

S. Tahoe groundwater contamination improving

By Kathryn Reed

Owners of Tahoe Tom's on Dec. 8 were issued a letter by the Lahontan Regional Water Quality Board allowing the South Lake Tahoe gas station to shut down the onsite remediation system during the winter.

Tahoe Tom's has long been a source of contaminating the groundwater and affecting wells. Even though MTBE (methyl tertiary butyl ether) has been banned for years as a gasoline additive, it is still in the water system. Last summer it was found in a nearby well.

"Significant cleanup at the site occurred April through November and concentrations of petroleum products reduced significantly," Lauri Kemper, Lahontan assistant executive officer, told *Lake Tahoe News*.

Testing the hydrocarbon concentrations will continue. If numbers are higher than the October results, the onsite remediation system will be turned back on.

Groundwater samples will be taken at the Mark Twain Lodge. In the past it had been contaminated, which required the gas station to provide the hotel with bottled water.

"(A) decision on further enforcement such as a penalty for the past violations (of) not providing bottled water or a plan is still pending," Kemper said.

Beginning in 2015 water samples from the Best Western Station House and Alpenrose Motel wells also must be collected.

A more permanent solution to the problem is still being worked out.

"We are also waiting for final decision from county health on the treatment system design and plan submitted by Tahoe Tom's. Once they have county approval, then we would expect Tahoe Tom's to provide a schedule for implementation or the water board may impose a schedule," Kemper said.