

## Owners could foot levee costs

[By Ryan McCarthy/Appeal-Democrat](#)

February 17, 2009 - 11:36PM

Property owners in Olivehurst, Linda, Arboga and Plumas Lake would pay up to \$148 a year if a proposed assessment district projected to generate \$800,000 a year for levee-related maintenance wins approval.

Directors of the Three Rivers Levee Improvement Authority, who held a workshop Tuesday, are expected to take up a resolution March 3 that would lead to ballots being mailed for votes on whether to form the assessment district.

A home on an acre or less faces a proposed assessment between \$11 to \$148 yearly, depending upon the benefit from the levee operations and maintenance work the proposed district would fund.

"Because of their location, homes in Plumas Lake receive greater benefit from TRILA's levee improvements and improved levee maintenance," said Paul Brunner, executive director of the improvement authority. "Plumas Lake homes would pay a larger assessment than a home in Linda or Olivehurst."

"Each dollar paid by the property owner equals one vote," Brunner added. "This means a home in Plumas Lake will have more votes than a home in Linda or Olivehurst."

About 13,800 parcels in the four Yuba County communities are within in the assessment district.

A public hearing on the district is expected to be held in May after ballots are mailed, if directors of the authority agree to put the assessment before property owners. If it goes forward in March, ballots would be counted between May 13 and 29.

Brunner cited the damages from the Yuba River levee break in 1986 and the Feather River levee break in 1997 in discussing the assessment district.

He said a 2008 survey found support and opposition for such a district about even.

"We were kind of down the middle," Brunner said.

Kim Floyd of LucyCo Communications, public outreach consultant for the three rivers authority, said public funds can't be used to advocate for the district but can be used to inform people.

"It's a program," Floyd said. "It's not a campaign."

"You can't say, 'please vote 'Yes,'" she noted. "You can say, 'Please vote.'"

She said of the outreach effort that, "we really believe in the personal touch" and "one on one, face to face communication."

Small neighborhood group meetings as well as speakers at business groups and service clubs will be part of the program, Floyd said.

"We are reaching out to everyone," she added. "It's making sure everyone has all of the facts."

Levee maintenance could help landowners avoid flood insurance rates that could reach up to \$2,700 a year, Brunner said.

The assessment district is subject to procedures of Proposition 218, the Right to Vote on Taxes Act passed by California voters in 1996.

*Contact Appeal-Democrat reporter Ryan McCarthy at 749-4707 or [rmccarthy@appeal-democrat.com](mailto:rmccarthy@appeal-democrat.com).*