Flooding possible in Lake Tahoe Basin



Streets in South Lake Tahoe are flooding a bit after a whole day of rain Feb. 8. Photos/Susan Wood

The National Weather Service in Reno has issued a flood watch for portions of California and Western Nevada, including the Lake Tahoe Basin and Alpine County from 4pm Saturday through Sunday afternoon.

Some streets in South Lake have standing water, trees are down and drains are clogged. The city is keeping an eye on the situation to determine if more employees need to be called in.

South Lake Tahoe has sand, bags and shovels at the Rufus Allen Boulevard yard through the back gate. Staff will be at the site to help. Truckee also has sand bags available for residents.



Pent up winter took its toll on the flag at American Oil gas station in South Tahoe.

Minor flooding is possible on all small streams in the affected areas. The heavy rain may also trigger rock and mud slides.

The National Weather Service said Bear Creek near Alpine Meadows might have minor flooding. The bike path along the Truckee River between the River Ranch and Tahoe City may flood. Basements and yards of some low-lying homes along the river may also begin to flood.

Small creeks and streams are the most susceptible to flooding.

Snow levels will remain at about 8,500 feet into Sunday morning before slowly falling. However, ski resorts below that elevation are reporting it’s been snowing all day. While it’s raining in South Lake Tahoe, it was changing to snow at Stateline at 3:45pm.

A winter storm warning has been issued by the NWS in Reno for the 24-hour period starting 4am Feb. 9. Expect 1-4 inches at lake level, 1-2 feet above 7,000 feet.

The U.S. Forest Service has issued an avalanche warning for the backcountry through 7am Sunday. The area covered is between Yuba Pass and Ebbetts Pass.

– Lake Tahoe News report

Drought exposes more dangers of illegal bridge jumping

By KCRA-TV

Jerry and Robyn Trudeau of Carmichael walked under the Salmon Falls Bridge in El Dorado County in disbelief Wednesday.

“It’s really unbelievable,” Robyn Trudeau said. “So many have jumped off this bridge as teenagers.”

Her husband was one of them.

But one look at the lack of water flowing under the bridge and the Trudeaus remarked how no one would think of doing that now.

Read the whole story

EID asking customers to cut use by 30%

The El Dorado Irrigation District board this week declared a State 2 drought warning.

This means customers are being asked to reduce water consumption by 30 percent.

At the March meeting the board will consider a drought surcharge. Also at that meeting the board is expected to discuss whether the voluntary restrictions should be mandatory.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Sleepy workers impacting gross domestic product

By Sendhill Mullainathan, New York Times

The problem is very simple: Many of us need more sleep.

Here’s an alarming statistic: A survey by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found that one in 25 people admitted to having fallen asleep while driving during the previous month. To put that in perspective, mathematical models based on this data imply that an estimated 15 to 33 percent of all fatal crashes in the United States might involve a drowsy driver. But even that may be an

underestimate, as some people who fall asleep at the wheel may be sheepish about acknowledging as much in a survey.

What does sleep have to do with economics? Doesn't it sit squarely in the realm of physiology?

First, the economic consequences of inadequate sleep are surely huge. There may be more sleepy workers than drivers. In one month in 2008, a poll showed that 29 percent of workers had fallen asleep or had been very sleepy at work. The effects can add up: one study in Australia calculated the cost of sleeplessness at 0.8 percent of the country's gross domestic product.

Read the whole story

Snippets about Lake Tahoe



• Hot Springs Spas recognized HotSpring Spas Carson City–Lake Tahoe as a 2013 Territory Dealer of the Year. The territory includes Northern and Central California, Nevada and Hawaii.

• The Tahoe Donner Association Nordic Center application is scheduled to be reviewed by the Truckee Planning Commission at a special hearing on March 4 starting at 6pm.

• The KT-22 Banzai at Squaw Valley for the Rahlves' Banzai Tour event on Feb 15-16 was canceled and rescheduled for March 1-2.

• New Orleans's Clone Attack will play for free Feb. 15 at 7:30pm at Park Hotel's CoffeePub in South Lake Tahoe.

• Kayla Anderson is now marketing manager of Diamond Peak Ski Resort and the Incline Village General Improvement District.

U.S. takes gold in men's slopestyle; Guldemond 15th

By USSA

ROSA KHOTUR, Russia – Sage Kotsenburg (Park City) scored a historic victory to open the 2014 Olympic Winter Games, winning the inaugural slopestyle snowboarding gold medal.

Kotsenburg, who failed to qualify in Thursdsay's opening rounds, made his way into the finals Saturday morning then put down a remarkable first run which held for the win.

Norway's Staale Sandbech earned silver, with Canadian favorite Mark McMorris taking bronze.

Team USA athletes Ryan Stassel (Anchorage) and Chas Guldemond (Reno) did not advance to the final and finished 14 and 15, respectively.

Kotsenburg showed the sportsmanship and camaraderie of snowboarding when he pulled his friends Sandbech and McMorris up onto the top of the podium with him during the medals presentation.

Kotsenburg's gold medal winning run: Cab 270 to switch, half-cab on back 540 off flat down, half-cab layback slide off the cannon back 180 out, cab double cork 1260 holy crail, frontside 1080 off the toes rocket air and backside 1620

Japan.

Out of this world service, amenities at Constellation property in Truckee



Constellation residences, which are full ownership, come completely furnished. Photos/Provided

By Susan Wood

TRUCKEE – Kate Wormington knew she bought into the right ski resort housing venture when she surrendered part of this season to nursing a knee injury – and it wasn't from skiing.

The San Carlos woman recently came up to her four-bedroom, ski-in, ski-out abode that is attached to the Ritz-Carlton Lake Tahoe at Northstar's mid-mountain lamenting her running injury. The staff listened. Without a request, an employee working at the Constellation Residences owned by JMA Ventures and managed by Vail Resorts' RockResorts' hospitality division delivered a surprise – popcorn, hot chocolate and a movie.

"I didn't even ask," she told *Lake Tahoe News*.

The perfection of the place was also confirmed one day when her family of four was whisked away by a snowcat driver who happened to pull up to ask if they wanted to go on a joy ride. They jumped in and had a blast.

Wormington, her husband and two children also have spent many hours watching the mountain bikers roll down Northstar's ambitious park, walking their Bernese mountain dog on the mountain and stargazing out the window.

And this year, it's increasingly obvious how a family may overcome a lackluster snow winter season. The ski-in, ski-out complex has a snow gun situated next to the building on a bunny run leading down to the Big Easy chairlift.



The Constellation, right, is attached to the Ritz-Carlton at Northstar via a walkway.

"A lot of people talk about how terrible the season is because

of the snow this year – but ask a mom. The ski school groomers are ideal, and the snowmaking at Northstar is fantastic," Wormington said, acknowledging the most prominent silver lining for the dry winter season. This is the best time to learn how to ski or hone your children's skills. The days are sunny, and the crowds are less.

While her 9-year-old daughter has all but passed her up in ability, her 4-year-old son still could use a little work just based on his age. In the summer, he's also enamored with catching a trout at Northstar's reservoir that is used to make all that snow when Mother Nature doesn't deliver.

"My kids have never skied anywhere else. And we never felt the need to take them anywhere else," Wormington said, albeit further admitting she and her husband have traveled and skied all over. "When it came to Northstar, it's such a cool atmosphere for kids."

There are other choices in housing or hotel stays around Northstar – at the village, in the surrounding neighborhoods served by bus or even near Martis Valley with the 3-year-old Martis Camp, luxury homes built by DMB Development.

"They're beautiful homes and way more expensive, but kids can't get down to the place. My 4-year-old can't make it," she said. The Martis chairlift off Lookout Mountain serves five black diamond runs. The one blue run, Washoe, is even "tricky" for him, she added.

The Wormingtons briefly thought about housing options at the Northstar Village but believed it was a little too noisy to live or stay in.

"I don't want a club scene. I want a community," Wormington said. "If we want a vibrant scene, we'll take the gondola down," she said. A gondola is located outside the two adjacent properties. "And I like that there's a certain sense of decorum here at mid-mountain." She finds that staff watches

out for her kids when they're out and about.

They considered housing sold through the Ritz-Carlton Destination Club but didn't like the fractional ownership idea.

"We would wonder what weeks we would get," she said.

With JMA Ventures at the helm, the Wormingtons believe they got the best of all worlds. They brought in their own furniture, which is optional but not common, and turned one of their bedrooms into a bunkroom to accommodate six kids. Everything is there, so when they drive up from the Bay Area, they bring half a suitcase and a cooler and park the car until they leave. The Wormington family is a big hit with friends, too, hosting 20 families since buying Labor Day 2012.

Last November, JMA – which owns Homewood Mountain Resort and expects to break ground in 2015 with an ambitious master plan for the West Shore resort – upped the stakes at Northstar by bringing RockResorts on board as the manager to its Constellation Residences. The Vail Resorts subsidiary specializes in "casually-elegant accommodations," so Constellation was right up its alley.

Starting at $1.3 million, the residences come with the amenities of the Ritz-Carlton, which is attached by a sky bridge, so owners could saunter through the properties with their slippers on.

Wormington declared the RockResorts-JMA team "takes better care of us than even the Ritz." Of course, access to all those Ritz amenities like the year-round heated pool, 1,700-square-foot spa and fitness center as well as ski valet and three dining outlets such as its signature Manzanita restaurant add to the ambiance. There are even grocery runs and in-room dining service provided at Constellation.

The residences are loaded

Built in 2008 to sell, the 1,800-square-foot residences are equipped with LCD televisions, wireless Internet, gas fireplaces, patio furniture, washers and dryers, central heating and air conditioning, a wine refrigerator, heated marble floors and jetted tubs in the master bathroom – among other things. The craftsmanship is meticulous, and the floor plan is ideal for those wanting a little space in their bedroom wing. Outside storage for larger toys is available.

Then there's the no-holds-barred service to answer every whim. Units the owners have rented out have hosted wedding parties and many special occasions.

"You know, we bought it for the layout, and the Ritz amenities are super, but we found out later how amazing the Constellation staff is. We've stayed all over the world, but the customer service is best here," Wormington said.



Northstar's slopes are out the back door. Ski valet is provided as well as an area to warm boots.

And Constellation sales specialist Brit Crezee said more ideas are in the works to beef up the service and amenities such as beach shuttles in summer. Prospective buyers have responded. While 11 units fall under the fractional Ritz Destination Club realm, only five of the 17 Constellation housing units in the first phase are left. The second phase of Constellation is expected to be available for purchase in about a year. JMA Ventures expects to begin building those 50 units in 2015.

Crezee isn’t surprised by the demand. Beyond the obvious San Francisco Bay Area market, she’s had buyers from Boulder, Colo., and San Diego.

“At 6am, they can be on a flight (to Reno), and be on the slopes by 9,” she said of Southern Californians.

Crezee has seen all types of buyers and renters – but all seem to share one common denominator.

“People want the Ritz experience, but want more convenience and to have the room to spread out,” she said. “There’s really nothing like this in Tahoe or North America.”

Indeed, the Constellation Residences represent the positive “perfect storm” of ski resort housing for those who can afford it.

First, the Ritz-Carlton Lake Tahoe is the only 5-diamond resort in the Tahoe area and for good reason. It lives up to its brand name in a mid-mountain environment.

And Vail has made a significant investment since buying Northstar from Booth Creek Holdings a few years ago.

“They know the demographic and know what to do to make people happy,” Crezee said.

Vail’s subsidiary RockResorts is a leading vacation-rental and whole-ownership hospitality company with luxury resorts maintained and managed from Colorado to Jamaica’s renowned plantation-influenced Half Moon property in Rose Hall, which is celebrating 60 years in 2015. Vail has been the sole owner of RockResorts since 2005. Laurance Rockefeller started it.

Interestingly enough, the city of South Lake Tahoe had a shot at RockResorts to run the hotel of the convention center project before the developer of the Chateau at Heavenly Village went bankrupt due to financing issues. RockResorts long ago terminated marketing license and technical services

agreements associated with the project.

Vail Resorts Hospitality Chief Operating Officer James O'Donnell declined to comment on previous "business dealings" such as the aforementioned negotiation, but as the ski resort company runs Heavenly Mountain Resort across the street he took the high road in saying Vail "has a keen interest in seeing someone being successful with development there."

Vail Resorts Hospitality still made its mark in the South Shore market by recently buying the Accommodation Station when long-time vacation rental owner Greta Hambsh retired. The Vail company changed the name to Lake Tahoe Lodging Co., which manages 70 vacation rentals and nearly 200 long-term seasonal rentals.

The Constellation project represents a shift in focus to grow lodging properties at the base of ski resorts. Nonetheless, Vail's focus on the year-round business through RockResorts' offerings is expected to lean toward enhancing the activities of summer.

"This is a unique opportunity to demonstrate our commitment to enhancing the entire guest experience. We couldn't have been more excited," said Ashley Lowe, the senior spokeswoman for the hospitality and real estate division of Vail Resorts Management Company.

It's all about relationships

No one could be in more agreement with the RockResorts' line of thinking than Todd Chapman, chief executive officer of JMA Ventures, a company he has helped run for 13 years with his father, Art.

Chapman pointed out to *Lake Tahoe News* that he has a professional and personal interest in Constellation Residences at Northstar.

“The partnership is the driving force behind the relationship. We have a well-located product. RockResorts – Vail’s hospitality arm – saw this opportunity as unprecedented access to the mountain that no one else can deliver,” Chapman said. “It’s obvious that when we look at investment opportunities, we look at the interest level of others to them.”

But it’s not all about business and coinciding partnerships to Chapman. He walks the talk. Chapman bought into the housing complex and relishes his time there to “unplug” from the pressures of modern life with his family consisting of his children, ages 6, 8 and 9.

“This is the best time to enjoy our family. We drive up from the Bay Area, park the car, and we don’t touch the car until we leave for the weekend,” he said. “My kids can sleep in until 8 and be on the mountain by 8:45. We value (that time),” he said.

However, he did admit to being a little surprised by the interest level this year with the dry winter conditions.

“Based on the snow, this says a lot about the commitment folks have to the alpine life,” Chapman said.

Letter: $200 parking tickets in South Lake Tahoe

To the community,

At a time when many locals are struggling to make ends meet and tourists are in short supply, a change to the parking

rules have caught some by surprise in the form of a $200 parking ticket.



Last summer the entire City Council with the exception of JoAnn Conner voted in favor of Ordinance 1055 that changed the definition of "no parking on street including shoulders during snow removal operations" to read "city streets and street right-of-way be kept clear of snow and other obstructions (automobiles) during the snow season, which is defined as from N. 1 to April 30 of each year." This means that large parts of the city, where it is legal to park in the summer months, have been made into no parking zones punishable by a $200 fine for six months out of the year, regardless of snow removal conditions.

As we all know, parking in South Lake Tahoe is a limited commodity. Many homes have no usable driveway. Access to many of the local trails require street parking. Some schools and public buildings have only enough parking to handle staff, and some business rely on street parking for their customers. It is common sense that street parking should be restricted during the snow removal process but simply restricting parking for half of the year makes no sense at all.

Additionally, there is no requirement in the new ordinance to update signage to reflect the new rules. The signs currently reflect the old ordinance, "no parking during snow removal operations." There is nothing to indicate to the public that they could receive a $200 parking ticket if they park on these streets at any time from Nov. 1 to April 30.

I do not know why it was deemed necessary to make this change to the parking ordinance. But I find it interesting that at a time when the city has expanded its parking enforcement there is a changing of the rules resulting in a substantial fine and the ability for the City to wright more tickets. If you have been affected by this new ordnance or simply do not like idea

of not being able to legally park on City streets and right-of-way six months out of the year, please contact your city councilmember or the city manager.

Here is the link to the wording of ordinance 1055.

Mike Keck, South Lake Tahoe

Fresh Tracks snowshoe event at Camp Rich

The Tahoe Mountain Milers Running Club is hosting the Fresh Tracks 5K Snowshoe Walk and Race on Feb. 23 at 10am at Camp Richardson Resort.

The beneficiaries are the Eric Nageotte-Lowe Scholarship Fund for the Heavenly Freestyle Team and Girls On The Run-Sierras.

More info is online.

Cost is $20 if registered by Feb. 15 or $30 after that or at the event. Fee includes choice of swag, snowshoe rental, post-race refreshments, and continued day use of groomed Camp Richardson trails. Register online.

Truckee has sand bags available for residents

Due to the forecasted unsettled weather, Truckee Department of Public Works has made sand bags, sand and shovels available for public use.

A truck with sand has been stationed at Truckee Fire Station 92, located at 11473 Donner Pass Road (near the high school).

Sand bags and shovels are also available at the Public Works Public Service Center located at 10969 Stevens Lane.

For further information, call (530) 582.7707.