



Hikers along Independence Lake shoreline. © Rich Reid/TPL

Independence Lake

Preserving an Iconic River and Meadow System

Independence Lake is tucked away among towering peaks in the upper reaches of the Little Truckee River watershed. Nearly 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 a high mountain sanctuary, perfect for hiking or just soaking in the beautiful scenery.

While Independence Lake’s beauty and rustic nature are astonishing, the biological diversity that it supports is even more amazing. Independence Lake is home to one of two remaining wild, self-sustaining lake 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 nearly pristine nature and intact ecosystem, Independence Lake has become a unique refuge for rare fish.

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

Conservation of Independence Lake

The Nature Conservancy acquired the

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, 0.5 miles 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

property around Independence Lake in late April 2010, and is working with public and private partners to preserve critical habitat for native fish and wildlife, prevent the introduction of aquatic invasive plants and animals, implement forest management strategies to decrease the risk of wildfire, and allow visitors to enjoy the property and lake in ways that are compatible with the conservation of this precious resource.

Stewardship

The unspoiled status of Independence Lake still faces threats from aquatic invasive species that, if they found their way to the lake, could severely disrupt its healthy ecosystem. In addition to harming native fish, aquatic invasive species can clog water pipes and valves, cover beaches with sharp shells, and fill calm waters with thick mats of

aquatic plants. Boat movement between lakes has been identified as the primary means for these aquatic invaders to get established in previously unaffected lakes.

Boats

To enhance public enjoyment of the lake and prevent the introduction of aquatic invasive species, our partners – The Nature Conservancy and the Truckee Donner Land Trust– maintain a small fleet of watercraft for visitor use on Independence Lake from June through October. No watercraft from outside the Preserve are permitted on the Lake. Motorboats are provided on an every other week basis to provide a balance between a motorized and non-motorized visitor experience. Use of the watercraft is currently free of charge. Independence Lake is open to the public year-round for walk-in day use.

Northern Sierra Partnership Strategic Objectives

Conserve the sweeping natural landscapes that define our region.

Restore the ecological vitality of our forests, meadows and rivers, and the landscape's resilience to natural disturbances like fire and flood.

Expand opportunities to enjoy our region's extraordinary natural assets through recreation, sustainable tourism, and environmental education.

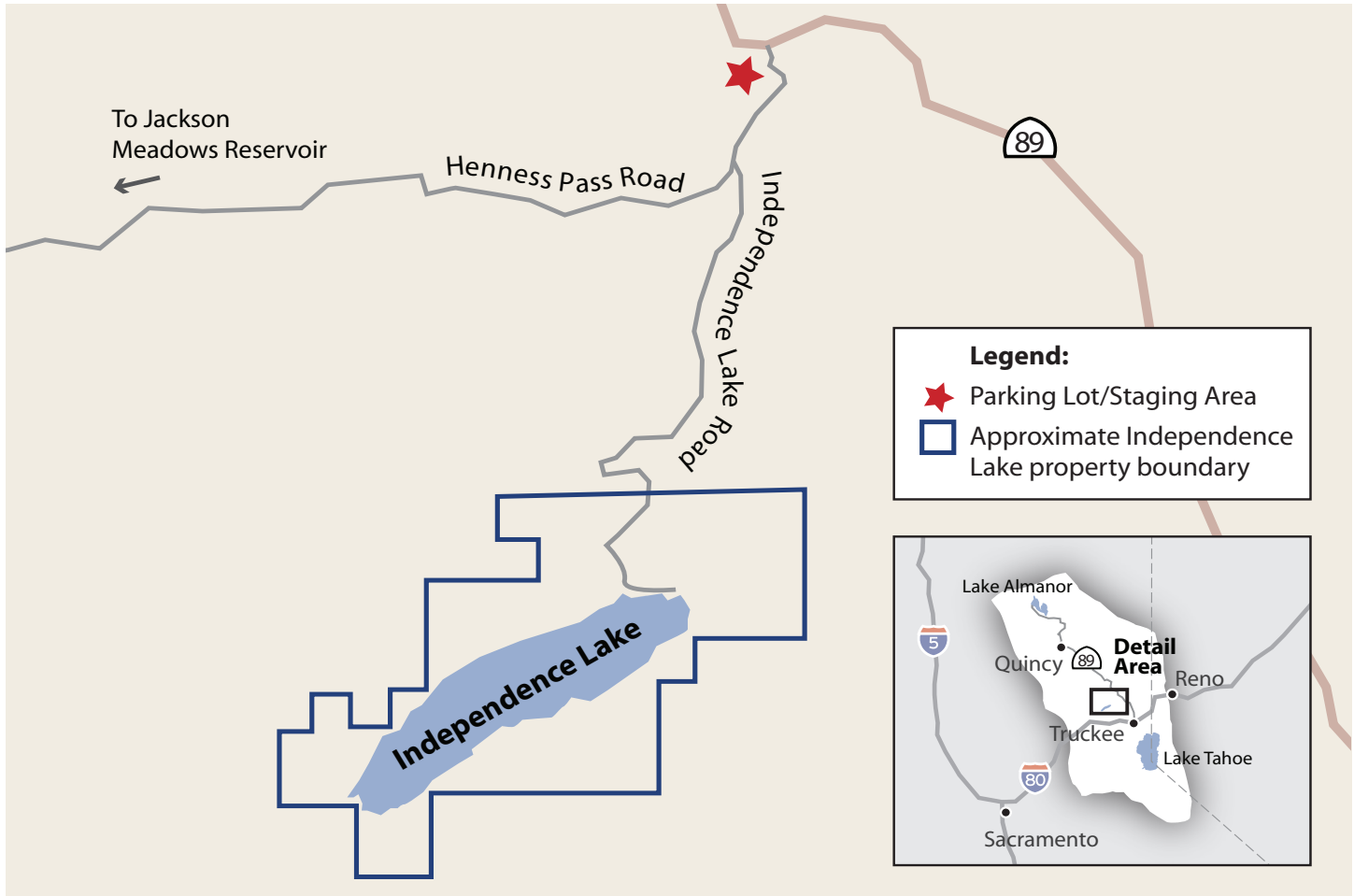
Support the growth of vibrant rural communities that sustain—and are sustained by—the healthy natural landscapes that surround them.



Independence Lake © Michael Conner/TNC

Northern Sierra Partnership is a collaborative initiative to conserve, restore, and enhance the magnificent natural landscape of the northern Sierra Nevada, and build the foundation for sustainable rural prosperity.

Independence Lake - Map & Directions



Directions from Truckee

From Interstate 80 take the Highway 89 North exit toward Sierraville. Travel approximately 15 miles North on Highway 89 to Independence Lake/Webber Lake/Jackson Meadow Reservoir turn-off.

Turn Left/West off of Route 89 toward Independence Lake/Webber Lake/Jackson Meadow Reservoir. Stay on paved road for 1.5 miles. Turn Left/South at sign for “Independence Lake – 5 miles.” Continue approximately 5 miles to Independence Lake. The road becomes a rough dirt road. High clearance vehicle advised.

After roughly 2 miles you reach a fork in the road and a sign for “Independence Lake - 3 miles.” Take the RIGHT fork. After approx. ½ mile there is another fork, follow the LEFT fork across a stream. If you do not drive across a stream soon after taking this left fork, you have made a wrong turn. Continue along this road going roughly south.

The entrance to the Independence Lake Preserve is marked with a sign. Follow the directional signs to the parking area.