

# Keys pressing forward with weed removal

By Kathryn Reed

Twenty years ago it was recommended that herbicides be used in the Tahoe Keys to rid the canals of invasive weeds. That reality is inching closer, but is still two years off at the earliest.

No longer is it just Eurasian milfoil choking the waterways of this South Lake Tahoe neighborhood. Curlyleaf pondweed is becoming just as prolific. Both are spreading into Lake Tahoe.

It's an environmental issue affecting the ecosystem, as well as a recreation-economic issue.

The Tahoe Keys Property Owners Association has been fighting the weeds for years, with a more concerted effort starting in 2011. Research and field tests have been taking place since then. In the 2017-19 time period non-herbicide demonstrations are scheduled, with the goal of herbicide demos in 2018-20.

In 2020, TKPOA would like to be embarking on a large scale, long-term implementation plan to bring the invasives under control.

"We want to take the level back to 1980 to have the weed mass be less than 10 percent," John Larson, TKPOA board member, said. "We believe once we get to that point level, we can manage it without herbicides."

Larson was speaking Nov. 1 at a meeting attended by about 40 people. They were there to get an update on the weed removal situation and learn what the plans are for the future.



In the 1960s the Tahoe Keys was built on the most sensitive marsh in the Tahoe basin. Photo/Kathryn Reed

Today, invasive weeds cover 90 percent of the canals.

To pay for future treatments the homeowners association is going to ask its members to impose a special assessment that could cost each of the 1,529 housing units \$1,600.

Other property owners are also involved. The Tahoe Keys Beach and Harbor Association is on the same page as the TKPOA. The California Tahoe Conservancy is a partner, but has its own agenda with the Truckee Marsh restoration project. The problem entity is the Tahoe Keys Marina.

The marina had said it was going to use an **ultra violet method** to get the weeds out. While that has been talked about for the entire Keys, John J. Paoluccio, president of Inventive Resources Inc., wants to test his technique in a larger area than the Keys wants to use as a demo site.

Now the Keys marina says it is coming up with its own UV plan.

A 21-page 1991 agreement between the marina, Tahoe Keys Property Owners Association, and Tahoe Keys Beach and Harbor Association dictates how the three organizations work together, who pays what to whom and for what. However,

disagreements, disputes and uncooperativeness have been the norm since the Krilichs took over the marina.

It's possible the regional water board could put pressure on the marina to work on the weed problem.

TKPOA is going forward no matter what.

High powered equipment is going to augment the current harvester. This will help with milfoil removal so more of the fragments are pulled from the water.

Herbicide use would have to be OK'd by the Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board. While that state agency has approved the use in concept, each project has to be approved on an individual basis.

Several of the questions from the public on Tuesday night centered on the safety of using herbicides. Joel Trumbo with the state Fish and Wildlife Service said the herbicides target the intended plants, and don't harm animals of any kind. Plus, the native plants also continue to live.

Rick Lind with Sierra Ecosystem Associates said diversion dams have been looked into, but would be "very costly and complex." This is because the Keys was built on a marsh – meaning there is water everywhere. Underground water would fill the drained canal, thus requiring that water to be pumped. Even if there were the money to do so, where to put that water would be another regulatory issue.

Greg Hoover, the aquatic invasives supervisor for TKPOA, said once the problem is taken care of in the Keys, the entire lake will be fixed.