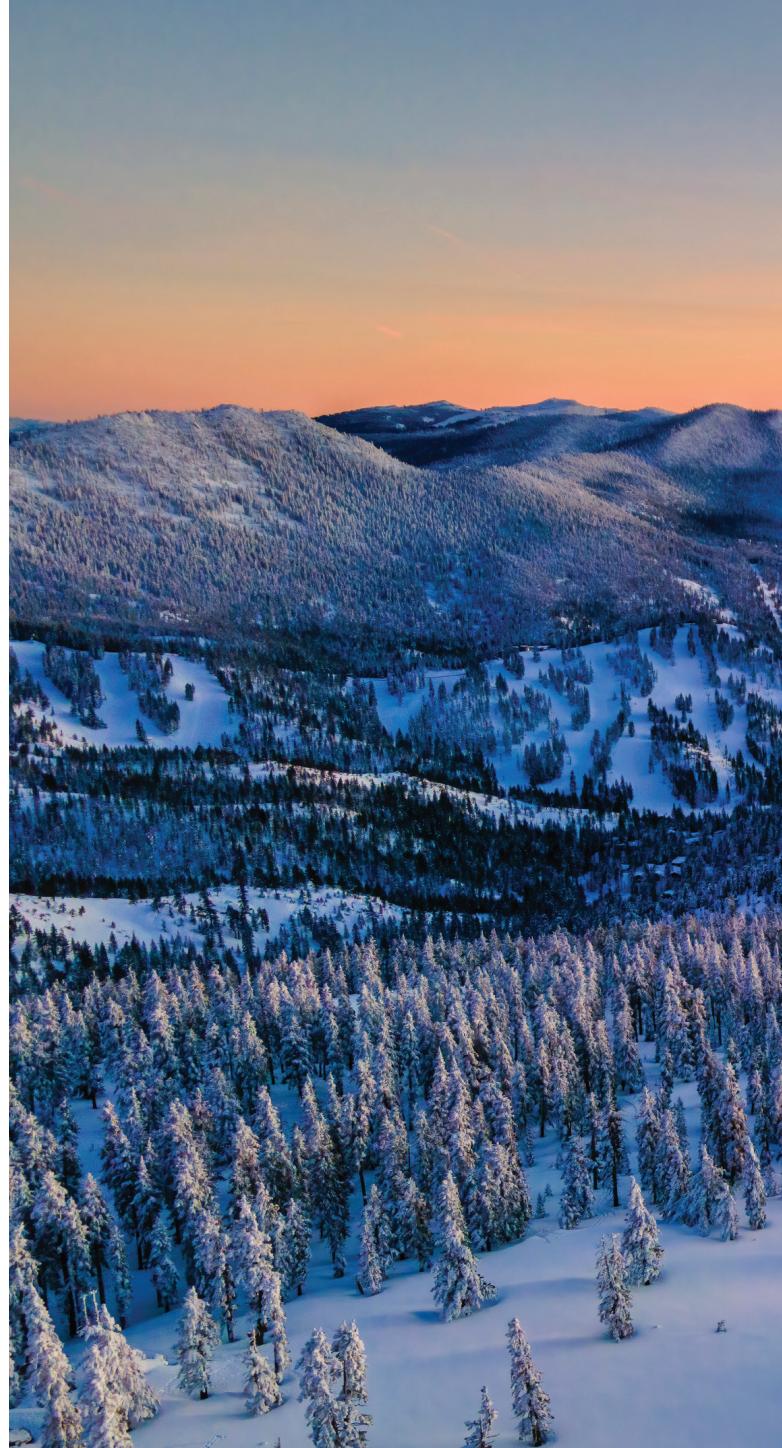
We helped fund the effort to underground power lines in Glenbrook. The goal is to reduce fire-starts in the Basin and create a model for other local communities looking to do similar work.

■ MOBILE RANGER STATION

We helped the U.S. Forest Service create a mobile ranger station to take to campsites, events and other popular destinations to educate people on wildfire safety and preparedness.

■ CALIFORNIA WILDFIRE & FOREST RESILIENCE TASK FORCE

The Tahoe Fund served as the fiscal sponsor of the Governor's quarterly Task Force meeting in Tahoe, which drew over 450 attendees, plus high-ranking officials, to examine forest health and wildfire through a bi-state lens.



HELP FIX OUR FORESTS.

TAHOEFUND.ORG/SMARTESTFOREST

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