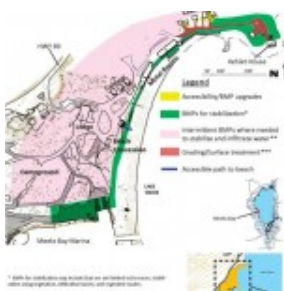


Forest Service to spruce up Meeks Bay property

By Susan Wood

With all the new, proposed development activity happening on the West Shore of Lake Tahoe, the Meeks Bay Resort is in line for a face lift starting this spring and going through fall.



The U.S. Forest Service is planning a number of improvements at Meeks Bay Resort. Graphic/Provided

The Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit is proposing a project to remove power lines, retrofit utility equipment, stabilize the slope with vegetation and make irrigation improvements – among them, the creation of water basins used to collect runoff. Massive stormwater runoff makes indentations where it channels into the lake. These best management practices – essentially known as erosion control methods – will use \$250,000 under the Southern Nevada Public Lands Management Act.

The U.S. Forest Service owns the lands and the buildings at the resort, while the Washoe Tribe of California and Nevada

operates the seasonal venue under a permit with the federal government.

Even with the Forest Service managing 75 percent of the land around Lake Tahoe, the federal agency still recognizes the desire among user groups to have access to the lake.

“Lakefront access is a big role of the Forest Service,” said LTBMU Landscape Architect Ashley Sommer, who’s spearheaded the project.

The project also calls for installing about 200 feet of paved road to make the lake more accessible to users. The cabins Meeks Bay Resort rents out will become more accessible with walkways that resemble the work the agency has done at the Nevada Beach Campground.

“In the total picture, the contribution to our facilities is important as we’re able to go in and upgrade,” LTBMU spokeswoman Cheva Heck said.

This prime property comes with a history, too. The Kehlet House – which is rented out mostly in the summer – is eligible for the National Registry of Historic Places. The two-story home with seven bedrooms was the living quarters of the Kehlet family, who originally owned and ran Meeks Bay Resort.

There is a concern improvements come at a price.

Ed Porras, the general manager hired by the tribe to run the resort, expressed a little concern the work would flow into their peak summer season and be disruptive.

“Our initial feeling is (the planning) is a little last-minute. But through a series of meetings, we’ve made it quite clear – repeatedly – that this is not a light situation because we’re concerned about the financial impact,” Porras said.

A more acceptable time line for the tribe and the resort

management was finalized that involved spring and fall, and Porras hopes that time line is honored.

The work is intended to be completed by 2012.

“When it’s over it will be a plus. The improvements should be nice, and we look forward to the Forest Service work,” he said.

Porras characterized the resort’s business as “resilient,” adding last year’s sales and bookings were the best since 2003 – even in this tough economy.

“With the economy, I think people are finding value for their vacation dollar. Instead of spending \$25,000 to go to Europe. They can come to Tahoe for \$3,000,” he said.