Peaks and Paws event at Squaw

Squaw Valley is paying tribute to man’s and woman’s best friend when it hosts the inaugural Peaks and Paws event Sept. 18 from 11am to 5pm.

It’s a opportunity to sip wine or beer while playing with your pets and socializing with other dog owners.

Peaks and Paws will feature a dog training seminar, adopt-a-dog show, guided hikes and three hours of wine and beer tasting and live music from 2 to 5pm. Attendees can also visit a few premiere animal-themed arts & crafts booths.Pets are welcome, but must be well-behaved and on a leash.

Entrance to Peaks and Paws is free. Wine tasting is $25 per person and includes a commemorative wine glass. Beers are also available for $4 each. All proceeds benefit the Humane Society of Truckee Tahoe.

For more information, visit www.Squaw.com.

Environmental documents released for SLT General Plan update

The draft environmental impact report for South Lake Tahoe’s General Plan update was released today. People have until Nov. 12 to comment on it.

A public hearing is scheduled for Oct. 14 at 3pm at Lake Tahoe Airport before the Planning Commission. The City Council will

take on the issue Nov. 2 at 9am.

Copies of the report are available at 1052 Tata Lane, South Lake Tahoe or call (530) 542.6020.

The existing General Plan was adopted in 1999. The purpose of the document is to act a planning tool for the city for the next 20 years.

– Compiled by Kathryn Reed

Early morning wildland fire near Stateline casinos

Updated: Sept. 13 11:09am.

Firefighters quickly doused a half-acre fire this morning near the Heavenly gondola in South Lake Tahoe.

This area and right behind the Stateline casinos have always been popular illegal camping sites for homeless people. Although fire officials have not determined the exact cause of the blaze, speculation this morning was that the fire could have originated at a homeless camp.



Firefighters extinguish a

blaze near the
Heavenly
gondola Sept.
13.
Photo/Taylor
Flynn/Tahoe
Mountain News

Crews from the U.S. Forest Service, South Lake Tahoe, Lake Valley and CalFire responded to the fire that was reported at 5:47am. It was contained by 7:30am.

“They jumped on it right away. We are fortunate,” said Lisa Herron, Forest Service spokeswoman.

This was the second fire in 12 hours the four agencies responded to.

The first was Sept. 12 at 5:30pm, about a half mile off Al Tahoe Boulevard in the Springmeyer Land Conservancy area. The fire was human caused and burned a 30 foot by 30 foot area of grass and duff.

The Sept. 13 fire was reported by a pilot taking off from Lake Tahoe Airport as being by the gondola tower 6 or 7 at Heavenly Mountain Resort.

“Significant on this fire, was the fire’s activity and the location on the slope. This fire burned with relatively intensity due to the fire’s location adjacent to steep slopes with heavy continuous fuels like trees, dead and alive, as well as, brush,” South Tahoe Division Chief Marty Scheuerman said in a press release. “The primary reasons firefighters were able to contain this fire to just a half acre was the quick aggressive response and the temperatures were in the low 30s and relative humidity was in the 60 percent range.”

Both Fires were human caused and under investigation.

– Compiled by Kathryn Reed

California ranked No. 48, Nevada No. 15 for condition of roads

By David T. Hartgen, Adrian Moore, Ravi K. Karanam and M. Gregory Fields, Reason Foundation

We often hear the nation's infrastructure is crumbling, but state highway conditions are the best they've been in 19 years, according to Reason Foundation's 19th Annual Highway Report. Unfortunately, the recession is partly responsible for the improvement in road conditions: people are driving less which has helped slow pavement deterioration and reduced traffic congestion and fatalities.

The annual Reason Foundation study measures the condition and cost-effectiveness of state-owned roads in 11 categories, including deficient bridges, urban traffic congestion, fatality rates, pavement condition on urban and rural Interstates and on major rural roads, and the number of unsafe narrow rural lanes. National performance in all of those key areas improved in 2008, the most recent year with complete data available.

Drivers in California, Minnesota, Maryland, Michigan and Connecticut are stuck in the worst traffic. Over 65 percent of all urban Interstates are congested in each of those five states. But nationally, the percentage of urban Interstates that are congested fell below 50 percent for the first time since 2000, when congestion standards were revised.

Motorists in California and Hawaii have to look out for the most potholes on urban Interstates. In those two states, 25 percent of urban interstate pavement is in poor condition. Alaska and Rhode Island have the bumpiest rural pavement, each with about 10 percent in poor condition. However, nationally, pavement conditions on urban Interstates are the best they've been since 1993, and rural primary roads are the smoothest they've been since 1993 also.

Read the whole story

Opinion: Going backward on tax law kills jobs

By Gail Maderis

When you're out of work, what you need most is a job. When more than 12 percent of Californians are out of work, what California needs most is to keep the jobs we have and to bring in new jobs. So when something like Proposition 24 puts new jobs and existing jobs at risk, is that what California needs most? No.

You'll hear talk from the Prop. 24 people about tax loopholes. But 24 isn't just a slogan – if it passes, it will be a law.

And that law would undo three targeted, common-sense tax reforms put in place to do exactly what's needed most now – keep the jobs we have, encourage new hiring and jump-start our economy.

Read the whole story

Gail Maderis is president and CEO of BayBio, a Northern

California association of biotechnology companies.

Rotarians explain importance of literacy to students

Three classes of first- through third-graders at Zephyr Cove Elementary School spent time with members of Tahoe Douglas Rotary last week to celebrate National Literacy Month.

Rotarians Dan Oaks, Paula Peterson, Greg Felton, Conrad Buedel, and Keith Byers volunteered their time to read books, deliver gifts and share a little about being in Rotary to the young students. President Craig Schorr even added in some of his infamous comical entertainment.



Rotarian Dan Oaks reads to Zephyr Cove students on Sept. 8. Photo/Provided

The Tahoe Douglas Rotary Club, comprised of nearly 80 members, has made significant contributions to the Lake Tahoe South Shore and surrounding communities for more than 45 years,

including raising more than $200,000 for local programs since 2000.

Sushi class in Truckee

In partnership with Sierra College, Dragonfly sushi chef Kris Phaivanh and chef and owner Billy McCullough will present a sushi making class at the Truckee restaurant on Sept. 18 from noon to 2pm.

Veteran sushi chef Phaivanh will lead the class, sharing his knowledge on the intricacies of sushi and sashimi creation. He will demonstrate traditional shaping and cutting methods, as well as providing modern twists on making sushi.

A strong supporter of the Slow Food movement, McCullough will discuss the importance of utilizing sustainable fish in the creation of sushi.

Cost is $32 for the class plus $25 for the materials. The maximum number of people allowed is 25.

Dragonfly Restaurant and Sushi Bar is located upstairs at 10118 Donner Pass Road, Truckee – (530) 587.0557.

Heavenly season pass becomes

interactive device

Vail Resorts is offering a way for skiers to stay connected without pulling out their smart phone on a chairlift.

EpicMix, dubbed a first-of-its-kind online and mobile application, debuts this season. It allows riders at Heavenly, Vail, Beaver Creek, Breckenridge and Keystone to use technology to digitally capture their ski and ride experience and share it with friends and family.

EpicMix is a digital application guests access online, at their computer or via a free mobile application that can be downloaded for the iPhone, Android or other smart phone. EpicMix automatically captures the activity of guests throughout each of its resorts through radio frequency scanners at each lifts. An RF-enabled chip embedded in Vail Resorts' season passes and PEAKS lift tickets will automatically track guests' lift rides, calculating vertical feet skied and days on the mountain and will recognize special achievements and accomplishments by granting guests commemorative, collectible digital pins.

EpicMix will allow guests to share their statistics and accomplishments through updates on Twitter and Facebook. Skiers and snowboarder can create special EpicMix leader boards with their Facebook friends. The EpicMix mobile application will alert guests when any of their Facebook friends are skiing and where they are on the mountain. The application will also allow guests to send messages to their private groups of Facebook friends on the mountain.

The mobile application will also provide trail and grooming information, snow and weather reports, as well as resort news and traffic updates.

EpicMix will also have a special website for kids under the age 14..

There is nothing to buy.

The company says no information collected through EpicMix will be shared unless a guest “opts in” and specifically chooses to share their information. All information collected through EpicMix is subject to the strict privacy policies of Vail Resorts. Guests can choose to disable the RF chip in their pass to prevent any scanning.

For more information and to watch a demo video of EpicMix, click here.

CTC celebrates 25 years of protecting Tahoe lands

By Joann Eisenbrandt

Environmental Emergency Room. That could just as easily be the name on the sign outside the California Tahoe Conservancy’s offices on Third Street, just a long block from Barton Memorial Hospital in South Lake Tahoe.

On Sept. 16, at Commons Beach in Tahoe City the Conservancy will celebrate a quarter-century of bandaging Lake Tahoe’s fragile and wounded environment. On California’s books since 1970, a 1982 voter-approved bond measure provided $80 million in funding for this independent agency within the state’s Natural Resources Agency. Funding for Lake Tahoe Basin projects began in spring 1985.



Cove East along the Upper Truckee River where it opens into Lake Tahoe is an ongoing project for CTC. Photos/Kathryn Reed

Conservancy Deputy Director Ray Lacey explains the rationale behind its formation, “The easiest parallel is with the Coastal Conservancy, another early California conservancy, which was formed out of fear that California’s coastline would become privatized because of intense real estate pressure. In Tahoe, there was state, national and international recognition that there were real problems. Water quality was declining and something had to be done quickly to turn it around. This was beyond the means of local governments and nonprofits without external assistance. The Conservancy became a conduit for those external financial resources.”

When the Washoe first summered along Tahoe’s pristine shores, they used the land but did not consume it. The track record of those who have followed has not been as stellar. Competing public and private interests, clear-cut logging, haphazard urbanization and overlapping regulatory layers have muddied the waters. Tahoe’s stable environmental balance was lost, and that began impacting the lake’s clarity.

“Tahoe was developed at the worst time in history,” Lacey explains. “Older developed areas were pedestrian-friendly. Tahoe was developed in the postwar (World War II) era, when it was all about the car. That’s difficult to retrofit.”

Unlike the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency, the Conservancy is not a regulatory body. Its mission – to protect the Lake’s legendary clarity, increase public access and recreational opportunities, and preserve Tahoe’s wildlife – is accomplished in two ways: “One,” Lacey explains, “as a conduit for both technical and financial resources to overwhelming local needs (grant projects); second, actual land acquisition and ongoing management of those lands (direct projects).”

The CTC’s initial funding was targeted primarily at the acquisition of parcels on the California side of the lake. To date, the Conservancy has acquired more than 5,400 parcels.

“Twenty-five years ago,” Lacey explains, “the basin was subdivided for a population of 400,000 people, even though that wasn’t sustainable. TRPA had begun deeming some parcels unbuildable. We provided the ‘out’ for property owners who were otherwise caught between a rock and a hard place.” All the Conservancy’s property acquisitions are from willing sellers.

Since that initial bond, there have been a variety of funding sources: appropriations from Environmental License Plate Fund; offshore oil revenues collected by the federal government and given to the state of origin to offset the effects of offshore drilling; as well as statewide voter-approved bond measures – propositions 12, 40, 50 and 84 – for “clean air, clean water, and parks.”

This money also funds CTC grants to local governments and private nonprofits to match local funds and enhance the scope of environmental projects. One highly-visible example is the Lakeview Commons project at Highway 50 and Lakeview Avenue,

now in the first of three phases. The $6 million the Conservancy allocated will provide improved beach access, a better Highway 50 crossing, a non-motorized boathouse, picnic tables, terraced seating and new vegetation. As with other CTC grants, implementation of the project falls on the local partners. In this case the city of South Lake Tahoe and El Dorado County. Those entities commit to a definite completion timeline and the maintenance of the project for a set number of years. According to Lacey, the CTC has never had to seek legal recourse against a grant-funded project for failure to perform.

El Dorado County Supervisor Norma Santiago, who is on the CTC board, speaks highly of the Conservancy as a partner with local government.

“The Conservancy allows the county to work together on joint projects to meet our obligations as good stewards of the lake – for projects like the bike trail or erosion control – we formulate a real partnership in meeting our mutual mission of water quality, air quality, and sustainable communities,” Santiago said.

Other notable Conservancy direct and grant projects include:

• Commons Beach in Tahoe City: Site of the 25th anniversary celebration, the Conservancy provided $6 million to restore Tahoe City’s lakefront to its original condition. The land had been deeded “to the people of Tahoe City” by President Ulysses S Grant. “It’s a shining example of the Conservancy working with local entities,” Lacey explains.

• Upper Truckee River Restoration: The Upper Truckee River from Meyers to Lake Tahoe is now under public ownership (CTC, California State Parks, U.S. Forest Service, or the city of South Lake Tahoe), with the exception of one privately-held parcel. The Conservancy is working with its public partners to restore the entire river system because scientists say

restoring a single piece isn’t effective in significantly decreasing the flow of sediment into the lake.

• Upper Truckee Marsh Restoration: The Draft Environmental Impact Statement is expected to be out for review this fall for the meadow and river area in the center of South Lake Tahoe.

• Sunset Stables River Restoration: A part of the Upper Truckee River project on Conservancy-owned land. The goal is to return the straightened streambed to its natural meandering course to slow down the flow and facilitate more frequent dumping of sediment and nutrients onto the surrounding marshland. The Conservancy expects implementation to begin in 2012.

• South Tahoe Greenway Shared Use Trail: The creation of a continuous 9-mile-long bike trail from near the junction of Pioneer Trail and Highway 50 in Meyers to Stateline, using the old Caltrans freeway right-of-way. Purchased by the Conservancy about 10 years ago, all the parcels have been inventoried and design parameters are being explored. An EIS will come out in late 2010. This project is seen as a major step in making South Lake Tahoe a bicycle-friendly town. “Every new segment we complete,” Lacey emphasizes, “will increase exponentially the value of the network as the segments are now starting to connect.”

• Van Sickle Bi-State Park: With land donated by the late Jack Van Sickle in Nevada and Conservancy-owned land in California, it will bridge two states, which the Conservancy believes is appropriate as the watershed that is impacted covers California and Nevada.

• Angora Fire Resource Damage Assessment and Restoration Plan: The 2007 Angora Fire affected 177 Conservancy lots. An assessment was done to evaluate levels of damage to soils, forest, vegetation and wildlife on these lots, and establish

priorities for restoration and protection of water quality impacts on the Lake. The Conservancy is in the midst of a forest-thinning project on some of these lots. Regarding residents' complaints about the process, Lacey responded, "Our lands are subject to the same rules as those homeowners face. We made no money on the timber cutting, as all the wood was of a low grade and sold to a firewood supplier to defray the costs of the project, which were from $3,000 to $6,000 per acre."

Moving forward

During the last 25 years, the Conservancy's focus and goals have changed. Land acquisition has largely been completed, with close to a thousand parcel acquisitions a year now down to a dozen that are mainly project-driven.

"Simply purchasing the land wasn't the end," the CTC deputy director explained. The focus now is on "realizing the potential of those 5,000 plus parcels."

The CTC's granting role also continues, but is now enhanced by a third, new role – as a grantee. Because of a proven 25-year track record the Conservancy has successfully secured grants from federal agencies such as the Bureau of Reclamation and the Army Corp of Engineers. Given the current economic climate in California, relying only on money from Sacramento is no longer possible.

Another offshoot of this realization is the Tahoe Fund, a nonprofit launched in August 2010 to raise private money to match public funding for projects already "on the ground" in the Lake Tahoe Basin. Largely the idea of CTC Executive Director Patrick Wright, the nonprofit believes it fills a void in the environmental funding landscape. Its goal is, as its website explains, "To leverage public and private investments." Unlike other organizations that are either watchdog groups or focus on one specific program, the Tahoe

Fund, “will fill this void by enlisting the local community, visitors, and opinion leaders to support or contribute to a broad range of environmental, recreational, and educational projects.”

The board consists of a mix of private and public figures, with the two public members, Wright and Jim Lawrence, administrator of the Nevada Division of State Lands, being non-voting members. Donors to the Tahoe Fund may specify which projects their donations will go to.

Also part of the new reality is the proliferation of gaming and the resulting dilution of Tahoe’s drawing power as a gaming-only destination.

Supervisor Santiago agrees, “There is obviously a changing dynamic in the basin. It is through environmental redevelopment we can create greater prosperity in the basin, make us more geo-touristic . . . The larger work is to attract the capital investments to make the large infrastructure changes that need to be made.”

In the late 1990s, the realization began emerging that the only sustainable future for Tahoe must be built around what makes Tahoe unique – its natural attractions. Years of credible scientific research had shown lake clarity was quickly approaching a point of no return. Recognition of this led to the 1997 Environmental Summit, bringing President Bill Clinton and Vice President Al Gore to the lake. The resulting financial commitment is what Lacey calls a “watershed” moment in terms of political influence, with economic and environmental interests lobbying together in Washington rather than separately.

Understanding the CTC

But how well does the public understand the Conservancy’s role and how it fits into Lake Tahoe’s acronym-riddled environmental matrix. Anyone who’s lived in Tahoe a while

knows the term “Conservancy lots,” and recognizes the rough-hewn, low-slung timber fencing that often surrounds them. Some may have even dumped a dead refrigerator or moldy mattress on them in the dark of night. But often that’s as far as it goes.

“We’re not well-enough understood,” Lacey agrees. “Conservancies are meant to be locally-based. Our board is comprised of both local and state representatives intentionally. We need to be much more approachable.”

Bob Kingman, currently Mt. Lassen area manager for the Sierra Nevada Conservancy, agrees with the need for enhanced public education. The SNA is a sister agency to the California Tahoe Conservancy, which unlike it, “doesn’t have any one particular resource we are mandated to conserve or protect. We focus on the economic, social and environmental well being of Sierra Nevada communities in 22 counties, specifically excluding the Lake Tahoe Basin.”

Kingman worked for more than 20 years in various positions at the CTC, and while there developed a class at Lake Tahoe Community College aimed at introducing the local community to all of the organizations and government agencies in the basin, giving a primer on the mission of each, its jurisdiction and how these entities all fit together.

Public education about the environment is a priority for CTC Executive Director Wright as well. The CTC website is being reconfigured to be more interactive and user-friendly. The Conservancy would like to see visitor centers at every entrance to the lake. It helps with the seasonal centers in Meyers and owns land for one in Tahoe City. There is also a Conservancy-funded $1.8 million Explore Tahoe visitor center in Heavenly Village near Stateline, created in cooperation with South Lake Tahoe and others.

Like Kingman, who says his class at LTCC was “very well received,” Lacey believes the public is anxious to learn more

about the environment and how to protect it.

“The environmental damage people do,” he says, “is not willful, but out of ignorance and lack of awareness. People are generally eager to learn. If you tell people, ‘You’re here at the gateway to Tahoe, tread lightly,’ they’ll listen. We have an important role to play so that when people do visit, they become good stewards of the landscape.”

The future role of the Conservancy is seen by the agency as a work in progress. Lacey terms it “adaptive management,” not holding on to a plan, but revisiting it as circumstances change. He acknowledges that the outcome is not in the Conservancy’s hands alone, as they have no regulatory power, yet he remains optimistic. “The single most momentous change is the coming together of the environmental and economic communities and recognizing we have a common goal.”

Party on Sept. 16

The Conservancy’s 25th anniversary celebration on Sept. 16th at Tahoe City’s Commons Beach is seen as an opportunity for all who love Lake Tahoe to come together. “Our constituency is the citizens of California and around the world. Everyone has an inherent right to enjoy these resources,” Lacey says.

The event will include food, music, speakers and commemorative gifts. The Conservancy’s redesigned Lake Tahoe environmental license plate will also be introduced. The celebration is free to the public and begins at noon.

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‘Bridezillas’ Tahoe bachlorlette bash to be on national TV

By Leigh Grogan, Sacramento Bee

Jenny Coleman filled out the application to appear on We network’s hit reality show “Bridezillas” because she figured she’d make a perfect monster bride: Girl from California getting married in Mississippi.

Two different perceptions, she said.

“A hillbilly town and rednecks vs. blonde, tanned, ditsy and we-all-surf California.”

Coleman, 31, of Citrus Heights, and her bridal entourage, including husband-to-be Jereme Eggert, were picked for the show and will appear in two episodes – at 9 tonight and 9pm next Sunday on We.

The show follows their road to wedded bliss – from a bachelor/bachelorette bash in Lake Tahoe to the March nuptials in Eggert’s hometown in Mississippi.

Read the whole story