Eldorado lifting forest road closures

Eldorado National Forest’s wet weather seasonal closure for dirt roads and trails ends April 1. The seasonal closure applies to routes identified on motor vehicle use maps which are available free-of-charge at all Eldorado National Forest offices and on the forest’s website.

“We recently reviewed the road and trail conditions and found that they met our criteria for ending the seasonal closure,” said Eldorado National Forest Supervisor Kathy Hardy. “This time of the year, however, some routes may remain wet and visitors have the responsibility to not damage these roads and trails.”

Hardy says that visitors will encounter unmaintained routes that could have road hazards such as potholes, rocks on the road, and overgrown vegetation that blocks visibility. Higher elevation routes may still be covered with snow.

The Mormon Emigrant Trail, a route that connects Highway 50 with Highway 88, remains closed to through traffic due to snow. The snow is not plowed on this road and typically opens to the public in June.

The seasonal closure does not apply to the Rock Creek Recreational Trails Area near Georgetown, which has its own wet weather closure procedures.

Meeks Creek Meadow restoration comments sought

The U.S. Forest Service Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit is seeking public input for a proposed project to restore Meeks Creek Meadow. The project area is located on the West Shore near Meeks Bay.

The proposed project would restore approximately 300 acres of meadow habitat, re-establish a natural fire regime, and provide for diverse wildlife habitat.

Proposed project work would include removal of encroaching trees and prescribed fire operations. Implementation would depend on funding availability.

Tree removal would include hand and mechanical thinning in and around the meadow, and near stream environment zones. SEZs that are determined to be suitable for low impact equipment would be thinned mechanically, while all other SEZs would be hand thinned. Some over-the-snow mechanical and hand thinning could occur.

Thinning operations would utilize existing Forest Service roads along with construction of less than a quarter of a mile of temporary roads, which would be decommissioned after the project.

To provide for public safety when mechanical equipment is in use, temporary closures of Forest Roads 14N42, which provides access to the Desolation Wilderness trailhead, and 14N44, could occur. The Forest Service would explore options to prevent disruption of access, but a closure lasting approximately two weeks is possible.

The 30-day comment period ends April 30. Comments may be submitted electronically to comments-pacificsouthwest-

ltbmu@fs.fed.us. For more information, contact Sarah Muskopf at (530) 543.2835 or email smuskopf@fs.fed.us, or go online.

NPR canceling ‘Talk of the Nation’

By Brian Stelter, NPR

BOSTON — NPR is ending the 21-year-old call-in radio show “Talk of the Nation” and encouraging local stations to replace it with an expanded version of “Here and Now,” an afternoon newscast that is produced here.

The plan, announced Friday, is the product of discussions that began more than two years ago between NPR and some of its biggest member stations. The stations wanted a magazine-style news show at the middle of the day, something along the lines of “Morning Edition” and “All Things Considered,” the two bookends of most stations’ weekday schedules.

“Here and Now” fits that description. The program, produced by Boston University’s WBUR, started locally in 1997 and began to expand nationally in 2001. Until now, it has been distributed by a rival programmer, Public Radio International, but in the summer it will start to be distributed by NPR instead.

NPR will partner with WBUR to turn the one-hour “Here and Now” into a two-hour show, with contributions from NPR News staff and other local stations. A co-host, Jeremy Hobson, will join the current host of the program, Robin Young.

The partnership marks the first time that NPR, a national supplier of newscasts and shows, has linked arms with a

station in this way. “Together, we’re addressing both what the audience is looking for and what member stations have been looking for,” said Kinsey Wilson, the chief content officer for NPR.

He declined to comment on the specifics of the financial arrangement, but said, “We’re confident that by partnering together we can make this both an editorial and a financial success.”

The longer version of “Here and Now” will start July 1, immediately after “Talk of the Nation” bows out. “Talk” is a radio fixture from 2 to 4pm Eastern time, broadcast by 407 stations and reaching 3.53 million listeners a week, according to NPR. (That total counts all the people who hear the program at any point during the week.) It mixes long-form interviews with calls and emails from listeners.

Neal Conan, an NPR reporter and anchor since 1977 and the host of “Talk” since 2001, will “step away from the rigors of daily journalism,” NPR said in a statement.

“They set the standard in many ways for high-quality call-in talk,” Wilson said about “Talk of the Nation.”

The Friday version of “Talk of the Nation” – “Science Friday with Ira Flatow” – will continue to be distributed by NPR, the organization said.

Wilson said the decision to end “Talk” came out of the discussions with WBUR about a partnership.

Local stations continue to produce their own call-in shows, he said, and some are carried nationally, like “On Point,” which is also produced by WBUR. But the change announced Friday is a move away from opinion and toward straightforward storytelling.

Among local stations, there has been a “hunger for a stronger

news presence in the middle of the day," said Charlie Kravetz, the general manager of WBUR, who helped organize a meeting of station directors about midday news back in 2010.

"Here and Now" is broadcast by 182 stations now, but many of them are small; of the 25 biggest radio markets in the country, only eight currently carry it. Partly for that reason, it reaches about 1.35 million listeners a week, far fewer than "Talk of the Nation." A spokeswoman for NPR noted that its audience has grown about 11 percent from a year earlier.

NPR will begin to pitch "Here and Now" to stations on Friday morning. While "I'm sure we won't convince everyone," Mr. Wilson said, "our goal is to convince a large number of stations that carry 'Talk of the Nation' to carry 'Here and Now.'"

The arrangement strengthens NPR's ability to react to breaking news situations. The two-hour program will be produced between noon and 2pm Eastern, and then updated as needed until 4pm for stations that choose to carry it later in the afternoon. This way, "Here and Now" can be a bridge from "Morning Edition," which starts at 5am in some markets but is updated until noon, to "All Things Considered," which starts at 4pm.

"This will essentially provide us the ability to go live, if we need to, from 5 in the morning until 10 o'clock at night," Wilson said.

NPR produced a midday news magazine called "Day to Day" in the mid 2000s, but it was canceled in 2009.

Kravetz said, "A central part of our plan is to tap into a lot of the public radio stations across the country that are doing wonderful journalism that never gets heard outside of their markets."

For the three months that "Talk" is still on, NPR and WBUR

will hire new staff members for the expansion. Mr. Hobson, currently the host of public radio's "Marketplace Morning Report," distributed by American Public Media, will come on board and Meghna Chakrabarti, a local host in Boston, will be the backup host.

Ski report: It may rain on your fun



There is a chance of thunderstorms in the afternoon, so dress for changing conditions. Snow levels will be above 8,000 feet.

Lots of events today:

- U.S. Freestyle Championships at Heavenly has moved up the dual moguls competition to this morning with aerials later this afternoon and fireworks tonight.
- Sierra-at-Tahoe is hosting Ski with Maddie Bowman Day in the half pipe and the Tanner Hall Invitational in the West Bowl.
- Kirkwood Cross Country Center has a Sunset Snowshoe Tour.
- Sugar Bowl has the Boarding for Breast Cancer Shred the Love Rail Jam.
- Squaw Valley has the Pain McShlonkey Fun Event.

Here is the March 30 ski report.

– Curtis Fong

S. Tahoe schedules neighborhood meeting

There will be a Neighborhood Service Team meeting on April 25 from 5:30-7pm for Area No. 4, which includes Al Tahoe, Bijou Pines and Pioneer Village.

South Lake Tahoe has funding to support neighborhood improvement initiatives such as neighborhood signage and other things which exemplify neighborhood pride.

The meeting is at the senior center.

Uthe turning in his assistant DA badge

By Kathryn Reed

Hans Uthe is good about talking on just about any subject except if the topic is himself.

It took his wife, Beth, to convince him to speak to the media about his retirement. And then in an interview with *Lake Tahoe News* he spent more time talking about his colleagues, his dad and crime in general than he did his career, the cases he's tried or his future.

"Humble and unassuming" is how El Dorado County Superior Court Judge Suzanne Kingsbury describes Uthe.

The two worked together in the DA's office when Jerry Lasarow had the position Uthe now has.



Hans Uthe is closing the door on his tenure as lead prosecutor in the South Lake Tahoe office of the El Dorado County District Attorney's Office. Photo/LTN

"I remember a time when we were in the Justice Court, presided over by now retired Judge [Gene] Rasmussen, when a fellow came in for arraignment who was charged with a Fish & Game violation for illegal possession of a kestrel, a small hawk-type bird. Gene looked a little puzzled because the code section wasn't readily familiar, when Hans launches into a lengthy and detailed explanation about what a kestrel was, its habitat, diet, etc. The judge was getting frustrated because he wanted to move his calendar along, but Hans was so caught up in his story that he didn't even pause for a breath," Kingsbury told *Lake Tahoe News*.

Uthe is known for having a breadth of knowledge about an array of topics. One of those is substance abuse.

He estimates at least 80 percent of the crimes in South Lake Tahoe have a substance abuse component – outright drug use or sales, burglaries to pay for drugs or an argument that escalated into battery because of being under the influence. Most of the DUIs also involve locals.

“The percentage of crimes by locals is higher than you’d think,” Uthe said.

He points to the casinos, the 24-hour community being a huge factor. When talking to his counterparts on the North Shore they don’t experience the crime rate South Lake Tahoe does.

“I’ve always thought we generate more crime than a community this size should,” Uthe said. “This community was leading the state last year in heroin seizures.”

South Lake El Dorado Narcotics Enforcement Team leader Jeff Catchings said he regularly works with Uthe to make sure the prosecution team has what it needs to obtain a conviction.

“He was very, very easy to work with,” Catchings said. “He’s a very smart attorney.”

That respect also comes from those on the other side of the aisle.

“Hans and I have worked together for several years, always on opposing sides of criminal cases. While I congratulate him on his retirement, he will be sorely missed in the criminal courtrooms of South Lake Tahoe. Hans brings decades of experience into the courtroom and always acts in a dignified and respectful manner,” attorney Rob Woelfel said. “Hans has dedicated himself to public service and to protecting the citizens of El Dorado County. He is also very generous with his time, volunteering for activities such as mentoring teens through the teen court program and helping those struggling with drug addiction through the court.”

It’s the Roberson case that Uthe says he is most proud of, even though as he describes it, he played a minor role. He credits colleague Trish Kelliher, now retired South Tahoe police Capt. Martin Hewlett and FBI Agent Chris Campion for putting Ulysses Roberson behind bars.

“Roberson is pure evil. I don’t think he has a single redeeming quality,” Uthe said.

Roberson in December 2009 was convicted of second-degree murder in the death of his son.

“Our job is to exonerate those who are falsely accused and convict those who are guilty of crimes,” Uthe said.

Uthe’s boss, Vern Pierson, said, “Because of Hans’s hard work, dedication and compassion, many victims and citizens of El Dorado County have seen justice served. Hans will be greatly missed by the office and the law enforcement community. We wish him all the best in his retirement.”

With only one week left in the El Dorado County District Attorney’s Office, the top prosecutor in the South Lake Tahoe office will be leaving a huge void. He’s been the assistant district attorney since July 4, 1998. April 5 is his last day.

“He has been a supportive boss for his troops, not only backing them up, but providing assistance anywhere it was needed. If one of his support staff was out, leaving the others short handed, he would sit down and churn out clerical work. He never hesitated to pick up a case or a calendar for the attorneys in the office,” Kingsbury said.

There are no plans to replace him. It means an office that is already lacking personnel will be even more comprised.

“I’m concerned,” Uthe said of his position not being filled. “You always have to have leadership in an office.”

The 58-year-old plans to spend more time with his wife – who he says has supportively understood his job has been his priority. While he hasn’t gotten on the slopes this year, he intends to. If he doesn’t, it will be the first year he hasn’t skied. After all, he spent 10 years on the Bear Valley ski patrol.

Mountain biking, hiking and fly fishing are the other outdoor endeavors he enjoys.

The Uthes moved out of Tahoe several years ago after people with access to a police scanner heard he had been called out to a crime scene. They took the opportunity to throw rocks through windows at his home. That was enough of being so close to the bad guys.

And while he can see doing some pro bono legal work, Uthe said he has no intention of being in the private sector for compensation.

“I gave everything I had,” Uthe said of his time in El Dorado County. Now he wants a little time for himself.

Opinion: Keep Nevada part of TRPA

By Jesse Patterson

Nevada senators introduce bill to Save Lake Tahoe. Now, we have to make sure that it passes. Special interests who stand to benefit if Lake Tahoe loses its environmental protections will fight hard to stop this bill.

Nevada legislators need to hear from you. If you have not already done so, sign this petition to tell our elected officials that Lake Tahoe is for everyone, not just big money interests, and must be protected.

The Save Tahoe Bill, (SB229) introduced on March 11, will keep Nevada committed to the bi-state agreement that has protected Lake Tahoe for the last 40-plus years by completely repealing

SB271, a bill that pulls Nevada out of all bi-state protections currently safeguarding Lake Tahoe.

SB271 was pushed through the Legislature in the last few minutes of the 2011 session and set a timetable for Nevada to leave the bi-state agreement in 2015. A promised environmental analysis looking at the impacts of this course of action has never materialized putting the future of Tahoe in jeopardy.

Why is repealing SB271 important?

The lake needs a uniform regulator. Lake Tahoe is divided between two states but it does not know jurisdictional boundaries. Nor do the threats facing the lake. The two states must work together for the long-term protection of this unique national treasure.

Why does the lake need the TRPA?

The TRPA regulates development uniformly on both sides of the state line. The TRPA has stopped runaway urban sprawl and casino growth that threatened conservation lands. Tahoe's future is uncertain if the agency disintegrates.

The TRPA's successful boat inspection program has been the only defense against quagga and zebra mussels, which will cost millions to tackle if they establish. It only takes one mussel to destroy Lake Tahoe forever. We cannot take that chance.

The TRPA and its partners have secured hundreds of millions of dollars in federal restoration funds that have made a big difference at the lake. Our congressional leaders need to know that protecting and restoring the lake are top priorities for both states before they push for more investment. The bottom line is we aren't going to get more money if the two states act like squabbling siblings.

Join the League to Save Lake Tahoe, the Nevada Conservation League and thousands of others who care about the future of

Lake Tahoe in supporting SB229.

If you haven’t already done so, sign our petition. Or, email the members of the Nevada Senate on Natural Resources and ask them to vote YES on SB229.

Thank you for telling Nevada elected officials that Lake Tahoe should be protected for future generations.

Jesse Patterson is deputy executive director of the League to Save Lake Tahoe.

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3 Tahoe City businesses hit by burglars

By KTVN-TV

Placer County sheriff’s deputies are investigating three related business burglaries that took place late Thursday night or Friday morning.

Deputies say the burglars broke out windows to three businesses at the Cobblestone Mall, located at 495 North Lake Blvd. in Tahoe City.

Deputies say the burglars entered the Tahoe Rug Gallery and Kalifornia Jean Bar, while Blue Stone Jewelry showed signs of an attempted entry.

Some merchandise was taken.

Anyone with information related to this case should call (530) 581.6321 or Placer County Crime Stoppers at 800.581.6321. A $1,000 reward is being offered.

‘Monsanto Protection Act’ called outrageous, dangerous

By Michelle McGuinness, MSN News

A short-term spending bill has sparked intense debate about America’s food supply.

HR933 passed the Senate last week; President Obama signed it into law Tuesday. The bill helped the government avoid a March 27 shutdown. All of which sounds like standard procedure.

But activists are enraged over section 735 of the bill, the “Farmer Assurance Provision,” which they’re calling the “Monsanto Protection Act” and claiming could harm America’s food supply.

Monsanto is an agricultural biotechnology company that produces genetically engineered seeds. Opponents claim genetically modified organisms (GMOs) may be harmful to human health and environmental biodiversity.

“It’s outrageous,” said Dave Murphy, founder and executive director of Food Democracy Now.

“This is an ATM machine for Monsanto,” Murphy said. Monsanto “basically opened a new line of credit when they got this thing passed.”

Usually, any new GMO crops need to be approved by the U.S. Department of Agriculture and legal challenges can be filed to stop a seed from being planted until it undergoes a more vigorous review. But opponents of section 735, the “Monsanto Protection Act,” claim the bill eliminates regulatory checks and judicial review.

“It’s basically a corporate handout to Monsanto,” Murphy claimed. “It hurts every farmer. … Every consumer is at risk.”

In a statement to MSN News, a USDA spokesperson said, Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack “has asked the Office of General Council to review this provision as it appears to preempt judicial review of a deregulatory action which may make the provision unenforceable.”

In an email to MSN, Kelly Clauss of Monsanto’s Public Affairs office said the Farmer Assurance Provision has enjoyed bipartisan support in Congress since June 2012.

“As we understand it, the point of the Farmer Assurance Provision is to strike a careful balance allowing farmers to continue to plant and cultivate their crops subject to appropriate environmental safeguards, while USDA conducts any necessary further environmental reviews,” Clauss wrote.

She said not only Monsanto, but other major grower groups like the American Farm Bureau Federation, the American Seed Trade Association, the American Soybean Association and the National Corn Growers Association supported the provision.

Clauss also provided a June 2012 letter to the House Committee on Appropriations signed by the groups cited as supporters.

“Opponents of agricultural biotechnology have repeatedly filed suits …. in order to disrupt the regulatory process and undermine the science-based regulation of such products,” the letter claims. It says the litigation has impeded the availability of new technology to growers and consumers.

The letter calls the provision a “positive step” that assures growers “the crops they plant could continue to be grown, subject to appropriate interim conditions, even after a judicial ruling against USDA.”

But that did not calm the worries of more than 250,000 people

who signed a petition expressing their outrage at the passage of what they call the “Monsanto Protection Act.”

The petition alleges that the provision “forced USDA to immediately approve any permits for continued planting at the industry’s request, putting industry completely in charge by allowing for a ‘back door approval’ mechanism.”

Section 735 says the Secretary of Agriculture should “immediately grant temporary permit(s) or temporary deregulation” upon request from a farmer, grower, farm operator or producer.

Murphy said there was a protest at the White House March 27 that included a small group of local citizens.

“We gave Obama all the political cover he would need and he still caved,” he said.

Kashima takes bronze on home snow

By USSA

Heather McPhie (Bozeman, Mont.) successfully defended her title, taking gold in moguls at the Sprint U.S. Freestyle Championships on Friday at Heavenly Mountain Resort.

In the men’s contest, Bradley Wilson (Butte, Mont.) took his first U.S. crown winning over brother Bryon with local favorite Sho Kashima (Stateline) taking bronze. World Cup titlist Hannah Kearney (Norwich, Vt.) was second for women with Eliza Outtrim third.

The championships close Saturday with dual moguls and aerials.

Weather created challenges with rare fog and ice delaying the start Friday morning.

With incoming heavy weather predicted for Sunday, the scheduled dual moguls competition was moved along with the already scheduled aerials event.

“It was a warm day, the course was soft, but I was just working on getting my speed, charging out of the gate and really get some speed through the middle section,” Kashima said. “My recovery has been long but my skiing feels good and I finally feel like I’m back to the skiing I know I can do. Skiing in front of the home crowd, my family, friends, doctors, sponsors, everyone who enables me to be able to do what I love is a great feeling. And being able to put on a show for them after all the support they’ve given me is awesome!”