

USFS Fish Festival a victim of government shutdown; other Tahoe entities faring OK

By Kathryn Reed

Crime will still be fought on the South Shore, but this weekend's Fall Fish Festival has been canceled because of the federal government shutdown that took effect today.

A big unknown is how the social service programs that so many in the area rely on will be affected by the government essentially turning off the financial spigot. While there is money in the pipeline, it won't last forever. And there is no known date for when Congress might figure out how to resolve its differences.



Gina Swankie with the Sacramento FBI office said the government shutdown is not affecting agents – including the ones stationed in South Lake Tahoe. However, the U.S. Attorneys Office is shuttered.

The U.S. Forest Service offices throughout the country are closed. Law enforcement and firefighters are still working.

For Lake Tahoe it means the Oct. 5-6 annual Fall Fish Festival, formerly known as the Kokanee Festival, has been canceled. Taylor Creek Visitors Center is closed, as well as Forest Service operated campgrounds.

However, campgrounds that are operated by a concessionaire and other concession-operated facilities are open as of now. The Forest Service is leaving gates and roads open, too.

The trail building day on Oct. 5 in the Angora burn area has been canceled because USFS personnel were going to oversee the work.

Tahoe National Forest offices, including the headquarters in Nevada City and ranger district offices in Camptonville, Foresthill, Sierraville, and Truckee are closed.

TNF is leaving its woodcutting hotlines open, and anyone with a fuel wood permit may continue to gather firewood as conditions allow.

The shutdown could delay the sale of any Forest Service cabins. Escrows will be unable to close unless the buyer has already interviewed with the Forest Service and documents were provided to title and escrow.

The other main federal agency in the basin – Tahoe Regional Planning Agency – is staying open.

“TRPA may not be impacted by a federal shutdown for some time. We are not directly funded by any federal agency, but partners with various agencies, such as the [U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service] through the Aquatic Invasive Species Program. We may not need to submit any invoices to the federal government for several months,” Jeff Cowen, with the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency, told *Lake Tahoe News*.

Barton Health officials do not anticipate any direct impact from this shutdown. Medicare reimbursements will still be forthcoming.

While the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says the shutdown will affect its flu vaccination program as the country goes into flu season, Tahoe-ites should be OK.

“Barton has worked closely with El Dorado County Health and Human Services on the flu shot program for our community this year. El Dorado County will provide flu shots to community

members at a low rate,” Monica Sciuto, Barton spokeswoman, told *Lake Tahoe News*. “Pharmacies in town are already offering flu shots as well. Barton will be providing flu shots through the physician offices and to patients at the hospital. Barton already has flu vaccines – we order a year in advance – and is ready to go with our flu program for this winter season.”

Educators believe they will weather a short shutdown just fine.

“The district has received this year’s federally funded program appropriations. However, payments may be delayed from the U.S. Department of Agriculture funded school lunch and breakfast programs. The district will continue to serve meals to all students until this possible federal shutdown is addressed,” Jim Tarwater, superintendent of Lake Tahoe Unified School District, told *Lake Tahoe News*.

Douglas County School District also receives funding for the free and reduced lunch program, as well as federal dollars for its three Title 1 schools.

Rich Alexander, assistant superintendent for DCSD, said the district is operating as normal and anticipates doing so for the foreseeable future while the feds work out the problem.

“If the shutdown does not last too long, we are not anticipating any issues. It is very hard to get a reading on the long-term impact, as there is a lot of speculation,” Lake Tahoe Community College President Kindred Murillo said.

Other government entities also are keeping an eye on Washington.

Steve Mokrohisky, Douglas County manager, told Lake Tahoe News, “While it appears that critical emergency support services may not be immediately affected, our continued efforts to resolve FEMA flood map issues, seek approval of our comprehensive lands bill, work with the Forest Service on

improvements at Round Hill Pines, pursue federal funding for transportation and water quality improvements at Lake Tahoe, as well as several other areas will likely be delayed. New grant opportunities will also likely be on hold, which will impact our efforts to meet the infrastructure needs of local residents.”

South Lake Tahoe City Manager Nancy Kerry said there are no direct impacts right now, but that staff will be looking at how federally funded grant projects could be affected.