

Harvesting cray fish may improve Tahoe's clarity

By Jeff DeLong, Reno Gazette-Journal

The millions of crayfish skittering along the bottom of Lake Tahoe offer a promising economic opportunity and, if reduced in number, a possible chance to help improve the lake's threatened clarity.

That's the central message from a Yerington man who proposes a commercial venture to harvest crayfish on the lake's Nevada side.

If successful in changing state law and obtaining permission from all necessary regulatory agencies, Fred Jackson could begin pulling crayfish from Tahoe and selling them to restaurants and food wholesalers sometime next year.

"We want to see if we can make a difference for the lake's clarity and make a little money on the side," said Jackson, 47.

Crayfish, also known as crawdads, are not native to Lake Tahoe. The Tahoe area's first crayfish, believed to have come from the Klamath River, were introduced into Marlette Lake in 1895, according to a study prepared by scientists at University of Nevada, Reno and University of California, Davis.

Other introductions followed, and by 1932, crayfish were "thriving in the lake and its tributaries," the study said.

Their numbers quickly skyrocketed. In 1967, an estimated 55 million crayfish lived in Tahoe. Today, the number is estimated at 220 million or more.

Catching and selling crayfish – a Cajun delicacy – just sounds

like a good idea, Jackson said.

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