Pile burning in Angora could begin this week

U.S. Forest Service fire and fuels management crews plan to begin prescribed fire operations in the Angora Fire area this fall, burning piles created during the fuels reduction component of the Angora Ecosystem Restoration Project.

Operations could begin this week.

Burning the piles is the last step in the fuels reduction process in these units, which have been treated by hand. Fuels reduction using mechanical equipment continues in other parts of the fire area. Fuels reduction efforts, including prescribed fire, in the Angora Fire area aim to reduce the long-term risk of high intensity wildfire.



Piles stacked this summer in the Angora area could begin to be burned this week.
Photo/LTN

The piles border the neighborhoods around Tahoe Mountain Road, Fallen Leaf Lake Road, North Upper Truckee, South Tahoe High School and Gardner Mountain. If a window of good weather conditions occurs, crews will burn as much of the

approximately 440 acres of piles as they can accomplish safely and while minimizing the effects of smoke on local communities. If crews light a significant number of acres at one time, the project may produce a smoke plume resembling that of a wildland fire.

Forest Service fire and fuels management staff monitor weather conditions closely prior to prescribed fire ignition. They are looking for conditions that will carry smoke up and out of the Lake Tahoe Basin. Crews conduct a test burn before igniting a larger area, to verify how effectively fuels are consumed and how the smoke will travel.

Other federal, state and local fire management agencies may also be conducting prescribed fire work during this period.

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.

California bill aims to boost dog licensing

By Cynthia Hubert, Sacramento Bee

Got a pet pooch? Local government agencies are motivated more than ever to make sure you get him licensed, and soon may get some help from the state.

Assembly Bill 1121, on Gov. Jerry Brown’s desk, seeks to give local shelters a new tool for enforcing a state licensing law that mostly has been ignored, without consequences, by dog

owners.

Across California, only about 16 percent of pet dogs are licensed, said Jennifer Fearing, chief economist and California senior state director for the Humane Society of the United States.

In Sacramento County, a mere 9 percent of pooches carry licenses that allow agencies to track their whereabouts, pay for services such as animal control, and monitor rabies vaccinations. The state does not require pet cats to be licensed.

“A lot of people don’t even realize that dog licensing is the law, and has been since the 1950s,” said Fearing. “It’s good for the animal, and it’s good for government animal shelters.”

Sponsored by Assemblyman Richard Pan, D-Sacramento, the bill would require pet stores, rescue groups and others that sell dogs to submit monthly reports to local licensing agencies.

The reports would list contact information for each person who adopted or bought a pooch, allowing the agencies to contact pet owners and make sure the animal gets licensed. Fines of up to $100 would be imposed on those who fail to comply with the law.

Read the whole story

Snippets about Lake Tahoe



• Fire+Ice restaurant in the Heavenly Village will donate all October proceeds from its Strawberry Shortcake to the National Breast Cancer Foundation.

• There is a blood drive in Incline Village on Oct. 14 from 10am-5pm. Click on flyer for details.

• The Concrete Masonry Association of California and Nevada has given South Tahoe High awards for Education Design for the Construction, Arts, and Transportation Academy and Sustainable Design for the Stadium View building.

• Sierra-at-Tahoe is offering free passes to 270 students in Lake Tahoe Unified who got straight A's or had a 4.0 gpa last school year.

• The National Rural Health Association named Tahoe Forest Hospital in Truckee one of the top 100 Critical Access Hospitals in the United States.

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

Opinion: Cyber relationships could destroy real ones

By Amanda Strong

After an exhausting day, all you want to do is put your feet up and spend time with the person you care about the most … and then your spouse walks into the room. Upon their arrival,

you close your computer hoping you don’t appear too startled to raise suspicion.

Sharing intimate details of your life on Facebook with someone else probably wouldn’t go over so well with your significant other. Your relief is temporary, because this will likely become a reoccurring theme when you continue to “network” with that special person.

This deception happens every day when a person decides to carry on an affair, especially one where social media plays a prime role. With more than 700 million users on Facebook, many of those ask themselves, “am I crossing the line?” when they carry on with another “friend” either new or old.

Things become foggy when you’re consistently tempted to look up an ex or confirm a friend who may not be the greatest choice to allow back into your life. The lines begin to blur and lies turn into infidelity. Before becoming just another statistic, ask yourself these three questions:

Is the relationship real? Cyber relationships are tricky. Either you begin to correspond or communicate with someone after a reconnection or you meet someone entirely new. This excitement or newness resembles the easier days without responsibilities, work, and children. You feel special from all the attention solely focused on you, swept away with the thought of a less complicated life.

The reality may be difficult to swallow when you realize that the person you make that connection with a. may not be the person you thought you knew or b. turns out to be very similar to the person you’re currently with when the fun times fade and reality slaps you in the face. Social networking hands you the opportunity to be anyone you want to be. Someone living in a fantasy may not grasp the impact on their family and themselves. Their new relationship is real to them, but could it be masked by all the hype that surrounds social networking.

When you take away Facebook, and you're just one on one, can you look at the person and feel your new reality will stand the test of time?

What is life like? Lonely or feeling like you want more out of life? Vulnerability, mixed with the ease of connecting (or reconnecting) with people, is a recipe that may derail one's path. A person may feel they're receiving more support from a friend than a spouse. This attention sometimes leads to a tighter bond with your social media "friend" than the person you sleep next to at night. But is this new relationship based on finding the support, more so than the person giving it?

Sometimes the relationship is not about the attraction or compatibility but the needed strength to get out of a difficult or lonely situation. Ask yourself, are you using this new relationship as an out? Do you truly believe this person will be around in six months? Be honest with yourself with where you are in life, and why you've pursued another relationship in the first place.

Why take the risk? Some people are going to cheat, whether facilitated by cyber relationships or not. Others may look for their ex and get into trouble pursuing the past or innocently be struck out of the blue with a connection they never thought would happen. Are you impulsive and want to just go for it? Have you thought about the consequences and decided to cross the line anyway? Ask yourself, are you risking your marriage or relationship because you found a more exciting and passionate person; think this is your soul mate; or feel this is your way out of your current situation?

Even if you get wrapped up in the hype and the temptation seems too much to handle, there's always that split second before you post something or encourage communication when you know you shouldn't. Your actions could destroy the ones you love and change your life completely. Ask yourself, why would I choose to face those consequences? If you deal with the

truth before you cross the line, you may save yourself from making a huge mistake.

Couples are now citing Facebook on their divorce papers as one of the reasons their marriage fell apart. Can social media be blamed for giving everyone such an easy tool to cheat? Words of advice, be honest with yourself, because your decisions are yours, and only yours, to make.

Social networking sites aren't losing sleep over your choices, that job is solely your responsibility.

Amanda Strong is the author of "With Just One Click", the first of its kind about the complexity of Facebook relationships.

Southwest Gas replacing plastic pipes in Lake Tahoe

By Northern Nevada Business Weekly

New technology, federal tax breaks and lower construction costs combined to spur efforts by Southwest Gas to replace miles of vintage plastic pipe in its system at Lake Tahoe this year.

The Las Vegas-based utility is using two new technologies – "keyhole" and "split and pull" – in the Tahoe-area project.

With the keyhole technology, a 24-inch diameter piece of asphalt is cut to access the natural gas pipeline below the ground.

This eliminates the need to remove longer sections of roadway

to replace older lines.

When the work is done, the keyhole of asphalt is replaced, using a durable adhesive.

The “split and pull” technology, meanwhile, splits the old pipe while pulling a new carrier pipe at the same time.

Read the whole story

Finding the rhythm to connect nature and art

By Robert Schimmel

“Take me back!” “I remember when.” “Those were the good ole days.” Have you ever had thoughts like these when unexpectedly you were back in a special place or activity and flooded with joyous and reflective memories, not to mention real-time rushes of excitement and peace?

Of course you have, and that’s exactly what this repressed artist went through Sep. 17 under the meditative and visual tutelage of the “Trails and Vistas” art hike at Spooner Lake. Not only did this wonderful afternoon of artistic performances and visual quiescence remind my soul of what I once enjoyed and pursued on a regular basis, it exposed me to some creative expressions and connections between man and nature that were enriching and thought provoking.

To back it up and start from the parking lot, my friends and I began this artful and contemplative 2.5-mile, 2.5-hour hike and themed experience called “Reflections and Rhythms” with about 15 others and our guide, Leslie, who was graciously

followed up by our own “herder” and caboose, Bill – her husband. As we set out to embrace the trail and unknown artistic presentations, I recalled my radio show interview with Nancy Lopez, the executive director (www.trailsandvistas.org), and Deb, her volunteer friend, and knew that “Trails and Vistas” has as part of its goal to celebrate nature through the arts and to connect whenever possible with the area’s indigenous cultures.



Reflection pool by Lorna Denton.

Well, we couldn’t have been more blessed to be at Spooner Lake, summer home of the Washoe, on such a perfectly refulgent day to accomplish both tasks. But it did take some paradigm and habit busting.

Tahoe isn’t New York City, so noise and the high-energy lifestyle are certainly not part of my day-to-day other than my part-time dealing job at Harvey’s, yet I found the serenity and total inner focus (talking is discouraged) disconcerting at first. Then volunteer and brightly garbed Deb appeared at the first of perhaps 16 art stops. She handed us totem stones and a calming, connecting lesson in subduing and submitting. After that our “tribe” began to visibly acquiesce to the surroundings and more easily focus at each successive performance. The glittering Spooner Lake and perfectly cued quaking of the aspen added harmoniously to the ambience.

As we took part in seeking our own inner rhythms with Norman

on his djembe drum and our outward expressions through dance with Chris and his fairy performers, it was easy to see that those attending felt and wanted the natural aphrodisiac of nature’s peace and acceptance.

On several stops the performers camouflaged and morphed themselves into boulders and aspens, including one background message presented in poetry that became a metaphor of nature’s living spirit. From the melodic and healing sounds of a tamboura accompanying angelic, East Indian lyrics to the rustling of a children’s troupe of ballet dancers on pine needles beautifully choreographed to a poetic storyteller’s voice, the only dissenting sound all day was that of one jealous and raucous stellar jay. Could it be he became one with a totem stone?



The Trees have Eyes by Scott Thompson.

As if normal artistic endeavors in Mother Nature’s studio weren’t enough, one stop featured intense feats of acrobatic and fluid strength in aerial narrative (pertaining to our oceans) from cords hung in trees. Not my back, for sure. And the final fitting stop and crescendo for the day was a performance by the Reno Taiko Drummers in the “Stonehenge” setting at the park: the perfect, rhythmic closing for our senses to absorb.

Observing all the glorious forms, colors, light and shadows change during our 360 degree adventure in the late afternoon

was reward enough for me, especially shared with friends. But the performances and efforts of all the artists took it over the top and opened my eyes to dedication and creative talent for which we can all be grateful.

Robert Schimmel is a professional artist and teacher in South Lake Tahoe as well as host of "Lake Tahoe Art Scene" on KTHO radio on Thursdays at 5:15pm.

Climate change takes toll on cultures

By Dylan Walsh, New York Times

There are nearly 7,000 known languages in the world today. It is predicted that half of these, in many cases vessels of indigenous cultures, will vanish over the next 50 years.

This has been much on the mind of Brigitte Baptiste, who took over this year as director of the Colombian Environment Ministry's Alexander von Humboldt Biological Resources Research Institute. Although rigorous assessments of indigenous vulnerability have been few and far between, she says, climate change is known to cause shifts in the growth of flora and fauna in local ecosystems, from animal migrations to natural cycles like pollination.

In some places, the shifts in ecosystems require indigenous cultures to rapidly adapt or perish as their traditional means of subsistence becomes harder to sustain.

For example, the Wayuu, who have lived for centuries in Colombia's arid northwest, depend on the glacially fed

Rancheria River as well as two rainy seasons to support a culture rich in fishing and animal husbandry. But glacial retreat means that the river is often at lower levels than it used to be, and seasonal weather is becoming both less predictable and more violent.

Over longer arcs of time, Dr. Baptiste explained by e-mail, indigenous knowledge keeps pace with change, assuring the viability of the community. But in the case of rapid climate change, “if this adaptive capacity, already embedded in the fabric of local cultures, fails to give quick answers, the youngest members of the community may jump out of the tradition.”

Many indigenous youths are already resettling in urban areas because of tribal displacement and the allure of rising economies, a phenomenon exemplified by the Nukak-Makú people of Colombia. Climate change will only compound the problem, Dr. Baptiste said.

Read the whole story

Rise: Implement a freeze on water, sewer rates

Publisher’s note: ***Lake Tahoe News is profiling the six candidates who will be on the Nov. 8 ballot for the South Tahoe Public Utility District board. They are being published in the order they were submitted. Dale Rise is the incumbent.***

Name: Dale Rise

Age: 59

How long have you lived on the South Shore?: 37 years

What water company supplies your home? Your work?: STPUD



Dale Rise

Job/profession?: General engineering contractor, general contractor, and own a retail ice cream store – Aloha Ice Cream.

What stands out to you in the 2011-12 budget?: The 2011-12 budget was a balanced budget, with operations and maintenance taking a cut of 16 percent.

What boards, commissions, or other experience, including volunteering, do you have?: Four years on STPUD board, two years president, two years vice president, one year finance committee, three years operations committee; two terms city of South Lake Tahoe Building Board of Appeal; California Special Districts Association training.

Is there any individual, group or organization you would not take campaign money from? Why?: I have never taken – nor will ever accept funds from any group. I believe that a candidate that receives funds from union or management lobbyists should be questioned regarding their agenda.

What is the No. 1 reason someone should vote for you over another candidate?: I am not afraid to make difficult decisions. I have and will continue to put the public back in South Lake Tahoe Public Utility District. I will remain open, transparent, accountable to the public.

California law mandates water meters be installed. What is your solution to make the fee equitable for those on meters and those without one?: I feel that the rate we have in place today is fare to metered and unmetered customers. The off balance is past board members could have started installing water meters years ago, and we would have more meters in the ground today – evening the balance between metered and unmetered customers.

To get the remaining 60 percent of South Tahoe PUD customers on meters it will cost $15 million. As a board member, where will you get the money to pay for the meters?: District crews will be installing 200-300 meters out of regular budget. I would like to see a rebate, or incentive program that would enable the homeowner to hire a contractor to install the meter. Hope for more grant funding.

Do you believe the district should spend money on lobbying efforts in Sacramento and/or Washington, D.C.? Why or why not?: In the past four years STPUD has spent approximately $280,000 on federal lobbyists, and approximately $90,000 on California lobbyists. During the last year the district did not renew the contract (at approximately $30,000 per year) with our California lobbyist. I feel there is no value to the district. I do not feel currently there is value to the district in continuing the contract with federal lobbyist company ENS. To me they are more like tour guides or activity directors for board members and staff visiting Washington, D.C. At one time, there was a need for a full time lobbyist – however in today's economic climate, with no money coming from the federal government. In the event that a single item comes up, the district can hire a lobbyist to address the item on a one-item basis.

What do you know about STPUD getting money from the Lake Tahoe Restoration Act?: The district has received funds in the past to improve water infrastructure for water line replacement, improving the ability to fight forest fires. I believe these

funds will be limited in the future.

How do you balance the economic situation of the community with the infrastructure needs of the district?: STPUD must live and work within its own budget. The EPA guideline recommendation is that the district budget approximately $7 million per year on infrastructure. In the last two years the district has spent approximately $13 million per year. I think that we can slow down capital improvement projects and still stay ahead of our aging infrastructure needs without raising rates.

With 38 percent of a customer's sewer bill going to meet the needs of the Porter-Cologne Water Quality Act and $100 million already invested in Alpine County to take STPUD's wastewater, would you leave things as they are? If yes, why? If no, what would you change and how do expect to accomplish those changes?: The Porter Cologne Act was the most important act for water clarity in Lake Tahoe's history. It is what we do with the water in Alpine County is very important today. Four million gallons per day is received by nine ranches in Alpine County at no charge. The water is transported through a 24-inch gravity fed pipeline. STPUD is in the final planning to install turbines in the system to generate green power to sell to Liberty Energy.

What should be done with the land STPUD owns where the old post office was on Black Bart?: The old post office site has no water, sewer, or gas service. It would cost over $100,000 to bring the building up to current code for any use. TRPA zoning limits what type of use. I feel that the building should be demolished, and the property restored to natural.

There has been a three-year wage freeze for employees. What are your thoughts on employee raises and benefits?: The union and management contract is up for negotiation this [fiscal] year. I look forward to sitting down with both parties in order to negotiate a contract that is fair to rate payers

When would you vote for a hike on water and sewer rates and why?: I am in favor of a rate freeze.

Lukins Brothers Water District – any comments?: The acquisition of Lukins will not come at the expense of existing ratepayers.

What should be the main priority of South Tahoe PUD?: Furnish our customers with reliable water and wastewater services, safely, efficiently, and cost effective.

What should be the main priority of a South Tahoe PUD board member?: It is the duty of the board of directors to establish procedure and formulate policy. It is also responsible for adopting all policies, set budget and number of employees.

Tell readers something about yourself that most people don't know: I believe that if you want to do something well, you must be dedicated and willing to sacrifice. People might doubt what you say, but they always believe what you do.

NV Energy reducing price for electricity

By Bill O'Driscoll, Reno Gazette-Journal

In time for the coming cold season: Declines in electricity and natural gas rates for NV Energy customers effective Saturday.

The utility said today it will trim electricity rates by an average of 2.43 percent for its Northern Nevada customers and natural gas rates by 10.7 percent for its Reno-Sparks customers.

For the typical residential customer using 746 kilowatt hours of electricity per month, the bill will fall from $83.98 to $82.16. For the typical natural gas customer using 56 therms of gas, NV Energy’s charge will drop from $50.55 to $45.52.

Read the whole story

Statewide conversation about environmental sustainability and museums

What are the top environmental challenges for our region? Who is working to address these challenges? How can museums be involved? These are some of the questions to be posed on Oct. 14 by the UC Davis Tahoe Environmental Research Center to discuss how museums can inform their communities about environmental challenges and inspire action.

The 9:30-10:30am event is free and can also be viewed via webcast.

The UC Davis Tahoe Environmental Research Center and six other cultural organizations, all representing distinct bioregions across California, will engage museum, environmental, and community leaders in roundtable discussions as part of a statewide initiative, titled Ignite! Museums as Catalysts for Sustainability.

The goals are to explore the fundamental ecological issues facing each region and to seek ways in which museums can be partners in finding solutions to these challenges. The seven concurrent discussions will be connected virtually and

environmentalist, entrepreneur, and author Paul Hawken will give the keynote address.

Ignite! Museums as Catalysts for Sustainability is spearheaded by the Green Museums Initiative, a program supported by the California Association of Museums. The regional roundtables will take place concurrently at seven host institutions: the Annenberg Center at Sunnylands in Rancho Mirage; San Diego Zoo; Aquarium of the Pacific in Long Beach; UC Merced Library; California Academy of Sciences in San Francisco; UC Davis Tahoe Environmental Research Center; and Gateway Science Museum in Chico. Each site is convening museum leaders, scientists, environmentalists, community stakeholders, and artists to discuss how to preserve ecosystems and promote healthy communities in their region. Artists participating in the regional roundtable discussions will create artworks for a statewide traveling exhibition by Exhibit Envoy.