Lake Tahoe News wants to know your opinion

Lake Tahoe News is about to start a feature to stimulate dialog that goes beyond the comments on stories. There are many issues facing the Lake Tahoe Basin. Some are of regional importance, some are more localized. This is an opportunity for your voice, your ideas to be heard.

The "Tahoe Facts" on the home page is going away and in its place will be a question. The question will probably change on a weekly basis.

If you would like to suggest a question, email it to info@LakeTahoeNews.net. Put "Weekly Question" in the subject line.

As with all comments, please be civil. Stick to the topic. Don't insult someone personally.

Kathryn Reed, LTN publisher

Echo Summit slated to open Saturday

Highway 50 over Echo Summit is expected to reopen Saturday.

It has been closed since May 11 to replace the deteriorating rock wall that no longer functioned as much of a barrier for vehicles that might have drifted off the road.

Exact timing of the May 21 opening will be determined by the weather and temperatures. Caltrans and contractor C.C. Myers Inc. anticipate the highway will be opened as soon as Saturday afternoon.

Once the road is open, it will be subject to controlled traffic while work continues.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Contractors snared in sting operation in Truckee

For the first time, the California Contractors State License Board and the Nevada State Contractors Board teamed up this week in a joint enforcement operation on both sides of the state line. Particular attention was paid to people who crossed the state line to illegally bid on jobs.

The effort began Thursday with an undercover sting operation at a pair of neighboring cabins in Truckee. Members of CSLB's Statewide Investigative Fraud Team led the sting by posing as owners of the cabins, getting bids for various improvement projects including landscaping, painting, and flooring. Those who bid more than $500 for labor and materials were issued a notice to appear in court.

Thirteen NTAs were issued for contracting without a license and related violations including illegal advertising and requesting an excessive down payment. Six of the 13 were issued to residents of Nevada. One of those six is a Nevada-licensed contractor. CSLB investigators received more than $86,600 in illegal bids during Thursday's sting, with three of

the bids for at least $12,000.

California law requires any home improvement job valued at $500 or more for labor and materials be undertaken by a California-licensed contractor. California and Nevada have a reciprocity agreement, making it easier for contractors licensed in one state to get a license in the other.

California law also requires advertisements for home improvement contracting services to include the California contractor license number. Those who perform jobs valued at less than $500 are allowed to do so in the state of California, but their ads must state that they are not a California-licensed contractor. In California a down payment for home improvement work cannot total more than 10 percent of the contract or $1,000, whichever is less.

Sweep operations will also take place on both sides of the state line today.

The following suspects who received NTAs are scheduled to be arraigned in Nevada County Superior Court facility in Truckee on July 18:

SUSPECT NAME/CITY	AGE	WORK CLASS	VIOLATION
Richard Mark Russell Reno, NV	49	Flooring	Contracting without a license, illegal advertising
Ildefonso Colmenero Kings Beach, CA	33	Earthwork and Paving	Contracting without a license, illegal advertising

Benjamin Munoz Truckee, CA	39	Landscaping	Contracting without a license, illegal advertising, illegal advertising, soliciting excessive down payment
Edgar Ramon Solorio Zaragosa Truckee, CA	29	Landscaping	Contracting without a license
Jorge Fernando Pena-Campos Reno, NV	49	Painting	Contracting without a license, illegal advertising
Jeffrey James Drake Truckee, CA	50	Cabinet, Millwork and Finish Carpentry	Contracting without a license, illegal advertising
Michael David Durfee Reno, NV	42	Painting	Contracting without a license, illegal advertising, soliciting excessive down payment
Aleta Jeanine Renteria Reno, NV	46	Painting	Contracting without a license, illegal advertising, soliciting excessive down payment

Steven Gregory Snider Reno, NV	54	Landscaping	Contracting without a license, illegal advertising, failure to carry workers' compensation
Matthew Nestore Williams Truckee, CA	29	Painting	Contracting without a license, illegal advertising
Tomas Prochzka Truckee, CA	34	Landscaping	Contracting without a license, illegal advertising
Donald L Otto Sparks, NV	61	Painting	Contracting without a license, illegal advertising
Bradley John Allen Moran Soda Springs, CA	38	Landscaping	Contracting without a license, illegal advertising

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Soroptimist meeting on South Shore

Soroptimist International of Tahoe Sierra meets every Thursday at 7:30am at the Lake Tahoe Senior Center, 3050 Lake Tahoe Blvd., South Lake Tahoe.

All are invited with breakfast and coffee served.

Call (530) 409. 2791 for more information.

A representative from Tahoe Youth & Family Services will speak May 26.

Opinion: A compromise for dogs at Upper Truckee Marsh

Publisher's note: ***This is an open letter to the staff and board of the California Tahoe Conservancy and for all those concerned about access to the Upper Truckee Marsh.***

By Anthony Cupaiuolo

Due to a ban by the California Tahoe Conservancy board, no dogs are allowed (leashed or otherwise) in the Upper Truckee Marsh through July 31. This three-month closure is the first of its kind for the marsh, and there is talk of banning dogs permanently from this area. This would be a tragic outcome for residents and visitors to this area.

The reason for the closure is to protect wildlife and nesting grounds in the marsh – a commendable goal. The marsh is a special area and it deserves special protection. I'm a volunteer videographer for Lake Tahoe Wildlife Care, where my wife, Karen, is a board member and also a volunteer – so we're keenly aware of the needs of wildlife in our region.



People allowing dogs to run off-leash led to the ban of canines at Upper Truckee Marsh. Photo/LTN

Unfortunately, this closure does little to protect wildlife while punishing responsible dog owners. The board doesn't want dogs off-leash chasing wildlife and disturbing nesting grounds. Neither do we. But, dogs already aren't allowed off-leash in the meadow. So, what we have is an education and enforcement issue.

Additionally, it doesn't address other irresponsible behaviors that are harmful to wildlife, such as those who use the marsh to fly loud gas-powered radio-controlled planes. Or let their cats outside, free to stalk and kill small birds and animals. Or those who use the area as a late-night party spot. (I've even seen people drag some pretty big power generators out there for music.) And although the meadow is a great place to teach kids about wildlife, they can be pretty disruptive themselves – ever seen a 5 year old go running up to a bunch of ducks just to see them scatter? Again, education and enforcement (and more on both in a moment).

Currently, responsible dog owners like my family are unable to enjoy the beauty of our nearby treasure for three prime months of the year (and possibly permanently). My wife and I have a

small child and my parents live next door. If we want to enjoy an off-pavement walk with our Lab (also a member of our family), we have to load up two cars and drive somewhere.

Yes, there are other areas dog owners can take their dogs for walks – but none is as beautiful or as accessible for young and old family members as this meadow. It's as if you were told you couldn't go to Kirkwood, but only Boreal on a powder day. Why should this beautiful area be reserved for just a few? This meadow should be open to everyone who respects it.

Clearly, denial of access is unfair. But there is another side – one with which I empathize. The residents who live on or nearby the meadow's access points have had to contend with disrespectful people who allow their dogs to roam freely and don't pick up after them. They've had to deal with those who use the trails to access the beach for late night parties. This, also, is unfair (although not connected with the dog/wildlife issue).

There is a solution that I see as a middle ground. Last month, I had the opportunity to voice my concerns about the closure to Ray Lacey and Dana Dapolito, deputy director and associate environmental planner, respectively, for the Conservancy. During that conversation the idea of a permitting process emerged.

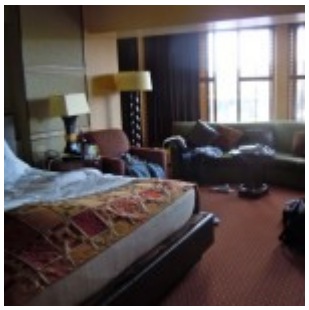
Although we didn't cover the specifics, this is how it might work: Those who wish to walk their dogs (on a leash) would have to go the Conservancy's office to get a permit to walk their dog in the meadow. During this process, they would learn about the sensitive nature of the marsh and the reasons why keeping dogs on leash are necessary. Those with permits would be able to walk their dogs in the meadow. If you are caught walking your dog in the meadow without a permit, even if it's on leash, you would be fined. If you have a permit and you let your dog off-leash, you would be fined.

Once the word gets out about this process, there's every reason to believe we can accomplish the goals of protecting the marsh while allowing access to those who are responsible and respectful of this local treasure. Of course, dog owners who want this area to be open to dogs off-leash will be disappointed – so might residents who live on the marsh who wish to keep this area as private as possible for themselves. But for the vast majority of us, this is a solution that works.

Anthony Cupaiuolo is an Al Tahoe area homeowner.

Lodging managers get primer in attracting business online

Heading into the historically busy summer season, lodging professionals on the South Shore got a short lesson in how best to use Travelocity to their benefit.



Alania Henry, a rep from the online site, spoke to the South Lake Tahoe Lodging Association last week about services to drive people to their property.

Keeping content updated, reviewing it like a consumer and not a manager, and offering promotions were some of her suggestions.

When it comes to having a hotel pop up closer to the top, Henry said hotels with posted rates and ones with availability get preference.

She also suggested hoteliers use the Top Secret Hotel option. This allows people to pick their destination, price and rating, but not the actual hotel. It's also non-refundable – a bonus for the lodging property.

Henry claims the return on investment is good for the hotels using sponsored searches at the top or bottom of pages.

Travelocity has also partnered with sites like Kayak, Ski Lake Tahoe and Yahoo to make it easier for travelers to book rooms.

– Kathryn Reed

Cyclists may enter Nevada State Parks for free

The Nevada Division of State Parks is waiving entrance fees for bicyclists coming into any Nevada State Park May 21-22 in celebration of National Bike Month.

Touring cyclists may also benefit from a new State Parks policy that helps bicycle riders find camping spaces in the park, even if State Parks' campgrounds are full.

The free bike-to-State Parks weekend is in conjunction with Nevada Bike to Work Week, May 16-20 and the League of American Bicyclists' National Bike Month.

For more information on bicycling opportunities in Nevada State Parks in Northern Nevada, contact Jenny Scanland, at (775) 684.2787.

Lecture focuses on food for health

Join Barton Health registered dietitian Lynn Norton as for an educational and fun journey to better health on May 24 from from 6:30-7:30pm at Kahle Community Center in Stateline.

The talk is geared toward adults and for anyone looking to understand the impact of the food on our health. Norton will address the positive and negative impact of food choices, portions and habits, both long-term and short-term.

The talk will encourage audience commentary and will be followed with a formal question and answer session.

Go online for complete details and the 2011 lecture series line-up. For more information, call (530) 543.5656.

Movies about the forest, fires to air at Explore Tahoe

Explore Tahoe: An Urban Trailhead will be showing a series of movies May 31-June 3.

All are free. The visitor center is located at 4114 Lake Tahoe Blvd. near Heavenly Village.

“The Greatest Good” – a U.S. Forest Service Centennial Film about Smokey Bear will be shown May 31 from 2-3pm.

“Forests with a Future” – a U.S. Forest Service film about protecting old-growth trees, wildfire, and communities in the Sierra Nevada will be shown June 1 from 2-2:30pm.

“Living with Fire in the Lake Tahoe Basin” will be shown June 2 from 2-2:30pm.

“Be Ember Prepared” is on June 3 from 2-2:30pm.

Attic Thrift Store reopens

Join the Barton Auxiliary for the “Grand Reopening” of the Attic Thrift Store on May 23 at 10am.

Beginning Monday the Attic will resume to its normal hours: Monday through Friday, 10am to 4pm and Saturdays, 10am to 2pm.

The store is on Lodi Avenue in South Lake Tahoe.

For information, call (530) 541.3378.