South Tahoe may ban plastic bags



Canvas-nylon bags are growing in popularity.

By Kathryn Reed

Paper or plastic? One day that question may not be allowed to be asked in South Lake Tahoe.

The cityâ€™s Sustainability Commission is developing a survey to send to business owners to find out how banning plastic bags in the city would impact them.

The board is leaning toward creating incentives for businesses to voluntarily stop using them instead of dictating policy. Incentives may include creating a consortium to buy more environmentally friendly bags for customers. To do so in bulk would cut the expense dramatically.

The commission intends to work with the Lake Tahoe South Shore Chamber of Commerce through its green team.

Jeff Tillman of South Tahoe Refuse is a non-voting member on the local commission. He said at this monthâ€™s meeting, â€œItâ€™s going to be up to the consumer and what type of habits they want to have. Itâ€™s no different than the blue

bags we have now (for recycling).â€

The amount of petroleum used to create plastic bags is one of the major arguments for ridding the world of them. When they finally decompose after about 1,000 years, the bags leach contaminants into the soil.

Plastic bags that end up blowing along roadways and in the water pose a hazard to birds and marine life.

But they are cheap â€“ about a penny to make. This compares to the nickel it costs to create a paper bag and the dime for compostable bags.

Many stores in Tahoe and elsewhere offer people the opportunity to buy canvas or nylon, reusable bags. South Tahoe with some partners developed such a bag that was a focal point of the 2008 annual Environmental Summit.

Simply switching to paper bags is not the best environmental decision because, according to the Environmental Protection Agency, creating paper compared to plastic bags causes 70 percent more air pollution and 50 times more water pollutants.

This is why reusable bags are all the rage.

Commissioners in November expect to approve the survey and have a plan for distributing it.

Dems to honor Ames with lifetime achievement award

South Lake Tahoeâ€™s Laurel Ames has won the Jerome Waldie Lifetime Achievement award.

This is the inaugural year for the El Dorado County Democratic Party to award Volunteer Awards.

Ames is well known in the environmental community. In addition to co-founding the Sierra Nevada Alliance, she is a former executive director of the League to Save Lake Tahoe.

Receiving the Democratic Spirit Award is Kathy McCoy. The Community Steward Award goes to Barbara Smiley.

The recipients will be honored at the inaugural Jefferson Jackson Dinner in memory of Jerome Waldie on Oct. 24. Waldie, who died earlier this year, had been a California lawmaker, congressman and member of the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency for 16 years.

For more information about the dinner, call (916) 941.9910.

Washoe deputies cite business for selling booze to a minor

Washoe County sheriff's deputies conducted compliance checks of establishments in the Incline Village and South Reno areas on Oct. 10, and cited one business for selling alcohol to a minor.

Deputies sent an underage person into 11 businesses to attempt to purchase alcohol. The businesses included four bar/restaurants, one liquor store and six convenience stores. Staff at 10 of the 11 businesses asked for identification and declined the sale. One business, a convenience store, completed the sale and was cited for non-compliance.

Washoe County Sheriff Mike Haley reminds parents and

businesses it is a crime to supply alcohol to minors. Juvenile drinking increases the possibility of traffic accidents, injuries and deaths, and these tragedies are preventable, deputies said.

LTWC returns bald eagle to wild



A bald eagle is released Sunday near Carson Pass. Photo/ DanThriftPhotography.com

By Kathryn Reed

HOPE VALLEY â€“ Seconds after she flew from the arms of Wayne McKnight, the young bald eagle was tested when two other raptors raced toward her.

Holding her own, she dove, darted and averted harm. All three bald eagles landed in trees by Red Lake as a crowd of people above them on Highway 88 watched the spectacle.

â€œThatâ€™s a first,â€ said Tom Millham, who with his wife, Cheryl, runs Lake Tahoe Wildlife Care on the outskirts of South Lake Tahoe.

His guess is the other eagles may have been showing the rehabbed bird that this was their territory.

The female eagle was about 4 months old when she arrived at LTWC in the summer. It had fallen out of a nest near Lake Almanor. The nest was so high a tree trimmer could not reach it.

The eagle at 12 pounds is a little heavier than most 8 month olds would be â€“ usually they are 8 to 10 pounds.

â€œSheâ€™ll fly and lose some of that baby fat,â€ Millham said.

Trout caught by Lake Tahoe fishermen is what was fed to the eagles, and remaining bear cubs and river otters.

For the last three weeks members of LTWCâ€™s eagle team have been exercising the bird in preparation for Sundayâ€™s release along the Carson Pass.

This location is used because no matter what direction they take off there is plenty of food â€“ primarily fish. To the east are the Smith and Carson valleys, north is Tahoe, west is the San Joaquin Valley, and Bear Valley is to the south.

LTWC let another baldy go at this location in July. The third bald eagle it had been carrying for was put down because its wing didnâ€™t heal and therefore the animal could not survive in the wild.

LT Wildlife Care is all about returning animals to the wild.

McKnight helped with the release of a golden eagle a few years ago, but this was his first experience helping with a bald eagle.

He and Millham entered the birdâ€™s cage about 2:30pm. The magnificent animal with its massive wingspan landed on McKnightâ€™s heavily gloved forearms. Her eyes and beak were covered for the ride up to her release point.

She is a talker â€“ but a calm bird, according to her handlers.

â€œItâ€™s respect for the bird that keeps me going,â€ McKnight said.

McKnight looked like a proud dad letting an offspring into the world.

â€œSee how well she flew,â€ Millham said â€“ another proud â€œfather.â€



Wayne McKnight takes the eagle from Lake Tahoe Wildlife Care.Â Â Â Â Photo/Kathryn Reed



Wayne McKnight and Tom Millham prepare for the release. Photo/Kathryn Reed

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Lahontan water board meets in SLT this week

Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board will conduct a public hearing Oct. 14 to review the Water Quality Control Plan for the Lahontan Region.

The Basin Plan includes water quality standards and control measures for surface and ground waters within watersheds east of the Sierra Nevada crest and in the northern Mojave Desert. The Triennial Review process meets state and federal requirements for periodic review and update of Basin Plans. Staff-recommended topics for plan revisions range from an editorial update of the entire plan to revisions of standards for specific water bodies. Public comments are invited on these and any other issues that should be addressed in future plan amendments.

Following the public hearing, the board will consider adopting a prioritized issues list to direct planning efforts for the next three years. Adoption of the Triennial Review list does not necessarily mean the board will adopt subsequent revisions to the Basin Plan. Water Board staff will investigate issues and propose plan amendments for Water Board consideration at

future public hearings.

The public hearing will be during the Water Board’s regular meeting.

Date: Oct. 14 and 15; the public hearing will not begin earlier than 7:30pm Oct. 14.

Place: Lake Tahoe Community College, Aspen Room, One College Drive, South Lake Tahoe.

Living Voices at Edgewood Oct. 14

Living Voices uses a unique combination of theater, video and live interaction to create a high impact experience allowing audiences to discover history’s relevance to their lives.

The Oct. 14 5:30pm performance at Edgewood Tahoe in Stateline is sponsored by Robert and Annetta Chester.

Donations support Tahoe Arts Project.

This program is presented by Tahoe Arts Project in conjunction with Arts Expo Lake Tahoe.

(530) 542.3632

http://www.livingvoices.org/natvis/natvis.html

Educator touts benefits of preschool

By Vicki Barber

Helping children succeed in school and life is the primary focus of education. We are blessed in El Dorado County to have a K-12 system with high academic standards and safe learning environments where our children can and do excel.

Of the many factors which contribute to school success, a quality preschool experience builds early reading and math skills, and strong early learning foundations. Preschool exposes children to a language-rich environment that increases cognitive development and love of learning. It also provides the opportunity to learn the social and self-regulatory skills essential to peer relationships and classroom success.

In todayâ€™s tough economic times, some families may think they need to go without a preschool experience because of challenged family budgets. Families in this situation may not be aware that a child with unemployed parents is qualified for Head Start and State Preschool programs which are offered throughout the county in public school and private preschool settings. As an example, a family of four with monthly income of $4,188 is still eligible for free state preschool. Families qualify at the time of enrollment, and then, no matter what their changing circumstances, they remain eligible for the program for entire program year.

Studies show that the academic and social skills learned in preschool improve student achievement, lead to increased graduation rates, and as well as increased potential for college attendance. I urge all of our El Dorado County families to support our youngest learners and find a preschool experience for their children which fits their family needs.

For families wanting more information about finding a preschool opportunity for their child, they can call any of the following numbers:

Choices for Children â€“ (530) 676.0707

El Dorado County Office of Education â€“ (530) 295.2307

Happy Kids Preschool and Child Care Center â€“ (530) 676.2223

A Circle of Friends â€“ (530) 622.5437

Cool Care â€“ (530) 889.1119

Pinetop Montessori â€“ (530) 644.4373.

Vicki Barber is superintendent of El Dorado County Office of Education.

Tahoe residents score at bodybuilding championships



Cassandra Chandler

Cassandra Chandler placed first in the 45+ division and second in Class A at the San Francisco Bodybuilding & Figure Championships.

The Incline Village resident who is a trainer at Push Fitness in South Lake Tahoe competed this weekend in the figure and

bikini component of the competition.

Chris Minnes of South Tahoe placed second in the Novice Light Heavyweight division.

It seemed touch and go whether he would weigh-in at the appropriate weight. The scales said 196. In his rather radical diet the last week he lost 20 pounds in 72 hours.

Alexander Huxtable, also of South Tahoe, places 12th in the Novice Middleweight category.

Trail fills senses with changing seasons



Lake Tahoe from the ridge above Granite Lake. Photo/Kathryn Reed

By Kathryn Reed

Water â€“ it is everywhere.

Lake Tahoe, Emerald Bay, Cascade Lake, Fallen Leaf Lake, Granite Lake, Eagle Lake. They are part of the scenery in a short, though somewhat steep hike from the Bay View trailhead.

The senses come alive. Deep breaths reveal fall is in the air â€“ that distinct smell of wet, decaying leaves.

Bright colors dot some of the leaves, while others are brown from the freeze a week earlier. Ferns are matted down. What looks like dead dill has a faint hint of the herb â€“ thought maybe itâ€™s an illusion.

Another bluebird day in Lake Tahoe. Not a cloud to be seen. The sun twinkles across Granite Lake â€“ a small, clear alpine spot that on a hot summer day may make for a good swimming hole.

This Desolation Wilderness lake is aptly named â€“ Granite.

The route that starts near Emerald Bay along Highway 89 is steep to begin with. Clearly, cardio is something I need to work on at the gym. Then the trail levels out a bit more.

It takes longer than it should to reach the lake and then the ridge farther up. The camera is out. And back out again. But no picture can truly capture the majestic wonder of Mother Nature.

One spot along the trail has turned to ice. Snow patches are spotty. Mostly itâ€™s loose dirt.

Reaching the ridge, where the wind blows enough to put the long-sleeve shirt back on, the vastness of Desolation Wilderness unfolds. The granite seemingly goes on forever.

Had we gone farther, a right turn would have dropped us down to Eagle Lake with an exit point that would have required a short trek along the highway. Going straight would have taken us to Fontanillis Lake.

We did a U-turn â€“ needing to get on with our Sunday afternoon activities.

Kokanees annual ritual up Taylor Creek



Kokanee fill Taylor Creek. Photo/Kathryn Reed

Each fall the kokanee salmon travel up Taylor Creek near South Lake Tahoe to spawn. The annual ritual means the fish change color, spawn and eventually die. The US Forest Service visitor center at Taylor Creek explains the whole process in detail. The fish are only around for a short time.