

West Shore creek restoration project tops \$3 mil.

By Kathryn Reed

More than \$3 million has been allocated to help clean up the area that per acre dumps the most amount of sediment into Lake Tahoe.

Work on the West Shore's Lower Blackwood Creek will begin this summer with vegetation enhancements.

The California Tahoe Conservancy board approved funding in March and the state Public Works board will vote on the matter this month.

"Primarily it's an undeveloped watershed. Most of the sediment is from the stream channel," Adam Lewandowski with the CTC said. "Much of the watershed was heavily grazed and logged until the 1970s."

The upper part of the channel had been gravel mined at one time. The U.S. Forest Service has restored the upper creek area.

When the CTC project is done it will mean the entire Blackwood Creek channel will have been restored.

"There's a huge plume of sediment from the creek going to Lake Tahoe. That's what we are trying to reduce," Lewandowski said.

At the Conservancy meeting, pictures of steep, eroding banks were shown. Riparian vegetation is missing. The abundance of sunlight hitting the water is not good for aquatic species when it comes to nutrients.

Engineered logjams will help redirect the flow of water away from the banks. A new bend in the channel will be put in.

The work will be in two phases. The first will be upstream of Highway 89, the second downstream.

In September the final design for the channel restoration should be done; in October bids will be sought; and from June-October 2011 the channel will be restored and trails will be rerouted.