

Law breakers force all dogs from Upper Truckee Marsh

By Kathryn Reed

Poop bags have been replaced with pamphlets about why dogs are no longer allowed in the Upper Truckee Marsh.

Today begins the second annual three-month ban of canines – even ones on leash – from this popular South Lake Tahoe meadow that leads to Lake Tahoe.

While those who like to take their best friend for a walk in this area won't be able to until Aug. 1, neighborhood lore has it that this also happened when the land was privately owned.



No more walking in the Upper Truckee Marsh for AJ.
Photos/Kathryn Reed

Before the California Tahoe Conservancy took ownership several years ago longtime Tahoe families owned the land. It was known as the Barton Meadow before the CTC called it the Upper Truckee Marsh. On maps, the sandy area is called Hartoonian Beach.

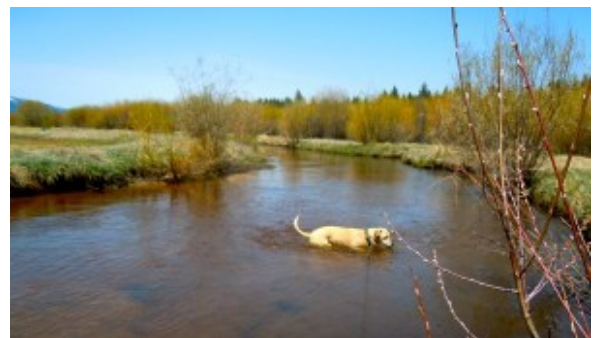
Cattle used to roam this acreage. And when they were being

rounded up, even the locals stayed out of the meadow for about three months a year for fear of being trampled in a stampede by the herd. Plus, the cowboys shot dogs caught off leash.

By comparison, the \$150 potential fine levied in this modern day era pales by comparison.

The whole point of the CTC closure is to preserve the marsh that provides critical habitat for wildlife – in particular a variety of birds. This marsh is the largest wetland habitat in the Lake Tahoe Basin.

“It’s the public’s responsibility to respond to and honor the objectives by which we are trying to manage that property,” Dana Dapolito, CTC associate environmental planner, told *Lake Tahoe News*. “We are providing the information. They need to take that step to comply.”



Even on leash, AJ is forbidden from swimming in Trout Creek where it meanders through the Upper Truckee Marsh.

For the first 24 days of April sheriff’s deputies wrote 18 citations. However, the CTC does not know how many of those were people with dogs off leash or people drinking alcohol or campfires or some other unpermitted activity.

What the landowners do know is compliance of the leash law, according to their land steward, is at 65 percent this year.

This compares to late last summer-early fall when it was at 80 percent when dogs were let back into the marsh.

With an average of 400 dogs a week being seen by the steward this spring because of the extremely temperate conditions and lack of snow, that equates to 140 dogs running around off leash. They could be trampling on sensitive habitat and scaring wildlife.

Even when the closure is not in effect, the leash law has been – and always has been the rule since the Conservancy has owned the land. And prior to it becoming public property, no one was ever supposed to be in this area without permission by the private landholder.

Had people followed the leash law rule, those who do what they are told would not be punished. Instead, the majority of dog owners are paying the price for the minority – that one-third of dog walkers seen without a leash.

“Our goal is not to levy fines,” CTC Deputy Director Ray Lacey told *Lake Tahoe News*. “The citations are for flagrant disobedience.”

Of the nearly 5,000 CTC properties in the basin, this is the only one with this type of closure.