

Hwy. 50 slope expected to be secured next week

By Kathryn Reed

The nearly two-year grind of construction on Highway 50 just below Spooner Summit on the Tahoe side is about to come to an end.

“That project has a grading season exception based on the concern a serious hazard could occur if the project were not allowed to be completed,” Kristi Boosman, Tahoe Regional Planning Agency spokeswoman, told *Lake Tahoe News*.

That hazard is the hillside winding up in the middle of the highway.

Usually dirt is not supposed to be moved in the Lake Tahoe Basin after Oct. 15 per TRPA rules. Those rules are in place so added sediment won't flow into the lake during the wet season.



Slope stabilization along Highway 50 in Douglas County should be completed next week. Photos/Susan Wood

However, with this in part being an erosion control project

and it not possible to stop work without leaving the hillside to the south in jeopardy, work has continued well past the first substantial snow. And while heavy rain at lake level and snow at the higher elevations are in the forecast starting Wednesday, work is not expected to be wrapped up until the end of next week.

During the storm earlier this month that had snow at the summit being counted by feet instead of inches, the commute between Tahoe and Carson City was even more gnarly than usual. This is because one lane of the highway headed east is closed with all the construction work. It was bumper to bumper with low visibility and oncoming traffic inches away.

“It’s definitely not an ideal situation. We can’t just remove the barrier and leave the slope exposed. It’s just one of those things. We have to get it done,” Scott MacGruder with the Nevada Department of Transportation told *Lake Tahoe News*.

The work took longer than expected because as the slope was being stabilized the crews realized the hillside was much weaker than anticipated, MacGruder said. This meant more reinforcement was needed, which took more time. He said geologists have been on-site to give input.



Heavy equipment and piles

of dirt have been the norm for months along Spooner Summit.

“Sometimes you get sloughing that is unforeseen,” MacGruder said. “You can’t make up time.”

On Nov. 28 an inspector from TRPA is scheduled to assess the work.

Granite Construction is doing the work. The \$3.6 million project started in 2011. In all, it included about five miles on Highway 50 from Cave Rock to nearly the junction of Highway 28.