California makes plans for return of wolves

By Matt Weiser, Sacramento Bee

A lone gray wolf in the prime of his life roams 730 miles to seek a mate and a new home, crossing nearly the entire state of Oregon in two months.

He skirts small towns, crosses numerous highways, surmounts the Cascade mountain range and pauses just 30 miles from California.

It sounds like the stuff of legend.

But this journey is very real, and it holds huge implications for California. If the wolf, known to Oregon officials as OR7, resumes its southbound trek it will make history as the first wild wolf confirmed in California in nearly 90 years.

The wanderings of OR7 are already stirring excitement, not to mention controversy.

“It’s actually a reason to celebrate,” said Suzanne Asha Stone, Northern Rockies representative for the group Defenders of Wildlife, which led the charge to reintroduce wolves to the West. “I didn’t think I’d see it in my lifetime.”

Cattle and sheep ranchers in the state’s northern counties are not among the celebrants. Some are watching OR7’s travels with dread.

“We definitely have concerns,” said Jack Hanson, a cattle rancher near Susanville and treasurer of the California Cattlemen’s Association. “I’m hesitant to say I see a clear road and things will go well.”

The California Department of Fish and Game, for more than a

year, has quietly worked on a plan to prepare for the eventual return of wolves. It expects to release the plan in January.

Read the whole story

Budget gift: Barton Auxiliary has slew of ideas at 2 locations

Publisher's note: ***Lake Tahoe News is looking for gift ideas that are less than $20. Find out how to make a suggestion.***



The Barton Memorial Hospital Auxiliary has two outlets to do your under $20 shopping.

1) The Gift Shop which is located in the front lobby of the hospital. There are a variety of jewelry, scarves, baby gifts, See's candy (we are the only ones in the South Shore that offer it year-round), tree ornaments, flowers, holiday pottery and glass ware, and many other wonderful gifts.

The December hours are:

Monday-Thursday: 9am-4pm

Saturday-Sunday: 10am-4pm

Tuesday-Thursday: 4-8pm

Closed during the lunch and dinner hour.

2) The Attic, which is located at 970 Lodi Ave. The Attic offers donated items, Christmas decorations, clothing, toys, books, CDs, videos, furniture, pottery and glassware, and plenty of knickknacks.

The hours are:

Monday-Friday: 10am-4pm

Saturday: 10am-2pm.

All proceeds this year go toward the remodel and new addition of the Community Clinic. The Auxiliary has already donated more than $600,000 toward this construction.

– Cathy Vogelgesang

‘Vagina Monologues’ looking for cast, volunteers for S. Tahoe production

The South Shore community has again been granted the privilege of producing the Eve Ensler production “The Vagina Monologues”.

A casting call and volunteer meeting for all men and women interested in participating is Dec. 19 at 6:30pm at the South Lake Tahoe Women’s Center, 2941 Lake Tahoe Blvd.

For those who are interested, call Natalie Yanish at (775) 843.7142 or email natalie@realtordeb.com for more information about how to get involved and what to expect at the casting

call, as well as performance dates and details.

V-Day is a worldwide organization spreading awareness, raising money for local organizations, and fighting violence against women and girls.

People are needed to:

Act

Publicity and marketing

Art coordinator

Volunteer coordinator

Production team

Volunteers: If you do not have much time, but would like to help in the production and fundraising, help would be appreciated.

Five reasons why men should participate in the production:

Your mother, sister, girlfriend, wife and daughter.

V-Day’s three core beliefs:

Art has the power to reach, transform, and inspire to act.

Empowered women are unstoppable leaders and lasting social and cultural change is spread through their experience.

You cannot end violence against women without looking at the intersection of poverty, racism, the environment and war.

V-Day dreams of a world in which women and girls will be free to thrive, rather then merely survive.

Kings Beach beautification: roads, sidewalks, lights

By Katherine E. Hill

KINGS BEACH – Kings Beach will be undergoing a face-lift over the next three years, with sidewalks, lighting, landscaping and a reconfigured three-lane highway through the small hamlet. With these improvements, known as the Kings Beach Commercial Core Improvement Project, come long-term maintenance and repair costs from snow removal in the winter to replacing pavers and making repairs through the years.

A proposed benefit assessment district is being considered to pay for these long-term costs that would encompass property owners along Highway 28 from Highway 267 to east of Chipmunk Street and about one block back from Highway 28 into the area known as The Grid. Property owners learned about the proposed assessment district last week during a series of presentations by Placer County officials and consultants hired for the project.



Kings Beach will be transformed in the coming years.

Photo/Katherin
e E. Hill

NBS consultants recommend property owners form the benefit assessment district to fund the ongoing maintenance of the $35 million capital improvement project. The consultants presented three alternatives for the district that ranged from $378,878 per year to maintain a snowmelt system to $266,246 annually to remove all snow by hand.

Greg Davidson, director of NBS, recommended against a snowmelt system in the sidewalks, noting that it would add an additional $3 million in initial costs to install the system, with annual maintenance costs at more than $378,000. Instead, NBS is recommending property owners consider a district that would cost about $186,761 annually to maintain, with a wide portion of the sidewalks cleared during snowstorms by hand with some snow storage along the walkways.

“It seems to be the most popular,” Davidson told members of the North Tahoe Business Association during a lunch presentation Dec. 6. Consultants had presented the proposal to property owners during a morning meeting that day and noted that those in attendance preferred the alternative with the most snow cleared by hand and to eliminate the snowmelt system. A third presentation was that night.

This proposal would mean an average annual assessment of about $600 per property owner, which could change as plans for the district are finalized.

“Landscape maintenance may be something to be considered to add to the district,” added Stephanie Parson, NBS senior consultant. Property owners at the morning meeting expressed interest in landscape maintenance being included in the assessment district, which was not part of the initial plan. NTBA members at the lunch meeting were also in favor of adding landscape maintenance to the plan, which will add about

$12,000 to the annual costs, Davidson said.

The assessments for each parcel are based on a variety of factors, including street and sidewalk frontage, lot size, building size, and land use (residential, commercial, vacant land, recreational use, and more). Property values are not used for assessments within the district.

Assessments would be done annually to reevaluate each parcel, with a public hearing conducted yearly by the Placer County Board of Supervisors. Property owners also could dissolve the district in the future should they vote to do so.

Consultants are expected to have the final property assessments for each parcel completed by February, with property owners within the proposed district voting in February or March. The district would then have to approve by the Board of Supervisors, with assessments added to 2012-13 property tax bills.

Kings Beach project on track

While property owners consider the assessment district to pay for long-term maintenance of improvements, Placer County Associate Engineer Dan LaPlante says the project is on schedule to be finished by fall 2014.

During the summer, traffic-calming measures such as speed bumps and traffic circles were installed within The Grid. These traffic-calming measures will continue to be installed next summer, along with off-highway improvements such as sidewalks, drainage and five parking lots. As well, utilities will be moved and put underground along Highway 28 in summer 2012.

The bulk of the work, which will realign Highway 28 through Kings Beach from four lanes to two lanes with a center turn lane, will be done in the summers of 2013 and 2014, said LaPlante, who also is serving as project manager.

LaPlante said the county is still working to fully fund the project, but is optimistic that funding will be ready before the major project work begins in 2013. The $35 million project is being funded through federal and state agencies, transit occupancy tax, impact fees and other sources. There is currently a $10 million funding shortfall, he said.

“If we can salvage the middle two lanes, we can save $5 million,” he told NTBA members, bringing the shortfall down to $5 million.

For more information on the Kings Beach Commercial Core Improvement Project, go online.

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Note: Katherine E. Hill is a member of the North Tahoe Business Association, but does not own property within the proposed assessment district, and therefore, will have no vote in its formation.

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Downtown Truckee Wine, Walk & Shop

The Downtown Truckee Wine, Walk & Shop is Oct. 6 from noon to 4pm.

This annual favorite brings more than 1,000 locals and visitors to historic downtown Truckee to sip wine, taste scrumptious food samples and enjoy shopping.

The event, which has steadily grown since 2004, not only benefits the community through marketing efforts and a boost in tourism during the shoulder season, but also benefits a different local nonprofit each year. In years past, $3,000-$5,000 has been donated to the chosen nonprofit partner. Past beneficiaries have included Girls on the Run Sierra, Sierra Senior Services, Tahoe Women's Services, Truckee and Glenshire Elementary Schools' Special Friends Program, Truckee High School music program, Truckee-Tahoe Humane Society, Lake Tahoe Music Festival and InnerRhythms Dance Theater.

For more information, call (530) 550.2252.

USFS prescribed burn this week near Tahoe City

U.S. Forest Service fuels management crews are scheduled to begin prescribed fire operations in the Tahoe City area Dec. 13. Operations may continue through the week.

Residents and visitors can expect to see smoke from the 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.

‘Vagina Monologues’

“Vagina Monologues” will be performed Feb. 24-25 at 7pm at the Blue Angel Loft in South Lake Tahoe. Tickets are $15.

Karla Robinson at Sugar Bowl

Country pop music singer Karla Robinson will be at Sugar Bowl ski resort for free Dec. 17-18 from 2-5pm.

Advocacy group’s extreme weather map brings climate change home

By Dean Kuipers, Los Angeles Times

Climate change much? A new map published today by the Natural

Resources Defense Council makes it plain that extreme weather attributable to climate change isn't something that only happens in other parts of the world. Chances are you've had your own Hurricane Irene, or drought, or something like it in your own backyard.

The interactive map lays out 2,941 monthly weather records broken in communities throughout the U.S. from January thru October of this year, and traces an onslaught of severe storms, drought, flooding and calamity. The point is to show how climate change is affecting your community every day.

"We did this analysis because we wanted to aggregate state-by-state what had happened for people, so they could see it on the map," said Kim Knowlton, senior scientist in the Health and Environment program at the NRDC. "I think it's pretty stunning: One can see in the Northeast how much record-breaking rainfall; in the South, in particular, how much record-breaking heat. We have icons, too, for drought and wildfire. For snowfall, all over the Midwest and the Northeast."

An interesting interactive element plays the entire year like a video, showing rain, flood and storms surging across the country.

Read the whole story

Snippets about Lake Tahoe



• South Tahoe Public Utility District's board is having a workshop Dec. 15 from noon-2 at the district office. Here is the workshop agenda. The regular board meeting follows at 2pm.

• Here is the annual ski area report card put out by the Ski Area Citizen's Coalition.

• Here is the Caltrans roadwork schedule for El Dorado-Tahoe for this week as well as the Sierra schedule.

• According to a quarterly cost of living index, Truckee has the fourth highest grocery prices in the country and is the ninth most expensive place to live.

• Debbie Akin has been appointed to the El Dorado County board of education.