Letter: MontBleu helps support Bread & Broth

To the community,

Bread & Broth would like to express its gratitude to MontBleu Resort Casino & Spa for financing an Adopt A Day of Nourishment and sending two very hardworking and conscientious volunteers to their Monday evening's sponsorship dinner on May 22.

Their sponsorship supported B&B's goal of feeding the less fortunate of the South Shore. Each Monday warm and hearty meals are served to the working poor, families in need, elderly on fixed incomes as well as those living outdoors.

MontBleu's Melissa Patton, director of human resources, and Ruby Turner, director of hotel operations, were busy throughout the entire setup and meal serving. They were a great help to the B&B volunteers. Ruby had a "wonderful time helping and meeting such nice people" and Melissa thought the B&B program was "great and truly appreciated the opportunity to participate in the B&B volunteering experience".

Bread & Broth salutes MontBleu Resort Casino & Spa for their generosity and commitment to the South Lake Tahoe community through their annual sponsorship of an Adopt A Day.

As a nonprofit program, B&B relies on the generosity of our sponsors to provide meals on Monday at St. Theresa's parish hall and Friday at Lake Tahoe Community Presbyterian Church.

If you would like to support Bread & Broth's program, please contact me at (530) 542.2876 or carolsgerard@aol.com.

Carol Gerard, Bread & Broth

Wildlife management – an ongoing debate

By Jon Beckmann, National Geographic

In the original poem-turned-song “Home on the Range”, Dr. Brewster Higley affectionately recalled building his Kansas cabin in a place he shared with buffalo, deer, and antelope. Notably absent from his poem are the other species of large mega-fauna that at one time called his region home, including grizzly bears, black bears, wolves, and mountain lions.



Bears in neighborhoods are common in Lake Tahoe. Photo/Judy Brown.

When Higley wrote his popular ballad in the late 1800s, most of these species were gone, and by the early 1900s species such as grizzly bears and wolves were absent from more than 90 percent of their original range. However, over the last 40-50 years large carnivores have slowly begun to reclaim both their range and their numbers in the United States and across North America.

This recovery is a conservation success for these species, but

it presents new challenges for people living with them, particularly in many western states.

Since the mid-1990s I have worked in the Lake Tahoe Basin in Nevada. Using historical records, several colleagues and I recently published a paper confirming that black bears were present throughout the state until about 1931, despite the fact that Nevada has not previously been recognized in the historical distribution maps for black bears in North America.

The lack of historical references after 1931 suggests that black bears were extirpated from Nevada's interior mountain ranges by then. While over-hunting and conflicts with domestic livestock contributed to the bear's local extinction in the Great Basin, the clear-cutting of forests throughout western and central Nevada for timber used in mining played a key role as well.

Two primary factors have led to bears' return back to parts of Nevada. First, as fossil fuels replaced timber as a heat and energy source and as forestry and grazing practices evolved, habitat regeneration occurred in the bears' former range in the Great Basin. Second, an investment in bear-proof garbage cans and dumpsters has lowered mortality rates of bears stemming from conflicts with people.

From the late 1990s to 2008 the Nevada population of black bears grew at an average annual rate of 16 percent. One result is that bears have been deemed fair game for hunters. In fact, the data we collected with the Nevada Department of Wildlife documenting growing bear numbers was the basis for the Nevada Board of Wildlife Commissioners' decision to approve the state's first-ever bear hunt in 2011.

The new hunt, which allows the killing of 20 bears in a year, set off a fierce debate in Nevada over how the state wildlife agency would manage recovering populations of large carnivores. Concerns included the role of hunting in

management plans and determining which communities in the state were comfortable having recovered bear populations nearby.

All stakeholders – from hunters and ranchers to the larger agricultural community and environmentalists/wildlife preservationists – must determine together how we manage and live with these species. The recovery success of bears in Nevada could inform efforts with grizzlies and wolves in places like Idaho, Wyoming, and Montana – or mountain lions as they begin to recover in the Dakotas, Nebraska, and perhaps even Higley's home state of Kansas.

A complete hunting ban on grizzly bears and wolves, both no longer protected under the U.S. Endangered Species Act due to population recovery, is doomed to fail and disenfranchises hunters, who have contributed much to conservation during the last century. More useful is finding a consensus on the number and distribution of large carnivores we hope to sustain.

Hunting regulations can then be formulated and adjusted to reach mutually recognized goals. Communities will need to grapple with how to live with big predators rather than simply whether or not to hunt them. Clear definitions will likely be needed of where large carnivores should never occur in a given landscape, something that has been poorly done if at all previously.

Hunting of large carnivores must be done under sound monitoring, not simply to remove animals that kill big game species or livestock. If done sustainably, we need not fear that these predators will slide back onto threatened species lists. And as they begin to recover, it will be up to each community and state to decide whether their songs and poems will express longing for a home where, like deer and antelope, bears get their chance to play.

Jon Beckmann is a Conservation Scientist for the Wildlife

Conservation Society's North America Program.

Overhaul of Calif. water system has $25 bil. price tag



Farmers and urban water users would have to pay for the new system. Photo/NPR

The state plan to overhaul the hub of California's water system will cost nearly $25 billion to build and operate, according to preliminary figures released Wednesday.

The proposal, backed by Gov. Jerry Brown's administration and the Obama administration, calls for habitat restoration and the construction of two enormous tunnels to divert water from the Sacramento River and carry it under the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta to southbound pumps.

Water users, including San Joaquin Valley irrigation districts and urban agencies in Southern California and the Bay Area, would bear roughly two-thirds of the cost, with the rest coming from federal and state sources.

The proposal – in the planning stages for seven years – represents the biggest water supply project in California since the 1960s launch of the State Water Project under Brown's father, Gov. Pat Brown. But important questions are hanging over it, in particular whether federal fishery agencies will approve operating rules that will deliver the volume of water sought by the contractors who will pay for most of the project.

By building a diversion point on the river in the north delta and restoring more than 100,000 acres of habitat, the contractors hope to escape the endangered species restrictions that have reduced their water deliveries from the delta.

Citing an economic analysis, state water officials said the value of benefits the project would provide outweighed costs by 35 percent to 40 percent. Proponents said the new diversion would improve the quality of water deliveries by taking some supplies north of tidal influences and runoff from delta farms. It would also stabilize export amounts by taking less water from the existing, fish-killing south delta facilities and make the water system less vulnerable to earthquake damage.

Under the estimates released by the state, building the tunnels, three large intakes on the river and associated facilities would cost $14.5 billion. Operations and maintenance would amount to $4.8 billion over the 50-year life of the project. Habitat restoration, which would be funded with state bonds and federal appropriations, would cost $4.1 billion.

Since most of the money would come from water users, their participation in the project is crucial. And they are reserving final commitment until still-evolving details of the plan are firmed up.

"We've got to be able to say we can make it work under all

conditions," said Roger Patterson, assistant general manager of the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California, which imports supplies from the delta. "There will be some judgment as to where we think things may or may not go.… Under the worst-case scenario, does it still work for us?"

Depending on what operating rules the fishery agencies demand to protect endangered native fish, delta deliveries could increase or decrease compared to the average of the last two decades. If they fall, the water contractors must decide if the project is worth it.

"We need to see a project that provides improved water supply, has affordable costs and enforceable regulatory assurances before we can make any commitments," Ted Page, board president of the Kern County Water Agency, said in a statement.

Metropolitan expects its share of the project costs to add from $60 to $84 a year to household water charges in Southern California.

But tunnel opponents argue that urban users will wind up footing much more of the bill because agriculture won't be able to afford its share. "They're irrational costs for a subset of San Joaquin Valley farmers to bear," said Jeffrey Michael, director of the Business Forecasting Center at the University of the Pacific in Stockton.

"Urban users are going to pay much more for this than they've been told and the usual cost overruns will just make the problems worse," he said.

Tom Birmingham, general manager of the Westlands Water District, the state's largest irrigation district, estimates that the delta project will add at least $125 million to his agency's annual budget. But the district's growers are willing to pay that, he said last year, because when delta deliveries are cut in dry years, they have to buy expensive water from other irrigators to keep their almond groves alive.

The Brown administration has made the delta project one of its priorities. It has set this fall as the deadline for release of draft environmental documents that would begin a formal public comment period. A final decision on the project is likely a year or more away.

Under the most optimistic time frame, construction would begin in 2015 and last 10 years.

Brown has been pushing the U.S. Interior Department to speed its review of the project, which has so far generated about 20,000 pages of draft environmental documents.

“We are completely focused on the huge amount of work … that remains to be done,” Letty Belin, an Interior counselor, said during a news conference announcing the funding details. “The Obama administration is arm-in-arm with you.”

Tahoe National Forest implements fire restrictions

Effective June 1, residential burn permits will be suspended for Nevada, Placer and Yuba counties and fire restrictions will go into effect in the Tahoe National Forest.

Despite the recent light rain, conditions in the foothills and the high country remain unseasonably dry. Warming temperatures, dry winds, and very dry fuel moisture levels have prompted this early fire season response.

Anyone who burns in violation of the suspension will be subject to civil or criminal action and could face cost recovery charges for the fire suppression response. All fires

or smoke reported will be considered a wildfire and a full suppression response will be dispatched to the scene.

In the Tahoe National Forest beginning June 1 campfires are not permitted in the backcountry, but only in developed campgrounds and other designated sites (in the metal rings/grills provided). Portable stoves, including those that use gas, jellied petroleum or pressurized liquid fuel are permitted in backcountry areas with a valid campfire permit. Propane-type barbecues can be used outside designated sites where camping is permitted, but charcoal barbecues can only be used in designated campgrounds. Smoking is only permitted in an enclosed vehicle or developed recreation site.

Internal combustion engines, including off highway vehicles can continue to be operated on roads or motorized trails and within the Prosser Pits OHV area.

Truckee recycling electronics, shredding documents

Truckee’s 6th annual Electronic Waste Recycling event is June 22 from 9am-2pm in the back parking lot of Town Hall, 10183 Truckee Airport Road.

Residents are encouraged to drop off all their old electronic equipment for free recycling. Computers, televisions, VCRs, stereos, copiers, cell phones, radios, telephones and fax machines are common electronic products that must be kept out of household trash and recycled separately.

Electronics waste may be recycled at the Eastern Regional Landfill free of charge throughout the year. For details, call Tahoe Truckee Sierra Disposal at (530) 583.0148.

The Truckee Police Department will once again offer residents the opportunity to shred confidential paperwork onsite at the community recycle event.

Last year 9,000 pounds of paper was accepted through this event. Get there early, space is limited. The paper shred portion of this event is from 9-11am.

Plastic bags remain legal in California

By Laurel Rosenhall, Sacramento Bee

A proposal to ban plastic grocery bags in California went the way of so many plastic bags – into the trash can – on Thursday when it failed to garner enough votes in the state Senate to move ahead in the lawmaking process.

Senate Bill 405 by Sen. Alex Padilla, D-Pacoima, would have prohibited supermarkets and drugstores from providing plastic shopping bags to consumers beginning in 2015. Paper bags would be available for purchase. Padilla argued that the ban would be good for the environment, reduce litter and help local governments that now deal with cleaning them up. Many senators said the bill would promote good habits among Californians, who would get used to carrying their own reusable shopping bags.

But several of Padilla's Democratic colleagues opposed the

measure, saying it would cut jobs for constituents who work in Los Angeles-area bag factories and would hurt consumers who re-use their plastic bags for garbage, dog waste and other household needs. Republicans also opposed it, saying the Legislature had more important things to work on.

“I think there is an education campaign necessary,” Padilla said after the final 18-17 vote on his bill.

Four senators did not vote – Democrats Ben Hueso, Curren Price, Lois Wolk and Rod Wright. Padilla said he hopes to persuade them to vote for his bill and wants to move it from the Senate’s trash can to its recycling bin, so it can get another vote next year.

Snippets about Lake Tahoe

• Area plans will be the topic of a special South Lake Tahoe City Council meeting on June 25 from 6-8pm at Lake Tahoe Airport.

• Comedic actor Russell Brand takes the stage at Tahoe’s MontBleu casino July 27 at 9pm. Tickets range from $55 to $75 and are available through Ticketmaster or the MontBleu Box Office, 888.829.7630.

• North Lake Tahoe’s ForeclosureRadar has changed its name to PropertyRadar.

• Paulette Grune will present Reflections of the Past to commemorate the 150th anniversary of Gettysburg. She will

share the history of a Civil War era woman told through her attire. The free event is at the South Lake Tahoe library on July 13 at 3pm.

• Tahoe Improv Players perform at the Valhalla Boathouse July 9 and July 23, Aug. 6 and Aug. 20 at 7:30 each night. The comedy is appropriate for those 15 and older. For more info, go online or call (530) 541.4975.

Caution urged for cyclists, motorists in work zones

Caltrans is reminding motorists to be aware of increased bicyclist activity in the Lake Tahoe region during Bike Month in June.

Motorists need to share the road with bicyclists on roadways where there are no designated bike lanes. Bicyclists also need to take precautions when traveling through construction areas.

Caltrans offers the following reminders:

· Do not ride into the cone pattern, which is the contractor work zone, whether you see the contractor working there or not. There may be hazards in the cone pattern that are not readily apparent to the cyclist, such as drop-offs, trenches, excavations, ground-out rough surfaces, tack coats put down prior to paving, hot asphalt surfacing, or moving equipment, materials or personnel. If you are involved in an accident in the work zone, the authorities may find you in violation of provisions of the California Vehicle Code for entering a contractor work area.

· This means that you may need to ride in a narrowed lane with motorized vehicles to pass by the cone zone. If you are uncomfortable doing so, you may need to find an alternate route on city streets or county roads to bypass the cone zone.

· If you are riding in the traffic lane next to the cone zone and workers are near the cones performing operations, you may want to announce yourself by saying something like “bike” so that contractor workers know you are passing by. Cyclists normally ride much closer to the cone pattern than motorized vehicles and workers are used to having some additional buffer space over the cone where they may swing a tool or a rake or similar.

The 22nd annual America’s Most Beautiful Bike Ride takes place June 2, and the Tahoe Bike Challenge, which encourages bike riding rather than driving, is June 1-14.

Sunday’s bike event, which is sold out, will take riders on portions highway 50, 89 and 28 around Lake Tahoe. Signs will be posted alerting motorists of the event. Highway 89 will be closed from Spring Creek Road to Vikingsholm Vista Point in Emerald Bay from 6:30 to 8:30am on Sunday for the event.

For more information on the bike challenge, go online.

Learn the basics of geocaching

Rangers at Washoe Lake State Park will teach participants the basics of geocaching and develop their GPS orienteering skills on June 8.

The park will have a limited number of GPS units to loan for the program. If you have one, bring it.

The lesson will be from 9:30am-noon. Meet in the equestrian area pavilion. Washoe Lake State Park is five miles north of Carson City.

There is no charge for the program, but there is a $7 per vehicle entry fee. Nevada residents receive a $2 discount.

Girls' Empowerment Day coming to S. Tahoe

Live Violence Free with support from Soroptimist International of South Lake Tahoe and Tahoe Sierra is putting on Girls' Empowerment Day on June 8.

The event is from 9am-5pm at Inn by the Lake in South Lake Tahoe.

All middle school girls, including those that are either going into high school or will be starting middle school next school, are invited.

Workshops will be centered on achieving a sense of self-esteem, leadership and empowerment. Workshops will be conducted by Soul 2 Soul, TRiO, and Live Violence Free, with yoga from Audrey Villanueva. The workshops will include arts and crafts, self-defense, yoga, and a girls support group.

There is no cost to participate.

For more info or to sign up, contact Scarlet at (530) 544.2118, ext. 7634 or scaldwell@liveviolencefree.org.