

FACT SHEET

Truckee River Flood Management Project

August 2009

Challenge: Every 5-10 years, the Truckee River overflows its banks, causing tremendous damage to residents, businesses and infrastructure. In the 1997 New Year's Day Flood, damages exceeded \$1 billion across 6 counties, with \$700 million in Washoe County alone. Damages from a similar flood in the future are expected to top \$2 billion in Washoe County.



Goals: The Truckee River Flood Project (Flood Project) has **4 main goals**:

- 1) **Reduce flood damages and deaths** from a 1997-type flood (117-year event);
- 2) **Restore 50 miles** of the Truckee River between Sparks and Pyramid Lake;
- 3) **Improve fish passage** along the river for spawning; and
- 4) **Enhance recreation and open space amenities** in the Truckee Meadows.

Partners: The Flood Project is sponsored by a consortium of local partners including **Washoe County, Storey County, Sparks, Reno**, the **University of Nevada, Reno**, and the **Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribe**, among others, and is being designed and built in cooperation with the **U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps)**. Washoe County is the managing partner, collecting the funds, selling the bonds, holding title to the lands, and supporting the staff.

Flood Project Coordinating Committee: The project is overseen by the 23-member Flood Project Coordinating Committee (FPCC), which meets monthly. Washoe County Commissioner Robert Larkin chairs the FPCC and Sparks Councilman Ron Smith serves as Vice Chair. A community **Working Group**, **Technical Advisory Committee** and **Finance Subcommittee** provide critical input to the FPCC. Naomi Duerr, P.G., is Director of the Flood Project, and manages a staff of 10.

Timing: The final Flood Project plan is now being completed. The Corps and Congress must approve the plan before federal funding becomes available. However, the Flood Project began advance construction in **2008** using local dollars and grant funds.

Cost and Funding: At an estimated **\$1.2 billion to \$1.6 billion**, the Flood Project is the largest public works project ever undertaken in northern Nevada, combining flood control, ecosystem restoration, and recreation together in **one visionary, integrated effort**. The Corps is expected to contribute approximately 2/3 of the project cost (~\$1 billion) with the local community contributing about \$400 million. A 1/8-cent sales tax is used to help fund the project. The 1/8-cent sales tax will raise about \$100 million over 30 years, leaving a gap of \$300 million that must be filled. The FPCC recommends implementing a program of flood benefit fees to meet the funding need.

Project Elements:

- Preserve remaining floodplain to allow river to flood naturally
- Remove flood-damaged buildings and terrace the open lands to create more flood storage
- Protect infrastructure (e.g., Sparks industrial area, downtown Reno, Hidden Valley/Eastside Subdivision residential areas, I-80, US-395, Reno-Tahoe Airport) using low levees set back from the river
- Replace low bridges, which block water and debris, with bridges that span the river
- Restore 50 miles of river by rebuilding curves, raising water levels, and revegetating banks
- Improve fish passage and spawning opportunities for Cui-ui (Endangered), Lahontan Cutthroat Trout (Threatened) and other native fish species
- Replace degraded floodwalls and protect downstream communities from flooding
- Avoid declaration of presidential disasters, reduce emergency response effort and costs, and save lives



Accomplishments and Milestones:

- Established the FPCC and supporting advisory groups
- Developed the Locally Preferred (Living River) Plan
- Worked with the Nevada Legislature to pass 3 new laws to help the Flood Project:
 - ✓ AB 5 – Authorization of about \$5 million in funding for ecosystem restoration
 - ✓ AB 54 – Authorization to implement home elevation and flood-proofing program
 - ✓ SB 175 – Authorization to create a Joint Powers Authority, enact fees, use WC Bond Bank
- Obtained \$25 million in grant funding for the project
- Acquired 13 properties (140 acres) valued at over \$50 million for the project
- Initiated Truckee River Action (TRAction) program and began construction of 4 TRAction projects:
 - ✓ Reno-Sparks Indian Colony Levee and Floodwall
 - ✓ 102 Ranch Ecosystem Restoration
 - ✓ Lockwood Ecosystem Restoration
 - ✓ Lower Mustang Ranch Ecosystem Restoration
- Completed feasibility or design for 3 additional TRAction projects: Virginia Street Bridge, North Truckee Drain, and Hidden Valley Home Elevation
- Upgraded the regional flood warning system
- Identified as a “Best-Practice” Project by Harvard University’s Ash Institute for Democratic Governance and Innovation. Reviewers indicated the Flood Project is an example of government at its finest.



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