

Upper Truckee Marsh to be off-limits to dogs in 2011

By Kathryn Reed

Unleashed dogs in the Upper Truckee Marsh are wreaking so much havoc on wildlife habitat that the California Tahoe Conservancy has decided that beginning in 2011 dogs will be banned from this swath of public land in South Lake Tahoe.

“The purpose is to preserve habitat value,” Ray Lacey, CTC deputy director, told *Lake Tahoe News*.

Canines will not be permitted in the area starting in May during the breeding season. The cut-off date has not been determined, but it could extend into the fall to encompass the migratory season for birds.



Beginning in 2011 dogs will be banned in the summer from the Upper Truckee Marsh. Photo/Kathryn Reed

This is expected to be an annual closure.

The 300-plus acres were acquired for the purpose of preserving

habitat, not for recreation. For about a decade the Conservancy has been trying to educate dog owners about what happens when their animals walk in sensitive marsh areas. It impacts the terrain as well as scares off wildlife.

“They are traipsing in the meadow. There is a lack of complete understanding by people who want to get to this isolated beach,” CTC board member Kathay Lovell said at Thursday’s meeting.

El Dorado County Animal Control and the South Lake Tahoe Police Department will help regulate the closure. People violating the law will be cited and fined.

The goal this year is to educate the public about why the closure will be implemented.

Tina Carlsen, who has a doctorate in ecology and is an environmental program manager with the CTC, was tasked with analyzing the impact dogs have on wildlife and habitat in the marsh that is on the east side of the Truckee River adjacent to the Al Tahoe neighborhood and leads to Lake Tahoe.

She said birds are leaving the area because of dogs. Dogs are also affecting feeding and nesting areas of several species of birds.

Sean Butler, urban land management supervisor, said he won’t be surprised if people are angry about the closure, but said this has been a long time in coming because people continually disregard the current rules.

He said he expects the closure to be easier to enforce because it is not subject to confusion – like can a dog be off-leash to swim in the lake.

The CTC pointed out that no changes are planned for Cove East, on the other side of the Truckee River. Al Tahoe residents have the option of the dog park at Regan Beach for lake access

for dogs.