

Studying Tahoe may help with Antarctic exploration

By Mike TeSelle, KCRA-TV

Gordon Seitz, an earthquake expert with the California Geological Survey, expressed excitement about a first-of-its-kind exploration that took place below the surface of Lake Tahoe on Thursday.

"Oh yeah, there's not too many chances to get that new discovery," Seitz said.

Seitz said a specially designed submarine, equipped with a high definition camera, is being used to take the first close-up video ever recorded of the submerged section of Tahoe's most active fault line.

"The west fault runs along the entire west side of the lake," Seitz said.

Researchers from Northern Illinois University and the California Geological Survey are using a floating platform to control the submarine which will dive to depths more than 1,000 feet.

"We hope to use this information to learn more about future earthquake hazard and to learn about potential tsunami activity that could be triggered by a shift," Seitz said.

Thursday's mission was also proving as a test for a potentially bigger first in underwater exploration, Seitz said.

If the Tahoe mission is successful, Northern Illinois University researchers plan to drill a 3,000-foot-deep hole in an Antarctic ice shelf to drop the submarine into an aquatic environment that has never been explored before, Seitz said.

“They are focused on how climate change is impacting the ice shelf to see if it will detach as the ocean warms,” Seitz said.

For now, Seitz is eager to see what the Tahoe mission reveals.

“We know we’ll learn something. We just won’t know what that is until we get our eyes on the bottom of the lake,” said Seitz.