Tahoe fire officials working on ways to make their needs heard

By Kathryn Reed

MEYERS – Fire officials are feeling like people have forgotten that every day there is threat of a catastrophic fire in the Lake Tahoe Basin.

They feel a bit dissed to not be more involved with the Aug. 16 annual environmental summit, when in recent years they have been an integral part of discussions surrounding the event.



Lake Tahoe Basin fire officials meet Aug. 4 in Meyers. Photo/Kathryn Reed

The real work is not what is said at the 90-minute public session (which this year is at Homewood Mountain Resort from 9:30-11am), but instead during more intimate get-togethers with the politicians.

Some speculation is that with Govs. Jerry Brown and Brian Sandoval coming – the first time since 1997 the California and

Nevada governors have shown up – that more attention will be directed to Nevada's SB271.

In the past, the fire officials had direct access to Sen. Dianne Feinstein, D-Calif. That, so far, is not a possibility this year. And she is the hostess this year.

"We need to make sure fire is a priority. When there is limited money to spend there are other folks who are trying to create a higher priority than fire," John Pang, Meeks Bay fire chief, told his peers Aug. 4 at a meeting at Lake Valley Fire Department.

Money is needed to continue fuels treatment work. Because fire is no longer allowed to naturally burn in a forest, removing trees is the way to reduce the threat of fire. This season in the basin more than 2,000 acres are expected to be treated.

Elwood Miller, who works for the Tahoe Fire & Fuels Team, said he is hearing from congressional staff that because treatments are ahead of the 10-year plan, that perhaps funding should be cut. But with 85 percent of the basin being owned by a state or the feds, many believe they are the ones who need to take more responsibility than the local jurisdictions.

"A wildfire is not going to wait for SNPLMA money," Miller said of a key source of funding for the Nevada Fire Safe Council.

Also, the money being supplied by federal and state agencies to make the forest healthy is for the initial entry, not the upkeep of it.

It used to be thought that crews would need to revisit a site every eight to 10 years, but that has been reassessed to every five to seven. Part of the issue is when trees are thinned the undergrowth sprouts more rapidly. While a ground fire is easier to fight than a crown fire, Manzanita and white thorn burn hot and fast and are not desirable to keep growing in

large swaths.

While the fire gang, and state and federal landowners want more attention, they are going to keep working as a group to get what they want and need. Their collaborative approach is something that has been praised at previous summits by the Washington politicians.

Other items from the meeting:

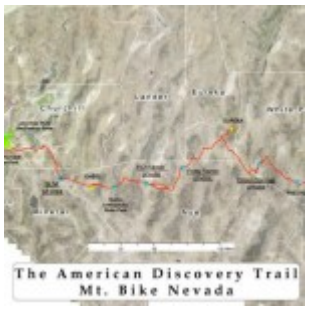
• They collectively said the need for a biomass facility in or near the basin needs to be built. This came up because the Kings Beach location has been scrapped. Now the Cabin Creek area near Truckee is being considered because this is where refuse from the North Shore is hauled.

• Talk of Arizona's Wallow Fire centered on how it could have been worse without the amount of defensible space work that had been done prior to the blaze.

21-day mountain bike trip takes riders across Nevada

Mountain Bike Nevada is a 519-mile border-to-border tour from Sept. 10-20.

Sponsored by the Nevada State Parks, the tour will start at the historic Cal Neva Resort on the North Shore and end in the shadow of Wheeler Peak in Great Basin National Park.



The off-road route will explore the Flume Trail, six State Parks, mining ghost towns, Pony Express Trail, wild mustang herds and numerous hot springs which include the unique Dinah's Punch Bowl.

"We completed an exploratory ride last year which led way to organizing this year's inaugural event that also benefits Nevada public education," Todd Whear, ride organizer and event co-founder, said in a press release. "This is not along Highway 50 and the Loneliest Road in America. This route is much lonelier, more isolated and more scenic. Mountain bikes were built for this kind of riding and Nevada offers some of the finest mountain terrain, weather conditions and trail systems anywhere in the U.S."

The 2011 Mountain Bike Nevada adventure tour is limited to 50 participants with registration available until Aug. 20. The $1,600 fee includes:

• Daily guide services

• Daily support crew services

• Two nights at a Eureka hotel on rest day

• All meals (except on rest day in Eureka, meals on own)

• All camping fees

• MTBNV riding jersey, water bottle and camp mug

• All non-alcoholic beverages

• Bike technician services

To register and learn more, go online.

Men dominate STEM jobs, but earning potential good for women

The U.S. Commerce Department's Economics and Statistics Administration has issued the second in a series of reports on science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) jobs and higher education.

As expected, the report "Women in STEM: A Gender Gap to Innovation" finds there are fewer women than men in STEM jobs and attaining degrees in STEM fields. That's true despite the fact the wage premium for women in STEM jobs is higher than that for men and that there's greater income parity between genders in STEM fields than there is in the employment market as a whole.

While women make up 48 percent of the U.S. workforce, only 24 percent have STEM jobs. During the past decade, this underrepresentation has remained fairly constant, even as women's share of the college-educated workforce has increased.

Women with STEM jobs, however, earned 33 percent more than women in non-STEM jobs in 2009, exceeding the 25 percent earnings premium for men in STEM. Women in STEM also experience a smaller gender wage gap than their counterparts in other fields.

"We haven't done as well as we could to encourage young people to go into STEM jobs – particularly women – which inhibits American innovation," acting Secretary of Commerce Rebecca Blank said in a statement. "Closing the gender gap in STEM degrees will boost the number of Americans in STEM jobs, and

that will enhance U.S. innovation and sharpen our global competitiveness.”

Women who do get STEM degrees are more likely to enter jobs in fields like education or healthcare, the report finds. And while more women choose to major in math than men – nearly 10 percent versus 5.7 percent – most men with STEM majors select engineering degrees. Engineers are the most male-dominated STEM occupational group but also the one with the smallest gender wage gap.

Several possible factors contribute to the discrepancy of women and men in STEM jobs, including a lack of female role models, gender stereotyping, and less family-friendly flexibility in the STEM fields.

La Niña may be gaining steam to return to Tahoe

By Jeff Delong, Reno Gazette-Journal

La Niña, the weather pattern that helped produce an epic winter for the Reno-Tahoe region in 2011, could return in a few months.

The U.S. Climate Prediction Center on Thursday issued a La Niña watch, citing conditions indicating a return of the climatic phenomenon sometime next fall.



Heavy snow last winter forced trees into houses. Photo/LTN file

La Niña, characterized by cooler surface ocean temperatures in the eastern Pacific, was in place from late 2010 through much of 2011 but was declared over by the climate center two months ago.

So-called “neutral” conditions are in place today. Predictions into what will happen next vary by computer model, but some suggest the return of a mild La Niña by fall.

The climate center also cites “the historical tendency for significant wintertime La Niña episodes to be followed by relatively weaker La Niña episodes the following winter.”

Read the whole story

History: Catholicism on the South Shore

Publisher’s note: ***This is reprinted with permission from the March 1976 Lake Tahoe Historical Society newsletter.***

The Historical Society will honor the 25th Anniversary of St.

Theresa’s Church at its March meeting. The program will be in charge of Father Grace who first came to the parish in April of 1956.



As an outreach of the Truckee parish, founded in 1885, a priest served the north shore area of Lake Tahoe for many years before Mr. and Mrs. Frank Globin invited a priest to come to their Al Tahoe resort to hold services during the summer months. The church records show the fist mass on the South Shore to have been celebrated by Rev. Michael Miles during the summer of 1926 in a small building at the corner of Sacramento and Lakeview Avenues. Twenty-five years later, Father Patrick Lyons arrived on July 1, 1951 to establish St. Theresa’s to serve his parishioners on a year-round basis. The original site of the church was that of the current Intermediate School. Twenty families of about 150 people comprised the membership at the founding. Roughly 1000 families now belong to St. Theresa’s where it is not unusual for 4000 worshipers to be served ruing Sunday services.

St. Theres’a is preparing a historical brochure for printing later in the year. Mrs. Pat Whitney, in collecting pictures for the brochure, has prepared several photographic exhibits which will be on display during the March 25 meeting.

Refreshments will be served following the program. Guests are cordially invited.

Snippets about Lake Tahoe



• The Incline Village General Improvement District board of trustees is ready to put a disc golf course in. It will be paid for from donations from the community.

• Bijou Bash at Bijou Community Park in South Lake Tahoe is Sept. 10 from 10am-4pm.

• Trinkie Watson was recently named a Paul Harris Fellow by the Rotary Club of Truckee. The recognition bestowed through Rotary International is one of the organization's highest honors.

• Here is Caltrans' Sierra roadwork schedule for the coming week. And this is the Tahoe roadwork schedule.

• Placer County is among the nation's Top 10 Digital Counties with a population between 250,000 to 499,000, according to the National Association of Counties.

Federal government inspecting NV Fire Safe Council's books

By Kathryn Reed

MEYERS – Nevada Fire Safe Council's financial ledger is being looked at by more than just the auditing firm the nonprofit hired to do an audit.

The Office of Inspector General spent a week at the Carson City office reviewing grants. *Lake Tahoe News* has also been told the Bureau of Land Management wants to review the

records.

Lake Tahoe News first reported on the audit July 21.



Andrew List

Andrew List, executive director of the NFSC, told a group of fire officials on Thursday he believes he knows where the whistle-blower complaint came from. He would not name the contractor, but said a specific firm keeps being denied work from the council because it doesn't have the equipment to do the jobs.

However, a U.S. Forest Service official told *LTN* the inspector general is reviewing an ARRA grant. ARRA is the federal stimulus money.

"They looked at every piece of paperwork," List said.

He added that many questions centered on how the Fire Safe Council chooses contractors for mechanical work. List was told that aspect of the process looked good.

However, List said verbally he was told some changes may need to take place with hand crew contracts – specifically, that they may need to go out for bid instead of being handled exclusively by the fire departments or land owners such at the Forest Service.

A written report will be issued that details the Office of Inspector General's findings.

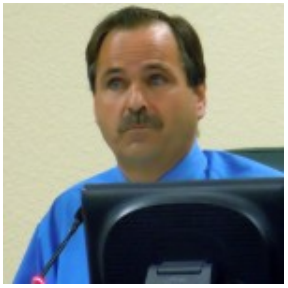
Opinion: El Dorado asks for flexibility to achieve environmental goals

Publisher's note: ***The following letter was approved Aug. 2 by the El Dorado County Board of Supervisors to be sent to the Governing Board of the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency.***

Dear Governing Board:

The purpose of this letter is to convey our support for your continued pursuit of lake clarity through environmental threshold gains, transportation enhancements, economic development and expanded public and private partnerships, but, to also bring your attention to the difficult condition of water quality program compliance by local jurisdictions.

Only through partnerships with the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency, the California Tahoe Conservancy and the US Forest Service, has the county been able to complete 53 erosion control oriented projects at a cost of $83 million in the last 28 years. But, sadly, that number pales to what is facing local jurisdictions over the next 15 years. Basin wide, it will cost $1.5 billion to achieve the goals and objectives of the recent Total Daily Maximum Load mandated improvements at a time when all local jurisdictions suffer from severe fiscal impacts of a state and federal budget crisis and enormous local tax receipt losses.



Ray Nutting

The key to achieving these goals is a committed funding component and a reduced and reasonable dollar match that allows local jurisdictions a better chance to fund the required improvements. The County of El Dorado needs the ability to have operations and maintenance dollars included in the 50% match. Otherwise, these goals will be impossible to reach without affecting every county department, including public health and safety services.

The County supports projects of mutual interest that benefit the ecology and economy for generations to come and greatly appreciates your commitment to lake clarity. We also appreciate any assistance in reaching reasonable solutions to environmental improvements.

Sincerely,

Raymond J. Nutting, Board of Supervisors chairman

Heaven is a hotel rooftop overlooking the Pacific Ocean

By Paula Peterson

AVILA BEACH – To sum it up: heavenly. I found a place to unwind, relax, disappear into my own world, and yet, my

daughter can have fun and enjoy it as well. And, I don’t have to leave the hotel.

When traveling with your kids there aren’t many places that can give everyone in the family the same vacation value. But the Inn at Avila Beach, Avila Beach and the central coast certainly fit that bill.



Cabanas on the roof at the Inn at Avila Beach mean not needing to the leave the hotel. Photos/Paula Peterson

I usually take a vacation to enjoy a region, but after finding the Inn at Avila Beach in 2009, I have found that I can enjoy a hotel as my vacation destination. Don’t get me wrong, the whole central coast is full of great things to do, and I enjoy them when I’m there. But my rooftop heaven is always waiting for me.

I attended Cal Poly in San Luis Obispo during the late ’70s and frequently visited Avila Beach. This big pink building on the hill housed apartments and I never paid much attention to it. But with remodeling and its reincarnation as a hotel, I definitely pay attention now. Terra cotta tiles on the floors, colorful hand-painted tiles around the property and a homey

atmosphere greet you as you check in (but yes, it still sports a pink exterior). Oceanfront rooms with nice patios allow the visitor to hear the waves pounding on shore all day and night. They have interior courtyard view rooms, but I wasn't very impressed with the rooms without an ocean view where one can enjoy the view and the sounds of the waves.

So now, for the best part … the rooftop. They have created a paradise on the roof, complete with cabanas, barbecues, tables, hammocks, counters, sinks, blenders, sofas, televisions and comfy chairs and couches. You can sit and relax in a cushioned wicker chair and read your favorite book while listening to the beach action. You can bring up that bottle of wine you bought during your day of wine tasting, uncork it with some cheese and crackers and enjoy the sunset. You can stay away from restaurants and barbecue your dinner, from steaks to the fresh fish you just bought on the pier. Or, when the sun goes down, bring up the bag of complementary popcorn you just popped and watch a movie under the stars.

Everyone in the hotel shares the space, but there has always been plenty of room for everyone each time I've been there. I was impressed the maids made regular rounds and straightened up the blankets and cushions so all was fresh for the next person to enjoy the space.

Avila Beach is small and quaint.

It's changed a lot since my college days. In the late 1990s Unocal started to clean up decades-old oil seepage from their pipes under the town and where a massive oil spill was found. A half-mile stretch of town was leveled in order to clean up the mess and a $30 million lawsuit helped rebuild the town. The small beach shops were old and homey before, but what replaced them are stylish and pleasing shops, deli, store, beach front restaurants, coffee shop, a wine shop and bar. You can walk from your hotel room and have a coffee at Joe Mamma's (where the sign reminds you that each cup of coffee is

personally crafted and that they aren’t at Starbucks). You can sit in the beach chairs outside or stroll on the beach or pier with your java.

The newly redesigned Avila Market & Deli is quite charming and offers a great menu. You can eat upstairs, take it outside, or downstairs where they’ll pour you a glass of wine to go with your meal. As with each beach town, there are souvenir shops my daughter can’t stay out. During late spring, summer and early fall there is a fun farmers’ market where you can sample seafood from the local restaurants, buy fruit and veggies or stop by the outside bar and enjoy a cocktail. Then you just walk home to the Inn at Avila Beach a block away.

I’m happy on the rooftop, but there are so many nearby choices on where to go touring and exploring. Rent a local bike and go out the Bob Jones Trail from the beach by the golf course out to the Avila Valley Barn and enjoy a treat, drive in to See Canyon for apples or wine, venture south to Pismo Beach or the other direction to San Luis Obispo. One can go wine tasting in the ever expanding Paso Robles region, exploring and shopping in Morro Bay, Cambria and Cayucos or go on Hearst Castle tours and the list goes on.

Something I never miss on my trips to the central coast is the fabulous year-round Thursday night farmers’ markets in San Luis Obispo (SLO) … a must see and do. City streets close every Thursday for three hours from 5 to 8pm and you can eat from a multitude of restaurants, fruit and veggie stands, and buy clothing and just about anything you’re looking for. Bands are also playing on several of the side streets and the energy in the area is easy to catch.

Another stop we never miss is to Splash Café. Their bread bowl clam chowder is out of this world. Their main restaurant is in Pismo Beach near the pier. Don’t let the long line wrapping around the funky building scare you. It moves quickly. They just added a location in SLO, too.

But there is always my rooftop at the Inn at Avila Beach. Late spring is my favorite time to be in Avila, but there really is no wrong time. Parking gets a little crazy on busy summer days, but if you're parked in the lot at the hotel you're good, though there aren't enough places for every room.

More hotel and town information are online.

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Minden woman seriously hurt on Blue Lakes Road

A Minden woman sustained life-threatening injuries when the vehicle she was driving up Blue Lakes Road lost control, hit a tree, flipped and came to rest about a mile into the forest on Saturday.

Shellie Scott, 44, was hoisted out of the area off Highway 88 by a CHP helicopter crew. They transferred her to a CalStar helicopter crew who flew her to Renown Medical Center in Reno.

CHP Sgt. Dan Paxton said Scott had extensive bleeding.

She was driving a 1987 Subaru Forester south on the rural road when she lost control shortly before 4pm Aug. 6, Paxton said. There are skid marks where she went off the road.

The speed limit is 35mph.

Paxton said indicators point to Scott possibly driving under the influence.

– Kathryn Reed