

Tahoe specialty plate losing popularity

By Kathryn Reed

TAHOE CITY – The specialty license plate benefiting the California Tahoe Conservancy sells well in the winter, but not in summer. The goal is to ignite sales year-round.

The program funds non-motorized trails in the Lake Tahoe Basin on the California side.

Since 2011-12 the revenue has been declining or has been flat. That fiscal year \$1.172 million from plate sales came to CTC, while in 2015-16 the revenue was \$991,000.

Winter sales are boosted by Tahoe area skiers and snowboarders donating their time to the cause for ad campaigns and then ski resorts giving tickets as an incentive to random license plate owners.

The goal is to create a summer campaign from Memorial Day to Labor Day. A “plates for projects” initiative is in the works. The CTC would partner with an organization or two that needs funding. The group(s) would apply for a grant. In exchange they must promote the license plate program.

Grants are likely to be in the \$7,000 to \$20,000 range. The campaign would be marketed to groups that are already interested in Tahoe such as mountain bike organizations, Jeep trail riders and others.

Pete Fink, who was at the March 16 CTC meeting, said TAMBA would be interested in working with the CTC.

This summer would be the pilot campaign, and if all goes well, it could be expanded in future years.

Of the various specialized plates, the CTC one is the seventh most popular based on sales. The one that surged ahead of all others is the old style black and yellow plates that came out in 2015. There are more than 230,000 of those plates on the streets, while there are about 23,000 CTC plates, and it has been around since 1992.

Car dealers are not allowed to sell any specialty plates. This is a California Department of Motor Vehicles rule. CTC member Karen Finn said she would look into changing that regulation.