

Technology helps in fight against AIS

Smartphones became Lake Tahoe's first line of defense against the introduction of new aquatic invasive species this summer.

Members of the Lake Tahoe Aquatic Invasive Species Program received real-time updates from other land managers about vessels traveling to Lake Tahoe from waters with a high risk of containing invasive species. The data-sharing app used by partner agencies acts as an early warning system for Tahoe's watercraft inspectors.

Since 2009, Tahoe Regional Planning Agency has enforced mandatory watercraft inspections at Lake Tahoe, which has prevented the introduction of new aquatic invasive species.

So far this year, inspectors in the Lake Tahoe region have conducted more than 7,300 inspections and decontaminated more than 3,500 vessels.

In 2016 thus far, Lake Tahoe watercraft inspectors have prevented four boats containing quagga mussels from launching. The most recent discovery took place this month at the boat inspection station in Meyers.

Quagga mussels have caused significant environmental damage in U.S. waterways, including the Great Lakes and Lake Mead.

In addition, 20 boats have been found with other invasive species, including New Zealand mudsnails, during the inspection process at Lake Tahoe.