South Tahoe's Caltrans project gets green light

By Kathryn Reed

The much talked about Highway 50 improvements from Trout Creek to Ski Run Boulevard in South Lake Tahoe are moving forward.

The California Transportation Commission approved the Caltrans project on June 30. It will start next summer.

The project includes class II bike trails, lighting, walkways and an improved driving surface.



The barrier on Echo Summit will be replaced in May 2011. Photo/Kathryn Reed

The multi-million dollar project will take three years to complete.

In other Caltrans news, South Tahoe Public Works Director John Greenhut told the City Council this month that a deal has been struck with the state agency for the city to have possession of the rock wall on Echo Summit that will be dismantled beginning next May.

Caltrans officials will address the council again before that project begins. It calls for shutting down the summit to one lane of traffic for at least May 2011 while the rock wall is doubled in height.

RV saves cash, brings families together

By Sherman Goldenberg, RV Business

Rent an RV, hit the road and save gobs of money on your next vacation.

Really? Maybe not, even some advocates concede, according to the *Los Angeles Times*.

“You could probably pack four people in a car, eat at restaurants, stay in hotels, and I imagine it’s about the same cost,” said Chuck Woodbury, editor of RVTravel.com, a consumer website offering tips and tricks for RVers.

But consider the intangibles.

“The real advantage of the RV is that the family’s together, and you can cook and eat healthy meals,” Woodbury said. “There’s something about being in a little house that’s very appealing. Sitting around a campfire at night is a lot more fun than sitting around a hotel room and watching TV.”

Read the whole story

E. coli in bagged lettuce raises food safety concerns

By Bobby Caina Calvan and Deia de Brito, Sacramento Bee

California’s salad bowl remains far from pristine, even as farmers attempt to do more to keep produce free of stomach-churning contaminants.

Four years after tainted spinach killed three and sickened hundreds, state health officials this week again told consumers the E. coli bacteria was lurking in their produce — this time in Fresh Express brand packaged lettuce in California and 18 other states.

The discovery again raised questions about how the nation’s fresh food is farmed and processed, and whether government should have a stronger enforcement role in policing farming practices.

Read the whole story

STHS open house shows off new facilities

Dear Community,

South Tahoe High School is hosting an Open House on Aug. 26 from 9am-3pm. We would be honored if you could attend. The open house will be a casual affair, with people coming and going all day.

If you can spare some time during that day, Principal Ivone Larson and staff members would love to show you around the new facilities. We are all excited about the great things that have been accomplished in just more than a year and we're dying to show off.

In April, our new Construction Arts Transportation Academy opened and the new two-story, 15-classroom Stadium View building will be completed Aug. 1. Work is progressing nicely on the Performing Arts modernization project and the new Tahoe Arts and Design Academy. Our campus will be one of the finest in the state when work is complete.

Refreshments will be served and we really hope you can join us.

Angie Keil, Lake Tahoe Unified School District

Lack of stimulus money compounds state budget woes

By Kevin Yamamura, Sacramento Bee

Facing a dismal budget crisis last year, California relied on a federal lifeline of stimulus dollars. The cash infusion staved off the bleakest of cuts to Medi-Cal patients, welfare recipients and students.

But that money is beginning to run dry, leaving California grappling with whether to replace it by raising taxes or institute the severe cuts the state avoided last year.

The state already has exhausted some pots of stimulus money, such as one for higher education. Others will expire in the

next year.

Read the whole story

Detour leads to tranquil falls near Markleeville

By Kathryn Reed

MARKLEEVILLE – Closing my eyes I'm taken some place more distant than the 1.5 miles I hiked. The rushing water makes hearing difficult unless one speaks in a loud voice. It's one of those times when listening to Mother Nature seems like music that can never be replicated.

Nothing on my iPod sounds so wonderful.



Waterfalls in Grover Hot Springs State Park. Photos/Kathryn Reed

Opening my eyes it's a sea of blue. The sky above seems to be tickled by some of the distant pine trees. Leaves dance in the, oh, so gentle breeze.

The crystal clear water makes me want to lap it up as though I were a canine.

Granite boulders of all sizes beckon to sit or lie upon. Completely vertical, I don't want to move. I am so incredibly relaxed.

The few people in the opposite direction along this trail outside the campground at Grover Hot Springs State Park all had smiles. I now understand why.

Others are also dipping their toes into the icy cold and ironically named Hot Springs Creek and her pools that sit above the magical falls.

Our destination for the day came with a detour thanks to Linda, the extremely friendly State Parks employee. If it weren't for her, we may have never gone to the falls. The $8 entrance fee was worth the trek to the falls, let alone the rest of the hike.

The state park is best known for the hot springs that are 4 miles from the heart of the town of Markleeville. As the county seat for California's least populated county, Markleeville is a blip on the map. This outdoor mecca is a short drive from South Lake Tahoe via Highway 89 over Luther Pass, with a left on Highway 88. Then, just follow the signs.

Driving into the park, go to the end of the day use area. Start the hike by making a left at the gate. The falls are an easy 1.5 miles up mostly a wide path. Getting closer to the falls, the trail has several offshoots. Just listen to the roar of the water to find them.

It's easily one of those places where you could spend a lazy afternoon. Unfortunately, that was not on our agenda. We were there to get in a more ambitious hike.

After what I considered a way-too short of a stay by a little

wading pool above the falls, we made our descent only to begin our real climb.

Linda, the park employee, didn’t exaggerate when she said the hike to Charity Valley is steep.

Markleeville is at an elevation of 5,500 feet; Grover is at 5,800 feet; we went to 7,267.

The soft, single-track trail is not gradual. It’s vertical. Without the shade of the massive pines and cedars, it would have been unbearable on this Sunday in July.

Surprisingly, it wasn’t that far up for the evidence of the September 2008 Burnside Fire to show its blackened remains. Trees are forever scarred.

A smattering of wildflowers dot the landscape, bringing color to the forest floor – Indian paintbrush, lupine, tiger lilies and snow plants are in abundance. Ferns are at the lower part of the trail.

Butterflies flit about, seemingly oblivious to the only two people on the trial. Hawks soar overhead. A solitary deer stands still between the trees, making me wonder where her family is.

The trailhead had a warning about mountain lions. I didn’t think twice about it until seeing some unfamiliar scat on the trail.

Up, up and away the trail goes, until it’s above the tree line. Then views of the valley below and beyond open up. They make the sweat and heat bearable.

Finally, it’s decision time. Right for 2.5 miles to Burnside Lake, left into Charity Valley or a U-turn to complete an 8-mile day? The latter was the answer. The ridge we came to and the vistas along the way brought us views we are still talking about.

Going down it was a coin toss to know if a beer at the Wolf Creek Saloon in Markleeville or soaking at Grover Hot Springs sounded better.

We experienced both.

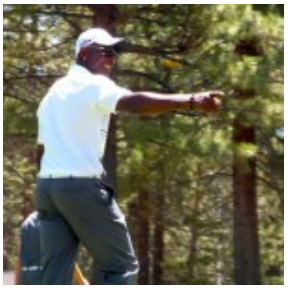
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Mix of seriousness, playfulness during celeb tourney

By Kathryn Reed

STATELINE – While Billy Joe Tolliver was breaking a single-day course record, other players on the second day of the American Century Championship tournament were struggling.

As NBA all-star Wally Szczerbiak finished his round and was about to get a bite to eat, he was asked how he did. He shook his head sideways and said "unbelievable" – and not in a good way.



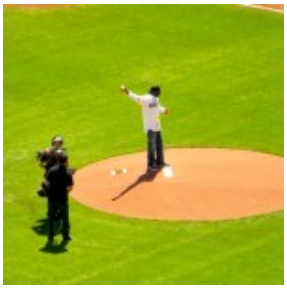
Jerry Rice interacts with the crowd July

17.
Photos/Kathryn
Reed

Stands and beaches were full, as well as the walkways as people gathered to watch their favorite athlete, comedian or actor. Boats filled the water, pulling right up on the beach. Lots of half naked bodies were frolicking about – some actually paying attention to what was happening on the green part of the grounds.

Thursday's attendance at Edgewood Tahoe Golf Course beat last year's numbers by 10 percent. Last year the whole celebrity golf tournament drew record crowds.

A big smile came across former wide receiver Jerry Rice's face when asked about the possibility of switching to baseball with his prowess at the mound on opening day for the Giants this year. He threw out the first pitch to his former QB Steve Young.



Jerry Rice throws out the first pitch at the Giants home opener in April 2010.

A spectator was quick to pipe in that Rice could do anything well.

Some guys admitted to having voted for Rice when he was on

“Dancing with the Stars.” They said their wives were voting even more often.

Then there was the person who had to ask if Rice had played for the Forty-Niners. Yes, is the answer – and he has three Super Bowl rings.

For several years Jim Combs of Reno has been coming to Stateline to give Charles Barkley a few cigars. What kind, he wouldn’t say. But he did light one for Barkley as the basketball legend limped down the fairway.

The tournament wraps up today. Click here for tee times. The action starts at 8:15am at the Lake Tahoe golf course. NBC will be airing the tournament from noon-3pm.

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Tolliver leads ACC, sets single round record

By Emerson Marcus, Reno Gazette-Journal

STATELINE – Former Atlanta Falcons quarterback Billy Joe Tolliver admits his favorite hole at Edgewood Tahoe Golf Course is the 19th, but he hasn’t played too poorly on the first 18 either.

Tolliver shot a single-round American Century Championship record Saturday, with a 33.



Billie Joe Tolliver was in the lead most of Saturday. Photo/Kathryn Reed

He enters the final round of the 21st annual celebrity golf tournament as its leader.

Read the whole story

Nevada Beach improvements begin next week

The U.S. Forest Service Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit will begin a construction project to provide much needed improvements and BMP upgrades to Nevada Beach Day Use Area.

The project will begin on July 19 and continue through Oct. 15. Work will occur weekdays from 8am-6pm.

Two new restrooms and repaving of the north and center parking loops are planned for this construction season. The two old north and south restrooms will be decommissioned after the two new restrooms have been completed. Rental of the Pavilion

picnic pad will not be available during construction and some noise from these activities will be heard in the campground and on the beach.

For more information and addition details about the project, contact Bob Becker at (530) 543.2688 or rabecker@fs.fed.us.

Advice for coping with hot temperatures

To the community,

With summer in full swing, El Dorado County health officials are encouraging residents to prepare now to stay cool and healthy over the next few months.

We are asking people to take steps to ensure their air conditioner is working properly and they have a plan in place to prevent summer heat injuries.

Each summer brings the potential for heat waves. Summer heat waves can be extremely dangerous and can cause serious medical problems, especially for people who are very young, elderly, or have chronic medical conditions.

It is more difficult for these individuals to regulate their body temperatures and to adjust to extreme changes in heat. During periods of extreme heat, electric fans do not sufficiently cool a person down, especially those who are most vulnerable to the heat. Staying in an air conditioned environment and using common sense measures will help prevent heat-related illness.

The El Dorado County Department of Human Services has programs

to assist low-income individuals with summer heat planning. One program is available to make homes more energy efficient and to repair or replace air conditioners or evaporative coolers. Another program provides assistance once per year to pay for high energy costs, such as a high electric bill during a summer heat wave.

For more information on these programs, or to see if you qualify, contact DHS at (530) 621.6150.

The following are tips on how to stay cool and healthy during hot weather:

* Drink plenty of fluids, such as water and low-calorie sports drinks, to replace salts and minerals lost through sweating.

* Stay indoors in an air-conditioned building. If your home does not have sufficient air conditioning, visit a friend, relative or other location in the community, including libraries, grocery stores, or shopping centers where the air conditioning is working.

* Pace yourself and avoid heavy exertion in the heat.

* Never leave a child or an animal in a parked vehicle, even for a few minutes. Temperatures can quickly rise to dangerous levels in a matter of minutes.

* Check on neighbors, relatives and friends, particularly those who may be isolated.

For more information and additional tips to stay cool and healthy during the summer, visit www.edcgov.us/publichealth.

Olivia Kasirye, county health officer