

Dredging helps bind together Tahoe marinas



Sand Harbor boat launch is closed. If it does open, it won't be for a full season. Photos/Kathryn Reed

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By Kathryn Reed

While the lake level is said to be the same across Lake Tahoe, marinas are not allowed to dredge to the same depth. That is one of the discrepancies the Lake Tahoe Marina Association is trying to remedy.

Nor are there any studies to prove a difference between new dredging and maintenance dredging when it comes to lake clarity or other environmental issues. Another topic for LTMA to get involved with.

The association first came about in the early 1990s when four North Shore marinas got together to try to be one voice. The

union lasted a couple years. Then two years ago the idea to resurrect the group was floated and this time marinas throughout the basin are part of LTMA.

Pat Bagan, vice president of LTMA, said he believes the change in ownership and younger people will help sustain the association.

One of the biggest issues facing marinas is dredging. The average boat draws about $3\frac{1}{2}$ feet, so the water level needs to be deeper than that. Most tour boats and sailboats need more clearance. The lake is at 6222.83 feet. The Tahoe Regional Planning Agency says marinas can dredge to depths ranging from 6,215 feet to 6,219.3 feet.

Last week Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board granted a dredging permit to the Tahoe Keys Marina and amended the permit for the Tahoe Keys Property Owners Association. No one from either entity was available for comment.

It's estimated to cost more than \$2 million to dredge the east channel or marina side, and more than \$740,000 for the west or homeowners' channel. TKPOA is obligated to pay all costs associated with its channel, while the marina dredging bill is split by the marina owners, TKPOA, and the Beach and Harbor Association.



The channel going to the Tahoe Keys Marins has

dropped farther since fall
2014. Photo/LTN file

The dredging for the TKPOA channel will start March 25.

“The goal is to be done by May 21. We are forecasting to finish two weeks prior to that, based on weather permitting,” Kirk Wooldridge, TKPOA general manager, told *Lake Tahoe News*.

Ski Run Marina has been approved to dredge the mouth of the harbor; work should begin this week.

“There has been discussion of additional dredging in Lake Tahoe to support a channel for the Tahoe Queen tour boat there, but no one has applied for a permit. There is information that would qualify this as maintenance dredging,” Alan Miller with Lahontan told *Lake Tahoe News*.

Elie Alyeshmerni, who owns Ski Run Marina, told *Lake Tahoe News* that Aramark – owner of the Queen and the party responsible to dredge the channel – expects to soon apply for a permit.

North Tahoe Marina has a multi-year dredging permit, Tahoe City Marina finished its project, while Homewood Marina, Star Harbor and Fleur de Lac have applied for permits.

Sand Harbor officials don't even know if the ramp will open this season.

“You have to go about 100 feet out from the bottom of the launch lanes now to gain about 12 inches of additional draft,” Jay Howard, supervisor of Lake Tahoe State Park, told *Lake Tahoe News*. He oversees Sand Harbor and Cave Rock launches. “The prognosis for Sand Harbor is not good. I think for Sand Harbor to be open we need at least 1½ to 2 feet of water to come off those hillsides above us. That might happen; we might get close to that.”

The problem, though, is the snow depth in the Marlette basin is 22 inches when it should be 5 to 6 feet, Howard said.

Normally Sand Harbor opens in early May. That won't happen this year.

Cave Rock is open.

"I think the lake will come up enough where at the end of the season we would not expect Cave Rock to be any worse than it is right now," Howard said.

Bob Hassett, who operates Lakeside, Timber Cove and Camp Richardson marinas, is working on a dredging permit application for Lakeside. He said it would be minor and that work should only take four hours.



Prep work at Ski Run Marina
in anticipation of dredging.
Photo/LTN

"We were operating at Timber Cove Marina in 1992 – the last time the water was this low. Although it will require more care, we expect to operate just fine off the end of the pier. Larger boats may be limited and require a shuttle out to them. We will lose a number of buoys but still expect to have availability," Hassett told *Lake Tahoe News*.

Camp Richardson Marina has the longest floating pier on the lake. A fuel rod will be used to get gas to boaters who are

tied up to the floating dock.

“The first two rows of the buoy field will be too shallow to accommodate boats. With those gone, we still expect to have 96 buoys available for seasonal and day use guests,” Hasset said.

The marina association is asking the California Tahoe Conservancy to use money from SB630 to study the differences between new and maintenance dredging. Some of that money is paid to the state from marinas.

Working as a group, marina owners were able to get Lahontan to loosen its requirements for who can test water quality during storms. The state agency will be training marina representatives on March 26.

Alyeshmerni, who is president of LTMA, said the association is also looking to get all marinas certified as a clean marina within the next couple years.

“We want to be good stewards and guardians for the lake,” he said.

Those with certificates are: North Tahoe Marina, Sierra Boat Company, Tahoe City Marina and Sunnyside.

Starting this year the LTMA is going to recognize someone who went above the call of duty. On Thursday, Matt Williamson will be honored.

“He dove under the boat and saw someone who was in an air pocket and pulled them out and they were fine,” Alyeshmerni said.

A boat rented from Ski Run Marina last year capsized. One person was missing, that is when Williamson dove and found the woman.

“We are also trying to let the public know we are all working

together. We want the public to enjoy the experience. What we are working toward as an association is to make it as pleasant and fun as possible at Lake Tahoe," Bagan said.