Opinion: Explaining why Washoe Meadows State Park is being reheard

To the community,

Since the October meeting of California State Parks and Recreation Commission where the decision was unanimous to accept staff's recommendations., the director of State Parks, Ruth Coleman, approved the Upper Truckee River Restoration and Golf Course Reconfiguration project. The approved project is the proposed Preferred Alternative described in the Final Environmental Impact Report (EIR): River Ecosystem Restoration with Reconfigured 18-hole Regulation Golf Course (Alternative 2 Slightly Modified). On Nov. 23, 2011, a lawsuit that objected to the procedure used to process the approvals for the proposed project was filed on the project.

The Parks and Recreation Commission will take the opportunity to reconsider the approved project at its January meeting. In light of the lawsuit, the commission wished to ensure that they have a process in place that will stand the test of a legal challenge in order to not delay what is the clear and proper choice for improving the environment of the park area and the lake. This is too important to the future of this area to not ensure it can proceed in a timely fashion.

All comments, letters, transcripts, and presentations from the October 2011 hearing will be incorporated and included by reference in this reconsideration. Although there is no need to re-present materials the commissioners already have received, the public is invited to attend the meeting and offer testimony if they so desire. A revised notice of determination (NOD) will be filed. The commission meeting will be at the next regularly scheduled meeting on Jan. 27, 2012,

at 9am in the Community Room of the Brentwood Community Center, 35 Oak St., Brentwood.

Under statute, an agenda item must be heard within a radius of 100 miles of either Sacramento, San Diego, Los Angeles, San Francisco, San Bernardino, Eureka, Redding, Fresno, Ukiah, Monterey, San Luis Obispo, or Santa Barbara, whichever is closest to the project. In this case, since the project is in South Lake Tahoe, that city would be Sacramento, and Brentwood meets that requirement for the meeting location.

Cyndie Walck, California State Parks

Douglas County's master plan takes control from TRPA

By Anne Knowles

MINDEN – The Douglas County Commission approved an update to the county's 15-year-old master plan, paving the way for the county to take over permitting in its portion of the Lake Tahoe Basin from the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency.

"The TRPA wants to get out of the permitting process," Douglas County Commissioner Nancy McDermid, who also serves on the Governing Board of the TRPA, said during the Jan. 5 commissioners' meeting. "And as chair of the (TRPA's) local government committee, I'm telling you it's going to happen."

The revision calls for the county to work with the agency on the update of its long-awaited Regional Plan and ordinance codes and "explore the feasibility" of taking over permitting

responsibility through a memorandum of understanding.



With Douglas County taking more control of permitting in the Lake Tahoe Basin, it may have more of a say of what Edgewood Companies does with its land in Stateline. Photo/LTN file

Some of the work to update the county's local plans cannot be completed until the TRPA delivers its Regional Plan update, promised by year-end. That's because any plans for the Lake Tahoe Basin must comply with the TRPA's yet-to-be-completed plan, said Candace Stowell, planning manager for the county, during a presentation to the commission.

"Well, yes and no," McDermid said. "The city of South Lake Tahoe has adopted a plan and say they will comply" with the TRPA update after the fact, once the plan becomes available.

"We can't make changes until the TRPA comes out with a plan," Stowell replied.

Brandy McMahon, senior planner for the county, added that she

has been working closely with the TRPA Planning Director John Hester and Regional Planning Coordinator Arlo Stockham, but said local plans can only be updated after the TRPA plan is finished.

“The message we get from the TRPA is different than what they tell the staff,” McDermid said.

South Lake Tahoe adopted its updated General Plan in May 2011, with the caveat that it would change the plan where necessary in order to comply with the TRPA Regional Plan update. A month later, the League to Save Tahoe filed suit in U.S. District Court, claiming the city plan was out of compliance with the TRPA Regional Plan. In December, South Lake Tahoe City Attorney Patrick Enright said he expected Judge Garland Burrell to rule on the case in early January. There has been no ruling to date.

Douglas County’s master plan update also calls for the county to assist in the completion of the Stateline-to-Stateline Bikeway and to work with South Lake Tahoe, Caltrans and others in the planning and implementation of the Highway 50 Stateline Corridor/South Shore Community Revitalization Project.

The Highway 50 revitalization project will get more attention at the Jan. 10 meeting of Douglas County Planning Commission, when the commission gets status reports on the master plan changes and TRPA Regional Plan, according to Jo Etta Brown, chair of the commission.

Brown and fellow planning Commissioner Kevin Servatius were reappointed to the commission by the board of commissioners during its meeting. Public comment was unanimously in favor of reappointing the pair. Some spoke about the lack of representation of the lake on the board, but agreed that it was more important to keep people already up to speed on the complex issues facing the county. Bob Cook, project coordinator for the Chimney Rock chapter of the Nevada Fire

Safe Council, had also applied.

“Bob lives at Stateline and we live in the valley, but there’s no requirement to have someone from the lake and there never has been,” Brown told *Lake Tahoe News*. “We know Lake Tahoe needs our help. And 90 percent of the problems at the lake are problems here in the valley, too.”

The commissioners also added an action item saying the county would work with other stakeholders in the completion of the South Shore Vision Plan, a $70 million project to overhaul traffic routes, both pedestrian and vehicular, around the casinos. The item, proposed by Zephyr Cove attorney Lew Feldman, was approved but not before being changed to read that the county would incorporate the plan rather than adopt it.

Other master plan update items affecting the lake include changes designed to increase affordable housing throughout the county and development of green building codes.

Nevada’s largest casinos lose $4 bil. in 2011

By Sean Whaley, Nevada News Bureau

CARSON CITY – Nevada’s major casinos saw total revenues increase to $22 billion last fiscal year, but the 256

properties reported a net loss of just less than $4 billion, the Gaming Control Board reported Friday.

It was the third year of losses in a row. Before that the only loss since records have been kept came in 2002, the year after the terrorist attacks.

The report, called the Nevada Gaming Abstract, analyzes those casino properties grossing $1 million or more in gaming revenue for the year ending June 30, 2011.

It shows that total revenues increased by just more than $1.1 billion from fiscal year 2010, but the total dollar value of the loss reported by the properties increased as well, by $600 million from the $3.4 billion loss reported in 2010.

The abstract shows that 2008 was the last year the major casinos in Nevada turned a collective profit.

Michael Lawton, senior research analyst for the control board, said the report shows mixed results for the gaming industry.

“Really there are two sides to this income statement and the first side obviously is revenues,” he said. “Revenues did increase. They are at $22 billion compared to $20.8 billion last year. That’s the first increase we’ve seen since fiscal year 2007, however it’s still about 13 percent below the peak levels we saw in fiscal year 2007.”

The expense side continues to show volatility, however, Lawton said.

The report shows that visitors are coming to Nevada and Las Vegas casinos, but they are spending less on gaming and more on other amenities, he said.

“Total revenue” is the money spent by patrons on gaming, rooms, food, beverage and other attractions. “Net income/loss” is the money retained by casinos after expenses have been paid but prior to deducting federal income taxes and prior to

accounting for extraordinary expenses.

Gaming revenue accounted for nearly $10.2 billion of the $22 billion in total revenues, or 46.2 percent of the total. The 256 casinos paid $792.4 million in gaming taxes and fees, equating to 7.8 percent of their gaming revenue.

On a county-by-county basis, Clark County had 148 casinos grossing $1 million or more in gaming revenue during FY2011, which generated a combined net loss of just under $4 billion from total revenues of $19.5 billion. Washoe County had 30 casinos, which reported a combined net loss of $44.5 million from total revenues of $1.4 billion.

Nevada Gaming Abstract 2011 – Selected Statistics By Gaming Market

Area	Net Income/Loss	% Change from FY2010	Total Revenue	% Change from FY 2010	Gaming revenue from FY2010	% Change from FY 2010
Statewide	-$4 bil	+16.4%	$22 bil	+5.6%	$10.2 bil	+2.6%
Clark County	-$4 bil	+18.7%	$19.5 bil	+6.8%	$8.7 bil	+3.8%
Las Vegas Strip	-$2.2 bil	-14.1%	$14.5 bil	+9.3%	$5.5 bil	+6.4%
Downtown Las Vegas	-$59.9 mil	-18.7%	$900 mil	-0.6%	$496 mil	-2.4%
Washoe County	-$44.5 mil	+61.9%	$1.4 bil	-4.6%	$739 mil	-5.2%
Reno/Sparks	-$54.1 mil	+156%	$1.2 bil	-4.8%	$662 mil	-5.1%
Stateline	-$24 mil	-72.7%	$344 mil	-6%	$198 mil	-9.1%

In FY2011, 69 casinos owned by public companies accounted for

78.2 percent of the total gaming revenue generated statewide during the fiscal year.

USFS changing hours for Incline office

The U.S. Forest Service Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit is temporarily changing the hours of operation for its North Shore office in Incline Village.

Beginning Jan. 11the office will be open Wednesday through Friday from 9sm-3:30pm.

The North Shore office issues permits for Desolation Wilderness, as well as national recreation passes, including the Access, Senior and Annual Interagency passes. It also sells maps and offers hiking, biking, backpacking, off-highway vehicle and other recreation information for the Lake Tahoe Basin.

The North Shore office is located at 855 Alder Ave., and the phone number is (775) 831.0914.

Training on digital devices

The South Lake Tahoe Branch library is hosting free individual training sessions for many popular digital devices including laptops, tablets, iPads, Kindles and Nooks.

Each sessions is 30 minutes and are available from 10am to 4pm on Jan. 21, Jan. 28 and Feb. 4.

Call (530) 573.3185 for more information or to register for an appointment.

The library is located at 1000 Rufus Allen Blvd. in South Lake Tahoe.

El Dorado County man dies in mobile home fire

By Cathy Locke, Sacramento Bee

Fire officials are investigating the cause of an early morning fire at a mobile home park in Pollock Pines in which a 68-year-old man died and his wife was injured.

The El Dorado County Coroner’s Office this afternoon confirmed that the man found dead in the mobile home was John Harlan, said Battalion Chief Mike Pott of the El Dorado County Fire Protection District. He said Harlan’s wife, Virginia, was taken to Marshall Medical Center in Placerville, where she was treated for smoke inhalation and minor burns, and released.

Firefighters were called to the Wagon Wheel Mobile Home Park at 24 Hub St. at 12:19 a.m. The mobile home park is across the

street from a district fire station. Medics arriving at the Hub Street address reported that fire was visible through the front door and flames were coming out the rear windows of the single-wide mobile home.

Read the whole story

South Lake Tahoe Women's Center reinventing itself

After 35 years of doing business as the South Lake Tahoe Women's Center, the agency is changing its name.

Historically known as a refuge for victims of domestic and sexual abuse, the agency is transitioning from a safe haven to a leader in communitywide violence prevention and intervention. Officials are hoping the new name speaks to the comprehensive and inclusive nature of the agency's vision.

The name will be announced Jan. 19 during the open house from 5:30-7:30pm at 2941 Lake Tahoe Blvd. The unveiling of the new sign and logo will take place at 6pm.

For more information, contact Leanne Wagoner at (530) 544.2118, ext. 7620.

Building a business of no-frills bikes

By Andrew Zaleski, Grist

Two days before New Year's Eve, Jimmy Standley was in Lake Tahoe getting ready for the inaugural SnowGlobe Music Festival, three days of tunes, parties, afterparties – oh, and he had to sell some bikes, too.

As head of business development for Solé Bicycles, Standley is one part of a five-man team bent on bringing fixed-gear bicycles to the masses. Fixies, as they're affectionately known, are bicycles at their most basic: frame, wheels, pedals, seat, and handlebars. Whereas most bikes have a "freewheel" system that allows the wheels to spin independently of the pedals, on a fixie, if the bike is moving, your feet are too. This makes for bikes that are simple, lightweight, and low maintenance, although they're not well suited for tackling hilly terrain Tour de France-style.

"Fixies were big in the '80s and kind of died out. Now it's sort of this trendy thing that's starting to come back," Standley says.

Indeed. In Seattle, there's a dude who peddles pies from one. Credit bike messengers in New York City for the resurgence. A fixie's ideal for shuttling a parcel through traffic-clogged city streets or jetting across campus.

It was the appearance of fixies around the University of Southern California alongside skateboards and beach cruisers that inspired Jake Medwell and Jonathan Shriftman to found Solé Bicycles two years ago, when they were still students. At that time, it was more common to either purchase a custom fixed-gear bike – which could be costly – or rig together your own fixie by stripping down a standard road bike. Over lunch

one afternoon, Medwell and Shriftman decided they wanted to build fixies and sell them at prices the typical college student could afford.

A $15,000 grant won through a competition sponsored by Inc. magazine allowed the duo to get the company up and running. They traveled to China to meet with a manufacturer and design the Solé fixie prototype, and placed an initial order for 200 bikes. The first bikes, which they sold for $80 apiece, quickly evaporated.

Read the whole story

Ringo Starr’s photographer releases book, to perform in Tahoe

Rob Shanahan, Ringo Starr’s personal photographer and an acclaimed music photographer, just released the book “Volume 1: Through the Lens of Music Photographer Rob Shanahan”.

He will be at Harrah’s Lake Tahoe on Saturday. Shanahan is the drummer for the Hollywood Stones.

Starr wrote the forward for the book. The book includes behind the scenes photos of rocks most iconic musicians including Ringo, Paul McCartney, Keith Richards, Tommy Lee and more.

Election law changes cumbersome for counties

By Gus Thomson, Auburn Journal

Placer County elections chief Jim McCauley said Tuesday that, early in the election season, his office has been sorting out state mandates and new election rules.

“Laws were passed that seem to conflict with what is already there,” McCauley said. “There is a lot of confusion and different opinions from one county to the next.”

The primary election is June 5.

One new election rule requires ballots for election-day voting to be printed for 75 percent of all registered voters, while 60 percent of Placer County’s voters are pre-registered to vote by mail and don’t need them, McCauley said.

“We’re going to be throwing out thousands and thousands of ballots,” McCauley said.

McCauley said he’s also concerned about U.S. Postal Service plans that could close the Reno mail distribution center.

“If people drop it in the mail on Friday (from Lake Tahoe), there is not guarantee, we’ll get it on time,” McCauley said.

Read the whole story