

# Federal grant would help STPUD with meters

By Kathryn Reed

South Tahoe Public Utility District is in line to get a \$297,606 grant from the Bureau of Reclamation to be used for its water meter project.

California is mandating most water districts install meters by 2025. The original thinking was that this would get people to lower their use of water.

Comments are being taken until April 7 on the bureau's **draft environmental assessment** regarding the grant.

The money would be used to install the smart metering system radio towers, receiving equipment, and software. If awarded, it would mean the district could borrow less money from the state.

Nearly three years ago the district applied for a \$21.5 million loan from the state that it thought was going to come with a zero percent interest rate. The State Water Resources Control Board changed the rules, saying that rate was for districts with 10,000 or fewer customers.

STPUD tried to appeal that ruling, but the state chose not to hear the appeal.

The meters being installed this construction season are being paid for with the loan that has a 1.6 percent interest rate for 20 years.

"The future phases for the final 5,000 meters, currently under review in the state's legal department, is at 1.8 percent for 30 years. For this future contract, the district is eligible for 'green reserve funds', up to a maximum of \$4M, which would

be a principal forgiveness grant,” Richard Solbrig, STPUD executive director, told *Lake Tahoe News*. “We will not know if we receive this until they issue the actual contract from their legal department, hopefully within the next month.”