

July 4 can mean freedom to litter Lake Tahoe beaches

By Stephen Ward

Pristine might have been the last word to use to describe the beaches of Lake Tahoe early this morning.

Thanks to a group of volunteers on the South Shore, most people will never know what the shoreline looked like after people left behind their trash from the Fourth's festivities.

With the South Shore's population more than doubling for the holiday weekend, the impact on the environment is noticeable, as is people's reluctance to be responsible for themselves. Instead of using trash receptacles, they left their trash and other items on the beach.



Trash collected from South Tahoe beaches on a previous July 5. Photo/Kenny Curtzwiler

This is the 11th year Kenny Curtzwiler, owner of K&K Services, has rallied his staff together to clean the majority of El Dorado Beach, along with Regan Beach and the walkways surrounding Highway 50.

“One day I walked over to El Dorado Beach and noticed it was wrecked, and I decided to start cleaning up,” Meyers resident Curtzwiler said. “I never asked the city for help, I just decided to clean it myself.”

South Lake Tahoe Parks and Recreation Director Gary Moore sang the praises of Curtzwiler, saying the cleanup takes a lot of pressure off his department. Until last year, Curtzwiler had paid the dumping fees.

Curtzwiler and his five employees are sticking to the same regime they have for the past decade, which involves coming to the area with a dump truck and trailer to load all the waste into the beds of the vehicles before taking the collection to South Tahoe Refuse. Curtzwiler estimates approximately 50 yards of trash are accumulated each year.

He is starting the work this morning at 6 on the lake side of Highway 50 across from Aloha Ice Cream, they work their way east and anticipate being done by 10:30am. Curtzwiler says volunteers are welcome.

According to Curtzwiler, the majority of trash found at the sites is broken chairs, empty beer bottles and wet clothes.

Clean Tahoe crews will also be out today. The nonprofit that picks up trash in the public right-of-way in the El Dorado County portion of the basin was preparing to spend the majority of today restoring the facilities tarnished by tourists.

“We have two trucks we use to pick up trash from the public walking areas,” said Ellen Nunes, who runs Clean Tahoe.

Clean Tahoe has set its focus on cleaning the public parameters, and believes a few hours will be needed in order to fully regenerate the grounds.

The U.S. Forest Service owns Nevada, Kiva, Pope and Baldwin

beaches on the South Shore. Because phone calls were not returned, it's not known what their plan of action is for the debris left behind from Fourth of July revelers.

While many organizations anticipate a substantial amount of garbage left behind, some resorts don't consider cleaning up after the holiday a grueling endeavor.

Austin Sass, spokesman at Zephyr Cove Resort, anticipates the Zephyr Cove beach to be back to normal within two to three hours, and says the time it takes to restore the property isn't different than any other weekend.

"We get our entire staff out there and pick up trash until the beach is clean again," Sass said.

As for harmful materials, Sass is steadfast in ensuring the property will not be threatened by the use of fireworks or glass beverages.

"We have recycle bins at the front of all entrances to the beach," Sass said. "And you can't even see the fireworks from our beach since we're a cove, so we close before the show even gets started."

Though jurisdictions have fines for littering, with resources on the Fourth devoted elsewhere, it is impossible to enforce such laws.