

. A river is reborn after Lake Tahoe reaches milestone

Truckee River flowing for first time in 18 months

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TAHOE CITY, Calif. (KCRA) —For the first time in 18 months, the Truckee River has begun flowing after Lake Tahoe's water level reached a milestone.

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Water managers said melting snow pushed the lake above 6,223 feet of elevation last Saturday.

That is the elevation of the lake's natural rim, above which the lake begins to empty into the river at Tahoe City.

Buster Hines, who was visiting from Contra Costa County, said the lake's outlet looked much different than the last time he saw it.

"There wasn't any water in it at all from here back to the lake. Completely dry," he said.

At first a trickle, the river has grown into a small stream over the last six days.

"It's good. I'm glad to see a little water. But quite frankly, with all the rain we've had, I thought there would be more water running than this," Hines said.

Because it is so big, with a surface area of more than 191 square miles, Lake Tahoe falls and rises slowly.

Jeff Anderson, a water supply specialist for the U.S. Department of Agriculture, said melting snow is currently adding about 390 million gallons of water to the lake each day.

Anderson said the lake is forecast to rise another foot by sometime this summer.

When the lake fell below the natural rim in October 2014, it generated headlines across California and questions from potential visitors.

"We actually did get questions if there was water in the lake," said J.T. Thompson, North Lake Tahoe's tourism director.

The dropping lake level also created wide, rocky beaches and shut down some boat ramps.

However, Thompson said the north shore's overall tourism business continued to grow.

He predicted the lake's rise and the river's return will draw even more visitors.

"(That) is a good thing. Great for the restaurants and the bars and everybody that wants to come out and enjoy the lake," Thompson said.

Paul Miltner of Tahoe Whitewater Tours said he is also looking forward to a better season.

Thanks to smaller creeks entering downstream from the lake, much of the Truckee River did not go completely dry.

However, Miltner said last year's whitewater rafting season on the river lasted only a couple of weeks.

"This season, it's looking very up for us. We look like we're going to have a full season on all of our rivers," Miltner said.

Anderson said the river's return will also be good news for the city of Reno, which relies upon it for much of its drinking water supply.

He said the river will likely continue to flow until at least this autumn.