

Incline Lake may forever be dry

By Kathryn Reed

INCLINE VILLAGE – Should a manmade lake at Lake Tahoe be restored? Or should the acreage be returned to what it was pre-1930s?

Those are some of the basic questions being asked by the Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit. The answers aren't as simple.

A handful of people showed up Monday night to give the U.S. Forest Service input into what was Incline Lake. The 777-acre parcel was acquired in 2008 from the Incline Lake Corp. The final price, though, of \$43.5 million was not settled until 2011.

The private lake had existed since the 1930s. It was regularly stocked so fishermen would have something to catch. The lake covered 19 acres of the land that is situated along Mount Rose Highway. It is about a mile below Tahoe Meadows and to the left if driving toward Reno.

Two national forests and Incline Village General Improvement District own the land surrounding the parcel. That is in large part why the Forest Service wanted the land – to remove that private parcel from the middle of forest and make it contiguous public property for recreation use.



Ponds are naturally forming where Incline Lake used to be. Photo/Matt Dickinson

The lake was drained in 2009 because the dam was deemed seismically unfit. It was the previous owner that drained the lake and took down all structures on the property.

The entire area is open for public use. Hikers and bikers are welcome, but no motorized vehicles.

The Forest Service is taking comments on the scoping documents until July 19. Today the agency is looking at removing the dam and restoring the land to a marsh area. It could resemble what Grass Lake on Luther Pass is like. This would be 15 to 20 years out to allow Mother Nature to do her work.

"I'm leaning more toward rustic wetlands. I like their proposal," Sue Hughes of Incline told *Lake Tahoe News* as she was leaving the July 8 open house at the IVGID offices.

Ponds are already starting to naturally form. John Gregory of Incline said water flows year-round at this location.

Leaving the dam and refilling the lake are not options because of the instability of the rock structure. This area is prone to earthquakes and downstream is where the bulk of Incline Village residents live. It is possible a smaller dam could be built, but that would also mean a smaller lake.

Dan Dominy of Incline is a fisherman who for years enjoyed

casting a line there. He worries about what the impacts might be if more people use the area in the future, especially since there is a road on the land.

The Forest Service has \$5 million set aside for improvements. Dam building and then the subsequent maintenance would require more money.

A network of trails and signage are possible. Informal trails exist today. One leads to the Mount Rose Wilderness, another goes along Third Creek to downtown Incline.

An environmental analysis will likely be released in January 2014. Work – whatever that looks like – could begin in 2015 building season.

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Notes:

- The next meeting about the future of his property is July 10 from 5-7pm at Homewood Suites, 5450 Kietzke Lane, Reno.
- Comment deadline is July 19.
- More info is online.