

Storm provides lessons for Forest Service

By Terri Marceron

A few weeks ago an unusually wet storm put Forest Service projects in the Lake Tahoe Basin to the test. We want to take this opportunity to share with you some of the lessons we learned and how we are using them to improve our management of the Forest and its resources.

The Blackwood Creek restoration project, which began construction last summer and continued this summer, proved a resounding success as the newly created channel absorbed the heavy rainfall and allowed it to deposit sediment along the floodplain rather than rushing it directly to Lake Tahoe. Since Blackwood Creek, disturbed by past mining, grazing and logging, has been a major source of sediment to the lake, we are very pleased to see that our restoration strategy is having its intended effect.

At most of our project sites, some involving large scale construction, our best management practices (BMPs) implemented to prevent off-site erosion were in place and effective. In anticipation of the storm, our staff were checking on project sites to ensure these BMPs were installed and take any additional measures to mitigate the potential impacts of a 25-year storm.

However, on part of one project site, we learned that we did not prepare quickly enough or well enough for the storm. In the Angora Fire area, we failed to install sufficient BMPs on roads near Seneca Pond, where work to remove hazard trees was under way. With the storm forecast several days out, we should have used that time to prepare the site adequately. Our staff has developed recommendations to ensure that we aren't

caught off guard by future storms. Forest leadership and project staff immediately gathered in the field to review the project area and reevaluate our procedures. We have stopped operations at the Angora Hazard Tree project and are working to ensure the site is prepared to ride out the winter.

The season for field work in the Lake Tahoe Basin is brief. Like all who work outside here, we are eager to complete our projects before the snow flies. In doing so, we must stay conscious of the need to minimize our impact on the land and on water quality. Our promise to you is that weâ€™ve learned from this experience, and weâ€™ll be putting the lessons to work.

Terri Marceron is forest supervisor for the Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit.