

Regional trail advocates tout collaboration

By Kathryn Reed

RENO – Being on *Outside* magazine's top 10 list when it comes to trails. It's a goal trail advocates in the region are striving for.

More than 50 people – trail builders, land owners, nonprofits, government agencies, volunteers, contractors, sporting good store managers, users and others – attended an all-day summit last week at Bartley Ranch Regional Park to flush out how to be better at what they do. What they are doing is building trails and making a network that connects. This was the second annual Eastern Sierra/Tahoe Trails Summit.

"We want a regional trails plan from Markleeville to Plumas County. We want to have common trail standards," Cheryl Surface, with Washoe County Regional Parks and Open Space, said.

Learning from one another, networking and finding common ground were some of the goals that were accomplished.

It was acknowledged that while trails can be an economic driver in terms of bringing in tourists, increasing property values and cutting down on health care expenses, those controlling the purse strings and issuing the permits are not always buying into those things.

While trails may bring money, they cost big bucks to build and maintain. That is why partnerships were stressed.

Garrett Villanueva, trail planning expert with the Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit, and Clay Grubb, trail builder with the Tahoe Rim Trail Association, talked about their unique

relationship.

“You need to establish relevancy with the agency,” Villanueva said. It’s not enough to identify a problem or have an idea. Have a solution or way to implement the idea is a must.

Grubb said, “If you can take on the maintenance, all of a sudden you are relevant.”

Every trail that gets built then must be maintained. That means someone’s budget has a new ongoing expense. The windstorms this last winter had crews contending with blow downs almost every place where trees grow. While volunteers can do some of the work, it is the landowner – usually a government agency – that at a minimum for legal reasons must oversee the work gets done.

More than one speaker talked of the need to find someone in the agency to be a champion for the cause. And once that person is identified, don’t go over their head, be appreciative and be patient. Government can work at glacial speed because there is a process.

Persistence is key, as is understanding the agency has constraints that may not be obvious.

So often a trail crosses land that has multiple owners who don’t all have the same interests, time schedule or rules that must be followed.

“We as an agency get all the responsibility, but none of the credit,” Villanueva said. The nonprofit trail group usually is touted as the one that made everything come together.

Villanueva pointed out the lack of trail etiquette in the Lake Tahoe and surrounding area, especially compared to Colorado and Utah.

“We need to start behaving better. It’s about sharing the trail. We are all out there for the same reasons,” he said.

Grubb said as a trail builder it's important to think of all the users and not just a group's special interest. This means paying attention to site lines and passing points.

Michael Ward, a consultant with the Eastern Sierra Recreation Collaborative, spoke about how his group won over the Forest Service after receiving a chilly reception. The Inyo National Forest was working on its Forest Plan and Ward's group only wanted to address recreation.

"Shared values" was the thrust of Ward's group. It brought people together. He said having people participate in activities to bring their beliefs to the forefront instead of just talking at them or having advocates write comments helped spur collaboration and build consensus.

Dan Morris with the Carson Ranger District of the USFS said the problem he has is the demand for trails outweighs the opportunities. What allowed his office to build 50 miles of trails in the last five years are partnerships with groups.

Funding is his biggest challenge. Today there is no money for new trails.

"We have to get creative," Morris said. This means the nonprofits are likely the ones to come up with the funding and the Forest Service provides the guidance.

Opinion: EDC uses seniors to cut budget

By Larry Weitzman

"We've got major budget issues. I'd feel much better getting

all those other things to a committee and make sure we get multiple minds on this and develop a plan, a prioritized plan and the 15-16 (fiscal year budget) deficit is the target. And I understand it. I have seen deficits all my career tied to the county. But we have to be very real about it and we have to start addressing it now. Not six months from now, not a month from now. Now," said Brian Veerkamp, El Dorado County District III supervisor.

That statement took place at 5:40pm at the Sept. 23, 2014, meeting of the El Dorado County Board of Supervisors during a discussion of the \$100 million plus deficit facing EDC over the next five years.



Larry Weitzman

In light of that, the BOS created an ad hoc budget committee comprising Veerkamp, Supervisor Shiva Frentzen, and other county officials including Laura Schwartz, County Auditor Joe Harn and CAO Pamela Knorr, plus two members of the public and other interested parties from the public. What was supposed to be a committee to recommend actual budget cuts and methods to arrive at those cuts turned into a budget policy forum.

Paul Freeman, a retired manufacturing manager, applied for the job as a public member on the basis of the published notice which clearly described the function of the committee as follows: "This committee will provide recommendations to the BOS regarding funding sources and expenditures of funds."

In the seven months since the committee formation not one spending cut recommendation has been made. Not even one

analysis of what caused the excess spending was initiated. Meanwhile, the county spent \$10 million of savings. Based on county revenue, it spent \$10 million more than it took in and that \$1.3 million monthly bleed continues as I write this column.

What the committee did produce in those half a dozen or more meetings was a 10-point page and a half draft memo of government speak entitled El Dorado County Draft Budget Policies. That idea occurred early on in the process and was directed by Knorr, the county CAO, who ended up missing the final meetings. And this Jan 12 ad hoc budget committee occurred six days after Knorr told the BOS at a regular meeting of the BOS, "Your real need is to stop spending." It looks like she didn't mean it. The county is burning through cash like a battleship of drunken sailors who haven't set foot on land in nine months. And Knorr wants to write a memo of government speak. When any suggestion or discussion of a budget cut was attempted it was shoved aside. Even Supervisor Frentzen who so desperately wanted to analyze the last three years of county hiring was totally shut out by Veerkamp and the CAO.

Freeman was disappointed, to say the least, and has become fearful for the taxpayers of this county, especially seniors. The CAO fiddles, the BOS majority (i.e. excluding Ron Mikulaco and Frentzen), are enjoying the music while EDC bank accounts burn to the ground.

Making matters worse, at the last ad hoc committee meeting where Veerkamp served as de facto chairman, he remarked that that he felt that the committee was assembled to develop budget policies to be followed in the future and he essentially reaffirmed that during the last BOS meeting. Would that qualify Veerkamp as a flip-flopper or just a budget wimp? "I will gladly pay you tomorrow for a hamburger today."

Why is all this important? Fast forward to the special BOS

budget meeting of April 15. The purpose was to work on the budget. Fifteen minutes before the meeting Knorr dropped a 39-page budget package on the supervisors, who had no chance to read or study it. It turns out Knorr has a history of preparing documents and not giving them to a BOS until just before the meeting. Without time and study (and it would take a day to absorb these 39 pages), Knorr knows the BOS will not be up to speed and not understand what she is proposing, Supervisor Frentzen made a remark to that effect. It's difficult to ask questions if you don't understand the material. And nowhere in this document are there credible spending cuts to solve the budget problem which was caused by excess hiring and spending over the last three years. The 39 pages were mostly a government-speak PowerPoint.

However, in the 39 pages are significant cuts to senior programs which were characterized by Supervisor Veerkamp as "chump change" and would save EDC almost no money, in the tens of thousands of dollars instead of the necessary \$10 million to \$20 million. For instance, Knorr wants to save \$13,200 and cancel the highly beneficial Perks Court program. Knorr wants to eliminate Senior Day Care and Knorr wants to eliminate the senior meals programs, programs that use a few thousand dollars of EDC seed money with most of the costs picked up by volunteers and in-kind donations. These programs aren't solely about food, but keeping seniors active, healthy and participating in society. It's those programs that will suffer under the Knorr scalpel. That should be considered ineffective elective surgery. Medical malpractice.

Knorr in her government-speak style says she is going to cut two positions in her office. But these are vacant positions upon which no money is spent, therefore the savings are fictitious. Yet Knorr is maintaining almost all of the humongous growth of the CAO's office which on new analysts alone we spend almost \$2 million annually. None of those analysts even existed two and a half years ago when the county

ran just fine with a small surplus. It was part of the massive new hiring (exacerbated by huge raises) of former CAO Terri Daly that caused this budget debacle. The only significant change in county spending is county salary and benefits that have grown by \$38 million over the last two years, almost the exact amount of the growing budget deficit that started two years ago. Revenues and other county expenses have remained reasonably constant.

At the April 28 BOS meeting Supervisors Frentzen and Mikulaco appeared upset with the budget process especially when CAO Knorr tried to usurp the BOS power by reciting EDC County Charter section 304C which says the CAO is to "recommend an annual budget" Knorr continued by saying, "I do the budget and you get to modify it." She went on to say effectively she doesn't have to listen to the ad hoc budget committee effectively pooh-poohing its importance and use. County counsel went on to back Knorr, saying that this should be the process (Knorr's interpretation) and it is in compliance with the EDC Charter and that's the governance level of the structure. They all forgot a more important Charter provision about listening to what the BOS has to say regarding following their directions and that is section 202 (a) (2) which says, "The BOS shall: (2) Appoint or remove the CAO. "

Something else was said by Veerkamp that was incorrect was when he said Mikulaco and he share some responsibility for this budget problem (as it happened last year). Absolutely incorrect. Both Supervisors Mikulaco and Frentzen voted against the current budget. It was Veerkamp, Norma Santiago and Ron Briggs who voted for it.

Larry Weitzman is a resident of Rescue.

Time to start doing more things alone

By Roberto A. Ferdman, Washington Post

On any given Friday night, bars, restaurants and movie theaters tend to fill up with people spending time with friends, lovers, and family. But when the weekend comes, those who find themselves on their own are likelier to be found on the couch, at home, doing something in private.

There's nothing particularly strange here. But maybe we're missing out when we automatically choose to stay in when we don't have social plans.

"People decide to not do things all the time just because they're alone," said Rebecca Ratner, a professor of marketing at the Robert H. Smith School of Business, who has spent almost half a decade studying why people are so reluctant to have fun on their own and how it may lead to, well, less fun overall. "But the thing is, they would probably be happier going out and doing something."

Ratner has a new study titled *Inhibited from Bowling Alone*, a nod to Robert Putnam's book about Americans' waning participation in group activities, that's set to publish in the *Journal of Consumer Research* in August.

Read the whole story

Drought could change fish on Calif. dinner plates

By Edward Ortiz, Sacramento Bee

At Ken Beer's fish ranch, thousands of white sturgeon and catfish thrash in round tanks or in long concrete raceways.

Beer's 320-acre operation, called The Fishery, supplies live fish to markets and restaurants in the Sacramento region. It depends on a supply of cool water. If water temperatures are too warm, cool-water fish such as sturgeon can't survive.

Luckily for Beer, he can tap groundwater from wells on his property to keep his business going. But some other fish farms can't. California's multiyear drought is changing the state's aquaculture industry. Experts say it eventually could alter the species that wind up being sold in the state's fish markets, farmers markets and in restaurants that buy fish directly from growers.

Read the whole story

Snippets about Lake Tahoe



• Boatbound, a boat rental marketplace, is now in Lake Tahoe. Boat owners can lend their boats to people for a price. Owners in Homewood, Tahoe Keys and Meeks Bay have signed up. For more info, go online. *Lake Tahoe News* readers may use the promo coupon code **TAHOE** for \$50 off any rental.

- Clear Creek Tahoe in Carson City was recently recognized by *Golfweek* magazine as the No. 18 Best Residential Course in America.
 - Ed Wilson, 59, of Placerville has been appointed assistant director of public affairs at the California Department of Water Resources.
 - For the fifth year in a row, Craig Zager of Coldwell Banker Select in Zephyr Cove has achieved the status of No. 1 producing sales agent in Nevada for Coldwell Banker.
 - The first book in their “Weird” trilogy, “Weird Reno” is a collection of curiosities researched from numerous media sources from the mid-1800s to the early 21st century. La Nae and La Ferry will give talk May 9 from 10-11am about the book, which will be available for purchase at a discounted price. Bring a comfortable lawn chair to Dangberg Home Ranch Historic Park, 1450 Highway 88 Minden.
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Boomers, stock market boost vacation home market

By Marilyn Much, Investor's Business Daily

Vacation-home demand has been on a steady climb as a strong stock market, low interest rates and tempting deals have prompted high-end households to spend more freely on second residences and summer getaways.

The push comes as more high-net-worth buyers have opted to put some of the earnings they've gained from a rising stock market

into second homes in spots that support a more leisure lifestyle.

Contributing to the increased demand are baby boomers home shopping for a place to vacation now, and retire to later.

Real estate brokers in resort locales from Massachusetts' Cape Cod to Nevada's Lake Tahoe report brisk second-home buying activity during the year's first quarter.

Read the whole story

Placer County working on Tahoe parking plan

Placer County will have a public workshop May 11 to discuss the results of a recently-completed parking study of the Kings Beach and Tahoe City business districts.

The meeting will be from 5:30-7pm at the Tahoe City Public Utility District offices, 221 Fairway Drive in Tahoe City.

The goal of the workshop is to provide an overview of existing parking capacity and utilization, the results of a review of the county's current parking standards and requirements, and an examination of potential parking programs such as an in-lieu fee parking program. An in-lieu program would allow developers to meet some or all of their parking requirements by paying fees, rather than providing parking on-site. Fee revenue would be used by the county for public parking.

In the study, LSC Transportation Consultants Inc. developed recommendations to help the county and area stakeholders formulate a comprehensive plan that best meets the parking and

mobility needs of Kings Beach and Tahoe City.

Placer County sees the study as the first step toward developing a plan that:

- Provides easier and more convenient access to parking
- Better supports shopping districts
- Reduces greenhouse gas emissions caused by cars circling for parking spaces.

The parking study document is online.

Time alcohol consumption to not impact workouts

By Amanda MacMillan, Outside

You don't have to give up drinking in moderation before a big race. That said, if you choose to drink, do so in amounts and at times that least impact your performance.

For athletes who enjoy alcohol in moderation, it's hard to say how much of a difference, if any, they'll notice by giving it up entirely.

That's because not much has been studied on the long-term effects of moderate drinking versus teetotaling on performance.

"This is a very difficult and specific question," says Matthew Barnes, a professor of sport and medicine, and a prominent researcher on alcohol and exercise at New Zealand's Massey University. "Most alcohol research, including my own, has looked at acute responses to alcohol, either before or after

exercise.”

In other words, we know that drinking in the hours prior to a workout is a bad idea—reduced coordination, for instance, can increase your injury risk. And we know that drinking immediately following a workout impairs recovery by interfering with muscles’ repair process. But in general, says Barnes, the effects of alcohol in moderation – defined as one drink a day for women and two drinks a day for men – are less clear.

Read the whole story

Pigs to take center stage at EDC Fair

Food categories have been added to this year’s El Dorado County Fair contests to embrace the Hog Days of Summer theme.

The fair is June 18-21 in Placerville.

In addition to the food entries in the fair entry guide people may create Beach Ball Pigs.

The Great American Pig Races are another tie in – symbolizing life in the country and those hog summer days. These pigs will be racing several times a day, every day of fair.

In keeping with the theme, the fair chef, Gary Gilligan, will be offering cooking classes like Pork – the Other White Meat and Stuffed Pork Loin.

In the barns there may be baby pigs. Buying a swine at the auction supports the hard work of youngsters who’ve raised the

animals. The livestock auction begins at 10am June 20.

Many of the food vendors will have some special foods – such as pulled pork nachos and porktastic tacos. Bacon cinnamon rolls will be that Sunday's featured item for the Daily Special Contest.

More info about the fair is available online.

Tourist stops change dramatically as climate shifts

By Matt Villano , USA Today

From Alaska to Miami, the phenomenon of climate change – the catch-all phrase that describes subtle but significant changes to Earth's atmosphere – is wreaking havoc on some of the most beautiful destinations in the country. Perhaps the most concerning news: There has been no recent evidence that the trend will slow or stop any time soon.

Shrinking Lakes

All Andrew Glasgow wanted to do was share the wonder of Mount Shasta and Shasta Lake with his wife and two young sons.

He had visited the mountain before, many times. He remembered the awe-inspiring grandeur of the snow-covered triangle reflected in the turquoise waters of the lake below. His family simply had to see it. So, for Thanksgiving last year, he booked a trip. But when they arrived, the scene was totally wrong. There was virtually no snow on the mountain itself. And

the lake – if you wanted to call it that – was nothing more than a glorified puddle.

Warming temperatures and drought conditions in California likely were two of the factors contributing to what the Glasgows spotted that day. Other lakes have been affected by climate change as well. Rising temperatures in Lake Tahoe are suspected to have caused a drop in the number of bottom-feeding creatures in the lake – the very same creatures that eat algae and therefore give the lake its world-renowned clarity.

Read the whole story