

Tahoe Keys Marina creates illegal parking lot

By Kathryn Reed

Tahoe Keys Marina staff illegally removed vegetation to create a dirt parking lot close to the water.

“It’s fairly significant. Eleven thousand square feet is the size of an entire lot,” Julie Regan, spokeswoman for the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency, told *Lake Tahoe News*. “It’s a serious matter and we will want to look into it thoroughly.”

TRPA issued a cease and desist order July 25. It would be up to the Governing Board if punitive action would be taken.



Tahoe Keys Marina turned vegetated state land into a dirt parking lot.

Photo/Kathryn Reed

The grading occurred July 24. TRPA, South Lake Tahoe and California Tahoe Conservancy started investigating Friday. The Conservancy owns the land that was dug up.

“We cannot change what has happened. We have to decide how best to move forward ... if it’s only remediation or if it’s something compensatory,” Ray Lacey, CTC deputy director, told *Lake Tahoe News*.

State officials were at the marina at 10am Friday giving

people until 5pm to remove their vehicles from the illegal dirt parking area.

The marina is accused of violating two state Penal Code sections. One was trespassing by taking down a fence to get heavy equipment in to do the work; the other is unauthorized removal of plants and soil.

This is an area where the Conservancy spent significant money to restore the site.

The marina owns the paved area. The Conservancy owns the dirt area. A fence separates the two.

The vegetation that was removed is next to the South Lake Tahoe launch ramp.

It's also against TRPA code to park on dirt. The fine sediment is an issue when it comes to erosion, and in particular for reaching Lake Tahoe and degrading its clarity.

No one from the marina returned calls, and their attorney was not available for comment.

Marina officials, including their attorney, had met with Conservancy staff July 24 about using the 1-acre lot the Conservancy owns off Venice Drive for parking for this weekend's wooden boat show. This is a lot the two entities have long agreed to could be used for boat storage. Parking for the show was not a problem, the Conservancy said.

Lacey said Robert Spinnato, marina manager, apologized for digging where they didn't have permission. And the marina, according to Lacey, agreed to keep people from parking on the dirt.

South Lake Tahoe sent police and building inspectors to the site on July 25.

"It's a violation of TRPA code and they have been noticed.

They also violated the city's grading ordinance," City Manager Nancy Kerry told *Lake Tahoe News*. "The police department is interviewing and may file a complaint for improper removal of vegetation."

A bit of irony is that one day the disturbed land, including the Conservancy section up to the cul de sac area of Venice Drive, is slated to be paved. The Conservancy board in December 2013 OK'd 60,000 square feet for additional parking that would be used for people accessing Cove East and for the marina. Marina attorney Bob Henderson had earlier told *Lake Tahoe News* that would not happen this building season.

Even so, all the permitting still needs to be secured before any new parking lot in the basin is ever created.

Lacey said a meeting has been set up for Monday between Conservancy staff and marina officials.