

Hull repairs knock Tahoe Queen out of service

By Kathryn Reed

The Tahoe Queen is being dismantled. Sort of.

In order to comply with an anticipated visit by the U.S. Coast Guard in the fall, the paddle-wheeler will not churn the waters of Lake Tahoe until late April or early May. This is so workers can overhaul the interior of the hull.

The boat will remain docked at Ski Run Marina in South Lake Tahoe while crews do the work.



The Tahoe Queen will remain tied up through April. Photo/Kathryn Reed

“This year our marine engineers came out and looked at the Tahoe Queen. They said we need to go into the bilge area where the inner hull is,” said Austin Sass, spokesman for Aramark, which owns the Queen and Dixie II on the South Shore. “In order to do that we need to disassemble all of the galley equipment in the lower part of the boat. The walk-in freezer and grill have to be disassembled. You can’t just move them.”

Water and electricity will be turned off. The equipment is likely to be temporarily moved to upper decks where guests would normally be.

Sass said the inspection in the fall happens every five years. How inspectors test it will not require disassembling the boat again.

“Inspectors use special devices to measure the hull and whatever else they inspect,” Sass said.

While the Queen is offline, divers will take off algae and other things that may have latched onto the outside of the hull.

Sass didn’t have a dollar figure for what the work will cost or what it might mean in terms of lost revenue. He does not anticipate a rate increase for sightseers because of the work.

The Dixie is expected to pick up customers for the next few months with its offerings being expanded.

“I don’t anticipate visitors to Lake Tahoe will have less of an opportunity to go out on the lake and enjoy Emerald Bay and enjoy the experience of cruising,” Sass said.

The work is being done now in what is the slow season for cruising so when the summer crowds arrive both boats will be plying the water.

Even though the company released information about trips to Squaw Valley last month, those February and March excursions have been canceled.

Sass said the full Squaw boat trip schedule was originally cutback because work is being done at the Tahoe City Marina. Garwoods Restaurant could accommodate the paddle-wheeler, but he said it was tricky to dock there because of the low lake level and the buoy field.

The water level to-date has not posed a problem for the Queen or Dixie on the South Shore.

The Queen began operating on Lake Tahoe in 1983. In 2008, it received a half million dollar makeover that had to do mostly with cosmetic and interior improvements.