

Tahoe's seismic monitoring being upgraded

By Kathryn Reed

Earthquake stations throughout the Lake Tahoe Basin are being upgraded so the Nevada Seismic Laboratory in Reno can create a shake map for first responders.

The information collected will be able to tell emergency personnel what is happening and where to go to provide help.

Graham Kent who heads the lab – and who is a 1980 grad of South Tahoe High School – gave a presentation March 20 to the California Tahoe Conservancy board. The board OK'd a license agreement for a seismic sensor on one of its properties in Placer County.



Sierra Nevada seismograph station is upgraded by John Torrissi. Photo/Nevada Seismic Lab

The Reno lab is upgrading its sensor vaults with modern broadband microwave communications systems.

Kent explained that the cameras would also be able to provide real-time photos that could be advantageous to fire crews.

The goal is that video would all be available to everyone through the lab's website. This in turn would then ideally be used by the media and through social media to spread information about a disaster.

The cameras will be active 24/7.

While some people don't think of Tahoe as being a hot bed of seismic activity, it is.

Kent said more seismic research has been in the Lake Tahoe Basin than any other basin in the world.

"Each earthquake we get here causes minor landslides," Kent told the board.

He showed a simulation of what would happen if there were a major earthquake that then generated a lake tsunami. It wiped out much of what is on land, including Inn by the Lake where the meeting was being conducted.

The West Tahoe Fault hasn't had major action in 4,500 years. Scientists say it's due because history shows it erupts every 4,000 to 5,000 years.

Faults lie under Angora, Cascade, and Fallen Leaf lakes. Plus, there are the Incline Village and Stateline faults.

The seismic stations have an 18-foot triangle antenna mast with a solar panel, antennae, equipment enclosures, seismograph and 32-foot connecting cable. It could be installed this spring.

Lab officials are responsible for installation and maintenance. Although this particular CTC property is slated to be traded to State Parks, the negotiations with that state agency are that all agreements that are in place are to be honored.

In other action:

- The board approved guidelines for a volunteer program.
- It was brought up how non-action items did not have an accompanying staff report. Board members are OK with this because the items for the most part are an update. But for the public that is not previously aware of the issue, they are left in the dark.
- Staff is going to focus on 17 parcels – six near the Y in South Lake Tahoe, nine in Meyers on Highway 50 and two in Kings Beach – to be sold under the Asset Lands Program. The board agreed to notify a wider area, include why the parcel had been obtained and what funds were used to acquire it. Of the 333 lots in the program, 227 are residential. At this time there is no plan to sell the neighborhood lots. Tahoe Vista resident Ellie Waller suggested the board visit the sites before they are sold. The board agreed to do so.