Lahontan cutthroat trout thriving at Independence Lake

By Jeff Delong, Reno Gazette-Journal

At a “gem” of a Sierra lake recently purchased for the public, native inhabitants are making a record comeback.

At Independence Lake, one of only two lakes in the world with an indigenous population of Lahontan cutthroat trout, the threatened fish are now spawning at levels not seen since 1956.

“It’s a real success story. They’re coming back,” said Gary Scoppettone, a cutthroat expert with the U.S. Geological Survey.

This summer, 223 cutthroat have been counted spawning from the lake up Upper Independence Creek, from 176 last year and 165 the year before. In 2003, as the lake’s fish teetered at extinction, only 17 cutthroat spawned at the lake, Scoppettone said.

Read the whole story

Opinion: $20 mil. Dugard payment covers up truth

By Bruce Maiman, Sacramento Bee

The decision last week by the California Legislature to approve a settlement for Jaycee Lee Dugard is costing us way

more than $20 million.

Kidnapped near her Tahoe-area home in 1991, authorities say that Dugard, then 11 years old, was imprisoned in the Antioch home of Phillip and Nancy Garrido for nearly two decades. Phillip Garrido confessed to kidnapping and raping Dugard, although both Garridos have pleaded not guilty to numerous charges.

Without question, what Jaycee Dugard endured is beyond comprehension, but it should be patently obvious that California taxpayers weren't responsible for what happened to her. It's not our fault she was kidnapped, brutalized, raped and enslaved. Yet we're paying the fine.

Read the whole story

Homewood resident, FOWS board member sounds off

Dear Publisher,

On July 7, Mr. Dave Tirman, senior vice president for JMA Ventures, wrote a rebuttal to an article written by Mr. Tom Rosenberg in the *Sacramento Bee* on July 4 regarding Homewood Mountain Resort (HMR). It was inappropriate for Dave Tirman to mention Friends of the West Shore in his rebuttal. Friends had nothing to do with the article and members first saw it when published by the *Sacramento Bee*.

As Tom Rosenberg has stated, he is not a member of Friends and does not represent Friends. Friends has over 300 members, so the only comments attributable to Friends are from a board

member specifically writing or speaking on behalf of Friends [not as an individual] or from our letterhead or website.

Dave Tirman's last comment is misleading that "certain members of Friends of the West Shore are resorting to misinformation and distortion of fact to further their agenda".

Friends relies primarily on information from HMR's or Tahoe Regional Planning Agency's website or official written documents. Because of its size and complexity, clarification on certain aspects of the proposed resort has been necessary, including confusion over the measurement of total height and the number of units to be included in the project. These items were clarified at the May 27 TRPA meeting. In particular, TRPA advised that under the EIR/EIS analysis, the project includes 349 units, not the 316 as noted in the presentation by JMA, the project developer. Also, Friends appreciated that Dave Tirman attended the Friends community meeting on July 2 and, at the request of Friends, spoke to the group and provided information and clarification on the HMR project.

Friends supports a revitalized HMR that is smaller in size and scope, with a much reduced number of units. Some concerns noted by members of West Shore communities regarding this project:

1. Density, size and scope of the project are not compatible with the long-time character and scale of the neighborhood or the West Shore.

2. What is the impact on wetlands, watersheds and any development on raw, vacant land, especially the Fawn St. wetland area and the steep hillside slopes of the mountain.

3. Potential traffic congestion from 349 units (number of bedrooms undisclosed) could easily result in 300–500 cars, not including service and employee vehicles or boats and trailers. The proximity of the resort to Highway 89 could cause a backup on the highway during peak activity.

4. What is the availability of water and the impact on the aquifer level of other nearby communities. Who pays for any required new water and sewage infrastructure? What will be the impact of the Truckee River Operating Agreement?

5. To what extent is the project economically feasible and sustainable over a long period of time? Can the West Shore homeowner/rental base absorb such a high density project?

Friends is trying to obtain accurate information about the HMR project to disseminate to residents of the West Shore so they can evaluate the extent of this development but the information changes frequently and is sometimes incomplete. Therefore, full disclosure and understanding of the project details is important and Friends asks the public to refer to the HMR or TRPA websites for available facts and clarification. We also look forward to the release of the draft EIR/EIS for further details. We are aware that there many divergent views on the size and scope of the proposed resort but Friends is hopeful, through community meetings and communication with JMA Ventures, that the development process can be respectful of all opinions and result in a development that satisfies the needs and concerns of the West Shore Community and HMR, a resort that everyone can appreciate and accept.

Judith Tornese, West Shore homeowner and board member of Friends of the West Shore

PS: Friends of the West Shore is a Lake Tahoe, non-partisan community organization established to help preserve and enhance the character, scale and historical significance of the West Shore. It is a resource to the community and uses the collaborative efforts of the residents to make a positive impact on the West Shore neighborhoods.

TY&FS receives $25,000 grant

Tahoe Youth & Family Services recently received a $25,000 grant from Sierra Health Foundation through its Responsive Grants Program. This grant will provide counseling services for young children and will help expand the popular Little Latinas Program.

The grant was one of 21 awarded by the Sacramento-based private philanthropy, which promotes improved health and quality of life for the people of Northern California. Sierra Health Foundation awarded a total of $506,469 to support projects that improve health and quality of life in the first 2010 Responsive Grants Program funding cycle.

Through the Responsive Grants Program, Sierra Health Foundation asks nonprofit organizations and public agencies how they can promote and improve health in their communities. Since launching the program in 2008, Sierra Health Foundation has awarded more than $2.7 million to provide support for 94 programs and projects.

Bear encounters leave a lasting memory, if not more

By Jeff Delong, Reno Gazette-Journal

The bear gave him a bloody nose.

That’s getting off lightly, for sure, but Sam McClure’s

predawn encounter with a black bear while hiking the Tahoe Rim Trail two years ago was a frightening experience.

McClure, then 16 and an experienced backpacker, had set up camp near the trail south of Tahoe Meadows on a Monday night in July. He was awakened shortly after 4 a.m. by a heavy animal “falling” across his tent.

Its silhouette in the moonlight made clear what the animal was – a bear. Not a big bear, but big enough.

Read the whole story

Harveys puts more Elton John tickets on sale

Additional tickets in all price ranges are now availability for the Elton John show on July 25 at the 2010 Lake Tahoe Summer Concert Series at Harveys Outdoor Arena in Stateline.

Tickets are $95.50, $150.50, $175.50 and $235.50, plus applicable service charges, and can be purchased via www.ticketmaster.com or www.apeconcerts.com. Showtime is 8pm.

Paddling on Lake Tahoe can

take some patience

By Kathryn Reed

It’s not the Boundary Waters, but canoeing on Lake Tahoe can be fun – even if it means taking deep breaths while some guy on a Jet Ski spins in circles close to our canoe. Unfortunately, the choppy water and deafening noise made me briefly forget I was in one of the most magical outdoor playgrounds.

Only during this episode did I long to be on the lakes of Minnesota where motorized watercraft are not allowed. Maybe it’s time to plan a visit to see my sister and paddle a few days with her. Or maybe it’s time for law enforcement in Tahoe to crackdown on violators like this.



Sue Wood cruises along Lake Tahoe. Photos/Kathryn Reed

The speed limit on Lake Tahoe for all vessels is 5mph 600 feet or closer to the shore.

With Tahoe’s push to be welcoming to paddlers, encounters like the one Sue and I experienced would deter a lot of people from returning.

Gliding across Lake Tahoe one stroke at a time, it was part

scenic tour, part architectural tour as our 17-foot canoe took us from Timber Cove Pier to Tahoe Shores to Edgewood Tahoe back to our starting point.

It was another tough Sunday living and playing in Lake Tahoe.

Meandering along it was the echoes of people having fun that resonates most – not that yahoo on his personal watercraft. Many are on shore, but more are out in the water. Several wave as they paddle by in kayaks. Some are too wobbly on paddleboards let go long enough to wave. One person is swimming, oblivious to those who are dry.

It was a bit disconcerting that no one stopped us at Timber Cove to ask what body of water our canoe was last in. (It was the Upper Truckee River in case anyone wants to know.) The concern is because of possibly transporting aquatic invasive species into Lake Tahoe. Signs are posted at other non-motorized launches about what paddlers should do – but not here.

Paddling toward Nevada, one gets an architectural tour to start with. Some lovely houses sit back not far from the shore.

Various lodging resorts dot the shore. With the snow-capped mountains all around, it's a reminder this really is a year-round destination.

Photographers are busy snapping pictures of wedding parties at Edgewood and Timber Cove.

The farther we paddle, the quieter and less congested it gets. That won't necessarily be the case this week as Edgewood Tahoe Golf Course hosts the annual celebrity golf tournament.

After turning around near Tahoe Shores, we paddled back the short distance to Edgewood. It was a fitting place to get a cocktail and appetizer before heading for Timber Cove Pier. We

didn’t care we were the only ones dressed in lifejackets at Brooks Sports Bar.

Something to remember is California and Nevada have different rules for accessing private land. In the Golden State, the public has access to land that is below the high water mark – so that’s quite a bit right now. In the Silver State, landing on a private beach is equivalent to trespassing.

The Lake Tahoe Water Trail is a great resource for paddling at Tahoe. The website has information about memberships and trail maps.

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Meet an EDC sheriff’s candidate

Come to Café Campanile in El Dorado Hills Town Center to meet candidate for El Dorado County sheriff, John D’Agostini, on July 19 atpm.

Mosquito abatement at Tahoe to start next week

El Dorado County Vector Control will begin its adulticiding control program for mosquitoes next week. This program involves fogging selected areas around South Lake Tahoe and

the West Shore to reduce populations of adult mosquitoes.

These areas will be fogged early in the morning or in the evenings when wind conditions are at an optimum. The ground fogging will be done with truck mounted or ATV mounted sprayers.

The Environmental Management Department urges the public to take precautions to prevent West Nile virus.

“Prevention strategies include draining all sources of standing water and reporting dead birds and tree squirrels to the State West Nile Virus hotline,” Virginia Huber, division manager, said in a press release.

Birds are reservoirs for West Nile virus. Mosquitoes transmit the virus by biting an infected bird and then biting a person. Dead bird reports are the most sensitive and earliest indicator of West Nile virus transmission and can be reported to the State hotline at 877.968.2473 or online at www.westnile.ca.gov.

Huber recommends the following tips to prevent West Nile virus:

Drain standing water that may produce mosquitoes.

Dawn and Dusk are times to avoid being outdoors when mosquitoes are most active.

Dress appropriately by wearing long sleeves and pants when outside.

Door and window screens should be in good working condition.

Defend yourself by using an effective insect repellent. Make sure to follow label instructions!

For more information about WNV, visit the following websites: www.edcgov.us/emd or www.westnile.ca.gov. Information is also

available on the El Dorado County West Nile Virus Hotline (530) 573.3405.

Big Springs Gardens open to public again

By Sacramento Bee

Don Phillips didn’t want to leave his mountain paradise. Now he doesn’t have to go – and we’re welcome to visit.

Almost a year after Phillips announced the permanent closing of his Big Springs Gardens near Sierra City, the lush retreat is again open to the public.

“We’re working to keep the place open forever,” said Phillips, who turned 86 in October. “That was my dream.”

Nicknamed “Monet in the Mountains,” Big Springs has attracted more than 20,000 visitors up Highway 49 for brunch or barbecue and a stroll through 113 acres of amazing gardens and Sierra forest. Its beauty draws many painters who – like legendary French impressionist Claude Monet – find unmatched inspiration in the mix of flowers and water. With the 8,600-foot Sierra Buttes as a backdrop, its high country setting just makes it more precious.

Read the whole story