

Dixie to run this summer, Queen to sit idle

By Kathryn Reed

Aramark will continue to only have one paddle-wheeler plying the waters of Lake Tahoe for the unforeseeable future.

This is because the company's permit with the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency does not allow both boats to operate out of Zephyr Cove. Normally the Tahoe Queen is docked at Ski Run Marina, but it has been running out of the Nevada marina because the lake is too low at the California site for it to reach the dock. The other reason the Queen has been operating from Zephyr Cove is the M.S. Dixie II is undergoing a seven-figure remodel.

"The permit allows Aramark to operate the Dixie out of Zephyr Cove and the Tahoe Queen out of Ski Run Marina. Because the Dixie is not operating and getting her engines rebuilt/replaced, and because the Tahoe Queen is unable to operate out of Ski Run Marina because of low water levels, TRPA has authorized Aramark to operate the Tahoe Queen out of Zephyr Cove until the Dixie is operating again," Tom Lotshaw with TRPA told *Lake Tahoe News*.

The exception to both being operational out of Zephyr will be Labor Day weekend for the annual race between the two paddle-wheelers.



The interior of the M.S.
Dixie on June 15 shows much
work still needs to be done.
Photos/Kathryn Reed

It is Aramark's responsibility to dredge the Ski Run channel – not the marina owner. Aramark has not sought a permit to do so. The last time it was dredged was 24 years ago.

“We have to dredge in order for us to go back there. At this point in the season it is not doable,” Joao Rodrigues, who oversees Aramark's water and marine operations at Lake Tahoe, told *Lake Tahoe News*. “They would have to block off the whole channel to do dredging.”

Rodrigues said the dredging might occur in the fall.

Aramark is shooting for the Dixie to be back in operation by July 1. The plan is for three cruises seven days a week instead of the normal two. The idea is this will help compensate for the Queen being idle. The Dixie can hold 500 people.

The major part of the renovation is the engines, which were the original ones – and 21 years old.

Rodrigues said today it would be impossible to build a paddle-wheeler like the Queen or Dixie at Tahoe because of TRPA regulations. He said refurbishing the boat is costing about what it did to build it in 1994.



The M.S. Dixie has new engines.

The engines are the latest model – tier four – to meet all of the Environmental Protection Agency regulations. The work is being done with the boat in the water at Zephyr.

Skipperliner out of Wisconsin, which built the original engines, has manufactured the new ones.

Last week the vessel looked very much like a construction site. Crews were cutting pipes. The interior was total chaos.

The inside and outside will be receiving a fresh coat of paint. New carpet will be laid.

“The carpets are a different pattern. The walls are a different color. It brightens up the room,” Rodrigues said.

Rodrigues said renovating the two bars might not make the July 1 deadline.