

Learn about the basics of wine tasting

Rick Kushman, wine and food writer and educator, will teach a Wine 101 class called “Why Wine is More Fun Than People Make it Seem” on May 12 from 1:30-3pm at Lava Cap Winery in Placerville.

Kushman will cover how to get more out of a wine country experience and drinking wine. Learn tips on tasting – and practice with Lava Cap wines – discover keys to grape growing and winemaking, and why any of that matters.

He’ll also decode some of the more annoying “wine speak” and offers pointers on how not to be a wine snob, even accidentally.

Tickets are \$25 per person. Seating is limited. To purchase tickets, call (530) 621.0175.

USFS multimillion dollar South Shore fuels reduction project to start this summer

By Kathryn Reed

Needing to reduce the threat of another wildfire was a point easily agreed to. How to accomplish that goal – well – that was finally resolved at 10:20pm April 11. It took eight years to reach that decision.

On Wednesday the Lahontan Water Quality Control Board voted 5-0 to approve the permit that will allow the U.S. Forest Service to begin the South Shore Fuel Reduction and Healthy Forest Restoration plan. (Board member Jack Clarke was absent.)

The South Shore project is designed to treat 10,200 acres in 10 years at a total cost of \$42 million. That dollar amount covers planning, implementation and monitoring.

About \$30 million is in hand; coming from the Southern Nevada Public Lands Management Act. About one-third of that has been spent on planning.



Photos/Kathryn Reed

"The longer the process goes, the less we have," Scott Parsons, forester with the USFS, told *Lake Tahoe News* during a break in the meeting.

"With the absence of fire, you get sites like this."

— **Duncan Leao, USFS**

Where the remaining \$12 million needed to complete the project will come from is still a mystery. But the amount in the bank

should cover the first five years, according to Forest Service officials.

Plenty of finger pointing went on during the more than two-hour discussion at Lahontan's new South Lake Tahoe offices on Silver Dollar Avenue. Plenty of talk of moving forward was part of the dialogue, too, with the emphasis being on collaboration.

"The project is a necessity to accomplish the Forest Service's goals and the community needs, while protecting water quality," George Cella, engineer geologist with Lahontan, said.

One of the problems with the state water board and the federal agency working together is they overlap jurisdictions with different mandates. Lahontan's primary concern is water quality. The Forest Service, while concerned with water quality, deals with habitat, forest health, recreation and other mandates. Lahontan only has jurisdiction in California; the Forest Service works on both sides of the state line.

"Fuels projects on the Nevada side move through the approval process much more quickly. We have completed planning, analysis, project implementation and monitoring for fuel reduction treatments on 5,000 acres in Nevada in the time it has taken us to complete planning for South Shore. Planning for another 4,000 acres near Incline Village is nearly complete," Forest Supervisor Nancy Gibson told the Lahontan board.

Lahontan, until now, had a strict rule of not allowing mechanical equipment to be used in stream environmental zones. The thinking was the soil disturbance that would send sediment into the waterway was more of a concern than dense growth of vegetation that could spark a fire.

Looking back to the June 2007 Angora Fire that destroyed 254 houses, the burn pattern shows some of the hot spots that

propelled the fire were the untreated stream areas, especially near Angora Creek.

“While SEZ treatment using mechanical equipment are new for Lahontan, the Forest Service has successfully implemented them in the Round Hill and Spooner projects on the Nevada side, and at the Heavenly Valley SEZ demonstration project on the California side,” Gibson said.

The Tahoe Regional Planning Agency permitted those Nevada projects.

A problem with moving projects forward in the Lake Tahoe Basin is the number of agencies involved. After the Angora Fire a bistate commission was formed to develop protocols. One of the mandates from the May 2008 documents was to create a streamlined approach to permitting. The purpose was to speed things along – in particular the treatment of hazardous fuels.

That has not happened.

While Lahontan and TRPA created a memorandum of understanding that called for TRPA to issue permits, that was challenged in court. Thus, the reason Lahontan is part of the process.

Fire management in Tahoe

One of the problems with fires in the Lake Tahoe Basin is that only 25 percent of them are weather related. This means the bulk are from causes like errant campfires (Angora Fire), cigarettes being discarded (Gondola Fire) or some other unpredictable cause.

Gibson, who this week is marking her one-year anniversary of being in charge of the Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit, said the forest she came from on the North Coast had the opposite ratio. Lightning was a huge ignition source, which meant by monitoring the weather, fire suppression resources could be allocated early.

Tahoe is also unique with so much development being in the middle of a forest. With the basin's forest abutting the urban areas, it makes fuel reduction projects all that more important.

Gibson sat down with *Lake Tahoe News* in an exclusive interview before the Lahontan board meeting to talk about fire, permitting and the future.

"Look at the expense, time and anxiety in dragging this project out," Gibson said. "In 2008, we had clear direction from the bistate fire commission to act quickly. It's the luck of the cards nothing has happened."

She worries forests will continue to become drier as the snowpack lessens and does not stick around as long because of climate change.

"The only way we are going to get ahead of it is with fuels reduction," Gibson said.

With all agencies facing financial constraints, wasting time – which equates to dollars – is no longer sustainable.

Gibson said Lahontan could have easily rolled the state environmental process into the federal.

She also said it is time to put aside past philosophical differences and look at the best course of action to decrease wildfires and ensure the forest's health.

What will be treated

Even though Lahontan extended an invitation to hundreds to see sections of the South Shore project, only 20 people were on the tour Wednesday afternoon before the meeting. And that group consisted of various agency reps and the media – no members from the general public.

Three of the six Lahontan board members were on the tour – Amy

Horne, Eric Sandel and Don Jardine.

First stop was an aspen project near Taylor Creek that was treated in January. Winter thinning occurred because no snow was on the ground. Other aspen restoration projects are contained in the South Shore plans.

The tour demonstrated sites that use mechanical equipment – which includes whole tree skidding and cut to length – and hand crews.

Parsons, with the Forest Service, said a prescription for each segment is designed, which in turn says how the site should look when the project is done. Prescriptions weigh several factors, including fuels, habitat, riparian needs, types of vegetation, and slope.

Using machines speeds up the work, which in turn cuts down the expense because less time is needed. Hand crews are the ones who create the burn piles. Mechanical treatment either hauls the fuels away, or redistributes some of the matter on site. The latter to mostly deal with erosion to cover bare soil.

Martin Goldberg with Lake Valley Fire Protection District said hand crews are definitely expensive.

Stop No. 2 on the tour was behind South Tahoe High School's shop building. Walking down the forest road to the left is an area that was not touched by the Angora Fire, but will be thinned in the South Shore project. To the right is a section that for the first couple hundred feet was treated mechanically and farther up had trees felled by hand as evidenced by the teepee-shaped burn piles.

At the end of Nez Perce Street in the North Upper Truckee neighborhood is an example of the wildland urban interface being treated nearly a decade ago. But beyond the thinned area is a creek and dense vegetation that need tending to. The road will need to be worked on and the creek crossing upgraded

before rigs can be brought in to do the heavy lifting.

Goldberg said the No. 1 question he gets from homeowners is asking why they have to do defensible space when they know a few hundred feet from their structure is a fire hazard in the forest. It's the law for homeowners to have defensible space. (Goldberg used to work for Lahontan.)

"Had Angora started off Highway 50, this would have all been lost," Goldberg said of the homes in that particular area.

The last area on the field trip was off Highway 50 near the Truckee River where there is a turn out on the right side of the road heading west just before North Upper Truckee Road.

Duncan Leao with the Forest Service said, "With the absence of fire, you get sites like this."

Wood was everywhere.

Ideally, he said, an acre should have less than 10 tons of fuel. Sitting there, Leao estimated, was more than 60 tons of fuel.

To thin the area by hand would cost close to \$9,000 an acre, while mechanically it would be about \$3,500, officials said.

"Hand treating is out of the question. I'm not sure why we are discussing it," Goldberg said as he looked over the area.

This isn't the only area in the basin, let alone the South Shore project, with this amount of buildup.

"You see this a lot near Saxon and Trout creeks. A lot of heavy fuels," Leao said.

While the need to thin was reiterated, so was the fact that once the South Shore project is done it really isn't. That's because trees and other vegetation keep growing, so the need for fuel reduction projects will never go away.

The South Shore project will begin this summer.

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Fundraiser benefits Heavenly Freestyle Team

The Eric Nageotte-Lowe Memorial Fundraiser benefiting the Heavenly Freestyle Team is April 14 from 6-10pm at Mo's Place in South Lake Tahoe.

Everyone is invited to hear live music by the Cash Only Band, buy a raffle ticket, eat, and meet and mingle with Heavenly freestyle team members, alumni, and coaches.

Raffle tickets are \$1 each. To make a donation or for more info, contact Lisa at (530) 573.0619.

Eric Nageotte-Lowe was an aspiring freestyle skier with dreams of making the U.S. Ski Team. He died training in New Zealand in 2004.

Fire destroys house in Alpine Meadows subdivision

By Martha Garcia, Colfax Record

A house in the Alpine Meadows subdivision about five miles east of Colfax was destroyed by fire Wednesday noon.

According to Cal Fire Battalion Chief Doug Rinella, a neighbor across the street from the one-story home located in the 28000 block of Manzanita Trail noticed flames shooting through the structure's roof.

"It's probably going to end up a total loss," said Rinella, who estimates the loss at about \$200,000.

[Read the whole story](#)

Global warming may increase Lyme disease

By Lynn Peeples, Huffington Post

Darren Collins doesn't know life without Lyme disease. He was just 11 months old when he came home from Wisconsin's Mauthe Lake Campground pasty white, lethargic and running a fever of 105. Darren's flu-like illness eventually subsided, but a host of other troubling Lyme-related symptoms – stomachaches, irritability and concentration problems – have since plagued the boy, now 10.

"He's like Jekyll and Hyde," says his mom, Kristin. One moment

Darren could be “happy and smiling,” and the next in a “complete rage.”

“He scores perfect on a spelling test one week, then gets every word wrong the next week,” adds Kristin, a nurse in Waukesha, Wisc. “He wants to know why he can’t be like other kids.”

Darren Collins holds up a flag with the names of another family afflicted by Lyme. Sisters, Sophie and Stephanie, frequent his chat room; both were too sick to participate in the fundraiser walk.

For now, Darren is settling for finding kids like himself, a group that has grown significantly over the decade since he contracted the disease from a tick bite. And according to experts, there may be a link between these increases and a changing climate.

A quarter of all Lyme disease cases are among children. At highest risk: kids ages 5 to 14, who are more likely to play outdoors and close to the ground, where ticks are ready to pounce. Darren recently launched an online chat room catering to this group. Every Friday night at 8 p.m. Central, he now talks online with nearly a dozen new friends who log on from as far away as Kentucky and Australia, all living with Lyme.

Overall numbers are on the rise, too. From 2005 to 2010, the number of Wisconsinites contracting Lyme each year jumped from 26 to 44 of every 100,000 people. Around 15,000 cases nationwide were reported to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in the mid-1990s. That number is now 30,000 to 40,000, although the CDC admits it could be as much as 12 times higher.

Lyme is just one of a lengthening list of emerging infectious diseases that are soaring in North America. Experts say that

increasing temperatures and altered precipitation patterns that accompany climate change are already playing at least a partial role in the spread and intensity of zoonoses – infectious agents that begin in animals and account for an estimated 75 percent of all newly emerging diseases. Cases of West Nile virus reported to the CDC, for example, rose from 21 in 2000 – a year after its arrival in New York City – to more than 1,000 in 2010.

Read the whole story

Day set aside to honor older Americans

Older American's Day – "Never too Old to Play" – celebration lunch is May 16.

The celebration will be at each of the senior nutrition sites in El Dorado County – South Lake Tahoe, Placerville, El Dorado Hills, Greenwood, Pioneer Park, Diamond Springs, and Pollock Pine. Lunch will be from noon-12:30pm.

Suggested donation of \$3 for those 60 and older and non-senior meals are \$5.

The theme of this year's Older American's Day celebration is "Never too Old to Play". The day celebrates the important role older adults play in sharing their unique experiences, wisdom, and understanding to other generations through spirited participation in social group and service organizations in our community.

For more information, call (530) 621.6341.

Boat inspections slated for 3 N. Nevada reservoirs

By Jeff DeLong, Reno Gazette-Journal

Guarding against the potentially disastrous spread of invading mollusks, Nevada officials hope to begin inspecting and decontaminating boats at three Northern Nevada reservoirs come summer.

A voluntary inspection program could be under way at Lahontan, Rye Patch and Wildhorse reservoirs sometime in July, said Karen Vargas, aquatic invasive species coordinator for the Nevada Department of Wildlife.

The program's goal is to prevent spread of aquatic invaders – in particular the quagga mussel, which has overrun Southern Nevada's Lake Mead since it was first discovered there five years ago.

Tests conducted last April indicated the presence of juvenile quagga mussels in Lahontan and Rye Patch – the first Northern Nevada water bodies where quagga contamination is suspected.

Read the whole story

Some salsa judges like it hot, hot, hot

I like hot salsa. That's all I'm going to say.

Oh, and I'm going to be a judge at the salsa contest April 15 at Sierra-at-Tahoe. But I'm only one of five judges, so this piece of insider information may not help.



Judges at
Sierra's 2011
salsa contest.
Photo/LTN file

But it might be worth your while to start mixing up a batch of salsa. A 2012-13 season pass goes to the winner of "traditional" and "fruity" varieties. Contestants need to bring 2 cups of homemade salsa to West Bowl by 10am Sunday, and specify what category they are entering.

For those who don't want to do the salsa bit, there will be pinatas for kids and adults, a taco eating contest (\$5 entry fee for five tacos), and live music.

– Kathryn Reed

Snippets about Lake Tahoe



- Passaretti's restaurant is about to start its 30th year of business in South Lake Tahoe. Beginning April 16, it will be reopen for lunch at 11am, seven days a week, serving the lunch menu until 4pm and the dinner menu until 9, 9:30pm on weekends.
- South Tahoe High School's graduation is June 8 at 4pm.
- Caltrans District 3 – which Tahoe is part of – has launched Facebook and Twitter sites to provide the latest updates on potential traffic delays, emergency lane closures and other news. For more information and to sign up for these sites, go online and click the Twitter and Facebook links.
- South Tahoe Association of Realtors created 127 Easter baskets for the Family Resource Center and Live Violence Free.
- After a 10-year hiatus from California, the 2013 Nature Valley U.S. Alpine Championships will be at Squaw Valley. The event will be March 17-23.

Scout looking to improve veterans' facilities on West Slope

Since 1997, Friends of the Veterans Monument has been creating a place to reflect, remember, and honor the men and women who

have served in the armed services of the United States.



The effort has been led by Rich Buchanan of Placerville.

This site that is used several times each year for special events, complete with flyovers that draw large crowds. Memorial benches are in place, but not enough to accommodate the growing attendance.

More seating, a kiosk and another structure for troop listings are just part of the vision that continues to form in the minds of this group.

Hayden Cooksy decided his Eagle Scout project would be to have two benches dedicated to this site. Cooksy explains that he chose two benches so that he can designate “one to commemorate those who served in the ‘forgotten war’ in Korea and one to honor the more current conflicts in the Middle East spanning from 1980 to the present”.

The Welcome Home Fund has been created at the El Dorado Community Foundation. This fund will be advised by seven members of the community, and will be used in the ongoing efforts of the Friends of the Veteran’s Monument to enhance the site in a myriad ways, including support for Cooksy’s Eagle Scout project.

Gifts may be made to the El Dorado Community Foundation’s Welcome Home Fund, P.O. Box 1388, Placerville, CA 95667.