

Echo Lakes and Fallen Leaf Lakes Inspection Protocols

March 2023

Purpose:

- Refine watercraft inspection protocols to be consistent across all boatable waters in the Tahoe Region.
- Formalize any special protocols, reciprocity, and specify activities of seal inspectors and non-motorized screening personnel.

Background:

The protocols for Echo and Fallen Leaf lakes have historically differed from the protocols implemented for Lake Tahoe in that every boat was decontaminated prior to launching. The rationale being these lakes did not have any known AIS and extra precautions were warranted. In the program's infancy, this was a strict approach based on limited knowledge and experience to limit risk at the highest level. Given the 15 years of experience and the current standing of the program as the "Gold Standard" for inspection programs in the US, the conservative nature of these protocols should be reexamined. The previous protocols have made it difficult for boaters and inspection staff to interpret the protocols, requirements, and fees in a consistent manner, and made navigating the program more difficult.

There are three classifications of roles where staff in the Watercraft Inspection Program provide the training necessary to implement the program.

1. Non-motorized screeners- Screener's duties include conducting surveys via the TRPA supplied Non-motorized Screening Form created by Watercraft Inspection Program staff to quickly assess risk and redirect high-risk and non-compliant vessels to inspection stations. If time allows, basic inspections may be conducted. Screeners are utilized at access points to the lakes, such as a kiosk staff at campgrounds or beaches.
2. Certified Seal Inspectors- Seal Inspector's main role is to inspect for and remove and apply seals on watercraft for the purpose of launching and hauling out watercraft. Seal inspectors also conduct non-motorized screenings as mentioned above. Seal Inspectors are not authorized to perform motorized watercraft inspections.
3. Certified Watercraft Inspectors- Watercraft Inspectors are trained and on the Western Regional Watercraft Inspection and Decontamination Protocols and certified by TRPA staff after successful completion of the training. Certified Watercraft Inspectors perform watercraft inspections, decontaminations and non-motorized screenings.

Trained and TRPA certified designees shall only operate within the confines of the classification in which they have been trained certified. Seal inspector training is required for the ramp manager on an annual basis to maintain certification and eligibility to perform these duties. This includes non-motorized screening training. All Regional launch areas, including those at Fallen Leaf and Echo Lakes are required by TRPA Code of Ordinances 63.4 to have certified seal inspectors at the ramp during operating hours, which requires annual training and certification.

Proposed Protocols:

The main purpose of Watercraft Inspection Program is to assess and reduce the risk of a new AIS introduction by means of watercraft inspection and decontamination. Based on the vessels launch history or by the presence of mud, water, plants or animals, a decontamination is made available to

reduce the risk. Those that opt not to be decontaminated are not provided a seal, and are not able to launch, and in some cases, may be reported to authorities.

Routine monitoring in Lake Tahoe have proven that the Watercraft Inspection Program protocols are effective, and that no new introductions of any species have been identified since the program began. Therefore, the protocols that are being implemented for Lake Tahoe are appropriate to reduce the risk for Fallen Leaf and Echo lakes as well. Applying consistent protocols throughout the Region makes sound operational sense and meets the high standards of protection Lake Tahoe deserves.

The Watercraft Inspection Program will proceed with the following internal policies which are in addition to and complement the Lake Tahoe protocols. Training may be made available to staff at both Fallen Leaf and Echo Lakes for the purpose of inspecting non-motorized vessels only.

Motorized Watercraft

1. Treat all motorized watercraft going to Echo Lakes (EL) and Fallen Leaf Lake (FLL) as those going to Lake Tahoe in regard to decontamination requirements.
2. A single sticker will be required to launch in any or all of these waterbodies. A Tahoe Only sticker will be able to launch in all regional waters, providing they receive an inspection, decontamination if needed, and the appropriate seal in order to launch at their desired location.
3. For watercraft leaving Lake Tahoe and going to these lakes, a mandatory inspection is required. Separate seals for each regional waterbody will be maintained to help enforce this. The same requirements for Clean, Drained, and Dry will be applied to these boats to pass inspection without a decontamination requirement.
4. Based on current monitoring, Fallen Leaf Lake and Echo Lakes do not harbor invasive aquatic plants or Asian clams, both of which are present in Lake Tahoe. As such, these lakes should carry reciprocity agreements for vessels sealed from either Fallen Leaf Lake or Echo Lakes as they do not present an increased level of risk to each other.

Non-motorized Watercraft

1. All non-motorized vessels that pass through the inspection stations with the intention of launching at either Fallen Leaf or Echo Lakes will be subject to identical inspection requirements as motorized vessels.
2. These vessels, whether decontaminated or not, will be given a decontamination receipt if they do not have a registration and are not large enough to merit a non-motorized Tahoe sticker and a seal. This will allow the receiving regional waterbodies to ensure compliance with the program in the absence of certified watercraft inspection personnel. Boaters will be instructed to dry their vessel following any decontamination, so they are dry when they arrive at the lake.
3. Trained and certified seal inspectors and non-motorized screeners carry the authority to refuse access to any watercraft, motorized or non-motorized, for failing to comply with the protocols established within each of those classifications.
4. Any non-motorized watercraft that arrives without going to the inspection station will require a minimum of a non-motorized screening to assess risk. If watercraft inspection certified personnel are available, they may provide a visual and tactile inspection to further assess risk.
5. If a non-motorized watercraft is CDD and there are no concerns with its known launch history, there is no increase in risk, and should be authorized to launch. All such interactions should be captured utilizing the non-motorized screening form.