

Opinion: Stop Nevada's overregulation of paddlers

By David C. Antonucci

In 2011 the Nevada Legislature adopted a new program to combat aquatic invasive species (AIS) throughout the state that goes into effect this year. This program is not widely understood and it has implications for paddlers.

We need paddlers to contact the Nevada Legislature to express our needs. Read on!

Effective Jan. 1, 2013, all watercraft that can transport water and that enter Nevada waters must purchase an AIS boat sticker from Nevada Department of Wildlife. This includes canoes and kayaks of nearly all types, but excludes paddleboards. In Tahoe, this applies to kayaks that launch from Nevada beaches and those that launch from California but paddle into the Nevada side of Lake Tahoe. This program is in addition to the Tahoe Keepers program, so paddlers at Lake Tahoe that are in Nevada waters should have boat stickers from both programs.

- The stickers cost \$5 for Nevada residents and \$10 for out-of-state residents and must be renewed each year. As 2013 is the first year of implementation, paddlers without this sticker will be warned; in subsequent years, NDOW wardens will cite and/or ticket boats without this sticker. The sticker will be required on all paddle craft, including those that are part of rental fleets; no group discount is currently allowed in the state statute.
- The current statute does not recognize that a comprehensive boat inspection/decontamination program for both motorboats and non-motorized boats is up and

running at Lake Tahoe that addresses the issue for both states. Due to complaints by out-of-state powerboat owners, the Nevada Legislature is currently considering a "fix" for the existing statute (AB128) by exempting boats from out-of-state that are already licensed by their state. However, non-motorized boats do not require a license from California or other states, so this exemption will not apply to kayakers at Lake Tahoe. If the current legislation passes as is, all paddlers on Lake Tahoe that travel in Nevada waters will be required to purchase the sticker every year.

- The Lake Tahoe Water Trail Team recognizes the Nevada program is intended to fund AIS prevention programs throughout Nevada, including education, inspection, and boat washing stations at infected waterways that often send their boats to Lake Tahoe. While this program is a laudable effort to improve Nevada's approach to AIS and bring it in line with efforts from other Western states, it does not recognize that we at Lake Tahoe have a well-developed program that will do a better job for this interstate waterway.

The Lake Tahoe Water Trail Association participated for years to help develop the features of the Tahoe Keepers program for non-motorized watercraft to assure that it is fair, easy to use and understand, and applies to all waterways in the Lake Tahoe Region. We firmly believe the Nevada program unnecessarily complicates AIS protection efforts and will lead to widespread confusion and non-compliance. How do most boaters even know when they are in Nevada waters? We also believe strongly that the current legislation considered a "fix" for the Nevada program in interstate locations unfairly burdens non-motorized watercraft and targets boat types that are less likely to transport AIS than motorized watercraft.

Please join us in urging the Nevada Legislature to reconsider AB128 and recognize the Tahoe Keepers program as the single

appropriate approach to preventing the introduction and spread of AIS from non-motorized boats in the Tahoe region.

Send your comments and concerns about AB128 to the Nevada Legislature. And help the Lake Tahoe Water Trail Team to continue to advocate on behalf of paddler interests at Lake Tahoe by joining the LTWTA.

The LTWTA may be reached by emailing info@laketahoewatertrail.org.

David C. Antonucci is a member of the Lake Tahoe Water Trail.