Fierce storm expected Thursday afternoon

The weather forecast is so nasty for the Lake Tahoe Basin that Lake Tahoe and Tahoe Truckee unified school districts canceled classes today with only a dusting of snow on the roads this morning.

The National Weather Service says, “Travel not recommended in the Sierra with extended highway closures possible. Zero visibility with blowing and drifting snow.”



Roads in the Lake Tahoe Basin are expected to look like this Thursday afternoon. Photo/LTN file

The storm is expected to arrive this afternoon and continue into Friday morning.

Two to 4 feet of snow is forecast above 7,000 feet and 10-24 inches below 7,000 feet.

The Highway 395 corridor could receive 2-6 inches above 5,000 feet, while below 5,000 feet up to 4 inches.

Saturday’s storm could bring more than a foot of snow to the Sierra.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Snippets about Lake Tahoe



• California Fish and Game Commission approved an opening day of April 2 for the recreational fishing season.

• El Dorado County Supervisor Norma Santiago has a new number in South Lake Tahoe – (530) 573.7918.

• South Lake Tahoe’s Rosemary Manning has tips for people who are feeling overwhelmed about the events in Japan. Follow her blog.

• The Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board is preparing an updated Lake Tahoe Basin Construction General NPDES Permit. A Proposed Order is available for review and comment online. Information on the April meeting and how to provide comments on the new permit are included.

• Destination Services, which has offices in Lake Tahoe, Aspen, Colorado Springs, Denver, and Vail/Beaver Creek, was honored with an ICON Award by *Confetti* magazine for orchestrating the Best Overall Event Produced for a Corporation or Association. The event was an outdoor extravaganza in Denver.

Crime seminar for property managers

Douglas County sheriff's, South Lake Tahoe police and Carson City sheriff's are offering a free training called Crime Free Multi-Housing Program April 11 from 8am-5pm.

It is being offered to all local multi-family housing, manufactured housing, vacation rental owners, managers, and property management companies.

It will be at Lakeland Village in South Lake Tahoe.

A second training will be April 12 from 8am–5pm at Douglas County Judicial and Law Enforcement Building, Minden.

Preregister by calling (775) 790.6694 or email laketahoecrimefreeprograms@msn.com.

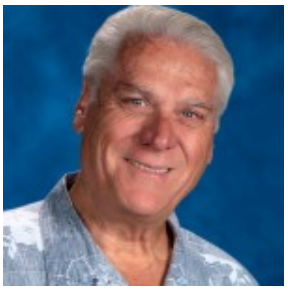
Tarwater explains changes within LTUSD

Dear Parents:

The current financial maelstrom in the state of California continues to force districts to make painful reductions in order to meet their financial obligations. Lake Tahoe Unified School District has made severe budget reductions over the past two years to the tune of $4 million – $1.2 million for

2010-11 alone.

The Board of Education and the Leadership Team have drawn a line in the sand when it comes to eliminating important programs such as K-3 Class Size Reduction, elementary PE, music in grades 4-12, and athletics programs for middle and high school students.



Jim Tarwater

In order to maintain programs, the district offers Golden Handshake Retirement Incentives so positions can be eliminated through attrition, instead of “pink-slipping”.

Such an opportunity has arisen this year with the retirement of the director of Human Resources and Staff Development. More tough decisions need to be made in order to keep as much money as possible at the schools. Therefore, it has become necessary for me to relinquish my duties as principal of LTESMS and to assume the responsibilities of the HR department rather than hiring a replacement.

All administrators have had to take on more responsibility during this financial crisis as we continue to downsize. Therefore, next year, Ryan Galles, principal of Sierra House Elementary, has graciously accepted the duties of principal at LTESMS for the 2011-12 school year. Mr. Galles has a proven track record at Sierra House Elementary and will be able to work with both schools and communities to maintain the high performance and parent involvement that we all expect.

It has been my honor and my pleasure to have opened LTESMS in

September 2005 and to have been a part of this amazing school, which has received numerous awards for its outstanding programs and academic excellence. I am proud of the parents and students who have worked cooperatively and collaboratively with the teachers to maximize the students' academic potential as they grow to be productive members of our global society.

I would like you to know that I have thoroughly enjoyed being a part of the LTESMS community and I will really miss meeting and greeting your son or daughter each morning. It has been a privilege to be your principal over the past six years.

As I say "farewell" at the end of this school year, I will not say "goodbye". I look forward to visiting LTESMS throughout the coming year from time to time and giving "high fives" throughout the year. I also look forward to seeing your children grow and thrive as they move through the middle and high school.

Sincerely,

James R. Tarwater, principal LTESMS and LTUSD superintendent

Pets act as emotional power brokers in families

By Benedict Carey, New York Times

First, he tore up his dog toys. Then shredded the furniture, clothes, schoolbooks – and, finally, any semblance of family unity. James, a chocolate-brown pointer mix, turned from adorable pet to problem child in a matter of weeks.

"The big bone of contention was that my mom and my sister

thought that he was too smart to be treated like a dog; they thought he was a person and should be treated as such – well, spoiled," said Danielle, a Florida woman who asked that her last name not be published to avoid more family pet strife. "The dog remains to this day, 10 years later, a source of contention and anger."

Psychologists long ago confirmed what most pet owners feel in their bones: that for some people bonds with animals are every bit as strong as those with other humans. And less complicated, for sure; a dog's devotion is without detectable irony, a lap cat's purring without artifice (if not disapproval).

Yet the nature of individual human-pet relationships varies widely, and only now are scientists beginning to characterize those differences, and their impact on the family. Pets alter not only a family's routines, after all, but also its hierarchy, its social rhythm, its web of relationships. Several new lines of research help explain why this overall effect can be so comforting in some families, and a source of tension in others. The answers have very little to do with the pet.

Read the whole story

Wood smoke particulates pose health problems

By Cheryl Katz, Environmental Health News

NORDEN – On a frosty evening in the Sierra Nevada, smoke curling from the chimney of the Clair Tappaan Lodge is a

welcome sight for chilly snowshoers and cross-country skiers. Gathering by the massive stone hearth at this landmark Sierra Club mountain hostel, guests relax in the warmth and aroma of the crackling log fire.

Woodsy scents waft across the region, as millions of fireplaces and wood stoves are lit by people seeking environmentally friendly sources of heat and ambience. But new research is raising concerns about the toxic substances in that smoke.

Tiny airborne specks known as particulate matter produced by wood-burning stoves appear to be especially harmful to human health. Small enough to deeply penetrate the lungs, they contain high levels of carcinogenic chemicals. They're capable of damaging DNA and activating genes much like car exhaust and tobacco smoke, according to a new study in Denmark. Another new study, conducted in Canada, found that infants and toddlers were significantly more likely to get ear infections if they lived in an area with a lot of wood stoves and fireplaces.

Because wood is a natural material and has been an integral part of human existence for so long, many view it as a benign, cheap and renewable energy alternative. But wood smoke can exacerbate asthma symptoms, and is especially harmful to children and older people. The emissions also have been linked to respiratory disease, atherosclerosis and other coronary problems, and early deaths among people with cardiovascular or lung disease.

Read the whole story

High water creates additional ‘tributary’ into Lake Tahoe

By Kathryn Reed

Water races from what appears to be another tributary of Lake Tahoe.

This wouldn’t be unusual right now based on the amount of snow, rain on snow and snowmelt the Lake Tahoe Basin continues experience. But this area in South Lake Tahoe isn’t a normal outflow.

A barrier beach about 45 feet by 45 feet and nearly 3 feet high was breached last week, sending a torrent of water into Lake Tahoe. Because this is all coarse sand, gobs of fine sediment are not likely to have entered the lake.



South Tahoe stormwater coordinator Robert Erlich talks about the Pope Marsh breach. Photos/Kathryn Reed

Still, on March 23 a small light brown patch could be seen not far from shore. Robert Erlich, stormwater coordinator for

South Lake Tahoe, said the discoloring is a result of the sand being pushed into the lake.

Pope Marsh, which is owned by the U.S. Forest Service, sits between Pope Beach and the Tahoe Keys on the South Shore. From the private gated Lighthouse Shores it would be hard to tell this flow is not normal. But it is normal and natural in high water years.

“This was a pretty big one this year,” Greg Trischler, water supervisor for the Tahoe Keys Water Department, said of the breach.

A wall of sand about 3-feet high in some sections forms a nearly 50-foot-wide exit route for the water.

Because this area is one of the biggest waterfowl nesting habitats on the South Shore, the breach is a good thing, according to the Forest Service.

“It will improve the nesting habitat for waterfowl,” explained Sarah Muskopf, USFS aquatic biologist.

She said more plants will grow there, which in turn will hold more sediment in the marsh, meaning less will end up in the lake.

For South Lake Tahoe, this is giving officials concerned with urban runoff a chance to gauge where the water is coming from.

On March 19 when Erlich saw the breach he called in a local consultant the city uses to monitor turbidity – the official word for cloudy water. Rath Townsend recorded the turbidity at the marsh outlet at 4.72 ntu. NTU is nephelometric turbidity units.

At the Venice/Pope marsh inlet before the confluence it was 8.16 ntu and 9.64 ntu after the confluence in the Venice/Pope marsh.

This compares to 62.3 ntu at the Y along Lake Tahoe Boulevard, across from Raley's.

What is ideal is for the numbers to decrease as they hit stormwater basins. The lowest turbidity level should be as the water enters Lake Tahoe.

This in large part is what the total maximum daily load is all about – cutting back how much gunk reaches the lake.

Monitoring will go on throughout the spring, during different conditions, to see which stormwater control measures that are in place are working and what might need improving. The goal is no brown stuff would reach the lake.

"We're getting to know a little bit about our watershed," Erlich said. "We have an interest in trying to find out if the urban runoff is coming into the Pope Marsh. We want to look at the connectivity flows into Pope Marsh."

He said two-thirds of the bad stuff reaching the lake is from urban runoff.

Erlich added that this section of South Lake Tahoe accounts for nearly one-quarter of the city's drainage issues. Water is running from Lake Tahoe Boulevard from about South Tahoe High to the Y. Water descends from Gardner Mountain.

Some of it ends up in the private Tallac Lagoon near 15th Street and Venice Drive. That lagoon acts as a filtration system, but also has an overflow system. Eventually water from the lagoon winds up in Pope Marsh.

Because some of that water is coming off South Tahoe streets – and carrying sediment – the city is charged with monitoring it even though it may reach the lake via Forest Service land.

Another concern of the city's and the Tahoe Keys Water District is the rising level of the lagoon can threaten to flood houses in the area.

“We usually monitor the height of the water in Tallac (Lagoon),” Trischler said. Manually breaking the beach barrier was an option to get water in the lagoon to recede.

He said the Dillingham Corp. built the lagoon and dam by the bridge on Venice Drive when the Keys was developed in the 1960s.

“They also planted the tule grass and the trees in Pope Marsh. It was supposed to pull some of the nitrogen and phosphorus out. It was designed to filter itself out so it would be 99.9 percent pure,” Trischler said.

Dillingham also installed the concrete weir at Pope Marsh near Lighthouse shores.

“If this wasn’t here, erosion could move back into Pope Marsh,” Erlich said of that weir.

That barrier beach will form again. It does each year. The waves from the lake bring in sand and it naturally piles up. But it will take another high water year like this one for that temporary tributary into Lake Tahoe to be created.

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TVES to host movie night

Tahoe Valley Elementary School is having a family night March 25 at 6pm.

The move “How to Train Your Dragon” (rated PG)will be shown.

Advanced tickets are $3 at the school office or $5 at that door. It includes one bag of popcorn per person.

Bob Dog Pizza will be selling pizza. Sodas, water and ice cream will also be for sale.

Bring your sleeping bag, blanket or lawn chair.

Parents must accompany children.

This is sponsored by Tahoe Valley Second Grade and Tahoe Valley Parent Club.

Beer-food pairing at Northstar

Sierra Nevada Brewery Pairing Dinner at TC's Pub in the Village at Northstar is April 15 at 6pm.

TC's Pub and Sierra Nevada Brewery will join forces to create a four-course meal paired with some classic and seasonal ales from the Chico based brewery. The menu, prepared by Northstar Resort's executive banquet chef will be comprised of fresh, seasonal ingredients.

In addition to the food and beer there will be prizes and giveaways throughout the night.

This event is for ages 21 and older.

Tickets are $55/person in advance, which include gratuity. If space is available, tickets will be for sale the evening of the event at the door for $65/person.

For more information, call (530) 562.3866.

Washington state considers bill to punish out-of-bounds skiers

By Andrea Castillo, Daily Evergreen

Washington skiers and snowboarders who choose to cross into clearly marked closed mountain areas could be charged with second-degree trespassing if a bill introduced in the Washington State Senate passes.

Engrossed Substitute Senate Bill (ESSB) 5186, sponsored by Sen. Jim Kastama, D-Puyallup, passed its third reading by the Rules Committee on March 4 with a vote of 43 to 5. ESSB 5186 is accompanied by House Bill 1484.

Kastama, who works as a ski patrol at Crystal Mountain, said his goal in creating this bill is to prevent deaths and injuries of adventurous skiers. He said in the last 10 years alone, five people have died and 520 people have been caught skiing in closed areas at Crystal Mountain.

“There’s something about skiing that makes people feel invincible,” he said. “I know really good skiers that tell me they’ll take a chance and go into these closed areas. We find people just ducking under that rope and disobeying the signs. It’s clearly indicated that you could die.”

According to the bill, skiers who choose to knowingly trespass in an area that has signs indicating its closure can be fined up to $1,000 or 90 days in jail. However, Kastama said first-time offenders would most likely be given community service hours.

Kastama said the bill got off to a rough start this session because many people did not understand the difference between closed areas and out of bounds or backcountry areas.

Read the whole story