

Crayfish harvest at Lake Tahoe to begin this month

By Jeff DeLong, Reno Gazette-Journal

Pursuing a vision to make a buck while helping to improve Lake Tahoe's clarity, a Nevada man hopes to begin harvesting crayfish from the lake's waters within this month.

With all but one key permit expected to be in hand this week, Fred Jackson and Tahoe Lobster Co. Inc. are ready to get to work. Chefs across the Reno-Tahoe area are lined up to receive a savory product they expect to be well received by customers.

"I'm ready to go. It's time to make the move," Jackson said.

Jackson plans the first commercial operation to sell live crayfish trapped from Tahoe's waters, a venture he said could aid the lake. His company's motto: "Clarity by cuisine."

Crayfish don't belong in Lake Tahoe, but they love the place. Introduced in the area in the late 1800s, Tahoe's crayfish population is now estimated in the range of 200 million to 300 million.

They're causing problems and could be associated with a dramatic decline in the lake's native invertebrates, said Sudeep Chandra, a freshwater science expert at University of Nevada, Reno.

Crayfish could also be linked to algae blooms diminishing Tahoe's famed clarity.

"When they poop, they stimulate algae growth," said Chandra, who is working with Tahoe Lobster Co. to track potential ecological benefits in parts of the lake through removal of crayfish.

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