Lake Tahoe about to hit natural rim



This was the Truckee River flowing from Lake Tahoe in Tahoe City in October 2013. Photo/LTN file

By Kathryn Reed

Lake Tahoe is expected to drop below its natural rim this afternoon, which would be the first time in five years.

The rim is 6,223 feet.

There was still water coming out of the dam in Tahoe City on Wednesday morning.

“The forecast is for it to drop below and stay there this afternoon,” Mark Faucette, senior forecaster with the National Weather Service in Reno, told *Lake Tahoe News*.

The winds that have been gusting in the area for much of the last two days have not allowed for consistent water level readings. For example one hour on Oct. 15 gauges read the lake was two-hundredths of an inch below the rim and the next hour it was three-hundredths above the rim.

“We don’t really get that much difference in an hour,” Faucette explained.

When Tahoe drops below its rim it means no water is flowing into the Truckee River and therefore it is not reaching its end destination of Pyramid Lake.

The last time it dropped below the rim was late in the calendar year of 2009. Faucette said once it goes below the rim to not expect to it rise above it for a while. The only thing that would change that prediction is if the area gets a big rain event.

“Snow won’t bring it up. We need rain and runoff to bring it back up,” Faucette said. “The ground around the lake is pretty dry so it takes a lot to moisten it up to get runoff.”

There is a small system in the forecast for Friday night into Saturday, but it could fizzle out before it reaches the Sierra.

“There’s another trough for early next week that could give us some chance of moisture on Monday into Tuesday, and an increase of winds, but not like last night,” Tony Fuentes with the NWS said.

The official water year started Oct. 1. This makes year four of the drought that has been drying out California and Nevada.