

Voters face decision on levee assessment

[By Michele Perrault/plumaslakelife.com](#)

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Voters and residents of Plumas Lake will soon be faced with a choice that could affect their homes and their finances for a long time into the future. The Three Rivers Levee Improvement Authority (TRLIA) is moving forward with a necessary assessment on home owners in the Plumas Lake area in order to complete their end of the deal with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).

As part of the contingency to have the levees surrounding Plumas Lake certified and not remapped into a flood zone, TRLIA must implement an ongoing, long-term plan for maintenance of the levees.

"We are hoping to get the word out to as many residents as we can," said Paul Brunner, TRLIA executive director.

TRLIA, working with members from Reclamation District 784, are implementing a series of small community meetings to make themselves available to residents who have questions or concerns regarding the proposed assessment. The first meeting recently took place at Rio Del Oro school, attracting about a dozen interested residents.

Paying additional fees is an unattractive option - especially given current economic conditions — but Brunner wants residents to understand that without this assessment in place, the out-of-pocket expense could end up much higher for residents.

FEMA, the agency in charge of ensuring public safety throughout the country, is in the process of evaluating the safety of the levees that protect the homes and residents of Plumas Lake. Part of that evaluation will be based upon what plan is in place to continue maintenance on the levees and protection for the area's residents. Regardless of the levee improvements being complete, FEMA could still remap the area into a flood zone, which requires residents carry flood insurance if there isn't a long-term plan in place. This would essentially mean that all the work that has been done, while it will certainly save lives during a flood, will not save residents' from feeling financial pain.

"Levee operations and maintenance is required for levee accreditation by FEMA," Brunner explained.

Areas throughout the nation that are considered to be part of the flood zone require residents purchase flood insurance. In the case of Plumas Lake this insurance for a high-risk flood area will run residents between \$1,200 and \$2,200 a year for protection.

On the other hand, the proposed assessment would cost Plumas Lake residents an additional \$148 a year but would make the area eligible for the low-cost non-required flood insurance of \$350 a year. Add this to the cost of the current maintenance rate and residents would be paying approximately \$213 a year for levee maintenance and an additional \$350 a year if they chose to take the insurance. The total for Plumas Lake residents for levee maintenance and insurance would run around \$563 a year.

While there is no guarantee as to what action FEMA will take on remapping Plumas Lake into a flood zone, it's clear that rezoning the area will result in residents facing greater expenses.

TRLIA will distribute assessment ballots to residents on March 24. Residents will have until May 12 to return the ballots by mail or in person at the public meeting in May. In addition, residents who have voted by mail can make changes to their vote by appearing in person at the May public meeting.

For more information on the assessment and details on what it will provide and cost can be found on the TRLIA Assessment District Web site:

<http://www.featherriversetbacklevee.com/assessment/index.html>

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