

Upper Truckee River users fail to practice 'leave no trace'

By Austin Fay

On a four-hour hike from Lake Tahoe Golf Course to where the Upper Truckee River ducks under Highway 50, *Lake Tahoe News* spotted three Coors Light cans, 10 empty bottles, two red plastic cups, one-and-a-half pairs of shoes, a black overturned grill, 14 golf balls outside the course, as well as a cigarette box and other micro-trash along the sweeping riverbanks.

A sort of tree-house platform was also found built into an overhanging tree midway through the Upper Truckee's journey around the east side of the airport on California Tahoe Conservancy land.

Weaving and meandering through lush meadows, with quaking aspens and willows drooping and sliding into the chilly winding waters, the Upper Truckee River eventually empties into Lake Tahoe.



Steve Ashcraft of South Tahoe checks out the treehouse on the Upper

Truckee
River's edge.
Photos/Austin
Fay

Beyond being an eyesore, garbage can also end up in the lake. With much of the river being a wildlife corridor, what humans leave behind is never good for animals.

In addition to the walking, bicycling and hiking trails that stretch through the river's floodplain, kayaking, rafting or just floating makes the river a popular recreation destination.

Much of the trash was found at the river entrance near the intersection of Elks Club Road and Highway 50.

Since May 3, the Tahoe Flea Market has been every Sunday in the parking lot near the most popular entrance point to the river for recreationists. According to Bruce Eisner, acquisitions manager for the California Tahoe Conservancy, the flea market's participants are responsible for the condition of the parking lot.

Many locals don't want to see the natural beauty of the land depreciated. Steve Ashcraft, a 31-year South Tahoe resident, walks his dogs up and down the Upper Truckee River several times a week and values the shared land and its single-track trails.

"I see a couple soda cans here, some clothes there, a raft here and that's with light usage (of the river). How bad is it going to be on a long 4th of July weekend?" Ashcraft wonders. "It's just an ongoing thing."

Ashcraft also has a problem with CTC's way of doing things.

"I'm just surprised with the millions and millions they budget for realigning the river and all those cans and bottles are

sent out into the lake," he said.

Of the 63 tributaries of Lake Tahoe, the Upper Truckee River watershed makes up 18 percent of the total watershed drainage into the lake.

Danny Cohen, a one-year South Lake Tahoe resident looking a little sunburned as he took his cooler and rafts out of the river Wednesday night, has floated a section of the river at least 20 times in the last 30 days.

"For the most part it's pretty clean right now, but the river's been flowing pretty strong," Cohen said. He and the three friends he was with reported seeing a few golf balls and a stranded paddle during their float.

"Compared to the rest of California, it's not that much trash," said Joy Eichnerlynch, a four-year South Lake Tahoe resident.

Eichnerlynch was out for a sunset stroll with her husband, Walter, and their two wet dogs, Jesse and Gregor, on June 30. They live near F Street and think the litter is worse there than the Upper Truckee because of a nearby sledding hill.

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