

Opinion: NTPUD making cost-saving infrastructure improvements

By Paul Schultz

The North Tahoe Public Utility District proudly provides three core services to the residents of North Lake Tahoe from the California state line to Dollar Hill; fresh drinking water, transportation of sewage to the Tahoe Truckee Sanitation Agency for treatment, and providing high quality Parks facilities to our residents. The district also prides itself on being responsible stewards of the public's money with recent capital improvements providing more efficiency while grant opportunities allow funds to go further and to do more with less.

In the last three years the district has spent \$5,815,611 on capital improvement construction in the sewer and water departments and used grants to leverage the public's dollars to get more done and increase efficiency within the district's systems. Of that total, 21 percent, or \$1,235,405, was constructed using grant funds from the U.S. Forest Service through the Lake Tahoe Restoration Act to support new water tanks and upgrades to water lines, including fire hydrants and increasing water line sizes for improved fire flow.

All upgrades are done with an eye toward increased efficiency; replacing leaking water pipes conserves water and reduces unaccounted water losses and pumping costs.

For example, the replacement of 9,500 linear feet of water lines in the Kingswood Estates neighborhood, west of Highway 267 between Lincoln Green and North National Avenue, has resulted in a 37 percent reduction in unaccounted for water that will reduce the costs for treatment, storage, and pumping

expenses. The District is currently replacing sewer mains in the area around Brook Avenue in the Kings Beach grid, which will improve access and help reduce the district's operational costs by allowing the District to abandon an old, mid-block sewer main that runs underneath buildings.

Water and sewer line relocations to support the Kings Beach Commercial Core Improvement Project will take place next construction season under a co-operative agreement with Placer County to minimize the disruption to the customers and help reduce the District's costs. The district has been working closely with Placer County to minimize the number of relocations necessary and has secured grant funding from the U.S. Forest Service through the Southern Nevada Public Land Management Act, to pay for two-thirds of the relocation costs in the areas outside the state highway.

Many projects utilize grants for construction while others increase efficiency because of the project. Rehabilitation of sewer pump stations reduces energy use by modernizing pumps and motors that move our wastewater along Highway 28 and up and over Dollar Hill. The recently completed Secline Sewer Pump Station Rehabilitation Project has resulted in a 38 percent reduction in energy consumption from our 2011 usage due to the installation of new pumps and motors.

The North Tahoe Public Utility District is proud of the services that it provides to our community and does all we can to make our resident's dollars go farther by reducing operational costs and seeking grants when they are available. We will continue to move forward in this direction and do all we can to keep rates low while meeting state requirements and maintaining our infrastructure.

Paul Schultz is general manger-CEO of North Tahoe Public Utility District.