

Lake Tahoe bill clears key Senate committee

By Bill Theobald, USA Today

WASHINGTON – Democrats and Republicans found a rare subject they could agree on Wednesday: Lake Tahoe and surrounding land is worth improving and protecting.

The Senate Environment and Public Works Committee easily passed the Lake Tahoe Restoration Act of 2015 by voice vote and sent it to the full Senate.

The bill authorizes \$415 million in federal funds over 10 years to improve the clarity of the lake, reduce the potential for severe forest fires on the surrounding land, and prevent the spread of invasive species.

Read the whole story

Tahoe Improv Players to perform at LTCC

The Tahoe Improv Players will take the stage Feb. 6 at 7pm as a benefit for Tahoe Arts Project.

The performance will take place at the Duke Theatre at Lake Tahoe Community College.

Tickets are \$12 for adults and \$8 for children, and may be purchased at the door.

In addition to the public performance, Tahoe iMPRoV Players

will be putting on a free improv workshop for middle and high school students on Feb. 6 from 10am-2pm, with a free performance from 2:15-3pm in the college theater. There are 20 spots available on a first come, first serve basis. Call 530.542.3632 to reserve a spot.

Members of Tahoe iMPRoV Players will be performing in the South Shore schools Feb. 1-5.

2015 shatters record as warmest year

By Bill Chappell, NPR

It's not rare for a year to break record temperatures. But it's now happened two years in a row – and 2015 was “very, very clearly the warmest year by a long chalk,” says Gavin Schmidt, director of NASA's Goddard Institute for Space Studies.

NASA is presenting the annual review of global average temperatures in conjunction with NOAA, which says that not only did 2015 finish as the warmest year on record, but it did so by the widest margin ever – nearly a third of 1 degree Fahrenheit warmer than 2014's average.

In 2015, the average temperature on land and ocean surfaces around the world was “1.62° F (0.90° C) above the 20th century average,” according to NOAA.

Read the whole story

Food Bank to be in SLT next week

The Food Bank of El Dorado County will be distributing food in South Lake Tahoe on Jan. 27 from 10-11am at the American Legion Hall, 2748 Lake Tahoe Blvd. This is assuming the weather cooperates.

One allocation per household will be distributed. This is for people living in El Dorado County who meet the state Health and Social Services Agency Emergency Food Assistance Program **income guidelines**.

For more information on how to give or get help, call 530.621.9950 or email info@foodbankedc.org.

Study: More plastic than fish in oceans by 2050

By Ivana Kottasova, CNN

The world is flooded with garbage.

There will be more plastic than fish in terms of weight in the world's oceans by 2050, the World Economic Forum warned Tuesday.

Plastic has become one of the world's most popular materials, combining amazing functionality and very low production costs.

Its use has increased 20-fold in the past 50 years and is expected to double again in the next 20 years.

Almost everybody in the world comes into contact with it – over a quarter of all plastic is used for packaging, the most popular use of the material.

Read the whole story

Pro skier JT Holmes survives avalanche burial

By Benjamin Spillman, Reno Gazette-Journal

Pro skier JT Holmes says he's still shaken five days after being buried and going unconscious in an avalanche northwest of Lake Tahoe.

Holmes, who is known for pushing the boundaries of big mountain skiing and speed riding, said he was skiing with friends on Thursday near Truckee when the slide occurred during the group's fourth run of the day.



JT Holmes

Holmes said he was in a group of eight in the backcountry between Tinker Knob and Donner Lake, skiing a north or northeast aspect in complex terrain with trees, chutes and

gullies and which he estimated was at about 7,400 feet in elevation.

“I got flushed through, went downhill with the avalanche,” Holmes said. “The second wave of the avalanche buried me.”

Read the whole story

Out-of-bounds snowboarder faces criminal charges

A snowboarder skiing in a closed area of Sugar Bowl Ski Resort faces trespassing charges.

Resort officials say Christian Michael Mares triggered an avalanche at approximately 12:45pm Jan. 15 after knowingly traversing into an area of the East Palisades called Perco's. This area has not been open to the public since the 2010-11 ski season. The area is marked as closed from the Mt. Disney and Mt. Lincoln directions, and it is a very active avalanche area.

The Friday avalanche is not connected in any way with the search for missing Sugar Bowl ski instructor Carson May, according to the resort.

“Normally, when skiers or riders choose to enter into a closed area, resort management will pull the skier's pass for a duration of time, ban the skier for the remainder of the season or, if serious enough, for multiple seasons. However, since Mares is not a Sugar Bowl season passholder and given the magnitude and severity of this situation, and the fact

that patrol, staff and public were put at serious risk from Mares' decisions and actions, Sugar Bowl has now turned this incident over to the Placer County Sheriff's Department for prosecution under California Penal Code 602(r), which refers to trespassing into a closed area of a ski resort," the resort said in a statement.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Fund to create legacy for Tahoe's Underhill



Mitch Underhill and his oldest son, Mason.

The Mitch Underhill Mountain Fund has been created to provide scholarships and money to support exploration and learning through adventures in the mountains.

Underhill, a South Lake Tahoe native, died in September 2013

at the age of 34. At the time he was a paramedic firefighter with Lake Valley Fire Protection District.

He was exceptional at navigating the wilderness. He often said he wanted to teach youth “the ways of the mountains” and helped instruct fire science/academy and rock climbing courses through Lake Tahoe Community College.

The Mitch Underhill Mountain Fund is designed to do just that through scholarships to Lake Tahoe Community College students enrolled in the wilderness education or fire science programs.

More information is available **online**.

S. Lake Tahoe says yes to using plastic bags

By Kathryn Reed

South Lake Tahoe has done a 180 on being an environmental leader, according to some people.

It all has to do with plastic bags.

The council on a 3-2 vote Jan. 19 said only grocery stores and food outlets must adhere to the plastic bag ban. Mayor Wendy David and Councilmember Austin Sass were in the minority.

There had been a misunderstanding by Councilmember Hal Cole at the original vote in 2014. He thought the council was going to discuss how things were going before the ban expanded instead of automatically encompassing other establishments a year later – which was in October 2015. That is why last fall he asked to revoke the ordinance beyond grocery stores and

restaurants.

Cole is also concerned about the economic repercussions on businesses. He also pointed out that businesses could always voluntarily not use plastic bags.

But at no time when the revocation has been discussed has there been mention to assess how the bag ban is working. No business person has either come forward at a meeting or written a letter asking to retain the use of plastic bags.

Instead, the vote was based on personal preference and not facts based on zero evidence being presented at the meetings as to the ban being negative for businesses.

Sass asked if any businesses have complained about the ban. City Clerk Suzie Alessi said not to her knowledge.

Councilwoman JoAnn Conner said people are afraid to speak up for fear of retribution.

Sentiments from the public included:

- Jerry Goodman: The council is not environmentally sensitive.
- Joe Stanton: The real compromise would be to allow businesses to use their existing plastic bag supply before implementing the ban. People come to Tahoe because they see it as an environmental leader, but rescinding the bag ban delivers the opposite message.
- Bruce Grego: There is no environmental impact by having a plastic bag ban. Paper bags aren't as useful.
- Pete Fink: It's about bringing your own bag; plastic bags weren't around when he was a kid; Europe is doing just fine without plastic and the U.S. could be in the same boat.

In other news:

- A taxi driver questioned why the city is allowing Uber to operate here. City Attorney Tom Watson said it's a state issue and the city has no control.
 - Hilary Roverud is interim director Development Services because Shawna Brekke-Reid left earlier this month.
 - The city eliminated the following subcommittees: airport master plan, Lake Tahoe Unified-Lake Tahoe Community College memorandum of understanding (for the fields), parks and rec master plan, policy for giving to nonprofits, single room occupancy and warm room.
 - Subcommittees added include development services code (Sass-Cole) and Champions Plaza (David-Tom Davis).
 - Representation to the two chambers of commerce, lodging association and South Tahoe Public Utility District remain intact after being proposed for elimination.
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Letter: SLT failing when it comes to street repair

Publisher's note: *The following letter was read by Brady Hodge at the Jan. 19 South Lake Tahoe City Council meeting and is reprinted with permission.*

I don't have to remind anyone in this room that the reason this city was formed in 1965 was for better basic essentials, including police, fire, snow removal, and street maintenance resulting through local control.

The poor and deteriorated and neglected condition of the streets in this city is failing one of the basic commitments made by this city when it was founded.

The poor condition of the streets, and complaints by residents and property owners in the Tahoe Keys, have forced the property owners association to form a separate, special committee just to address this one issue.

The Tahoe Keys provides the city with significant revenue streams:

- The 1,529 Tahoe Keys properties are the source of over 20 percent of the city's residential property taxes.
- The 328 VHRs, at last count, located in the Tahoe Keys are paying annual license fees and substantial transient occupancy tax to the city.

For the city to fail to reinvest in the infrastructure of these neighborhoods by allowing the streets to deteriorate to the point that they're at today, is incomprehensible. The poor condition of the streets in this city is deplorable, and disgraceful.

The streets in the Tahoe Keys represent only 9 percent of the city's streets. Yet to my recollection, the only street in the Tahoe Keys that's been repaved by the city during the last 20 years is a portion of Venice Drive. TKPOA – the property owners association – has done more repaving than the city during this time; it repaved Kokanee and Marconi when it replaced water lines. The only other street paving work has been done piecemeal by water and utility companies and the [California Tahoe] Conservancy.

And the poor condition of many of the streets in other neighborhoods throughout the city is even worse than in the Keys.

This is not a record to be proud of. My opinion, and that of

many of my neighbors and other city residents, is that the poor condition of the streets in this city is by far the city's most serious problem today.

Why are these streets in such poor shape? The responsibility for these crumbling streets rests directly upon your shoulders. Something has to change. The responsible thing to do would be to rearrange priorities to budget annually for pavement maintenance and replacement to return the city's streets to their prior, more acceptable condition.