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Date: August 28, 2026

Julie Regan
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Dear Julie Regan:

The Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit (LTBMU) appreciates the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency's (TRPA) May 27 letter and the continued coordination on the Caldor Fire Restoration Project. We recognize the high level of public interest and the sensitivity of work within the Lake Tahoe watershed, as well as our joint commitments under the Environmental Improvement Program. The LTBMU values its partnership with TRPA and remains committed to advancing our shared goals in forest restoration and stewardship.

Planting seedlings is an extremely labor and time-intensive activity that requires diligence to ensure success. Herbicide is one of several tools the LTBMU may use to give these seedlings the best chance to succeed, while still meeting other project objectives such as protecting habitat and human health. The LTBMU has taken a careful and deliberate approach in evaluating where and how herbicides should be applied. Because we share responsibility for protecting water quality in the Basin, the LTBMU, TRPA, and the Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board will continue coordinating on project implementation. This includes proposed restoration measures, anticipated treatment locations and acreages, application methods, timing, setbacks, best management practices, monitoring, public notification protocols, and other protective measures.

Projects already evaluated and approved through NEPA include a clearly defined process for herbicide use. The Forest Service follows all federal and state regulations, including required reporting and notification procedures. Given this established framework, the LTBMU does not believe an additional formal interagency review before each herbicide application is necessary. However, we understand that TRPA receives inquiries from the public and that having timely information is important for responding to those questions. To support this, the LTBMU will post on the press release webpage ahead of herbicide treatments and provide TRPA with location details in advance of implementation.

The LTBMU concurs that alternatives to herbicides should be used whenever feasible and we remain committed to ongoing assessment of herbicide need, consideration of viable alternatives, and protection of both the environment and the personnel implementing treatments. Manual methods are preferred when they can be effective. If herbicide use is warranted, it must be carefully planned, applied, and monitored to safeguard Lake Tahoe's exceptional water quality. Staff rely on the best available science when making decisions about herbicide use and regularly consult the UC Davis Weed Control User Tool (WeedCUT) to ensure decisions are based on



current information.

The LTBMU's invasive weeds program demonstrates our commitment to using alternative treatment methods whenever feasible. Invasive treatments are an important part of our commitment to preserving the integrity of the Lake Tahoe ecosystem and preventing the spread of terrestrial invasive plant species. Treatments are generally very small in scale and often target individual plants. Since 2010, herbicides have been used on less than 132 acres of LTBMU federal land to prevent the spread of invasive weeds, which is only 3.5% of the overall approximately 3,700 acres treated. The other 96% of acres were treated with manual methods. A similar approach was applied to design the need for herbicide use in the Caldor Restoration Project.

As outlined in the Caldor Restoration Project Environmental Assessment, the LTBMU will ensure the proper and safe handling and application of any herbicides used. Locations for potential herbicide use to support reforestation objectives will be evaluated after initial treatments—such as mechanical thinning and prescribed fire—are completed. Because reforestation occurs after initial entries and removal of overhead hazards, the LTBMU does not anticipate implementing reforestation objectives for the Caldor Restoration Project until at least fiscal year 2028. Recent field observations indicate strong natural regeneration in some lower elevation areas, which may further reduce the need for herbicide. Invasive weeds treatment will continue in the basin, including within the Caldor burn area.

The regeneration and restoration of Lake Tahoe's forested landscapes is a goal we all share and we value TRPA's partnership. The LTBMU remains committed to open, proactive communication and coordination as project planning and implementation progresses.

Sincerely,

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AARON GAGNON
Acting Forest Supervisor

Cc: Rosalie Herrera, USFS LTBMU
Vic Lyons, USFS LTBMU
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Hayley Williamson, TRPA Governing Board Chair
Ben Letton, Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board Executive Officer
Brendan Ferry, TRPA Advisory Planning Commission Chair