Drought doesn’t prevent Tahoe development



Crews work on the golf holes that will be rerouted to accommodate Edgewood Lodge. Photos/Kathryn Reed

By Anne Knowles

Large commercial development projects around Lake Tahoe are moving along unchanged in the midst of a historic drought.

Squaw Valley’s proposed 94-acre hotel, condo, timeshare and recreation area, Edgewood Tahoe’s 154-room lodge, and the Chateau’s multiphase retail and hotel project at Stateline are all on track.

A fourth project, Homewood Mountain Resort’s redevelopment, is mired in litigation but owner JMA Ventures expects to begin construction on the $500 million project a year from now.

Placer County has requested an update to the water supply assessment for the Squaw Valley Specific Plan environmental impact report, according to Alex Fisch, senior planner for

Placer County.

That EIR became available in mid-May and public comment on the project is being accepted through July 17.

The update to the water supply assessment, provided by the Squaw Valley Public Service District, will include data on precipitation and aquifer pumping through 2014.

Fisch said the county requested a 25-year assessment of water availability. By law, a 20-year assessment is required for all projects constructing 500 or more dwelling units.

The controversial Squaw Valley plan on 85 acres includes up to 1,493 bedrooms in 850 units; 297,733 square feet of commercial space, including conference rooms, retail and restaurants; 90,000 square feet of recreational features such as movie theater, indoor rock climbing and pool and water slides; and parking. Housing for up to 300 employees and 20,000 square feet of additional commercial space is planned on another 8.8-acre parcel.

The development is expected to take 25 years to build and, according to the EIR, will need 234 acre-feet of water annually by 2040.

“It’s difficult to say how much water it will need in the intervening years,” Mike Geary, SVPSD general manager, told *Lake Tahoe News*.

“The county, to its credit, is allowing a flexible phasing plan. So many projects are affected by market forces so the county just said build it how you want.”

SVPSD plans to drill four wells on the property to deliver the water.

SVPSD is also developing an 8-mile pipeline to the Martis Valley to import water into Olympic Valley as a redundant, emergency source of water for existing customers, says Geary.



Water purveyors are still working out the details for future phases of the Chateau project in South Lake Tahoe.

Also in Placer County is Homewood's controversial redevelopment project, which includes hotel, retail and new base area. That project's EIR outlines two alternatives for water. One alternative calls for Tahoe City Public Utility District to be the sole water provider. A second alternative says TCPUD would supply water to the south base area while Madden Creek Water Co. would supply the north base.

It estimates water demand at 385 acre-feet per year for the south base, 134 acre-feet per year for the north base and 43.6 acre-feet a year for snowmaking.

Calls to JMA Ventures to clarify the project's plans were not returned.

Water for the long-delayed build out of the Chateau project is still being ironed out. When the project was initially

permitted, South Tahoe Public Utility District was going to deliver service to the bigger portion of the development, the convention center and a 400-unit hotel, while Lakeside Park Association was set to supply so-called project B, 125 time-share units.

Now, the two purveyors are in negotiations about who and how to deliver service to the significantly altered project. STPUD provides service to the retail that has already gone in. The storefronts currently use 1,480 gallons per day, according to Richard Solbrig, STPUD general manager.

(The permit on STPUD's portion of the original plan, for a convention center and hotel, called for 77,700 gallons per day, Solbrig said.)

Solbrig told *Lake Tahoe News* it's unclear where the overall project is going next, although a 32-room hotel with pool big enough to accommodate two planned hotels and 19,000-square-feet of retail space is being designed now for the next phase that could break ground this summer.

STPUD and Lakeside agreed on a revenue sharing deal, since Lakeside lost most of its customer base when the project went belly up, and are working out the details now, according to Solbrig and Jack McLaughlin, president of Lakeside Park Association.

The Edgewood Lodge project is moving along, with corollary work being done now and construction on the hotel itself starting later this summer. But it's unclear how much water the project will consume. Douglas County's EIR on the project only mentions water quality, like what is required for the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency.

Patrick Rhamey, vice president of real estate, said an analysis of water demand exists, but he didn't have the time to provide it to *Lake Tahoe News*.

The water purveyor is Edgewood Water Co., a small company that delivers water to properties totaling about 2,000 rooms, said Rhamey.

“Edgewood Lodge’s 154 rooms, excuse the pun, are a drop in the bucket,” he said.