

Rain brings flooding concerns in Tahoe, Truckee



South Lake Tahoe crews assess the Whole Foods project site on March 21.

Photo/LTN

By Lake Tahoe News

The National Weather Service in Reno has issued a flood warning for the greater Lake Tahoe area, including South Lake Tahoe, Truckee, Stateline and Incline Village. The warning is in effect through late Thursday.

“Right now the city is looking good. We have cut snow berms in known zones and have a team clearing drains and pipe in low areas. We do not anticipate river or creek flooding, just the normal low zones and micro areas,” Jim Marino, South Lake Tahoe deputy public works director, told *Lake Tahoe News*.

According to the Weather Service, “A warm and wet winter storm with a deep tap of sub-tropical moisture will bring moderate to heavy rain to areas below 7,500 feet tonight and early Thursday. The snow levels fall to 7,000 feet Thursday, but the moderate to heavy rain continues into Thursday evening. Rainfall amounts of up to 3 inches are possible below 7,000

feet around the Tahoe basin.”

The added problem is this is rain on snow, which means all that snow is being turned into water. As this happens, creeks, rivers and streams start to rise even faster.

Jason Burke, the storm water manager for the city, and another official were at the Whole Foods site at Highway 50 and Ski Run Boulevard the morning of March 21. Burke told *LTN* everything there is holding up, with the bulk of the water being clear – which is a good thing.

City officials will be talking to Tahoe Regional Planning Agency officials and other regulatory agencies to brief them on how things are working.

Infrastructure was put in last summer/fall in this area to help with what is a known area for flooding. A significant part of the project is environmental improvements.

City crews will also be out clearing drains and pipes to ensure water flows where it should.

In low lying areas and places with poor drainage sump pumps are at work.

Sand bags are available for residents.

The rain is expected to turn to snow later on Wednesday, with a winter storm warning issued from 5pm March 21 through 5am Friday. The Weather Service says 2 to 3 feet could fall above 7,500 feet, with localized amounts up to 4 feet near the Sierra Crest.

Dinner-dance fundraiser to benefit veterans

The second annual Nowruz “New Year” Celebration Feast to benefit Veterans Healing Camp will be March 27 from 5-10pm at the Casino Fandango Buffet Banquet Room in Carson City.

This casual fundraiser features food, music, dancing, silent auction and door prize.

Nowruz is the ancient Persian “New Year” celebrated since 1700 B.C. that occurs on the first day of spring at the vernal equinox.

The celebration begins at 5pm with fun, fellowship and information about Veterans Healing Camp, buffet dinner feast starts at 6pm. The celebration continues with live music and dancing in the banquet room with Randy Ide. There will also be a silent auction featuring valuable donated prizes from local businesses and a wonderful door prize drawing.

Tickets are \$40 and \$10 for children. Tickets are available at the Casino Fandango cashier cage or by contacting Shahla Fadaie at 775.781.2394.

Snippets about Lake Tahoe

- Vicki Moore has resigned as Douglas County chief financial officer effective March 20. She started the job April 24, 2017.

- The Tahoe Truckee Earth Day Festival at the Village at Squaw Valley will be April 21 from 11am-5pm.

- Author and photographer Tim Palmer will present a free slideshow on the 50th year anniversary of the Wild and Science Act on April 27 from 10am-noon. He will be at Sierra Nevada College in Incline Village, room 139/141.

- Alborosie & Shengen Clan, plus JRas & The Higher Elevation and Two Peace with disc jockey Slee & Conscious Cru will be at Blu Nightclub at MontBleu in Stateline on April 20. Doors open at 9pm. Must be at least 21 to attend. Tickets are \$25.

- Donny and Marie Osmond will be at Harveys on Aug. 24 at 7:30pm. Tickets range from \$59.58-\$126.02.

Inland waters expert to give talk in Incline

Professor Geoff Schladow of the Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering at Sierra Nevada College will give a talk at the Incline Village school on March 28.

He was appointed founding director of the UC Davis Tahoe Environmental Research Center in August 2004. As director of the largest limnological (the study of inland waters) facility west of the Great Lakes, he is the point person for UC Davis research, teaching, and outreach agenda at Lake Tahoe.

Schladow is an expert in the areas of environmental fluid mechanics, water quality modeling, and the dynamics of inland waters. He is developing computer models to link streamflow measurements with meteorological and other remote-sensor information to provide Tahoe decision-makers new management tools.

The talk is free and open to the public. It will be in room TCES 139/141 from 11:45am-12:45pm.

Chateau project on track to be completed

By Kathryn Reed

In less than four years it's possible the much maligned Chateau project in South Lake Tahoe will be completely built out with a hotel that includes a rooftop pool, condos that come with another pool, a high-end bowling alley where the convention center once was planned, outdoor movie theater showing family-friendly films, restaurants and retail.

Developers for the site were before the South Lake Tahoe City Council on Tuesday requesting 15,770 square feet of commercial floor area to help bring the project to fruition. After much discussion, the council agreed to set aside the CFA for the project with the caveat that if the project isn't developed, the CFA returns to the city.

CFA is something the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency came up with years ago as a way to curtail development. Instead these commodities just escalate the price of a project.

Midkiff and Associates, the local planners representing the developers, contend the CFA was part of earlier deals and that there should be no charge today because it was already promised for this project. While the city had no proof one way or the other, staff and electeds relied on what was presented and gave the CFA to the project.

Now being called the Resort at Tahoe, the plan is for a \$500 million infusion of cash into South Lake Tahoe. The goal is to have a second village on the other side of Highway 50 near the state line.

Developers say the project will bring in \$13 million a year in transient occupancy tax and \$1.4 million in sales tax. The hotel tax is based on 14 percent TOT on hotel rooms that could go for \$550 a night, a one-bedroom condo for \$850/night and possibly \$2,500/night for a four-bedroom condo. They are expecting to be priced competitively with neighboring Zalanta.

"The project is ready to start the first phase this summer. We are intending to submit to design review to staff in the next week or two," Gary Midkiff with Midkiff and Associates told the council March 20. This would be 16 units above the current retail.

According to the developer, the preliminary parking analysis calls for there to be enough parking already planned to accommodate what they want to do.

This is surprising considering when the project was first approved the plan was to use casino parking lots to handle overflow from the site. It's a much different world today with the Stateline casinos charging for parking at various times and no longer wanting non-patrons leaving their vehicles there.

Planning consultant Lyn Barnett was at the meeting representing neighboring Stardust hotel. He said that property has about 50 vehicles a year towed because they've parked there illegally. He is worried parking will just get worse with more development.

"Until there is an application and some type of analysis of the application, it's hard to know the impact on neighbors in the area," Barnett said.

That's one of the unusual things about what transpired on Tuesday. This item was brought to the council just days after being requested by the planner and there was no application. This is practically unheard of in the planning world, especially in the Lake Tahoe Basin.

Barnett was with the TRPA as a planner when the two amendments were made to the operating agreement for the Chateau project.

"We have concerns about the 1998 document even being valid. I think it's stale. We have a new Regional Plan, a new city General Plan, we have a community plan that replaces an area plan," Barnett said. "There should be a scoping for an environmental document if there is a third addendum."

The developers believe because they have a valid building permit they can go forward without further review even though changes are being made to the project.

When the project was first approved it was to include two hotels, a convention center, retail and open space. The city was going to be the operator of the center and take care of the common areas. Since the original developer filed for bankruptcy the city no longer has a financial stake other than collecting taxes.

But the city does have the responsibility to ensure the project conforms to approved permits, to ensure further analysis is not required, and to insist financing is in place before construction permits are issued.

Opinion: All dogs are emotional support animals

By Wes Siler, Outside

A few years ago, I hit rock bottom. I was pushed out of the business I'd spent seven years building by someone I once considered a friend. Making matters much worse, I badly injured myself in a motorcycle crash, and it took me three months of hard work to be able to walk again. The worst part, though, was that losing my business meant that I'd lost my health insurance.

On top of the never-ending pain, and watching my life's work swirl into the toilet, I was dirt broke, and badly in debt with medical bills. Friends took it on themselves to pay my rent and feed me, which was incredibly generous of them, but man did that screw with my sense of self worth. All of this coming at once was too much—I couldn't see a way out. But then I adopted a dog. Wiley saved my life.

Read the whole story

Why Americans are unhappier than ever

By George Ward, The Conversation

March 20 is International Day of Happiness and, as they've done every year, the United Nations has published the World Happiness Report. The U.S. ranks 18th among the world's countries, with an average life satisfaction of around 6.88 on

a scale of 10.

While that may be relatively near the top, America's happiness figures have actually declined every year since the reports began in 2012, and this year's are the lowest yet. The question, then, is whether the government has a role to play in improving the happiness of its citizens. And if so, how might policymakers go about it?

Fortunately, a growing body of work by economists and psychologists can give governments access to the kind of data that can inform the way they think about policy and happiness.

In our new book, "The Origins of Happiness: The Science of Well-Being Over the Life Course," my colleagues and I provide a systematic account of what makes for a satisfying life.

The role of government

The idea that government ought to focus attention on the well-being of its citizens goes back centuries. Thomas Jefferson himself said, "The care of human life and happiness ... is the only legitimate object of good government."

Historically, this has meant increasing economic productivity and growth to increase personal happiness. But as the data suggest, and many countries are beginning to realize, this isn't likely to be sufficient. As a result, many governments around the world are now taking steps to broaden their policy goals beyond GDP.

This is not just a question of leaders being benevolent. Electoral data suggests that governments of populations that are unhappy do not tend to stay in power very long.

But how can governments change the way their citizens feel? Ultimately, changes cannot be made without good data. If governments are going to use well-being as a serious measure of success and progress, they need solid evidence of what lies

behind people's happiness and misery.

To make rational decisions about where to spend finite public funds, they need to know how potential policy changes will affect people's well-being – and at what cost. Without these numbers, governments risk looking for happiness in all the wrong places.

Causes of happiness and misery

For “The Origins of Happiness,” my colleagues and I analyzed a large amount of survey data from around the developed world in order to document what determines life satisfaction over the life course.

We found that income plays an important role in determining happiness – but it's not as significant as people might think or expect. Highly important are social relationships, be they at home, in the workplace or in the community.

That suggests that, to boost happiness in America, policymakers should look to counter adverse trends in inequality, the erosion of social trust and increasing isolation.

Our research finds that mental illness explains more of the variation in happiness than physical illness. In the U.S., mental health problems, including depression and anxiety, are a major cause of suffering. Yet many can be treated, for example through evidence-based psychological therapy. Public health spending on mental illness is therefore not a luxury, but a necessity.

In fact, our calculations in the book suggest that mental health treatment usually turns out to be cost-neutral, given the large benefits that alleviating mental health problems brings in terms of lower physical healthcare costs, absenteeism and crime, as well as increased productivity.

Much of increasing happiness in adults begins with addressing the needs of children. We found that schools – and even individual teachers – have just as large an effect on the happiness of children as do their families. So schools and governments can and should do a great deal more to ensure that they teach the kind of key life skills and resilience that foster happiness, both in childhood and right through into adulthood.

Not surprisingly, the world of work has a huge influence on our happiness as adults, providing not only income but also important social interactions as well as routine and purpose. The leading drivers of a satisfying work life include job autonomy, work-life balance and the quality of social interactions with coworkers and managers.

Ultimately, a great deal more can be done to make work more satisfying and enjoyable. Again, the evidence suggests this is not a luxury, but can make for a more profitable business environment.

Policymakers now need a host of carefully controlled experimental trials of particular policies in order to obtain precise estimates of their effects on happiness – which can then be compared with their financial costs. And although a great deal remains to be done, the Enlightenment ideal of focusing government attention onto making life satisfying and enjoyable is slowly becoming an ever more viable reality.

George Ward is a doctorate student at Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Free sand bags available in Tahoe-Truckee

With heavy rain and snow in the forecast for Wednesday and Thursday, South Lake Tahoe and Truckee officials are reminding residents where they can get sand bags.

The snow level is expected to be at 7,500 feet and above.

In South Lake Tahoe bags are available at the city's public works yard at 1160 Rufus Allen Blvd. as well as fire station No. 3 located at 2101 Lake Tahoe Blvd.

To pick up sand bags, proceed through the gate at 1160 Rufus Allen Blvd. and drive to the back of the lot. At the back of the lot is a large sand mound, shovels and bags. Residents fill their own bags and transport back to their own residence.

Truckee provides self-service sand bag stations after 5pm at Truckee Fire Protection District Station No. 92 at 11473 Donner Pass Road and at the U.S. Forest Service parking lot at 10811 Stockrest Springs Road off Donner Pass Road.

Nev. woman sues, fears missing horse could be slaughtered

By Scott Sonner, AP

A Nevada woman who fears her missing horse could end up at the

slaughterhouse has joined a lawsuit challenging state plans to transfer ownership of thousands of free-roaming mustangs to private hands

Lawyers for the California-based American Wild Horse Campaign and Cynthia Ashe of Silver Springs filed the lawsuit Monday in state court in Carson City seeking an injunction to block what they say would be “a giveaway of a valuable and cherished Nevada asset.”

The lawsuit accuses Nevada’s Department of Agriculture of breaching a contract that called for the wild horse group to manage the nearly 3,000 mustangs in the Virginia Range east and south of Reno through 2020 in a humane manner under a joint agreement emphasizing fertility control.

Read the whole story

SLT council pushes pot discussion back 1 week

By Kathryn Reed

The recreational marijuana item on Tuesday’s South Lake Tahoe City Council agenda was a bit of a cluster.

It was initially on the agenda as one sentence without any supporting material. Two presentations were added to the city’s website on March 20, however the council and public had no opportunity to review the documents.

One presentation is from the Development Services Department. It includes information from public safety.

The other document that arrived after the meeting started included 95 questions the council members were expected to answer without being given time to review them.

Councilmember Brooke Laine at the start of Tuesday's meeting questioned how this item ever got on the agenda without supporting material. The agenda item said possible action, aka a vote, could be taken. But legally that could not have happened based on the public not being given enough information to know what was being voted on. Direction would have been possible.

Interim City Attorney Nira Doherty defended how it was agendaized, but said it was highly unusual.

At 3:20pm, when it came time for the item to be discussed, acting City Manager Jeff Meston said it could take three hours to hear the item. He enlightened everyone about all the questions that needed to be answered.

Councilmember Jason Collin suggested the questions be sent to the electeds through something like Survey Monkey so they could be answered and collated. However, doing so might be deemed a serial meeting and would therefore be a violation of the Brown Act.

The council decided to move the item to March 27 at 4pm; it is designed to be the only issue that will be on the agenda that day.