

LT Basin Federal Advisory Committee meeting

The Lake Tahoe Basin Federal Advisory Committee (LTFAC) will meet from 1-4pm April 12 at the U.S. Forest Service Supervisor's Office, 35 College Drive, South Lake Tahoe.

LTFAC will address issues related to federal activities at Lake Tahoe.

Items on the agenda include:

- 1) a review and discussion of public comments and congressional input on LTFAC's preliminary recommendation of the Lake Tahoe Southern Nevada Public Land Management Act (SNPLMA) Round 11 capital projects and science themes;
- 2) develop a final LTFAC recommendation for the Lake Tahoe SNPLMA Round 11 capital projects and science themes, and
- 3) public comment will be taken on preliminary recommendation packages for capital projects and science and research themes.

LTFAC consists of 20 members representing a broad array of constituencies.

Short sales spur Tahoe-Reno real estate market

The Reno-Tahoe real estate market began the year with signs of growth as home and condominium sales showed significant increases throughout the area, according to the quarterly

report by Chase International.

The data compares home and condo sales from January-March 2010 to the same period in 2009.

Sales of single-family homes in Lake Tahoe were up 52 percent and Reno-Sparks saw a 26 percent increase in home sales. Carson Valley experienced a 27 percent jump while Truckee home sales were up 44 percent.

Sue Lowe, corporate vice president of Chase International, notes that the strong upswing in sales is a partial result of short sales and bank-owned properties, federal tax credits for first-time home buyers as well as investors coming back into the market.

First-time buyers hoping to take advantage of the \$8,000-federal tax credit must have their homes in escrow by April 30, with sales closed by June 30. State tax credits are also available.

Reno-Tahoe home sales are following national trends. The National Association of Realtors recently announced that pending U.S. home sales climbed above expected projections to 8.2 percent in February, primarily in response to the home buyer tax credit.

Lowe acknowledges home prices are slow to recover due to the amount of short sales and bank-owned property deals.

For homes priced above \$1 million, the East Shore was up 33 percent, Tahoe City up 100 percent, South Lake Tahoe down 50 percent, Incline Village up 117 percent, and Truckee down 8 percent. Reno/Sparks was down 13 percent and the Carson Valley remained flat.

The less than \$1 million Tahoe market showed significant double digit gains with East Shore up 25 percent, South Shore up 41 percent, Tahoe City up 90 percent, Incline up 64 percent

and, Truckee up 55 percent. Reno Sparks less than \$1 million market was also up 27 percent and the Carson Valley up 28 percent.

The condo market was up across the board with Lake Tahoe posting a 143 percent increase in units sold and Reno Sparks posting an 83 percent increase.

EDC applauds South Tahoe's delay on redevelopment



To the community,

The El Dorado County Board of Supervisors voted unanimously to send a letter outlining their concerns regarding South Lake Tahoe's plans to adopt a redevelopment plan without consulting them first.

The April 6, 2010, county letter sites various issues related to the city's definition of blighted areas and parcels included, the speculative intention of the scope and size of the area, the city's environmental and financial analysis, utility company concerns, and the lack of communication with the county on this redevelopment plan.

County board members wanted to be clear that this letter and their concerns were not intended to prevent the city from proceeding with redevelopment goals, but, they did however

state, "While the county does not wish to unnecessarily impede the city's planning and development goals in the proposed Project Area, the documentation prepared by the Redevelopment Agency does not provide sufficient evidence that the proposed Project Area is blighted, as defined by the California State Community Redevelopment Law."

Supervisor Norma Santiago, South Lake Tahoe's representative on the El Dorado County Board of Supervisors emphatically agrees.

"I fully support redevelopment as a method and tool to improve blighted areas, and as a great opportunity to communicate with involved agencies to implement a common vision," says Santiago.

The county's letter also states that staff estimates that, even with statutory pass-through payments, the County is likely to lose between \$4,660,176 and \$16,953,025 in property tax increment over the life of the proposed Redevelopment Project, depending on the success of the Project. This loss of tax increment would put a severe strain on the county's ability to provide needed public health and safety programs throughout the region.

Santiago sees this as a good opportunity for the county and city to work on the project together, noting also that the South Tahoe Public Utility District joins the county in its objections to the project definitions.

"Jurisdictions like the utility district and the county have the responsibility to protect their constituents and make sure their tax dollars are spent correctly. While we realize doing nothing to address blighted areas would be detrimental to all jurisdictions and constituencies, we have to insist that this project is done legally and correctly for all involved; the city, the county, special districts and our constituents," she added.

The city of South Lake Tahoe, at their public meeting (April 6), agreed to postpone the adoption of the Redevelopment Project Plan Area No. 2 and work with the county and utility district on their concerns.

"It's a new day, let's play ball together, on the same team, and let's come up with something that works for everyone concerned," said Santiago.

El Dorado County Board of Supervisors

Documentary about youths' quest to find fire

Date: May 4

Time: 6pm (No-Host bar 5:30-6pm)

Location: Assembly Rooms 139 & 141, Tahoe Center for Environmental Sciences, 291 Country Club Drive, Incline Village (on the campus of Sierra Nevada College)

Join Graham Kent, Heidi Buck and the Forest Guard Students. This documentary presents a whirlwind year in the life of six home-schooled children the foothills of Northern California who have developed an ingenious invention for the early detection of forest fires. What starts as a local environmental solution evolves into an idea that could have a major global impact after they win top prize at the Global Children's Climate Competition and with it, the chance to have their dream become reality.

Their invention is a network of cameras located around forests that send real-time pictures to hundreds and thousands of

desktops, turning people all over the world into Forest Guards. Their Forest Guard concept catches the eye of a top R&D specialist at Sony who invites the kids to work with some of the best engineers and designers in the business to help the Forest Guards develop their concept into a workable prototype. Real-world experience at the forefront of technological design is contrasted with the everyday lives of the kids at home in Meadow Vista, a picture-perfect foothills community of rolling hills, farms, forests, and lakes. But during the worst summer in California history for fires, a major blaze rages dangerously close to their homes – many of them are forced to evacuate. With no sign that things will get any better in summers to come, it couldn't be a better time to raise awareness of forest fires and what we can do to prevent them.

As the first prototypes are tested near Tahoe National Forest, the Forest Guards are invited to the UN's Global Environmental Conference in Copenhagen to present their idea to global environmental and world leaders – and they become ambassadors for the innovations of young people in the ongoing dialogue about the future of our planet.

Learn about this project and how it could save the Lake Tahoe Basin from future forest fires.

Exploring Lake Tahoe

Presentation by Phil Caterino, Tahoe Divers Conservancy

Date: May 13

Time: 6:30pm no-host bar/door opens; 7pm program

Cost: \$10. No-Host Bar.

Location: Assembly Rooms 139 & 141, Tahoe Center for Environmental Sciences, 291 Country Club Drive, Incline Village, Nevada (on the campus of Sierra Nevada College)

When we are asked by tourists, "What do you see under there?" the most common response by divers with the Tahoe Divers Conservancy is "not much." Swimming among beautiful waves of granite boulders the size of houses, bright reflections of light from mica studded sandy lake bottom and a generally stark but surreal crystal environment. TDC often describes diving in Lake Tahoe as "Zen Diving". But today the underwater world of Lake Tahoe is disturbingly full of strange, new life.

In just a few years, vast sandy areas that for centuries covered the bottom of Lake Tahoe have disappeared under a carpet of invasive plants. The change is not merely cosmetic. Invasive species will upend the ecology of Lake Tahoe, shifting distribution of species and starving familiar fish of their usual food supply. Eurasian watermilfoil, Curlyleaf pondweed and the Asian clam are all found in Lake Tahoe now. It is not just invasive plants. In summer 2009 scores of brown bullhead catfish were found in Emerald Bay. Once confined to the Tahoe Keys and Taylor Marsh, non-native fish are propagating all over Lake Tahoe.

Phil Caterino has spent the last 40 years working to protect Lake Tahoe. He was the founder of Alpengroup, the Sierra Avalanche Center, the Nevada Conservation League, the Tahoe Divers Conservancy, and the Thunderbird Lodge Preservation Society. He is a strong advocate for grass-roots activism to engage the public in meaningful projects committed to the preservation of Lake Tahoe.

Program is presented by Squaw Valley Institute and UC Davis Tahoe Environmental Research Center.

Ex-owner of The Block wants to buy resort

Publisher's note: *Eneliko "Sean" Smith was managing partner of the now defunct Cedar Lodge and The Block hotels in South Lake Tahoe.*

By Art Bukowski, Record- Eagle

TRAVERSE CITY, Mich. – A Las Vegas entrepreneur who plans to buy Leelanau County's long-shuttered Sugar Loaf Resort faces multiple criminal charges in California, though he contends he's "not a crook."

Eneliko "Sean" Smith said he plans to spend about \$10 million to buy the resort and open at least a portion of it by July 4. But he faces felony grand theft and embezzlement charges in California's El Dorado County, and is the subject of numerous derisive Internet postings about past business endeavors.

On Monday, Smith said "everybody makes mistakes," and said he remains committed to the Sugar Loaf purchase.

Read the whole story

Skier visits to Tahoe resorts

exceed 5-year average

By Jeff DeLong, Reno Gazette-Journal

The Sierra ski season is winding to a close the same way it started – with plentiful snow and plentiful business.

Up to 7.5 million skier visits are expected this season, more than the five-year average of 7.4 million, according to the California Ski Industry Association, which represents 28 ski resorts in California and Nevada.



Crowds enjoy the sun at Northstar's mid-mountain lodge.

Photo/Kathryn Reed

While that's short of the record 8.2 million visits of 2004-2005, it surpasses the 6.7 million visits last year and represents significant progress as the country struggles out of recession, Bob Roberts, association executive director, said.

Read the whole story

Lake Tahoe ski report, April 6



Time to go see if there are any powder slashes on this bluebird day. Here is the ski report from Curtis Fong, the Guy from Tahoe.

Ritz at Northstar's temporary closing called normal

By Jason Hidalgo, Reno Gazette-Journal

Three months after opening, the Ritz-Carlton Highlands at Lake Tahoe will close for three weeks to get ready for the summer season.

The luxury hotel opened in December is scheduled to close April 19 and re-open May 10. The closure includes all services, such as the spa and the Manzanita restaurant.



The Ritz-Carlton at

Northstar is
closing
temporarily.
Photo/Kathryn
Reed

Hotel officials said the temporary closure has nothing to do with the situation at the Ritz-Carlton at Lake Las Vegas, which will close permanently in May.

Read the whole story

Report on BlueGo's efficiency expected Friday



By Kathryn Reed

South Shore transit officials expect to get a rundown Friday about how the public bus system is operating. Transit Resource Concepts took over the business side on an interim basis last month.

(South Tahoe Area Transit Authority's board meets April 9 at 1pm at the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency office at 128 Market St., Stateline).

TRC has been tasked with looking at MV Transit's records (they operate the BlueGo buses), financial records, structure of the organization and offer long-term visionary ideas to the board.

"What's missing and lacking and we're searching for is oversight," board member Stacy Dingman said. "We need a really

strong leader who can direct the board.”

The idea is an executive director will be brought in to run the bus system. Transit administrator John Andoh and STATA parted ways last month. The next leader will have more authority.

Dingman said Andoh was the right person at the time because he knew where buses should go and was able to help the system with scheduling. But in those two years, STATA realized it needs more than what Andoh could give. Andoh, before he left, said an executive director is what the agency needs.

“We need an executive director to tell us what to focus on. I really believe it is a really good problem to have. We realize we need help to make this work for our community,” Dingman said.

None of the board members is a transit expert.

Also on the agenda is a staff recommendation to award a bid to Avego to install a fleet management system. The \$150,000 for the hardware and software comes from the federal American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.

The system would be designed to locate where vehicles are and calculate the number of riders.

Dingman said in no way is this system anything like what was proposed early last decade when kiosks all over the area were supposed to assist riders with finding the nearest bus. That was a fiasco that never worked.