

Douglas County residents face stormwater fee



The Burke Creek stormwater project under way in Stateline involves Douglas County, Nevada Department of Transportation, Nevada Tahoe Resource Conservation District and the U.S. Forest Service. Photo/LTN

By Kathryn Reed

STATELINE – Douglas County wants to get a handle on its stormwater. It's been trying to do so for years.

In this incarnation residents are likely to foot the bill via a special fee.

It's estimated that countywide about \$2 million is needed on an annual basis, with much of that money to be used for ongoing maintenance. Individual households are likely to see a \$4 to \$7 monthly bill. It's being called a fee, not a tax.

How this dollar amount was calculated has not been revealed, nor have the valley and lake needs been broken out.

A vocal and concerned group of citizens turned out Sept. 19 at Kahle Community Center to hear what officials had to say.

People are worried money collected at the lake will be used in the valley. The administrative costs are another concern; people are worried not enough money will go for real work. Lack of trust in the county commissioners as a whole was a common theme.

Larry Werner, interim Douglas County manager, and Jeff House with House Moran Consulting led the discussion.

“There is a stormwater plan in place, but it is inadequate because of the lack of funding. It’s not because of the lack of expertise,” House told *Lake Tahoe News*.

His contract with the county expires at the end of the year. Between now and then the commissioners are each supposed to appoint two people to a committee. That group will take comments from the various public meetings, look at the work that needs to be done, and help come up with a credit program.

The credit program was also met with skepticism at Tuesday’s meeting. People wondered how it would be equitable and administered.

There is already a credit program in place for the total maximum daily load (TMDL) mandate handed down from the feds. This credit is given to entities like the county and Nevada Department of Transportation.

In 2011, Douglas County was being more innovative with its TMDL-stormwater issues.

Some people have their Tahoe Regional Planning Agency best management practices certificate and want that to be considered. The various general improvement districts have a

variety of programs in place, but there is no consistency.

Then there are companies like Edgewood Tahoe that receives stormwater from a variety of sources based on being a lakefront business. Patrick Rhamey with Edgewood said it would be "crazy" for his company to pay a dime when it is spending more than \$5 million on stormwater issues related to the lodge construction.

That would be where the credit program comes into play – some entities might get cash back.