Ski report: May be nasty up top



Snow. Does more really need to be said?

Here is the ski report from Curtis Fong, the Guy from Tahoe.

Scattered school closures; brunt of storm still to come

Douglas County School District decided not to take any chances today with chains and snow tires required on Kingsbury Grade. Schools at the lake are closed.

Most highways in and around the Lake Tahoe Basin have some sort of controls.



South Tahoe snowplow crews widen roads

March 22 in the Tahoe Island area. Photo/Kathryn Reed

All schools are also closed in the Tahoe Truckee Unified School District.

The National Weather Service in Reno is calling it a “parade of winter storms through Saturday.”

Although only about an inch of white stuff had fallen in South Lake Tahoe by 7am, this is just the beginning. For today, the NWS says 5-10 inches could fall at the lake, with 10-18 inches above 7,000 feet.

On Thursday afternoon into Friday morning, snow and strong winds are likely, with 2-3 feet above 7,000 feet. At the lake, another 10-18 inches could fall.

Saturday is calling for another foot.

“Anyone planning travel over the Sierra passes this week should prepare for dangerous driving conditions or consider postponing travel. Due to recent heavy snowfall many roads have narrow lanes available for travel resulting in additional delays and possible closures,” the National Weather Service warns. “Anyone planning back country activities should remain aware of the avalanche danger this week.”

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

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LTUSD makes administrative changes

Lake Tahoe Unified School District board of trustees shuffled administrative positions Tuesday night.

With the retirement of Human Resources Director Jim Watson at the end of the school year, it means starting this summer Superintendent Jim Tarwater will be in the district office full time.



Ryan Galles

The district office is also losing the staff development position.

Tarwater, in addition to being superintendent, has been sole principal of the Environmental Magnet School since Beth Delacour became principal of South Tahoe Middle School.

Ryan Galles, principal of Sierra House Elementary, in the fall

will divide his time between that school and the magnet school. He will not be receiving any extra pay.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

U.S. wine consumption passes France's

By Ryan Flinn, Bloomberg News

The United States passed France as the world's largest wine-consuming nation for the first time, lifted by its larger population and an interest in wine-and-cheese culture among young Americans.

Wine shipments to the United States climbed 2 percent to 329.7 million cases last year, according to Gomberg, Fredrikson & Associates, a wine-industry consulting firm in Woodside. That compares with 320.6 million for France.

While the French still eclipse Americans in per-capita consumption, the U.S. wine industry is benefiting from a population of almost 311 million people – five times the size of France's – and more young people becoming interested in the drink. Marketers also are using social media to reach a new generation of consumers, said Jon Fredrikson, the firm's president.

"Wine is really gaining traction in the U.S. – it's becoming an accepted part of everyday life," Fredrikson said. "That's a radical change over the past two decades."

The retail value of U.S. wine sales rose 4 percent to $30 billion in 2010, according to Gomberg, Fredrikson.

California’s output accounted for 61 percent of the volume. The state’s worldwide wine shipments climbed 2 percent to 241.8 million cases.

“With the U.S. being the biggest, it means we’re a target for everyone in America and around the world that produces wine,” Fredrikson said. “Everyone wants to be here.”

Read the whole story

Hwy. 50 bike trail in S. Tahoe moves forward

By Kathryn Reed

It took a bit of arm-twisting, but South Lake Tahoe Councilman Tom Davis finally acquiesced to colleagues’ desires to go forward with the bike trail from El Dorado Beach to Ski Run Boulevard.

“I’m frustrated with the process and amount of money,” Davis said at last week’s council meeting.



Tom Davis

The issue has been on the books since at least 2004 when the California Tahoe Conservancy gave the city money to design the

project.

Design work has mostly been delayed to coordinate with Caltrans' Highway 50 improvement. That three-year project is slated to start in May.

About 90 percent of the project has been designed, with the environmental documents expected to be released later this year.

The council, with members Claire Fortier and Bruce Grego absent, agreed to use $157,700 from the Congestion Mitigation Air Quality fund to move the project forward.

Voter approved Measure S money would pay for maintenance of the trail.

In other action:

• Jerry Bindel questioned the city's desire in its five-year financial plan that was approved March 15 to raise the hotel tax in 2014. Bindel runs Lakeland Village, is a board member of the South Lake Tahoe Lodging Association, Lake Tahoe Visitors Authority and Tourism Improvement District.

Council and staff told him interested parties would be consulted before voters are asked to increase the tax.

• Jere Copeland, representative for some employee bargaining units, reiterated the need to make sure necessary items are negotiated and don't become a matter of policy in terms of the fiscal plan and reorganization plan. The latter was also adopted March 15.

Exercise to train crews to fight wildland fire on Hwy. 50

If you notice a large number of public safety units on Spooner Summit on Friday, don’t be alarmed – it’s a drill.

The planned scenario will simulate that a small brush fire has started alongside Highway 50, approximately halfway up the grade to Spooner Summit from the Carson City side. It will be simulated that the fire has occurred during a dry August, and therefore brush fuels will be extremely susceptible to combustion.

Afternoon winds have complicated containment of the fire, causing it to quickly expand. The fire then starts burning downhill toward Clear Creek Road. At a particular point in the scenario the fire will “jump” across the highway, further expanding complexity of the event by simulating requirement for closure of Highway 50 and evacuation of residences in danger.

Douglas County Emergency Management and Sierra Front Wildland Fire Cooperators are putting on the training.

The event is designed to exercise inter-agency involvement during a large-scale manmade or natural disaster utilizing the federally mandated National Incident Management System.

Numerous public safety agencies will participate in the event, including East Fork Fire and Paramedic District, Tahoe-Douglas Fire District, Carson City Fire Department, U.S. Forest Service, U.S. Bureau of Land Management, Nevada Division of Forestry, Douglas County Sheriff’s Office, Nevada Highway Patrol, Nevada Department of Transportation, and numerous public utility companies.

Green building doesn’t have to be expensive

By Jason Hildago, Reno Gazette-Journal

Going old vs. going new.

That’s apparently the key question when tackling a renewable building project.

Once associated mostly with free-spirited hippies and tree-hugging nature lovers, going green has made serious gains within the general public’s consciousness in just the past few years.

“The perception of green building used to be of people living out on the sticks and off the grid with windmills and battery packs,” said Allyson Wong, co-owner and architect at GuiDenby, a design-build construction company in Reno. “But that’s not what green building is about anymore. It’s become very sophisticated and more mainstream than it was just a short time ago.”

So much so that solar installations now account for 90 percent of the work done by Aspen Electric, a Reno-based electrical installation and repair company.

“In the last two-and-a-half years, we’ve really started to focus on solar electric installations,” said Shawn O’Meara, a managing member for the limited liability company. “Almost everybody’s somewhat familiar with it now. Even if they don’t know much about it, a lot more people are definitely thinking about it.”

Read the whole story

Opinion: Time to end term limits

By Quentin L. Kopp

In 1990 as a state senator, I supported the concept of term limits because of the foul effects of gerrymandering, and my belief in the notion of citizen legislators – not politicians per se, but people who volunteer for electoral public service as an ideal, not an occupation. I also maintained that legislative turnover would occur only if redrawing of legislative districts was accomplished by a citizens' commission, not by legislators themselves with their innate conflict of interest in ensuring retention. (I didn't support the initiative that ultimately imposed term limits, Proposition 140, however, because I opposed its lifetime limitation and felt a citizen should be able to serve a given number of years, then depart, but with the ability to assay future legislative office.)

In practice, however, term limits has produced a phenomenon different than the "citizen legislator" I envisioned, the civic-minded individual who volunteers for a few years before returning to a profession or business.

Whether legislative staff, lobbyists or state bureaucrats dominate the legislative process (as critics predicted) and exercise more decision-making power under term limits is debatable.

What isn't debatable is that now every term-limited legislator looks instantly for the next elective office, be it state Senate, Assembly, Board of Equalization, Congress, statewide office, county supervisor or otherwise. That constant turnover

causes more time, effort and need for soaring political contributions, and results in inexperienced legislators. Has legislative performance been improved by term limits? Voters can answer that, if provided opportunity to do so.

Quentin L. Kopp is a retired superior court judge and former state senator and former member of the San Francisco Board of Supervisors.

Read the whole story

Pro athletes express climate change concerns to students

By Stephen Ward

RENO – Carbon emissions and global warming are not concepts easily conveyed to teenagers. Telling them what it might mean to their ability to ski in Tahoe in the future made it real.

“It wasn’t a boring way of learning,” student Tyler Groves said.



Alliance for Climate Education

takes it show to Reno and Truckee. Photo/Provided

The nonprofit Alliance for Climate Education is on a road trip in the Reno and Truckee era; bringing extreme athletes to high schools to give testimonials blended with fast-paced cartoons to get the message out.

That’s what ACE’s presentation consisted of Tuesday morning at North Valley High School in Reno. The group recruited acclaimed snowboarders Iris Lazzareschi and Moss Halladay to speak with students about the ways climate change has affected their sport.

“It’s something we got to take care of,” Halladay said to the crowd of about 400 fervent students.

Lazzareschi was quick to add her voice, explaining how she and Halladay had to cancel a trip to Alaska this year because of a lack of snowfall.

“We can’t shoot when there’s no snow,” Lazzareschi said of needing to interrupt the film schedule.

ACE spokeswoman Rebecca Anderson did most of the talking; telling students they need to reduce their carbon footprint and staying informed about the environment.

Anderson’s roughly 30-minute presentation ran consecutively with a fast-paced animation meant to illustrate all her main points. Trees reducing greenhouse gases were shown eating away at the gases as if they were malnourished animals.

The video also offered an array of statistics like the average young person needs 21 football fields worth of waste to accommodate for their consumption of energy.

“You don’t have to live large to live well,” Anderson said.

A cartoon depicting a teenager running quickly across an endless stretch of connected football fields brought the students into an uproar.

“That’s tight!” a student in the front of the auditorium shouted.

Shortly before ending the presentation, the discussion’s mood became somber. Halladay, who is from Tahoe City, explained how many of his friends cannot find work in the Tahoe area because of low snowfall, which ultimately creates a vicious cycle of unemployment and turmoil for the region.

“It doesn’t care, like, what you think about it,” Halladay said. “It affects you.”

When shown an idyllic video where world carbon emissions are restrained and clean energy is the standard, students broke into commotion and raised their hands in unison when asked whether they would like to make that vision a reality.

“I think (the talk) was informative,” senior Jaffar Richardson said.

As the event came to a close, many students rushed the stage to snag autographs before heading back to class.

In the end, Anderson said her motive is more than just scaring kids about the future environmental outlook.

“As the next generation, they have the opportunity to change (the situation),” Anderson said. “It’s not going to be easy, but it needs to happen. After all, they’re going to be the ones most affected by it.”

More information is on the ACE website.

Other dates:

• March 24 9:30am: Nine-time Big Mountain Snowboarder of the Year and POW Founder Jeremy Jones visits his hometown of Truckee at Truckee High School

• March 24 10am: Pro snowboarder Ralph Backstrom at McQueen High School in Reno

• March 24 11am: Pro snowboarder Nick Visconti at Truckee High School

• March 28 12:05pm: Visconti at Damonte Ranch High School in Reno.