

Survey: STR customers differ on how to recycle

By Kathryn Reed

South Tahoe Refuse customers are divided when it comes to whether they would like to stick with the blue bag recycling program or have a garbage can dedicated to such goods.

The garbage company that services the South Shore of Lake Tahoe on both sides of the state line asked customer to answer a 14-question survey to get their take on a variety of issues.

"What I glean from this is the blue bags are being utilized," Nancy McDermid said. She is Douglas County's representative to the Waste Management JPA. (South Lake Tahoe and El Dorado County are the other members of the JPA.)

Jeanne Lear with STR at this week's JPA meeting at Lake Tahoe Airport went over the 116 survey responses. The average customer who responded has been a STR customer for 19 years, with the longest being 52 years. Forty-seven percent were from South Lake Tahoe, 31 percent from El Dorado County and 22 percent from Douglas County.

Seventy-percent use the blue bag.

When it came to wanting to keep that bag or go to a tote, the results were 40 percent for each. The other 20 percent is not sure. The majority – 65 percent – is not willing to pay another dollar for a dedicated recycling can.

Just more than one-quarter of the respondents are using some type of bear proof device.

Fifty percent believe there is no problem in their neighborhood with animals getting in garbage, while 43 percent say there is an issue. Lear said it's possible people don't

know about problems because STR or Clean Tahoe employees have cleaned up the mess before they would have had an opportunity to see it.

The majority (79 percent) believes when there is a customer who lets an animal get into the trash a metal animal resistant container should be mandatory.

STR was surprised to learn about two-thirds of the survey takers don't use the recycling buyback center. Lear said this in part has to do with Nevada residents not being able to use it in full because the bottle bill exists in California and not the Silver State.

The JPA will be able to use the information going forward if it wants to make changes to the recycling program or animal containers.

In other action:

- The JPA board is still deciding if a loan program will be created so customers could buy bear boxes without putting out the cash all at once. Details will be brought forward at the next meeting, which is anticipated to be in January.