



News Release

South Tahoe Public Utility District
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What stinks?

South Lake Tahoe, CA (July 12, 2021) – If you live or have driven by Black Bart Ave the last three days, you likely noticed a strong odor. This weekend the South Tahoe Public Utility District stored partially treated wastewater in one of its two emergency retention basins on the corner of Black Bart Ave and Pioneer Trail. The basins are designed to store wastewater when there is an issue at the treatment plant to prevent a sewage spill.

The District is currently rehabilitating one of its three secondary clarifiers, which is over 50 years old. The combination of high flows due to increased visitation over the 4th of July holiday and unusually high temperatures in the valley, and a settling problem with the remaining two secondary clarifiers caused the District to store 2 million gallons of partially treated wastewater in the emergency retention basin. The wastewater treatment plant has stabilized and the District is currently returning the water to the plant and conducting cleaning operations.

“We don’t take this lightly and only use the emergency retention basins as a last resort,” said Jeff Lee, Manager of Plant Operations. “We thank our neighbors for their understanding and patience and are doing everything we can to remedy the situation as quickly as possible.”

The District maintains two emergency retention basins which are designed to store 56 million gallons of water when there is an issue at the treatment plant. The District last used the basins to store partially treated wastewater during the big winter storms of February 2017. Prior to that, the basins had not been used for this purpose since 1997.

When the wastewater treatment plant was built in the 1950s, it was located on the outskirts of town. Over the last 70 years, South Lake Tahoe has grown and the plant is now located right in the heart of town. “The District is very conscientious of odors and has invested in various measures over the years to reduce odors,” said Lee. “The reality is that we can’t totally remove odors, but we continue to monitor odor on a daily basis and run our operations to minimize impacts to our neighbors.”

For more information about the wastewater treatment process, visit stpubd.us.

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