Ski resort tries to curtail evaporation from snowmaking reservoir

By Sandra Emerson, Inland Valley Daily Bulletin

Ron Ellingson will be watching the Mt. Baldy reservoir closely this ski season. The 10-million-gallon reservoir is used to make snow during the ski season and like any body of water, succumbs to evaporation, but for Ellingson, president of Mt. Baldy Ski Lifts Inc., the evaporation means higher costs and less snow for skiers.



Ron Ellingson, president of Mt. Baldy, is using hollow plastic conservation balls on his snowmaking reservoir. Photo/Provided

So, to keep costs down and provide more snow to visitors, Ellingson contracted with Glendora-based manufacturer XavierC LLC, to install hollow plastic conservation balls to reduce the evaporation.

The balls are 4 inches in diameter and float along the top of the reservoir to reduce evaporation by up to 90 percent.

As the water level rises and lowers, the balls adjust by

piling on top of each other or by spreading out across the surface.

Read the whole story

Snippets about Lake Tahoe



• You Knew Me When will be at the Himmel Haus in South Lake Tahoe on Jan. 25 at 3:30pm. No cover.

• Tahoe City Winter Sports Park is having a Nordic relay on New Year's Day starting at 9:30am. Cost is $5 for teams of two. Registration opens at 8:30am. For more info, call (530) 583.1516.

• To say thanks to the communities of Crystal Bay and Incline Village, Diamond Peak will offer free skiing Jan. 5-10 to residents with a current IVGID picture pass or punch card.

• Tahoe Choir and Lake Tahoe Community College Chorus are looking for people to participate in the new season of singing Gershwin and Porter show tunes. The first rehearsal is Jan. 7 at 7pm in Room 120 in the Duke Theatre building at Lake Tahoe Community College. For more info, call (530) 577.6404.

• Have you filled our your *Lake Tahoe News* paid subscriber form?

CalFire worried about early fire season

By Dave Marquis, News 10

CalFire, the largest firefighting agency in the world, is cautioning that without enough winter rain and snow an intense, dangerous fire season could start as early as April.

“In my 27 years of doing this, I’ve never seen, this far north, fires continue to occur through the winter,” said CalFire Battalion Chief Fred Lopez at his station along Cook Riolo Road in western Placer County.

In Big Sur on the California coast, flames burned homes and property in an unusual late-season fire in mid-December.

The problem in the spring, Lopez said, is that without enough precipitation, heavier fuels that burn longer and hotter, will become dangerously dry.

Read the whole story

Eldorado closes forest roads

Dirt roads in Eldorado National Forest will be closed for the season starting Jan. 1.

They will remain closed until at least April 1.

Roads subject to the seasonal closure are identified on a

free-of-charge map that is available at all Eldorado National Forest offices or online.

The seasonal closure is designed to protect roadbeds and watersheds from damage and to safeguard water quality.

The seasonal closure does not affect routes in the Rock Creek Area of the Eldorado National Forest near Georgetown, which has its own route closure process.

Calif. motorists face new laws in 2014

By Cathy Locke, Sacramento Bee

The California Highway Patrol is alerting motorists to a number of new transportation-related laws or changes to existing laws that will take effect in the new year.

Most will become effective Wednesday. Among the new or amended laws are:

• A law prohibiting motorists from passing a bicycle with less than 3 feet between any part of the motor vehicle and any part of the bicycle or driver.

• Counties will be authorized to increase registration fees by $1 for passenger vehicles and $2 for commercial vehicles to fund programs related to vehicle theft crimes in those counties.

Read the whole story

GED exam about to get tougher

By Theresa Harrington, Contra Costa Times

CONCORD – Every time a bell rings in the holiday movie, “It’s a Wonderful Life,” an angel gets its wings. In a similarly heartwarming gesture, every time teacher Christine Paynton rings a bell in her Mt. Diablo adult education class, it means a student has earned his or her GED high school equivalency certificate.

As classes came to an end this month, Paynton excitedly rang her bell four times, proudly introducing graduates who passed their high school equivalency exams in the nick of time, before new tests are unveiled in January. Across the country, thousands of adults have been scrambling to finish the tests and earn their certificate – an important academic milestone for those without a high school diploma – or else begin anew with more rigorous, computerized assessments next month.

The GED Testing Service updated the exams to better prepare students for college and careers. The new tests will condense five subject-matter exams into four and will include more difficult questions aligned with new Common Core Curriculum Standards that promote critical thinking and problem-solving, said spokesman Armando Diaz. To get ready, some centers have begun offering the soon-to-be-obsolete 2002 test on computers.

Read the whole story

Opinion: SnowGlobe 2013 – one local's opinion

By John Spinola

Below is my 2 cents about the SnowGlobe festival that has our town somewhat divided (and for some of us sleep deprived). As someone who lives relatively close to the event and has their life and routine disrupted by it, I just feel the need to vent. I consider myself to be a reasonable person and am well aware that tourists are the lifeblood to this community. I have lived here continuously since 1976.



South Lake Tahoe's SnowGlobe ends at 12:30am New Year's Day. Photo/Lesia Witkowsky

Now on with my rant:

To the people that say – "Just pack up and leave for 3 days"

I say – You are aware that most of us have jobs and or businesses that we need to be at during the week between Christmas and New Years. It is the busiest part of the month for this town and as a local we cannot just pack up and leave during this time. We have commitments to our employers and customers. That might be the only week that we make $ within the month of December

To the people that say – “Just get some earplugs”

I say – You are aware that earplugs do not stop the boom, boom, boom that the bass creates. Earplugs do nothing to stop my deck from vibrating under my feet or the constant thump, thump, thump that permeates my house during the SnowGlobe event. Should I really be required to wear earplugs in my own house?

To the people that say – “If it’s too loud, you’re too old”

I say – That’s a tired cliche and has been around since the ’50s. It’s got nothing to do with it being too loud. It’s got to do with the event not having a proper venue and that the noise (actually bass level) being disruptive to myself, my family and my dog. I am all for people having a good time and enjoying themselves, but when it invades my house I feel I have a legitimate complaint.

To the people that say – “Quit complaining and get over it”

I say – Dismissive comments like that do nothing to solve the issues that this event present. All this tells me is that you are ignoring me or anyone else who wants to voice an opinion that differs from yours.

To the people that say – “It brings a lot of good to the area”

I say – No. It just brings money to the area – which is a good thing. But I am not sure how much because you have to figure in the extra man hours that are spent on the city side preparing for, policing and cleaning up after this event. It has also divided our locals as to whether it is a good or bad thing. It really doesn’t present the best image of a family-friendly mountain town. And, yes, I know we are a 24-hour town with gaming, drinking and access to illicits.

To the people that say – “We are tourist town and it brings $ to the area”

I say – Yes, I know this is a tourist town and I know that it brings $ to the area. Again, it needs a proper venue that isn't disruptive to the people that live here or even the ones that are vacationing here. I have seen vacationers cut their visits short because of it. I live with the fact that tourists overtake our town on all the big holidays and during most of the summer months. I live with them overrunning this town and clogging up the highway, grocery stores and restaurants. I'm OK with this. It's why I am able to live here. But again, when they invade the peace and quiet that is my household, I feel I have a legitimate complaint.

To the city –

City says – "We set up a hotline"

I say – You set up a number that goes to a token recording that does nothing to address concerns or grievances.

Recording states – "We are aware that the noise is louder than last year. The lack of snow is the reason for this."

I say – Have them turn it down because of the lack of snow.

Recording states – "Some have addressed concerns about fireworks. Fireworks are shot off over the paved/parking areas and fire personnel are on scene."

I say – Paved parking is covered with buses, vendors and staff parking. There are also islands between all the parking areas that have trees and underbrush.Trees and underbrush also surround the parking areas. There is a reason that we shoot off fireworks over the lake and not in the woods.

City says – "They are taking over the play fields and college."

I say – They also took over Bijou park and eliminated any access to the gazebos, play areas and dog park.

City says – “They have a curfew.”

I say – They regularly play past their supposed curfew.

I will end this letter by stating once again that I am all for having events here in the area that bring people and money to the area. We do need to offer more than just gaming. We need people to come to South Lake Tahoe and not just Stateline. I am all for SnowGlobe. It just needs a proper venue that isn’t disruptive to the populace and the rules imposed by the city need to be enforced.

I’m hopping off my soapbox.

John Spinola is a resident of South Lake Tahoe.

Nevada to be test site for commercial drones

By Kristy Totten and Steve Tetreault, Las Vegas Review Journal

WASHINGTON – Look to the skies. Nevada was chosen Monday as a coveted base for the emerging drone industry.

The Federal Aviation Administration announced the Silver State as one of a half dozen authorized to become test sites for the commercial development of unmanned aerial vehicles, or UAVs.

The winners now get an early start – along with the federal government’s lucrative seal of approval – to cash in on the vision of drones populating U.S. skies alongside piloted aircraft.

Nevada officials have projected the creation of 15,000 well-

paying jobs in the state directly tied to the industry, as well as thousands more in feeder industries.

Read the whole story

Inspectors keep invasive mussels out of Lake Tahoe

Diligent inspectors have helped keep Lake Tahoe free of quagga and zebra mussels.

During the 2013 boating season Tahoe Resource Conservation District workers inspected more than 14,000 vessels entering either Lake Tahoe, Fallen Leaf Lake or Echo Lake. Half were new inspections, while the remainder had intact Tahoe-issued inspection seals.

Thirty-six of the inspected watercraft were harboring aquatic invasive critters including plants, mussels and snails. TRCD decontaminated 4,221 watercraft with hot water to prevent invasive species from entering Tahoe’s waters.

Invasive aquatic species are getting closer to the basin. This summer Nevada Department of Wildlife confirmed New Zealand mudsnails in sections of the Truckee River from Mayberry Park in Reno to the Sparks area.

“Clean, drained and dry” is the motto of the program.

TRCD inspectors also staffed Boca, Prosser and Stampede reservoirs and partnered with the Truckee Donner Recreation and Park District to provide watercraft inspectors at Donner Lake. Truckee inspectors screened more than 3,500 vessels for aquatic invasive species.

Prevention efforts for more than 7,000 paddlers occurred at U.S. Forest Service kiosks, boat ramps and Fallen Leaf Lake. They were assessed for their risk of transporting aquatic invasive species from previously visited water bodies.

Information about the boat inspection program, including hours of operation for boat launches and snow closures, is available online or by calling 888.824.6267.

GOP proposes shortening 2016 primary season

By S.V. Date, NPR

A year after losing the popular vote for the fifth time in the last six presidential elections, the Republican Party has crafted a series of rules tweaks designed to regain control of – and dramatically shorten – its presidential nominating process.

The subcommittee charged with looking for fixes has approved five proposed changes for review by the Republican National Committee's rules committee at its January meeting. The full RNC would then need to pass the changes by a three-quarters supermajority.

February 2016 would be set aside for the traditional early states: Iowa, New Hampshire, South Carolina and Nevada. The other states could start as soon as March 1, but could not hold winner-take-all contests before March 15. Larger states that violate either of those rules would lose all but nine of their delegates to the summer nominating convention, not counting their three RNC members who are automatic delegates.

Smaller states would lose two-thirds of their delegates, not including the three RNC members.

Read the whole story