Tahoe boat inspections to resume; no fee hike

Enough money has been pieced together for the boat inspection program at Lake Tahoe to continue this summer without raising fees for boaters.

The program, first adopted in 2009, requires all boats being launched at Lake Tahoe to be inspected. Those found to be carrying invasive species pay an additional fee to be decontaminated.

Dennis Zabaglo, aquatic resources program manager for Tahoe Regional Planning Agency, on March 26 stressed to the Governing Board the importance of maintaining the program. He said in 2014 there were 6,800 inspections and 3,300 decontaminations. More than 50 boats were carrying an AIS, with 12 of those being quagga mussels.

“That validates our efforts,” Zabaglo said.

The quagga mussels have devastated the water bodies they’ve entered, like Lake Mead in Southern Nevada.

Half of the money to operate the inspection program comes from the boating fee, the other half mostly from the Southern Nevada Public Lands Management Act. With that money nearly gone, other sources are being looked at. Last week TRPA was awarded a $200,000 quagga free grant from the state. There may also be money from the Army Corps of Engineers. Worst-case scenario is the need to tap into reserves.

The board on Thursday approved all the contingency budget plans as well as the fee schedule.

New this season will be an inspection station at the Truckee Airport. This replaces the one at Northstar. The cost to run

it will be shared by Truckee as that town makes a concerted effort to keep AIS from Donner Lake.

The other inspection stations are in Meyers, Alpine Meadows and Spooner summit.

One board member questioned whether the boating season might be a little lackluster this season because of the low lake level. Zabaglo said that was a concern last year as well and was unfunded, and that TRPA believes boaters will still be coming to Tahoe this summer.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report