Smoke, flames at Fallen Leaf Lake are control burn

Updated Nov. 19 at 2pm.

By Kathryn Reed

FALLEN LEAF LAKE – Smoke fills the air and the crackling of fire can be heard. But no one is in sight at this controlled burn and no evidence of water is in the area to suppress the flames if they were to get out of control.

On the second swing by the intersection of Fallen Leaf Lake and Tahoe Mountain roads a man with a shovel and hardhat is spotted. It's Rob Kimball of Kimball Tree Service.

A control burn Nov. 18 at Fallen Leaf Lake. Photos/Kathryn Reed

He said his company was contracted by the Fallen Leaf Lake Fire Department to burn 50 acres. The process has been going on for two weeks.

"The ground is wet. Nothing is going to move outside of where it is burning," Kimball said.

He used a machine the morning of Nov. 18 to stack some of the

debris left over from the thinning project. Kimball said that’s why some of the piles appeared to be tall and caused flames to shoot 2-3 feet in the air.

Despite the high winds Thursday afternoon, Kimball said everything was under control. He said guys working with him were doing some burns on the water side of Fallen Leaf Lake Road as well.

Fallen Leaf Lake Fire Chief Gary Gerren said the project is being overseen by the Nevada Fire Safe Council. This agency has a list of approved contractors to do this type of work and Kimball is on that list.

With Fallen Leaf being a volunteer department, there isn’t the manpower to do the work.

“There is no regulation to have water available. You just need good prudent judgment,” Gerren said. This is because the fire season is over, the ground is wet and more moisture is coming.

Fire officials not associated with Fallen Leaf said a certain amount of wind is needed to blow the smoke out of the basin and not settle on the neighborhood where the burn is. They also said it’s not unreasonable for one person with a shovel to handle 20 burn piles, but would need a contingency plan if things got out of hand.

Over the course of the burn period about 300 piles have been burned. Before this project, Kimball’s crews burned 27 other acres for Fallen Leaf Lake.

A couple signs are posted on the intersecting streets saying “control burn” but no evidence of a water tender or other fire suppression unit was evident.

Kimball said he checks on the fire periodically throughout the night.

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