

# Lake Tahoe attractions on USFS property to close during government shutdown

By Kathryn Reed

With the majority of the land in the Lake Tahoe Basin being owned by the feds, the impact of the government shutdown is starting to be felt.

This will be the last weekend Camp Richardson, Tahoe Tallac Site, Round Hill Pines and Zephyr Cove Resort will be open during the government shutdown. That is because the U.S. Forest Service owns the land.



Activities at Camp Richardson may not continue past this weekend if the federal government shutdown continues. Photo/LTN file

It doesn't matter that independent concessionaires operate those entities on the South Shore.

"We got a 48-hour cease-and-desist notice (Wednesday) night," Ginger Nicolay Davis, president of the Tahoe Tallac Association, told *Lake Tahoe News* on Thursday afternoon. That was the same message delivered by the USFS to the other

concessionaires.

But by Thursday evening the Forest Service had changed its mind. A reprieve was given to the Tahoe entities through the weekend. This means the weddings scheduled at Valhalla will go on, Oktoberfest will happen and the paddle-wheelers will set sail.

However, on Monday all of the concessionaires are anticipating receiving a letter from the USFS explaining the closure procedure. This is assuming Congress has not resolved its differences and the federal government remains in shut down mode.

“This will likely have a major impact on tourism at Lake Tahoe in the short term,” Douglas County Manager Steve Mokrohisky told *Lake Tahoe News*. “There is an important point that should not be missed here: local governments and businesses are becoming increasingly important in providing services and information to our residents at a time when the federal government is literally inoperable.”

The two leaders within the Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit of the USFS – Nancy Gibson and Jeff Marsolais – are talking to government and tourism officials, but not to the media.

“If people stay home and don’t travel and tourists don’t come, it affects everyone,” South Lake Tahoe City Manager Nancy Kerry told *Lake Tahoe News*. “If the federal government can’t get its act together and realize that their decisions affect everybody, they shouldn’t get paid. It’s unbelievable they are still getting their salaries. We have people here who don’t get to work.”

The local economic toll from the shutdown remains to be seen. Federal paychecks have stopped – which means those people are watching how much money they spend. And if concessionaires close up, those employees will be without income. The Tallac Association, which is a small nonprofit, counts on weddings to

fund the summer arts and music festival.

"I truly believe this is coming from way, way up and not a local thing," Davis said of closing Tahoe sites. "I do believe it's a political move to get as much attention around this as they can, to get enough people mad so more people will start calling their congressmen."

Davis had rearranged the two weddings set for this weekend before the reprieve was issued. While she said it was hard to call the brides to tell them a Plan B had to be found just days before the big event, they were understanding. The call to tell them Plan A was back on was a much more pleasant conversation.

The Tahoe Tallac Association has multiple weddings scheduled every weekend in October, so alternative locations need to be found now just in case the shutdown continues.

And with 50 guests for one of the weddings staying at Camp Richardson this weekend, word that the resort is staying open for at least the next three days was welcome news to many.

Kris Knox, general manager for Camp Rich, was not available for comment.

"The city is reaching out to anybody and everyone who has events. We will do whatever we can to accommodate them," Kerry said.

Aramark, which operates Zephyr Cove Resort, and the M.S. Dixie II and Tahoe Queen paddle-wheelers, did not know about this weekend's potential shutdown until *Lake Tahoe News* called. Officials never got back to *LTN* after saying they would.

The Queen would still be able operate because it is docked at a private marina in the city limits.

Lake Tahoe Visitors Authority sent out a special press release Thursday letting people know Tahoe is open for business. North

Lake Tahoe Resort Association officials said they have no intention of doing anything special based on what Congress is doing.

Even though the Forest Service operates many of the trails in the basin, they remain open. There would be no way to close them even though USFS law enforcement officers are not furloughed.

In addition, there are state parks in both states in the basin that are not affected by the feds, as well as other commercial vessels on the lake.