

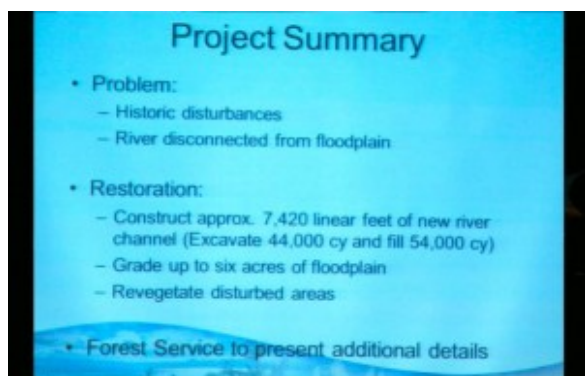
Upper Truckee River restoration to resume in June

By Kathryn Reed

A four-year project to restore a section of the Upper Truckee River is expected to start in June.

A major hurdle to make the U.S. Forest Service project a reality was overcome Thursday when the Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board unanimously gave its approval.

Because there will be disturbance to stream environment zones and projections are the turbidity of the river will exceed normal levels, the board needed to grant these allowances to occur during construction.



The U.S. Forest Service will begin restoring a section of the Upper Truckee River this summer. Photo/LTN

The Tahoe Regional Planning Agency Governing Board must sign off on the project. That approval is needed because more than 100 trees greater than 14 inches in diameter will be taken out because they encroach on the meadow. It may be on the April agenda.

“The project is necessary to help rewater the meadow system,”

Nancy Gibson, Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit forest supervisor, told the Lahontan board Feb. 14. "It's one of the primary reasons we are pursuing this project."

This is one of many projects along the river. Some are completed, others are in the planning stages, and others are just being talked about.

With the Upper Truckee River being the largest tributary to Lake Tahoe, it carries the most amount of sediment. The goal is to make the waterway flow more naturally like it did before it was disturbed for ranching, building the airport and other needs. This in turn will mean less sediment reaching Lake Tahoe because the banks of the river will be more contoured, thus allowing the water to go over the banks and flood the meadow. The fine particles in the future will be deposited in the meadow.

The Forest Service will be repairing what's called reaches 5 and 6, for a total of 13,000 feet of channel. The project starting this summer and what has the regulatory approval is for Reach 5, also known as the Sunset Stables Reach. The Forest Service and California Tahoe Conservancy own the land that runs parallel to and directly east of Lake Tahoe Airport.

Sunset Stables will be the staging area. By not having it at Elks Club it allows the annual summer flea market to remain open.

What is planned:

- Year 1: New channel construction, approximately 4,000 feet.
- Year 2: Remaining new channel construction, approximately 3,300 feet; utility line relocation. South Tahoe Public Utility District's backup treated effluent export line and water line will be relocated and buried.
- Year 3: Irrigation and seasoning; no active construction.

- Year 4: Construct channel tie-ins, floodplain grading area, and connect new channel to Upper Truckee River flows.

Extra dirt that is needed will come from a South Lake Tahoe erosion control project.

During construction it's likely areas will be off-limits to the public for safety reasons. The whole project is expected to be done in October 2016.

In other action:

- The Lahontan board approved amendments to the Lake Tahoe Basin Plan.