

CAUGHLIN RANCH FIRE

Restoration crucial, costly

By Jeff DeLong

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Officials plan Friday to submit a \$125,000 grant proposal to the region's primary water provider to fund emergency restoration efforts in the Caughlin Fire area.

The request to the Truckee Meadows Water Authority would finance the construction of straw barriers, dams to block debris flow and hydroseeding, all designed to prevent erosion problems when the first heavy rain hits the near-2,000-acre burn area in southwest Reno.

"We want to beat the weather," said Lynda Nelson, a parks planning manager for Washoe County and a member of the team exploring emergency restoration needs.

The \$125,000 would come from the water authority's Truckee River Fund, established to finance projects benefiting the river's water quality.

"We need to get this going, but we also need to get the funding," Nelson said.

Officials also are exploring funding through the



The Caughlin Fire races down Manzanita Canyon Nov. 18. A public meeting about restoration is today. TIM DUNN/RGJ FILE

U.S. Natural Resources Conservation Service's Emergency Watershed Program, to fund restoration work on private land. The bulk of property burned by the Nov. 18 blaze, which destroyed 30 homes and damaged dozens more, is private.

Crews have surveyed burned areas and concern centers on Manzanita Canyon, where fire ripped down a drainage with very steep slopes in places, Nelson said.

"The biggest thing is Manzanita Canyon. It's a very hazardous situation there," Nelson said.

Other concerns are focused along Evans Creek and in the Windy Hill-Bartley Ranch area, where falling rocks could pose a safety hazard. Officials are considering installing temporary concrete barriers on hillsides there.

Some residents in the fire area acknowledge concern.

"I'm very worried about erosion," said Bill Povolmy, whose Alpine Creek Road home lies beside a scorched Evans Creek.

Povolmy likewise is worried about the possibility of cheatgrass taking over the fire area, an invasion that

IF YOU GO

University of Nevada's Cooperative Extension hosts a "Post-Caughlin Fire Update and Presentation" in collaboration with Washoe County, Reno and the Nevada Land Conservancy. The event will provide information on restoration efforts, right of entry to burned property and managing landscapes after the fire.

WHERE: Caughlin Ranch Elementary School, 4881 Village Green Parkway, Reno.

WHEN: Today, 6 to 8 p.m.

could increase future fire danger.

Pioneer Drive resident John Harker, who lives next door to two homes destroyed by the fire, said he would favor shoring up some of the steepest slopes.

"If we get a real wet season, I would say it could be an issue," Harker said.

The full cost of emergency erosion control projects and longer-term restoration efforts has yet to be determined, but Nelson said it likely will be "hundreds of thousands of dollars we really don't have."