

Bill would label genetically modified food

By Sharokina Shams, KCRA-TV

A group of U.S. senators, including Sen. Barbara Boxer, D-Calif., are pushing for a law that would require labels for genetically engineered foods, but efforts to make similar laws in California have failed.

Some lawmakers want all foods that are genetically engineered to be labeled in order to alert consumers.

"Consumers have a right to know what is in the foods they eat, and parents have a right to know what they are feeding their families," Boxer said in a news release. "This legislation will direct the Food and Drug Administration to require clear information for food that has been genetically engineered."

Still, some scientists say genetically engineered, or genetically modified foods, are not harmful.

Read the whole story

Douglas County putting on dog obedience class

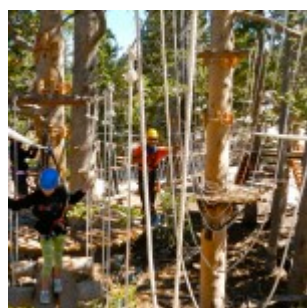
Douglas County Parks & Recreation will be offering a dog obedience class at Kahle Community Center in Stateline from March 5-April 9 from 7-8pm.

Cost of \$80.

Instructor Guy Yeaman uses a light-handed approach to help dogs obey commands. Dogs must be at least 4 months old and shot records need to be brought to the first class. Each dog needs a choke chain and fabric or leather lead. F

For more information or to register, call 775.586.7271.

Snippets about Lake Tahoe



- The final environmental impact report and statement are available online for Heavenly Mountain Resort's Epic Discovery Project and proposed amendments to the 2007 Heavenly Master Plan. Tahoe Regional Planning Agency's Advisory Planning Commission is scheduled to review the final EIR/EIS document and make a recommendation on certification March 11. The TRPA Governing Board is scheduled to review the document for consideration and possible certification at its regular meeting March 25-26.
- Here are the Caltrans roadwork schedules for the week for El Dorado-Tahoe and Sierra
- Tahoe Paradise Resort Improvement District's board will meet Feb. 19 at 6pm at Lake Valley fire station in Meyers. Here is the agenda.
- The Friends of Alpine Meadows (FoAM) will host its first public meeting Feb 21 at 5 pm at the Tahoe Mill Collective, 150 Alpine Meadows Road. FoAM will be presenting the results of the Alpine Meadows user survey, which had more than 500 responses, as well as discuss the goals of the organization.

Study: Amount of plastic in oceans rising

By John Schwartz, New York Times

Nearly 8 million metric tons of plastic waste makes its way into the world's oceans each year, and the amount of the debris is likely to increase greatly over the next decade unless nations take strong measures to dispose of their trash responsibly, research suggests.

The report, which appeared in the journal *Science* on Thursday, is the most ambitious effort yet to estimate how much plastic debris ends up in the sea.

Jenna Jambeck, an assistant professor of environmental engineering at the University of Georgia and lead author of the study, said the amount of plastic that entered the oceans in the year measured, 2010, might be as little as 4.8 million metric tons or as much as 12.7 million.

The paper's middle figure of 8 million, she said, is the equivalent of "five plastic grocery bags filled with plastic for every foot of coastline in the world" – a visualization that, she said, "sort of blew my mind."

Read the whole story

Family-owned Calif. ski resorts struggle from drought

By Scott Smith, AP

With California entering its fourth drought year, even some big resorts with millions of dollars in modern snow-making equipment don't have all their lifts running.

The midsized and family-owned resorts struggling most had hoped to reopen for the Presidents Day holiday, traditionally the year's biggest weekend for skiing.

A recent winter storm that washed over the state originated in the tropics and dropped more rain than the much-needed snow. While any wet weather is welcome in California, the storm didn't end the drought or put all the dormant resorts back in business.

"We're basically the canary in the coal mine," said Janet Tuttle, who owns Donner Ski Ranch northwest of Lake Tahoe and one of about seven resorts forced to close mid-season. "It's kind of a sad state here in California."

A stingy snowfall had left Donner's mountain face marked with brown patches of exposed dirt and rock. Tuttle and her husband, Marshall, closed the resort's six chairlifts and two beginner runs by mid-January. They reopened Wednesday with a little boost from the recent storm, hoping to keep the lifts running this weekend.

She worried about more warm weather in the forecast. "I'm not very happy about that," she said.

California's 27 resorts – and two in neighboring Nevada – make up the nation's second-most-popular destination for skiers and snowboarders after Colorado, said Bob Roberts, executive

director of the California Ski Industry Association.

China Peak Mountain Resort east of Fresno was among the latest ski areas forced to suspend business, following others in Northern California such as Donner Ski Ranch, Dodge Ridge and Yosemite's Badger Pass. Mt. Baldy Ski Lifts near Los Angeles also closed.

Homewood Mountain Resort at Lake Tahoe suspended skiing early this month but also plans to open for the Presidents Day weekend with a few inches of fresh snow from recent storms.

Ski season started strong with heavy snowfall in December blanketing California's mountains. Resorts opened before Christmas, earlier than the previous year, with raised hopes that more snow would follow.

But January set records as the driest and the second warmest in recorded history, said Michael Anderson, a climatologist with the state's Department of Water Resources. The Sierra Nevada this January received 2 percent of its normal precipitation, with an average high temperature of 53 degrees, he said.

In an unsettling trend, four of California's 10 driest Januaries have occurred since 2007, said Anderson, adding that several days recently at Lake Tahoe have reached the mid-60s. He spent last weekend with his family in the Sierra's Donner Summit, where it rained.

"When it's raining at the top of the mountain, it's awful hard to build a snowpack," he said.

Other Western states have gotten their share of snow this year, said Michael Berry, president of the National Ski Areas Association, noting favorable skiing in Colorado, Utah, Wyoming and Montana. He said storms have hit Washington, but the warm temperatures pushed the snow level to higher elevations.

Meanwhile, much of California remains locked in extreme drought.

Tim Cohee, owner of China Peak Mountain Resort, thought he could keep the lifts running through Presidents Day weekend. But Cohee said that only the beginner skiing hill and a slope for sleds and inner-tubes would be open for the holiday.

China Peak has snow-making machines, but the warm weather gave Cohee few opportunities to turn them on. The recent rain made the mountain blotchy, so he suspended skiing. Cohee said China Peak and other small resorts are facing serious financial hardship.

"Name a business that could go through four years of this," said Cohee, who has owned and managed ski resorts in California for 22 years. "I've seen a couple wimpy years before, but nothing like this – nothing even close."

At the large Heavenly Lake Tahoe, a little more than half of the ski runs were open Tuesday, but spokeswoman Rachael Woods of Vail Resorts said those runs are long and well-groomed, providing skiers and boarders with great conditions.

The runs are fully open at Kirkwood Mountain Resort, owned by the same company, and one of California's highest in elevation, said Woods, adding that Kirkwood, Heavenly and Northstar all received well over a foot of snow from the recent storms.

Cold overnight temperatures at the high elevation ski areas have allowed for making snow, she said, adding, "There are many resorts that are doing well."

Berry, the National Ski Areas Association's president, said ski resort operators are optimists by nature; they have to be, he said, adding that a powerful storm may still hit California deluging the mountains and turning the season around in 24 hours. He ran Kirkwood Mountain Resort for 13 years and has

seen it happen.

“Mother Nature can be cruel,” Berry said. “She can also be incredibly generous.”

Federal money available for Nev. recreation projects

The Nevada Division of State Parks has \$300,000 in federal funds for local park and recreation improvement and acquisition projects through the Land and Water Conservation Fund program.

All local governments, including counties, cities, towns, general improvement districts, and Native American tribal governments are potentially eligible for the 50:50 matching grants offered through the program.

The Land and Water Conservation Fund Act of 1965 was enacted to assist in preserving, developing and assuring recreational accessibility to local parks for present and future generations.

The application package and grant manual are available online. The deadline to apply is May 8 at 5pm.

Author to talk about life at Pyramid Lake

Author Bernard Mergen lived at Pyramid Lake in the mid-20th century. He went on to earn a doctorate from the University of Pennsylvania and became a professor of American studies at George Washington University in Washington, D.C. Now professor emeritus, he comes to South Lake Tahoe to share his newest book.

In “At Pyramid Lake”, Mergen writes about the cultural history, including efforts of the Paiute Indians to preserve the land and survive as a community. He writes about reclamation projects, conflicts over water rights and the history of the lake’s recreational use, stories of the residents and squatters, and visits from celebrities such as Herbert Hoover and Zane Grey.

The talk is March 24 at 6pm at the South Lake Tahoe Library, 1000 Rufus Allen Blvd.

The event is put on by the Friends of the Library in partnership with the Lake Tahoe Historical Society.

Kids don’t have to be picky eaters

By Natalie Parletta, Washington Post

Hippocrates said, circa 400 B.C., that “food should be our medicine and medicine should be our food.” He would probably turn in his grave if he saw the amount of highly processed,

sugary food and drinks marketed to children today. This food can be as addictive as cocaine or heroin. And it's difficult for parents to counteract its appeal.

One in three children and 66 percent of adults in the U.S. are overweight or obese. This is contributing to unprecedented levels of preventable obesity-related disease such as diabetes, heart disease, and liver and kidney failure. Unhealthy diets also contribute to poor mental health and lower IQ in children.

Parents have a very important influence on their child's health and eating choices. For starters, breastfeeding for 12 months can impact their taste preferences by exposing them to multidimensional flavors – and they can develop taste preferences for foods that mom eats too (healthy or otherwise).

Children will learn to like healthy foods, such as vegetables, if they are regularly exposed to them from a young age. When you can, cook baby foods yourself from fresh ingredients, and avoid adding sugars and salt. Children's taste preferences are established in early life. It is best to keep it simple – introduce new vegetables and fruit one at a time so they can learn to appreciate the individual flavors.

Read the whole story

Tahoe wedding officiant has seen it all



Warren Kessler has been a wedding officiant for decades. Photo/ABHOW

By ABHOW

To have and to hold, for better or for worse, for richer or for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish from this day forward, until death do us part.

Warren Kessler, who moved to Tahoe Senior Plaza in South Lake Tahoe in September, has presided over the exchange of this vow more than 13,000 times.

Kessler began conducting weddings in 1983 after he moved to the area with his wife. He was ordained through the Universal Life Church and soon began freelancing as a wedding officiant. Also a state notary, Kessler went on to work for several chapels before settling in at Chapel of the Bells, where he performs ceremonies as an on-call minister. That means he has to be ready to go at a moment's notice.

"I could be at a restaurant. I could be anywhere," he says.

When he gets the call, he runs down to the chapel, does the wedding and goes back to where he left off.

The chapel is a no-nonsense kind of place, where couples often skip the typical frills like tuxes and gowns. "Two people just get out of their car. 'I do, I do.' That's about it," Kessler says.

With 31 years of experience under his belt, it's not surprising that Kessler's mental archives are bursting with fascinating tales. He has pretty much seen it all. Couples come in from all over the country and the world. "They all have interesting stories to tell you," he says.

The average wedding goes smoothly, Kessler says, but every now and then strange things happen. He recalls a nearly 40-year-old groom named Joe, who was affectionately called "Junior" by his mother. In an effort to declare his independence, he insisted that Kessler call him "Little Joe" during the ceremony. Not only were guests confused, the mother was furious. "It looked like the blood drained out of her head and into her ankles," Kessler says.

Other notable weddings include one with a groom getting married for the 10th time and another where the groomsmen rented tuxes but forgot the shoes, leaving them standing at the altar in sneakers.

There's no doubt that Kessler enjoys his work. In fact, he doesn't think of it as work at all – and it certainly isn't the typical 9-to-5 job.

"Weddings are always fun," says Kessler. "It's a happy business."

Founded in 1949, ABHOW is widely known for its pioneering leadership in senior housing and health care. The company serves more than 5,500 residents in 44 retirement communities in California, Arizona, Nevada and Washington.

Opinion: How to protect customers' private information

By John Krieger, Las Vegas Sun

Privacy laws are becoming more consumer-focused, and companies that collect personal information about consumers – and fail to disclose what they do with it – are beginning to find themselves in uncomfortable situations.

New regulations are aimed at protecting people's privacy, and companies need to know their obligations, particularly if they have an Internet presence and are gathering personally identifiable information about their customers.

If a business collects personally identifiable information – defined in most states as someone's first initial and last name and an account number, such as a credit card, bank account or driver's license number – the company has an obligation to keep that information safe.

Read the whole story