

Truckee River flow expected to be high for months



Water from the Truckee River, which is to the left, covers part of the bike path connecting Tahoe City and Squaw Valley. Photo/Kathryn Reed

By Kathryn Reed

TAHOE CITY – The Truckee River just outside Tahoe City is known for its placid pace for casual summer rafters. Today it looks like there might be some class IV rapids – it's running that fast and high.

Rafting companies have had to deal with drought for the past few years, and at times didn't open. Now there is too much

water to speculate when to mark an opening date on the calendar.

The patio at the River Ranch restaurant near Alpine Meadows is closed. The water is swirling furiously and nearly reaches the top of the wall.

Water is touching the base of the bridge crossing the river leading to the ski resort.

Sections of the bike path between Tahoe City and Alpine are off limits because the river has overflowed. In some sections it has gone under Highway 89 so there is water on both sides.

This scenario could last well into summer as the water master regulates the level of Lake Tahoe. The lake is about 18 inches below the legal limit that was established in 1917 based on shoreline stability.

The record snowpack is beginning to melt, meaning the lake just keeps getting higher. Water officials say there is enough snow at higher elevations to cause the lake to rise another 3 feet in the next three months.



A raging Truckee River near the River Ranch's patio on April 28. Photo/Kathryn Reed

With the water being so swift in Tahoe City and farther east in Reno, officials are cautioning people to stay away. It's dangerous to be near it because people and animals could easily be swept away to their death.

Plus, there are a number of snags in the river that make it even more precarious for those in kayaks.

The National Weather Service in Reno said the Truckee River hasn't experienced this high of flows since February 1999. A flood advisory is in effect in the Tahoe-Truckee areas until the afternoon of May 2.

With temperatures expected to be in the mid- to high 60s in Truckee and the Lake Tahoe Basin for much of next week, the snow will just start melting that much faster. That means more water will be released to accommodate all that runoff.

Unless there is a heat wave or rain on snow event, officials

expect to handle the situation with only these minor flooding events.

Water coming out of the dam at Tahoe City flows at 2,600 cubic feet per second when the level is at the maximum allowed. Today, the flow is at 2,200 cfs.