Smoke slowly being blown out of Tahoe

While the American Fire burning near Foresthill is at 78 percent containment, the Rim Fire near Yosemite is at 7 percent containment.

Both are continuing to bring smoke into the Lake Tahoe Basin, Truckee and western Nevada. Winds helped blow some of the smoke out of the basin on Saturday, but the smell remains this morning even though there is more blue sky compared to the last few days.

A dense smoke advisory from the National Weather Service in Reno remains in effect until 8pm Aug. 25 for the basin and points east, including parts of Alpine County. A lake wind advisory is in effect for the same time period

The American Fire has burned 24,135 acres. Crews are being released to go fight other fires as full containment is expected Sept. 1.

The Rim Fire is at 133,980 acres.

“The Rim incident is expected to continue to exhibit very large fire growth due to extremely dry fuels and inaccessible terrain. Rapid fire growth and extreme fire behavior are hampering suppression efforts,” fire officials said.

Nearly 5,000 structures remain threatened.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Then and now: A gas station for 5 decades





This is possibly the oldest continuing, uninterrupted gas station in South Lake Tahoe.

According to notes on the back of this photo dated 1954, Allen E. “Brownie” Piedmont was the owner of this Flying A gas station.

The aerial photo is also from the 1950s

It is now Tahoe Tom’s at near Stateline.

The black and white photos are from the Lake Tahoe Historical Society Museum, while I took the color one.



– Bill Kingman

Trek to Raymond Lake a contrast in landscape



Raymond Lake in Alpine County is about 1,000 feet below jagged Raymond Peak. Photos/Kathryn Reed

By Kathryn Reed

HOPE VALLEY – With each step, it seems like the landscape is changing.

Smooth granite turns into coarse volcanic rock. Sandy footing becomes hardpack. Towering mountains and pines give way to 360-degree views.

If this is anything what the entire 2,650-mile Pacific Crest Trail is like, it might be something I would contemplate

doing. But then again, considering how good the beer at the Jeep tasted and the hot tub at home felt, I'm pretty sure my adventures on the PCT will be limited to day trips.

Brenda and I start our trek on a recent Friday morning and never encounter another soul on the trail.

We begin at an elevation of 6,461 feet. Our destination of Raymond Lake is at 8,972 feet. Brenda's GPS had the trip at 5.5 miles going out and 5.3 coming back. We're not sure how we lost those two-tenths of mile on the return.

Distinct signs of autumn line the trail early on as leaves are already a yellow-orange.

We get to an overlook with a marker that says we are at 8,000 feet. While the view is a bit like being on top the world, clearly there are peaks around us that are much higher, like Reynolds Peak at 9,690 feet.

Looking down is a vast meadow – the one that is by Grover Hot Springs in the Markleeville area. Across the way a strand of water flows from the mountains. This is one of two waterfalls we see on our hike.

Part of the trail crosses Pleasant Valley Creek. In August it is not a big deal to cross, but reports are that it can be difficult in the spring.

A few wildflowers still sway, but most of the color is gone. Brenda has been on this hike once before and said the flora can be exceptional.

At times the trail is narrow, with a steep descent to one side. It can be a bit breathtaking for those, like me, with a little fear of heights. But Brenda got me through it. I would have turned around had I been on my own.

Going along we see what appears to be large granite rocks that have a hue of light red and purple, as though Mother Nature

has splashed them with pastel paint. An orange, rough moss-like substance covers other rocks.

The only turn to pay attention to is clearly marked. One way is to stay on the PCT, the other for Raymond Lake. We follow the arrow for the latter. Another three-quarters of a mile and we are at our destination.

At the shore of the lake there are enough disintegrated rocks to make sitting comfortable – though this isn't anything like soft sand. A breeze comes up and it's like flecks of light are dancing across the water.

We see a couple people at the far end of the lake who must have been camping. Permits are required for overnight stays, but not for day hikes.

Supposedly golden trout are in Raymond Lake, but we didn't see any.

Brenda walks around the lake while I sit and take in the scenery. The jagged spires that form Raymond Peak are 10,011-feet tall. It appears there are caves in the mountain, but they are too high up to explore. Some of the flat surfaces of the rock wall look like they could be a paradise for climbers.

It's a definite paradise for hikers.

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Getting there:

From South Lake Tahoe, take Highway 50 west. Turn left onto Highway 89 to go over Luther Pass. Turn right on to Highway 88 at Pickett's Junction. Turn left on Blue Lakes Road. Turn left toward Tamarack Lake. At the fork, go left. Then there will be place to veer slightly to the right. There will be a big wide area to park before you get to Lower Sunset Lake. If you are down by that lake, turn around.

Part of this is a dirt road. While 4-wheel drive is not necessary, the road is not ideal for a typical passenger car.

The trail is to the right of the road we drove in on. Not far up is a single-track trail to the left – take it. There is not a trail marker at the start or for this first left.

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Letter: Time to raise TOT in South Tahoe

To the community,

The city of South Lake Tahoe claims to have a deficit. So why does the city hire consultants and a city attorney at $150,000 a year? It's a puzzle. Also, new hires are made routinely. Are things what they are said to be or is this a game of pick a number statistics? Whatever.



Bill Crawford

The city, to increase revenue, now has a paid parking program. It's called a user's fee. It has caused a verbal storm by locals who oppose paid parking. Some folks believe the program

will not raise the projected revenue.

Before rushing into paid parking, it would have been smart for the city to explore raising the hotel room tax, TOT. It has been the same for two decades. The tax on a non-redevelopment room is 10 percent, on a redevelopment room the tax is 12 percent.

At about the turn of the century, the City Council tried to increase the TOT, but the lodging folks united and killed the proposal. So now the city has a deficit and is stuck with a stagnant revenue base on a major industry.

The city should again try to increase the TOT, especially since it has imposed a paid parking free, a tax on the pocketbook of locals. The TOT should be 12 percent on all hotel rooms.

Bill Crawford, South Lake Tahoe

Tahoe City spending 4 days celebrating 150 years

The North Lake Tahoe Historical Society is commemorating Tahoe City's Sesquicentennial (150th anniversary) during Labor Day weekend.

On Aug. 30 at 4pm there will be a reception at the Watson Cabin at Heritage Plaza. The North Lake Tahoe Historical Society is partnering with event hosts Tahoe City Rotary and the Tahoe City Public Utilities District to welcome the descendants of Tahoe pioneer families and visitors. The event will include an unveiling of a street exhibit about Tahoe City

history, featuring panels with photos and information about Tahoe City from 1863 to today.

Special events continue through that Monday. Details are available online.

Report: High school students not ready for college

By Anita Hofschneider, Wall Street Journal

First, the bad news: Nearly 75 percent of 2013 high school graduates who took the ACT college readiness exam aren't fully prepared for college, according to a report by the organization that administers the test.

Now, the (moderately) good: Student performance has improved slightly since 2009, when just 23 percent of high school graduates tested met all four of the exam's benchmarks for college readiness, compared with 26 percent this year.

The report, out Wednesday from the ACT, shows that American high school students are making slow progress toward college readiness and raises concerns about whether they'll have the skills necessary to fill jobs in the future, said Jon Erickson, president of educational division of the ACT.

More than half of all 2013 high school graduates in the U.S. took the exam, which assesses proficiency in English, reading, math and science.

Read the whole story

Snippets about Lake Tahoe



• Two physicians have joined the Barton Health team. Amanda Stevens Weavil is an ob-gyn at Barton Women's Health and Kim Evans will be at Barton General Surgery.

• The draft Highway 28 National Scenic Byway Corridor Management Plan has been revised and posted on the Tahoe Transportation District website. Comments may be submitted to Derek Kirkland at dkirkland@tahoetransportation.org until Sept. 6.

• Here are the El Dorado-Tahoe and Sierra roadwork schedules for next week from Caltrans.

• The Mark Twain Bookstore in Virginia City will close after Labor Day.

• South Lake Tahoe and El Dorado County are creating a Parks, Trails and Recreation Master Plan and are asking for input via this online questionnaire.

Placer County sets record

with TOT collections

The Tahoe area of Placer County is reporting increases in hotel and sales taxes.

Revenues from transient occupancy tax are up approximately $1.6 million over the previous year, a 15 percent increase. Sales tax for the winter quarter (January, February, March) of 2013 is up a 22.5 percent over the previous year.

Despite a fourth quarter where TOT revenues were actually down, overall, the county had a banner year. TOT for fiscal year 2012-13 for the Tahoe area was $11,290,565; while it was $9,828,896 the previous year. This represents the largest TOT collections in Placer County history. The highest recorded collection period was FY 2010-11, at $10,504,078 countywide, $10,137,704 in the Tahoe area.

Environmentalists upset with Calif. fracking bill

By Marc Lifsher, Los Angeles Times

SACRAMENTO – Environmental and liberal activist groups are split over a pending pioneering bill that would regulate the controversial oil-extraction technique known as fracking.

Legislation by Sen. Fran Pavley, D-Agoura Hills, would, for the first time in the nation, require oil companies to

disclose details of the chemicals, locations and procedures involved with hydraulic fracturing and related “well-stimulation” activities. The bill also would require that well sites be permitted and that the state conduct a scientific study of hydraulic fracturing, among other things.

In fracking, large quantities of water and sand as well as various chemicals are injected to free up oil and natural gas locked deep underground in shale formations. Another extraction method uses acid-solution injections to release the hydrocarbons.

Most environmental groups in testimony Wednesday before the Assembly Appropriations Committee backed Pavley. But the Sierra Club said it opposed the bill, arguing that it doesn’t give the public enough information to protect water and air from potential contamination.

Read the whole story

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3 chefs to compete at Sample the Sierra

Chefs are sharpening their knives for the second annual Sierra Chef Challenge, which is part of the 4th annual Sample the Sierra festival.

While the event is supposed to showcase what El Dorado County has to offer, the meat for the cook-off is coming from Reno’s Sierra Meat & Seafood Company and the mystery box of fresh produce from Mountain Bounty Farm out of Nevada City.

This years competitors are Peter Brinkerhoff, executive chef

for Gar Woods, Riva Grill, Caliente & Bar of America; Glenn Simpson from Blue Angel Café; and Jeremy “Boomer” Acuña of Zephyr Cove Resort. They will compete in a 45-minute cook-off.

Sample the Sierra is Sept. 1 from 1-5pm on Ski Run Boulevard in South Lake Tahoe. Tickets are $30 and may be purchased online.