Tahoe Keys Marina parking spaces to be increased

By Kathryn Reed

Parking may no longer be a hassle for people using the Tahoe Keys Marina, Fresh Ketch restaurant and Cove East nature trail.

This is because the California Tahoe Conservancy board at its meeting this month agreed to enter a lease agreement with the marina owners to build 91 shared use spaces.

The Conservancy owns 1.3 acres of land between the current parking lot and the trail. It's that dirt area at the end of Venice Drive in South Lake Tahoe that could be paved over as early as this year.



The acreage behind the Tahoe Keys Marina sign is slated to become a parking lot. Photo/Kathryn Reed

"The existing footpath should not be affected," Bruce Eisner of the Conservancy told the board Jan. 20.

The parking lot would be linked to the popular path that leads to Lake Tahoe.

Negotiations have been going on for a couple years to seal this deal. Although the marina owner still has to sign-off on everything, the Conservancy is confident a contract will be in place shortly.

In addition to adding parking to an area that is congested throughout much of the summer, a lane leading to the boat ramp will be dedicated to people needing inspections related to invasive aquatic species. Also part of the project are restrooms, day use amenities and landscaping.

Although there are no plans today to make any of the spaces at the marina paid, if that were to happen, language in the lease calls for the Conservancy to receive 20 percent of the proceeds.

The 30-year lease will not cost the CTC a dime. The marina will pay for the planning, permitting, construction, and operation and maintenance of the facilities.

The board also on Thursday approved the lease agreement where the marina will pay the Conservancy $5,000 a year for the use of the 1 acre parcel on Venice Drive that is about halfway between Tahoe Keys Boulevard and Cove East.

With the agreement comes an option for the marina to buy this plot of land for $261,000. But the Conservancy does not want to sell it until after Jan. 1, 2015. This is because the state agency foresees using it as a staging area if work is done to the Upper Truckee River at this location.

If the river, which is being reconfigured upstream in stages, goes through a similar rebirth at the mouth of Lake Tahoe, then the footpath would be altered.

“The current path is merely a temporary path,” Eisner said of

the big picture that involves restoration to the river.

The other component that is likely to affect Cove East and what is called the Upper Truckee Marsh is the environmental impact statement and environmental impact report on 525 acres that are scheduled to be released this spring. Four alternatives are proposed in those documents about what should be done with the property that is owned by the state.

The land is some of the most sensitive in the Lake Tahoe Basin, containing rare and threatened species.

Hight just misses podium in halfpipe

By Lindsey Sine, U.S. Snowboarding

KILLINGTON, Vt. – Louie Vito (Sandy, UT) has done it again. Vito nailed his runs in the icy Vermont halfpipe Saturday to take his second Dew Tour win of the season in the three stop series. Joining him in the winner's circle was none other than Vermont native and all around halfpipe slayer Kelly Clark (Mt. Snow, VT) whose 95.75 score not only got her first, but gave her the honor of having the highest scored women's run in Dew Tour history.

The win marked the third overall this season for Vito, who also took first at the Visa U.S. Halfpipe Grand Prix in Colorado in December. He led the competition after the first run, but upped the ante in his second with back-to-back double corks, a frontside 10 and a frontside tailgrab, earning the top score of 93.00 on his victory lap.

“I feel great about landing a solid run out here. The halfpipe was good and everyone rode really well overall,” Vito said. “I feel good heading into Snowbasin next month, and hopefully I can just stay on my feet.”

The streak of three puts him in a good string of consistency as he looks ahead to the X Games as well as the final stop of the Dew Tour at Snowbasin, Utah in the beginning of February.

Colorado’s JJ Thomas (Golden, CO) took second for the day, followed by Mason Aguirre (Duluth, MN) in third.

For Clark, the Killington Dew Tour stop marked her fourth win thus far in the season, including the Grand Prix in Colorado, the O’N’eill Evolution halfpipe comp, and the Burton European Open a week ago.

“Every day is a new day and it’s hard to take the scale from one event to the next in a great sport like snowboarding,” Clark said. “I’m really happy with the way I rode and I walked away with a win I can be happy with.”

Now, the riders move on to Aspen for the X Games.

Official results, 2011 Winter Dew Tour. Killington, Vt., Halfpipe

Men

1. Louie Vito, Sandy, UT, 93.00

2. JJ Thomas, Golden, CO, 88.00

3. Mason Aguirre, Duluth, MN, 86.50

—

4. Steve Fisher, Breckenridge, CO, 83.50

5. Spencer Shaw, Stratton, VT, 83.00

6. Matt Ladley, Steamboat Springs, CO, 82.00

7. Ben Watts, Bend, OR, 75.25

8. Trevor Jacob, Malibu, CA, 71.50

9. Zack Black, Breckenridge, CO, 58.00

10. Jack Mitrani, Mammoth Mountain, CO, 55.50

Women

1. Kelly Clark, Mt. Snow, VT, 95.75

2. Gretchen Bleiler, Aspen, CO, 92.25

3. Queralt Castellet, Spain, 86.00

–

4. Elena Hight, South Lake Tahoe, CA, 81.50

6. Kelly Marren, Hillsborough, CA, 46.25

Truckee's Carroll 5th in slopestyle

By Elizabeth Karam, U.S. Snowboard Team

LA MOLINA, Spain – Allyson Carroll of Truckee finished fifth in the FIS World Snowboard Championship slopestyle event in La Molina, Spain. Saturday's contest marked the World Snowboard Championship slopestyle debut. Slopestyle snowboarding is one of four events being considered for the possible inclusion in the 2014 Olympic Winter Games in Sochi.

After weather delays pushed the qualifier from Friday to Saturday, Belarus's Seppe Smits and Finland's Enni Rukajarvi came out on top to win. U.S. rider Faye Gulini (Salt Lake City) just missed qualifying for finals in 12th. Benji Farrow (Mt. Holly, VT) and Paul Brichta (Burnsville, MN) competed in the men's division but failed to qualify for finals.

In front of a huge crowd, Carroll took full of advantage of every run, consisting of three roller features followed by three large feature jumps and ending with a rail feature, scoring a 14.2 to qualify for the finals in fourth.

"Going into qualifiers I just wanted to land my run, so I did kind of a safety run," explained Carroll of her strategy.

Feeding off the energy of the crowd, once in the finals Carroll continued to throw it down, finishing in fifth. Rukajarvi never let the lead slip, sweeping both the qualifier and final to take home the victory. Sarka Pancochova of the Czech Republic and Sheely Gotlieb of New Zealand placed second and third.

"It was an awesome experience. It was way cooler than I expected," said Carroll. "The vibe of the whole contest was really good. It was an all around great contest."

Smits landed the crown for the men, followed by Sweden's Niklas Mattson and Finland's Ville Paumola in second and third.

Official results, FIS World Snowboard Championships, La Molina, Spain, Slopestyle

Men

1. Seppe Smits, Belarus

2. Niklas Mattsson, Sweden

3. Ville Paumola, Finland

–

26. Benji Farrow, Mt. Holly, VT

31. Paul Brichta, Burnsville, MN

Women

1. Enni Rukajarvi, Finland

2. Sarka Pancochova, Czech Republic

3. Shelly Gotlieb, New Zealand

–

5. Allyson Carroll, Truckee, CA,

12. Faye Guilini, Salt Lake City, 15.1

Kashima a distant 34 in World Cup aerials

By Elizabeth Karam, U.S. Ski Team

LAKE PLACID, N.Y. – Olympic champion Hannah Kearney (Norwich, VT) won her third World Cup of the season at the Nature Valley Freestyle Cup in Lake Placid, NY. Jeremy Cota (Carrabassett Valley, ME) landed his first career World Cup podium in third. Kearney continues to hold the World Cup leader bib.

The Lake Placid streak for the U.S. is definitely still alive. After a successful day for the U.S. Friday with aerialists Ashley Caldwell (Charleston, SC) winning and Ryan St. Onge (Winter Park, CO), placing second, the momentum carried into

Saturday’s moguls competition. The USA earned half of the top five spots, two men and three women, showing the depth of the U.S. Freestyle Ski Team’s moguls skiers.

“There’s a lot of depth on our team and a lot of people stepped up,” said Moguls Head Coach Scott Rawles.

Kearney kept her own streak in motion, taking the top spot on the podium. She once again edged out 2010 Olympic silver medalist Canadian Jennifer Heil with Audrey Robichaud, also of Canada, in third.

The 2011 World Championships are scheduled for Feb. 2-5 at Deer Valley Resort and Park City.

Official results, FIS Freestyle World Cup – Nature Valley Freestyle Cup

Men

1. Colas Guilbaut, France, 25.81

2. Alexandre Bilodeau, Canada, 25.59

3. Jeremy Cota, Carrabassett Valley, ME, 25.31

–

5. David DiGravio, Farmington, ME, 24.40

9. Joe Discoe, Telluride, CO, 21.85

11. Patrick Deneen, Cle Elum, WA, 20.58

12. Bryon Wilson, Butte, MT, 19.23

16. Ryan Dyer, Steamboat Springs, CO, 22.03

18. Jimmy Discoe, Ridgway, CO, 21.48

19. Jay Panther, Park City, UT, 21.45

31. Nate Roberts, Park City, UT, 18.58

34. Sho Kashima, Lake Tahoe, CA, 15.82

Women

1. Hannah Kearney, Norwich, VT, 25.45

2. Jennifer Heil, Canada, 24.72

3. Audrey Robichaud, Canada, 24.41

—

4. Heather McPhie, Bozeman, MT, 24.23

5. Eliza Outtrim, Steamboat Springs, CO, 23.73

9. Alison DiGravio, Farmington, ME, 22.18

13. Alyssa Lawson, Boulder, CO, 20.60

14. Kayla Snyderman, Winchester, MA, 20.55

24. Brittany Loweree, Point Lookout, NY, 18.20

37. Heidi Kloser, Vail, CO, 12.51

Tahoe tops Rand McNally's travel list

Lake Tahoe is on top of Rand McNally's list of where travelers are headed this season to ski.

The agency's travel experts say the West is drawing more skiers than other area in the United States or Canada based on

2010-11 bookings.

The top destinations based on bookings are:

1. Lake Tahoe

2. Steamboat Springs

3. Vail

4. Aspen

5. Breckenridge

6. Telluride

7. Quebec

8. Stowe

9. Jackson Hole

10. Whistler

Man headed to South Tahoe found in Texas

By News 10

VACAVILLE – A 57-year-old man suffering from dementia has been safely located at the U.S./Mexico border, after being reported missing on Thursday. He was taken into custody by the Hudspeth County Sheriff's Office in Texas.

Jose Ruben Valdez was found about a half hour east of El Paso Texas near the border on Friday just before 1 p.m. U.S. Border

Patrol officials detained him when he tried to cross the border, then notified the Vacaville Police Department that had been working to locate Valdez using modern technology to track his whereabouts, said Vacaville police spokesman Mark Mazzaferro.

The missing man’s license plate was scanned when he approached the border checkpoint and border patrol agents received a hit that Valdez was a missing at-risk person.

Before being found Friday, Valdez was last seen by family members around 11pm Wednesday when he left his home in Anaheim to travel to a relative’s house in South Lake Tahoe. He was able to contact loved ones from several different locations but told them he was lost. His family told police due to his dementia, Valdez may easily become confused or lost if left alone.

Read the whole story

Ski report: Ski and ride with care



It’s a beautiful spring-like day at Lake Tahoe. Enjoy the slippery slopes, and ski and ride with care.

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

Mancuso second in downhill, Vonn third

By Ski Racing Magazine News Service

CORTINA d'AMPEZZO, Italy – Just a three hour drive from where the World Cup men were celebrating the "Super Bowl" of ski racing today in Kitzbuehel, Austria, the women had a classic downhill of their own in Cortina d'Ampezzo, Italy, as Germany's Maria Riesch returned to the top of the downhill podium on a stunning day in the majestic Italian Dolomites.

Riesch, the current overall leader and winner of this season's first two downhills in Lake Louise, was the fastest in today's contest by almost a full second with a time of 1 minute, 39.30 seconds on a day that could not have been much better for ski racing. Cloudless skies and temperatures in the teens all framed by some of the most beautiful, jagged mountain scenery in the world left fans little to ask for as Riesch showed them what a perfect downhill run looks like.

Julia Mancuso of Squaw Valley (0.91 seconds back) and downhill standings leader Lindsey Vonn of Vail (1 second back) joined Riesch on the podium in second and third, respectively. It was Mancuso's 22nd career podium and her best World Cup result since finishing second here in a super G in 2008 and her first Cup downhill podium in three years. She won the silver medal in the downhill at the Vancouver Games.

"Julia was awesome," said U.S. head coach Alex Hoedlmoser of Mancuso, who finished second in both of this week's training runs and fourth in yesterday's super G. "We're really psyched. We knew that was in her. It was a very good effort from her and a sold run top to bottom and should definitely giver her

some confidence.”

It was the first time Vonn finished lower than second in a speed race this season as she collected her 73rd career World Cup podium and 10th in Cortina.

Vonn came into today’s race having won three consecutive races in Cortina (yesterday’s super G and last season’s downhill and super G). Her on-the-edge ways of late caught up with her as she was forced to make yet another mid-course, high-speed recovery.

World Cup racing in Cortina concludes Jan. 23 with a second super G.

Vail the mountain could swallow several Tahoe resorts

Publisher’s note: *This is the third of four days of stories about issues pertaining to Vail.*

By Susan Wood

VAIL – If the belief is skiing here is only about the snow conditions, you’re only scratching the surface.

That’s because finding the balance between feeling a sense of solitude and being embraced can be a tricky one. But it’s one that can be had at Vail, one of the largest U.S. ski area at a staggering 5,289 acres.

For skiers and boarders seeking fluffy snow stashes, exceptional hospitality and room to breathe, this is the mountain that stands alone. After summiting the 11,250-foot

ridge from the front side off the Mountaintop Express chairlift to the back, the jaw-dropping view makes it obvious you have arrived to a ski land like no other. Two express lifts from Vail Village, and you're on the top.

Seven back bowls stretching 7-miles wide drum up terrain to last a week or a season depending how creative one is. The terrain is so massive on the backside that powder can be found days after snow falls. And Colorado does provide some of the best of the flakes in the world. Giggling on a run is commonplace.



Susan Wood needs another week to ski all of Vail. Photos/Kathryn Reed

"Almost everything is a bowl here," Adventure Session tour leader David Lockhart explained. Lockhart, who showed up at Vail 28 years ago for the season and stayed, took out a group eager to experience the mountain one January morning with fellow guide Nancy Sherowski, a transplant from Maine.

The group kept growing for the comprehensive, daylong tour. In its second year, adventure sessions team up one guide each with no more than four skiers or boarders to show off the terrain and provide pointers along the way. It costs $129 on top of the $102 adult day lift ticket. It's worth every penny for Vail newcomers. Free mountain tours are also available.

“Pretty amazing,” Sam Travis of Scotland summed up his first-time experience off the Swingsville run from the mountaintop. And that’s just the front side – respectable, fun and the gateway to the backside. He joined Lockhart in the Game Creek area on the long, windy Lost Boy run. This is aptly named because a youngster got lost and spent the night in a tree well and survived.

To a guide like Sherowski, though, the mountain has not been touched without spending a blue sky day at Blue Sky Basin – which lauds Earl’s and Pete’s bowls, the latter named after a founder of Vail who was a member of the 10th Mountain Division. Soldier and mountaineer Pete Siebert created the ski area with road engineer Charlie Vail in 1962, four years prior to the town’s incorporation.

Next year, Vail will celebrate 50 years under its belt.

One of its major accomplishments would surely be the development of Blue Sky Basin, a rugged wilderness area that represents a hard-won agreement and compromise between the ski resort company, environmental groups and the state wildlife department.

The farthest backside terrain has some of the finest ski acreage in North America. The variety is astounding. There are plenty of tame groomers for the plow drivers to comb over. There are also gullies that make skiing a fun teeter-totter. And tree skiing is a thing of beauty at Big Rock Park, where powder stashes are common and abundant. Grand Review, a ski area boundary run located on the perimeter of Pete’s, is a photo opportunity at every turn for camera hounds wanting to get an unobstructed view.

The terrain off the new High Noon Express chairlift brings out the advanced skier in everyone. The Never run is a quad burner that rewards the skier and rider with spectacular vistas from the Ptarmigan ridge.

Sundown, Sunup, China – all the bowls have their own sense of character. In the latter, Dragon's teeth rock formations greet the skier looking for a challenge. As far as the former, the bowl's triple chair where High Noon went in had an unsanctioned "underwear-donning" tree underneath. Replacing it with the new high-speed lift took out the tree, but opened up more views.

"I'm sure one will re-grow itself. But we're not planting one," resort spokeswoman Liz Biebl joked.

There are few things the Vail crews won't summon for their customers. Smiles from the lifties set the scenario for a great run. Signs remind skiers to alternate. Environmentally, recycling bins can be found all over the mountain and solar panels reduce the carbon footprint.

Groomers log at least 20 hours a day to open up the mountain to a wide variety of ski clientele. For the evening, one such snowcat serves the dining crowd seeking an extraordinary experience. The Game Creek Lodge at mid-mountain opens its menu to diners who catch the Eagle Bahn Gondola at the Lionshead Village. From the top, a cozy snowcat takes them the rest of the way.

Vail's special creative task force is always at work conjuring up new ways to make the experience better. These include discount days, lunch specials and cooperative airline advertising to help frugal types manage the vacation during economic challenges.

Events with free entertainment also drive the destination visitor seeking more than ways to float over snow. There's Holidaze in December. And there's CarniVail during Mardi Gras March.

"When the economy took a dive, what we saw at first was that people bought a commitment (to Vail). Now how they spend that time is something we need to be flexible in looking at –

things like the Adventure Sessions," Biebl said.

Epic Mix is a computer tracking program that allows skiers and riders who sign up a chance to monitor what runs they take and vertical feet they add up. Then, the results can be sent to friends for "a little friendly competition," she explained. "It gives you a better sense of where you've been."

And at Vail – in the family of six areas including Heavenly Mountain Resort and Northstar-at-Tahoe – snowsports enthusiasts can use all the help they can get to cover the massive terrain with a 3,100-foot drop to the 8,120-foot base served by 193 runs and 31 lifts. The mountain reports a 57-inch snow depth. Go online for more detail.

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Caliber of food as varied as the choices in Vail

Publisher's note: ***This is the third of four days of stories about issues pertaining to Vail.***

By Kathryn Reed

VAIL – It would be hard to go hungry in this ski town and easy to not have enough cash for a lift ticket the next day.

Although the area has plenty of high-end restaurants, they aren't all that way. A good mix of places to eat and drink exists. On a trip to the area earlier this month I tried to sample a variety of places.

What surprised me is by the end of the week I had more

pleasurable experiences on the mountain during the day. But I was alone in this assessment. Perhaps it's the hazards of being a vegetarian.



A snowcat is needed to get to the Game Creek restaurant at Vail. Photos/Kathryn Reed

A nice touch at the Vail Chophouse in Lionshead is at 3:30 each afternoon patrons are poured a glass of Champagne – for free.

Sue asked our waiter J.D. about free refills. He smiled and without missing a bit said, "Ya, right. You are in Vail, remember?"

Prices at this slopeside restaurant are reasonable. Sue and my aunt Linda couldn't finish the six sliders and fries ($9). We each had a hot drink, with my Café Grand (Grand Marnier, Godiva chocolate liquor, coffee, whip cream and nutmeg) being the most expensive at $8.50.

But this is the type of place my 26-year-old cousin who teaches children's ski school part time would not venture into. So, off to Bart & Yeti's we went to meet her and my uncle Tom.

We recommend a pint ($4.75) of the Hazed and Infused from the Boulder Beer Company. The fries are better here, too.

One night the five of us ate at Bully Ranch, which classifies itself as “casual, Western style atmosphere and Southwestern and American menu.” Not sure how they qualify as Southwestern. It definitely is not the place to take a vegetarian, especially when she is buying.

Nonetheless, I was able to get through the evening with soup and salad. The tomato cheddar soup ($6) is quite good. The beer battered fish and chips ($17) were well received by my dining companions.

A fun place for a beer after a day of skiing is Moe’s Original Barbecue in Lionshead. Definitely a young crowd. The jalapeno corn bread is yummy.

The five us went to Game Creek one night. By day this is a members’ only retreat, while at night it is open to the public. We took the gondola up out of Lionshead. From there a tricked out snowcat took us on a 6-minute ride to the restaurant.

Executive Chef David Clawson said cooking at 10,300 feet is only an issue for baking and pastries.

“One of our goals is to exceed people’s expectations being in that remote location,” Clawson said.

Clawson is going on his third year at Game Creek, having worked at Le Meridien in San Francisco and the Lodge at Vail prior to this job.

The meals are $82 for three courses, $92 for four courses and $102 for five courses.

Tucked back in a corner table presented challenges for the waiters trying to fill water glasses, and serve and retrieve dishes. The room is large and open, without any intimacy. It’s

vast and unappealing like a casino banquet room, with little ambiance.

At the end of the evening we had mixed reviews. Yes, it's fun. Would we do it again? Not me. But Tom's assessment was, "The experience was totally worth it." Sue would go back for the food. She liked the crab and corn soup, while Christina thought it a bit watery. Tom said the duck confit was incredible. Three of us had the asparagus starter that was good, but didn't wow us. Sue raved about the scallops. My tofu-mushroom dish needed flavor and was cold.

If you go, get the duck confit, scallops and sticky toffee pear for dessert.

A couple nights later it was the cousins on the top of Beaver Creek for a unique dining experience at Beano's Cabin. This time we were hauled up at dusk in a sleigh pulled by a snowcat.

Sam the banjo picker from Tennessee distracted us from the chill in the air as we huddled under heavy blankets.

I had been told Executive Chef Steve Topple was looking forward to creating something special for me – the vegetarian in the group. After the waiter went over the specials I asked what he would recommend for a vegetarian. He said I'd probably have to order off the menu, but would check with the chef. The menu was all I could choose from. So much for creativity.

At $85 for a three-course meal or $105 for five-course, I'd recommend vegetarians not dine here. My first course options were pizza (which I had at lunch), chili or salad. The salad was good. My option for the entrée was beet gnocchi. Fine.

But then I tasted it and winced because of the saltiness. Sue took a bite and said, "Oh, my god, that's a sodium rush."

She and Christina couldn't say enough good things about their

first two courses. Christina said the striped bass was seasoned and cooked perfectly, while Sue said the same about her Rocky Mountain trout.

We all enjoyed our desserts – chocolate trio, banana split crème brulee, and Colorado goat cheese crepe.

We also all liked the overall feel of Beano's compared to Game Creek. The open kitchen to watch the food being prepared, the roaring fire, wood beams – it just felt like a mountain cabin.

Go there without a vegetarian in the group.

The recipe below is from David Clawson at Game Creek, though none of us had it the night we were there – it wasn't an option.

Butternut Squash & Apple Soup

½ lb Butter

1 Onion

6 stalk Celery

6 T Ginger fresh

12 Apples (peeled seeded and cored)

6 Butternut Squash (peeled, seeded, large dice and roasted)

3 Bay leaf

½ lb Flour

3 gallons Chicken stock

1 qt Applesauce

To taste Salt & White Pepper

Method:

1. Melt butter and sauté the onion, celery, and ginger

2. Add flour to make a blond roux

3. Add chicken stock, bay leaf, squash and eight apples

4. Taste for salt and white pepper

5. Simmer until vegetables are overcooked and very soft

6. Puree and pass through fine strainer (chinois)

7. Very small dice (brunoise) the other four apples add to finished soup.

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