

Marinas on front line for lake clarity issues

By Kathryn Reed

CAMP RICHARDSON – Marina operators throughout the Lake Tahoe Basin are beginning to make a concerted, united approach to dealing with aquatic issues.

The Tahoe Marina Association is a relatively new group made up of the owners. Eleven of them gathered last week at Camp Richardson to hear a presentation from the League to Save Lake Tahoe about how marinas can keep Lake Tahoe blue. This in itself is not something that would have happened a handful of years ago based on the nonprofit's old philosophy of thinking anything not native to the lake must be harmful – including boats and buoys.

The new thinking of working with those who are here has made for more amicable relationships – including with marinas.

Jesse Patterson, deputy director of the League, told them, “You know the good, the bad and ugly of the lake. That is why we want you involved.”

Last year four marinas participated in a training about aquatic invasive species, with more sessions planned for May. The Eyes on the Lake program is open to the general public, too. It's all about identifying invasives and getting rid of them.

A representative from Obexer's on the West Shore admitted it's difficult to tell the difference between native and non-native plants.

A Sierra Boat Company employee said using the information gathered about AIS helped with their dredging application.



Stormwater flows into Lake Tahoe marinas carrying water that mostly originated off property. Photo/LTN

The idea is to focus more on invasive plants like Eurasian milfoil and curly leaf pondweed because these are often habitat for non-native fish. Eliminating the food source is easier.

Boats are a conduit for the invasives, with some marinas like Tahoe Keys being inundated with the unwanted plants.

Patterson said marinas are the perfect place for invasive plants to live because it's still water where fine sediment comes in.

Another issue Patterson wants marinas to be cognizant of is stormwater runoff. Many marinas have pipes draining into the lake from their properties. But the water likely originated farther upland. Still, marinas are regulated and the amount of fine sediment deposited becomes their problem.

This fact was evident last July when a putrid smell was coming from Ski Run Marina. South Lake Tahoe officials were notified and it turned to be a malfunction with a weir. The city fixed

the problem.

Through the League's Pipe Keepers program marina staff can be trained to take samples during storms that are then analyzed for turbidity by the League's people.

"Source reduction is our No. 1 goal," Patterson said.