

## *Frequently Asked Questions about BMPs*

### **What are BMPs?**

Best Management Practices (BMPs) are actions to keep soil and other pollutants out of streams and lakes and protect water quality. In the Lake Tahoe Basin, BMPs are required on all developed properties, with the goal of reducing the decline in lake water clarity caused by excess sediments and nutrients flowing off impervious surfaces such as roofs and driveways. Some general BMP requirements are vegetating and mulching bare disturbed soils, infiltrating storm water runoff, paving dirt driveways, and stabilizing steep, eroding slopes.

### **What is the BMP Retrofit Ordinance?**

Pursuant to subsection 25.5.A of the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency's (TRPA) Code of Ordinances, all property owners in the Tahoe Basin are required to install infiltration facilities designed to accommodate the volume of runoff from a twenty-year/one-hour storm event (approximately one inch of precipitation in one hour). These infiltration facilities are called Best Management Practices (BMPs). Some specific examples of BMPs include roof runoff infiltration trenches, slotted trench drains to capture driveway runoff, and landscaping enhancements such as basins and rain gardens to capture and infiltrate storm water before it leaves the property. For more information about the BMP Ordinance, go to the TRPA website at <http://www.tahoebmp.org/>.

### **Why are BMPs necessary?**

Scientists have determined that the unique clarity of Lake Tahoe has been declining at a rate of one foot a year. Suspended fine particles from roads and driveways cause light scattering that reduces visibility. Nutrients such as nitrogen and phosphorus promote unnatural levels of algal growth which also impedes visibility in the lake. The TRPA adopted the BMP Retrofit Ordinance in 1992 to reverse this downward trend in water quality.

### **When do my BMPs need to be done?**

BMPs are required on every property in the Lake Tahoe Basin through a priority watershed system based on factors including soil type, slope, aspect and ratio of development. The deadlines TRPA has set for Priority 1, 2, and 3 watersheds are October 15<sup>th</sup>, 2000, 2006, and 2008, respectively. To determine your priority watershed, go to the TRPA website at <http://www.tahoebmp.org/> or call the TRCD at 530-543-1501, ext 113.

### **Who requires the installation of BMPs and are there penalties for non-compliance?**

The TRPA is the regulatory agency responsible for the requirements and enforcement of the BMP Retrofit Ordinance. The TRPA cannot start enforcement action until a one year grace period beyond each compliance date. Initial fines for single family homes begin at \$1000. For more information on the TRPA enforcement program visit their website at [http://www.tahoebmp.org/bmp\\_pdfs/BMP\\_Enforcement\\_Program.pdf](http://www.tahoebmp.org/bmp_pdfs/BMP_Enforcement_Program.pdf).

### **What is the Tahoe Resource Conservation District (TRCD) role?**

The TRCD is a non-regulatory, primarily grant-funded organization that has a Memorandum of Understanding with the TRPA to assist single-family homeowners with the design and implementation of BMPs. Working with the TRCD for a BMP evaluation is completely voluntary. We are bound by law to work with you in strict confidentiality; we will need authorization to share documentation of your completed BMPs with the TRPA to request your BMP Certificate of Completion. To obtain an authorization release form, stop by our office at 870 Emerald Bay Rd., Suite 108 or visit our website at [www.tahoercd.org](http://www.tahoercd.org). There are other agencies and private contractors in the Basin that can also help you learn about and satisfy the BMP Ordinance.

### **Has my property already had a BMP site evaluation? Does the property have a TRPA Certificate?**

To find out the BMP status of your property, go to <http://www.tiims.org:8089/searchBMP.asp> and enter your property address. If you do not have access to the internet, you can call the TRCD office and one of the staff will look up your property status for you.

### **How do I get a BMP Evaluation?**

The TRCD performs BMP evaluations for single family residences in California. As an agency, we are grant funded, which limits our resources and program staff, so we appreciate your patience. Call our hotline and get on our waiting list and we will get to your property as soon as we can. TRCD staff is also available for Technical Assistance throughout each summer season. For questions or to schedule an appointment, please call us at: 530-543-1501 ext. 113.

Another option is to design and/or install your BMPs on your own. If you are interested, we have many resources available and we can meet with you to help ensure a successful installation. There are also a number of contractors in the Lake Tahoe area that specialize in BMP design and installation. Visit [www.tahoercd.org](http://www.tahoercd.org) for a list of BMP Resource Professionals.

### **Do I have to install the BMPs exactly as they are recommended on my BMP Evaluation?**

If you want to alter your existing BMP Evaluation, it is recommended that you do so with the assistance of the TRCD staff to ensure that you are meeting the requirements of the BMP retrofit ordinance. To schedule an appointment for Technical Assistance, call 530-543-1501 ext. 113.

### **Why do I need to implement BMPs on my property when it appears that nobody else is?**

All property owners within the basin must implement BMPs on their property. This includes not only private property owners, but local jurisdictions, the Forest Service, and the California Tahoe Conservancy as well. BMPs to control erosion and infiltrate runoff from public roadways are being designed and implemented through an Environmental Improvement Program (EIP) throughout the basin. The installation schedule of these projects depends on jurisdictional funding allotments. For information about EIP projects in your area, contact your local jurisdiction or the TRCD.

**What happens during the final BMP inspection?** At your request, TRCD staff will visit your property and confirm that all required BMPs are installed and functional. If the installation meets all requirements of the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency (TRPA) BMP Retrofit Ordinance, we will request a Certificate of Completion from the TRPA. An Authorization Release Form must be signed by the property owner prior to our releasing your information to the TRPA. You can check the status of your Certificate at <http://www.trpa.org/bmpinfo/>. In order for your Certificate of Completion to remain valid, all BMPs must be maintained and functional. To request a final inspection for your property, call 530-543-1501 ext. 113.

### **What about Fire Defensible Space?**

A fire safe landscape can be integrated with BMPs to protect your property and Lake Tahoe. For a complete discussion regarding fire defensible space at Lake Tahoe, obtain a copy of "Living with Fire: A Guide for the Homeowner". Copies are available at your local Fire District or pick one up free at the TRCD office. Or go online at <http://www.livingwithfire.info/> to learn more about creating and maintaining defensible space around your home. Contact your local fire professional for a fire defensible space inspection.

### **Where can I find web resources to do BMP research on my own?**

<http://www.tahoercd.org> - TRCD website with tip sheets and BMP information.

<http://www.trpa.org/bmpinfo/> - Tahoe Regional Planning Agency, Erosion Control Team

<http://www.unce.unr.edu/publications/EBPubs/EB0403.pdf> - How to Install Best Management Practices on Developed Property at Lake Tahoe (Contractor's BMP Manual)

<http://www.unce.unr.edu/publications/EBPubs/EB0201.pdf> - Home Landscaping Guide for Lake Tahoe and Vicinity

<http://www.epa.gov/OWOW/NPS/> - Environmental Protection Agency web-link (for a national perspective on stormwater runoff and pollution control)