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PRESS RELEASE
-- For Immediate Release --

Russian and Mongolian policy-makers and scientists make historic journey to Lake Tahoe

South Lake Tahoe, CA – A historic delegation of Russian and Mongolian government, academic, and non-profit leaders are traveling to Lake Tahoe to identify how cooperative watershed management lessons can be applied in the Lake Baikal watershed. The Baikal basin is split between Russia and Mongolia and is roughly the size of France. The region has a population of over 4 million people and includes the world's oldest, deepest, and most voluminous freshwater lake—Lake Baikal.

The tour, hosted by the non-profit Tahoe-Baikal Institute (TBI) and co-sponsored by the U.S. Forest Service, Open World, Desert Research Institute, and other government, foundation, and non-profit partners, is full of firsts. These include the first time Russian and Mongolian officials have worked cooperatively to protect the trans-boundary Baikal watershed since 2000, and the first time Tahoe has been showcased to such high level delegates from Russia and Mongolia. Delegates represent their respective country's Ministry of Natural Resources, National Academy of Science, and influential non-profit organizations.

“The time is ripe for Russia, Mongolia, and the United States to cooperate on protecting the Baikal watershed,” said Valery Molotov, the Director of Russia's Federal Regional Planning Agency for Lake Baikal, named Baikalpriroda. “Our region is seeing a significant increase in economic pressures and their resulting environmental impacts. The watershed protection efforts at Tahoe will be useful in helping to envision how we can protect our natural beauty while building a sustainable economy.”

The fourteen delegates will travel to San Francisco, Sacramento, Lake Tahoe, and Reno (between August 7-18th) meeting with government, business, academic and non-profit organizations working on watershed management efforts in California and Nevada, and in particular at Lake Tahoe,. A key focus will be on lessons learned in Tahoe's current efforts to revise regional management thresholds led by the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency (TRPA), and how changes will influence the over \$30 million in annual funding from the Bush Administration. The mission of Russia's Baikalpriroda is nearly identical to that of the TRPA.

Tony Brunello, TBI's Executive Director said “these delegates are on the ground floor of determining what the Baikal watershed will become in our lifetime, and they are looking to Lake Tahoe for examples. In essence, they have the opportunity to leapfrog poor development choices, and move to an economy that protects their incredible natural resources. This is a great chance for our colleagues in California and Nevada to not only share their expertise, but also to learn how similar issues are being addressed on the other side of the globe.”

For more information or to meet with the delegation, see www.tahoebaikal.org or call Tony Brunello.

The Tahoe-Baikal Institute

The Tahoe-Baikal Institute (TBI) is a non-profit 501 (c)(3) organization registered in the United States and the Russian Federation with the mission of “Protecting mountain lake watersheds around the world through environmental inquiry, international exchange, research, and action.” Since 1990, TBI has hosted over 350 international leaders at Lake Tahoe and Lake Baikal (the world's deepest, largest, and oldest freshwater lake) and developed original research, training, exchanges, and partnerships. For more information go to www.tahoebaikal.org