

Smoke from controlled burns visible in basin

Smoke that is visible on Spooner Summit and the Twin Peaks area near Sawmill Pond is from controlled burns operated by the U.S. Forest Service.

“Please be assured that Forest Service crews are monitoring these and other areas and all of our prescribed fires are under control,” Lisa Herron with the USFS said in a statement. “Also, we are currently in a low fire danger period and precipitation is on the way.”

Lake Valley Fire has a small burn in the Onnontioga area.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Crews scramble to stabilize King Fire terrain

By Peter Hecht, Sacramento Bee

Engineering and erosion control crews faced a time paradox Wednesday in a scorched Sierra Nevada region.

For weeks since the devastating King fire burned through 97,717 acres of timberland and watershed north of Pollock Pines, multiple agencies launched a long-term project to protect water supplies and wildlife habitat from destruction due to burned mountain terrain being unable to handle seasonal rains. Agencies including the U.S. Forest Service and the Sacramento Municipal Utility District have been conducting

helicopter “helimulching” flights, dropping tons of rice straw to hold fragile hillsides and promote regrowth.

They hope to resume the flights as soon as dry weather returns.

But with a major storm system barreling down, crews Wednesday shifted to more immediate concerns by building earthen berms to help prevent roadways from washing out and to keep sediment from fouling the upper American River and nearby tributaries.

Read the whole story

Snippets about Lake Tahoe



Fire – it’s a controlled burn on Spooner Summit.
Photo Copyright 2014 Carolyn E. Wright

- The U.S. Ski and Snowboard Association named the Squaw Valley-Alpine Meadows Ski Team a gold certified club – the highest recognition a ski and snowboard club can receive from USSA.
- The Clarence E. Heller Charitable Foundation gave the League

to Save Lake Tahoe \$35,000 to support its land-use planning program. The foundation also bolstered its named endowment at the League with a \$200,000 donation.

- Barbara Bannar is now president of the Lake Tahoe Unified School District board and Larry Green is clerk.

- A celebration of life for Michael Donahoe will be Jan. 10 at 2pm at Zephyr Point Presbyterian Conference Center, 660 Highway 50, Zephyr Cove. Parking is limited, so RSVP to Hillary at bittmanbliss@att.net or call 530.577.7135.

Youngsters dive into special classroom



Larry Phippen teaches Bijou fourth-graders how to be better swimmers. Photos/Kathryn Reed

By Kathryn Reed

Holding on to the side of the pool the youngsters kick as hard as they can, causing Larry Phippen to close his eyes with all that water headed in his direction.

He's telling them to turn their heads and breath. Later they grab kickboards to make their way across the width of the pool. Other times they are going after rings at the bottom of the pool.

The noise from all of these kids at the South Lake Tahoe pool is deafening under the dome.

"I think this is a great opportunity. It doesn't matter who the person is. If they are going to a public school, it's important for a city when they have a facility like this to offer something back to the community where it doesn't cost anything," Phippen told *Lake Tahoe News*. He is the instructor for this swim program and is also a coach with the private Tahoe Swim Club.



Jasmine Perez kicks along the wall.

Since the mid-1980s the city and Lake Tahoe Unified School District have had a partnership where every fourth-grader has

the opportunity to learn to swim at no cost to the student.

The kids are divided into beginner, intermediate and advanced groups. Each class receives one week of instruction for about an hour a day.

“A lot of families have never been to the swim center. And a lot of kids have never been swimming before today,” Rebecca Musalo, Bijou Community School teacher, told *Lake Tahoe News*.

Hugo Perez is in the beginner group, which is staying in the shallow end where everyone can touch the bottom. Some in this group, like Hugo, have swum before but are not proficient, while others are new to the sport.

Hugo likes floating on his back the best.

“I feel like I’m in a bed on the water,” Hugo told *Lake Tahoe News*.

The hardest part was learning to turn his head in the water to breathe.



Hugo Perez practices floating on his back.

His dad, Hugo Perez Sr., was on the pool deck watching with admiration. This is how he chose to spend his day off – watching his son become more adept at an activity that he likes.

Safety in and around water is the overriding lesson all levels are taught. This includes being able to tread water and float

on their back.

Everyone helping the kids is a certified safety water instructor. The program is nationally recognized by the American Red Cross Learn to Swim Program.

“What surprises me around here is you have a lot of public free access to beach areas, but not a lot of guards,” Phippen said, underlining the importance of being self-reliant. “We teach them how they can survive in water and feel comfortable.”

At the end of the week, each student is given a handout stating what level they are at and what program would be ideal for them if they chose to take more lessons at the recreation center. The city offers swim lessons throughout the year.

Opinion: TPRID needs to be wary of county

By Michael Clark

There is an important meeting of the Tahoe Paradise Resort Improvement District planned for the evening of Dec. 11 at the CCC building. There is an effort being made to approve an memo of understanding (MOU) with El Dorado County. The purpose of this MOU are unclear to me and to many others. Since the TPRID was formed under the auspices of El Dorado County, they are already obliged to assist the TPRID with administrative functions, and they already do.

The TPRID does not have a checking account. El Dorado County keeps all records, writes all checks, retains all monies and

provides oversight of their finances. It has been this way since the TPRID was formed in the 1960s. When the TPRID spends any money, the spending is approved by the TPRID board, there is a check request form submitted to El Dorado County by the TPRID, signed by at least two members of the TPRID board of directors, then El Dorado County sends the funds to the vendor(s).

What exactly will be changed by the MOU? Nothing will materially changed with this process and someone will still need to provide vendor numbers, addresses, coding and signed check requests to the El Dorado County bureaucracy. So why is an MOU needed and how will it provide any further assistance to the TPRID?

Further, the TPRID wisely chose to invest in using their asset to provide space for weddings and other functions on their property about a decade ago. It has proven to be a significant revenue source for the TPRID. The scheduling of these events has been difficult at best. Anyone who has planned an event, especially a wedding, knows how important a local contact can be.

The MOU proposes to cede this scheduling to El Dorado County.

Currently, the TPRID manager schedules these events and receives a portion of the proceeds as part of his compensation and motivation. Should an administrator in El Dorado County take over this scheduling, there will be far less motivation. It is difficult to understand exactly how El Dorada County can be expected to manage administrative functions from Placerville for a district in Tahoe Paradise with their current staffing.

My understanding is that they are facing a \$20 million deficit and will likely have to reduce staff. And, the on-site manager will still have to interface with those who wish to use the facilities. The TPRID manager will have to do all the work

that was done previous to the MOU, but will have no compensation and motivation. It is difficult to see how this will result in success. Again, there is little benefit to the TPRID.

When I served on the TPRID board, myself and every other director visited the park once or twice a week. We discussed what was being done, the priorities and provided direction to the TPRID manager on an almost daily basis. We accomplished a lot: built a playground that was funded 50 percent by a grant, repaved the parking lot, improved the clubhouse, etc.

One manages employees by providing solid direction, definable goals and specific instructions, not by second-guessing after the fact. I see this MOU as nothing but an attempt to abdicate responsibility to El Dorado County.

The directors of TPRID have to realize what their oath means and agree to act in the interests of the district's members, the property owners within the TPRID boundaries. I strongly recommend that the TPRID board consider focusing their efforts on working within themselves to provide clear, concise direction to their employee and to focus on the operation of TPRID rather than look for ways to decrease their involvement.

The TPRID is the only entity that has any official status in El Dorado County here in Tahoe Paradise in regards to recreation. And yet, they have no Internet presence and little support from El Dorado County. While, at the same time, the various permutations of the "Meyers Plan" has a website hosted by El Dorado County. One must really wonder about that reality. Why would the unofficial "Meyers Plan" group be supported by El Dorado County when the official TPRID is not? Considering that there is an El Dorado County supervisor on the TPRID board, this is hard to understand. Do the members and organizers of the "Meyers Plan" have an MOU with El Dorado County? If so, why? And if not, why not?

What I find incredible is that this MOU is extremely contentious within our little community. There are many property owners within the district that are opposed to it. There must be those who are supportive of it as well. But absolutely no information has been released to the public in any meaningful way, through public sources like newspapers or blog sites, by any interested party. One would expect that responsible property owners, TPRID directors or El Dorado County supervisors would want to provide information and rationale for such an agreement before it is proposed. But that is apparently not the case. Hence, my attempt to put this MOU vote into some perspective.

Part of this MOU may be understood in the context of the structure of the TPRID. The way that the district was structured when it was founded is no longer used as it has proven to be difficult to manage. There is legislation available under California state law which allows the TPRID to be changed to a different form of district, a community services district. Many have interpreted this change as "giving up the park" or allowing El Dorado County to "take over" the park. I had a lengthy conversation with El Dorado LAFCo (Local Area Formation Commission) Director José C. Henríquez, who authored the state legislation. After our conversation, I understood the conversion process in far more detail and found it to be sensible. The application to convert the TPRID to a more efficient model would be beneficial to the district without "giving up" the TPRID to anyone, in my humble opinion. This conversion would offer similar administrative advantages in the form of assistance from El Dorado. However, it requires serious study and consideration by the TPRID board of directors to initiate the process.

I attended the El Dorado County Board of Supervisors meeting at the Lake Tahoe Airport in October. I made two appeals to the supervisors at that time, requesting that the TPRID be made a larger part of their focus on recreation, attempting to

bring the TPRID into their discussions.

There was little interest and, in fact, the BOS cited the limited budget of El Dorado County for being unable to provide such assistance.

It is difficult to understand how El Dorado County would wish to enter into an MOU if they clearly have no interest in being involved with the TPRID. Although assistance is greatly needed, this MOU is entirely too broad and without specifics to be of any real use to the TPRID or its members. In addition, the relationship already exists. So why is this so important again?

In conclusion, I believe that the proposed MOU is not in the best interests of the property owners within the TPRID boundaries and will prove to further complicate the relationship between El Dorado County and the TPRID. Adding layers of government bureaucracy has seldom proven to improve matters.

Michael Clark is a resident of Meyers and former Tahoe Paradise Resort Improvement District board member.

—

Note: *Lake Tahoe New earlier this week requested from the District 5 supervisor's office an agenda for tonight's TRPIP board meeting but was not provided one.*

Slew of warnings issued

before storm arrives

In what is being called one of the worst storms in years is coming with a slew of warnings – from the National Weather Service, departments of transportation, law enforcement, utilities and others.

A winter storm warning has been issued by the NWS in Reno for the Lake Tahoe Basin for a 24-hour period starting 1pm Thursday. Rain will be followed by snow. Up to 3 feet is forecast at upper elevations, with 7-14 inches below 7,000 feet, with up to 24 inches along Highway 89.

Winds are expected to be wicked – with ridge tops seeing 100 mph. Sustained wind of 15 to 25 mph is expected at lake level, with gusts up to 45 mph.

Blizzard conditions are expected on roads in the Sierra. Up-to-date road conditions may be found on the home page of *Lake Tahoe News* by clicking on the state icons on the home page.

Caltrans has mobilized more than 1,500 pieces of storm-related equipment and has 3,000 maintenance employees ready for this week's storm.

Here are various warnings and tips:

Liberty Utilities

- Always keep a flashlight and extra batteries handy.
- Do not use candles in a power outage or other emergency. Camp lights and lanterns may also be useful; however, do not use kerosene lanterns indoors unless you have proper ventilation.
- Turn off or disconnect any appliances or electronics you were using when the power went out. Unplug your computer to avoid the possibility of surge damage when the power returns.

Always use a surge protector for valuable electronic equipment, and you may want to purchase an uninterruptable power supply. A UPS is a battery back-up system that supplies power for about 15 minutes – long enough for you to save all work and shut the computer down.

- Leave one light turned on so you'll know when your power returns.
- If you're cold, put on layers of warm clothing. Never burn charcoal for heating or cooking indoors. Close doors to unused rooms. Use wood-burning fireplaces if available, but ensure the flume is open.
- Leave the doors of your refrigerator and freezer closed as much as possible. Cover a stand-alone freezer with blankets, quilts or sleeping bags to further insulate it and help keep food frozen. Transfer refrigerated food to ice chests filled with ice if outage is prolonged.

Northstar Fire Department

- While no flooding in the Northstar area is expected, if the need for sand bags should arise, contact the fire department at 530.562.1212, ext. 4.
- Wind will impact high-profile vehicles on roads, cause some power outages and trees down, and cause untied objects such as trash cans, deck furniture, and Christmas decorations to become airborne.
- Some creeks and rivers may rise.

Caltrans and NDOT

- Check antifreeze level and make sure it is properly filled and formulated for winter temperatures.
- Check tire pressure and tread.

- Replace the wiper blades and fill the windshield wiper fluid reservoir; be sure to use a winter formula to help de-ice windshields.
- Carry tire chains that are the correct size for your tires, in good working order and practice installing the chains before needing to use them.
- Have a full tank of fuel before traveling.
- Have blankets, extra clothing, food and water, towels, a shovel, a flashlight, an ice scraper, a small bag of sand or kitty litter and road flares.
- When traveling with children, carry small activity packs for them to help prevent driver distractions.
- Have a fully charged cell phone before leaving and carry a car charger.
- Reduce speeds during winter weather and allow for additional stopping time.
- Turn on headlights to see and be seen.
- Turn off cruise control.
- Avoid quick starts, stops and fast turns. Accelerate, brake and steer smoothly and gradually.
- Keep additional distance from other vehicles.
- Watch carefully for snow removal equipment and don't crowd the plow. Only pass snow removal vehicles when a safe, legal passing area is available and sight distance is good.
- Use extra caution on bridges, ramps, overpasses and shaded areas; they may freeze first.
- If your vehicle begins to skid, steer in the direction of slide and slowly remove your foot from accelerator.

- Share your travel itinerary so others know when to expect you.
- Remove snow and ice from all vehicle windows, mirrors, lights, turn signals and license plates.
- Buckle up.
- Avoid quick starts, stops and fast turns. Accelerate, brake and steer smoothly and gradually.
- Reduce speed. Speed limits are based on normal road and weather conditions, not winter road conditions.
- Do not slam on brakes. Apply steady pressure on ABS-equipped vehicles and pump the brakes if necessary on non-ABS vehicles.
- Use extra caution on bridges, ramps, overpasses and shaded areas- they may freeze first.
- Be aware of black ice.
- If parked or stuck in snow, leave window slightly cracked for ventilation and make sure vehicle exhaust system is clear of snow.
- Use caution when following, passing or approaching snow removal equipment. Drive a safe distance behind snowplows. Plows often travel slower than other vehicles to remove snow, apply sand and liquid anti-icers and assist stranded vehicles. Don't travel beside a snowplow.

Truckee Police Department

- Department of Public Works is running day and night snow removal crews. For questions about snow removal operations, call 530.582.7707.
- Sand bags are available free of charge at the U.S. Forest Service parking area located at 10811 Stockrest Springs Road and at Truckee Fire Station 92 at 11473 Donner Pass Road.

Online gaming ban not in federal spending bill

By Steve Tetreault and Howard Stutz, Las Vegas Review-Journal

WASHINGTON – Congress in its final major bill of the year unveiled Tuesday declined to support a call by billionaire casino owner Sheldon Adelson for a ban on legalized Internet gambling.

The \$1.1 trillion measure would fund most government operations through September of next year, making it a must-pass measure. It also contains dozens of individual policy provisions sought by lawmakers and special interests.

But after being flooded by lobbyists from both sides, House leaders declined to get involved in a battle that caused a major split in the casino industry and sparked speculation of an unusual alliance between Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid of Nevada and Adelson, a leading conservative.

The omnibus spending bill did not contain Adelson-sought provisions that would reinstate federal law to ban all forms of Internet gambling. A December 2011 Justice Department opinion held that the relevant law, the Interstate Wire Act of 1961, only outlaws sports betting online.

Read the whole story

Meat prices keep going up

By Bruce Kennedy, MoneyWatch

While consumers gear up for all the end-of-year celebrations, they are also shelling out more for that holiday ham, roast or turkey.

Meat prices across the board have moved higher in 2014, led by record highs in U.S. beef prices. Cattlefax, an information and analysis service, notes the USDA's retail beef price rose to a record high of \$5.96 a pound in October.

Steve Meyer, livestock market analyst and president of Paragon Economics, says that through October of this year retail prices on all fresh meats were up around 12.4 percent, compared to the same time period a year ago.

A number of factors are behind the jump, but the main issues appear to be weather, disease and demand.

Read the whole story

House OKs Calif. drought bill that faces Obama veto

By Bettina Boxall and Evan Halper, Los Angeles Times

The U.S. House on Tuesday passed a California drought bill, despite a veto threat from the Obama administration and its

expected demise in the Senate in the final days before Congress adjourns.

The 230-182 vote was largely a symbolic gesture in the years-long effort by House Republicans to weaken endangered species protections that have restricted water deliveries from the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta to San Joaquin Valley agribusiness and urban Southern California.

The measure, which was introduced last week after House GOP negotiations with Sen. Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.) fell apart, was opposed by environmentalists, the White House and Gov. Jerry Brown's administration.

"This is no time to re-ignite water wars, move water policy back into the courts, and try to pit one part of the state against another," California Natural Resources Secretary John Laird wrote in a letter Tuesday to the California congressional delegation.

The 26-page bill focused on water operations in the delta and Northern California, directing federal agencies to take steps that would send more delta water south. Proponents of the measure said that endangered fish restrictions had significantly reduced Delta pumping during storms in late 2012 and early 2013.

[Read the whole story](#)

Snippets about Lake Tahoe



- Sho Kashima of Stateline has been named a member of the U.S. Freestyle Ski Team's moguls squad for the 2015 season.

- HowMuchWillItSnow.com was developed by David Pomeroy to show snowfall forecasts in inches for cities and ski resorts for a seven-day period.

- Borges Sleigh Rides is operating out of Sand Harbor State Park now through Jan. 3. Sleighs are equipped with wheels when there is no snow. For more information and reservations, go online or call 775.588.2953.

- The California Tahoe Conservancy's Dec. 11 board meeting has been canceled because of weather.

- A petition is circulating to get Placer County supervisors to remove the Lake Tahoe Basin portion of Martis Valley West from the larger development project.