Tahoe fire officials plead for cash from congressman

By Kathryn Reed

With charred trees all around him and having driven through much of the neighborhood that will forever be scarred by the Angora Fire, Rep. Tom McClintock took it all in.

“I’m in fact finding mode right now,” the Republican from Granite Bay said at the end of Tuesday’s tour.



Rep. Tom McClintock, center, listens to Lake Tahoe Basin fire officials Sept. 7. Photos/Kathryn Reed

He would make no statement how he might help bring more cash to the Lake Tahoe Basin to help create a healthier forest. But he does favor allowing timber to be harvested so the cash that comes from that work would pay for the harvest or thinning.

“This excess timber will come out one way or another. It will either be carried out or burned,” McClintock said.

The congressman started the day on the West Shore to see what lingers from the August 2007 Washoe Fire that was started when barbecue flames got out of hand. Five homes and nearly 20 acres were destroyed.

A contingent of fire officials from throughout the Lake Tahoe Basin escorted McClintock on the tour, pointing out how the West Shore was not treated and how parts of the Angora burn area had been.

Walking in near the end of Zuni Street in an outfit better suited for the halls of the Capitol than the forest of Tahoe, McClintock was surrounded by charred trees. Some have blue paint patches, signifying they will soon be felled.

This section of the June 2007 fire that reduced 254 houses to ash and burned nearly 3,100 acres is close to the ignition point of the illegal campfire.



Kit Bailey

“If the SEZ (stream environmental zone) had been treated it would have reduced the impact to the houses downwind and downstream,” Kit Bailey, fire chief for the U.S. Forest Service in Tahoe, said.

This means had there been funding for more thinning and had the agencies been playing nicer at the time to allow for such work, maybe some of the destroyed houses would still be standing.

The Sept. 7 field trip was all about lobbying the congressman

for money. He is on the Natural Resources Committee. For that committee he is the lead Republican on the Subcommittee on Water and Power, and he is also a member of the National Parks, Forests and Public Lands Subcommittee.

The fire officials were able to the get the ear of Sens. Harry Reid, D-Nev., John Ensign, R-Nev., and Dianne Feinstein, D-Calif., when they were in the area last month for the annual environmental summit. (No one can remember the last time Sen. Barbara Boxer, D-Calif., set foot in Tahoe.)

With McClintock's side of Congress being responsible for appropriations, his support will be key when reauthorization of the Lake Tahoe Restoration Act comes up for a vote. This piece of legislation would bring $415 million to the Lake Tahoe Basin over eight years. A chunk of it would go to fuel reduction projects.

The Forest Service gets a base amount of cash each year for these projects, but it fluctuates. It's stimulus money and cash from Southern Nevada Public Lands Management Act that have helped the USFS and local fire agencies to thin as much as they have. But both of those supplies are running dry.

This year the Forest Service expects to treat 2,000-3,000 acres mechanically and another 1,000-1,500 acres by hand.

Lake Valley Fire Chief Jeff Michael told McClintock how his department has money to fund two year's worth of projects. If more is not secured, he expects that 20-person team will be out of work.

"Eventually we are going to run out of state and federal funds and it will be up to the land owner," Duane Whitelaw, North Tahoe Fire Department chief, told *Lake Tahoe News*. "Some of the challenges fire districts have is we don't own the land we're treating."

It is California Tahoe Conservancy and state parks property he

is talking about.



Bill Holmes

Bill Holmes, unit chief with CalFire, spoke a bit about how the building code regulations that went into affect Jan. 1, 2008, are a step in the right direction, but he wishes wood decks had been banned.

“Wood decks are the first thing to catch fire,” Holmes said to the group standing in the forest. “If that catches fire, the house catches fire.”

He said the decks are a greater threat than shake roofs because the number of shake roofs is minimal now.

Dennis Cocking with South Tahoe Public Utility District was on the tour giving a bit of history how his agency had put in about $18 million in infrastructure improvements to the area before the fire hit. That allowed water flow to be continuous.

On an average day the agency produces 12.5 million gallons of water. On June 24, 2007, the first day of the Angora Fire, 24 million gallons were produced.

“That’s why infrastructure improvements are so critical,” Cocking said.

South Tahoe PUD is hoping for cash from the LT Restoration Act, too.

For the fire districts, this is the third year of a 10-year abatement plan. The problem is, without more money, the plan

won’t be finished. Whitelaw said the purpose of having McClintock walk in the forest was to see what wildfires can do, but also see what thinning projects can do.

Lake Tahoe Wildlife Care unable to save bird with West Nile

By Reno Gazette-Journal

The Mono County Health Department said a Hawk has tested positive for West Nile Virus.

The Swainson’s Hawk was picked up near Topaz and taken to the Lake Tahoe Wildlife Care in South Lake Tahoe , where it died on Aug. 24, Mono County Health Officer Richard O. Johnson said. The positive test was the first in Mono County this year.

Read the whole story

‘Women at Ground Zero’ talk

Susan Hagen and Mary Carouba will speak Sept. 15 in Stateline about their experiences in New York City in the weeks following the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001.

The authors of “Women at Ground Zero: Stories of Courage and

Compassion” are guests of Soroptimist International of South Lake Tahoe.

The lunch is at Harveys on the convention floor from 11:30am-1:30pm. Cost is $15. Reservations must be made by Sept. 10 by calling (530) 573.2433.

Books will be signed before and after the talk.

Caltrans working on tunnel near Truckee

Caltrans will be installing new pedestrian flashing beacons, signs, street lights, pedestrian push buttons lights inside the tunnel and to do shoulder paving on Highway 89 in the “Mousehole” Tunnel area near Truckee starting Sept. 7.

The construction schedule is:

Sept. 8-Oct. 15 – one-way traffic controls will be in effect 24 hours a day using temporary traffic signals located on each side of the “Mousehole” Tunnel.

This $245,000 project is designed to increase the safety of the traveling public in the “Mousehole” Tunnel area. The general contractor for this project is Koch Excavating Inc. from Penn Valley.

Freezing temps returning to Lake Tahoe Basin

By Kathryn Reed

Bring in those plants that don't like freezing temps and get out the fleece, it's going to be nippy out. A hard freeze is possible this week.

A low-pressure system from the Gulf of Alaska will be sitting over the Lake Tahoe-Reno area on Wednesday and Thursday. Expect the high in Lake Tahoe to be 60 Wednesday and in the upper 50s on Thursday. Overnight lows will be near freezing on Wednesday and in the upper 20s Thursday night. In areas a little farther from the lake, like Meyers, take a couple degrees off those temps.



It was warm enough Labor Day for a family to enjoy Cove East; but the outside air will soon resemble the lake temp.

Photo/Kathryn
Reed

Reno will be about 70 on Wednesday and in the 60s on Thursday.

“The temperatures will rebound by Saturday,” according to Rhett Milne, meteorologist with the National Weather Service in Reno. That means low 70s for the basin.

Most of the moisture associated with the cold front should pass to the north of the region, though scattered afternoon and evening showers on Wednesday are possible.

For today, a red flag warning remains in affect until 11pm. This means with all the wind and dry conditions the fire danger is high.

Lake Tahoe, though visibly low, remains 0.8 feet above the natural rim.

“I don’t think we’ll go below it. Maybe if we don’t get anything for another month or so we’ll go below,” Milne said.

Vail Resorts looking for nonprofits to give money to

While it’s still summer, the upcoming winter season is right around the corner. As the season approaches, Vail Resorts Echo, the company’s corporate stewardship program, is kicking off the 2010 fall grant process. Open to Tahoe nonprofits, applications are due Sept. 22.

Vail Resorts Echo encompasses environmental stewardship, charitable giving and community engagement. The program is

aimed at protecting the beautiful natural resources that surrounds the resorts and helping build stronger communities.

For its charitable contributions, Vail Resorts Echo supports programs that enhance the quality of life in the South Lake Tahoe area. Specifically, the focus of our charitable giving through Echo is in two main areas:

* Supporting educational and youth programs.

* Encouraging innovation in and implementation of environmental stewardship practices.

Local Heavenly leadership from Vail Resorts form the VR Echo Giving Council, and they award cash grants and in-kind donations once a year through a grant application process. Nonprofits that run programs within our focus areas, benefit local residents and are based in El Dorado County and Douglas County may apply.

Vail Resorts Echo has hit the web with a new site, www.vailresortsecho.com, which enables employees as well as the local communities and others to get a comprehensive snapshot at the company's corporate stewardship initiatives. In addition, nonprofits will be able to download the grant application and find instructions on how to apply.

The details:

* Applications are due Sept 22.

* Instructions and application is available online at www.vailresortsecho.com.

* One application should be submitted for both cash and in-kind requests.

* An organization can receive funds and/or in-kind donations once each year.

If you have any questions about the application process, give Nicky DeFord a call at (720) 524.5020 or email at ndeford@vailresorts.com.

Mild temblor near Lake Tahoe

By Reno Gazette-Journal

The United States Geological Survey website reports there was an earthquake of magnitude 2.1 under northwest Lake Tahoe this morning.

The Placer County Sheriff’s Office has not received any reports of anyone feeling the earthquake. The report has not been reviewed by a seismologist.

The quake was reported at 6:07am about 10 miles southeast of Truckee. It is reported to be at a depth of 5.3 miles.

Talk about S.S. Tahoe by model boat builder

Tahoe Maritime Museum hosts Alan J. Zulberti on Sept. 14 from 11am-noon to talk about his three-year project in building an operational model of the S.S. Tahoe.

Built nearly 115 years after the original ship was launched at Glenbrook in 1896, the model is entirely hand-built, has a riveted copper hull with more than 5,000 rivets and is powered

by the only known twin engine steam plant. Six-feet long and radio controlled, the ship provides the sounds of an actual steam whistle, a ships bell and steam cuffing. The model is quite fast with a trial run at a scale speed of 36.9 knots.

Zulberti is an active member of the San Francisco Model Yacht Club. This is his third model boat, which follows his construction of a WWII Patrol Torpedo boat, which received first place in Military and Best in Show a few years ago. The PT-588 was also the subject of a six-page feature article in a national magazine, Ships in Scale.

The model will be on hand during the slide show presentation. Lecture is free with admission. Adults $5. Members and children under 12 are free.

Tahoe Maritime Museum is at 5205 West Lake Blvd. in Homewood.

Gateway to the Sierra Sportsman's Outdoor Expo

Lovers of the great outdoors in El Dorado County can gather at the fairgrounds in Placerville for the first Gateway to the Sierra Sportsman's Outdoor Expo.

The Oct. 1-3 expo celebrates the rich and plentiful opportunities for outdoor recreation in El Dorado County, from fishing and hunting to boating, archery, biking, barbecuing and more.

The expo will provide information and resources about the things people love to do in this region.

Highlights of the three-day expo include seminars and hands-on

demonstrations in such topics as fly fishing, bear hunting and river guide services, as well as special hands-on demonstrations for children. Also featured are vendors in outdoor sports offering the latest know-how and equipment, clothing and accessories. A gun show will also be presented by the Buck Shop.

Barbecue fans are invited to come watch how the pros do it in the KCBS sanctioned Smokin' for Gold BBQ Cook Off on Oct. 2. This competition features teams competing for prize money and the grand champion trophy.

On Oct. 3 everyone is invited to try their hand at the grill in the "just for fun" Open BBQ Cook Off. Following each event, expo attendees are welcome to sample the cooks' creations during People's Choice tasting events, five tastes for $10.

On the evening of Oct. 2, the expo presents live music and dancing on the green featuring the country tunes of the popular regional band Hired Guns. The music, from 7-11pm is included with admission to the expo or come to the concert only for $5.

Visit the website for a full list of Expo activities, vendor information and daily schedules.

El Dorado County Fairgrounds is at 100 Placerville Drive in Placerville.

Tickets: Adults $8 • Children (6-12) $5 • Under 6 free • 3-Day Pass: Adults $20 • Children (6-12) $12 • Concert only $5.

Special dog/cat adoption day

The Wylie Animal Rescue Foundation (WARF) has rescued thousands of animals from certain death, but millions more were not so lucky and died – unloved and unwanted–in shelters across the country. The recent downturn in the economy has put even more pets on death row.

To help find homes for these dogs and cats, WARF is conducting a special Adoption Fair on Sept. 18 from 11am to 4pm hosted by Scraps Dog Bakery at 8675 North Lake Blvd. in Kings Beach.

A collection of adoptable dogs and cats will appear in person at the Adoption Fair – and when making an adoption at the fair, adopters will save money on fees when adopting those pets most in need. The Prizes for Pitties Program, offers a savings of $50 off the adoption of a pit bull or pit mix. The Senior for Senior program allows adopters over 55 to waive the adoption fee when they adopt a dog or cat over seven years of age. And, there is a discount of $50 on adult cat adoptions. All dog adopters will receive the training book Family Friendly Dog Training, by Patricia McConnell along with additional training handouts and a large Kong toy.

All of the money received by WARF is applied solely to helping animals. Tax-deductable donations are always needed and appreciated.

For more information, log on or call (775) 833.2319 or (530) 546.2725.