

Low water level allows pipe removal at Tahoe



Boy Scouts take the initiative to remove a pipe from shores of Lake Tahoe. Photos/Devin Middlebrook

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By Devin Middlebrook

The low water level at Lake Tahoe is the starkest reminder of the current drought, with piers and marinas reaching out over sand and rocks that are normally hidden from view.

But sand and rocks are not the only objects being exposed by the drought.

Near Tahoe City, a long-abandoned, cast-iron pipe sat just below the surface for decades, having only the occasional run-in with a boat propeller or kayaker. Installed in the early

1900s, the pipe originally delivered drinking water to Tahoe Tavern from Watson Lake to the north. With the receding lake level, the pipe, now strewn along the shoreline, was visible to all that visited the area.

That is where Eagle Scout candidate Cyrus Miller, 16, and the rest of Boy Scout Troop 228 from Danville decided to step in. With a large section of the pipe now exposed, the troop wanted to take advantage of the situation.

“This drought made it a unique and once-in-a-lifetime opportunity,” Miller said. “We wanted to complete a project that made a big impact.”



The beach with the exposed pipe.

With this goal in mind, Miller and his troop developed a plan to remove the pipe and return the area to a more natural state. Working closely with local agencies – Tahoe Regional Planning Agency, California Fish and Wildlife Service, California Division of State Lands, Placer County Museums, property owners, NV Energy, Tahoe Tavern, and Tavern Shores – the troop created a comprehensive plan for safely removing the pipe.

Using a few power tools and a lot of determination, the seven scouts cut the lengthy pipe into manageable sections. They then removed these smaller sections from the lakebed.

The sections were hauled away and recycled with a little help from Hansen Management & Maintenance Company of Tahoe City. The scouts then cleaned the project area, making it as though the pipe was never there.



The beach with the pipe removed.

Over the two-day project, the scout troop removed 700 feet of pipe from the lakebed.

At the end of day two, Miller looked over the project area and said, "It is amazing how much of an impact our troop's hard work made."

Several pieces of the pipe were donated to the Placer County Museum; where they will live on to tell the story of Lake Tahoe and its rich history.

Devin Middlebrook is an environmental education specialist with the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency.