Illegal trails cropping up in Lake Tahoe Basin

By Kathryn Reed

A new bike trail is going in at Carnelian Bay. Trees are being felled, berms created and gap jumps installed.

And whoever is creating this trail on U.S. Forest Service property could wind up in jail and having to pay a fine.



Cultural resources like these were unearthed in the process of creating this unauthorized trail on the South Shore several years ago. Photos/Provided

“When we have to obliterate unauthorized trails, it takes crews away from building other projects,” Cheva Heck, USFS spokeswoman, told *Lake Tahoe News*.

This is one of a few trails that has been discovered this summer in the Lake Tahoe Basin. Others are near Tahoma and Cave Rock. The Carnelian Bay trail is the most destructive because trees have been cut down. It was about a half mile long when crews discovered it.

While the feds don’t have any suspects at this time,

surveillance has been set up.

“I would rather have the Forest Service spend its limited trail budget on new trails than destroying illegal trails that are perhaps causing resource damage,” Kevin Joell, president of Tahoe Area Mountain Bike Association, told *Lake Tahoe News*.

TAMBA has been working with the Forest Service to create trails throughout the Lake Tahoe Basin. While working through the government process can take time, the end result is a trail built to current standards that takes safety and other issues into consideration.

“If someone has the energy to build trails, if we can harness that, we can talk to them on a peer level to find out what they want and explain what it would take to do it legally,” Joell said.



Illegal trails are not built to safety or other standards.

The problem with illegal trails is that they can cause erosion problems, disturb cultural resources and not be safe.

The illegal trails are often built near an existing trail but do not directly tie into it. This is so it won’t be detected so easily. It’s by word of mouth that the illegal trail is discovered. It might require carrying a bike or a bit of cross

country.

“We want people to work with us if they want to make trails,” Heck said.