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Sparks gives Ok to flood project JPA

by [Sarah Cooper](#)

10.12.09 - 10:50 pm

Northern Nevada's largest public works project is one step closer to forming a joint powers agreement after the Sparks City Council unanimously signed on to the idea Monday.

Forming such an agreement would give the project the legal muscle it needs to levee additional fees needed to fund the \$1.6 billion project. The new agency would be similar to the Truckee Meadows Water Authority.

Currently, the flood project is \$200 million short of the funding it would need to complete its entire list of flood control construction plans.

And while a JPA has the power from the Nevada Legislature to collect fees from locals to fund its shortfall, those fees, and who they would be collected from, are still up in the air.

"After it (the JPA) is set up, they will go back into that whole fee discussion," said flood project director Naomi Duerr.

Sparks residents already pay an extra \$5.41 on their sewer bills to fund the Sparks portions of the project. Duerr said that the amount of the eventual fee could be very close to that \$5.41.

The next step in forming the JPA is to get the flood control board to buy into a draft cooperative agreement.

"We are working with staff to draft a cooperative agreement," Duerr said. "If that gets a favorable review, then it goes to a joint meeting (of the cities of Reno, Sparks and Washoe County)."

If the draft agreement passes the criticism of that joint meeting, then it must be returned to each city council and the county commission for their final approval.

The city of Reno gave their Ok to a JPA model for the flood project in July and the Washoe County Commission gave their approval in an August meeting.

The joint powers agreement was also approved by the Nevada Legislature in their most recent session.

In February, flood project coordinators sent a Bill Draft Request to the Carson City lawmakers asking for the ability to form the JPA.

The flood project committee asked the Legislature to change Nevada Revised Statute to allow a JPA as a governing body to issue general obligation bonds. Law at the time only allowed such entities to issue revenue backed bonds.

The Legislature was also asked to expand the definition of a flood control project,

matching the legislative language more specifically to what the Flood Control Project Committee wants to do.

The goal of the project, according to its Web site is to, “reduce the impact of flooding in the Truckee Meadows, restore the Truckee River ecosystem and improve recreational opportunities ...”

More than 40 projects sprinkled across northern Nevada make up the entire flood project effort.

Local jurisdictions are financially responsible for 35 percent of the \$1.6 billion project. The federal government through the Army Corps of Engineers would pay for the remaining amount.

The flood project is currently being funded by a 1/8-cent sales tax across Washoe County. This is in addition to the added tax that Sparks residents are paying on their sewer bills.

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