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NEWS RELEASE

NOTE: THIS ITEM WAS APPROVED BY THE TRPA GOVERNING BOARD ON AUGUST 25, 2010

BOATER FINED \$5,000 FOR ILLEGAL LAUNCH AT LAKE TAHOE

Contact: Jeff Cowen, Community Liaison, (775) 589-5278

For Release Immediately

August 20, 2010

Lake Tahoe, CA/NV – A boater who refused a mandatory invasive species decontamination earlier this summer faces a \$5,000 penalty for evading watercraft inspectors in order to launch illegally into Lake Tahoe. The Tahoe Regional Planning Agency Governing Board will decide the matter at their meeting Wednesday at Stateline, NV.

On June 28, Tahoe Resource Conservation District watercraft inspectors at a boat ramp on the Lake's East shore sent the boater away from the ramp for a mandatory decontamination because the boat he wanted to launch was determined to be high risk for invasive species.

All motorized watercraft in the Lake Tahoe Region are required to be inspected for aquatic invasive species, such as quagga and zebra mussels and New Zealand mudsnails, before being allowed to launch. A watercraft decontamination is required for any vessel that is not clean, drained and dry, or that came from a known infested water body. The boater's decontamination was scheduled for three days later, on July 1, at a nearby staging area where other high risk watercraft visiting Lake Tahoe for the Fourth of July weekend were being decontaminated. On July 1 when the boater did not show up for the decontamination, inspectors put the vessel's registration identification on a watchlist as an alert to other launch and inspection sites.

Inspectors soon discovered that later on June 28 the vessel was brought to the roadside invasive species inspection station in Meyers, CA, where the boater gave different information to inspectors about the boat's origin. Inspectors found the boat to be clean and sealed the vessel which allowed the boater to launch at Meeks Bay, CA, on the Lake's West shore.

Using the vessel's description and registration numbers, the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency watercraft team located the vessel and alerted the California Department of Fish and Game. Wardens assisted in removing the boat from the Lake. According to the operator's statement at the east shore inspection site, the boat had come from Utah's

2-2-2 Boater Fine

Sand Hollow Reservoir, which is infested with quagga mussels. Quagga mussels are capable of multiplying to the trillions in only a few years.

Although it was later verified that the boat had not last launched in Sand Hollow Reservoir, but rather had come from Lake Powell, Arizona and was likely not a high risk, the evasion of inspectors is a serious violation, according to Tahoe Regional Planning Agency Aquatic Invasive Species Program Manager Ted Thayer. The discrepancy arose because the operator who brought the boat to Lake Tahoe was not the only operator of the boat and did not know the last location of the vessel.

“We have a zero-tolerance policy for the threat of aquatic invasive species at Lake Tahoe,” Thayer said. “This case shows that the inspection program is working and has given us an opportunity to improve it to ensure boaters cannot evade inspectors.”

Immediately following this incident, Conservation District inspectors changed their watchlist procedures such that the registration identification of any vessel sent for decontamination is circulated to all inspection locations and launch sites as a prohibited vessel. The registration identification is not removed from the watchlist until the boat has been decontaminated.

“We are proud of all the inspectors and launch operators involved in this incident for being diligent and doing their part to protect Lake Tahoe,” Thayer said. “It’s unfortunate that this incident occurred, because the vast majority of boaters have been very patient and supportive and we appreciate that.”

Following the incident, water in Meeks Bay Marina and the area the boat had been moored was tested for quagga and zebra mussel DNA. The tests indicated that no quagga or zebra mussels were present.

Tahoe Regional Planning Agency staff will recommend on Wednesday the Governing Board approve a settlement with the boater for \$5,000 for violating the Agency’s watercraft ordinances and evading Conservation District inspectors.

The Tahoe Regional Planning Agency, in cooperation with the Tahoe Resource Conservation District, is aggressively working to protect Lake Tahoe from the threat of aquatic invasive species. The TRPA cooperatively leads the effort to preserve, restore, and enhance the unique natural and human environment of the Lake Tahoe Region now and in the future. For additional information, email jcowen@trpa.org.

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