Ski report: Snow on all the slopes

This may be the last powder day of the season.

Here is the April 8 ski report.

– Curtis Fong

Snippets about Lake Tahoe



• Here are some closing dates for Tahoe area ski resorts: Diamond Peak and Homewood Mountain Resort – April 7; Northstar, Heavenly Mountain Resort, Sugar Bowl, Boreal and Soda Springs – April 14.

• The South Lake Tahoe Parks and Recreation Commission now meets the second Tuesday of every month at 3:30pm in the Cedar Room at the Recreation Complex located at 1180 Rufus Allen Blvd. The public is welcome to attend.

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

• Powerball comes to California on April 8.

• Soroptimist International of South Lake Tahoe has agreed to commit $25,000 to the Sierra House Garden Dome project. The dome proponents have 18 months to figure out how to get the project done before the service club gives the money to another group.

Old Tahoe being turned into boutique hotel

By Kathryn Reed

From a 1-star to a 4½-star property. That is what Jim Demetriades is trying to do with a prime piece of real estate in South Lake Tahoe.

He is turning the old Royal Valhalla motel into the Landing Resort & Spa.

“What South Lake Tahoe was lacking was a 4-, 5-star establishment … a super high-end boutique hotel,” Demetriades told *Lake Tahoe News*.



What the Landing Resort &

Spa in South Lake Tahoe will look like. Rendering/Midkiff & Associates

He bought the sprawling property 1½ years ago and began construction last fall. It is at the end of Stateline Avenue between Lakeshore Boulevard and Azure Street. Part of it is next to single-family residences along the streets of Hill Road and Sunrise Lane. Then it abuts the open space that is directly across from Lakeside Beach.

Demetriades would not disclose how much money he is putting into the renovation, but said, “It’s millions and millions of dollars.”

He said there is no way to build something like this from scratch because it would be cost-prohibitive and the regulatory hurdles insurmountable.

“We focus on properties in secondary markets that are reasonably priced, with a tremendous amount of charm and character,” Demetriades said. “We think South Lake Tahoe is a beautiful environment. But like many secondary markets it has gone through its ups and downs. It’s been in a prolonged tailspin with a lot of rundown properties. We think there is a crowd of guests who are interested in a nicer property in the area that is reasonably priced.”

He says room nights will range from $150 to $250.



This sign will soon disappear.
Photo/Kathryn Reed

“It will be Ritz-Carlton quality, but half the price,” Demetriades said.

But at a Ritz, people are used to getting service that is off the charts. Demetriades wants to deliver that as well.

He said the general manager he expects to have on board has experience at high-end properties.

Demetriades has properties in Southern California, as well as a hotel and three restaurants in Mammoth.

Jimmy’s Taverna is one of the eateries. And it’s what will be cloned and opened in Tahoe. Billed as Greek seafood, is will serve three meals a day. The restaurant will be for hotel guests and anyone else. The restaurant will seat 120, while the bar will fit about 50. In the summer outdoor seating will be available.

The restaurant will be the fifth and last building to be constructed.

Of the five buildings, one is almost done, two are well under way, and No. 4 had concrete poured two weeks ago.

The sound of hammers and saws could be heard last week as workers transform the three-story property.

The Royal Valhalla had 91 rooms; the Landing Resort & Spa will have 88. Part of the hotel could open in July.

“We are not taking reservations just yet. We are working with construction teams to validate the opening date. A lot has to do with the furniture,” Demetriades said.



Part of the new hotel is expected to open in July. Photo/Kathryn Reed

Each room has a balcony, some with views of Lake Tahoe. All are within earshot of the Harveys outdoor summer concerts.

The furniture is being custom made. Waterfall showers, heated floors, heated toilet seat, and heated towel racks are standard features.

A 150-seat conference facility is being built. Weddings are expected to be a large part of the revenue stream, with the facility able to be cordoned off into three rooms or one big room for 300 guests.

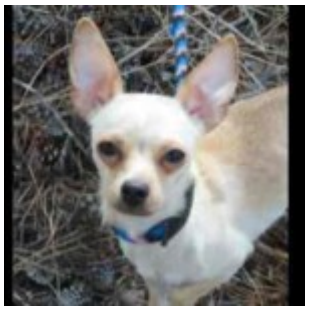
A spa will also be on-site.

Partnerships with nearby Edgewood Tahoe Golf Course are being worked out. Guests will have access to Lakeside Beach. Bikes

and boats will be available, as will a shuttle service.

The goal is someone flies into Reno, arrives at the Landing Resort & Spa and never has to drive.

Tahoe Tails – Adoptable Pets in South Lake Tahoe



Pippa is a very sweet Chihuahua who was found as a stray. She had had puppies recently, but they and her owners were never found.

After two weeks in the shelter, her personality is coming out and she is no longer super shy. She loves to be held and to go for walks, and she wiggles those huge ears at every little noise. She is tiny, and may do best in a household with other small dogs and older children.

Pippa is spayed, microchipped, and vaccinated. She is at the El Dorado County Animal Services shelter in Meyers, along with many other dogs and cats who are waiting for their new homes.

Go online to see photos and description of all pets at the shelter.

Call (530) 573.7925 for directions, hours, and other information on adopting a pet.

For spay-neuter assistance for South Tahoe residents, go online.

– Karen Kuentz

Incline comes together to Make-a-Wish come true

In conjunction with the Make-A-Wish Foundations of Hawaii and Northeastern California/Northern Nevada, the Incline Village General Improvement District and the communities of Incline Village and Crystal Bay came together in March to help make 11-year-old Kenny Mercado of Maui's wish come true.

Kenny has terminal Sarcoma cancer and his wish was to learn to ski in Lake Tahoe, to see snow, to have a snowball fight and to just be a regular kid on a winter vacation with his family.

Kenny and his family stayed at the Hyatt Regency Lake Tahoe, hit golf balls at the driving range and drove golf carts at the Incline Village Championship Course, took ski lessons and had snowball fights at Diamond Peak and enjoyed a day at the Incline Village Recreation Center, among many other activities throughout the community.

"Kenny is an amazing boy who is being raised by an equally amazing family. It was deeply humbling to have participated in his wish. Our community showed strangers, now friends, what kind of community we have the good fortune of living in – a caring, compassionate, and kind community. It was an honor to share in this experience and, on behalf of IVGID and myself, thank you to everyone who helped", stated Bill Horn, General Manager of the Incline Village General Improvement District.

The Incline Village General Improvement District would like to recognize and thank the following businesses and individuals

who helped make Kenny’s wish come true; IV Coffee Lab, Yoshimi Sushi, the Hyatt Regency Lake Tahoe, Sierra Nevada College, UC Davis, Incline Village/Crystal Bay Visitors Bureau, Hacienda de la Sierra Restaurant, Diamond Peak Ski Resort, Jean Eick, Rookies, Michelle Lewis of Bowl Incline, Incline Star Follies, Village Ski Loft, Incline Village Recreation Center, Parasol Tahoe Community Foundation, Jen Schmidt Photography, Murrieta Images, Trent Dilfer, T’s Rotisserie and Brimm’s Catering.

McGraw to be in Tahoe during celeb golf tourney

Country sensation Tim McGraw kicked off the 2010 Harvey’s Outdoor Concert Series. This year he is kicking off the American Century Championship golf tournament as the main entertainment.

McGraw will be at Harveys on July 16 at 7pm.

The opening act has not been determined. Three years ago it was Lady Antebellum; who helped sell out the concert.

Tickets go on sale April 19 at 10am via Ticketmaster. Prices range from $69.50 to $135.50.

Boys and Girls Club receives

outside support



Tahoe Motor Sports is supporting the Boys and Girls Club in South Lake Tahoe. Photo/Provided

Members of Tahoe Motor Sports recently visited the Boys & Girls Club Lake Tahoe to present a check for $100 from the proceeds of a car wash they had to support our club, kids, and programs.

Members of TMS are looking forward to being involved in helping the Boys & Girls Club.

For more information about these and other things at the Boys & Girls Club, go online.

High Roller Hold ‘Em

Two-time Olympic gold medalist Shaun White on April 6 at Heavenly Mountain Resort during the High Roller Hold ‘Em big

air competition. Video shot by Bob Sweatt of South Lake Tahoe.

Expect smoke in Cold Creek area this week

U.S. Forest Service fuels management crews will resume prescribed fire operations in the Cold Creek area near South Lake Tahoe beginning April 8.

Crews expect to burn approximately 2 acres per day. Operations may continue through the week, weather and conditions permitting.

Residents and visitors can expect to see smoke from this prescribed fire project area. The Forest Service strives to minimize the impacts of smoke on local communities. Smoke-sensitive residents should consider staying indoors and keeping doors, windows and outside vents closed. To directly receive prescribed fire updates, send an email to pa_ltbmu@fs.fed.us.

Forest Service staff will post road signs around areas affected by prescribed fire, and update the local fire information line at (530) 543-2600, No. 6. Other federal, state and local fire management agencies may also be conducting prescribed fire work during this period.

McClintock against expanding Yosemite

By Michael Doyle, Fresno Bee

WASHINGTON – A bill to expand Yosemite National Park has won the support of California's senators, but there's apparent skepticism from the conservative congressman who now represents the park region.

The Capitol Hill split could hinder the park expansion legislation that lawmakers will soon re-introduce. More broadly, it underscores the challenges looming as Yosemite aficionados and Rep. Tom McClintock get to know one another, like partners in an arranged marriage.

"We look forward to working with the congressman so he understands the issues," Mariposa County Supervisor Kevin Cann said.



Yosemite National Park only recently became part of Rep. Tom McClintock's district. Photo/LTN file

McClintock, R-Elk Grove, visited Yosemite this week for his first time as the park's congressman. The 56-year-old career lawmaker met with park officials for about two hours before

attending a Mariposa town hall meeting Tuesday night.

The world famous park fell into McClintock's 4th Congressional District when a state commission redrew legislative lines last year. The district now includes a big sweep of the Sierra Nevada mountains, from Lake Tahoe in the north to Sequoia National Park in the south. Yosemite is the district's crown jewel, one that repeatedly invites political intervention.

Last Congress, for instance, the lawmaker who represented Yosemite at the time – Rep. Jeff Denham, R-Turlock – introduced a bill to authorize the park service to acquire 18 acres for a new Yosemite visitors center in Mariposa.

McClintock didn't like that proposal. A member of the House Natural Resources Committee, he argued at a hearing last June that the park service would be better off using existing vacant buildings in Mariposa, and he asserted a new Mariposa center would put gateway communities in Madera and Tuolumne counties at a disadvantage.

"Why would we be having the federal government build yet another office facility?" McClintock asked, adding that "this is a plan that picks one winner out of many losers."

A member of the Mariposa Tea Party Patriots shared McClintock's skepticism and testified against the bill at the House hearing. The legislation died, and it has not been re-introduced.

McClintock did not respond to multiple requests for an interview or information over the past week.

He told Mariposa County supervisors on Tuesday that he would seek an investigation "to fully expose" a Yosemite plan that restricts certain commercial operations.

The congressman's staff has reportedly already communicated to park advocates that he won't support a separate Yosemite bill

that will resurface in a few days.

The legislation, to be introduced by Rep. Jim Costa, D-Fresno, in the House and by California Democratic Sen. Dianne Feinstein in the Senate will OK buying about 1,600 acres in Mariposa County for an addition to the park. The land is near a development called Yosemite West, and was reportedly part of naturalist John Muir's original plan for Yosemite.

"We haven't made an expansion to the park in over 85 years," said Laurie Wayburn, president of the Pacific Forest Trust. "I think this would be an extraordinary opportunity to get ready for the 2016 celebration of the park's centennial."

The Pacific Forest Trust owns about half of the land covered by the bill, and a partnership of medical professionals owns the other half. The bill authorizes the land purchase by the park service, but does not mandate it.

"This has been something that has been discussed for some time," Costa said, "and it's got bipartisan support."

Costa added that "it would be very good" if McClintock supported the bill, which has been backed by Mariposa County supervisors. Wayburn, though, said McClintock's staff has indicated he doesn't support the park expansion.

In general, McClintock believes the federal government is too big. He is also critical of park service officials, as when he denounced Lassen Volcanic National Park wildland fire managers last year as "people who lack the simple common sense that God gave a squirrel," following a blaze that blew out of control.

McClintock, without fanfare, introduced his own initial Yosemite-related bill last month. The measure would rename Mammoth Peak as Mount Jessie Benton Fremont. The mountain re-naming bill, which does not have any co-sponsors, would honor the 19th century woman whose writings helped inspire Yosemite protection efforts.

A 12,117-foot landmark near Kuna Lake, Mammoth is Yosemite’s sixth-highest peak. It’s been officially called Mammoth Peak since 1932, according to the Board on Geographic Names’ records.

McClintock publicly articulated some other intentions at the town meeting, including possible legislation blocking the park’s Merced River plan. The plan calls for the elimination of some Yosemite Valley commercial ventures, including an ice rink and bike rental operations.

“I want to sound the alarm over proposals for Yosemite from the National Park Service,” McClintock told Mariposa County supervisors Tuesday. “Yosemite belongs to the American people, and the park service’s job is to welcome and accommodate them, not to restrict and harass them.”