

Opinion: Explaining reasons to file fireworks suit

By Joan and Joe Truxler

In November, we made the difficult decision to file a lawsuit under the federal Clean Water Act. We do not want to stop the fireworks; and if the lawsuit is successful, we cannot gain financially. Our only motivation is to protect the lake.

On July 5, 2013, our neighbors in Marla Bay collected over two trash barrels full of fireworks debris that had washed ashore. The next day, more debris appeared. Our 3-year-old grandson found a fuse and brought it to us in his hand. Since then, we have collected over 8,000 pieces of fireworks pollution. It is composed of hard plastic and fuses that are cobbled together with cardboard, paper, string and various types of adhesives. Some pieces were ingested and passed through dogs and coyotes. Many were tangled with dead crayfish. To date, the debris continues to wash ashore eight months after the Fourth. We continue to comb PineWild, Marla Bay and Nevada beaches to pick up the debris by hand.

We never wanted a lawsuit. When the debris began accumulating in July, we contacted several agencies. But the companies responsible for the pollution never responded. Then, it occurred all over again after the Labor Day 2013 fireworks. Again, the responsible companies failed to respond even though they had been aware of the problem since they were contacted by the TRPA on July 8, 2013. Since then, they have declined our invitations to walk the beach, view the debris, and work together to solve this problem, despite the fact that much of the pollution has their name ("Pyro Spectaculars") printed clearly on it.

Under the Clean Water Act, private citizens like ourselves

cannot gain a cent if we win in court. We hope to stop or minimize the pollution washing up on our beaches, protect the lake, and begin a public discussion about the strong protection that an enforceable Clean Water Act permit will provide. If we are successful, decisions on how to clean up after fireworks shows will be public—not something left to private parties or us.

The beauty of Tahoe's water is vitally important to our community, to our businesses, and to our visitors. Because we value these things so highly, we filed suit to protect the lake from needless pollution and assure a public process to address pollution from future fireworks shows.

Joan and Joe Truxler live in Zephyr Cove and have filed a lawsuit against the Lake Tahoe Visitors Authority.