

JMA Ventures acquires residences from Ritz-Carlton at Northstar

By Sarah Duxbury, San Francisco Business Times

Days after saying that the \$70 million JMA deal to buy Great America was off, the San Francisco real estate company announced that it has closed a deal to buy the luxury residences at the Northstar ski resort directly from Ritz-Carlton Development Co.

Terms of the deal were not disclosed, but JMA President and Todd Chapman said there are two phases to the deal. First, JMA has bought 17 fully-furnished two-, three- and four-bedroom townhouses from Ritz-Carlton, and it plans to sell those as full-ownership homes. Chapman said JMA has not determined pricing on the units, but that it will be less than a similar offering would have cost in 2006-2007.

The residences were completed in 2009, along with the Ritz-Carlton Hotel at Northstar, and they are the only true ski-in, ski-out residences on the mountain. Ritz-Carlton was selling them as fractional residences, and it retains control of 11 of the units, which have sold fractional shares. The property opened in 2009, at the height of the recession, and East West Partners, the hotel owner, declared bankruptcy protection last year.

The residences were always separate, Chapman said, and the current deal is not a distressed real estate transaction and there was no debt on the property. Chapman said JMA's relationship with Ritz-Carlton made the deal possible.

Phase 2 includes the rights to build 50 units adjacent to the current residence, Chapman said, and JMA intends to build

those some time in the next few years.

Read the whole story

Homewood plan clears hurdle; TRPA next

Placer County Board of Supervisors on Tuesday unanimously approved the plans to overhaul Homewood ski resort.

Next up is for the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency Governing Board to hear the matter Dec. 14 at 9:30am at Granlibakken in Tahoe City.

The project proposal by owners JMA Ventures includes new ski lodges, residences, lifts and a complete change to what the West Shore area looks like now.

This week's hearing was to hear an appeal by the Friends of the West Shore, League to Save Lake Tahoe and Tahoe Area Sierra Club regarding the supervisors' earlier approval of the project.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Budget gift: Treats from Lake Tahoe Chocolate Factory

A visit to Lake Tahoe Chocolate Factory is a good place to find a great (and sweet) gift for less than \$20.



Doug, the chocolatier, will help you find the perfect gift.

Imagine your friends opening a tin of his special Peppermint Bark, Pecan Turtles, Rocky Road, Chocolate Mints or having the fun Tahoe S'mores or the specialty Marshmallows on a Stick.

Lake Tahoe Chocolates is located between Dart and Lakeside Inn in Stateline, in the back.

Opinion: Closing USPS' Reno center will create more postal issues

Publisher's note: *This editorial is from the Dec. 2, 2011, Reno Gazette-Journal.*

Forty years ago, Federal Express (now FedEx) discovered that there was money to be made by promising shippers that a parcel sent today could be in its recipient's hands tomorrow ... anywhere in the country.

In those same 40 years, the U.S. mail has gotten slower, not faster, even as the cost of stamps has steadily increased. For Northern Nevadans, it will get even slower if a proposal to close the Reno sorting center is accepted by U.S. Postal Service officials.

The Postal Service's answer to its serious financial problems seems to be making service worse rather than better.

The result will be to chase away even more customers – to email, bill-paying services and to FedEx or UPS – until there's no one left to prop up a dying service.

Before the USPS closes the Reno center and sends all local mail to Sacramento for sorting, including mail that has to be sent right back to Nevada, Congress should insist that the quasi-governmental agency complete a top-to-bottom rethinking of its mission and how it can meet it many years into the future. Right now, it is clearly heading in the wrong direction.

The Postal Service's problems are very real. It is losing money by the bucket load, and the model first put into place by Benjamin Franklin more than two centuries ago clearly doesn't work anymore.

Read the whole story

Science day explores all things winter

Celebrate winter at the free Family Science Day on Jan. 5 from 2-5pm at the Tahoe Center for Environmental Science.

There will be hands-on winter-themed science activities for kids ages 8 and older. Families are invited to explore the mysteries of snow and ice, conduct scientific experiments to discover what snowflakes look like under microscopes, what wind chill actually is, and why some animals hibernate, among many other activities.

For details, contact Andrea Wilkins at alwilkins@ucdavis.edu or (775) 881.7560, ext. 7474.

The center is at 291 Country Club Drive, Incline Village.

Mixed reaction to Lahontan OKing chemicals in Tahoe

By Kathryn Reed

Public health is one of two reasons the Lahontan Regional Water Quality board on Wednesday voted to allow chemicals to be used to rid Lake Tahoe of invasive species – plant or animal. Public safety is the reason people who supply drinking water to thousands of people in the basin spoke against the decision.

Allowing pesticide use at Tahoe is practically revolutionary for the water board. The decision is a 180-degree turnaround from years of not allowing anything potentially harmful from being added to the pristine water.

Staff told the board that the long-term benefits of applying chemicals would outweigh any short-term degradation to the lake.



Tahoe Keys
homeowners
association is
excited to be
able to use
herbicides to
get rid of
milfoil.

Photo/TRPA

County vector control units have been using chemicals for years with Lahontan's knowledge, but also in violation of its rules.

Vector control is also a health and safety issue.

Karen Bender with the El Dorado County Environmental Management Agency told *Lake Tahoe News* vector control rarely sprays in the Lake Tahoe Basin; it's mostly larvae sites that are treated. She has volumes of records Lahontan could have checked at anytime. The board's decision likely means Lahontan staff will be getting reports of all future chemical applications assuming pesticide use passes state and federal boards.

While water purveyors lost the battle to keep dangerous chemicals from the drinking supply of thousands, they did get the board to agree to notify all of them when an application will take place so all could comment on the proposed project.

There are 18 water purveyors around the lake, with 21 intakes between them. There are other water purveyors in the Lake

Tahoe Basin, like South Tahoe Public Utility District, that use groundwater.

An issue for water purveyors is if the chemical is detected in the drinking water supply it must be mitigated. That can create problems downstream, so to speak. None of those concerns, though, were brought up at Wednesday's meeting.

Nor was it discussed how one chemical might react with another.

In passing it was acknowledged the chemical to treat the problem could create problems for other aspects of the ecosystem. For instance if milfoil is eliminated, it could impact any species that uses it for habitat.

Besides public health, the other reason chemicals could be put into Lake Tahoe is for ecological preservation.

Three Tahoe Keys representatives spoke at the three-hour meeting at Embassy Suites on Dec. 7 – citing the need for chemicals to eradicate milfoil that is clogging the canals. The South Shore homeowners' group years ago asked Lahontan for exemptions and was denied each time.

It may still be years before any herbicides are applied. This is because more boards need to approve the Pesticide Basin Plan Amendment. The final overseer to vote will be the federal EPA – maybe in July 2012.

An environmental impact report will need to be done by the Tahoe Keys Property Owners Association before Lahontan votes on that specific project.

All potential projects will undergo a rigorous vetting process, according to Lahontan staff.

"If the project qualifies, then the applicant takes their case to the board," Mary Fiore-Wagner, Lahontan environmental scientist, told the board. "There will be robust monitoring,

and tracking and recovery of species.”

All projects must also meet California Environmental Quality Act requirements.

One issue the board had some problems with was that chemicals under rare circumstances might be used without board approval. They understood emergency criteria – as in if the governor of California issues a mandate to do something. But what took some understanding was the “time sensitive” project that the executive director could approve on behalf of the board.

Staff explained “time-sensitive” could be the introduction of an invasive species to Lake Tahoe that would not reach the level of a state emergency. There are 36 species that have been identified as being a threat to Lake Tahoe, with 20 of them already in the water.

Another issue that changed from earlier versions of the amendment is chemical detection will be allowed to last for more than a week. This is based on how some chemicals are released.

Dan Sussman, Lahontan environmental scientist, said monitoring still must begin one week after the initial application of the chemical.

Any treatment could mean temporary prohibition of swimming, boating and fishing or other recreational activities.

Lauri Kemper, second in charge at Lahontan, after the meeting told *Lake Tahoe News*, that via CEQA, project applicants are supposed to document past, current and future projects that could impact theirs. Kemper said even if that does not take place, her agency would be aware of what is going on in Tahoe to know if application of one chemical could interfere/conflict with another.

While the decision by Lahontan affects the whole lake –

because water moves – the agency only has oversight of California's portion of the lake.

It is the Nevada Division of Environmental Protection that oversees what goes into Lake Tahoe in the Silver State. They follow requirements outlined by the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System.

Bob Loding, water-wastewater specialist with Tri-state Water Operations in Zephyr Cove, told *Lake Tahoe News* that water purveyors are told by NDEP of anything going on with water – including being consulted before the rubber mats were put down to study the Asian clams.

He does not know of any time when chemicals have been allowed to be used in Lake Tahoe originating in Nevada.

Al Tinney, chief of water pollution control for NDEP, was not available for comment.

5th annual Alpine Touring and Telemark Demo

Alpenglow Sports has partnered with Alpine Meadows Ski Resort to put on the 5th annual Alpine Touring and Telemark Demo on Jan. 7 from 9am-3pm.

The event provides a forum to perpetuate the enthusiasm for all aspects of in-area and backcountry skiing. Free to all, the event will showcase the latest and greatest in telemark and Alpine touring equipment.

Participating vendors include Black Diamond, Dynafit, G3, Scarpa, Garmont, Rossignol, Volkl, Marker, Moment, Ski Logic, and DPS. Valid lift ticket or season pass purchased from Alpine Meadows/Squaw Valley required, along with a driver's license and credit card for deposit.

For more information, call Alpenglow Sports at (530) 583.6917 or email brendan@alpenglowsports.com.

National Trails Day

On Jan. 7 from 10am–2pm the Tahoe Rim Trail Association will partner with local businesses and organizations to kick off the winter season with the free Winter Trails Day family event.

While this is a national event, TRTA is putting on events on both ends of the Lake Tahoe Basin.

National Winter Trails Day is all about introducing folks to the joys of winter trails and using them safely.

South Lake event – Snowshoe through the newly opened Van Sickle Bi-state Park, outdoor gear demonstrations and a Warming Party (with food donated by Stateline Brewery and Baja Fresh) at Explore Tahoe after the hikes.

North Lake event – Snowshoe hikes on themes ranging from winter animals to avalanche awareness, winter survival demonstrations and activities.

Participants are encouraged to register in advance. Register online or call (775) 298.0012 or email Tom at programs@tahoerimtrail.org.

These events are subject to cancellation due to winter weather.

South Shore chamber mixer

Lake Tahoe South Shore Chamber of Commerce is collecting money for Christmas Cheer at its Jan. 12 mixer.

The event is from 5:30-7:30pm at Riva Grill in South Lake Tahoe.

Cost is \$10 minimum for members, \$20 for non-members.

North Tahoe Chamber mixer at Sunnyside

Sunnyside restaurant will host a special holiday North Lake Tahoe Chamber of Commerce business mixer on Dec. 9 from 4-7pm at 1850 West Lake Blvd., Tahoe City.

No RSVP is required.

Attendees will mix, mingle and network while enjoying appetizers, desserts, candy canes, cocoa and raffle for ski lift tickets, along with live music by Sheldon Felich. Santa Claus will also be attending, so bring your camera for pictures.

Bring an unwrapped toy (suggested value is \$20) for the Coldwell Banker Toys for Tots program.

For more information about the mixer, call Kym Fabel at (530) 581.8764 or kym@puretahoenorth.com.