

Natural landscaping advice, financial incentives

It's possible to be a good steward of the Truckee River and have a beautifully landscaped property, according to Robie Litchfield, a landscape architect, who serves on an advisory committee for the Truckee River Watershed Council.

Litchfield, of Truckee's L&P DesignWorks, says many people believe gravel is the only remedy for eroding slopes. However, there are plenty of attractive ground cover materials that can also be used locally to reduce soil erosion, which eventually makes its way into the Truckee River. This fine sediment reduces clarity and is a form of pollution.



Jake Hudson recommends erosion control best practices measures to Andy Otto. Photo/Talia Henderson/TH Multimedia

“Low profile grasses, wildflowers, perennial and ground covers under 18 inches in height, as well as turf, are acceptable means of soil stabilization, while not compromising defensible

space," Litchfield said in a press release.

She notes that some adapt better to typical Truckee weather cycles and others are less water thrifty.

Fortunately for many Truckee homeowners the voluntary program River Friendly Landscaping provides not only free soil erosion advice, but in some cases financial assistance and incentives. Many of our town's residents have the pleasure of living close to magnificent bodies of water such as Donner Lake, the Truckee River, and Donner and Alder creeks. The Truckee River Watershed Council and the Sierra Nevada Alliance have combined efforts to launch a campaign, which aims to reach local homeowners with landscaping advice to remedy the negative impact these parcels have on our region's water quality.

Properties of special interest include homes on steep slopes, sites with highly compacted soil, and homes that are close to surface water. There are four identified neighborhoods: north shore of Donner Lake, Tahoe Donner, and the Truckee River corridor in Placer County, and along East and West River streets. Site evaluations will be given on a first-come, first-serve basis. While any homeowner within the Truckee River watershed can participate in the program, homes in the focus areas will be given priority.

Interested property owners are encouraged to call (530) 550.8760, ext. 3 to schedule a free site evaluation. Based upon the assessment, an engineering consultant will design a plan with erosion control recommendations, free of charge. When the project is completed, River Friendly Landscaping staffers will once again visit the property. Unlike Truckee's counterparts who live in the Tahoe Basin, where such requirements are mandatory, this program is implemented on a strictly volunteer basis. Acting as a good steward of our area is a powerful incentive to sign up for the program, however there are additional perks.

An added bonus is that upon completion, the homeowner will be eligible for up to a \$400 rebate for materials and labor costs. Besides the joy of helping to protect the water quality of the Truckee River – an important local asset – homeowners are eligible for additional incentives. Each month, two homeowners who voluntarily implement the erosion control measures will receive two Reno Aces tickets.

The River Friendly Landscaping program is a joint project by the Truckee River Watershed Council and the Sierra Nevada Alliance. The program has been funded by the California through the state Water Resources Control Board.

Homeowners are also eligible to receive a complimentary full-color guide to landscaping in the Sierra Nevada. Published by the Sierra Nevada Alliance the 160-page manual offers great landscaping inspiration with dozens of photographs and how-to tips.