

## County Awarded Brownfield Grant for Wetlands Restoration

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Placer County's cleanup efforts of an abandoned concrete batch plant on the North Shore of Lake Tahoe have been bolstered by the awarding of three grants, totaling \$600,000, towards restoration efforts in the Snow Creek wetlands. The restoration project, managed by the Placer County Department of Public Works Tahoe Engineering Division, will address water quality concerns in the Tahoe Vista watershed.

The property, known as the TNT Materials Plant is located on Gun Club Road in Tahoe Vista and was a materials-based, concrete batch plant facility since 1948. Placer County Department of Public Works, Tahoe Engineering, is the owner of the property, having acquired it in August of 2008 with a \$2 million grant from the Sierra Nevada Conservancy. The property consists of eight individual parcels totaling a little more than an acre. The total restoration will be about two acres. Additional public easements between the parcels are owned by the Department of Public Works and create a project area of almost three acres.

The plant initially provided paving material for the construction of a road over Brockway Summit (now State Highway 267) into the Lake Tahoe Basin from Truckee. The property was developed on top of and adjacent to Snow Creek wetlands. The natural course of a tributary to Snow Creek was altered by fill material when the property was built. Cement and aggregate base rock was used to fill the wetlands on the property. The amount of fill increased annually and the operations encroached further onto the wetlands, likely causing water quality impacts downstream to Snow Creek and Lake Tahoe.

"These grants will help Placer County and its partner agencies restore this stream zone," said Kansas McGahan, a senior engineer with the DPW's Tahoe Engineering Division and the project manager. "The restoration of the blighted property was identified as an Environmental Improvement Project (EIP) by TRPA over 15 years ago when it was still an operational facility. Placer County stepped up to the challenge of implementing the project when our adjacent project in Tahoe Estates identified numerous water quality issues in the upper watershed. This is a great opportunity to make a positive change in the National Avenue area."

The three grants are from the U.S Environmental Protection Agency Brownfields Grants and Land Revitalization program. Additional agencies that have given financial backing to the restoration project include the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation and the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency. Total project costs, are expected to be about \$5.5 million. The primary purpose of the project is to remove fill material that was placed into the wetlands. This material eventually makes its way into Lake Tahoe. Wetlands are a natural biological process that remove nutrients and particulate matter from stormwater runoff prior to its entering Lake Tahoe. Nutrients and particulate matter are largely responsible for the degradation of the lake's clarity. Toxic materials associated with the operation of a cement plant are present at the site and are also found in runoff that makes its way to Lake Tahoe.

This restoration project will create a contiguous wetland area with adjacent California Tahoe Conservancy and U.S. Forest Service parcels. Tentatively, project restoration will also include a multi-purpose use trail that will run from National Avenue connecting trails in the North Tahoe Regional Park. Along with water quality improvements, the project will also improve the watershed's riparian and wildlife habitat.