Weather puts damper on opening some Tahoe area golf courses

By Steve Pajak, Sacramento Bee

Tom Neadeau has been the superintendent at Northstar for 17 years. He was the superintendent at Tahoe Donner for 16 years before that.

He’s seen a few Sierra winters, in other words. And he’s seen worse relative to getting Truckee-area golf courses open in spring, believe it or not.

“Every spring is different,” he said. “This one is not totally unusual. It’s just not what we like.”

Read the whole story

Treatment at Leviathan Mine keeps toxins from reaching creek

The Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board reports that emergency treatment of acid mine drainage stored in ponds at the Leviathan Mine Superfund site in Alpine County has successfully prevented discharge of approximately 3 million gallons of untreated toxic water to Leviathan Creek, a tributary of the East Fork of the Carson River.

As a result of the highest amount of rain and snowfall since 1995, acid mine drainage from ponds at Leviathan Mine threatened to overflow in April. Through May 15, precipitation near the site was at 155 percent of average, or 11 inches above normal. The Water Board's contractor began operating an emergency treatment system on April 5. The treatment system neutralizes the AMD stored in the ponds by mixing the contaminated water with lime.

Toxic metals from the AMD are captured as sludge on the pond bottom, and treated water is discharged to Leviathan Creek. The discharged water meets water quality criteria established by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. The emergency treatment operation is being conducted under approval from the EPA, which has jurisdiction over operations at this Superfund site.

Leviathan Mine is an abandoned sulfur mine five miles east of Markleeville and six miles west of Topaz Lake, Nevada. California acquired the mine in 1984 to clean up water quality problems caused by historical mining. The Water Board completed a pollution abatement project at the mine in 1985, and since 1999 has continued to actively treat waters discharged from the mine site.

DCSD wants dormant middle school to have second life

By Susan Wood

ZEPHYR COVE – An international youth hostel, university retreat, performing arts facility, senior center outpost, culinary arts program, seasonal housing or multi-purpose

sports complex – all represent a possible next stage in development for the “moth-balled” Kingsbury Middle School closed a few years ago because of declining enrollment.

That was the essence of the first community input session set at Whittell High School on Thursday night and facilitated by Douglas County School District Superintendent Lisa Noonan, who was collecting ideas on who to woo for possible suitors to buy the 36,000-square-foot school that sits on 10 acres of pristine lake ridge property above Lake Village.



Kingsbury Middle School's future may be decided soon. Photo/Susan Wood

Noonan will host the second meeting at 6pm on June 1 at Douglas High School’s Media Center at 1670 Highway 88 in Minden.

“My hope is by the end of the summer to get our ducks in a row,” Noonan said. “This is literally just step 1.”

The school – which provided a noisy source of controversy when the school district closed it and gave away two grades to Zephyr Cove Elementary and the high school – comes with its advantages and disadvantages for the possible buyer. The latter – it needs work, including a new roof that could run $460,000 according to early estimates. The former – it has a

cafeteria, full-sized gym, locker room and its BMPs – the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency's mandatory erosion control measures. The land use coverage may also be worth a lot, which opens the door for a buyer razing the building and capitalizing on eliminating the coverage.

"The land is probably what is more valuable – even in this market and economic downturn," school district Chief Financial Officer Holly Luna wrote *Lake Tahoe News* before the meeting.

Parent Andy Dauscher asked about getting a tally on all necessary repairs and a solid figure on maintenance costs. It costs the school district money to plow the road, keep a phone line open and run limited utilities.

When the district posed the question of closing the school, the estimates were as high as $1 million a year the school district would be saving. Noonan couldn't confirm the figure, but instead focused on what "it's costing" while deteriorating.

"It's a big deal when you sell a school in a small community," she said. "My hope is by listening to the community that we'll know this is what they want for the community."

Thursday's input session brought out only a handful of people to bounce around ideas to which Noonan jotted down notes. This was a stark contrast from the hundreds who gathered before the school closed. She addressed the 15 attendees of the booster club who met before the session and shared their suggestions as well. Much of their input focused on recreation. There's a huge need for large spaces and a place where teams can congregate and practice.

At the session, parent Greg Felton noted how many teams are forced to travel to the Carson Valley for practices, taking time away from homework and other activities – not to mention the safety hazard with the treacherous winter driving conditions over a mountain pass.

Felton pressed Noonan on whether selling the school may be the wisest choice for now and insisted on knowing whether the school board is absolutely set on the direction to sell the school.

“It seems like the wrong time,” he said, referring back to the superintendent’s comments on how bad the current economy is.

Noonan responded that she believes the school sale was part of the known equation when the board agreed to close it in 2008. She agreed to confirm the direction and look into other unknowns as in the zoning, whether any donor-type deed restriction exists and getting appraisals into place. No appraisal is on the table. And Noonan told *Lake Tahoe News* no serious parties have expressed interest in buying the property.

Western Nevada Community College was approached when Carol Lark was at the helm, but it has left the picture with its own budget problems to contend with. It may close two of its facilities.

Still, Nevada’s budget woes have not spoiled Noonan on the idea of pursuing interest from other colleges.

“I think the university option is a viable one,” she said. If not directly run by the higher education entity, perhaps an alumni group would like to form a Stanford Sierra Camp-type setting on the Nevada side of Lake Tahoe, she mentioned.

Other ideas abound – including a land, facility or title swap with Douglas County.

Before the sale may occur in a depressed real estate market, Noonan noted that the school could be used under some type of lease agreement, but the long-term goal is to sell.

“Our current 10-year projection doesn’t show a bounce back (of school enrollment),” she said.

First things first – Noonan wants input. She may be reached at enoonan@dcsd.k12.nv.us or (775) 782.5135.

Caution urged around fast flowing rivers

By Matt Kawahara and Bill Lindelof, Sacramento Bee

Just days away from Memorial Day weekend, the American River is "a different river" compared with this time in years past, said Sacramento County Parks Director Janet Baker.

"It's colder and swifter than normal," Baker said. "It's more dangerous."

Traditionally the unofficial kickoff of summer, this Memorial Day weekend is expected to send boaters, rafters, swimmers and those who want to relax by the shore flocking to area waterways – even with forecasts that are decidedly more springlike.

But due to an abundant winter snowfall and spring snowmelt in the Sierra, safety officials said, people need to be wary of faster conditions in local rivers, and wear personal flotation devices when they hit the water this weekend.

"The river flow is high and it's cold, so you have to come prepared with life jackets and the proper boating," said Sacramento Metropolitan Fire District spokesman Assistant Chief Scott Cockrum.

"There's still some snags in the river that will deflate inflatable rafts and you'll be stranded out there – or worse," he said.

Statewide, about 14 percent of accidents involving pleasure boats each year occur during the three major summer holiday weekends – Memorial Day, Fourth of July and Labor Day – said Gloria Sandoval, spokeswoman for the state Department of Boating and Waterways.

Read the whole story

TRPA's bike plan receives praise from Nevada

The Nevada Bicycle Advisory Board on Tuesday recognized the efforts of the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency and Tahoe Metropolitan Planning Organization for their achievements in bicycling advocacy planning and safety for the 2010 Lake Tahoe Region Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan.

The plan calls for an additional 162 miles of pedestrian and bike facilities in communities around the lake to add to the nearly 100 miles already built. The plan specifically focuses on connecting existing paths and improving facilities in high-use areas with a goal of creating vibrant communities that appeal to locals and visitors and provide environmental, safety, and economic benefits.

In a letter from the governor's office, the agencies were commended for admirable achievements in bicycling that the Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan represents. The plan lays the framework for the long-term planning of bicycle and pedestrian facilities in Lake Tahoe and provides implementing agencies with the ability to apply for funding for new bicycle paths, lanes, routes, and sidewalks while also providing the public with an understanding of which corridors are designated for

future facilities.

The Highway 50 project in South Lake Tahoe is an example of the importance of coordination the plan provides. What began as a Caltrans project to regrade a portion of South Shore’s main thoroughfare became a multi-jurisdiction project that included bike lanes, sidewalks, and landscaping and lighting that will enhance community character and safety while improving water quality and reducing vehicle emissions.

Blind tasting at Apres Wine Co.

Flying Blind tasting at Après Wine Company in South Lake Tahoe on Juen 28 at 6pm.

Strap on your goggles and get ready for new experiences in our blind tasting.

Cost: $20 advance, $25 at door. Includes five wines and appetizer pairings. Discounts on wines tasted.

RSVP to (530) 544.9463.

Taste bargain European wines

Euro Bargains tasting at Après Wine Company in South Lake Tahoe on June 21 at 6pm.

Great deals from around the world are the stars at this tasting.

Cost: $15 advance, $20 at door. Includes five wines and

appetizer pairings. Discounts on wines tasted.

RSVP to (530) 544.9463.

Learn about wine labels

Deciphering Label Mysteries at Après Wine Company in South Lake Tahoe on June 14 at 6pm.

Great wines sometimes hide behind their labels. Learn how to read a label and get the most out of your purchases. Cost: $20 advance, $25 at door.

RSVP to (530) 544.9463.

Lessons on corks at wine event

Wines Uncorked Tasting at Après Wine Company on June 7 at 6pm.

Learn more about the fate of the cork and try tremendous wines that are immediately accessible. Recyclable corks, twist top corks, metal, plastic, screw caps – they’re not just for ripple anymore.

Cost: $15 advance, $20 at door. Includes five wines and appetizer pairings. Discounts on wines tasted.

RSVP to (530) 544.9463.

Birding event at Pope Beach

Sierra Nevada Alliance and bird expert Sheryl Ferguson will host Birding in Lake Tahoe on May 28 from 8-11am at Pope Beach.

The event is a fundraiser for the Sierra Nevada Alliance, which is asking for a $25 suggested donation. But all are encouraged to come so contribute what you can.