

TRPA looking at restructuring boat inspection program

Expanding the boat inspection program and changing the fee structure will be discussed March 24 by the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency Governing Board.

Lake Tahoe boat inspections may include an annual clean boating certification. Known as Blue Boating, it is designed to augment the current inspection program aimed at preventing the introduction of aquatic invasive species.

Even as engines become cleaner with newer technologies, TRPA is taking proactive steps to reduce the potential environmental impacts of boats on Lake Tahoe including engine emissions, dirty bilges, excessive noise and shoreline erosion.

Since 2007, mandatory watercraft inspections have been in place at all Lake Tahoe launch sites to prevent the introduction of potentially devastating mussel species. Last year, fees were introduced to pay for the inspection service and approximately 14,000 boats were inspected.

The proposed updated fee structure is designed to cover the costs of watercraft inspections for invasive species as well as other elements such as noise controls and proper bilge and sewage containment. A key change proposed from last year's fee structure is conversion to an annual fee versus a per-inspection fee. The new fee would be scaled according to boat size, engine horsepower, and whether a boat is local or expected to travel to other lakes. Fees could range from \$20 to \$125 for an annual Blue Boating certification sticker and a full year of aquatic invasive species prevention services.

The inspection and certification process will include boater education and compliance with:

â€¢ Aquatic invasive species program

â€¢ Noise and no-wake-zone standards

â€¢ Clean bilge practices

â€¢ Wastewater management

â€¢ Engine tuning and propeller pitch

â€¢ Payment of mitigation fee

Those wishing to join the discussion or offer input on clean boating can send comments via mail or email or can attend a public meeting. The TRPA Governing Board meeting will be March 24 in Incline Village. Location and agenda information are available on the Meetings and Notices page.

For additional information, email jcowen@trpa.org.