

Mountain, road bike races in Ely

On Sept. 9, cyclists will get the chance to see if they have the steam to beat the old trains of Ely.

Road bikers will begin with a short ride to the entrance of the Robinson Nevada copper mine where they will circle a 240-ton haul truck. On their descent toward Ely, they will be side by side with the giant iron horse coal fired steam engine. The road bike course spans approximately 25 miles with an elevation gain of 820 feet.

Mountain bikers will ride 11 miles on single and double track trails with an elevation gain of 1,400 feet.

Entrance fee is \$75. To register and for more information, go **online**.

All racers will receive a shirt, finisher's medal, swag bag, barbecue ticket and train ride voucher which may be used to get the racer and their bike to the start line (bike spaces are limited) or on one of the regular train excursions scheduled throughout the weekend.

Modified 747 could soon fight Calif. wildfires



The modified 747 would be limited where it could fight fires. Photo/Global Supertanker Services

By Michael McGough, Sacramento Bee

Some of the summer's worst wildfires have spanned tens of thousands of acres in California.

As heat waves continue in the dry season, a new weapon may soon be at firefighters' disposal to help combat wildfires across the state.

The Global SuperTanker – a converted Boeing 747-400 jet capable of dropping 19,000 gallons of water or fire retardant – last week received interim approval from the Interagency Airtanker Board, Fireaviation.com reported, clearing it for use over the next 17 months.

Read the whole story

Tahoe Tails – Adoptable Pets in South Lake Tahoe



Peaches

Peaches is a year-old silver pit bull who is very pretty.

She loves to play with other dogs and didn't chase the cats that she met at the shelter. She is also very affectionate. The shelter's Facebook page has a fun video of Peaches playing with a couple of the other dogs who are also looking for new homes.

Peaches is spayed, microchipped, tested for heart worm, and vaccinated. She is at the El Dorado County Animal Services shelter in Meyers, along with many other dogs and cats who are waiting for their new homes. Go to the Tahoe animal shelter's Facebook page to see photos and descriptions of all pets at the shelter.

Call 530.573.7925 for directions, hours, and other information on adopting a pet. For spay-neuter assistance for South Tahoe residents, go **online**.

– Karen Kuentz

Fire fee for rural Calif. homeowners suspended

By Eli Stillman, Paradise Post

Thousands of rural residents including many homeowners in El Dorado County will no longer be paying an annual fire prevention fee that was enacted in 2014.

The fire prevention fee of more than \$153 for homeowners in the state responsibility area totals \$83 million annually for state government. The fee has been suspended until 2031 under a cap-and-trade bill that was passed by the Legislature last week.

Under AB398 the fee will now be supplemented using proceeds from the state's cap-and-trade auctions.

Read the whole story

Opinion: Rafting companies need to pay to play

By Larry Weitzman

I want my readers to understand about county government functions. Services that provide a general benefit, like public safety (sheriff, DA, PD, probation) roads, infrastructure, zoning, business licensing and parks, to a lesser extent, provide a general benefit to all county residents and should be paid for by the general population and the general fund. I did mention licensing, but that should be

self-funded, whereas fines and penalties aren't intended to fund public safety.



Larry Weitzman

As to building and safety, those are supposed to be self-funded just as the requirements we place on builders with respect to on- and off-site improvements for housing developments and charge huge traffic impact mitigation fees to provide for most of that. El Dorado County already has taxes on the tourist and recreation industry in the form of a 10 percent tax on hotels/motels and other temporary lodging called the transit occupancy tax. It raises millions of dollars and helps pay for the extra services required as a result and although it is general fund money, it's an excuse to fund things like the EDC visitors' bureau, festivals and other tourist and business draws. South Lake Tahoe makes bank on its TOT.

El Dorado County is blessed with incredible beauty and topography making it a playground for the semi-adventurous and adrenalin junkies alike. We have one of the best recreational rivers in the country, the American. It is a magnificent show of nature, it's power and beauty. The South Fork of the American River (SOFAR) flows through the Marshall Gold Discovery Historic State Park like the financial aorta of EDC.

As a result, it has spawned a huge industry: commercial rafting. It's been ongoing for decades with some years drawing over a 100,000 people who want the thrill of running rapids like Troublemaker. It is a rush. And that's only one of

several that will get your heart rate going. With the paddling required, it will add to your cardiovascular conditioning, too. For this year about 70,000 are expected to run the river with a commercial raft company. About the same number of people do the river in their own kayaks and rafts.

As a result of all this activity several problems are created. First is the public safety that has to be provided, emergency response teams, noise issues, crime issues, code enforcement, huge environmental issues and water quality concerns. Most of this falls on the EL Dorado Sheriff's Office. Just last week, they had their elite team of seven divers, all deputies, scouring the Cosumnes River looking for person a reportedly missing, spending hundreds of hours including overtime looking for this individual. On top of that, the taxpayers are spending about \$30,000 a year on a bus shuttle subsidy, purely to benefit the commercial rafting industry. An educated guess as to the total dollar amount spent on these river issues exceeds \$1 million. That could be a lot of road fixing money. Rafting is not a priority, but the roads are. But almost of this money comes from the general fund.

In looking at rate schedules from the various outfitters, the average cost for a river trip is over \$100 a person. One outfitter listed cheapest run at \$95 for a half river run on a weekday. On the weekend that goes up by \$20 and any other trip goes up from there. Rafting the river is about the price of Disneyland, and Disneyland does it all: policing, environmental, cleanup, maintenance and shuttle buses.

What do the rafting outfitters pay the county to run their enterprises? There is a \$200 permit charge per company and a \$2 a head put into the River Trust, which is used to pay for one county employee (river recreation supervisor Noah Rucker-Triplett) who works administratively with the rafters (a complete accounting needs to be done on this potential slush fund). The outfitters take in in excess of \$7 million but pay nothing for the privilege of making this money. Taxpayers end

up paying for the sheriff, environmental services, code enforcement or the continuing damages to the private citizens who live near the river who have to put with the noise pollution, commotion, huge late-night parties, vandalism, theft, trespass and more. In fact, the 6-mile stretch from about a half a mile east of Troublemaker rapids to where the river turns southwest from Highway 49 toward Folsom Lake at the Greenwood Circle day use area is designated a quiet zone. It probably is quiet compared to the take-off areas of LAX or SMF, or maybe not.

At a very recent River Management Advisory Committee meeting in the Marshall Gold Discovery Park Museum to discuss the updated County River Management Plan, the rafters want to tell the county how to run the river concessions. Isn't that the tail wagging the dog? There was no county representative present at a very one-sided meeting that bordered on mob rule. While an official county advisory committee, their actions may have been beyond the law and their authority. It's called an "ultra vires act."

The river outfitters want to play, but don't want to pay. If the outfitters want to have input, they can start by absorbing all the costs they create. There is a Planning Commission meeting scheduled for Aug. 10 at 8:30 am at the hearing room in Building C in Placerville to discuss the update and possible approval of the River Management Plan (RMP). It shouldn't be approved. It should be modified to reflect the costs and how those costs are going to be paid because of the outfitters commercial enterprises. We need a study to determine what exactly these costs are and how and who is going to pay for them. As above, we have a TOT on lodging, why not on the rafters, too? They create bigger problems than the hotel/motels in EDC. We need a 10 percent river fee (tax) and a permit fee for private users. We should call it the rafters assessment tax.

The RMP is deficient until a cost study is done. Approval by

the Planning Commission without a complete cost analysis would be derelict of their duty to the residents of EDC. Otherwise, the residents of EDC are going to pay, while the rafters play and make money at taxpayer expense. That is not a proper function of government. I doth protest and so should everyone else. Tell your supervisors enough is enough. While I wish the rafting industry continued success, the taxpayers should not be supporting and subsidizing these businesses. They need to pay their own way.

Larry Weitzman is a resident of Rescue.

Bay Area petition targets Waze, Google Maps

By Judy Peterson, Bay Area News Group

A Los Gatos resident who is fed up with cut-through beach traffic has started a change.org petition that she plans to personally deliver to Waze and Google Maps officials, telling them they're "ruining" the quality of life in Los Gatos.

Debbie Moessinger launched the petition and spoke about gridlock on the east side of Los Gatos at the June 20 town council meeting. Moessinger estimated that portions of a 15-block area of streets were gridlocked from 11am to 2:30pm on June 17.

"We were unable to get out of our driveways, to get into our driveways," Moessinger said. "There were frustrated drivers weaving in and out of traffic. I witnessed many extreme safety issues with drivers."

Read the whole story

Eclipse plea from regulators: Stay in the dark

By David R. Baker, San Francisco Chronicle

When a solar eclipse darkens the sky next month, California energy regulators have a small request:

Don't turn on the lights.

Or, if you must, please make sure they're LEDs.

The Aug. 21 eclipse that will completely block the sun across a wide arc of North America arrives at a time when California is relying more and more on solar power. During past eclipses in the United States, no one had to wonder how the events would affect electricity supplies. Now they do.

Read the whole story

Real estate sales value in basin on upswing

The luxury housing market in the Lake Tahoe Basin has helped the total sales for the first half of the year reach more than a half billion dollars.

According to Chase International, the value of single-family residences in the basin for the first six months of 2017 was \$511,139,859. For the same period in 2016 the number was \$472,811,970.

There have been 104 houses priced at \$1 million or more that have sold this year.

Incline Village has been the hot spot for sales with \$175,924,050 in sales for the first six months.

The South Shore was the region with the second highest value at \$145,112,125. However, the number of houses sold dropped year-over-year from 318 in 2016 to 274 in 2017. The average home price, though, is increasing – \$500,589 last year, \$529,606 this year.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Etheridge's lyrics continue to resonate with fans

By Susan Wood

SPARKS – From her gritty heartland rock to the resurging heartfelt soul, Melissa Etheridge's love of her craft has stood the test of time.

It shows in concert when she switches guitars, engages her audience with a wink, a nod and a roll of the eyes as well as those times she belts out those confessional lyrics with that signature raspy voice.

Once again, she proved it in front of hundreds of adoring fans

at the Nugget Saturday night in Sparks with a four-member band. At one point near the end, the singer-guitarist-songwriter clad in blue jeans and a black leather coat even joined the drummer with synchronized percussion.

Always dancing to her own drummer, Etheridge from the opener to the end gave the audience a taste of her diversity between light beams on stage with a few classics like "Hold On, I'm Coming" off her current album "Memphis Rock and Soul," a follow up to the more contemporary "This is M.E." compilation.

"I have so much music to play for you tonight," she said, with a coy smile in the beginning.

And the crowd reciprocated, raising phones to chronicle the moments. Throughout the night, many rocked out with abandon when she knocked out some of her biggest hits "I'm the Only One," "The Way I Do," "Come to My Window," "I Want to Come Over," "Resist," "If I Wanted To" and her career-launching "Bring Me Some Water."

With the help of good acoustics, the concert was delightfully refreshing and certainly nostalgic. After all, Etheridge is more than a singer in these last 30 years.



Melissa Etheridge delights hundreds of

fans at the Sparks Nugget on July 29.

Photo/Kathryn Reed

She's a songwriter with 15 Grammy Award nominations – winning two in 1993 and 1995. She's an accomplished guitarist, who can lay down the blues to accompany the searing rock anthems she's known for. She's a no-holds-barred activist, who has collaborated with other artists and organizations ranging from her contributions to gay causes and participation in the environmental movement. The latter led to an Academy Award for Best Original Song "I Need to Wake Up" for Al Gore's documentary "An Inconvenient Truth."

All of this is a far cry from those young days at age 8 when she first started strumming the guitar in Leavenworth, Kansas.

I wondered if she expected the extent of success and fame, so I asked her in an interview before the Sparks concert.

"That was the dream growing up, but it certainly was not what I thought it would be," she told *Lake Tahoe News*.

I saw her play at the 3772 Club in Pasadena.

"Yeah, but back then we called it Vermie's," she said, snickering.

It was the mid-1980s. She sat on a stool with a microphone and a guitar in front of about 30 people. I couldn't understand it. People were talking over her, and I kept urging them to be quiet. They didn't realize they were witnessing the early stages of musical greatness.

Etheridge met a record executive through a friendship at that tiny bar.

I also followed her outdoors.

During the West Coast Women's Music Festival in the mid-80s outside Yosemite National Park, the announcer took the stage

to announce “a special treat” of a performer. When the announcer yelled “Melissa,” most in the few thousand gathered didn’t know who she was.

But after that, I’m sure they remembered who they saw. She belted out “Piece of My Heart” in pure Janis Joplin style. The audience went crazy.

Her career hit full throttle.

And in the midst of it, I witnessed it again at the 5,000-seat arena of the Harveys Outdoor Summer Concert Series about a decade ago.

There’s only one Melissa. She has such a sense of a longing spirit. She is someone who knows the fragile state of love, writing about the angst like a poet. She also provides the impression of someone who would overcome life’s hard knocks. This especially became apparent when she was diagnosed with breast cancer about a dozen years ago.

But don’t call her a survivor.

“I’m a thriver,” she told *Lake Tahoe News*. “I never thought I would be battling anything other than myself.”

It makes sense. Much of her chronicling her music history Saturday night involved “redemption and resurrection.” She sings it because she lived it – through failed relationships that have taken her on a journey leading to the best time of all. She’s content, married with children, and still playing her music.

Indeed, she gets her strength from internal forces – but gives it out externally to others.

“I’m downright happy,” she said. “I’m proud of my life’s choices. They weren’t always the best choices. But they’re the best I could ask for.”

This is what they mean by “live and learn.”

She gravitates toward the intimacy of the smaller venues, recalling with affection those early days before being discovered. But the party and ride have been fun along the way.

“I’ve done it all. There’s certainly a joy when playing to 30,000 people, but there’s certainly a distance,” she said.

She keeps touring because the opportunities arise, declaring her favorite venues are in Amsterdam, Montreal and Chicago, but she would agree to play in Lake Tahoe again.

Then, there are personal reasons.

“I’ve had two marriages and four children,” she said, hinting at the financial aspect.

“This is what I love to do,” she said, further admitting to having no plans “to slow down.”

As long as she continues to approach new projects and more opportunity for music exploration to match her life’s exploration, she intends to chug along and fight the good fight.

Her music catalog spans 13 albums since 1988.

The compilations exemplify times in her life, and she touched on those times by addressing the crowd on July 29 with an understanding of getting your heart ripped out such as the stirring “Stronger Than Me” from the aptly named “Breakdown” album of 2000.

Throughout the highly personal setbacks and challenges, Etheridge has always used her life’s experiences as an opportunity to professionally share insight.

She even used a selfie stick to record her audience

connection.

“Say hi to Twitter,” she yelled to the crowd, adding her extra fascination with Northern Nevada: “This is Reno Sparkssssss.”

She left with the most obvious words of wisdom from a life bent on peaks and valleys.

“Choose love, spread peace,” she called out.

Melissa Etheridge continues her musical journey, playing tonight at the California State Fair and onto the legendary Fillmore concert hall in San Francisco Aug. 1.

Feds call Nevada Air Guard C-130 to battle wildfires

By Benjamin Spillman, Reno Gazette-Journal

With wildfires raging throughout the western U.S. a Reno-based National Guard unit will join the firefighting effort.

The deployment of a specially equipped Nevada Air National Guard C-130 comes at the request of the U.S. Forest Service.

The aircraft is equipped with Modular Airborne Firefighting Systems, referred to as MAFFS, and will be based in Fresno during the deployment.

Read the whole story