Opinion: Don’t change Washoe Meadows State Park

To the community,

Anyone who values open space and concurs with the wisdom of Native Americans that all living things are interconnected should be appalled by what is happening in Washoe Meadows State Park near South Lake Tahoe. California State Parks Department (CSP) plans to downgrade a portion of Washoe Meadows State Park to State Recreation Area in order to pave the way for golf course development. To my knowledge, never in the history of this state has a state park been downgraded to state recreation status.

The Upper Truckee River Restoration Project is being sold as a package deal, tied to golf course development. The final EIR has been released and CSP has stated that their preferred alternate is “a slightly modified version of Alternative 2”. Under this alternative the boundaries between State Recreation and State Park land will be reconfigured and nine golf holes will be moved to the west side of the Upper Truckee River. This will fragment the park, disturb currently contiguous wildlife corridors, result in the logging of thousands of trees, destroy wildlife habitats, and diminish the park experience as river access will be significantly altered and more of the park will be bordered by the golf course.

It’s not too late to get involved. A public hearing, to approve redrawing the boundaries between State Park and State Recreation Area will be held at 9am Oct. 21 at the Lake Tahoe Golf Course. Please attend and help us preserve Washoe Meadows State Park. If, like me, you can’t attend a 9am meeting on a work day, please write to: California State Park & Recreation Commission, P.O. Box 942896, Sacramento, CA 94296-0001, Attn. Louis Nastro, Assistant to the Commission; or email him at

LNastro@parks.ca.gov.

Restore the river and preserve Washoe Meadows State Park.

Sincerely,

Krissi Russell, South Lake Tahoe

Realtors earn specialized certificate for South Tahoe

Eighteen Realtors recently earned the South Tahoe Association of Realtors Area Specialist Certification.

The course and exams are necessary to earn the certification were developed to highlight the importance that all real estate professionals selling real estate in South Lake Tahoe have sufficient knowledge about the area.

The class features speakers from public agencies such as South Tahoe Public Utilities District, Tahoe Regional Planning Agency, U.S. Forest Service, and South Lake Tahoe and El Dorado Count building departments. Course content focuses on what real estate agents must tell clients when buying and selling homes in South Lake Tahoe, such as Best Management Practices, and which wood burning stoves are compliant per TRPA code.

Eighty percent is considering passing.

Those completing the recent test are:

Vince Barker

Michelle Benedict

Veronique Borges

Doug Carroll

Ken Daley

Diane Dickert

Judith Hanson

Brooke Hernandez

Sylvia Leutz

Laura Lyle

Cynthia Maclean

Teri McKinney

Davey Paiva

Theresa Souers

Jill Stanton-Bricker

Russ Starkey

Jim Wire

Erin Yohnka.

Human trafficking – a concern for girls on the streets

By Kathryn Reed

While people coming across the border illegally in the back of truck, then sold for slave labor is often the image people conjure when they hear the phrase “human trafficking,” it is not the only kind.

Young girls lured into prostitution to be part of a stable for some pimp are also victims of human trafficking.



Janice Dean, victims’ rights advocate with the FBI, and Minerva Shelton, an FBI agent, spent 90 minutes last week talking to a group of about 40 people about this issue. While they are out of the Sacramento office, their jurisdiction covers Lake Tahoe.

Girls as young as 11 have been found on the streets turning tricks. The average age is 14.

While the problem is more acute in Sacramento, South Lake Tahoe is not immune from this type of crime.

Frustration, though, from those sitting in the El Dorado County courtroom in South Lake was vented at the end of the talk. Lawyers, CASA volunteers, law enforcement, assistant district attorneys – all lamented that the system is failing the girls.

The FBI’s solution is to lock them up. The two speakers said this is the only choice because the girls tend to run when placed in a home. A group home far from civilization – the streets – is the only alternative, and those are rare.

“We know the perps are bringing the girls here,” Shelton said.

Hotel managers sometimes turn the other way, choosing to accept the cash for a room instead of calling the cops if they see young girls with guys clearly not their father.

An officer in the back of the room asked the FBI if there was a database where they could enter information about a

suspicious stop – when there is no legal reason to detain the adult driver, but something seems fishy. The FBI said nothing is being used by everyone, but the officer could contact them.

“What I’ve seen in Sacramento is we are not talking to each other. We say we’re on the same team, but we don’t talk,” Shelton said.

Wendy David, a CASA volunteer, vented her frustration with no one doing anything to help these girls become responsible, functioning adults.

“My experience is these girls are sexually exploited at a young age and then they are treated like a criminal,” David said.

Judge Suzanne Kingsbury relayed how she’s had cases where the girls said the allure of the lifestyle got them started in the dead-end business.

Dean said statistics show many of the girls who end up on the streets have run from home where they had been sexually abused. They may end up in a foster home or group home, but run again – back to their “daddy” – what they call their pimp.

“We need to focus on the runaways. We need to focus on why they are running away; then we might be able to prevent them from being lured into prostitution,” Shelton said. “Once they are into prostitution, it’s very hard to get them out.”

More information about human trafficking is on the FBI’s website.

Fairway Avenue in South Tahoe to be off-limits

Fairway Avenue between Fairway Drive and Highway 50 in South Lake Tahoe will be closed for several days starting early next week.

Utility work is being done for the Caltrans Highway 50 project and the Bijou erosion control project.

Fire started by lightning near Strawberry allowed to burn

A plume of smoke west of Strawberry that looks like a wildfire burning in the Sierra is under control – but is not going to be put out by firefighters any time soon.

Known as the Long Fire, it started Sept. 12 by lightning, but is just now starting to show itself to travelers along Highway 50.

“Fire specialists on the Placerville Ranger District are managing the lightning-caused Long Fire to meet multiple benefits such as allowing the fire to burn naturally in a fire-adapted ecosystem when it can been done safely, effectively and efficiently (while) posing no immediate risk to life, safety, property or resources,” Kristi Schroeder with the Eldorado National Forest said in a press release.



Smoke from a lightning ignited fire fills the American River canyon Sept. 26. Photo/LTN

The cloud of smoke can be seen in the west as far as El Dorado Hills, and from the east at about Lovers' Leap. Travelers on Highway 88 can also see the smoke.

It is burning at about 7,000 feet in the Packsaddle Pass area, southwest of Strawberry.

Firefighters are on scene to make sure it does not get out of control. The fire is expected to burn another five to seven weeks.

According to fire officials, the benefits to natural resources derived from a managed wildfire include:

• Reduction of heavy fuel loading that diminishes the threat of catastrophic wildfire.

• Reintroduction of fire into the landscape to perform its historical role of cleaning the forest floor of dead and down vegetation, eliminating sickly trees, and generally keeping the ecosystem healthy.

• Raising the crown base height. The crown base simply means the lowest limbs on an individual tree that would allow a ground fire to climb into those limbs and transition the fire

vertically up into the tree to create a crown fire.

• Recycling valuable nutrients back into the soil.

• Maintaining and improving wildlife habitat.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Free gift for first time mammogram patients

Tahoe Forest Health System celebrates National Breast Health Awareness Month by giving first-time mammogram patients a free gift.

By spreading the word about the importance of scheduling an annual mammogram, patients who bring in another first-timer will both walk away with a free gift. First time mammograms must be scheduled in October 2011 and completed by March 2012 to qualify.

Mammograms assist in the early detection of breast cancer, and they are quick and easy. Tahoe Forest Hospital utilizes the most advanced technology to perform comprehensive breast screening exams; digital mammography screenings are used for all patients. Breast MRI technology is also available.

No doctor’s order is necessary for a screening; follow-up breast care is available. To schedule an appointment, call (530) 582.6510. A limited number of free exams and mammograms are available through Susan G. Komen for the Cure Foundation. Call (530) 582.3277 for eligibility details.

Pancake breakfast raises money for S. Tahoe youth

South Lake Tahoe Optimist Club's semi-annual pancake breakfast is Oct. 1 at the senior center.

Breakfast will be served from 8:30-11:30am.

The $5 tickets are available from various youth clubs raising money or can be purchased at the event. All money is donated back to the youth of the community.

Contact Sandy Herback for more information – (530) 544.6500.

North alignment of Stateline-Stateline bike trail under review

The north end of the Stateline-to-Stateline bike trail is undergoing an environmental assessment.

The Tahoe Regional Planning Agency, Federal Highway Administration and U.S. Forest Service are the lead agencies.

The area being studied is between Incline Village and Sand Harbor. This roughly 3-mile stretch would include a 10-foot wide paved path with 2-foot shoulders. It will also include a sidewalk on the west side of Highway 28 between Lakeshore

Boulevard and the guard rail north of Hidden Beach, trailhead parking, and a drop-off/turn-around area just north of Tunnel Creek that may include limited parking.

This is part of the larger 30-mile trail going from Crystal Bay to Stateline. The Stateline demo portion has passed its environmental hurdles. Construction is supposed to start in 2012, with it taking three seasons for that section to be built.

The project description and alignment map are on TRPA's website and the project website.

People may comment on the north demo site until Oct. 21. Send comments to Brian Judge, TRPA, P.O. Box 5310, Stateline, NV 89449-5310.

A meeting on the project is slated for Oct. 5 at 6pm at the Chateau in Incline Village.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Kokanee Salmon Festival is more than just a fish event

The U.S. Forest Service Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit invites residents and visitors to attend the Kokanee Salmon Festival, which celebrates the annual fall migration of kokanee salmon at the Taylor Creek Visitor Center.

The event is Oct. 1-2 from 10am-4pm. The visitor center is located three miles north of South Lake Tahoe on Highway 89.



Participants can learn about the natural wonders of Taylor Creek and take part in many activities, including a salmon barbecue, kokanee trail runs, children's activities, educational and streamside programs, and much more.

On Sunday at 2pm, Wild Thing, Inc. will present a live wildlife program at the Lake of the Sky Amphitheater. This free program features live animals, which may include a bald eagle, barn owl, turkey vulture, a beaver, and snakes. Because of the live animals on stage, attendees should leave pets at home.

The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service will bring a 40-foot inflatable fish for children to explore, and the festival's two new mascots, Sandy and Rocky Salmon, will make appearances each day. There will even be a special appearance by Smokey Bear.

The Kokanee Salmon Festival and Oktoberfest at Historic Camp Richardson Resort, occur the same weekend, so the parking lot at the visitor center fills quickly. Visitors are encouraged to ride a bike or walk along the bike path between Camp Richardson and the visitor center, or take public transportation from South Lake Tahoe. BlueGo and the Nifty Fifty trolley will provide special service for these events. Contact them at (530) 541.7149.

All proceeds from T-shirt sales, festival pin sales, and the trail runs benefit the U.S. Forest Service environmental education programs in the Lake Tahoe Basin.

For more information and a complete schedule of activities, call (530) 543.2674.

Bridgeport fire sends smoke toward Tahoe-Carson-Reno

Smoke from a fire near Bridgeport is filtering into the Lake Tahoe Basin and into Northern Nevada.

The fire along Highway 395 started Sunday about noon.

More than 1,200 acres have burned.

Firefighters had to evacuate the Buckeye Campground Sunday night. Some roads in the area have bee closed.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report