Bad water being blamed on cheese company

By Jane Kay, Environmental Health News

HILMAR -– A century ago, a band of Swedish families settled in California's Central Valley, attracted by land that cost $25 an acre and life-sustaining water from the gushing San Joaquin and Merced rivers.

The Mords, the Ahlems, the Nymans and the Wickstroms started dairy farms, milking cows and growing oats and corn for feed. The settlers, joined by Portuguese immigrants, relied on one another to tend irrigation canals and survive choking dust storms and crop-stripping plagues of jackrabbits and grasshoppers. In 1984, to add value to their milk, descendants created an enterprise that grew into Hilmar Cheese Co., one of the world's largest cheese producers.

Now, much of the well water around the cheese plant, located in the agricultural heart of California, isn't fit to drink.

New documents show that the cheese is the likely culprit in spoiling at least 18 water wells – probably more – in and around Hilmar. High in nitrates, arsenic, barium and salts, the well water tastes bad and violates federal health standards, increasing the risk of cancer and other health problems.

Read the whole story

EDC Board of Supes meeting in South Tahoe

El Dorado County Board of Supervisors will meet in South Lake Tahoe on Oct. 12.

They start with closed session at 8am, followed by the regular meeting at 9am at Lake Tahoe Airport.

Wendy David will be the first presenter for the Lake Tahoe Collaborative, followed by Steve Kooyman and Harold Singer on an update of the Total Daily Maximum Load plan requirements.

Next, Tom Brannon of Caltrans, will review the Highway 50 improvement projects.

Then, Joanne Marchetta will present the TRPA's Regional Plan Update.

The idea is the board will break by 1pm following their other business and attend a lunch at the Lake Tahoe Golf Course, where Pam Armas from State Parks will present the golf course/Upper Truckee River improvement plan, and offer a tour following lunch.

Study: Smoking costs Nevada $2.6 billion annually

By Sean Collins Walsh, Reno Gazette-Journal

Warning: Smoking causes lung cancer, heart disease, emphysema, and an annual $2.6 billion drain on the Nevada economy.



At least, that's what researchers found in a recent American Lung Association study, "Smoking Cessation: the Economic Benefits."

Health economics and administration experts at Penn State University performed cost-benefit analyses for government spending on smoking cessation, programs aimed at getting people to quit, according to a Tuesday news release.

They came to the $2.6 billion total for Nevada by adding the cost of direct medical expenditures on smoking-related disease, more than $860 million; workplace productivity loss from smoking, more than $685 million; and the cost of many smokers' premature deaths, more than $1 billion.

Smoking costs the entire country $301 billion per year, according to the same calculation.

Read the whole story

Baccarat's popularity brings increase in cheating

By Liz Benston, Las Vegas Sun

In a darkened conference room at the Tuscany, a group of casino surveillance managers lean forward in their chairs for a closer look at video footage of a man strapping a metal device to his left wrist and concealing it in his jacket sleeve. Caught red-handed by the casino, he is now

demonstrating his crime to police.

“Now, watch this,” says Bill Zender, a security consultant who teaches casinos how to spot gambling cheats.

The man in the video takes the two cards he is dealt in a baccarat game and holds them up to the camera with his left hand, lowers his hand for a second, then holds up both cards again. One is a new, more favorable card that he has slipped out of its hiding place in the metal device as the less favorable card took its place.

The man glances nervously about the nondescript room, far from the glitz and glitter of the casino floor. Caught by a Cambodian casino, he is being asked to demonstrate his crime for the benefit of police. Behind him, a soldier in uniform holds a machine gun – foreshadowing the man’s uncertain future in a less forgiving culture for criminals.

Another part of the film shows the man’s stash spread atop his hotel bed: card-switching equipment, cards from multiple casinos and designer watches to bribe casino managers and other employees.

Read the whole story

Mountain bike advocates work on cohesiveness

By Dana Turvey

STATELINE – Trail builders, trail users and landowner gathered for three days to talk all things mountain bike related.

“IMBA is a good, knowledgeable organization specific to mountain bike trail building,” attendee Dave Clock said. “People don’t understand the hoops you have to jump through to build trails. The Forest Service as an entity has come to IMBA asking for help … they aren’t being hard-nosed, saying we have to do things this way or that. The Forest Service is saying ‘help us to know what you want.’ It’s been extremely productive.”

Clock is an example of the 90-plus who signed up for Oct. 1-3 conference. A former bike shop owner, he’s now lead bike mechanic for Tahoe Sports Ltd. in South Lake Tahoe.



The Flume Trail above Sand Harbor is a popular mountain bike trail.

Many familiar faces rounded out the meeting room, from shop workers to trail volunteers and a blend of cycling enthusiasts of all skill levels.

“This is a unique opportunity for riders to have their voices heard on the type of trails they want in the Tahoe region,” Tom Ward, IMBA’s California policy advisor, said of the event. “The Forest Service is ready to unveil their plans for managing Lake Tahoe over the next 10 to 15 years, so this is a key moment for mountain bikers to prepare our best speaking points for the public commentary period. Decision-makers in

the Forest Service will be on hand at this event, and it's IMBA's goal to prepare both sides to work together in the months ahead."

The International Mountain Bike Association and U.S. Forest Service hosted this first Tahoe regional mountain bike conference. While the Boulder-based bike advocates attend worldwide conferences every two years, the Tahoe meetings stood as a prototype of what IMBA hopes to provide to other regions across the nation.

The three-day conference at MontBleu used a series of seminars to share information directly between the mountain bike community of Lake Tahoe to the U.S. Forest Service.

Topics included Mountain Biking at Summer Resorts, Building the Tahoe Bike Community and Trail Science, Design and Management.

One of the more popular conferences was a roundtable discussion titled Trails for Tahoe. Nine topics were listed on dryboards around the room; after splitting into small groups attendees spent a few minutes discussing each issue before listing pertinent solutions or feedback for each.

Topics and some of the shared input included:

• What should IMBA do to help the Lake Tahoe mountain bike community? Create an online community message board; develop a local IMBA club to specifically focus on Tahoe mountain biking (currently there is not a Tahoe branch);

• What specific input should mountain bikers provide on USFS planning efforts? Volunteer hours can help with grant funding; explain the type of trails and experience we want, both front-country and back-country;

• What types of trail/riding experiences are desired? Develop more beginner and advanced trails (it was agreed there are

ample for intermediates); add signage with trail descriptions; connectivity of trail system; use natural terrain features on advanced terrain;

• What role can local bike shops play? Share information about successful and new trail work; influence where people ride; promote trail work days for volunteers.

A seminar on the final day called Community Bike Parks focused on the viability and popularity of mountain bike parks within a Parks and Recreation structure.

Ty Polastri of the Lake Tahoe Bike Coalition reported, “This idea of a bike park within the community is something I presented to the [South Lake Tahoe] City Council for Bijou Park. This seminar brought it down to two ideas: first, we need to organize a group of people to present the idea formally and second, it needs to be accompanied by a feasibility study generated by people like us. These can run from $5,000 to $10,000 and there are companies who create professional feasibility reports, like (seminar leaders) Hillride Progression Development Group.

“With this whole Trails Conference, where we’re headed is toward the hope of the local bike shops and the local volunteer groups and the local riders coming together in a cohesive way to work with the city, with the Forest Service and with the other entities to have a bigger voice than just mine, so the agencies will respond.”

Echoing the sentiment was Max Jones from Spooner Lake Outdoor Co., at the base of Tahoe’s famous Flume Trail.

He said, “We all have to work together … local bike shops could promote the variety of trails as they get built. Then we get people back over and over. Why does a downhill ski resort have 150 runs? Well, because tomorrow when that guest comes back, they want to ski on that one now. Here, the Forest Service is asking for our help. If the mountain bike

community, if the trail building fringe doesn't step up to this opportunity, then we are lost. I'll say it that strongly."

Polastri concluded, "The Forest Service has reached out to us, which is huge. They are responding to all the illegal trails that are being built, which use USFS resources to repair or remove them and also, they need to build a volunteer base. They have had trail workdays and had no volunteers show up.

"Overall, this conference has brought together the various groups – the bike shops are here, the Rim Trail is here, the Bike Coalition, TRPA, trail builders and passionate riders are all here. It's the first time all these entities have gotten together and I feel energetically that they can come together to make the steps we need for our bike community."

For those interested, the next USFS trail workday is Oct. 9 from 9am to 1pm. Volunteers should meet at the first gate of the Corral Loop at Oneidas Road in South Lake Tahoe. Call (530) 543.2694 for more information.

Opinion: Tahoe needs to have more control, TRPA less

Dear publisher,

People want to know what can be done about the blighted appearance of our city. As a candidate for City Council, I've taken the time to speak to business people and homeowners about their perspective on the problem. What they tell me is that the problem of blight is a direct result of our city being the most regulated real estate in the United States.

Consequently, investors are put off by such harsh regulations, businesses are reluctant to upgrade their properties and homeowners face endless fines, penalties and added construction costs.

I’m a longtime tree hugger, but I question the validity of using the decline in lake clarity as an excuse to deprive homeowners of building a garage or adding a deck. Sure, there has been a serious decrease in water clarity, but we cannot ignore that over the past few decades, the lake has been warming and our winters are now up to a month shorter. As a result of both of these trends, it would be perfectly natural for us to expect more sedimentation and more algae, even if there were not a single human living in the Tahoe basin.



Steve Kubby

To fix the blight, we have to restore the property rights of businesses and homeowners. That means the city of South Lake Tahoe has to challenge the authority of the federal government and the TRPA to regulate us. I believe we have the authority to do so, if we can muster the courage to do the right thing.

Those who would like to dismiss me as a one-issue medical marijuana candidate totally miss the point. I helped lead and direct a voter initiative that challenged the supremacy of the federal government on the issue of the medical use of marijuana. Despite all the propaganda and raids, the Supreme Court of the United States has upheld our right as a state to make our own laws regarding medical marijuana, regardless of federal law.

Based upon my experience and track record of success in taking on the federal government, I believe that beginning right here in South Lake Tahoe, we can redefine politics in a revolutionary return to common sense and smaller government. The time has finally come for us to take back our power, restore our property rights and force government to become our servant, not our master.

Here are the details of how this can be achieved.

Steve Kubby, South Lake Tahoe

Grant to help with Truckee River invasive weed issue

The Martis Fund awarded the Truckee River Weed Warrior Program a multi-year funding grant to create a website data base, educate the community and establish invasive weed prevention guidelines.

In the first year, the program's goal is to promote awareness by creating an online database and smart-phone application, which will allow for citizens to send in photos of potential weeds. When positively identified, the photo will be posted with GPS coordinates on the online map. Once the invasive weeds are located weed pulls will be organized.

"Invasive weeds are a serious threat to the ecological health of Martis Valley," David Welch, president of The Martis Fund, said in a press release. "We appreciate the opportunity to support a great grassroots effort to protect the natural resources of our region."

Education is a large part of the program. In addition to information on the website the program is providing an invasive weed guidebook and will organize weed walks for community members to familiarize themselves with the invasive species.

The warriors are also concerned about prevention. Many groups such as home owners associations and businesses that are landscaping are unaware of planting non-invasive plants and seeds. The program will be working to put guidelines in place to educate these groups and individuals about desirable plants.

To learn more about the Truckee River Weed Warrior Program please contact Beth Christman at the Truckee River Watershed Council (530) 550.8760.

The Martis Fund supports programs to secure open space, promote habitat restoration, and create workforce housing in the Martis Valley region. It was established in 2006 as a collaborative project of DMB/Highlands Group, Mountain Area Preservation Foundation, and Sierra Watch. For more info, visit www.martisfund.org.

Fall quickly feels more like winter

Fall is turning to winter as a low-pressure system over California and Nevada brings moisture.

Several inches of snow are expected to collect Monday through Wednesday above 8,000 feet in the Lake Tahoe Basin, according to the National Weather Service. Rain and hail are likely

throughout the basin at the lower elevations.

A chance of rain is in the forecast for much of the week, with the most amount of sun predicted for Thursday.

Pea-size hail was reported in South Lake Tahoe and Markleeville on Saturday.

Expect the temperature drop as the moisture does. Highs in the basin for the start of the week will be in the 50s.

– Compiled by Kathryn Reed

Literary revelry at Bona Fide Books

October is upon us, so is the time for literary Halloween revelry. Join Bona Fide Books the evening of Oct. 30 starting at 7pm for a scary slam and costume party.

Candy, beer and Vincent Price movies will be provided.

Bring your best original or classic scary story to perform for the chance to win a fabulous prize. Dress up as your favorite literary figure – everything from Edgar Allen Poe to Lolita is fair game. The best costume will also win a prize, so get funky and creative.

Bona Fide is at 1069 Magua St., No. 4, Meyers behind The Getaway Cafe.

Crime prevention course for rental agencies

Douglas County Sheriff’s Department is sponsoring a Crime Prevention Conference for all multi-family housing property managers, manufactured housing managers, hotel- motel managers, rental housing owners and managers including vacation rental property managers and RV- campground managers.

It is designed to help “Keep Illegal Activity out of Rental Properties”.

The free conference on the South Shore is Oct. 11 from 8am-5pm.

The Crime Free Programs were developed in 1992 by Tim Zehring, retired 22-year veteran of the Mesa Arizona Police Department.

RSVP by Oct. 9 t0 Melanie Raulston-Arnold at LakesideProperties-CFMHP@msn.com or call (775) 588.2988.