

# Letter: Finding solutions to dog poop

To the community,

I recently authored a theory that dog waste is contaminating Lake Tahoe. The following is my response to those of you who participated in the dialogue.

Thank you is the first thing I want to say. Thank you to *Lake Tahoe News* for the opportunity to make my point and the venue to do so. Thank you to the community members who replied because I know it's not always easy to share thoughts on such a sensitive topic; at least I know it isn't easy for me. Lastly, thank you to those of you who pick up after your pets because I believe you are the people who are making a difference in Lake Tahoe.

The large variety of responses indicates to me that some of you hold this issue close to your heart, while others of you hold it close to a nerve.

Community suggested recommendations:

**Drainage outlet filters and treatment areas:** I could not agree more. While it may not be possible to capture all the fine sediment and nutrients from our storm water drainage system, I do think it possible to capture most of them. If we design it well, and it works, then other cities, states, countries may adopt the concept and in that way we could be changing the world for the better.

**Enforcement:** Should be a last resort measure. It is my opinion that we already have enough compliance officers who think that they are saving Lake Tahoe by issuing fines and citations. While it may be a sweet job, often it goes to their head in the worst way possible.

**More bag stations and disposal containers:** Yes! It seems reasonable to think that if our cities and counties can require residences to provide bear-proof containers for every property, then it stands to reason that the residents demand a bag station and waste container for every beach, bike trail and trailhead.

Additional solutions may be to provide small **areawide dog park facilities** for each neighborhood that would contain and treat the waste. Such facilities could also be incorporated to collect, contain and treat area-wide storm water run-off thereby reducing the pollutants of both major contributors.

**Pack it in, pack it out.** While most all locals have adopted this as their creed, what I fail to understand is why that philosophy does not apply to their dog waste? What harm could be caused by picking it up and disposing of it properly.

My rebuttal to reader's comments:

Tahoeadvocate wrote: *Way more than any dog or cat and their habitat is on or close to the lake where most dogs and cats don't defecate near the lake.*

This is both true and false. It is true that not all dogs live near the lake, while it is false to think that the waste of dogs that do not live near the lake isn't making it to Lake Tahoe. It was my unfortunate experience while cleaning a street gutter of snow and ice that it also contained frozen dog waste, lots of it. It was at that moment that I made the mental calculation of how much waste was along every street of every neighborhood in Lake Tahoe, frozen waves of feces just waiting to be released and flushed down our storm water drainage system.

Justice wrote: *This should be regulated and bear bags required and then deer bags and then squirrel and beavers and for fish. This waste issue is the real cause of something somewhere this is real and really bizarre and laughable.*

Before we can push the discourse forward it has to be understood that the theory I presented is about imported nutrients as the cause for the imbalance of our ecosystem, i.e. nutrients brought in by truck, and not the nutrients which have grown here naturally. A bear need not bag its waste if he forages his food from the forest, which is not always the case. Our bears, coyotes, birds, squirrels, etc., feed upon our daily trash. Trash that contains nutrients from out of the area (brought in by truck) and there lies the steaming hot problem.

Cranky Gerald wrote: *If we all just did our part, instead of complaining about others we'd be halfway home.*

And was, in my opinion, the most intelligent response of all.

Bob wrote: *I bet now that all the dogs keep the birds scared off the water is cleaner.*

And was, in my opinion, the least intelligent response of all.

Bob also wrote: *This article is not based in science and is per speculation.*

Which is true, and I'd like to add to that I am also not a scientist either. However, I don't need science to tell me that smoking causes lung cancer, or that greenhouse gases causes global warming. Not long ago everybody thought the world was flat ... well, except for one guy ... who do you think was right?

But Bob does bring up a valid point. Where is the evidence? We've scrutinized sediment and banned two-stroke engines all in an effort to make change for the better. There has to be a scientist out there somewhere who has already made a study on the subject, and if there isn't one, shouldn't we crowd fund one? Perhaps a "feces thesis" from a college graduate, and then have the results published on *Lake Tahoe News*.

Then we'd know if my theory is full of crap.

**Mark Allione, dog owner**