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## STAFF REPORT

Date: February 21, 2024  
To: TRPA Governing Board  
From: TRPA Staff  
Subject: Adoption of 2024 Watercraft Inspection Fee Schedule

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### Staff Recommendation:

Staff recommends that the Governing Board adopt the proposed Resolution (Attachment A) containing the 2024 Watercraft Inspection Fee Schedule.

### Required Motion:

In order to approve the proposed 2024 Watercraft Inspection Fee Schedule, the Governing Board must make the following motion based on the staff report:

- I. A motion to adopt the proposed Resolution 2024-\_\_\_\_, (Attachment A) approving the 2024 Watercraft Inspection Fee Schedule.

In order for the motion to pass, an affirmative vote of any eight members of the Board is required.

### Project Description/Background:

In 2008, TRPA initiated the Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) Watercraft Inspection Program (Program) to prevent the introduction and spread of aquatic invasive species (AIS) into the waters of the Lake Tahoe Region. The Program serves as a national model and is a tremendous success with no new invasions detected since the Program began, until the recent discovery of New Zealand mudsnails in September 2023. The TRPA has a unique relationship with the Tahoe Resource Conservation District (Tahoe RCD) in that they are TRPA's primary partner in the AIS Program overall, but also a contractor to implement the inspection Program and has been doing so since the Program began.

The TRPA Code (63.4) allows for the collection of fees from the boating public as a long-term funding source for the Program that complements public funds. The Code also states that the TRPA Governing Board approves the fee schedule annually. The Program utilizes two different stickers to indicate that a boat has paid the appropriate fee for that season: one for boats that are exclusively used on Lake Tahoe ("Tahoe Only"), and one for boats launching on Lake Tahoe and in other bodies of water outside of the Region ("Tahoe In and Out"). The Program also allows for a Single Inspection Pass with a reduced rate that is valid for one inspection at the inspection station and seven consecutive days of seal inspections at launch ramps. In addition to the annual sticker fees, the Program charges for each decontamination performed. The decontamination fee can be avoided if boaters adhere to the "Clean, Drain and Dry" practice the Program promotes. Decontamination fees are based on how many "systems" need to be decontaminated because they were not "Clean, Drained and Dry." (A system is a bilge, engine, hull, trailer, live well, etc.)

To ensure the continued success and sustainability of the Program, TRPA staff are proposing an increase to the fee schedule for the 2024 season.

The proposed fee schedule increases for inspections include:

- Tahoe Only sticker- increase \$5.
- Tahoe In/Out stickers and Single Inspection passes- increase \$10 for watercraft under 17 feet and personal watercraft.
- Tahoe In/Out stickers and the Single Inspection passes- increase \$15 for watercraft over 17 feet.

The proposed fee schedule for decontaminations includes a modification based on the number of systems that require decontamination, increasing the categories from two to three:

- Single system decontamination- increase \$5.
- Two and three systems (new category)- the current category is more than one system, with the fee of \$50. The proposed fee for 2-3 systems is a \$10 increase from the current schedule.
- More than four systems (new category)- the current category is more than one system, with the fee of \$50. The proposed fee for four or more systems is a \$60 increase from the current schedule.

<b>Inspection Fees</b>	<b>2023</b>	<b>2024 Proposal</b>	<b>Amount of increase</b>
Tahoe Only	45	50	5
In/Out: PWC & up to 17	60	70	10
In/Out: 17 and up	100	115	15
Single: PWC & up to 17	55	65	10
Single: 17 and up	80	95	15

<b>Decontamination Fees</b>	<b>2023</b>		
Decontamination (single system, jet ski)	25	30	5
Decontamination (2-3 systems)	50	60	10
Complex Decontamination (4 or more systems)		110	110
<b>Ballast Boats (in addition)</b>			
Drained Ballasts	25	30	5
Undrained Ballasts	50	60	10
Attached Mussels	250	350	100

Supporting Information

Several factors weighed into the proposal to increase fees for 2024 including staff wages, grant funding, and general cost increases to operate the Program.

Sticker fees have not had a significant increase in several years, although the structure of the fee schedule has been adapted to address the factors listed above.

Sticker Fee Increase Recent History

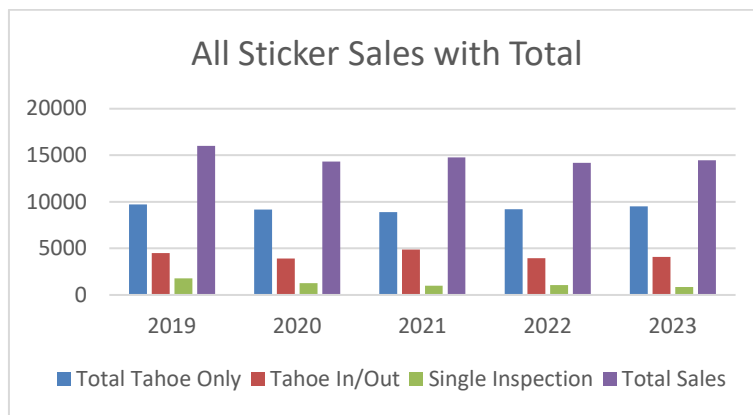
Inspection fees:

- Tahoe Only stickers increased by \$3 in 2019.
- Tahoe In/Out and Single Inspection pass increased by \$5 in 2021.

Decontamination fees:

- Single system decontaminations and personal watercraft decontaminations increased \$5 in 2022.
- Multiple system decontaminations increased \$10 in 2021.
- In 2022, the program added a decontamination category for ballast tanks, both drained and undrained.
- The attached mussel fee last increased in 2021 from \$200 to \$250.

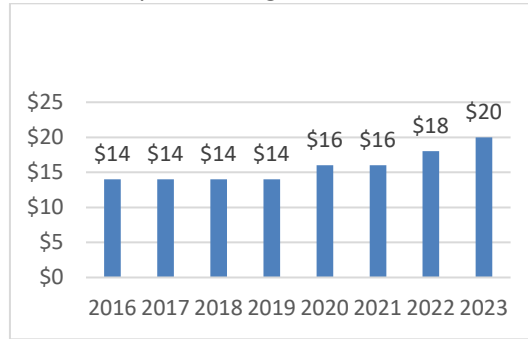
The AIS sticker sales remained steady between 2019 and 2023, providing a consistent revenue source.



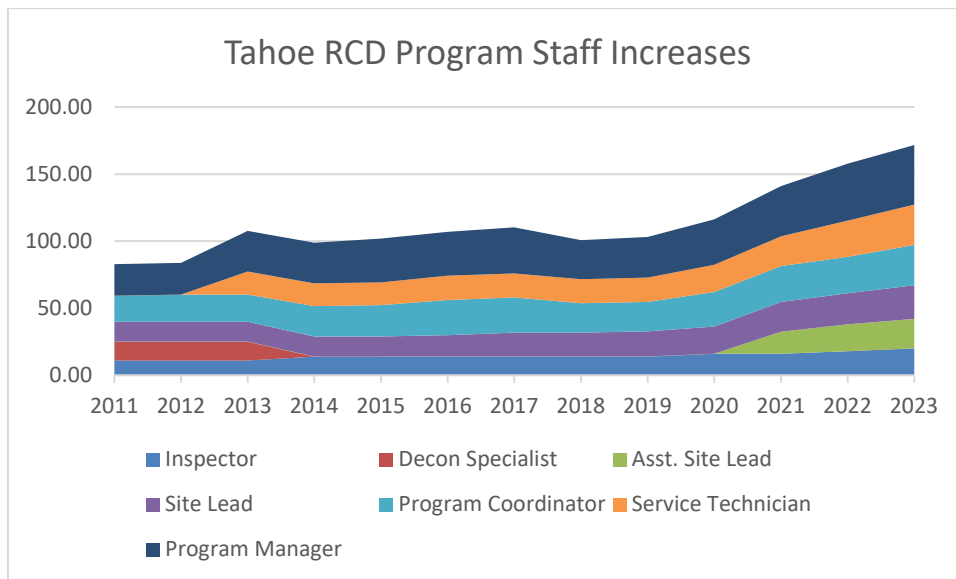
The primary reason for fee increases is to more accurately reflect the amount of work required to conduct inspections and decontaminations. Watercraft are becoming more complicated, requiring more expertise, time, and resources to inspect and decontaminate.

For the last several years labor rates have risen, creating increases in programmatic costs associated with performing inspections and decontaminations and administering the Program. Seasonal inspector wages increased from \$14 in 2019 to \$20 in 2023 to keep up with regional wages and attract valuable staff. Year-round supervisory staff wages have increased as well to maintain an appropriate separation between positions. Seasonal inspectors are supervised by assistant site supervisors and site supervisors. Program staff then implement the Program and supervise the stations.

Inspector Wages- 2016-2023



Tahoe RCD Program Staff Increases



In addition to the wage increases and in reaction to the recent discovery of New Zealand mudsnails, the Program plans to hire roving inspectors to interact and educate the non-motorized audience. The roving inspectors are new positions and will be strategically located around the lake to interact with as many recreationists as possible. This role fills a gap in reaching the non-motorized users and will further assist in preventing the introduction of all AIS.

Until recently, the Program has successfully competed for grants from the California Division of Boating and Waterways (CA DBW) since 2014. The Program has received approximately \$400,000 each annual cycle, thus totaling \$400,000 in Program funds each year. (Each grant award is for two years.) The Program was not awarded the grant for the 2023 grant cycle. The loss of these funds accounts for an approximately 16% reduction to the overall AIS Prevention Program budget and a 25% reduction to the Tahoe RCD contract.

The Program was not awarded the grant for the 2023 grant cycle due to several factors, the most likely of which being that the CA DBW prioritizes prevention program development over developed prevention programs such as our Watercraft Inspection Program. In addition, funding becomes more competitive each year as more prevention programs are developed in California, ultimately helping to protect Lake Tahoe waters.

The Watercraft Inspection Program has healthy reserves but is operating at a deficit without the grant funding, a deficit made larger by the continued rise in wages and Program costs. The Program annually assesses these costs and discusses options to decrease expenses. Long-term solutions may include smaller graduated increases to fees to address the deficit. The annual budget is estimated at \$2,414,000, of which \$1,569,722 pays the Tahoe RCD contract, comprising 65% of the overall Program budget. Within the Tahoe RCD budget, 74% is reserved for staffing, both seasonal and year-round.

The proposed fee schedule shown in *Exhibit 1* does not include the \$12 Shoreline Program fee approved by the Governing Board in October 2018. The Shoreline Program fees do not cover costs of the AIS inspections; rather, they contribute to, among other items, control and monitoring of existing species in Lake Tahoe that can be spread by boats to other areas of the lake. The Shoreline fees are collected at the time of sale of the AIS sticker.

Environmental Review:

None necessary.

Regional Plan Compliance:

The proposed action complies with all requirements of the TRPA Goals and Policies, Plan Area Statements, and Code of Ordinances, including all required findings in Chapter 6 of the TRPA Code of Ordinances.

Contact Information:

For questions regarding this Agenda item, please contact Thomas Boos at (775) 589-5240 or [tboos@trpa.gov](mailto:tboos@trpa.gov).

To submit a written public comment, email [publiccomment@trpa.gov](mailto:publiccomment@trpa.gov) with the appropriate agenda item in the subject line. Written comments received by 4 p.m. the day before a scheduled public meeting will be distributed and posted to the TRPA website before the meeting begins. TRPA does not guarantee written comments received after 4 p.m. the day before a meeting will be distributed and posted in time for the meeting.

Attachment:

- A. Resolution
  - Exhibit 1 – Fee Schedule

Attachment A

Resolution

TAHOE REGIONAL PLANNING AGENCY  
TRPA RESOLUTION NO. 2024 –

RESOLUTION AMENDING THE WATERCRAFT INSPECTION FEE  
AMOUNT AND SCHEDULE, EFFECTIVE FEBRUARY 2024 THROUGH DECEMBER 2024

WHEREAS, the introduction of aquatic invasive species such as quagga and zebra mussels pose a threat to the integrity of the Lake Tahoe Region’s ecosystem, recreation, water purveyance systems and economy in general; and

WHEREAS, Subparagraph 63.4.2.E of the TRPA Code of Ordinances as amended April 2011 requires that an owner and/or operator of a Boat Ramp (excluding Marine Railway Systems) or other Boat Launch Facility shall close any ramp or facility if the provisions of Subparagraphs 63.4.2.(A)-(C) are not met in order to prevent the launching of motorized watercraft; and

WHEREAS, Subparagraph 63.4.2.A of the TRPA Code of Ordinances as amended April 2011 further requires that all motorized Watercraft shall be inspected by TRPA or its designee prior to launching into the waters of the Lake Tahoe Region to detect the presence, and prevent the introduction of, aquatic invasive species; and

WHEREAS, Subparagraph 63.4.2.B of the TRPA Code of Ordinances as amended April 2011 further requires that all Watercraft inspected pursuant to Subparagraph 63.4.2.A shall be subject to decontamination if determined necessary by the TRPA or its designee; and

WHEREAS, Subparagraph 63.4.2.D of the TRPA Code of Ordinances as amended April 2011 further states that Inspections and decontaminations performed pursuant to Section 63.4 are subject to a fee related to the costs of performing such services and other Watercraft inspection program costs; and

WHEREAS, Subparagraph 63.4.2.D of the TRPA Code of Ordinances as amended April 2011 further states that the TRPA Governing Board will review and approve the fee amount and schedule annually; and

WHEREAS, during the April 2011 Board meeting, the TRPA Governing Board adopted Resolution 2011-07 making watercraft subject to a fee for inspection, decontamination and other program costs; and

WHEREAS, the Watercraft Inspection plan for 2024 requires a combination of public and private funding currently estimated at \$2,414,000 to inspect and decontaminate motorized watercraft; and

WHEREAS, state funding from both California and Nevada has been secured to support aquatic invasive species inspections for 2024; and

WHEREAS, the Governing Board of the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency on September 24, 2008 directed staff to bring to the Board for consideration an equitable fee schedule; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Governing Board of the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency that the amount and schedule of the aquatic invasive species inspection fee effective January 2024 through December 2024 be as shown in Exhibit 1; (Attached)

PASSED and ADOPTED by the Governing Board of the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency this 28th day of February 2024, by the following vote:

Ayes:

Nays:

Absent:

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Cindy Gustafson, Chair  
Tahoe Regional Planning Agency  
Governing Board



Exhibit 1 to Attachment A

Fee Schedule

**ATTACHMENT A, EXHIBIT 1**

Staff Proposed Fees for 2024 Boating Season (effective January 2024 through December 2024)

<u>2024 Sticker Fee Schedule</u>		
<b>Tahoe Only Stickers</b>	<b>Current Fee</b>	<b>Propose Fee</b>
All Sealed Vessels	\$33.00	\$38.00
<b>Tahoe In &amp; Out Stickers</b>	<b>Current Fee</b>	<b>Proposed Fee</b>
Personal Watercraft (PWC)	\$48.00	\$58.00
Vessels 0.1 ft. - 17.0 ft.	\$48.00	\$58.00
Vessels 17.1 ft. - and Greater	\$88.00	\$103.00
<b>Single Inspection Passes</b>	<b>Current Fee</b>	<b>Proposed Fee</b>
Personal Watercraft (PWC)	\$43.00	\$53.00
Vessels 0.1 ft. - 17.0 ft.	\$43.00	\$53.00
Vessels 17.1 ft. - and Greater	\$68.00	\$83.00
<b>Decontamination Fees</b>	<b>Current Fee</b>	<b>Proposed Fee</b>
Simple Decontamination (single system, personal watercraft)	\$25.00	\$30.00
Intermediate Decontamination (2-3 systems)		\$60.00
Complex Decontamination (4 or more systems)	\$50.00	\$110.00
Drained ballasts	\$25.00	\$30.00
Undrained ballasts	\$50.00	\$60.00
Simple decontamination and drained ballast	\$50.00	\$60.00
Intermediate and drained ballast		\$90.00
Complex decontamination and drained ballast	\$75.00	\$140.00
Simple decontamination and undrained ballast	\$75.00	\$90.00
Intermediate and undrained ballast		\$120.00
Complex decontamination and undrained ballast	\$100.00	\$170.00
Attached mussels	\$250.00	\$350.00