

# Messy locals, tourists keep Clean Tahoe in business

By Kathryn Reed

People still don't understand the concept of picking up after themselves. Annual statistics from Clean Tahoe underscore this notion.

This organization that has been around for nearly 20 years operates in South Lake Tahoe and on the South Shore of El Dorado County. Today it is a nonprofit.

In the last fiscal year, which ended Sept. 30, there were 173 illegal dump incidents in the city that Clean Tahoe dealt with.

"That number has increased every year since 2013," Catherine Cecchi, executive director of Clean Tahoe, told the City Council last week. Between 15 and 20 new dump locations sprout up each year.



Abandoned, destroyed sleds are the newest item Clean Tahoe has been dealing with.  
Photo/Clean Tahoe

People have other options to get rid of their crap. Annually,

in June, Clean Tahoe partners with South Tahoe Refuse to offer the \$5 dump day. A record was set in 2017 with 556,000 pounds of waste collected.

Clean Tahoe, for a fee, will also pick people's unwanted items up and dispose of them properly. Seniors and disabled residents can get a reduced fee or have it waived. The person still has to pay the garbage company's fee.

Of the 436 animal in trash incidents in the city last year, 51 were at a vacation rental. Code enforcement is notified of all tourist issues. For locals, they are referred to code enforcement on the second infraction. Multi-family residential units are the most challenging with the shared dumpsters.

Cecchi said the number of bear-trash encounters in the county have been decreasing because that jurisdiction has stricter rules when it comes to mandating bear boxes.

"We have far fewer repeat incidents in the county than the city," Cecchi said.

She added that the Be Bear Aware campaign and STR's loan program for bear boxes are proactive approaches to the problem, which also help to educate homeowners.

One of the more challenging tasks is cleaning up after homeless camps. This is done after the people have left and police say it's safe to go in. There were 28 camps last year; a figure that keeps going up.

In total, Clean Tahoe picked up 484 cubic yards of litter in the last year.

Clean Tahoe operates on a \$234,000 annual budget. Two-thirds of the money is collected from residents via their STR bill. That fee has not been raised since 1999. Cecchi said talks are under way to up it, but a dollar amount has not been disclosed.