

Crews take ax to invasive weeds in Tahoe marsh



The invasive mullein weed is scattered about the Upper Truckee Marsh. Photo/Kathryn Reed

By Kathryn Reed

Long stalks lay lifeless on the ground; others are being carted away to be disposed off-site.

Mullein looks pretty, with stalks that can grow to 10 feet, and yellow flowers blooming every other year.

The problem is mullein is a weed – and an invasive one.

“They take resources away from plants that are indigenous,” Sarah Werick, land steward with the California Tahoe Conservancy, told *Lake Tahoe News*.

She was out at the Upper Truckee Marsh last month leading a crew that was removing the weed.

Where the plant is in its lifecycle determines how the agency handles it. What are left behind are portions of the plant that don't have seeds. Just a little moisture and the mullein will reproduce. That is why the sections with seeds are removed from the area.

Mullein is scattered about this more than 400-acre section of the South Shore. Werick said the plant could take over a location – another reason to get rid of it.

Mullein can be allergenic, so some of the crewmembers have donned surgical masks to keep from inhaling anything that might make them ill.

As part of Werick's job, she is always keeping an eye out for invasive plants.

"When we see a growth spurt, we come out and do a big weed removal," she explained.

Also being removed on this particular day were thistles that are not native to the basin. However, there is indigenous thistle that remains untouched.

It takes a trained eye to know what is "good" vs. what is "bad," which is why Werick discourages the public from pulling plants.