Items not intended to be flushed clog Tahoe City sewer system

In the past several weeks, Tahoe City Public Utility District has had numerous sewer pumps clogged by “flushable” wipes.

“Flushable” is a catchy phrase and companies use it to market their products, according to TCPUD officials. Officials say the challenge is wipes can’t breakdown and more and more sewer lines and pumps are being clogged with these wipes.

The only things that should be flushed are toilet paper and human waste. All the rest are sewer-stoppers.



"Flushable" wipes are clogging the sewer system. Photo/Provided

The most common sewer-stopper for the TCPUD sewer system are “flushable” wipes because they don’t disintegrate.

Common items that should not be flushed:

“Flushable” wipes

Facial tissue

Paper towels

Cotton swabs and cotton balls

For more information, contact the TCPUD at (530) 583.3796, ext. 21.

Charred trees being extracted from Angora burn area

By Kathryn Reed

Alien-like machines seem to be able to perform superhuman tasks in the middle of the forest.

Cut, extract, de-limb, slice. Repeat, repeat, repeat.

The sound of trees crashing echoes through the otherwise tranquil Angora burn area. A few birds chirp, but no people are venturing in to see what the noise is all about.



Trees are being removed from the Angora burn area. Photos/Kathryn

Reed

What’s going on is the U.S. Forest Service is getting rid of a significant number of trees charred and killed in the June 2007 wildland fire that destroyed 254 houses and blackened more than 3,000 acres.

The project was delayed because of the lawsuit brought by Earth Island Institute’s John Muir Project and the Center for Biological Diversity. The conservation groups believed woodpeckers’ habitat was threatened. The court said we don’t think so.

One-by-one the burned standing lumber left behind by the Angora Fire is being removed. About 750 acres are being treated with mechanical equipment, while hand crews are tending to an additional 450 acres.

This project on the South Shore will be the first test case involving another lawsuit.

On June 30, El Dorado County Superior Court Judge Steve Bailey sided with conservation groups Sierra Club and Sierra Forest Legacy by saying the permitting process for this and other projects is out of whack.

Post-Angora the bi-state fire commission put together by the governors of California and Nevada at the time said permits for fuels reduction projects should be streamlined. Local agencies complied by having the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency take on the responsibility.

But the June court decision brings the Lahontan Regional Water Quality Board back into the picture.

Harold Singer, executive director of Lahontan, spoke to leaders of the Lake Tahoe Basin fire community on Aug. 4 telling them what the ruling means.

“They said go back and evaluate all of the projects in the 10-year strategy,” Singer said of the court ruling.

This means the Angora project needs a timber waiver. The deadline to secure it is Aug. 13 – same goes for all operations currently under way. Any projects starting after that date require a timber waiver, too. The application for Angora was submitted Thursday while Singer was meeting in Meyers with the basin fire chiefs and others.

“We are committed to expediting the applications, especially if something is going on. We don’t want to stop work,” Singer said.

Singer said no fee would be associated with the permit. Several tiers are associated with the permitting process. Hand crew jobs will fly through, while something like the Angora work that entails machines and the creation of new trails is at the strictest review process.

While Singer admitted the rest of this work season could be hectic for those needing permits from Lahontan, he said he wants to come up with a more permanent plan for the future. However, he has not contacted the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency to work on what that might look like. Considering TRPA has been the lead permitting agency for such projects in the last few years, it will need to be consulted.

In many ways, the court ruling puts basin fuel reduction permitting rules back to pre-Angora standards.

With the work in the Angora area being a multi-year project, the permit to proceed is crucial.

Crews are currently accessing the area off Forest Mountain Road; working about 400 feet from houses. The plan eventually is to make this a trail that will connect to Seneca Pond, Miwok and the gun mount at the base of Echo Summit.

Less than a half-mile in is the landing area where the chipper will be brought in to shred the trees being felled.

“The goal is to leave less than 10 to 15 tons per acre on the ground,” Duncan Leao, U.S. Forest Service forester said while taking *Lake Tahoe News* on a tour of the area this week. “We could remove 40 to 60 tons per acre to get to the desired level. This part of the prescription is retaining larger snags and larger downed logs. It’s a balance with fuel loading targets and habitat benefits.”

A minimum of four snags and seven downed logs are being left in each acre.

This wood has no value to a mill. Some might be able to be turned into firewood, but most will be chipped and hauled out of the basin. Where it goes is still up in the air.

CTL Forest Management is doing the work.

Trees in this area that are up to 24-inches in diameter will be felled.

“Not every tree, but we will look at all of them,” Leao said.

Each section of the burn area has a particular prescription. There are 16 units, with subunits in some of those. Criteria for how each section is handled include, but is not limited to, the health, size, crown and relation to other trees, species, slope of hill, intensity of burn area, and location. The entire ecosystem was looked out before a plan was devised.

Leao has noticed more deer in the area since the fire. Before not much habitat existed for them to forage. Not so now. Lots of green exists at ground level.

More mountain elderberry is sprouting as well.

In most cases a white fir would be removed over a Jeffery pine or incense cedar.

The prescription for the area also includes where to plant seedlings and where to increase aspen stands.

Several young pines that were planted in the last three years are sprouting in the forest. Their tender green branches protrude beyond the ever-present white thorn and Manzanita.

Part of the healthy forest plan is to get rid of invasive weeds. This is done before the mechanical crews come in and will be performed in areas not having timber removed. It’s all hand work. Bull thistle and cheat grass are two of the species being removed.

The burn piles dotting the landscape could be burned this fall if conditions allow for it.

As the project progresses, assuming the timber waiver is secured, that area of the forest being worked on will be off-limits to the public for safety reasons. The whole project could take six years – which includes building trails. The goal is to thin 700 acres by Oct. 15.

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Newspapers sue to get pay info from Legislature

By Michael J. Mishak, Los Angeles Times

SACRAMENTO – A group of newspapers, including the Los Angeles Times, has filed a lawsuit against the California Legislature, alleging that the institution violated state open-records laws by refusing to release the office budgets and spending records of lawmakers and legislative committees.

Last month, the Assembly Rules Committee rejected multiple requests for legislators' budgets, including one from a lawmaker, on the grounds that the information was exempt from public disclosure under the Legislative Open Records Act. Government administrators cited provisions excluding "legislative memoranda" and "correspondence" from disclosure.

The lawsuit, filed Friday in Sacramento County Superior Court, said the fiscal records "concern the conduct of the people's business and the use of public resources to conduct that business, and do not fall under any of the exemptions" in the open-records law.

Read the whole story

Increase in number of businesses expanding, moving to Tahoe-Reno area

By Bill O'Driscoll, Reno Gazette-Journal

Signs of life are emerging in the effort to grow existing business and bring new companies to the Reno-Tahoe region.

A report Wednesday by the Economic Development Authority of Western Nevada showed marked increases in the number of expanded and relocated businesses and jobs created in the fiscal year ending June 30.

That has EDAWN officials believing recovery could be under way after several years of recession and double-digit unemployment.

“It wasn’t a great year, but it’s improving … trending back up,” said Stan Thomas, vice president of business development.

He said he’s especially encouraged by growth in site visits from interested companies – nearly quadrupling from 20 a year earlier to 74.

“They are serious shoppers,” Thomas said. “That trend really gets me excited.”

Read the whole story

Ballet performance a fundraiser for Tahoe state parks

A special performance by Tahoe Youth Ballet at Sugar Pine Point State Park is designed to raise money for the ballet and Sierra State Parks Foundation.

The Aug. 17 event begins at 6pm. Tickets are $25 in advance, $30 that day. Call 800.838.3006 for tickets.

Bring a chair, picnic dinner or buy food-wine at the event.

Hot August Nights Poker Run

stops in Minden

More than 850 cars are expected to participate in the Hot August Nights Poker Run on Aug. 11. The classic cars will make their way to Carson Valley representing some of the 5,500 entrants in this year's nationally recognized 25th Annual Hot August Nights.

The cars will participate in a 110-mile seven stop poker run which begins in Reno, continues through Carson City to Minden Park and then parades over Kingsbury Grade to South Lake Tahoe, finishing up at Legends at Sparks Marina. For the eighth year, the Minden Park stop will be the official lunch stop featuring an up close and personal way to view and photograph these vehicles and have an opportunity to speak with the owners.

The event takes place from approximately 11:30am-2pm at Minden Park. Streets will be closed to through traffic from Esmeralda and 4th streets around the Minden Park area.

For more information, call (775) 782.8144.

Rafting season finally begins on Truckee River

The dam gates are open, the river is flowing, and rafting season on the Truckee River opened today.

Some companies will begin operating this weekend.

The delay in this summer's rafting season was due to a banner snow year and lingering snowpack, which kept downstream flows

above the federally regulated minimums required before water can be let out of Lake Tahoe.



Rafting season is open on the North Shore along the Truckee River. Photo/Jeff Dow

Most trips are leisurely and take two to three hours to complete, with patrons exiting at River Ranch Lodge near Alpine Meadows Road along Highway 89. Trips include parking, shuttle, paddles, life jackets and commercial rafts for two to 20 people.

For more information about rafting and raft companies, go online.

Caregiving class in South Lake Tahoe

Caregiving is a difficult and often challenging role that one can undertake, and taking the opportunity to share information and feel connected to others who are providing care is a vital step to perform this task to the best of your ability.

Take the opportunity Aug. 11 from 5:30-7:30pm, South Lake Tahoe Senior Center at 3050 Highway 50 to become connected and rejuvenated at your local support group.

Refreshments will be served. Free respite care is available to qualified caregivers.

Pre-authorization is required for respite services. Questions? Call (530) 621.6151.

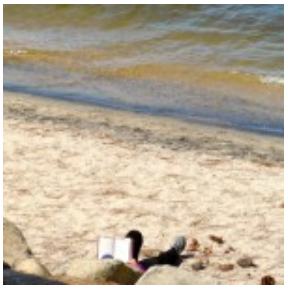
South Tahoe endorses TRPA zeroing in on lake clarity

By Kathryn Reed

Four years late, another 15 months before it might be approved and now a redirection at the eleventh-hour. That's where the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency's Regional Plan update is.

Instead of updating everything in the 1987 document, the bi-state regulatory agency has decided lake clarity and the California Sustainable Communities legislation should be the priorities.

The agency is taking its mission to the five counties and one city in the Lake Tahoe Basin to get their blessings, so to speak. South Lake Tahoe was the latest stop. While the council voted 5-0 to approve the narrowed scope, Councilman Bruce Grego did so reluctantly.



TRPA 's Regional Plan update's primary issue is now lake clarity. Photo/Kathryn Reed

Grego has issues with emphasizing limiting vehicles miles traveled as a way to improve lake clarity when public transit on the South Shore sputters at best. He also doesn't see cyclists using bike trails in winter.

Councilwoman Angela Swanson said some say "re-scoping is a failure in the process."

To that, Harmon Zuckerman said, "I think the failed effort was in the overly broad scooping plan in the first place."

He said between 80 and 85 percent of the Regional Plan is working. That's why fewer items need to be scoped – or changed. The idea is to make it a true update instead of a completely new document.

Zuckerman was hired away from Douglas County by TRPA to work exclusively on bringing the overdue Regional Plan to fruition.

He made a somewhat brief presentation to the South Lake Tahoe City Council on Aug. 2, having made a longer one to the TRPA Governing Board on July 27.

A third issue city staff wants TRPA to address is streamlining

the permitting process.

Zuckerman said that’s possible. With so much built out, it may be logical to have local jurisdictions do all the permitting, he said.

Mayor Hal Cole brought up the issue about the historical designation criteria when most of the town was built more than 50 years ago. Zuckerman said instead of scrutinizing every 50-plus-year-old building, TRPA would look at the historic resources map for direction.

Councilman Tom Davis vented his frustrations about land use issues such as a new drive-through not being allowed.

“We want a paradigm shift to work with our partners,” Zuckerman said.

While he wouldn’t promise drive-thoughs would be allowed, he did say the discussion could be had for the first time in years.

In other action:

• The council waffled on what to do about taking the employee pension question to voters. With California moving the state primary back to June, this means no February election. That is the month the council wanted to ask voters their thoughts. The council individually chastised the employee groups – except the firefighter association – for not coming to the table. If by the Aug. 23 meeting concessions are not made to close a more than $3 million budget gap, more staff will be added to the nearly 17 percent unemployment number in South Lake Tahoe, according to city officials.

• The council said at the Aug. 23 meeting definitive priorities will be laid out for the proposed capital improvement program. No vote was taken this week, but the council is leaning toward approving a $10 million certificate

of participation (which doesn’t require voter approval) to fund two years of road and other improvements.

• Bids for Al Tahoe Erosion Control Project 2 were denied because the city admitted the documents it sent out were incomplete.

• The council members voted against three items related to work on the Upper Truckee River restoration because they would rather have the city resolve differences with the contractor than pay under protest.

• The Tourism Improvement District agreement was extended to Dec. 17, 2019.

• The city got out of the business of patrolling the Village Center parking lot, aka Crescent V.

• The council decided to revisit in six months the idea of becoming a charter city. The majority of those who spoke against the idea were carpenters because of the threat to the elimination of prevailing wage criteria.

• The workshop that ended about 8pm was about redevelopment. The consensus was to bring an ordinance to the Aug. 23 meeting to keep the Redevelopment Agency, with a special meeting five days later to approve it before the Sept. 1 state deadline. The Aspens project remains up in the air. At issue is the state wanting to dissolve redevelopment agencies. A lawsuit by the League of California Cities would stop that from happening.

Free, guided hikes along Tahoe Rim Trail

The Tahoe Rim Trail Association is putting on the following free public guided hikes.

Online registration is now required for all TRTA programs. For more information call (775) 298.0012 or email programs@tahoerimtrail.org.

Aug. 6 – Vistas, Lakes and Wildflowers Hiking Series – "Cinder Cone" Join experienced TRT Guides on this moderately challenging hike from Tahoe City north to the Cinder Cone Overlook. There will be plenty of breathtaking views of Lake Tahoe, Squaw Valley and the Truckee River Canyon on this hike. This 8-mile hike is for experienced hikers, who can comfortably hike 6–8 miles. Meet at the Tahoe City South Trailhead at 8am.

Aug. 10 – Wednesday Wildflower Walk – Join us for this easy walk along the eastern side of Tamarack Peak toward Galena Falls. Well known for its natural beauty and abundance of wildflowers, this site offers great vistas of Washoe Valley and plenty of photo opportunities. This hike begins at 10am at the Mt. Rose Trailhead.

Aug. 13 – Vistas, Lakes and Wildflowers Hiking Series – "Martis Peak to Mt. Baldy" Join experienced TRT guides on this short, 6 mile, yet challenging hike from the Martis Peak Road (16N92) where the TRT intersects to Mt. Baldy. This hike will enjoy 360 degree panorama views from the Martis Peak Lookout. Participants will be led over 9,000 feet in elevation to Mt. Baldy for more incredible vistas. We will meet at 8am at the end of the road to Martis Peak.

Aug. 17 – Wednesday Wildflower Walk – Join us for this easy walk along the eastern side of Tamarack Peak toward Galena

Falls. Well known for its natural beauty and abundance of wildflowers, this site offers great vistas of Washoe Valley and plenty of photo opportunities. This hike begins at 10am at the Mt. Rose Trailhead.

Aug. 20 – Vistas, Lakes and Wildflowers Hiking Series – "Galena Falls" Join us for this easy walk along the eastern side of Tamarack Peak towards Galena Falls. Well known for its natural beauty and abundance of wildflowers, this site offers great vistas of Washoe Valley and plenty of photo opportunities. The hike will continue above Galena Falls to a wildflower strewn meadow and back down a USFS Road. This 6.5 mile hike begins at 8am at the Mt. Rose Trailhead.

Aug. 27 – Birds, Views and Falls – The Tahoe Institute for Natural Science, the Tahoe Rim Trail Association, and the Lahontan Audubon Society are sponsoring this moderately difficult hike (6.5 miles) from the Mount Rose Trailhead to Galena Falls in search of late summer birds and spectacular scenery. We will take our time to enjoy the birds and soak in great views before arriving at Galena Falls and the surrounding alpine meadows. Possible avian participants are Green-tailed Towhee, Clark's Nutcracker, Mountain Bluebird, and MacGillivray's Warbler. Bring water, sunscreen, and a sack lunch, as we will have lunch on the trail. This hike will begin at 7am at the Mount Rose Trailhead.