

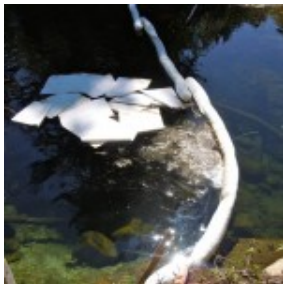
USFS: Astro turf soaked in oil tossed into Taylor Creek

Updated Sept. 19 at 8:10am.

By Kathryn Reed

CAMP RICHARDSON – Water samples are expected to be taken today from Taylor Creek after an oil slick was discovered by a U.S. Forest Service employee during the weekend.

“After a thorough investigation it appears that a passing motorist threw a piece of petroleum-soaked astro turf into Taylor Creek off the bridge,” according to John Washington with the U.S. Forest Service.



A sheen of oil is stopped Sept. 18 by a boom in Taylor Creek.

Photos/Kathryn Reed

Four white oil absorbing booms are draped across the South Shore creek that feeds into Lake Tahoe. Sheets designed to pick up hydrocarbons and not water are strewn about the edges of the creek, looking more like garbage than something to help the environment.



Booms and absorbent sheets pick up the oil in Taylor Creek.

A major concern is what the pollutant will do to the kokanee salmon run this fall. This tributary is a major spawning area for the fish – with events conducted just to witness their migration, making it also an economic concern on top of an environmental issue.

The fish have not started to spawn.

Forest Service officials who could answer questions about the environmental affects of the spill were not available this weekend, nor were California Department of Fish & Game, Lahontan Water Quality Control Board and El Dorado County Department of Environmental Health workers. The latter agency is now responsible for the site.

While a posse of officials descended on the site Sept. 17, no one was patrolling the water Sunday.

Signs, though, on the Rainbow Bridge have been posted saying, "Warning: Fire hazard No smoking on or near Taylor Creek."

While the booms say, "Oil only sponge" – it would take getting up close to them to know that. The booms were put out by Lake Valley firefighters, with Fallen Leaf Lake firefighters arriving later Saturday.

A sheen about 2-square-feet in area could be seen Sunday near

one of the booms. It was not possible to see how much the apparatuses had absorbed.

“The original reported sheen was 10 feet by 20 feet. Our spill coordinator observed that it appeared to be limited to between the street bridge and the walking bridge at Taylor Creek,” USFS spokeswoman Cheva Heck told *Lake Tahoe News*.

An original possible source of the contaminant was thought to be from a boat at Fallen Leaf, with the water coming over the dam into Taylor Creek. Billy Reif with the Forest Service on Sunday told *Lake Tahoe News* he does not believe the source is upstream because there is no evidence of the oil there.

He discovered the oil when he arrived at work at the Taylor Creek Visitors Center on Saturday about 7am.

Looking at the creek from the bridge at Highway 89 there is no evidence of oil or of the booms farther down the waterway.

This is the second incident this summer involving oil potentially affecting Lake Tahoe, though neither has done so. The other was at Zephyr Cove Resorts.