

Snow piling up; spring may return mid-week

By Kathryn Reed

Most schools in the Lake Tahoe Basin are closed or having a delayed start this morning after about a foot of snow fell overnight.

Besides residents shoveling and blowing out, ski resorts will be digging out too. Sierra-at-Tahoe is reporting about an inch of snow an hour in the last 24 hours. Squaw Valley says it has 14-18 inches of white stuff.



It might be
time to take
the RV south.
Photo/Kathryn
Reed

“Spring will try to peak its head out here in the middle of the week,” Rudy Cruz of the National Weather Service said this morning. “It’s not uncommon to produce this kind of snow in April. If it continues in May, it may be a bit unusual.”

Snow will be tapering off as the day goes on. The winter storm warning is in effect until 9am.

Expect Tuesday to be partly cloudy with highs between 35-45 degrees in the basin. Wednesday will be sunny with highs

between 48-58. It will then be partly cloudy Thursday and Friday. A chance of showers is possible on the weekend.

Expect the roads in and around Lake Tahoe to be slick today. Chain controls are a reality this morning.

If the back country is calling, know that the avalanche danger is “considerable” per the Sierra Avalanche Center.

Here is some school information:

- Lake Tahoe Unified School District – closed
- Douglas County schools at the lake – closed
- Lake Tahoe Community College – two-hour delay. The daycare is running normally.
- Incline Village schools – two-hour delay
- Sierra Nevada College – two-hour delay
- Tahoe Truckee Unified School District – open.

SLT city manager explains use of outside counsel



To the publisher,

As I mentioned I am writing to respond to your voice message.

As I mentioned, I was out of the area when you left your voicemail, and I am now back in the office. I appreciate you contacting me on this matter.

Let me address the questions you posed regarding legal assistance provided to Mr. [Bruce] Grego in early 2009 and give you a little background information. Early in 2009 issues arose regarding the eligibility to vote on matters relating to RDA Project Area No. 2 for Councilmember [Hal] Cole. New council members or returning former members need to be certain that they check to see if they have any conflicts of interests and this is done for all members. Sometimes an opinion is kept in-house with the city attorney.

For maximum protection however to all parties, an FPPC (Fair Political Practices Commission) opinion is sought because I understand that in a major conflict issue the opinion of the city attorney cannot save an elected official from fine etc if in fact a conflict of interest exists. For certainty, an FPPC opinion is sought. Sometimes outside legal counsel is sought because the legal expertise needed does not exist in-house or the city attorney is away from the office, etc.

Framing the question and providing the Fair Political Practices Commission [FPPC] all of the facts become an important component of getting a good answer from the FPPC.

1. Yes, an outside legal opinion was obtained from Richards, Watson & Gershon [RWG] on Feb. 2, 2010, for Councilmember Cole discussing his eligibility to vote on proposed Project Area No. 2. I approved seeking the opinion. Our practice was to ensure that members of the City Council did not fall unwittingly into a conflict of interest trap [creating liability for themselves and possibly voiding a vote on a city/RDA matter] by seeking expert legal advice.

2. At some point, the issue of Councilmember Grego's eligibility to vote came up in regard to the Chateau Project

because he represented the Lakeside Park Association. As you will recall, prior to the Chateau bankruptcy the developers were bringing forward a new interim financing plan that required a council vote. Staff needed a determination as to whether Mr. Grego could vote on a proposed financing for the project. As I recall, the city attorney was out of the country on vacation, and staff was preparing to seek an outside legal opinion in regard to the situation. When I alerted Mr. Grego to the fact that staff was seeking an outside legal opinion regarding his eligibility, he asked me if he could use the services of local attorney, and former City Attorney and STRA Agency Counsel Dennis Crabb. He said that he thought Mr. Crabb would have a better grasp of the factual situation involving his situation and framing the question for the FPPC.

3. Given Mr. Crabb's past experience as South Lake Tahoe's city attorney and agency counsel and his current work as city attorney in other cities, the request to use his services, upon reflection, was reasonable. Initially I was going to contract directly with Mr. Crabb for assistance. Mr. Grego said he would pay for the work performed by Mr. Crabb directly, and then decide whether to seek reimbursement. I told him the use of Mr. Crabb was reasonable to me under the circumstances and would in my opinion be an eligible city reimbursement request.

4. Before engaging the services of Mr. Crabb, Mr. Grego discussed the matter with me and asked if I thought it proper. I did and I also told him at the time that seeking reimbursement seemed proper to me.

5. The former city attorney reviewed the matter and thought the approval by my office was retroactive. It was not. Mr. Grego discussed using Mr. Crabb with me before he engaged his services. I believed the use of Mr. Crabb, a skilled and experienced municipal lawyer, was proper and told him that I thought reimbursement was appropriate if he later sought it.

6. It is reasonable in my view for the city to reimburse Mr. Grego for outside legal services in relationship to this matter based on the facts and circumstances as discussed here. Had Mr. Grego not needed a timely review by the FPPC, had the city attorney not been out of town, had the outside attorney not been one with vast municipal services, and had the attorney not been one who is most familiar with the facts and circumstances in this matter, I would not have approved reimbursement.

7. Prior to approving reimbursement to Mr. Grego a review of the matter was sought from the city attorney who approved payment and wrote a lengthy opinion in regard to the matter. The opinion is part of the public record and was provided to an interested member of the City Council along with backup upon inquiry to the Finance Department.

I hope this answers any questions you have. I am sorry I did not get back to you sooner.

Best wishes,

Dave Jinkens, South Lake Tahoe city manager

West Shore creek restoration project tops \$3 mil.

By Kathryn Reed

More than \$3 million has been allocated to help clean up the area that per acre dumps the most amount of sediment into Lake Tahoe.

Work on the West Shore's Lower Blackwood Creek will begin this

summer with vegetation enhancements.

The California Tahoe Conservancy board approved funding in March and the state Public Works board will vote on the matter this month.

“Primarily it’s an undeveloped watershed. Most of the sediment is from the stream channel,” Adam Lewandowski with the CTC said. “Much of the watershed was heavily grazed and logged until the 1970s.”

The upper part of the channel had been gravel mined at one time. The U.S. Forest Service has restored the upper creek area.

When the CTC project is done it will mean the entire Blackwood Creek channel will have been restored.

“There’s a huge plume of sediment from the creek going to Lake Tahoe. That’s what we are trying to reduce,” Lewandowski said.

At the Conservancy meeting, pictures of steep, eroding banks were shown. Riparian vegetation is missing. The abundance of sunlight hitting the water is not good for aquatic species when it comes to nutrients.

Engineered logjams will help redirect the flow of water away from the banks. A new bend in the channel will be put in.

The work will be in two phases. The first will be upstream of Highway 89, the second downstream.

In September the final design for the channel restoration should be done; in October bids will be sought; and from June-October 2011 the channel will be restored and trails will be rerouted.

V-Day performances on the South Shore

On April 16 (Spanish version) and April 23 (English version) at 7pm, V-Day Lake Tahoe will present a benefit reading of "A Memory, A Monologue, A Rant and A Prayer" at Opal inside of MontBleu Casino at Stateline.

This is the eighth year a V-Day event has been conducted in Lake Tahoe.

Local beneficiaries are Tahoe Youth & Family Services, El Dorado Court Appointed Special Advocates, and South Lake Tahoe Women's Center.

Last year more 4,200 V-Day benefits took place around the world raising funds and awareness toward ending violence against women. Since 1998, V-Day and these events have raised more than \$70 million for local beneficiaries working to end violence against women and girls.

Hopes for this year are to raise more than the \$4,000 from local 2009 events in Tahoe.

"A Memory, A Monologue, A Rant and A Prayer: Writings To Stop Violence Against Women and Girls" is a collection of monologues by world-renowned authors and playwrights, edited by Eve Ensler and Mollie Doyle.

For more information, call (775) 843.7142 or email nategoddess@yahoo.com. Tickets are \$15 in advance or \$20 at the door.

Multicultural writer to speak at LTCC

Lake Tahoe Community College Writers' Series and the Multicultural Committee present poet, playwright and editor Nathalie Handal on April 23 at 7pm in the LTCC Library in South Lake Tahoe.

The event is free and open to the community.

Handal is an award-winning poet, playwright, and writer. She has lived in Europe, United States, Caribbean, Latin America and Arab countries.

She is the author of the poetry collections "The NeverField, The Lives of Rain and Love and Strange Horses" (2010, University of Pittsburgh Press), and the poetry CDs "Traveling Rooms and Spell". She is also the editor of "The Poetry of Arab Women: A Contemporary Anthology" and co-editor of "Language for a New Century: Contemporary Poetry from the Middle East, Asia & Beyond" (W.W. Norton, 2008).

She has been involved either as a writer, director or producer in more than 20 theatrical and/or film productions worldwide.

Tahoe Rim Trail Association

events

Snowshoeing season is almost over but the trail hasn't melted out enough yet for hiking. What should you do? Beat the shoulder-season blues with the Tahoe Rim Trail Association's 2nd Annual April Speaker Series.

Find out about new backpacking and hiking gear, learn about the Tahoe Basin's geology and get the inside scoop on hiking the trail from start to finish in these three presentations.

April 12: "Latest and Greatest in Gear" by Dave Hess from REI. Hess will bring new backpacking and hiking gear to do a show and tell of what to get and give this year.

April 19: "Geology of the Lake Tahoe Basin" by Mark Vollmer. Vollmer is a free-lance photographer and writer and will give a presentation of the geology of the basin as seen from the Tahoe Rim Trail.

April 26: "Everything You Ever Wanted to Know About Hiking and Backpacking the Tahoe Rim Trail" by Mark Kimbrough and Tim Hauserman. These two will team up to divulge the secrets of the trail from where to get water to the best wildflowers and the easiest way to shuttle for day hikes.

All presentations are at the DWR Non-Profit Center from 6-7pm at 948 Incline Way, Incline Village.

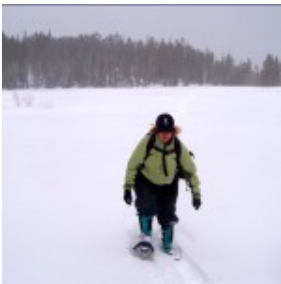
RSVP to programs@tahoerimtrail.org or call (775) 298.0012.

Foul weather dampens snowshoe trek to Round Lake

By Kathryn Reed

By April the word snow has taken on an unpleasant definition with me. The nice words for it are yuck and icky.

Still, I wasn't going to let the doldrums win. So out came the book "Snowshoe Routes Northern California" by Marc J. Soares. I didn't want to go any place I had been before and I didn't want to drive far.



Sue Wood
trudges
through Big
Meadow on a
snowy Easter.
Photos/Kathryn
Reed

We ended up picking the Big Meadow and Round Lake route. Sue and I had done this plenty of times as a hike on dirt, but never in the snow.

Parking is a little sketchy along Highway 89 headed up Luther Pass from South Lake Tahoe because the Big Meadow lot is not accessible with snow on the ground. Caltrans plows a couple cut outs, so it is do-able without the threat of being towed.

Even though we are familiar with the route to Round Lake as well as Dardanelles Lake, we wouldn't have done this had other people not already been there. In a different season everything looks unfamiliar. Plus, we were well aware of the forecasted storm for Easter Sunday. We didn't really want to become the story.

Immediately I knew the route the earlier snowshoers were leading us on was a bit suspect. Still, it finally seemed to track the route I had been on sans snow.

Normally, it's a bunch of switchbacks. This had sharp turns and then went straight up.



Scenery is stunning along this trail.

The book says you'll cross Big Meadow Creek. We never saw it or heard it. It's probably buried in all this snow or possibly frozen.

Boughs full of snow filled the looming conifers as though it were the middle of winter. Branches hung from the weight of the white stuff. A Tahoe Rim Trail marker barely peaked out at one point.

Trekking into the forest, the sun flitted in and out, casting shadows in a playful dance.

The trees protected us from the wind that whistled through the tight knit trees.

The worst part about the trail was the dog poop. As someone who used to hike with her dog, I understand the charm of an outing with the four-legged members of the family. But pick up after them in every season.



A bit of sun
dotes the trail
for Sue Wood.

We finally hit the expansive meadow. By then the snow had started to fly. And fly it did – in all directions except vertical. Waterhouse Peak was obscured by storm clouds settling in.

The start of the hike is at 7,237 feet. By the time we got back to the Jeep, it was snowing there as well.

At the edge of the meadow we lost the trail set by earlier shoers. Across we went, heads down as the wind whipped around us. Snow was picked up and spun like mini tornadoes. The sun was no longer anywhere to be found. The wind was howling, not whispering.

The book says to follow the edge of the meadow. The author says it can be wet as the snow begins to melt. I remember in summer walking straight across, so that's what we did. It was all good with so much snow.

With how exposed the meadow is, the sun is bound to dry this area out fast as the seasons change.



Big Meadow
does not look
inviting.

On the far side of the meadow there was no evidence anyone had been there before us. We called it a day. Foraging farther in search of a lake when a winter storm advisory for the afternoon had been issued was not something we were about to do.

It's definitely a route I'll try again, but next time it will be on a sunny day. Even though most Lake Tahoe ski resorts will close this month, the snowshoe season will last much longer.

Remembering a miracle worker in Nevada

Publisher's note: *This editorial is from the April 4, 2010, Reno Gazette-Journal.*

When the history of the long-running battles over the Truckee River is written, the late Marcia de Braga will get much of the credit for the agreement that finally brought peace to those troubled waters.

The five-term Democratic assemblywoman from Fallon died at

home on March 24. She was 72.

De Braga will be well-remembered as a legislator, a civic leader, a newspaper columnist and more, but her most important contribution to Northern Nevada may be her successful effort to bring all the interests together in 1999 to hammer out an agreement over future use of the water in the river that runs from Lake Tahoe to Pyramid Lake.

Read the whole story

Meeks Bay prescribed burn this week



Pending favorable conditions and resources, U.S. Forest Service fuels management crews expect to continue hazardous fuel reduction prescribed fire operations near Meeks Bay on April 5.

Residents and travelers can expect to see smoke from prescribed fire project areas.

This and other prescribed fire projects are designed to reduce wildfire risks to communities and critical resources. Smoke management is part of every prescribed fire burn plan, and efforts will be taken to reduce actual or potential smoke impacts on community areas.

Lake Tahoe ski report, April 4



The snow is too deep in Tahoe to find any Easter eggs buried on the slopes. You may find wind this afternoon as a storm rolls into the Lake Tahoe Basin. Here is the ski report from Curtis Fong, the Guy from Tahoe.