

Fallen Leaf Lake trying hard to keep out AIS

By Kathryn Reed

Not everyone at Fallen Leaf Lake believes enough is being done to keep out aquatic invasive species.

This South Shore lake has no invasive species and residents want to keep it that way. But with Lake Tahoe just a mile away, that could be difficult. The much larger lake is home to unwanted plant life such as milfoil and animals like Asian clams.



Fallen Leaf Lake wants to remain uncontaminated of aquatic invasive species.

Photo/LTN file

It's mandatory to have boats and trailers washed when launched at Fallen Leaf Lake. What some would like is a station at the other end of the lake at the campground.

Residents have set up a website to help educate people about aquatic invasive species, or AIS.

“We are hoping to get support from community members and the visiting public to help convince the USFS to do the right thing and let us help them by installing and operating the boat decontamination station at the campground,” Fallen Leaf Lake resident Mike Kraft told *Lake Tahoe News*. “If we can do this, we will be able to decontaminate nearly 98 percent of the boats being launched into the lake. This will help preserve the health and beauty of Fallen Leaf Lake for our future generations.”

The Forest Service owns the campground. The policy is to screen people as they come into the campground and explain the clean-drain-dry protocol. It’s kayaks, canoes and rafts that are launched from the campground.

This July 2011 document explains the USFS policy surrounding AIS.

“We follow TRPA’s protocols and rules for boat inspections,” explained Cheva Heck with the USFS.

Kraft, though, believes more needs to be done.

“We have even offered to provide, install, operate, and maintain the system so there is absolutely no cost to the USFS and they still will not help us protect Fallen Leaf Lake,” he said.

The Forest Service believes it is doing what it can.

Tahoe Keepers was launched this summer as an entity to work with the paddling community to become educated about AIS. The issue with paddlers is they launch at places other than marinas and therefore are not subject to the AIS inspections.

Even though the devastating quagga and zebra mussels have been around for decades, those in charge of waterways have been slow to implement policies to keep them out. It won’t be until next year that Truckee area lakes impose mandatory

inspections. Quagga mussels have been found at the Lahontan and Rye Patch reservoirs in Northern Nevada.

An idea that has been floated but is not known to be in place anywhere is to decontaminate vessels when they leave a lake known to be contaminated with an aquatic invasive species so they would not be able to be transported elsewhere.