

Expect delays on Hwy. 50 in S. Lake Tahoe

Sections of Highway 50 in South Lake Tahoe will be repaired with overnight work beginning Sept. 9.

The work will take place on sections between the Trout Creek Bridge and the Y, and also in spots from Wildwood Avenue to Stateline.

These are in areas of the highway that haven't yet been repaved during Caltrans water-quality improvement projects.

The work is scheduled from Tuesday to Friday, from 6pm-6am, and will require alternating eastbound and westbound lane closures. Weather delays or other unforeseen factors could extend the work into the following week.

Plunge in vaccination rate worries health officials

By Paloma Esquivel and Sandra Poindexter, Los Angeles Times

California parents are deciding against vaccinating their kindergarten-age children at twice the rate they did seven years ago, a fact public health experts said is contributing to the reemergence of measles across the state and may lead to outbreaks of other serious diseases.

The percentage of kindergartens in which at least 8 percent of students are not fully vaccinated because of personal beliefs has more than doubled as well, according to data on file with

the state. That threshold is significant because communities must be immunized at a high rate to avoid widespread disease outbreaks. It is a concept known as herd immunity, and for measles and whooping cough at least 92% of kids need to be immune, experts say.

Public vs. private

High vaccination levels in the U.S. have helped millions of children avoid serious diseases and saved tens of thousands a year from paralysis, birth defects and death, experts say. But the risk of infectious disease remains a concern. Recent measles cases, for example, were brought into the country by travelers and quickly spread to several unvaccinated individuals.

Read the whole story

Unity to celebrate World Day of Prayer

Unity at the Lake will celebrate the 21st annual World Day of Prayer on Sept. 11.

The theme this year is We Are the Light of the World: Let Your Light Shine.

The Rev. Hillary Bittman said in a press release, "World Day of Prayer gives us an opportunity to come together in celebration of our oneness with God, each other, and our world. Through prayer we foster peace and wholeness in our community and in our individual lives."

The seven-hour prayer vigil will be from 9am-4pm at 1195 Rufus

Allen Blvd., South Lake Tahoe. Come any time and stay as long or as short as you like.

For more info, call 530.544.2266.

Carl Thomas Strickland – 1974-2014

Carl Thomas Strickland was a fun-loving child who always loved anything with wheels and speed. As an adult he moved from Big Wheels to real wheels.

Mr. Strickland died Aug. 22 in a boating accident in Incline village. He was 40.



Carl
Strickland

Mr. Strickland was born Jan. 11, 1974, in Kansas City, Mo.

His outgoing, charismatic personality made his life memorable for everyone around him. During college, Mr. Strickland managed and operated the start-up of two surgical practices in San Francisco before becoming director of information systems for the international legal consulting firm Major, Lindsey & Africa (formerly Major, Hagen & Africa), while simultaneously

completing his degree in international business from University of San Francisco in 1999.

In 2000, Mr. Strickland moved to Lake Tahoe with his partner, Bruce Lindstrom, where he founded a real estate investment and development company, the Tahoe Zephyr Group LLC. In 2001, the two founded Point Foundation, the national LGBTQ scholarship fund.

Mr. Strickland served on the board of directors of several private companies and pursued his passion for Point Foundation, automobiles, classic wood and contemporary boats, international travel and snowboarding. He was passionate about life, with a desire to experience every adventure to the fullest.

He is survived by his life partner of 17 years, Bruce Lindstrom of Crystal Bay; his parents, Jeanne Thomas (Wayne Auer) of Boise, Idaho, and Richard Strickland (Pam) of Prairie Village, Kansas; sister Kathy Weinert (Mike, Ryan and Julianna) of Boise, Idaho; his grandmother, Betty Thomas Baker of Boise, Idaho; and many loving family members and friends.

Contributions in memory of Mr. Strickland may be made to Point Foundation.

USFS trying to save native river mussel in Tahoe



Western pearlshell mussels in the Upper Truckee River are being measured, weighed and tagged. Photos/Kathryn Reed

By Kathryn Reed

Part of the U.S. Forest Service's nearly \$5 million restoration of its section of the Upper Truckee River includes relocating 12,000 Western pearlshell mussels.

This summer 10 percent of the mollusks are being plucked from the river's bottom, weighed, measured and tagged, then put in coolers before being relocated to other sections of the river, as well as Trout Creek, as part of a pilot project.

Scientists want to see how the relocation works before all of the mussels are moved.

Different control plots have been created so if there is a die-off the scientists will ideally be able to isolate what went wrong.

Mason Bindl hovers on the water, splashing a bit as he uses a snorkel and mask to look for these mussels that look big

enough to eat. He scoops them into a mesh bag.

On the riverbank are Cody Bear, Phil Meting Van Rijan and Erin Miller. They are recording the particulars about the mussels so as monitoring begins in October, and then continues every three months, officials will know the survival and growth rates.



Working on the project are, clockwise from right, Mason Bindl, Cody Bear, Phil Metting Van Rijan, and Erin Miller.

If they aren't removed, they all would die. This is because where they are will be drained in 2016 and then filled in with dirt. A final sweep of the current channel will be made that summer to retrieve any stragglers.

A new 7,000-foot river channel has been in the works for a few years.

Sarah Muskopf, fish biologist with the USFS, said, "It's important to salvage this population. Not only is it the last one, but it's a huge part of the ecosystem."

The creatures, which can live to be 100 years old, are considered filter feeders. This means they feed off the nutrients and contaminants in the water, which in turn helps with clarity.

These native mussels used to be prolific in the Upper Truckee Watershed. Their numbers are diminishing. While scientists don't know exactly why the decline has occurred, they point to declining habitat for the mussels.

"The habitat is marginal here at best," Muskopf said.

They prefer cold, clean water with a cobble or gravel floor. That's exactly what is being designed for the new channel.

Most of the current channel lacks gravel, is warming because it is so shallow and is murky because of all the sediment.

River otters are the mussels' main predator. When the Lahontan cutthroat trout were in the river this also helped the mussel population grow because they would feed off the excrement.

Besides the Upper Truckee River, these pearlshell mussels are found in the lower Truckee River – beyond the dam in Tahoe City – and in other fresh water bodies in the Western United States.

Opinion: Liberty Utilities ratepayer rip-off scheme

By Roger Patching

You are about to be ripped-off big time by your local electric company, Liberty Utilities (LU). But, if you act now, we might be able to stop it. We're going to try to simplify what LU wants to hide in technical smoke and mirrors. The rip-off amounts to more than \$50 million distributed among only 49,000

ratepayers.

First of all, newly created LU is not your standard utility like PG&E or SMUD. It is wholly owned by a Canadian holding company (Algonquin Power and Utility Company) that raises investor funds (Wall Street) to buy energy projects, particularly lucrative renewables. Their primary concern is not to serve as a publically regulated utility, but to produce big profits for investors through the manipulation, most recently, of vulnerable little utility monopolies it acquires.

The way it works isn't complicated. The subsidiary company (LU), at the behest of its parent (Algonquin), tries to sell the regulatory California Public Utility Commission (CPUC) the notion that it needs an "upgrade" when it doesn't. If approved, LU's owner issues stock on the promise of high growth and/or LU borrows the project money from its parent (Algonquin). The project costs and financing are passed to the ratepayers. It has little to do with building to meet energy demands, but rather for enhancing the parent's balance sheet.

And since the engineering doesn't exist to justify expansion, the sales pitch is by corporate attorneys using fabricated figures instead of actual science. We, and other nonprofits, led by the North Tahoe Citizen Action Alliance (NTCAA) have challenged the false claims. The worry, however, is that LU's scheme might succeed with the CPUC unless more of you get involved. The unnecessary "upgrade" has to do with North Tahoe/Truckee.

The issue and their sales pitch: Power runs in a loop between Truckee and North Tahoe. Imagine a clock with Truckee at 12, Northstar at 2, Kings Beach at 5, Tahoe City at 7, and Squaw/Alpine at 9. The power runs in a circle both ways so that even with a break somewhere in the line power would still be delivered in either direction. Most of the loop operates at 60kV. And with residential growth the capacity could be increased with new lines. Sound simple? It's meant to. This

idea was introduced by Sierra Pacific Power (SPP) in 1996 when it projected 54 percent growth in 15 years. It didn't happen! While Truckee grew there was essentially no growth on the loop. Ignoring this historical fact, the same plan to rebuild the entire loop is now being pitched as needed to serve Northstar/Squaw resorts as well as Martis Valley developments. The wise approach would be to take less expensive steps that upgrade the weakest part of the system first.

But no, LU and its parent don't want a simple and incremental project. That's not how they make money. They want to enlarge the entire loop line to 120kV at a cost of over \$50,000,000. Especially egregious and unnecessary to rebuild now is the 625 line between Kings Beach and Tahoe City – which would cost half of the \$50 million. Contrary to the well-honed narrative by LU, this line is already heavy duty and won't need to be updated for decades, if ever. Its current capacity already grossly exceeds what is needed for the North Shore. Moreover, increased building is not anticipated along this line because it falls in the basin under TRPA's jurisdiction, unlike Martis and the ski resorts.

This is the scheme we are fighting. Remember, when LU was part of SPP with 1.1 million ratepayers, any such infrastructure costs would be borne by all of them. Algonquin bought a tiny inexpensive portion (renamed LU) whose 49,000 ratepayers will now bear this cost. And most of them are absentee vacation homeowners in the basin who don't follow local affairs and are easy to frighten with fear tactics of mid-winter power outages. Environmentally, the unnecessary rebuilding of the North Shore's 625 line will also cause the removal of over 25,000 trees – the largest forest removal and road-building project in the basin in modern history.

Want more information, both general and technically detailed, proving that we don't need such a project? In spite of massive stonewalling by LU regarding data requests, we've got it. Learn more and whom to contact to halt this project by going

online.

Lastly, while we volunteer our time, our efforts to protect your property, quality of life, and pocketbooks are not accomplished without funding – like for the brilliant utility consultant who worked on this project. Contributions to us, NTCAA, and others are needed and appreciated. They can be done via our websites and U.S. mail.

Roger Patching is president/CEO of Friends of Lake Tahoe.

Man rescued from Lovers Leap

A rock climber had to be plucked from Lovers Leap after having fallen about 20 feet.

The Aug. 31 incident occurred about 12:15pm. Lake Valley fire, El Dorado County search and rescue, CalFire, CHP and CalSTAR assisted in the rescue.

The man, whose name-age-hometown have not been provided, was stabilized by a rope rescue team. He was then placed in a Bauman Bag and hoisted into a California Highway Patrol helicopter. At the Strawberry meadow he was transferred to CalSTAR, which took him to Renown Medical Center in Reno.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Study: Cutting class, even a little, has consequences

By Brian Nordli, Las Vegas Sun

A study released Tuesday found that missing even a handful of days of school can cripple student achievement in the classroom.

Researchers from Attendance Works, a national advocacy group, found that students who miss three days or more in the month before taking National Assessment for Educational Progress tests exhibited skill levels that were one or two years below their peers. The exams are widely considered the nation's report card and can provide a snapshot for each state, according to the study, titled "Absences Add Up."

The findings held true in Nevada, where 22 percent of students in fourth and eighth grade reported that they missed more than three days in the month leading up to the exam.

Read the whole story

Wildflower talk, slideshow at LTCC

There will be a free slideshow at Lake Tahoe Community College on Sept. 12 from 7-8pm by wildflower enthusiast Lisa Berry.

Berry is an adjunct faculty member in the English Department

and a fan of photography and flowers.

The slideshow will feature photos of the best specimens of the season. The talk will be in the board room at the college.

This free event is sponsored by the LTCC Library and the California Native Plant Society. For more information, contact Lisa Berry at Berry@ltcc.edu.

STPUD board not unanimous in contract vote

By Kathryn Reed

On a 3-2 vote Thursday afternoon, the South Tahoe Public Utility District board approved a three-year contract for employees that calls for raises of at least 6 percent and up to 9 percent in that time period.

Voting no were Chris Cefalu and Randy Vogelgesang.

"I can do the 2 percent cost of living. I cannot cap it at 9 percent," Cefalu said at the Sept. 4 meeting. "My decision has been known all along." He thought 9 percent was too high.

Vogelgesang, though, changed his mind at the meeting. He suddenly was having issues with the three-year agreement. He said he wanted to be responsive to ratepayers who have concerns about the contract.

"Right now talking about it is not the time because we made the union an offer," General Manager Richard Solbrig responded. "If you pull it off the table, there are consequences."

Had the offer been changed or not approved, the district would have faced state sanctions regarding unfair labor practices.

The board adopted the agreement at an Aug. 15 special meeting. Cefalu was not at that meeting and Vogelgesang said he didn't remember that decision.

Two members of the public spoke at Thursday's meeting. Pamella Bondor-Wenziger, who attended meetings in the spring when rate increases were discussed, questioned why the public doesn't have a say in salary increases.

Board President Eric Schafer assured her she was being heard, but it will be for future boards to take any action on what she had to say.

Kenny Curtzwiler said he believes the incoming board, of which there will be at least one new member (Schafer is stepping down) and the potential for two, should be deciding on the contract.

Schafer said the five seated were elected to do a job, were capable of doing it and those decisions should not be kicked down the road.

This is the second salary increase for STPUD employees in the last two years.

The board in November 2012 unanimously approved a four-year contract for the union and two-year for management that was retroactive to July 1, 2012. Union members received between a zero and 13.31 percent pay hike, while the management group increase was between zero and 14.1 percent. About two-thirds of the 92 union employees received a raise.

There are now 110 employees in the union and 17 managers not represented by the union.

The 2012 contracts allowed for salaries to be discussed at the two-year mark, which is now. Discussions about management wage

increases are ongoing.

More details of the current contract are in this *Lake Tahoe News* story from Aug. 29.