

Time to tune up property's BMPs

Publisher's note: *This article first appeared in Tahoe In Depth and reprinted with permission.*

By Shay Navarro

Any homeowner knows that winter can take a toll on your property. The snow melts and leaves behind all manner of debris and damage.

But at Lake Tahoe, spring cleanup can mean more than just raking up. Tahoe properties need to have erosion-control landscaping measures known as best management practices, and spring often means tuning up your BMPs to make sure your property isn't sending polluted runoff to the lake.

Springtime also brings the added responsibility of maintaining defensible space around your property.

BMP maintenance

BMPs are important in that they minimize the impacts of development on water quality. TRPA requires properties to capture and infiltrate water from impervious surfaces, such as roofs and driveways, and to stabilize sources of dirt and debris with vegetation and mulch. Properties in compliance receive a BMP Certificate of Completion. Just like a car cannot be driven without changing the oil, BMPs need routine maintenance in order to continue functioning properly. Routine maintenance preserves the lifespan of BMPs and minimizes the potential for polluted storm water runoff to reach Lake Tahoe.

Single-family properties

BMP maintenance activities for a single family residential property typically include:

- Maintaining a 5-foot, noncombustible perimeter around each structure by removing dead vegetation, dried leaves, and pine needles. Keep only irrigated herbaceous vegetation in this area.
- Sweeping sediment off driveways, walkways, and patios.
- Removing pine needles, debris, and sediment from slotted channel drains, swales and gutters. Replace or repair any damaged conveyance structures.
- Removing pine needles and debris from gravel infiltration systems and rock lined swales. Remove gravel clogged with fine sediments, sift clean and replace. Repair or replace borders, filter fabric, and sediment traps as needed.
- Replacing dead vegetation in infiltration swales and basins and adding 1-2 inches of mulch to insulate plant roots and conserve moisture.
- Maintaining a minimum 3-inch layer of rock armor under roof drip lines and decks.
- Stabilizing any exposed bare soil and stabilize slopes with visible signs of erosion using rock mulch and/or vegetation.
- Repairing any failing retaining structures and removing accumulated sediment to achieve 6 inches of space from the top of the structure.
- Maintaining parking barriers to block vehicle access to all unpaved areas.

Commercial, apartments

Commercial and large multi-family residential properties complete online inspection and maintenance logs to show that BMPs have been maintained. BMP maintenance on these properties is critical in preventing polluted storm water runoff from reaching Lake Tahoe and helps local jurisdictions meet total

maximum daily load requirements. Once maintenance is verified, TRPA will re-issue the BMP certificate of completion.

For more information on BMP maintenance requirements and to view step-by-step instructional maintenance videos, go online.

Shay Navarro is the storm water program manager at the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency.