

Water trail signs help Lake Tahoe paddlers

By Becky Bell

Paddlers on Lake Tahoe will have an easier time safely finding their way on the Lake Tahoe Water Trail this summer.

Sierra Business Council, with funding support from Placer County, Nevada Department of Wildlife, and the city of South Lake Tahoe, will oversee the installation of educational wayfinding interpretive signs at 10 trailheads along the 72-mile water trail.

In 2015, the U.S. Forest Service Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit, Nevada State Parks, California State Parks, California Tahoe Conservancy, Tahoe City Public Utility District, and South Lake Tahoe agreed to develop the educational water trailhead system for 20 designated public launch and landing sites with facilities to address the needs of paddlers.

The signs being installed this summer are designed to help paddlers have a safe and enjoyable experience. The signs feature vital water safety and weather information, aquatic invasive species prevention tips, and a mapped paddle route with GPS coordinates, campgrounds, and public launch/landing sites.

“We are very proud to be part of this regional collaborative effort for the past decade, and to see the signage installed this summer,” said Jan Brisco, executive director of Tahoe Lakefront Owners’ Association. “We may never know, but it will be worth it if we can save even one life.”

Water trail signage has long been a priority for improved public lake access.

In 2011, public-private stakeholders expanded the signage purpose to enhance the user experience by improving water safety, wayfinding, reducing user conflicts, and encouraging resource stewardship and aquatic invasive species prevention.

Water trail users can embark on day trips or longer overnight trips.

The trail traces the perimeter of the lake and offers both campgrounds and shoreline lodging along its route.

Finding overnight parking at launch sites can be difficult, so paddlers are encouraged to make arrangements with operators at the various launch sites around the lake. The best time to take a multi-day trip is in late September and October, when the weather is still warm but crowds have thinned out at campgrounds and lodges.

Paddlers are asked to be the first line of defense to keep Lake Tahoe's waters pristine and clear. Arrive at Lake Tahoe with crafts "clean, drained, and dry" in order to prevent the spread of aquatic invasive species. Paddlers who have previously launched in infested waters should have their boats inspected free of charge at one of the four Tahoe boat inspection stations in Meyers, Alpine Meadows, Truckee, and Spooner Summit.

The easiest way to access the Lake Tahoe Water Trail is at developed public beaches with adequate parking and restrooms. Water safety tips and maps of public launch and landing sites are available **online**.

*Becky Bell is the Sierra Business Council's project manager for the Lake Tahoe Water Trail. This article is republished from the summer 2017 edition of **Tahoe In Depth**.*