Horizon casino turns into training facility



South Lake Tahoe's SWAT vehicle rams the entrance of the former Horizon casino in Stateline on Aug. 13. Photo/Provided

South Lake Tahoe's SWAT team stormed the old Horizon casino on Wednesday, causing extensive damage to the Stateline property.

And the owners are OK with this.

This was one of many training exercises by law enforcement at what is now a construction site. Brothers Jon and David Park are spending $60 million to transform the property into Lake Tahoe Hard Rock Hotel.

Because the large-scale renovation calls for significant demolition, SWAT and K9 units have had the opportunity to practice realistic scenarios in a controlled environment.

Start exercising to cut breast cancer risk

By Melissa Healy, Los Angeles Times

For women past childbearing age, a study finds that a modest amount of exercise — four hours a week of walking or more intensive physical activity such as cycling for just two hours a week — drives down breast cancer risk by roughly 10 percent.

If exercise were a pill, its effectiveness in driving down a woman's breast cancer risk would occur fairly quickly, the new research says: When women reported at least this modest level of physical activity over the last four years, they were less likely to have developed malignancy in a breast.

But, like a pill, exercise must be continued for the effect to endure: Even if a woman had been physically active earlier in life, when her reported physical activity levels dropped below the equivalent of four hours of weekly walking, her risk of developing breast cancer went back up.

Read the whole story

The wolf's controversial return to California

By Alexandra Ossola, Popular Science

In 2011, a male gray wolf called OR-7 left his pack in Oregon and traversed over 1,200 miles. While this sort of travel isn't atypical for gray wolves, the terrain that OR-7 covered set him apart from the pack; he became the first confirmed wolf in California in almost a century, making him an apple of the public eye.

Since OR-7 broke away from his group – the Imnaha pack in northeast Oregon – his life looks different. OR-7 traveled a small way back North and found a mate in the Cascades of southern Oregon. The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) has confirmed that the pair produced at least three pups, although there may be more.

But OR-7's notable route to fatherhood has reawakened a debate in California that is almost as old as the state itself: how to manage the gray wolf. With OR-7's wolf family knocking at California's door, the state must make a plan for how to manage a species that inspires an entire range of emotions within California's population.

"The public is fascinated by the issue of wolves in the West," said Karen Kovacs, Wildlife Program Manager for the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW). "People have some perceptions of how wolves are that are oftentimes not compatible with the regulatory authorities of the states that manage [the wolf population]."

As recently as the 1970s, the West had no wolves at all. That's a stark contrast to the 1800s, when settlers found their livestock populations constantly ravaged by wolves. In each state, extermination programs were put in place to ensure the total eradication of wolves; before 2011, the last confirmed sighting of a wolf in California was in 1924.
"The public is fascinated by the issue of wolves in the West."

But after a small wolf population reappeared in Montana in the 1980s, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) was inspired

to reintroduce an “experimental population” of wolves to Yellowstone National Park. The ecosystem there, it appeared, was out of balance without wolves at the top of the food chain: elk populations were out of control, and overgrazing drastically reduced the amount of vegetation. The flow of rivers had even changed, as barren river banks eroded more easily.

Much of the public was enamored with the idea; a 1985 survey of visitors to Yellowstone National Park showed that three quarters of those polled were in favor of reintroducing wolves. And since then, the praise has only become more frenzied. Videos and op-eds abound singing the wolf’s praise, calling it a keystone species and “an American hero.”

But not everyone was so happy. A small group of dissenters – especially farmers – were very much against the plan, believing their livestocks would be targeted by the new predator. An intense public debate ensued, but after a nearly decade-long fight, the U.S. Secretary of Interior signed the decision for the reintroduction of gray wolves to Yellowstone; wolves were then captured in Canada and transported to the national park.

Read the whole story

$7.5 bil. water bond to be on Calif. ballot

By Melanie Mason, Los Angeles Times

California lawmakers approved a ballot measure for a $7.5 billion water bond Wednesday evening, following an eleventh-

hour scramble to secure bipartisan support by increasing funding for new reservoirs.

Soon after lawmakers wrapped up, Brown signed AB1471 by Assemblyman Anthony Rendon, D-Lakewood, one of two identical measures they had approved. It had passed the Assembly on a 77-2 vote and won unanimous approval in the Senate.

“We hit the sweet spot when it comes to a balance between the various water needs of California – between storage, groundwater, clean drinking water and the whole host of other investments that are in this bond,” said Senate President Pro Tem Darrell Steinberg, D-Sacramento, in an interview before the vote.

As for the costs, Steinberg added, “I think $7.5 [billion] hits it just about right.”

Sen. Jim Nielsen, R-Gerber, said past water plans were too focused on the Sacramento Delta, and the new bond recognizes the water supply needs of the whole state as well as the water rights of farmers and others.

Read the whole story

Truckee man accused of having sex with minor

Erwin Bosbeli Cifuentes-Perez, 24, of Truckee was arrested Aug. 12 on charges of having sex with a minor.

The victim’s parents contacted Truckee officers to report the relationship between the victim and suspect who lives in Kings Beach.

Detectives determined the relationship was consensual, however the suspect is several years older than the victim. This makes the sexual relationship illegal.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Snippets about Lake Tahoe



• Work started this week on a maintenance project that will repave more than six miles of Highway 193 in El Dorado County. Work is expected to be complete by the end of October, weather-permitting. The highway will be subject to daytime one-way traffic control at various locations; expect delays up to 10 minutes.

• Olympic Valley businesses have raised $75,000 since 2012 to preserve and restore Lake Tahoe and the region's watersheds through the Green Bucks program and direct contributions. The money goes to Tahoe Fund for projects.

• Incline Village's golf course has been named a Top 10 Short Course in America by *Golf Range* magazine and Best Course for Women by *Tahoe Traveler*.

• South Lake Tahoe residents Bryan Burnam and Jacob Hanneman have started Bakpocket Products, a line of ultralight, outdoor products including hammocks, beach blankets, ecofriendly backpacks, bags and accessories. More info is available online.

Tahoe shoreline troubles a mystery to scientists

By Kathryn Reed

It doesn't take science for people to know Lake Tahoe's shoreline is growing as the drought persists. But it does take science to determine the health of those waters.

The annual "Tahoe: State of the Lake Report 2014" was released today by the Tahoe Environmental Research Center at UC Davis.

"While this year's data shows that progress is being made on many fronts, the biggest concern is what is not able to be shown," TERC Director Geoff Schladow said in a statement Aug. 14. "This really applies to the near shore where most people experience the lake. Even with the planned increase in monitoring, why it is continuing to degrade is poorly understood. I'm hoping the near shore network will start to fill that void."



Emerald Bay and Lake Tahoe in April 2013. Photo/LTN file

The Near Shore Agency Working Group is tasked with figuring out why there is so much muck near the shore line. Algae and

other plant life have been steadily growing, and the once clear waters are often brown. Periphyton is the algae found on rocks.

It wasn’t until this year that scientists in the respective agencies that regulate and study Lake Tahoe decided to make a concerted effort to find out why the degradation is occurring and what can done about it. The first six of 20 near shore monitoring stations will be installed this month. This will give researchers real-time data about water quality. They will be installed on private and public property.

Most of the studies that have been conducted at Lake Tahoe since 1968 involve monitoring the clarity in the middle of the lake with a disc that looks like a white dinner plate. While some of that data will help with near shore issues, most of it won’t.

The good thing about a drought is that it means less sediment reaching the lake from runoff. It’s fine sediment that scientists say is the leading cause of the decline of lake clarity.

The current State of the Lake Report explains how drought, climate change, and other natural and human factors are driving changes at Lake Tahoe.

2013 was the second consecutive year Lake Tahoe did not mix to its full depth. The lack of mixing was because surface temperatures were higher.

July 2013’s surface temp of 65.6 degrees was the highest recorded in five years. This was 1.8 degrees more than 2012.

The loss of near shore clarity and rising temperatures creates a breeding ground for invasive species.

Alan Heyvaert, an associate research professor and director of the Center for Watersheds and Environmental Sustainability at

the Desert Research Institute, is leading a group of researchers studying the near shore.

UNR and DRI researchers have installed cameras on mountaintops that in part are being used to study the near shore. They have documented a 90 percent decline in small species that live in the sand at the bottom of the lake – stoneflies, worms and bottom shrimp. Those species are important to the lake's food chain.

But also alarming is the discovery of new species.

"Changes in the length of seasons will alter the way in which water moves in the lake, leading to the possible loss of dissolved oxygen at the bottom of the lake," the State of the Lake Report says.

This in turn will also change the ecosystem because the chemical balance in the lake will be altered. This, too, will affect aquatic life.

Researchers are predicting that by the end of this century, summer may be two months longer than it was in the 1960s, and maximum temperatures may have risen by 8 degrees.

"With regard to climate change, we have really only scratched the surface," Schladow said. "We have little understanding of how extreme events will play out and impact the Tahoe basin and the Sierra."

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Notes:
• Tahoe Environmental Research Center Director Geoff Schladow will present highlights from "Tahoe: State of the Lake 2014" on Aug. 14 from 5:30-7:30pm at TERC, 291 Country Club Drive, Incline Village.
• Here is the full report.

2 injured in West Slope school bus crash



Four people were hurt in West Slope school bus accident on Aug. 14. Photo/CHP

Updated 12:05pm

Two students were taken to the hospital this morning following a three-vehicle accident on the West Slope.

The El Dorado Union High School District bus was hit head-on by a vehicle at 6:30am Aug. 14. The driver of the passenger vehicle was arrested on suspicion of driving under the influence, according to the California Highway Patrol.

Another vehicle was also involved in the Thursday morning crash on Grizzly Flat Road in Somerset.

The injuries are not considered serious. The other students were loaded onto another school bus.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Candidates solidified for November ballot

Some familiar names will be missing from the Nov. 4 ballot when it comes time for South Shore residents to vote.

Roberta Mason, an original member of the Lake Tahoe Community College board of trustees, is stepping down after 40 years. Newcomer Jeff Cowen is running unopposed for her seat.

Bob Grant and Michelle Sweeney are vying for the seat being vacated by Molly Blann. Also running for the college board is incumbent Kerry David. He has no challengers.

New this election is LTCC and Lake Tahoe Unified School District board members are being elected to represent specific areas. This means people will only be voting for one person.

Wendy David is stepping down from Lake Tahoe Unified's board to run for City Council. Ginger Nicolay Davis is running unopposed for that seat. Barbara Bannar is running unopposed to retain her seat.

In addition to David, the council candidates are incumbents Tom Davis, Brooke Laine and Angela Swanson, and Bruce Grego, Austin Sass and Matt Palacio.

Longtime South Tahoe Public Utility District board member Eric Schafer is calling it quits. Vying for his seat are Duane Wallace and Andy Chapman.
Incumbent Jim Jones is being challenged by Jeff Romsos. Incumbent Chris Cefalu is running unopposed.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Consensus lacking for future of Regan Beach

By Jessie Marchesseau

Upward of 100 people congregated on Regan Beach on Tuesday evening for the South Lake Tahoe Parks and Recreation Commission's workshop to help determine the future of this area.

"We can't have a community project without community input," said Parks and Recreation Commission Chairman Pete Fink as he opened the evening's workshop.

Luckily, most of the attendees on Aug. 12 were practically bursting with input.

The crowd was promptly broken into groups, each led by a representative from either the commission or city staff. They were toured around the entire Regan Beach site as leaders pointed out areas of concern and encouraged residents to make suggestions, come up with new ideas and express opinions.

It is no surprise that more than one heated discussion ensued. It seemed few people agreed on anything.

One Al Tahoe resident suggested all parking be removed so the park is accessible only to those on foot or bicycle, coinciding with a citywide effort to become a more bikeable, walkable community. Others were adamant the free parking should remain for residents who don't live nearby and so those with children or mobility issues can still easily access the park.

There was some talk of doing away with weddings at the beach,

a service which brings in between $30,000 and $40,000 per year in rental fees according to Recreation Manager Lauren Thomaselli, but blocks off portions of the beach on most summer weekends. Others argued for it to stay, saying it was not only an important source of income to the city, but provided a place for residents and visitors alike to have an affordable wedding in Tahoe.



South Tahoe residents offer ideas about what Regan Beach should be going forward. Photos/Jessie Marchesseau

Some suggested Regan Beach should be restored to what it was in the 1950s, a sloped natural beach; others said that would result in too much erosion and all the sand being washed away. Lakeview Commons kept popping up as a point of comparison. Some people want to see Regan Beach more like its popular neighbor; some want it as different as possible.

One nearby homeowner would like to see Regan Beach remain virtually as it is now, except for maybe cutting all the trees down to improve views for adjacent homeowners.

Many of the attendees were residents or homeowners in the Al Tahoe neighborhood. This may explain why some of them seemed to have agendas to keep as many people out of the park as possible, pushing out groups, weddings, people with dogs and people with cars.

To one such comment a woman chimed in: “Everyone wants to be the last one in and shut the door behind them. Do you want to be a neighborhood or a bunch of Nazis?”

Through the many debates and discussions of the evening, two issues stood out as hot topics: legal enforcement and dogs.

Some residents pushed for stricter enforcement of just about everything: bigger fines for having dogs outside the dog area, fines for dogs pooping, fines for glass on the beach, for smoking, for drinking, for being there after hours, and more. Some were advocating hefty fines for these offenses, $200-$500, with a theory that if violators are fined, they will have more respect of the town and lake. Others just commented this could be a good revenue source for the city since they did away with the paid parking plan.



With Lake Tahoe so low, there is more to Regan Beach.

As for the dogs, part of Regan Beach is currently designated as a dog water park while dogs are prohibited on the rest of the beach. There is some signage alerting beach-goers of this policy, but it is minimal and dogs often end up in the dog-free zone. Clean-up baggies are provided at the entrance to the dog area, but not all dog owners are inclined to use them, resulting in unwanted dog waste lying about.

For some, the solution is to ban dogs entirely. Others would like the dog park to stay, but implement better signage and/or

impose fines for violations. One attendee was adamant there should not be a dog park anywhere near the lake, submitting an article discussing the toxicity of dog feces for planners to review. Meanwhile, another resident suggested Regan Beach would be an ideal place to implement the Park Spark Project, installing devices which turn dog waste into energy to power things like street lights.

Organizers handed out 100 surveys and maps for attendees to fill out during the workshop. Questions included which neighborhood you live in, how often you visit the park, what amenities you think are important, what amenities you would like to see in the future and how often you would come if those things were implemented. People were encouraged to draw on the maps, indicating what changes they would like to see and where. Those who did not receive a map were asked to place sticky notes with suggestions on the big map displayed under the tent.

The sticky notes included comments such as: “remove grass”, “keep grass”, “no dogs”, “allow dogs”, “add more playground equipment”, “remove playground”.

After the evening’s workshop, ideas for the future of Regan Beach appear to be all over the board. But one thing is for certain: the city and Parks and Recreation Commission have their work cut out for them in trying to come up with a plan which the community can agree on.

Tuesday’s workshop was just the beginning of a long process. City Manager Nancy Kerry said there will be plenty of public meetings and lots of planning to come. If things move quickly, construction could start as early as next year.

The last time Regan Beach saw a major overhaul was in the 1990s. Kerry said according to surveys conducted by the city over the last year, it is one of the top three public areas respondents would like to see improved, and thanks to some

recent restructuring of debt she hopes to have between $1.5 million and $2 million to dedicate to the project.