

Nation's lone bi-state park a success based on popularity

By Kathryn Reed

Closed, but not off limits. That's the status of Van Sickle Bi-state Park as of sunset Monday.

Considering the traffic to the nation's first and only bi-state park exceeded expectations, it may come as a surprise to some people the gates won't be open again for six months.



Van Sickle Bi-state Park in its first season is popular with locals and tourists.

Photo/LTN file

The park near the state line on the South Shore was always intended to be open seasonally. Although this was a short season, with the park opening July 22, the plan is for it to be open each May through October – without snow.

People may still walk in. Driving is no longer an option. It's possible people will use the park to snowshoe and cross country ski, but no trail markers are set up.

The caretakers will continue to live on-site so someone is keeping an eye out on things.

In this inaugural season, locals and tourists have been flocking to the 725-acre park.

“It’s good when locals adopt a place like that and they adopt it as part of their culture,” Ray Lacey, deputy director of the California Tahoe Conservancy, said. “It’s been astonishing and delightful for us how popular it has become.”

When officials are out there they ask people where they are from to get a feel for who is on the trails. Local running groups are scampering up the dirt trails that lead to some magnificent views of Lake Tahoe.

Official user counts will be done next year.

Trail maps and interpretive signs are in the works, but not guaranteed for next summer.

“Explore Tahoe really has had the opportunity to be an urban trailhead now,” Lisa O’Daly, program supervisor with CTC, said. “They are incredible at letting people know the adventure going on outside their door so they can walk straight to the park.”

Explore Tahoe is in the Heavenly Village area, providing outdoor info to urbanites.

The Conservancy and Nevada State Parks are the owners of the bi-state park, while the Tahoe Rim Trail Association has contributed substantially to the operation and trail building.

“The connector up to the Rim Trail is not completed in the sense that it is smooth and 100 percent built to standard yet,” Mary Bennington, TRTA executive director, said. “About one mile in the middle has been roughed in. You could hike it, but that part will be harder because it is not really finished.”

The idea is from the South Shore's main bed base people will be able to hook up with the Tahoe Rim Trail at the Daggett Summit-Kingsbury Grade area.

Bennington expects the connector be done sometime in summer 2012. With the upper section not being able to be accessed until July because of snow, it made it impossible to have enough time this season to get the work done.