

Upper Truckee River creates new path, flooding



Tahoe Keys Boulevard has several inches of water on it on Feb. 9. Photo/Kathryn Reed

By Kathryn Reed

The Upper Truckee River in South Lake Tahoe has reached flood stage, is expected to be higher than it was in January and could reach 1997 levels.

"The Upper Truckee River changed course. It took the easiest way through the snow," Jim Marino, South Lake Tahoe assistant public works director, told *Lake Tahoe News*.

It has done so at multiple locations through Meyers and South Lake Tahoe.

It is beyond its banks near the mouth of Lake Tahoe. Flood stage is 10.5 feet. On Thursday morning it was at 11.63 feet.

Adding to the flow of the river is that the dam at Echo Lake is removed each winter. Water is pouring down from there, reaching the Upper Truckee River in the Christmas Valley area.

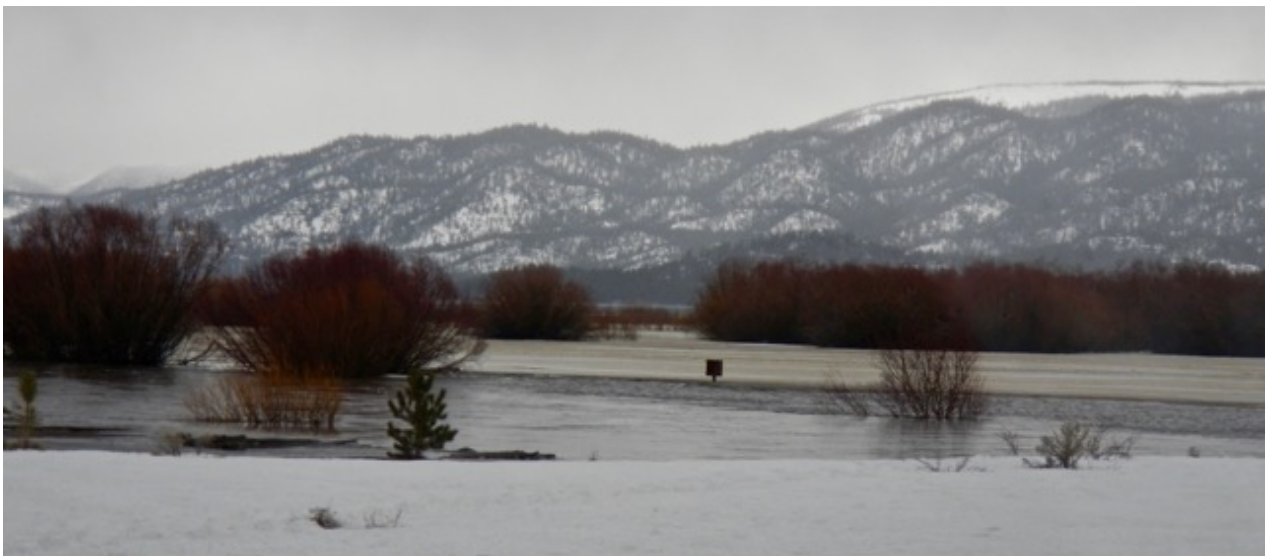
Meyers is contending with a slew of water issues, with the wet stuff reaching garages and homes.

In South Lake Tahoe water is flowing onto Venice Drive, which city officials closed off early this afternoon. Snow was moved into the parking lot of the commercial complex at Venice and Tahoe Keys Boulevard as a dam of sorts.

For the first time in at least 20 years the weir on Venice Drive has been opened, though not fully, to ease the buildup of water in that lagoon.

Tahoe Keys Boulevard has standing water near the entrance to the housing area. The neighboring state streets like Michael Drive, Dover Court, Colorado Street and Montezuma Avenue are all experiencing significant flooding.

"I just looked at the radar. I don't see a break for another six or seven hours. It's going to get heavier," Marino said at 1:40pm Feb. 9.



The Upper Truckee River near Cove East on Feb. 9 is swollen beyond its banks. Photo/Kathryn Reed

There is a flood watch until 4am Feb. 10 and a winter storm watch until 1am Feb. 11. Snow levels are supposed to drop to between 7,500 and 8,000 Thursday afternoon, falling to lake level by Friday afternoon. And now there is thunder.

No mandatory evacuations have been declared in the city, though some people have voluntarily left their houses. Douglas County has set up a shelter at the Community and Senior Center (pets welcome), 1329 Waterloo Lane, Gardnerville.

Crews throughout the region are out in full force addressing issues as they arise.

The city is keeping an eye out on the mobile home park on Blackwood Avenue. Homes on Woodbine Road are another concern. Bill and Shirley streets behind the Knights Inn have been flooding since the 1940s, and continue to today.

What has crews scrambling is that water is showing up in places where it usually doesn't. Part of this is because it is going through snow and making its own path, and part because there is no place left for it to go.

On Highway 50 at Bridal Veil Falls the eastbound No. 2 lane is blocked by a boulder the size of an SUV. Caltrans crews will need to blast it to move it.

Boulders and an unstable hillside on Highway 50 at Logan Creek on the South Shore is preventing through traffic to Carson City. Crews are still working in the area, putting in a gravel berm. But there is no word when it will reopen. Don't expect it to as the rain keeps coming.

Kingsbury Grade is open, but there are delays. Traffic is periodically being held in both directions as crews clear the road of debris. Compounding the backup on the Carson Valley side is that Muller Street and Genoa Lane are closed.

For current highway conditions, click on the state icons on

the home page of *Lake Tahoe News*.

The Emergency Operations Center in Carson Valley is now open. It is staffed with more than 24 mission critical positions, mostly supported by Douglas County staff, East Fork Fire Protection District, Douglas County Sheriff's Office as well as volunteers, Carson Valley Chamber of Commerce and Visitors Authority, Carson Valley Conservation District personnel, the Douglas County CERT Team. The Douglas County flood hotline is 775.783.6404.

Officials are encouraging residents to be prepared for the possibility of road closures and power outages. This is true no matter where one lives in the Tahoe-Truckee area.