Eldorado Forest to resume fire restrictions

An extended forecast of dry weather and concern expressed by the public in the aftermath of the Butte Fire have prompted Eldorado National Forest to put fire restrictions back into effect beginning Oct. 16.

Fire restrictions for recreational use will not affect the forest prescribed fire program.

Campfires will still be allowed in some developed recreation sites. These sites are listed **online**.

For more information on camping and other recreational opportunities, call 530.622.5061.

Tesla founder energized about firm’s future



J.B. Straubel talks about Tesla’s plans in Northern Nevada and beyond. Photo/Mike Wolterbeek/UNR

By Linda Fine Conaboy

RENO – Although it’s nice to be able to drive 250 without an electronic fill-up, all good things come to an end, as do all electric charges. The question of where to get a charge has been nimbly addressed by Tesla with the invention of their supercharger units with a DC connection allowing for a quick charge (30 minutes) at a series of superchargers strategically located coast-to-coast.

There’s one in Truckee, and the company is adding charging stations daily to accommodate not only Teslas, but all electric vehicles.

J.B. Straubel, Tesla’s co-founder and chief technical officer, gave a talk Oct. 11 at UNR titled Building a Clean Energy Future: Tesla and Nevada.

He spoke about his passion for electric vehicles, an interest he developed when he rebuilt a discarded electric golf cart at age 14. He also spoke about his electric Porsche 944 that had a world electric vehicle racing record. His interest in electronics led him to Stanford University where he earned a bachelor's degree in energy systems engineering and a master's in energy engineering. He teaches an energy storage integration class at his alma mater.

As co-founder of Tesla, Straubel has overseen the technical and engineering design of the company's vehicles, including the Tesla Roadster, the Model S series and just-launched Model X. He said plans are in the works for another car, this one to be more affordable than other Teslas, with a price at about $35,000.

"We were not founded to build expensive cars," Straubel said. "Our mission is to build affordable cars." The company is working on what he called a first generation roadster, the Model lll, which will have a 200-mile range.

Still in his 30s, the dapper entrepreneur chronicled Tesla's meteoric rise from 2003 and a mere 15 employees to its current complement of 13,000.

"We had a new idea in 2004—performance electric cars. It took a lot of effort to change people's perceptions," he said. That new idea led to the Tesla Roadster, powered by what was becoming a new era in automobiles—the lithium-ion battery.



Tesla began production of the Model S in 2012. Photo/Linda Fine Conaboy

What the company needed next, he said, was a car that could compete with gasoline powered vehicles; thus the Model S series was born in 2012, built around a battery pack that literally rides on the floorboard of the car permitting a huge increase in cargo capacity and offering added safety because there's no motor in the front. In fact, the Model S carries the highest safety rating in the United States, Straubel said, receiving Motor Trend's car of the year award in 2013.

The new Model X rides on the same platform as the Model S, but it is an SUV with a range of 250 miles on a single charge, falcon-wing doors and a 5,000-pound towing capacity. While there was a display of cars in front of UNR's Crowley Student Union building where Straubel spoke, the Model X was unavailable for viewing.

He explained that in order to fulfill company ambitions and its enormous appetite for batteries –they consume 10 percent of all batteries produced – Tesla needed a more ready source as well as a supply line closer to home. Most batteries now come from Asia. By 2020, that battery appetite is expected to grow as Tesla expects to sell 500,000 cars within the next five-year period as well as battery packs for home and commercial use.

"We thought there must be a better way to build batteries, so the gigafactory came into being," Straubel said in reference to the huge production facility being constructed in Storey County in the Tahoe Reno Industrial Center east of Reno and Sparks. "We're making a $4.5 billion investment and will eventually employ 6,500 people full time, building batteries that are self-contained from an emissions point of view."

Straubel said the plant would be powered by renewable energy

sources. “It’s a net-zero energy factory.”

The main mission of the factory is to drive down costs of storage, Straubel said.

“The energy source must be sustainable to power an energy-sustainable car. The missing links are renewable and sustainable [energy]. The goal is to eliminate 100 percent of fossil fuel energy usage. Many say eliminating fossil fuels is an impossible goal. They said that about the Model S too,” Straubel said.

“Sustainable energy is this generation’s moon shot challenge,” he said, referencing the moon landing in 1969. “The sustainable energy race is a race against ourselves. We see the movement to sustainable energy as our biggest goal.”

The Northern Nevada facility is being built in phases as needed. He expects to see the first wave of employees move in in a few weeks.

In 2015, there were more than 600 internships at Tesla and about one-third of them were converted to full-time employees. They’re launching a new internship especially for the gigafactory.

“We’re here to stay, we don’t want a workforce that’s imported from somewhere else,” he said. “And as many people as we can bring on board and recruit from the local community, it makes that tie even stronger.”

Opinion: Learning to die

By Margot Mifflin, New York Times

My mother taught me many things, including, in the end, how to die.

Her death went well, I told the few friends who I knew would understand my meaning: She was not in pain, she was conscious until the day before she died, she was at home, my sister and I were with her. It was a peak experience, revelatory and meaningful – something I wouldn't have traded for anything – except her life.

No one tells you how discreetly death can make its catch, or how languorously. It rolls in like a low wave: It's moving, and it's not; she's there, afloat, and she's not; it simultaneously sluices through her and tugs her in its tide for hours, until she's silently dispelled by its force.

I understand, now, why death has so often been personified in art – it's maddeningly anonymous. Sylvia Plath's Death is two people: the one who never looks up, and the one who smiles and smokes. But her suitors are too sexy and menacing to represent the remote, impassive, mundane death I witnessed. Jacques Brel's Death is a spinster, a princess and a witch – all impossible: the experience of death could never be so monumentally solitary with this crowd of enablers on the sidelines.

Read the whole story

Playing daily fantasy sports not the best bet

By Drew Harwell, Washington Post

After sitting through your 30th DraftKings or FanDuel commercial of the day – Scott H. won $15,000 off a $5 bet! – you may find yourself thinking: Maybe I should try my hand at daily fantasy sports. It's like that fantasy-football league at work, just sped up a little, right? How hard could it be?

The game, as the ads say, is straightforward: A bettor pays an entry fee (between 25 cents and about $5,000), joins one of the site's many contests and then starts crafting a fantasy team, by choosing professional athletes (each with a price; the team can't go over a "salary cap") and then getting scored on how well they play on the real-life field.

DraftKings and FanDuel's betting ranks have exploded: Even after a week of controversy, the two sites' guaranteed-prize games just pulled in more than $45 million in entry fees, their biggest Sunday of this National Football League season, according to industry tracker SuperLobby. But beyond its simple concept, daily-fantasy gameplay is loaded with quirks, risks and hidden pitfalls that critics say can stack the deck for veterans and lead casual players to lose out.

Read the whole story

Control burning near Tahoe City set to start

California State Parks will begin prescribed fire operations this week near Tahoe City. Operations will take place in Burton Creek State Park beginning Oct. 15 and will continue over the next several weeks as conditions allow.

Fall and winter bring cooler temperatures and precipitation, which favor prescribed burning. Each prescribed fire operation follows a prescribed fire burn plan, which considers temperature, humidity, wind, moisture of the vegetation, and conditions for the dispersal of smoke. This information is used to decide when and where to burn.

Smoke from prescribed fire operations is normal and may continue for several days after an ignition depending on the project size and environmental conditions.

Before prescribed fire operations are conducted, agencies post road signs around areas affected by prescribed fire, send email notifications and update the local fire information line at 530.543.2816.

Logger dies in accident on West Slope

A man was crushed by a log Wednesday while working in the Eldorado National Forest.

El Dorado County Sheriff’s Office received the call about 10am Oct. 14 regarding the accident off Wentworth Springs Road on the West Slope.

The name of the man and logging company he was working for have not been released.

Deputies said he sustained fatal head injuries from the accident.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Park brothers fire Hard Rock management team



Hundreds turned out for the January opening of Lake Tahoe Hard Rock; since then the crowds have been lackluster. Photo/LTN file

By Kathryn Reed

The Park brothers have fired the management team that was running Lake Tahoe Hard Rock.

Warner Hospitality, which 18 months ago was brought in to operate the remodeled-rebranded Horizon, has been a failure, **according to employees**. The Parks finally agreed.

No one from Warner, the fired firm based in Las Vegas,

returned a call.

Brothers David and Jon Park, who own the Stateline hotel-casino, deferred comment to their PR team, the Bauserman Group based in Reno. However, they were not available.

Two veteran casino executives have taken over the management reins at Lake Tahoe Hard Rock. Rick Stevens is president and COO of the Navegante Group. The company provides managerial and development services to the gaming industry. Founder Larry J. Woolf is well known on the South Shore. In 1984 he took the failing Caesars Tahoe (now MontBleu) and in one year turned it into a profitable property.

Jim Roets most recently worked in Las Vegas in gaming operations and casino marketing, but is said to be "a long time Northern Nevada gaming consultant," according to a press release.

Together the two will be responsible for getting the Hard Rock onto solid ground after what has been a shaky start from its January opening. Besides disgruntled employees, the property still doesn't have a working pool and hasn't settled with the contractor who did the $60 million in renovations. Plus, there is the guest relations piece that needs improving.

The Parks say they intend to be more involved from here on out.

High court declines appeal over Calif.'s top-two primary

By Associated Press

The Supreme Court is turning away a challenge from minor political parties in California that claim they are essentially excluded from general election ballots because of the state's top-two primary system.

The justices on Tuesday rejected an appeal from the Green and Libertarian parties, among others.

California voters approved the new primary system in 2010. The top two candidates advance to the general election, regardless of political affiliation. The idea was to fight polarization and encourage primary candidates to appeal to a wider pool of voters.

But minor parties say their candidates almost never are on the ballot in November, when millions more people vote than in the June primaries. The parties say the new system violates their constitutional right of political association.

Film about environmental activist coming to SLT

The Tahoe Area Sierra Club is bringing "Wrenched", a documentary film about Edward Abbey, to South Lake Tahoe on Nov. 6.

Abbey authored 21 books in his lifetime, including "Desert Solitaire", "The Brave Cowboy", and "The Fool's Progress". His comic novels "The Monkey Wrench Gang" and "Hayduke Lives" helped inspire a whole generation of environmental activism. A writer in the mold of Twain and Thoreau, Abbey was a larger-than-life figure as big as the West itself.

Filmmaker ML Lincoln's documentary "Wrenched" reveals how Abbey's anarchistic spirit and riotous novels influenced and helped guide the emerging environmental movement of the 1970s and '80s. Through interviews, archival footage, and re-enactments, Lincoln captures the outrage of Abbey's friends, who were the original eco-warriors.

The film will be shown at Unity at the Lake, 1195 Rufus Allen Blvd., South Lake Tahoe at 7pm. Cost is $5.

Poll: Growing majority calls drought 'extremely serious'

By Paul Rogers, San Jose Mercury News

After four years of relentless drought, more Californians are worried about water shortages than ever, despite El Niño conditions in the Pacific Ocean that are boosting hopes for a wet winter.

A Field Poll released Tuesday showed that 76 percent of registered California voters now call the state's water situation "extremely serious," up from 66 percent in May and 60 percent in April 2014.

During one of the state's other historic droughts, in 1977, when rainfall totals were similarly low, just 51 percent called the situation "extremely serious," although that drought only lasted two years.

Read the whole story