



**\*\*\*For Immediate Release\*\*\***

**CALIFORNIA SPORTFISHING PROTECTION ALLIANCE SECURES AT&T's REMOVAL OF TOXIC LEAD-CONTAINING PHONE CABLES FROM LAKE TAHOE**

**Emerald Bay, Lake Tahoe, California. September 18, 2024** – California Sportfishing Protection Alliance (CSPA) is pleased to announce Pacific Bell Telephone Company, dba AT&T of California, has agreed to remove its abandoned telecommunications cables that have been leaching toxic lead into the waters of Lake Tahoe for decades. This settlement comes as a direct result of CSPA's advocacy and litigation efforts to protect California's waterbodies.

"This is a monumental win for the environment, the communities who drink Lake Tahoe water, the people with lake-dependent livelihoods, and the millions of annual visitors," said Chris Shutes, Executive Director for CSPA.

After conditionally settling in 2022, AT&T reinitiated litigation to determine the merits of CSPA's claims. The lawsuit alleges AT&T's cables discharged lead violating California's voter-approved Proposition 65, (The Safe Drinking Water and Toxics Enforcement Act of 1986), and those discharges presented an imminent and substantial endangerment to human health and the environment, in violation of the federal Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA). The cables are comprised of paper-wrapped copper wires, inside a thick lead conduit, wrapped in spiral-wound steel rods and covered with a bitumen/tar-impregnated fiber coating. Each foot of the lead-clad cables contains approximately 3.39 pounds of lead. There are approximately 6 miles of submerged cables. As a result of this settlement, AT&T will remove about 107,000 pounds of lead from Lake Tahoe.

CSPA's investigation revealed the abandoned cables were discharging lead. Due to wind-caused currents, anchor strikes, and deterioration over time, the cables have become damaged and degraded, exposing the lead conduit in numerous locations.

CSPA-supported scientific investigations confirmed elevated levels of lead in water and sediment adjacent to the cables. The investigations found lead in algae, which forms the base of the food web for the fisheries at Lake Tahoe. CSPA also found lead in clams and crawdads collected at the cables.

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“Designated as an Outstanding National Resource Water, Lake Tahoe has no major pollution sources of lead or other metals entering the lake. So, our expectations were to see minimal to low concentrations of lead in this exceptionally clean and clear lake. The team conducted a structured scientific collection and laboratory analyses of water, sediment and microscopic plants and bacteria called biofilms (a.k.a. algae). One sample of biofilm on the cables showed lead at 67,000 times more concentrated than a reference biofilm sample taken from a rock. These biofilms are a food source for fish, and the lead can be biomagnified as it travels up the food chain,” said Sudeep Chandra, PhD, Professor of Limnology, Director of Global Water Center, University of Nevada, Reno.

Lake Tahoe, known for its breathtaking beauty, clear waters, and ecological significance, has been burdened by these lead-leaching cables. “CSPA remains dedicated to Lake Tahoe as one of nation’s most iconic waterbodies. We are proud to have fought for the removal of this toxic waste from Lake Tahoe, and we are happy that AT&T decided to finally step up,” stated Shutes.

CSPA was represented by the Aqua Terra Aeris Law Group (through Matthew C. Maclear and Erica A. Maharg), Klamath Environmental Law Center (through William “Bill” Verick), Law Offices of Andrew L. Packard, Law Office of Dr. John Kirk Boyd, Law Office of Brian Acree and the Law Office of William Carlon.

CSPA’s investigation resulted, in part, from the generous funding of [therootcauseproject.org](http://therootcauseproject.org), spearheaded by Founder, Roland Peralta. Local divers, Kris Kierce and Scott Fontecchio from Lake Tahoe Diving & Environmental, performed the sampling.

CSPA is a 501(c)(3) public benefit organization whose mission is the protection of fisheries, habitat, and water quality in California.

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### Enclosures

First Amended Complaint  
Consent Decree  
Press release  
Maps of Sample Locations  
Summary of Sample Results  
Analytical Lab Results