

# Panel drops plan for flood-control dam

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Saying it would do little to help during major floods but cost \$300 million to build, officials last week decided against constructing a flood control dam in the Huffaker Hills area.

Removal of the Huffaker dam will speed completion and substantially reduce the cost of a major flood control project proposed along the Truckee River, a coalition of local officials agreed. Recent cost estimates of the overall

flood project have reached as high as \$1.6 billion.

A dam at Huffaker Narrows and detention basin to store floodwaters from Steamboat Creek have long been envisioned as an important component of the flood project.

But recent studies suggest that while the facility would still help during smaller floods, the dam would do little during major events like the New Year's Flood of 1997 and might even make matters worse.

"We are actually causing a negative impact. There's really no need to have it at this

point," Paul Urban, flood project manager, told the Flood Project Coordinating Committee. The panel is made up of officials from Reno, Sparks, Washoe County and the University of Nevada, Reno.

The change in thinking results from recent computer modeling and widespread development in the area during the past decade. Development lessened the area available for flood storage.

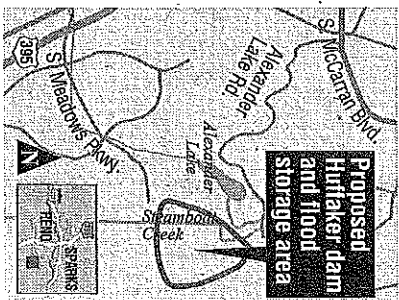
To protect homes in the Huffaker area, particularly in the new Centex Homes Cyan development, stored floodwa-

ters would have to be released and potentially worsen downstream flooding problems during a flood as serious as the one in 1997, officials said.

"What can I say? The developers beat us to it," said Naomi Duerr, flood project director. "It just doesn't deliver the bang for the buck it once did."

Committee members agreed.

"The engineering is saying it's really not having any benefit and at \$300 million, it ought to have tremendous benefit," Reno Council-



woman Jessica Sterraza said. Sterraza said she still wants

flood planners to look at purchasing land in the area so it can remain undeveloped and store water naturally during a flood. The area could still be the site of a regional park, which would be submerged during floods.

Committee members also directed staff to prepare a detailed report examining how plans for the Huffaker project evolved over the years and why scrapping it now makes sense.

"This has been a decision 10 years in the making, and it's important people understand," Duerr said.

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# Panel cancels Huffaker Hills dam plan

STAFF REPORT

A regional panel decided not to build a flood control dam in the Huffaker Hills area, saving \$300 million.

Recent studies suggest the dam might help during smaller-floods but would have little effect on major

events, such as the New Year's Flood of 1997, and could make matters worse, the Flood Project Coordinating Committee was told Monday.

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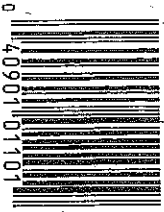
See full story on page 8A.



CANDICE TOWELL/RGL

Hypoallergenic wild horses found near Ely are at the federal wild horse center in Palamino Valley. Geneticists want to figure out whether they are related to Mongolian steeds or domestic herds. See full story on page 2A.

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