

CTC on track to restore Upper Truckee Marsh



This lagoon at the Tahoe Keys will be filled in when the Upper Truckee Marsh is restored. Photo/Kathryn Reed

By Kathryn Reed

It's possible kayakers using the Upper Truckee River may one day not be able to reach Lake Tahoe. And the landowners are OK with that.

The California Tahoe Conservancy board on Dec. 18 certified the environmental documents for the Upper Truckee River and Marsh restoration project and approved the preferred alternative. Tom Davis, South Lake Tahoe's rep, was absent.

The soonest any change will come is in 2018. That's dependent on state approvals and financing for what will be a multi-million dollar project.

Most of the work on this 600-acre swath of land in the middle of South Lake Tahoe will take place on the west side near Cove

East. While boardwalks and other amenities had initially been planned for the Al Tahoe side, residents convinced the Conservancy that adding more people to this area would be detrimental for the marsh and the neighborhood.

This marsh is the most sensitive wetlands in the basin.

A big change will be how the river actually flows.

“We are letting the river go and see what happens. We want to see if the old braided channels reappear,” CTC Executive Director Patrick Wright told *Lake Tahoe News*.

Stu Roll with the Conservancy, said, “This is cutting edge for stream restoration.”

Most river projects in the basin have been massive undertakings to reroute channels, shore up banks and fill in old channels. This is more like a holistic approach to restoration. And, yet, it is still designed to restore the river to its natural meander before the Tahoe Keys was developed more than 50 years ago. At that time various fingers of the river reached the lake instead of one distinct outlet like there is today.

Conservancy staff realizes it may mean kayakers and others who float down the river will not end up at the lake or near an easy take-out location. Wright said a future project not associated with the restoration is being talked about that would provide a spot for non-motorized watercraft to easily get off the river.

Another major change will be getting rid of the lagoon that jets off from the channel that leads from the Tahoe Keys Marina to the lake. Much of the time this is stagnant water.

The path will be altered with this latest project, but it will still form a loop that takes walkers and cyclists out to the lake.

The Conservancy acquired the 22-acre Cove East parcel at the end of Venice Drive in a settlement agreement stemming from the Tahoe Keys development. In 2002, a \$10.5 million restoration project was completed that brought back the wetlands that run between the walking path at the end of Venice and the river.