

Opinion: Setting the facts straight about rafters

By Nate Rangel

Twenty-three years ago, back in 1994, Bernard Carlson filed suit against El Dorado County and the permitted professional outfitters on the South Fork of the American River. He claimed that the granting of permits, under existing law which protects the environment, the community and local taxpayers, was a discretionary act and that the then existing River Management Plan and accompanying EIR was deficient. It turned out that he was right, and as part of the settlement that the county and my colleagues reached with him we engaged in what became an extensive seven-year process which resulted in a new management plan, along with a comprehensive and all-encompassing EIR. That management plan, backed up by its EIR, is the current “general plan” for the South Fork of the American.

Larry Weitzman, in his **July 31 opinion** piece titled “Rafting companies need to pay to play”, seems to have just discovered river recreation in El Dorado County. His list of grievances and alleged taxpayer subsidies are all matters that were dealt with and satisfactorily mitigated within that plan. In reality, Weitzman is a couple of decades late to the party and appears to have jumped on the “alternative facts” bandwagon. Or, put another way, he doesn’t know what he’s writing about.

He starts his list of complaints by discussing the huge burden that we pose on county search and rescue operations, and he backs that up with the one incident he was able to find – the tragic disappearance of a non-rafter on the Cosumnes River. It’s puzzling how that single event on another river bears any relationship to our operations here, but I’m sure Weitzman has it all figured out in his mind.

He then goes on to boldly claim that “taxpayers are spending about \$30,000 a year on a bus shuttle, purely to benefit the commercial rafting industry.” Again, he’s more than a bit fact challenged on this one. The shuttles he’s talking about are partially paid for by DMV registration fees specifically earmarked for pollution fighting programs such as this. They come via grants from the local Air Quality Management board that help satisfy traffic mitigation requirements within the existing Management Plan for private boaters. They utilize vehicles and trailers that were partially paid for by funds from the county’s River Trust Fund (the dollars that commercial outfitters pay to the county) and – here’s the best part – none of those shuttles, nor any of the dollars spent on them, is used by the commercial rafting industry. Nada ... zilch ... zero ... not one red cent.

Weitzman proceeds to expose the “potential slush fund” that the River Trust fund represents. According to him it pays for one single county employee which is – guess what – completely wrong. Those monies fund the entire river management program which includes one river recreation supervisor, two assistants, and other staff within the Parks Division, including the parks manager, to the degree that their time is allocated to river recreation issues. He decries as insufficient the dollars that outfitters spend toward our activities citing only the user-day fees paid to the county. He neglected to mention the put-in and take-out fees that we pay for use of Henningsen- Lotus Park, the fees paid to State Parks for use of Marshall Gold as well as the take-out at Folsom Reservoir, the dollars paid for lunch use at Cronin Ranch, a BLM managed resource. Or the money we spend annually in property taxes for our equipment to the county, or the county’s possessory interest tax we spend yearly based on our permits or the dollars we pay to get an environmental health permit so that we can feed our guests meals. The list goes on and on. The bottom line is we do pay to play, and we pay big time.

Finally, Weitzman accuses the rafters of wanting, through the auspices of the River Management Advisory Committee, to “tell the county how to run the river concessions. Isn’t that the tail wagging the dog?” I can only suppose that’s because we have one single commercial outfitter representative on RMAC. The fact that the RMAC is only an advisory to the Board of Supervisors and consists of six other appointed positions representing private landowners, State Parks, local businesses, one private boater and two at-large seats seems to have escaped him. But, again, in Weitzman’s world somehow our one vote is “wagging” that dog.

Weitzman’s headline alleging our failing to “Pay to play” is ironically accurate only in that he has failed to pay the price of being a legitimate journalist. His entire hit-piece is replete with lies, half-truths and irresponsible allegations with no basis in reality. The next time Weitzman goes trolling for a new crusade I’d suggest he pick a battle that wasn’t previously waged 20 years earlier, that he do his homework and that he get his facts straight.

Nate Rangel is a local resident and professional river outfitter. He is the current appointed outfitter representative on the El Dorado County River Management Advisory Committee.

Wine lovers are skipping the stores

By Dave McIntyre, Washington Post

Jan and Michael Gibson are wine lovers who don’t go to wine

stores. Instead, they go directly to the wineries, and have the wines shipped to their home in Rockville, Md. They are part of the small but rapidly growing “direct to consumer” sales channel that is chipping away at the traditional post-Prohibition distribution system.

“We travel to California at least once a year to visit wineries,” Jan says. They favor small wineries that sell most or all their production at the tasting room or through their wine clubs, and the couple looks for organic and biodynamic producers. “We have not found a good variety or quality of organic wines available in Maryland,” she says. The Gibsons also visit wineries when they travel in New Mexico or Virginia, but their favorites are from Mendocino and Sonoma counties in California.

More than 5 million cases of wine were shipped by U.S. wineries directly to consumers last year, up 17 percent over 2015, according to an annual study published by *Wines & Vines* magazine and Ship Compliant, a company that helps wineries navigate the labyrinth of state laws and regulations governing direct shipments. Those shipments totaled \$2.3 billion in value, with the average price per bottle at \$38.69. And they accounted for 8.6 percent of domestic wine sales by value, not including restaurants. (While Americans purchased \$26.9 billion in domestic wines last year, the average price per bottle for all sales was \$9.29.)

Read the whole story

Community college transfer

degrees speed graduation at CSU

By Alexei Koseff, Sacramento Bee

Early alumni of California's community college transfer program are showing promising results for the 7-year-old law's efforts to ease the path to a bachelor's degree.

Of a group of nearly 1,100 students who transferred to California State University in fall 2013 with the associate degree for transfer, 48 percent graduated within two years, data provided by CSU shows, compared to 31 percent of all undergraduate transfers. Within three years, 80 percent had completed their studies, 16 percentage points higher than transfer students overall.

The associate degree for transfer was created by legislators to clear up the confusion of varied requirements that had resulted in poor transfer rates from California community colleges to four-year schools.

Read the whole story

UNR, ACLU defend right of student who attended white nationalist rally

By Sam Gross and Siobhan McAndrew, Reno Gazette-Journal

Peter Cytanovic will start his senior year at UNR on Aug. 28.

UNR and the American Civil Liberties Union of Nevada referenced the First Amendment in defending Cytanovic, who will not be expelled and will keep a job on campus.

Cytanovic was identified as a participant in a white nationalist rally that turned deadly, in Charlottesville, VA over the weekend.

Read the whole story

NHPA, MADD working to stop drunks on the road

The Nevada Highway Patrol Association and MADD are partnering to end drunken and drugged driving, support victims of drunken driving, and bring an end to underage drinking.

Both organizations will tackle key issues such as reducing the number of drunken and impaired drivers on the highways and staffing NHP vacancies that currently hinder effective enforcement.

This partnership also includes working directly with legislators in Carson City to develop and support legislation addressing the safety of Nevada highways.

Foam Fest benefits adaptive sports program

Achieve Tahoe (formerly Disabled Sports USA Far West) will host its 28th annual Foam Fest fundraiser Sept. 2 from 2-6pm on the KT Sundeck at Squaw Valley.

Foam Fest brings people together for an afternoon of beer tasting and live music; this year featuring Ozomatli.

Proceeds from the event support Achieve Tahoe's yearlong one-to-one adaptive sports program serving individuals with disabilities (physical, sensory, intellectual) of all ages. The nonprofit also serves disabled veterans.

Foam Fest showcases a variety of regional breweries serving samples of their craft beers, and includes raffle prizes.

Foam Fest tickets are \$30 in advance and \$40 at the door for unlimited beer tasting and live music. Non-samplers: \$20 donation for the concert. Kids under 12 are free. Tickets are available **online**.

2-day mountain bike-beer event in Meyers

The 5th annual Tahoe Mountain Bike and Brew Festival in Meyers is Aug. 26-27.

The free festival staged at Divided Sky will include live music, beer garden, barbecue, kids zone, vendors, and lots of riding.

The latest bikes from Ibis, Specialized, Trek, Norco, Pivot, YT Industries, Intense, and Rocky Mtn will be available to try. Local breweries include South Lake Brewing Company, Lake Tahoe Aleworx, Coldwater Brewery and 50/50 Brewing.

For more information and to sign up for rides (some cost money), go **online**.

Budget cuts threaten clean-up of most polluted areas

By Paige Blankenbuehler, High Country News

This month the Waste Management and Regulatory Oversight Subcommittee had a hearing to discuss the fate of Superfund, a program of the Environmental Protection Agency. The meeting comes one week after the Superfund task force, which was created by EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt in May, released its first report with recommendations for cleanups of sites.

But the fate of the program may be threatened by budget cuts proposed to the EPA and the Superfund program, which will shrink by 30 percent if President Donald Trump's budget is passed. Although Trump's proposed cut to the EPA was expected, the deep cut to Superfund was not. Pruitt has previously said he does not support cutting the Superfund program and instead promised to prioritize it.

"Unfortunately, many of these sites have been listed as Superfund sites for decades, some for as many as 30 years," Pruitt wrote in an announcement of a Superfund Task Force in May. "This is not acceptable. We can – and should – do better."

The Leviathan Mine in Alpine County is a Superfund site and the old Meyers landfill that has been cleaned up was once on that list.

Read the whole story

ColorBlast run benefits Tahoe youth organization

Tahoe Youth & Family Services' annual ColorBlast 5K Run is Aug. 19 during Carson Valley Medical Center's Health Fest 2017.

Runners get covered from head to toe in different colors at each 1K marker while running or walking the course. Each section has a different color. All of the colors are safe because they are corn starch based.

The race is non-competitive and runners from all ages and ability levels are encouraged to participate.

Wearing white is encouraged to show off the color.

The race starts at 9am in the Carson Valley Medical Center parking lot at 1107 Highway 395 North in Gardnerville.

Cost is \$40 for adults, \$30 for ages 11-17, and free for children 10 and under. Register **online**.

Snippets about Lake Tahoe

- Sept. 2 is a free fishing day in California.
- Lake Tahoe South Shore Chamber of Commerce's After Five Mixer at Zephyr Cove Resort is Sept. 28 from 5-7:30pm. Cost is \$10 for members, \$20 for others.
- The Nevada Department of Wildlife, city of Reno, Truckee River Foundation and One Truckee River Initiative opened two life jacket loaner stations this summer to offer life jackets to boaters, anglers and swimmers who use the Truckee River.
- Here are the El Dorado-Tahoe and Sierra roadwork schedules for the week.
- MontBleu at Stateline is putting on an extreme midget wrestling contest.