Pile burning in Kingsbury Grade area

U.S. Forest Service fuels management crews continue prescribed fire operations on Kingsbury Grade near Andria Drive this week, weather permitting.

Residents and visitors can expect to see smoke from this prescribed fire project area. The Forest Service strives to minimize the impacts of smoke on local communities. Smoke-sensitive residents should consider staying indoors and keeping doors, windows and outside vents closed. To directly receive prescribed fire updates, send an email to pa_ltbmu@fs.fed.us.

Forest Service staff will post road signs around areas affected by prescribed fire, and update the local fire information line at (530) 543.2600, No. 6. Other federal, state and local fire management agencies may also be conducting prescribed fire work during this period.

Placer County allocates $3 mil. for Tahoe-area projects

The Placer County Board of Supervisors last week approved spending $3 million by the North Lake Tahoe Resort Association for four capital and transportation projects.

NLTRA is contracted with the county for transportation and

infrastructure development, and tourism and visitor information service.

The four projects are:

North Lake Tahoe Historical Society Black Bear Exhibit ($10,000). The funding will go toward an interpretive display in the Gatekeepers Museum in Tahoe City;

Auburn, Truckee and North Lake Tahoe Visitors Centers ($112,000). This project will allow for development and installation of two visitor-oriented displays in Auburn, Truckee and the moving and upgrading of the existing visitor center in Tahoe City;

North Lake Tahoe Water Shuttle Pilot Program ($380,000): This is funding for a three-year pilot program that will use water shuttles on the lake to connect the West Shore, Tahoe City, Carnelian Bay and Tahoe Vista; and

Lake Tahoe Regional Multimodal Pedestrian and Safety Improvement Project ($2.5 million): The project, formerly known as the Kings Beach Commercial Core Improvement Project, will upgrade and repair a 1.1-mile stretch of Highway 28 through Kings Beach. The TOT funds will help fund construction of curb, gutter, sidewalks and storm water drainage elements.

S. Tahoe cops clamping down on drivers using cell phones

How often do you see drivers texting or talking with hand-held cell phones and wish they would be stopped and cited?

California’s second annual Distracted Driving Awareness Month this April will once again find law enforcement in the South Lake Tahoe joining in statewide zero tolerance enforcement efforts for illegal cell phone use and texting violations.

A ticket for violating either the hands free or no texting law costs a minimum of $159, and subsequent tickets cost $279.

South Lake Tahoe Police Department will join hundreds of police and sheriff departments plus the CHP to conduct distracted driving enforcement operations.

Drivers who use hand-held devices are four times as likely to get into crashes serious enough to injure themselves, officers say. Younger, inexperienced drivers under 20 years old have the highest proportion of distraction-related fatal crashes. In addition, studies show that texting while driving can delay a driver’s reaction time just as severely as having a blood alcohol content of a legally drunk driver.

There are simple measures drivers can take to minimize distractions in the vehicle:

• Turn your phone off or put it out of reach before starting the car.

• Alert callers that you are unable to take calls when driving by changing your voicemail message.

• Make it a point not to call or text anyone who may be driving, such as during the commute to and from work or school, especially parents calling teen drivers.

• If you do need to make an important call or respond to a text message, pull over to a safe place to do so.

• If going cold turkey is too much of a stretch and you just can’t turn your phone off, consider using one of the available mobile phone apps that holds calls and incoming texts.

Workers needed to ensure Genoa Trail will open in mid-May

Last October, Carson Valley Trails Association work crews began manual construction of the last three-quarters of a mile of the Genoa Loop Trail, a segment of the 16-mile Genoa Trail System.

Work on this trail system started in May 2011, with volunteer hand crews and a professional trail building contractor using two trail building machines. In September it was determined that the first 500 feet of elevation on the south ridge of Genoa Canyon was too narrow, rocky and steep to use the trail building machine, so that portion of the trail had to be hand built. Trail building work continued until just before Thanksgiving, leaving another 1,000 feet of trail to be completed.

Trail work in Genoa Canyon resumed in March and will be completed by the official opening of the Genoa Trail System on May 12. Widening of the trail in hardrock areas is under way, using an electric jackhammer powered by a 3,000 watt generator. The generator must be manually carried as needed for nearly a mile.

Volunteers are still needed to help with the final cleanup on the Genoa Loop Trail. No previous trail building experience is required. For more information, contact Jeremy Vlcan at (775) 722.8784 or jrvlcan@aol.com.

Comments sought on final phase of Blackwood Canyon

The public comment period on the Blackwood Canyon project along the West Shore has been extended to May 10.

The Lahontan Water Quality Control Board is considering a mitigated negative declaration to comply with CEQA requirements.

Work on this Placer County project has been going on for a number of years. The last phase by the U.S. Forest Service is expected to reduce excessive bank erosion and channel incision, improve floodplain connectivity, enhance wildlife habitat and restore degraded riparian plant communities.

The Forest Service through its NEPA process found no significant impacts for the project. However, the water board staff determined additional mitigation measures and information are needed to comply with California environmental regulations.

Copies of the documents may be obtained by calling (530) 542.5400 or going to the water board office at 2501 Lake Tahoe Blvd., South Lake Tahoe.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Human desire is to gravitate toward a tribe

By E.O. Wilson, Newsweek

Have you ever wondered why, in the ongoing presidential campaign, we so strongly hear the pipes calling us to arms? Why the religious among us bristle at any challenge to the creation story they believe? Or even why team sports evoke such intense loyalty, joy, and despair?

The answer is that everyone, no exception, must have a tribe, an alliance with which to jockey for power and territory, to demonize the enemy, to organize rallies and raise flags.

And so it has ever been. In ancient history and prehistory, tribes gave visceral comfort and pride from familiar fellowship, and a way to defend the group enthusiastically against rival groups. It gave people a name in addition to their own and social meaning in a chaotic world. It made the environment less disorienting and dangerous. Human nature has not changed. Modern groups are psychologically equivalent to the tribes of ancient history. As such, these groups are directly descended from the bands of primitive humans and prehumans.

The drive to join is deeply ingrained, a result of a complicated evolution that has led our species to a condition that biologists call eusociality. “Eu-,” of course, is a prefix meaning pleasant or good: euphony is something that sounds wonderful; eugenics is the attempt to improve the gene pool. And the eusocial group contains multiple generations whose members perform altruistic acts, sometimes against their own personal interests, to benefit their group. Eusociality is an outgrowth of a new way of understanding evolution, which blends traditionally popular individual selection (based on

individuals competing against each other) with group selection (based on competition among groups). Individual selection tends to favor selfish behavior. Group selection favors altruistic behavior and is responsible for the origin of the most advanced level of social behavior, that attained by ants, bees, termites—and humans.

Among eusocial insects, the impulse to support the group at the expense of the individual is largely instinctual. But to play the game the human way required a complicated mix of closely calibrated altruism, cooperation, competition, domination, reciprocity, defection, and deceit. Humans had to feel empathy for others, to measure the emotions of friend and enemy alike, to judge the intentions of all of them, and to plan a strategy for personal social interactions.

Read the whole story

El Dorado County putting on bike event

The Great Bike Ride is the annual kick-off event each May in support of Bike Month. The bike ride begins at noon May 1 in the breezeway of Building A at the El Dorado County Government Center.

Bring a bicycle and a helmet. T-shirts will be given to all participants.

Participants will ride along the El Dorado Trail from Forni Road to the Weber Creek Bridge or Missouri Flat Road.

If you plan to participate and want a complimentary lunch from

Friends of the El Dorado Trail – RSVP no later than April 27 to Joni Rice at jrice@edctc.org.

Register online and log miles in support of Million Mile May. This year's cycling goal for the Sacramento Region is 1.5 million miles. National Bike to Work Day is May 18.

Court denies appeal of gambling cheat included in Black Book

By Cy Ryan, Las Vegas Sun

CARSON CITY – The Nevada Supreme Court has denied the appeal of Brent Eli Morris, convicted of illegally entering Las Vegas casinos while a member of the Black Book and cheating at craps.

Morris says he was never notified he was included on the list that bars individuals from going into Nevada casinos.

He says he was in prison in February 1994 when the Nevada Gaming Commission placed his name in the list of excluded people. He was serving a seven-year term for cheating at a Lake Tahoe casino.

After a four-day trial in Las Vegas in March 2011, he was convicted of four counts of violating the exclusion by the Black Book at the Orleans, Gold Coast, Excalibur and Caesars Palace.

He was also convicted of two counts of cheating at craps for placing bets after the dice was thrown. He received an 8- to 20-year prison term.

Read the whole story

Drought expands throughout the United States

By Doyle Rice, USA Today

The U.S. hasn't been this dry in five years.

Still reeling from devastating drought that led to at least $10 billion in agricultural losses across Texas and the South in 2011, the nation is enduring more unusually parched weather.

A mostly dry, mild winter has put nearly 61% of the lower 48 states in "abnormally dry" or drought conditions, according to the U.S. Drought Monitor, a weekly federal tracking of drought. That's the highest percentage of dry or drought conditions since September 2007, when 61.5% of the country was listed in those categories.

Only two states – Ohio and Alaska – are entirely free of abnormally dry or drought conditions, according to the Drought Monitor.

The drought is expanding into some areas where dryness is rare, such as New England.

"Conditions are starting to worry us now," said Keith Eggleston , a climatologist with the Northeast Regional

Climate Center in Ithaca, N.Y.

According to the U.S. Geological Survey, stream flow levels are at record or near-record lows in much of New England. The Drought Monitor lists all of Vermont as “abnormally dry,” just six months after the state’s wettest August on record that stemmed mainly from disastrous flooding by the remnants of Hurricane Irene.

Read the whole story

Opinion: Embracing FDR’s Four Freedoms would serve the country well

To the community,

We live in a troubled world. A time of economic depression and senseless wars. In a way the scene is similar to the mid-1930s and early ’40s. And we are in the middle of a political contest for the highest office in the land. And the political parties are in a muddle. What to do, what to do. They are not clearly framing the issues that need to be debated in clear language. But there is a way to do that.

In his 1941 state of the union address, FDR delivered the Four Freedoms. Freedom of religion, freedom from fear, freedom from want, freedom of speech.



Bill Crawford

At FDR’s request, Archibald MacLeish put together a group to create a pamphlet for widest possible publication o n the Four Freedoms. The group was formed. The pamphlet was written by Reinhold Niebuhr on religion, Max Lerner on freedom from fear, Malcolm Cowley on freedom from want, and E.B. White on freedom of speech. White did the rewrite.

I believe the issues of the Four Freedoms are alive and need national attention and discussion by the political parties. We need clear language to outline the nation’s problems. The rebirth of the Four Freedoms, what those words mean, would be helpful. If done, that might give the nation direction, purpose, and achievement at home in nation building. Political parties should lead the debate. If they do not, we will continue to muddle and drift along to our ruin.

Bill Crawford, South Lake Tahoe