NV State Parks has money to give away

Nevada State Parks is seeking applications for grants to fund park and recreation projects throughout the state. Congress recently approved $239,874 in funding for fiscal year 2011 to Nevada's local and tribal governments.

Due to the national economic crisis, these funds were not made available until July. The funds are available for park and recreation capital improvement and acquisition projects through the federal Land and Water Conservation Fund program.

Funding requests generally range between $25,000 and $293,874. A 50 percent match is required.

Applications are due Sept. 1 by 5pm. Application packages are online.

Opinion: Despite federal deal, still lots of work to be done on budget

Publisher's note: ***This editorial is from the Aug. 1, 2011, Reno Gazette-Journal.***

It would be difficult to find anyone anywhere who's happy about the deal reached by President Barack Obama and Republican leaders to raise the federal debt limit over the weekend.

It also would be difficult to point to anyone in the nation's capital who has performed heroically in recent weeks – not the president, not the leaders of either party in Congress – as the deadline for avoiding an unprecedented default approached.

There were no winners in the long, bitter debate and lots of losers – including a president whose approval rate has hit a new low.

By the time the politicians stepped to the microphones on Sunday to announce that they had an agreement, many Americans had had enough of all of them. And the nasty sniping that continued on Monday only added to the perception that the American government was no longer working to the benefit of the citizens.

But on Saturday it was clear that Congress had reached a stalemate. As in any game of "Chicken," there comes a time when someone must turn away or risk catastrophe. When the Senate rejected the latest House plan to raise the debt limit and the House rejected the latest Senate plan, even before the Senate voted on it, the time had come.

That's when the combatants should – and did – call an end to the current hostilities and move on to the next battle. And there are lots of battles yet to come.

Read the whole story

Not all Shore Shore rec measure officials kept in

loop

By Kathryn Reed

The treasurer of the board that oversees recreation Measure S on the South Shore just recently found out about the half dozen meetings the board has had this year geared primarily to rewriting the voter approved initiative.

It took a call by an El Dorado County resident to county Auditor Joe Harn in the last few weeks to alert him to what is going on. Harn is also the joint powers authority's treasurer.

"Protocol would be I'd be informed about the meeting. It is unusual that an officer of the JPA would not be informed of the meeting," Harn said.



Pine needles fill in the lines at Tahoe Paradise tennis courts in November 2010.

Meetings to discuss changing Measure S to Measure R so the money allocation could be altered have been going on since early spring.

On Aug. 8 Harn was told by county Supervisor Norma Santiago about today's meeting. Santiago is chairwoman of the

recreation JPA. Other board members are South Lake Tahoe City Councilman Hal Cole and Tahoe Paradise Park board member Deborah Henderson.

At the last meeting on July 29, John Upton said in writing and verbally that an audit of the JPA's books is not necessary. South Tahoe resident Tom Wendell asked the lone paid staff member of the JPA: Why?

Upton said with the JPA writing about eight checks a year that Harn's "strong position is it's not necessary."



Courts at Tahoe Paradise have not been safely played on in years.

Harn on Aug. 9 told *Lake Tahoe News*, "I'm not saying one is necessary, but I have not spoken to John Upton about JPA business in a couple years."

An audit in 2006 by Harn uncovered serious accounting deficiencies. He suggested several changes at that time regarding how the 2000 voter approved measure be handled.

This week he agreed the JPA has little money to spend after it pays bond debt, Upton, and disseminates the money per the measure's requirements. He said that is all straight forward. What Harn said would be the true reflection of how Measure S money is spent is for the three entities receiving the money to have their auditors do an independent schedule showing what

happens with the JPA money.

At the annual meeting two weeks ago where finances are talked about, the JPA board did not mention this more detailed analysis being a possibility or consideration.



When Tahoe Paradise courts will open is unknown. Photos/Kathryn Reed

Harn doesn't even know what Measure R is designed to do.

"If there is not a lot of transparency, normally the voters don't trust you. I found out (about Measure R) from a member of the public, but it sounds like they are about to go to the voters," Harn said.

And he's right. Today is decision day. The board meets at 9am at Lake Tahoe Airport for its last chance to stop the process of putting Measure R on the Nov. 8 ballot. The potential cost of the election is the main sticking point for the board, otherwise the three have agreed to the resolution and reasons to alter the measure.

R would allow bike trails built pre-2000 to receive maintenance money and funds to be directed to improving existing ball fields.

As it stands now, there is no more money for ball fields and only post-2000 bike trails receive cash for upkeep.

Tahoe Paradise is allocated $50,000 a year. This summer two of the three tennis courts at the park were supposed to be resurfaced. In Upton's July 29 staff report he said they would be open this month.

Lake Tahoe News spoke with groundskeeper Steve Dunn at the unfinished courts on Tuesday. They won't be ready for play this month. Dunn wouldn't even give a date because he doesn't know when they will be painted and it will be two weeks after they are painted before people can use them.

It used to cost $5 an hour to play on those courts. The groundskeeper said the Tahoe Paradise board has not set a fee, but he said he has heard it could be $10.

Fire management operations near Rubicon Bay

U.S. Forest Service fuels management crews are scheduled to begin prescribed fire operations in the Rubicon Bay area beginning Aug. 10. Crews expect to conduct operations on an area less than 10 acres.

Operations are expected to continue through the week.

All prescribed fire operations are dependent on weather and available staffing.

Residents and visitors can expect to see smoke from prescribed fire project areas. Smoke management is part of every prescribed fire burn plan, and efforts will be taken to reduce

actual or potential smoke impacts on community areas.

Opinion: Putting the spotlight on domestic violence

By Ellen R. Shaffer

Her husband described the abuse: “I would hold her hostage and terrorize her.” The Kaiser patient reported how she finally decided to leave: “I’ll never forget the office visit when my physician said, ‘I’m afraid if your husband doesn’t kill you, the stress will.’ ”

Last week’s groundbreaking decision by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to require health plans to cover domestic violence counseling without requiring a co-pay will give women and their health care providers an important new incentive to call out the distress signals of abuse, and to take action.

Domestic violence is a widespread, harmful and expensive public health issue. Public awareness campaigns, advocacy groups and laws offer support and a way out, but too many individuals remain isolated and stigmatized. Every year, 2 million women experience domestic violence, more than new cases of breast cancer or deaths from cardiovascular disease. Also:

– More than three women a day are murdered by current or former husbands or boyfriends.

– Homicide is the second-leading cause of injury-related death

among pregnant women.

– 6.5 percent of California women report physical violence by a partner in the past year.

– 24 percent of U.S. women have experienced physical domestic abuse at some point in their lives. Domestic violence can include threats, isolation, humiliation, unwanted sexual activities and limiting access to financial resources.

– Women who experience domestic violence, and children who witness it in the home, also suffer from an array of long-term mental health and medical conditions. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that the economic burden of domestic violence in the United States is $8 billion per year in direct medical costs and lost productivity.

Ellen R. Shaffer is the co-director of the Center for Policy Analysis in San Francisco.

Read the whole story

Landscape tour offers ideas in conservation

The 4th annual Conservation Landscape Tour is Aug. 21 from 1-5pm.

Pick up a map at the Sierra House Elementary School on Pioneer Trail in South Lake Tahoe between 1-3pm for this free tour.

See examples of BMPs, native plants, water conservation and defensible space.

Call (530) 543.1501, ext. 118 for more information.

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2 days of prescribed burns on South Shore

U.S. Forest Service fuels management crews began prescribed fire operations on Kingsbury Grade near South Benjamin today.

Crews expect to accomplish approximately 4 acres. Operations will also take place on Plumas Circle in the Pioneer Trail area. Crews will treat a small area, approximately one-half of an acre.

Both operations are expected to last through Aug. 10. All prescribed fire operations are dependent on weather and available staffing.

Residents and visitors can expect to see smoke from prescribed fire project areas. Smoke management is part of every prescribed fire burn plan, and efforts will be taken to reduce actual or potential smoke impacts on community areas.

Peaks and Paws Festival

The Village at Squaw Valley is paying tribute to man – and woman's – best friend with the 2nd Annual Peaks and Paws Festival on Aug. 27-28.

Dogs and their owners can enjoy bluegrass music, wine and an

array of events and demonstrations specifically designed for furry friends. A line-up of some of the region's most popular bluegrass acts will play in the village each day from 2-8pm, with outdoor events kicking off earlier in the day. All of the proceeds from the festival will benefit the Humane Society of Truckee-Tahoe.

The Dead Winter Carpenters will headline the festival along with a lineup of hit bluegrass acts including Montana Slim String Band and Brothers Comatose. The music compliments the perfect setting for sipping wine, sampling craft beers and enjoying the mountain views.

The Peaks and Paws Festival hosts an evening wine tasting in The Village at Squaw Valley from 5-8pm both days. The wine tasting costs $25 per day, with all proceeds benefiting the Humane Society. Lagunitas beer is also available for $4 from 2-8pm.

The festival's pet-partner events will kick off on Saturday with the Mutt Strut – a 3K run for dog owners and pets. The run will start and finish in front of Squaw Dogs in The Village. The Mutt Strut costs $5 to enter, with all proceeds benefiting the Humane Society. People without pets are also welcome.

Peaks and Paws welcomes two pet-friendly hikes this year. On Aug. 27, people and pets can join a guided hike around High Camp, exploring the wildflowers and wildlife that live at 8.200 feet. On Aug. 28, there will be a guided hike through the cascading waterfalls of Shirley Canyon. Both hikes start at 1pm and are free of charge, though a Cable Car ticket is needed to access Saturday's hike.

For more information and details about all the events for that weekend, go online.

White voters will dominate redrawn Calif. political districts

By Jim Sanders, Sacramento Bee

Most of California's legislators and congressional representatives will be elected over the next decade from districts dominated by white voters, the state's new political maps show.

Districts drawn by the state's first-ever redistricting commission may bolster the clout of other racial groups – particularly Latinos – but probably not end the longtime political dominance by whites.

Caucasians currently hold nearly two of every three legislative seats, for example, even though California's white population fell to below 50 percent of the state total more than a decade ago.

"The overrepresentation of whites, I think, will continue," said Marqueece Harris-Dawson of the African American Redistricting Collaborative. "Hopefully, that will be a focal point of the redistricting process (in 2021)."

In six of every 10 new legislative and congressional districts drawn by the California Citizens Redistricting Commission, whites comprise more than 50 percent of the adult citizen population, exceeding the total of all other groups combined, according to statistics by Redistricting Partners, a research and consulting firm.

The imbalance is due largely to population distribution – not racial discrimination – analysts say, adding that candidates of any color are potential contenders in districts dominated by their party.

“Minorities, more and more, are getting the ability to get elected almost anywhere,” said Paul Mitchell, a Democratic strategist and leader of Redistricting Partners.

Read the whole story

Caesars Entertainment narrows loss in second quarter

By Steve Green, Las Vegas Sun

Caesars Entertainment Corp. today joined other big Las Vegas Strip casino operators in reporting stronger business trends.

And thanks in part to cost cutting, the company narrowed its quarterly loss from $274 million in 2010’s second quarter to $155.5 million in the 2011 second quarter.

Net revenue increased slightly from $2.22 billion to $2.229 billion.

In Las Vegas, net revenue for the quarter increased 10.3 percent from the year-ago quarter to $786.4 million.

EBITDA, a key profitability measure, jumped nearly 32 percent in Las Vegas to $233.1 million.

EBITDA means earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation and amortization.

Read the whole story