

Casino, hotels once planned for East Shore park



Year-round people can be seen in scuba gear at Divers Cove. Photos/Kathryn Reed

By Kathryn Reed

INCLINE VILLAGE – If it weren't for George Whittell's desire to keep out private developers, it is possible Sand Harbor State Park might not exist. In fact, the recluse is the reason much of the East Shore is undeveloped.

That's not to say he didn't have grand plans. His vision was to develop a huge casino with several hotels where the park now sits.

But in 1963 per court order Whittell had to sell 5,000 acres for \$3 million.

In 1971, it became a state park. Nevada owns 14,000 acres, which encompasses Sand Harbor and Spooner Lake, in what is officially called Lake Tahoe Nevada State Park. Much of the

land is in the backcountry.

This history is some of the wisdom that is imparted during ranger led hikes. This is the third December the park has been putting on these free excursions.



In a normal year this boulder field would be under water.

Down the road and visible from the main beach is a corner of Whittell's Thunderbird Lodge, which is operated by a nonprofit.

Most of the trees are second-generation growth; the original forest was wiped out during the Comstock. Lumber was needed in the silver mines of Virginia City.

The sophisticated flume system with inverted siphons was used to get the wood across the mountain range.

At that time the land was mostly in the hands of the Hobart family, who were lumber barons.

Walking along the footpath, the group of 10 from Incline, San Francisco, Georgia and South Africa, stopped above Divers Cove. Lines on the boulders indicate how low the lake is.



Ranger Allen Wooldridge, center, talks about the history of Sand Harbor.

Fresh water and high elevation divers are often found here – including last Sunday.

“There are some submerged boulder gardens, but not much biology,” Alisa Johansson with state parks said of what’s under the water.

While there are interpretive signs along the path, Johansson and Ranger Allen Wooldridge share more details than what’s written and they can answer visitors’ questions.

For those unfamiliar with Tahoe’s formation – tectonic and glacial – the park employees explain how it came into being and that seismic activity is still very real here.

Wooldridge said a common question he gets asked is if all the sand is natural or if it’s trucked in. He explained how the prevailing southeast winds push sand toward the park. There is a logical reason the park is named Sand Harbor.

While boulders are a common sight on the north side, more areas are becoming exposed as the lake level declines.



Few people visit the beach
in winter.

On this chilly, overcast day not many of the park's residents are out. Chipmunks, squirrels, jack rabbits, bobcats, deer, gulls, ducks, magpies, mountain chickadees and bears are some of the critters that call this park home.

But people also heavily use it, with more than 1 million visitors a year.

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Notes:

- Dec. 27, 10-11am, Before It Was a Park History Talk, free. Meet at visitors center.
- Dec. 27, 1-2pm, Hike the Point with Rangers, free. Meet at visitors center.
- Dec. 28, 10-11am, Christmas Heritage Talk, free. Meet at visitors center.
- Dec. 28, 1-2pm, Hike the Point with Rangers, free. Meet at visitors center.
- Weekends through Jan. 4 there will be sleigh rides (with wheels if necessary) and the restaurant will be open.
- The park will be open on weekends through March, including the visitors center, which has a fireplace where people may get warm.

- For more info, call 775.831.0494.
 - The park is three miles south of Incline Village on Highway 28.
 - It costs \$8 to park.
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Letter: A productive year at Barton Health

To the community,

It has been a productive and noteworthy year at Barton Health. At times, the future seemed uncertain with the unpredictable roll out of the Affordable Care Act and the lighter winter season. Fortunately, we have persevered and several noteworthy accomplishments stand out.



John Williams

A few 2014 achievements at Barton include:

- Increasing healthcare access to uninsured and underinsured community members through the Barton Community Health Center.

- Being recognized as a “Top Performer” for key quality measures by the Joint Commission
- Heightening the patient experience to new levels by expanding and adding improvement measures.
- Investing in our workforce by bringing exceptional people into the organization, including new leaders, staff members, and physicians.
- Expanding access to care by providing urology services for men, women, and children.
- Volunteering our medical services at community events and helping those in need.

All of this would not be possible without the efforts of our employees and their dedication to providing high quality care for our community. We appreciate their hard work and look forward to another successful year in 2015.

May you and your families have a happy and healthy holiday season.

Sincerely,

John Williams, Barton Health CEO

Letter: Thanks for replacing stolen toys

To the community,

Thank you to everyone in the Community Development Agency who contributed to the Toys for Tots collection after hearing about the sad news of the toys being stolen.

In an amazing show of holiday spirit and in a matter of only a

few hours CDA was able to collect \$400 to purchase replacement gifts for children of all ages.

Special thanks to Walmart for giving us a 10 percent discount after hearing about the stolen toys. We were about to get baby toys, frozen dolls, a basketball, football, and soccer ball, a remote control quad, a couple crafting kits and so much more. The toys will be making their way to Tahoe.

Great show of generosity CDA.

Julie R. Curry, CDA administrative technician

Fallen Leaf Lake enhancing fire fleet

Fallen Leaf Lake will be better equipped next year to deal with any fires that may occur in this South Shore enclave.

A federal grant for \$372,000 will allow the fire department to buy a pumper engine to replace an old engine. It will be in service in 2015.

With \$250,000 from El Dorado County supervisors, the department is acquiring a fire boat that will be ready next summer.

These two recent grants, along with additional grants of \$103,00 from CalFire, El Dorado County and FEMA over the past three years, brings to a total of \$725,000 applied for and received by the Fallen Leaf Lake Community Services District.

Letter: LTVA, STR thank community for giving

To the community,

Recently the Lake Tahoe Visitors Authority, in conjunction with South Tahoe Refuse & Recycling, conducted a “drive and drop” at the LTVA’s California visitors center, and curbside collection on regular pick up days.

Once again we were overwhelmed by the generous response from our South Lake Tahoe community. Together we collected over 1,500 pounds of food and toys to benefit Christmas Cheer all Year, plus over \$1,200 in cash, \$1,000 of which was donated by the Kiwanis Club of Lake Tahoe.

Thank you to all who participated in making the holidays a little brighter for those in need.

Special thanks to Howie Nave and Steve Harness with 93.9 KRLT the Lake for the live remotes which encouraged additional donations while they were on the air. Thanks also to Aramark/Lake Tahoe Cruises for donating sightseeing cruise passes to give away during the live remotes.

With gratitude,

Sue Barton, deputy director Lake Tahoe Visitors Authority

Jeanne Lear, human resources manager South Tahoe Refuse &

Beavers may be good for the environment

By Samantha Clark, Santa Cruz Sentinel

Californians are crossing their fingers for more rain after three punishing years of drought have left streams, rivers and wetland parched.

One animal has the potential to restore these dry landscapes.

With their industrial buck teeth and flat tails, beavers and their dams offer a defense against drought, a solution to reversing the effects of climate change. The rodents are known as ecosystem engineers. And they once populated most of California (and the Bay Area) until fur traders nearly wiped them out in the 19th century,

“This state has lost more of its wetlands than all other states, and beavers can rebuild those wetlands,” said Rick Lanman of the Institute for Historical Ecology in Los Altos. “Knowing that it is native should help guide restoration efforts.”

Beaver dams bestow benefits to the environment that we humans can't easily copy. They turn land into a sponge for water. Their gnawing and nesting promotes richer soil and slows down water, improving imperiled fish habitat. Their dams raise water tables, nourishing shrubbery alongside streams that stabilize eroding banks and add habitat for birds and deer. They also help the endangered California Red-legged frog.

Read the whole story

Dumpster puppies find forever homes

By Colin Lygren, K0L0-TV

INCLINE VILLAGE – A month and a half ago a litter of puppies, all just barely over a day old, were abandoned in a Susanville dumpster. They were cold, hungry, and in need of love. Thursday, those dumpster puppies reached a milestone as they were all adopted into new homes.

“I was very fortunate in finding the perfect homes for them where they are going to have a happy and spoiled life,” said Melissa Shaw, who conducts adoptions at Pet Network Humane Society.

How this journey began is still unthinkable. Back on October 29th, 2014, the puppies were found in dumpster behind a Susanville store. Since then, volunteers at Pet Network Humane Society have been working around the clock, acting as surrogate moms, in hopes of keeping the dogs alive.

Read the whole story

Feds reject Nevada plan to refill Incline Lake

By Associated Press

RENO — The U.S. Forest Service has rejected a proposal by Nevada state wildlife officials to refill a drained lake in the mountains above Lake Tahoe and restore the scenic spot as a recreational fishery.

The agency says it intends to stick with its plan to leave Incline Lake empty, remove its dam and return the area to its more natural wet meadows near Mount Rose.

Deputy Regional Forester Ronald Ketter upheld a forest supervisor's earlier decision, the *Reno Gazette-Journal* reported last week.

"The desired condition for this project is to remedy the existing conditions of a high-hazard dam and provide a sustainable hydrological system that supports groundwater and riparian ecosystems," Ketter wrote in a Dec. 2 letter to the Nevada Department of Wildlife.

State wildlife officials are reviewing the Forest Service's response and considering further action, including a possible appeal, department spokesman Chris Healy said.

"We are definitely weighing our options," Healy said. "The local area is losing the opportunity to develop a valuable fishery and recreational resource if this decision stands."

The federal government in 2008 spent \$43.5 million for the once-private property that includes Incline Lake and 777 acres of surrounding land on a forested ridge between Reno and Lake Tahoe.

The lake was drained after inspectors determined its dam could

fail during an earthquake and flood areas of nearby Incline Village.

Ketter agreed with the state that a much safer dam could be built, but he said it wouldn't completely eliminate possible danger. The Forest Service would return most of the \$5.5 million in funding secured through the South Nevada Public Land Management Act for possible reconstruction of the dam, Ketter said.

He also rejected arguments that the public's recreational needs were being ignored.

"While the Forest Service appreciates the public's desire and need for recreational opportunities, the primary purpose and objectives of this project are to provide for public safety and the restoration of an altered aquatic/riparian system," Ketter wrote.

Judge: Concentrated cannabis qualifies as medical pot

By Denny Walsh, Sacramento Bee

A state appellate court in Sacramento has ruled that "concentrated cannabis" qualifies as marijuana for purposes of medical use.

A unanimous three-justice panel of the 3rd District Court of Appeal disagreed this week with an earlier ruling by El Dorado Superior Court Judge James R. Wagoner and reversed the judge's decision that a medical marijuana patient violated probation by possessing concentrated cannabis.

Sean Patrick Mulcrevy of Cameron Park was charged in 2013 with unlawful possession of concentrated cannabis, a misdemeanor, and was alleged to have violated his probation because of his failure “to obey all laws.”

Wagoner reviewed the existing legal authority indicating that concentrated cannabis is covered by California’s Compassionate Use Act, or CUA, the 1996 voter initiative approving medical use of marijuana with a doctor’s recommendation. But Wagoner rejected the authority as “unsound” and ruled that “the (CUA) does not apply to concentrated cannabis” because the act does not define marijuana, refer to concentrated cannabis or incorporate statutory definitions of either term.

Read the whole story

Caesars Entertainment to buy affiliate

By Associated Press

NEW YORK — Caesars Entertainment, parent company of Harrah’s Lake Tahoe and Harveys at Stateline, will buy an affiliate as it tries to smooth the reorganization of a struggling division and balance its debt load.

The Las Vegas company will take Caesar’s Acquisition in an all-stock deal, giving its shareholders an approximately 62 percent in the combined company.

Shares jumped 24 percent heavy trading before the opening bell Monday.

Chairman and CEO Gary Loveman says the maneuver will result in a simpler and more straightforward corporate structure.

Caesars Entertainment Operating Co. received a default notice earlier this month, although it disagreed that a default had occurred. Last month, Caesars said it was in discussions with its creditors to lower its \$24.2 billion in debt.

Caesar's Entertainment Operating Co. will file for bankruptcy as part of the deal announced Monday.

The new company will have \$1.7 billion in cash and operate its casinos in addition properties like Planet Hollywood and online gambling.

Shares of Caesars Entertainment Operating Co. rose \$3.21 to \$16.70 in premarket trading.