

Taylor Creek Visitor Center may be torn down, rebuilt

By Kathryn Reed

It was never meant to be a visitor center. And, yet, what was supposed to be the bathroom and storage facility at Taylor Creek have been a visitor center for more than 40 years.

All of that is about to change.



Taylor Creek
Visitor Center
may be
overhauled.

Photos/Kathryn
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This seasonal South Shore outpost on Highway 89 run by the U.S. Forest Service could be demolished in the next couple years and replaced with a 3,800-square-foot facility that is designed to provide a better experience.

“We want to make it more functional and organized,” Jackie King, USFS interpretive program manager, said of the proposed center.

What is there now was designed in the 1960s. Bats and mice infested the upstairs (it’s been taken care of) – but the area cannot be used.

The originally planned visitor center was not built because funding never came through. The Forest Service adapted. The center is small. With five people it feels crowded.

Making it a better experience just walking from the parking lot is part the plans. It's not welcoming how it is currently situated, nor from the outer parking area do visitors know a center even exists.



The current Taylor Creek center was built for storage.

A handful of years ago the idea was to construct a 10,000-square-foot center with classrooms and exhibit halls. The public nixed that idea, saying it would overwhelm the site.

Now out for public comment until mid-September is the smaller visitor center proposal. The idea is what's standing now would be torn down, the trailers would be hauled away and the new structure put up. The cement walkways with the animal tracks would have to be torn out, but King said they are such a talking point with guests that they would be replaced.

"What we've heard from the public is make sure you don't make it an architectural monument that overwhelms the site," King said.

The idea is for the center to beckon people to come in, to ask questions, to thumb through books. Then it will act as a

gateway, much like it does now, to the Rainbow Trail, Lake Tahoe and the amphitheater.



Interpretive information will remain outside near the visitor center.

Interpretative exhibits will remain outdoors.

It's the environmental analysis that is in circulation. It's online and hard copies are at the Forest Service office in South Lake Tahoe and at Taylor Creek. Once comments have been scrutinized, it will be up to the forest supervisor how to proceed. If it's signed off, at that point the agency will go after funding.

The project is estimated to cost just less than \$3 million. If everything goes according to plan, the new center could be running in four to five years.

It would remain a seasonal facility – operating seven days a week from mid-May through October.

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