Protected habitat for endangered frog expands in Sierra

By Julie Cart, Los Angeles Times

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on Tuesday designated 1.6 million acres in California as critical habitat for the endangered red-legged frog, made famous by Mark Twain in his story, “The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County.”

The amphibian, once so plentiful that it was commonly featured on restaurant menus, eventually became endangered because of development encroaching on its habitat and the effects of pesticides and other chemicals.

The habitat area is divided into 50 units across 27 California counties, including six counties that previously did not have designated critical habitat and the effects of pesticides and other chemicals.

Read the whole story

Commissioners’ decision puts Stateline strip club on ice

By Kathryn Reed

Plans for a strip club in the old Bill’s Casino at Stateline was effectively killed by the Douglas County Commissioners on Thursday when on a 3-1 vote they agreed to grant an adult

business permit to a body paint company.

Douglas County Code 5.36.030 (E) says, “An adult characterized business shall not be located within 250 feet of another adult characterized business.”

“That provision means that there must be a 250-foot distance between the respective property lines of the businesses,” Douglas County Manager Michael Brown told *Lake Tahoe News*.

Less distance than that separates MontBleu and the old Bill’s site.

Brown said his interpretation of county code is that a strip club could not go into what was Bill’s.

Michael Laub, who bought the building for $5.22 million late last month, was not available for comment. His desire is to turn the facility into a strip club.

The only place zoned for a strip club at Stateline is in the casino corridor. However, to operate one the owner needs the adult entertainment license from the county.

When reached for comment the day after the meeting, Commissioner Nancy McDermid said she was not aware the board’s decision could preclude Laub from opening his desired business.

“I don’t know that that’s true. The sheriff’s department recommended approval of this license,” McDermid said of the body painting operation at Opal and Blu nightclubs. “In our meeting it was made very clear how this all came about in terms of MontBleu changing hands (last fall). Their people are the ones who called the county and asked if they needed any licensing and if they were in compliance. The District Attorney’s Office said, “No you are not.”

Students leave books behind to learn about Tahoe history

By Kathryn Reed

A place with super old items was a completely new experience to a group of third-graders.

“Everything in this museum was used by someone in South Lake Tahoe,” Bonnie Turnbull told the students. Turnbull looked like she was home at the museum, dressed in an outfit that would have been popular more than a century ago.



Bonnie Turnbull tells Tahoe Valley students about Snowshoe Thompson. Photos/Kathryn Reed

Remodeled a year ago, the Lake Tahoe Museum is the place to learn about local history. Because third-graders in California must be taught local history, the museum in now part of that process.

Turnbull explained how back in the days of Snowshoe Thompson skis were used as a mode of transportation and not for fun.

She touches on how the Washoe Indians first called Lake Tahoe home, talks about ranching, the Pony Express, water travel, old hotels, railroads and so much more.

Educating half the class outside was Jackie Dumin, who is assistant manager of the Tallac Site for the U.S. Forest Service.

Prior to the museum visit Dumin goes into classrooms to educate students. Outside the museum she was telling them about the 150-year-old Osgood Tollhouse, how money was collected to travel on roads in the Lake Tahoe Basin and what it was like to travel by horse and wagon.



Students learn about the Osgood Tollhouse at Lake Tahoe Museum.

A bathtub that was recently donated sits on the porch of the old cabin. Students learned about when indoor plumbing was not available and that bathing would be done outback. A couple students wrinkled their noses when Dumin said every family member used the same bath water.

Inside, one of the largest displays is from the Celio Ranch. This was Colby Glaze’s favorite part. He really liked learning

about making ice cream.

“I enjoyed looking at the saws and learning how they cut ice with them,”Glaze also said. Later the group learned about refrigeration and how those blocks of ice would be put in iceboxes, with the upper compartment for the ice and below where the perishables are stored.

He and his classmates in Kelly Martin’s class at Tahoe Valley Elementary School were at the museum Wednesday.

All third-graders in Lake Tahoe Unified School District will visit the museum by mid-April, with St. Theresa School going as well. The Tahoe Heritage Foundation paid to bus the students.

“I had never been to the museum and I don’t think any of the kids had,” Martin said.

For more information about the museum, call (530) 541.5458.

STPUD questions South Lake Tahoe’s redevelopment plans

Dear Valued South Tahoe Public Utility District Customer:

For the last two years, the city of South Lake Tahoe has been working to create a new redevelopment project area generally referred to as Redevelopment Area No. 2. The proposed plan

would create a new redevelopment area of approximately 1,300 acres within the city limits. The District applauds the City's efforts to stimulate economic development of what amounts to a very large portion of our community.

The redevelopment projects will be funded by future property tax transfers from the District and other taxing entities within the Redevelopment Area. This means a portion of the property taxes you pay to the District will be transferred to the City's Redevelopment Agency, and will not be available to support the District's water and wastewater systems.

After a presentation of the plan, by City staff, to the District Board of Directors and a careful analysis by District finance professionals, the District has concerns regarding the inherent loss of property tax revenue and how this loss of revenue might affect our customers. The District is afraid the growth projections made in the proposed plan are too optimistic, and that the reality may result in a financial impact on the District that is far more significant than projected by the City. In the event the District is correct, it could necessitate rate increases, increased borrowing, deferment of critical capital improvements to the water and wastewater systems, or decrease in levels of service.

The District is mindful that many of our customers and City taxpayers are one and the same. Further, the District does not wish to be viewed as an impediment to much needed revitalization of many properties within our community. However, in light of the above stated concerns, the staff and Board of Directors are convinced that it is imperative that our customers attend the Community Meeting and Joint Public Hearing the City is conducting and make their will known.

Community Meeting:

2pm and 6pm March 24

City Council Chambers, 1901 Airport Road, South Lake Tahoe

Joint Public Hearing

9am April 6

City Council Chambers, 1901 Airport Road, South Lake Tahoe

The District looks forward to your involvement as stakeholders in this community. Active participation by fellow community members will guide the members of the City Council as they make this important long-range decision. Should you be unable to attend either of these meetings, please consider submitting written comments to the City prior to April 6.

Sincerely,

Dale Rise, president Board of Directors

V&T Railroad chugging toward another season

The 2010 season for the Virginia & Truckee Railroad is rolling down the tracks toward its May 27 opening, with tickets available here. Round-trip and one-way rides between Carson City and Virginia City will run Thursdayâ€“Sunday through Oct. 31. With last summerâ€™s inaugural season a complete sell-out, getting all aboard now preserves a window to Old West history.

The V&T Railroadâ€™s 16 miles of track re-opened last August after 70 years. The 75-minute ride includes vistas of the Carson River and Sierra Nevada, two tunnels, abandoned mine shafts, old cemeteries and offers occasional sightings of wild mustangs.



V&T Railroad. Photo/Jim Grant

The V&T travels the same silver path paved by the Virginia City mines of the infamous 1860s Comstock silver boom.

A variety of ticket options and packages with lodging and dining are also available for riders.

Limited spring hours at Lake Tahoe Museum

Lake Tahoe Museum in South Lake Tahoe will be closed most of April.

It will be open April 2-3 from 11am-3pm.

It will be open every Friday and Saturday from 11am-3pm from April 30-May 30.

Exhibits are being mounted in preparation for the summer season.

For more information, call (530) 541l.5458.

Spring weather throughout Lake Tahoe matches the calendar

It may feel like record heat considering this is just the first day of spring, but the National Weather Service says it would take another 5 to 8 degrees to hit the record high.

Last Saturday after a fresh dump of snow overnight, Highway 89 was closed to vehicle traffic. This brought out carloads of snowshoers and walkers. It was one of those rare opportunities to walk on the highway with Cascade Lake on one side and Emerald Bay on the other.



Snowshoeing on Highway 89 near Emerald Bay on March 13. Photos/Kathryn Reed

Today is a completely different story with the mercury expected to be in the high 50s all weekend and the road open to vehicle traffic.

It’s one of those Lake Tahoe weekends to play in the snow in the morning, then golf or bike ride in the afternoon.

But it’s Tahoe, so keep the shovel nearby.

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Kings Beach affordable housing project gets green light

A major project to build affordable housing in Kings Beach took a giant step forward Tuesday when the Placer County Redevelopment Agency board approved a series of actions that will put together financing and development agreements for a joint project between the county and Domus Development.

The project, also known as the Kings Beach Scattered Sites Housing development, will build 77 units of rent-controlled housing at five locations in Kings Beach.

The Placer County Redevelopment Agency has been working with Domus for several years to put together the deal, which required the acquisition of several parcels in the north Lake Tahoe community, development of the plans for building the housing and getting the project through the complex regulatory approval process in the Tahoe basin. The project will remove 35 substandard residential units, mostly 1950s-era converted motel units and vacation cabins, and replace them with 77 modern, spacious units with full amenities and significant upgrades to landscaping, drainage, utilities and street improvements.

With the approval of these items, the Redevelopment Agency has contributed $7.9 million of the estimated $33 million project cost. RDA contributed the funds through a pre-development loan and property acquisition through funds provided through the North Lake Tahoe Redevelopment Project Area Housing Set-Aside and 2006 Housing Tax Allocation Bond proceeds.

The housing units will be rent controlled for 55 years. Domus Development will be submitting an application later this month for Federal Low Income Housing Tax Credits and, if that application is successful, the project is planned to break ground in August.

Environmental review was conducted on all the sites and was certified under the California Environmental Quality Act.

Anderson 3rd in slopestyle; Teter competes Saturday

By Bennington Banner

STRATTON – After a week filled with sunshine and pre-qualifying, the first set of medals were awarded at the Burton U.S. Open on Friday.

Mikkel Bang of Norway threw down a massive run to win the menâ€™s slopestyle competition, while Sina Candrian of Switzerland took the womenâ€™s event to kickstart the hardware portion of the 28th annual Open at Stratton Mountain.

Bang finished with 98 points and was followed by countryman Ulrik Badertscher (93.67). Canadian Sebastien Toutant narrowly missed the silver with a 93.33 for third place on a day when

the temperatures hovered above 60 degrees.

Read the whole story

North Shore Earth Day celebration

The 2010 Tahoe Truckee Earth Day Festival is slated for April 24 from 11amâ€“5pm at the Village at Squaw Valley. This all-ages, community sponsored event gives participants an opportunity to learn about recycling/composting, alternative energy, sustainability, watershed and forest health, and reducing ecological footprints via a diverse array of agency representatives and earth-friendly vendors. It is the largest eco-event in the North Lake Tahoe-Truckee area. More than 6,000 people attended in 2009.

Earth Day is a Zero Waste event. Typical trash receptacles will not be available in an effort to drastically minimize waste. Booth participants are requested to minimize handouts and implement other forms of waste reduction. All food vendors will be using biodegradable take-out containers made of either paper or PLA, a high tech starch-based plastic. Food and biodegradable waste will be collected and composted by Full Circle Compost in Minden.

In addition to Saturdayâ€™s festivities, there is an entire week of events scheduled to celebrate Earth Day.

www.tahoetruckeeearthday.org