

Meeks Bay Marina closed; in trouble with state

By Kathryn Reed

The feds, state, a sovereign nation and a private business will meet again today in an attempt to find a resolution that would allow the Meeks Bay Marina to reopen.

It has been closed all season – and might not open in 2017 – because of stormwater violations.

Lahontan Regional Water Control Board in 2014 and 2015 issued citations to the U.S. Forest Service – the landowner; to the Washoe Tribe – which has a 20-year contract that expires in three years to run all of the operations; and to Action Water Sports owner Bob Hasset, as marina operator.

The four entities are engaged in confidential settlement negotiations that could take the rest of the year to resolve. Talks started about six weeks ago.

Eric Taxer, an engineer with the water board who did the inspections, said two years ago the parking lot was unpaved and remained so last year when he revisited the West Shore property. The feds and tribe knew long before Taxer showed up that a dirt lot was a major no-no.

“The response to the inspection and notice of violation was they did install some BMPs to temporarily control erosion. And they were going to submit a plan on how to address the entire site. That was going to be a multiyear plan,” Taxer told *Lake Tahoe News*.

But that plan never came to fruition.



Meeks Bay has 120 slips, but no one can launch this season.
Photo/LTN file

One of the fixes was to essentially dig a trench across the boat ramp. While it helps with BMPs, it makes it difficult for a boat to be launched.

“Around Memorial Day we came to the conclusion between the tribe and ourselves that there weren’t any quick fixes economically to keep us out of jeopardy with Lahontan,” Mike LeFevre, planning staff officer with Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit, told *Lake Tahoe News*. “We didn’t want to invest a lot of money and have it fail, so the tribe with Forest Service support decided to close the resort this season.”

The lodging and dining facilities at Meeks Bay are open; only the marina is off-limits.

No one from the tribe responded to inquiries from *Lake Tahoe News*.

“We certainly don’t believe BMPs in the parking lot are our

responsibility," Hassett told *Lake Tahoe News*.

Even so, his company as operator of the marina has been cited by Lahontan.

Lahontan spent 2014 and 2015 inspecting all of the marinas on the California side of the basin. (As a California agency it has no jurisdiction in Nevada.) This was in preparation for the marina permit that was issued in June, which brought all of the operators onto the same level playing field. The annual permit fee charged by Lahontan is \$1,282 per marina. Each marina has a Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan.

The goal is to keep as much sediment as possible from reaching Lake Tahoe in order to preserve the clarity of the water. Various best management practices can help accomplish this goal. Marina operators are also supposed to test the water multiple times each year and keep detailed records.

Lahontan said it found nitrogen, phosphorus, turbidity and iron at levels higher in the lake than are allowed per the permit regulations. Meeks Bay was failing on multiple levels, according to Lahontan.

Taxer stressed that the state agency did not want to shut down the business, but had the main objective of keeping pollutants from the lake.

"It's not a highly polluted situation, but there is runoff ... clarity issues," LeFevre with the Forest Service said. He said Highway 89 and Caltrans' lack of treatment for water on its road complicates matters at the resort.

The goal of the negotiations is to determine what course of action will be taken to remedy the violations, determine who is responsible for the work and what penalties might be assessed to whom. The water board has the authority to impose an administrative civil liability of up to \$10,000 for each day in which each violation of the Marina General Permit

occurs.

Depending when and what the resolution is will dictate if the marina opens next summer.