

Tahoe fishermen tired of waiting to get on the lake

By Kathryn Reed

Fishing is often a waiting game. But it's usually done on the water, not in a parking lot.

Waiting on dry land has been the case lately for a number of fishermen trying to access Lake Tahoe at the Cave Rock boat ramp.



Locked gates after 6am are frustrating fishermen.

Photo/Kathryn Reed

"It's getting fairly irritating. (Friday) there were three boats waiting at 6 and (the inspectors) show up at 7:30," Chuck Bartlett of South Lake Tahoe said.

The ramp is supposed to be open from 6am-4pm. The reason for the gate is so boats can be inspected for invasive species.

Cave Rock, on the South Shore in Nevada, is one of two public launches open this time of year. The other is on the North Shore in Tahoe City. The former is on Nevada State Parks land and the latter on Tahoe City Public Utility District property.

Nicole Cartwright with the Tahoe Resource Conservation District did not return a phone call. Her agency is responsible for the inspections and therefore locking and unlocking the gate.

It's the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency that is mandating the inspections. Quagga and zebra mussels are the main threat. The worry is if these species enter Lake Tahoe, they will destroy the ecosystem, cause billions of dollars in damage and ruin this tourist destination. The Great Lakes and Lake Mead in Southern Nevada are two areas that have been devastated by these mussels.

"We need those inspectors present at the time they are supposed to be there," Dennis Oliver, spokesman for TRPA, said. "There is a full contingent of folks who want to and need to get out on the lake for sport fishing. The inspectors are definitely supposed to be there during the posted hours."

Blue Ribbon Charters out of South Tahoe uses Cave Rock as its boat ramp.

"Usually the bites are a lot better in the morning. If they open later, you miss the bite," Eric St. Denis, who is part of the family run operation, said. He added, if they close the ramp early, it's hard on afternoon charters.

Mackinaw, brown and rainbow trout are primarily what people are catching. Many of the recreational fishermen are there for the fun "catch and release."

Ray Damato of Gardnerville is in his 19-foot boat once or twice a week. He's been casting a line on Lake Tahoe for about 30 years.

"We like to get out there right at 6 o'clock. Mackinaw fishing seems to be best in the morning," Damato said. "We only bring home maybe one fish if we are going to eat it that

night.â€

When the gates are closed the fishermen call the number that is posted. Sometimes they reach a person who says theyâ€™ll see whatâ€™s going on, other times only a message can be left.

â€œIf nobody shows up, nobody can fish,â€ Damato said.