

Restoration projects help thwart climate change



Work in the Martis Valley is one of the Truckee River Watershed Council projects. Photo/LTN

By Kathryn Reed

TRUCKEE – The environment and economy are being altered as the climate changes.

As rain replaces snow and the months when precipitation falls are more in the spring than winter, the Tahoe-Truckee area is going to have to adapt.

People are going to recreate in different ways, which will impact the economy. Different types of businesses may evolve, while others go by the wayside.

Mother Nature will adapt, but she also needs some help.

That was part of the message delivered this month by Joanne Roubique, district ranger of the U.S. Forest Service and Lisa

Wallace, executive director of the Truckee River Watershed Council. They were the featured speakers at the Truckee Chamber of Commerce breakfast.

"It's clear water has a role in buffering climate change near forests," Wallace said.

Her group has what it calls 50 large scale projects that are slated for completion in the next decade. They are working on waterways, meadows and near the forest.

A main focus is the Truckee River and the neighboring creeks and streams. From Tahoe to Pyramid Lake the Truckee River has been labeled "impaired and polluted."

"We are seeing the cumulative effect. There is already excessive sediment in the river," Wallace said. "With more rain, there will be more sediment. This impacts species, the economy and recreation."

If the river can become healthy, this will help the surrounding forest.

Now in its fifth year, the drought is impacting the health of the environment. Bark beetle is killing trees. Dying trees then become a wildfire waiting to happen. Depending on the fire, it could be catastrophic to people, the built environment and to the natural surroundings.

Roubique said the big issue is what to do with the timber that needs to be removed. The good news, she said, is that the various agencies are working together instead of in silos to address issues.

When it comes to dealing with fire prevention, thinning in the wildland urban interface has been common of late. Now the problem is that the trees upslope need to be dealt with to create a healthy forest.