

USFS ecologist to talk about climate change

Climate change, forests, and fire: what do current trends mean for resource management in the Sierra Nevada? is the topic of a talk by Hugh Safford on Aug. 4.

Safford is a regional ecologist with the U.S. Forest Service. He will summarize trends in climatic change from the past, present, and projected future, and discuss how these interact with wildfire and other disturbances and stressors to influence terrestrial ecosystems. Focus will be principally on vegetation, plant diversity, and a few key animal species, but effects on other factors like carbon, water, and soil will also be outlined. Safford will discuss implications of these trends for resource management in the Sierra Nevada.

The free talk is sponsored by Friends of the Library. The event at the South Lake Tahoe Library, 1000 Rufus Allen Blvd., starts at 6pm.

Series of gunshots heard in S. Lake Tahoe

South Lake Tahoe police's dispatch has been busy the last two Saturdays with calls of gunshots.

What sounded like two gunshots were fired, then a pause before two more rounds went off just before 10pm July 25 in the Y area. Not much later and two more suspected gunshots went off.

“Someone said it was like a high-powered rifle,” Sgt. Travis Cabral told *Lake Tahoe News*.

The shooter was not located.

On July 18 about 6am dispatch received about 30 calls saying nine to 10 gunshots had been fired.

Officers located evidence of fireworks having been shot off from a driveway of an unoccupied residence on California Street as well as in the Sky Meadows area. Three juveniles ran from the scene, but could not be located.

People are urged to call SLTPD at 530.542.6100 if they see or hear suspicious activity. Fireworks of any kind are illegal in the Lake Tahoe Basin. It is also not legal to fire a gun in the basin unless for self-defense or with a hunting permit.

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*

Kyburz Fire burned acres reduced to 98

With the use of infrared mapping, the size of the Kyburz Fire has been recalculated to be 98 acres. It is 80 percent contained.

There are no road closures.

The fire has charred both sides of Highway 50. The south side of the fire is still in progress as there are hotspots and tree torching in the old Cleveland Fire scar. The fire does have a line around it.

The fire is expected to be fully contained this week.

Unofficial reports are that a vehicle's axle sparked the blaze.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Then and now: USFS amphitheater hosted VP



As vice president, Al Gore took time to stroll around the Taylor Creek Visitor Center and pause for an interview aside the Lake of the Sky Amphitheater stage. Photo/Lake Tahoe Historical Society

In July 1997, President Bill Clinton and Vice President Al Gore were at Lake Tahoe to launch what became the \$1.7 billion environmental improvement program. VP Gore took time to stroll around the Taylor Creek Visitor Center and pause for an interview aside the Lake of the Sky Amphitheater stage.



Lake of the Sky Amphitheater
on the South Shore.
Photo/Bill Kingman

The amphitheater, which is owned and operated by the U.S. Forest Service, was remodeled about 10 years later. The single 1997 stage was in the area between the twin structures. Lake Tahoe Community College has had commencement ceremonies at this site.

– *Bill Kingman*

Sod removal experience not pleasant



Kathryn Reed attempts to cut the sod at her house in South Lake Tahoe.
Photo/Susan Wood

Publisher's note: *This is one in a random series of stories about what it's like to go through the South Tahoe Public Utility District turf buyback program.*

By Kathryn Reed

It took three tiny shovel indentations into the yard to be convinced this was not the route to remove dead grass. I needed a sod cutter.

Before this summer I didn't know what a sod cutter was let alone that they exist. I'll be fine if I never cross paths with one again. For anyone who has operated a rototiller or aerator, it's along those lines. The difference is the job isn't done once the sod is cut.

The sod has to be removed. It rolls up. But the rolls were too dang heavy for me to move so I got the shovel out and chopped them into sections. Each segment was about as big as a baseball base.

I managed to cut $3\frac{1}{2}$ lines last Saturday. Then a part fell off. Ahern's sent a guy up from Gardnerville to fix it. But by this time several hours had passed and I needed to move on to other things. Saturday was supposed to be my day for yard work. After all, the massage was scheduled for the next day in

anticipation of not knowing if I'd be able to lift my arms. Dead grass and dirt are not light.



Note: *If renting from Ahern's, do so late afternoon on a Friday to get the equipment for two days for the price of one. This is because the store isn't open on the weekend. And when calling other places, be wary of them saying they have the device because they may not.*

While waiting for the repairman to arrive, I took out the sod and put it in the area where the garbage company picks up trash. I was wishing I had borrowed my friend's Fit-Bit so I'd know how many steps this entailed.

Suffice it to say it was not a good day; it was not a productive day. I was hot, sweaty and barely made a dent into the project. Suddenly, 804-square-feet felt like it might as well have been AT&T ballpark. I was striking out.

I already had about the most ugly front yard on the street. I didn't realize splotchy lines of dirt could make it look even worse.

Stakes mark where the sprinklers are. Spray paint outlined where I wanted the path.

I had tried sketching what I wanted. That didn't go so well either. I can't even draw stick figures so there was no way this part was going to resemble something comprehensible. I'll need to try again because of the requirements with the South Tahoe Public Utility District turf buyback program is to provide a drawing.

The best part of this endeavor was meeting Brian Hirdman on Friday afternoon at the rental place. (We'd actually met before for a story but at the time I couldn't recall how I knew him.) He was there renting a sod cutter, too. He asked what I was doing, and said he did sod removal and landscaping for a living. I gave him my card and said if he was serious about helping, to call.

He called

Opinion: Californians suckers for superheroes

By Joe Mathews

With Superman, Spiderman, and Batman all living in New York (or its fictional doppelgangers), Californians have failed to grapple with our own superhero problem: we've become dangerously dependent on them.

This peril is most obvious in Hollywood. The film industry could collapse if the public gets tired of superheroes – two

dozen such films, most with huge budgets, are scheduled over the next five years.



Joe Mathews

But California's problem goes beyond the cinematic glut. Superheroes – and our desire to await one to save the day – have taken over our culture, our industry, our politics, and our schools.

You can see the phenomenon in Silicon Valley, where the success of start-ups too often depends on the blessing of elite superhero investors, and where too much focus is devoted to searching for the next Mark Zuckerberg or Steve Jobs. Nonprofit advocacy interests nearly all seek a superhero celebrity spokesperson and funder. And our politics are now driven more by individual superheroes than coherent political parties or associations.

We chose our last two governors on superhero logic; Arnold Schwarzenegger was supposed to transfer his cinematic superpowers to Sacramento, and Jerry Brown (himself a sequel) was sold to us as a superhero wizard (bloggers call him Gandalf, like the “Lord of the Rings” character) capable of conjuring a way through the state's thorny budget messes. Any ambitious change in California now requires expensive ballot initiatives, which creates a need for other superheroes (or supervillains, depending on your politics) like Tom Steyer, Charles Munger Jr., or the Koch brothers to provide the cash to lift very heavy things.

I may be extra sensitive to superhero-centrism, as the father

of three young boys. This month, my 6-year-old's summer camp and my 4-year-old's preschool both had superhero weeks. The latter produced a brand new superhero for California's pantheon: Super King, who shoots fire and ice, fights "bad kings," and won't clean up his room after his adventures.

Why do superheroes have such a hold over us? The director of my son's preschool, in an email to parents, argued that "there is something innate in a 3- and 4-year-old that craves power" and so the preschool "will be building on this innate need to control things by tying in superheroes to experiments with science and projects to broaden their view of the world and explore various artistic ways to channel these needs."

In California, it's easy to see how that craving for power extends beyond the preschool set. In San Diego for a reporting trip that coincided with Comic-Con, I rode the San Diego trolley with Batman and three ninjas (I've never felt so safe on public transit). In San Mateo earlier this year, I happened upon Draper University of Heroes, a residential program to train entrepreneurial superheroes that was founded by venture capitalist Tim Draper, best known for his plan to divide California into six states.

The school's theory: entrepreneurs must think of themselves as superheroes in order to take bold risks. Students at Draper University even take a Superhero Pledge that includes an Evangelism Clause ("I will help prepare the next generation of Superheroes").

This hunger for superheroes in business reflects concern about the slowing pace of innovation. Why are our companies giving us more texting apps instead of big new technologies?

Perhaps that's why we're drawn to Elon Musk, the Space X founder and Tesla CEO, who is seeking superheroic advances in space flight, electric cars, and batteries. Musk, although often mentioned as an inspiration for Robert Downey Jr.'s

portrayal of Iron Man, is no superhero, as Ashlee Vance's bestselling new biography makes clear. Musk is merely a gifted leader of teams of engineers determined to make new things. In Vance's account, Musk's companies get into trouble (and lose key employees) because of resentments bred by Musk's unreasonable demands for superhero-level devotion to work, and his need to be portrayed in the media as a superhero deserving all credit.

Our devotion to superheroes is understandable, given our collective sense of powerlessness in an age of political gridlock and economic inequality. But superhero devotion is a form of delay, a way of avoiding the inconvenient truth that progress, in any realm, requires bringing many different people together behind a common goal.

And superhero dependency feels like desperation. It's instructive that "Superhero" – the hit from L.A. rock band Jane's Addiction that became the theme song of TV's "Entourage" – is really an expression of desperate, unrequited love.

Be a superhero if you want. But do it someplace else.

Joe Mathews is California and innovation editor for Zócalo Public Square, for which he writes the Connecting California column. He wrote this for Thinking L.A., a partnership of UCLA and Zócalo Public Square.

Bay Area dirt bike rider

missing in EDC

A Bay Area man who last seen on the West Slope of El Dorado County has been missing since July 17.

Edward Cavanaugh, 46, was riding his blue Yamaha YZ 250 in the Rock Creek trail system. He was riding with someone else at the time. Cavanaugh was reportedly going to use the trail system to return to a residence he owns in the area. This trail is in the Georgetown Divide area between the towns of Mosquito and Garden Valley.

Search efforts began Friday, and include more than 50 search and rescue volunteers from El Dorado, Placer, Yolo, Alpine and Stanislaus counties. Search crews are using off road vehicles, foot teams, and a CHP helicopter.

He was last seen wearing Fox brand dirt bike riding clothing and a black helmet.

Anyone with information is asked to El Dorado County Sheriff's Office at 530.621.6600.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

2 Tahoe bears trapped, released

Two bears trapped in Lake Tahoe on Friday have since been released.

A 3-year-old, 175-pound bear was caught in Stateline. He was released in the Kingsbury Grade area on July 25. The 8-year-

old Incline Village bear weighing 300 pounds was relocated to the Sweetwater Mountains southeast of Gardnerville.

Nevada Division of Wildlife is expecting a busy summer and fall with bear activity as the animals search for food – which in populated areas comes in the form of trash.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Kyburz Fire 75% contained; Hwy. 50 reopening

Updated 8:37pm:

Highway 50 is expected to reopen Saturday night at 9:30 to unrestricted traffic.

The Kyburz Fire is 75 percent contained and remains at 200 acres.

PG&E re-energized the power lines this evening.

Boating may resume at Ice House Reservoir.

Two small fires at Blue Lakes and at Cody Lake are being handled by crews originally assigned to the Kyburz Fire.

The Lowell Fire is a new fire that started Saturday afternoon near Colfax, Alta and Gold Run north of Interstate 80. The National Weather Service is predicting that the smoke will reach Truckee tonight.

Officials anticipate the Kyburz Fire burning in the American River canyon will be fully contained by July 30.

The wildland fire that started July 23, reportedly when a vehicle's axle hit the pavement and sparked, continues to burn on both sides of Highway 50.

There has been no change in acres burned – 200 – or containment – 30 percent.

More than 600 people are working the fire, which is burning in steep terrain.

Highway 50 is open with restrictions.

Sand Flat campground east to Strawberry has a voluntary evacuation order.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Free landscaping workshops in Lake Tahoe

South Tahoe PUD and the Tahoe Resource Conservation District are hosting several free landscaping workshops over the coming weeks. All workshops are open to the public.

RSVP to jcressy@tahoercd.org or 530.543.1501, ext. 107.

The workshops are:

- Irrigation Controllers: Timing is Everything
July 28, 5:30-7:30pm at the South Lake Tahoe Library,
1000 Rufus Allen Blvd., South Lake Tahoe
- IrrigationControllers: Timing is Everything

July 29, 5:30-7:30 pm, Tahoe City PUD, 221 Fairway Drive, Tahoe City

- Understanding & Implementing Micro-irrigation

Aug. 4, 5:30-7:30pm, South Tahoe PUD, 1275 Meadow Crest Drive, South Lake Tahoe

- Understanding & Implementing Micro-irrigation

Aug. 5, 5:30-7:30 pm, North Tahoe Event Center, 8318 N. Lake Blvd., Kings Beach

- Native and Climate Appropriate Plants for the Lands

Aug. 22, 9am-noon, Lake Tahoe Community College, Room B103, South Lake Tahoe

- Tree Care in Time of Drought

Sept. 1, 5:30-7:30pm, South Lake Tahoe Library

- Converting Lawn to a Water Wise Landscape the Easy Way

Sept. 12, 9am-1pm, Lake Tahoe Community College.