



Hikers along Independence Lake shoreline. © Rich Reid/TPL

# Independence Lake

## Preserving a Pristine Lake and Its Surrounding Forests

The magnificent Sierra Nevada is known throughout the world for its rugged beauty, recreational opportunities, extensive forests and crystal-clear lakes and streams. Some of the richest natural assets and botanically diverse areas of the Sierra are found in its northern region, like the awe-inspiring Independence Lake.

### A Jewel in the Sierra

Independence Lake is tucked away among towering peaks in the upper reaches of the Little Truckee River watershed. Rare and pristine, it resembles Donner Lake as it must have been a century ago. Locals say you have to earn the right to visit this secret lake; getting lost along the way is a rite of passage to an alpine sanctuary, perfect for hiking or just soaking in the beautiful scenery.

While Independence Lake's beauty and rustic nature are astonishing, the biological diver-

sity that it supports is even more amazing. Independence Lake is home to one of two remaining wild, self-sustaining populations of Lahontan cutthroat trout in the world—a fish that has been lost from 99% of its historic range. In addition to the Lahontan cutthroat trout, Independence Lake also hosts populations of six other native Lahontan fishes that have lived here since glaciers disappeared some 10,000 years ago. Because of its pristine nature and intact ecosystem, Independence Lake has become a unique refuge for rare fish.

The surrounding pine forest is home to the black bear, mountain lion and the Truckee-Loyalton deer herd. Bald eagles and osprey can be spotted from the shorelines, hunting fish. The region is also home to rare species like the willow flycatcher, mountain yellow-legged frog, and Sierra Nevada mountain beaver.

### Independence Lake Fast Facts

#### Location:

NSP's region extends from south of Lake Tahoe to Lassen Volcanic Park; Independence Lake is located 12 miles north of the town of Truckee in the Northern Sierra



#### Size:

2.5 miles long, .5 mile wide with 5.8 miles of shoreline

#### What you will see:

Granite clad mountain peaks, pine forests, azure lake waters, Steller's jay, bald eagles, osprey, Truckee-Loyalton deer herd

#### What you can do:

Hiking and swimming

Independence Lake also plays a role in supporting human communities. As part of the Truckee River watershed, Independence Lake provides clean drinking water to western Nevada.

### Independence Lake at Risk

NV Energy, the electric utility serving northern Nevada and northeastern California for more than 150 years, is selling the property. The iconic alpine setting and proximity to metropolitan areas in both California and Nevada makes it attractive for real estate development.

Without proper management, the forest is at risk of catastrophic wildfire which would destroy habitat and cause serious erosion into

the lake. In addition, aquatic invasive species could cripple the lake's ecosystem, affecting the lake's unique assemblage of native fish, its recreational opportunities, and water quality.

### Our Vision for Protection

The Northern Sierra Partnership plans to purchase Independence Lake to protect it from development and to implement management strategies to decrease the risk of fire, protect crucial habitat for native fish and wildlife, and allow visitors to enjoy the lake in ways compatible with the conservation of its precious resources.

With the help of our supporters, we hope to ensure that Independence Lake remains healthy and beautiful for future generations.

## Northern Sierra Partnership Strategic Objectives

### Exceptional water resources.

Protect the wetlands, lakes, and streams that provide exceptional water resources for the people of California and Nevada.

### Healthy forests.

Connect and manage healthy forests that will reduce the risks of catastrophic wildfire.

### Thriving local economies.

Enhance the well-being of local communities and economies through sustainable land use programs.

### Proactive climate change solutions.

Develop proactive, science-based approaches to adapt to climate change and to mitigate its expected impacts.

### Long-term conservation values.

Build an enduring culture of land and water conservation in the northern Sierra.

### Support the Sierra.

Catalyze generous support, including \$75-100 million in private funding and \$225-300 million in federal, state and local funds.



Independence Lake. © Michael Conner/TNC

The Northern Sierra Partnership is a pioneering alliance dedicated to cooperative action that will conserve the lands and waters of the northern Sierra Nevada, and enhance its communities and local economies, for future generations.

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