Fires planned for Nevada side of basin

U.S. Forest Service fuels management crews will conduct prescribed fire operations in the Elks Point Road area of Round Hill on Dec. 5.

Crews expect to burn 1 acre, conditions permitting. In addition, operations will begin above Highway 28 near Skunk Harbor. Crews expect to burn 4 acres, conditions permitting. Operations will continue as weather and conditions allow.

Residents and visitors can expect to see smoke from these prescribed fire project areas. 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.

El Dorado County has money to repair select homes

El Dorado County has funds available as low-interest rate loans for home repairs to income-qualified homeowners in the unincorporated areas of the county.

Funding is provided through the State Community Development Block Grant Program and the county's Housing Rehabilitation Revolving Loan Funds.

These Housing Rehabilitation loans must be used to correct health and safety issues and to meet code compliance standards. Program loan funds may be used to repair or replace roofs, foundations, plumbing, electrical, heating/air conditioning systems, termite damage and more. The home must be located in an unincorporated area of the county.

To qualify, the household income must fall at or below 80 percent of the area median, based on household size. Current annual maximum household income limits are: one person, $42,650; two persons, $48,750; three persons, $54,850; four persons, $60,900; five persons, $65,800; six persons, $70,650; seven persons, $75,550; eight persons, $80,400.

For more information, call (530) 642.4863.

Comments being taken on trail plans for Truckee

Comments are being taken until Jan. 8 on the draft initial study-proposed mitigated negative declaration for the Truckee River Legacy Trail Phase 3B Project.

The project would construct a paved Class I trail south of the Truckee River, connecting Phase 3A trail (located west of the TTSA Wastewater Treatment Plant) to Glenshire Drive. The project would also construct a bridge over Martis Creek by its confluence with the Truckee River. The trail would travel through property owned by Truckee, U.S. Forest Service, and

Tahoe-Truckee Sanitation Agency.

Written comments should be sent to: Becky Bucar, Town of Truckee, Engineering Division, 10183 Truckee Airport Road, Truckee, CA 96161.

The Truckee Town Council is scheduled to consider adoption of the IS/MND on Jan. 8.

For more info, contact Becky Bucar at (530) 582.2932 or bbucar@townoftruckee.com.

June Mountain to reopen in 2013-14 season

By George Shirk, Mammoth Times

After a one-year planned hiatus, June Mountain Ski Area will re-open for the 2013-14 winter season, CEO Rusty Gregory said.

“We’re going to open it up,” he said. “We submitted our operating plan to the Forest Service and now we’re waiting for approval, and part of that operating plan is letting them know that we intend to open it as normal for the 2013-14 season.”

It is in essence a relaunch of the ski area, which is owned by Mammoth Mountain. Gregory said Mammoth would take the year to more clearly hone June Mountain’s mission and to target its marketing base.

“Carl Williams [the general manager of June Mountain] is going to working closely with the community on working to define a more clearly-identified market niche for June,” Gregory said. “That will involve both the mountain and the community.”

As of now, Gregory said June would be a destination for “young families.”

What that means in specific terms, Gregory said, is still up in the air.

“You’ll be hearing a lot more of that in the weeks and months to come.”

The news of the reopening did not exactly achieve the magnitude of the news of its closure for the current 2012-13 season, which was made last spring in the heels of a near-disastrous, snow-starved season for June and Mammoth.

“We haven’t made a big deal about it, not because it isn’t big news,” Gregory said, “but because we’ve got a lot of work to do and make sure we have our plan down and approach the community in the right way.”

Superstorm has California hospitals testing emergency preparedness

By Chad Terhune, Los Angeles Times

Two nurses examined an earthquake victim writhing in pain inside a yellow triage tent recently on the lawn of Redlands Community Hospital.

They suspected the woman had head trauma, a broken leg and internal bleeding as part of a disaster drill that morning for

a magnitude 7.9 earthquake.

The 229-bed facility was running on two generators after losing power, and the nurses needed to get her inside the hospital and into intensive care. Trouble was the hospital gurneys were too heavy for the damp grass and they couldn’t roll them to the triage tent.

In the weeks since Superstorm Sandy crippled some of New York’s best-known hospitals, many California health officials are reexamining their own disaster planning.

“If hospitals in a city like New York that is generally very well-prepared for emergencies weren’t up to snuff for Hurricane Sandy, how well will other hospitals do under similar circumstances?” said Arthur Kellermann, director of Rand Health, a nonprofit think tank in Santa Monica. “You want your hospitals to serve as a pillar of strength rather than a site of disaster in need of rescue.”

California’s 430 hospitals routinely test their preparedness, and many have had considerable experience responding to earthquakes, wildfires and other events over the years.

But Sandy’s toll has prompted officials to take a closer look at fuel and water supplies, the need for crowd control after a disaster occurs and the importance of recruiting volunteer help such as ham radio operators to bolster communication when mobile phones fail.

Sandy knocked out backup power to New York University’s Langone Medical Center in Manhattan and forced the evacuation of patients down darkened stairwells. Langone, Bellevue Hospital and the Manhattan Veterans Affairs Medical Center all remain partially closed a month after the superstorm hit.

In Southern California, a major blackout last year had already revealed some weaknesses at area hospitals, including Scripps Mercy and Sharp Memorial in San Diego County.

The backup generator at Scripps failed during the September 2011 blackout because of a mechanical problem in a fuel pump and the hospital lost power for about 90 minutes. The Chula Vista hospital said it evacuated some patients and relied on battery power for certain life-support systems.

Scripps Health said “no patients experienced an interruption in care.” Based on that experience, Scripps said, it made changes such as having at least two generators at each of its hospitals and expanding its supply of spare parts for fuel tanks and power equipment.

The state requires hospitals to test their backup generators regularly and have a fuel supply on-site for 24 hours of full operation.

A spokesman for the California Department of Public Health said regulators reviewed the power outage at Scripps Mercy and found “no deficiencies” in its emergency planning.

At Sharp Memorial hospital in San Diego, backup generators produced intermittent power during the blackout, but no patient evacuations were necessary, said Dan Gross, an executive vice president at Sharp Healthcare. In response, he said, Sharp upgraded its generators and made it easier to bring in additional power if needed.

Gross said Sandy may lead hospitals to think more about partnering with nearby gas stations on backup generators. It’s common during disasters for gas stations to have fuel but no power to pump it. Keeping access to water supplies for running a hospital’s heating and air-conditioning units is another key issue that’s often overlooked during a prolonged disruption, he said.

“If the HVAC system goes out, your intensive-care unit and operating rooms can become saunas, and you can only go so far before evacuation is necessary,” Gross said.

At Redlands Community Hospital, Kathi Sankey-Robinson, vice president of business development, oversaw the earthquake disaster drill two weeks ago looking for potential glitches.

When nurses couldn’t get the gurneys through the wet grass to the triage tent, she pointed to a shipping crate behind the hospital that could be taken apart so plywood could be put on the ground. She also noticed that a cart of emergency supplies needed bigger wheels to handle the outside terrain.

“We take this very seriously in California, but Sandy brings it to mind even more,” Sankey-Robinson said. “We are really looking for the bad and the ugly from these drills. Muddy grass won’t be the worst issue.”

Meantime, at the state level, officials are searching for about $1 million in outside funding to house and maintain three mobile field hospitals that can be deployed during a disaster. State funding is expected to run out next summer.

California purchased three of these 200-bed field hospitals for $18.3 million in 2006. They are designed to provide hospital beds, operating rooms and other medical equipment within 48 to 72 hours. They have been used in three disaster drills across the state, but no actual events thus far.

“We need to find a partner or we may lose this resource for California,” said Howard Backer, a physician and director of the California Emergency Medical Services Authority.

For hospitals, Rand Health’s Kellermann said, it can be difficult for them to look beyond their immediate financial pressures and invest in capabilities they hope to never use.

“It’s hard to get hospital boards and senior executives to focus on a ‘maybe, someday,'” Kellermann said, “as opposed to next year’s capital campaign, this month’s bottom line or a busy operating room schedule tomorrow.”

Timber Cove Lodge gets new name, to be renovated

There is one less Best Western in South Lake Tahoe.

What was the Timber Cove Lodge is no longer affiliated with Best Western, and it has a new name. As of Dec. 1, it is the Beach Retreat & Lodge at Tahoe.

The changes are part of the new ownership. Urbana Holdings based in Georgia acquired the property, which include the Timber Cove Pier, after the trustees of the estate of longtime owner Bob Maloff sold the property after Maloff died in 2011.

The first attempt at rebranding the restaurant site on the pier failed. Bistro on the Pier is gone and in its place is Boathouse Restaurant on the Pier.

What was Mama's Red Tomato restaurant in the front of the hotel along Highway 50 will be Kitchen 3411. That is expected to open by the end of the year.

In 2013, the 262 rooms and lobby will be remodeled, and meeting space added.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Ski report: Lots of virgin powder

Lots of fresh snow to ski on. And the sun is out.

Here is the Dec. 3 ski report.

– Curtis Fong

Tahoe Tails – Adoptable Pets in South Lake Tahoe

Kitty came to the shelter when his owner died. Her family would have taken him in, but Kitty is very scared of their dogs.



He is a beautiful, very sweet and affectionate cat who would like a quiet indoor-only home. He has his own litter box, scratcher and carrier to go home with.

Kitty is neutered, microchipped, and vaccinated. He 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

Study: Regular exercise good for the brain

By Huffington Post

Finding time to exercise every day could be powerful tool in warding off brain shrinkage, called atrophy, that comes with aging, according to a new study.

Researchers from the Center for Development of Advanced Medicine for Dementia in Japan found that adults who moved more during the day were less likely to experience progression of frontal lobe atrophy, which is the shrinking of the frontal lobe region of the brain. That part of the brain plays a part in emotions, problem-solving, memory, judgment and personality.

“Incorporating physical activity into your daily routine can be a helpful step to prevent conditions caused by brain atrophy, such as dementia,” study researcher Atsumu Yuki, said in a statement.

The study, to be published next month in the journal Medicine

and Science in Sports and Exercise, included 381 men and 393 women, who were followed for an average of eight years.

Researchers conducted MRI brain scans on the study participants at the beginning and end of the study period to monitor atrophy of the frontal lobe and the temporal lobe of the brain. Their daily activity levels were monitored via accelerometry sensors.

The researchers found that people who had expended the most energy from physical activity in the study, as well as people who took the most steps, had lower odds of developing frontal lobe atrophy than those who took the least steps and had the least amount of physical activity. However, they didn't find a link between exercise and atrophy of the temporal lobe.

A similar study in the journal Neurology, which was published just recently, also showed an association between physical activity and decreased brain atrophy, as well as fewer white matter brain lesions, in people over age 70. However, the University of Edinburgh researchers noted that because the study was observational, it was unclear which factor caused the other.

Letter: Community support helps feed those in need

To the community,

Tahoe Community Church would like to say thank you for the community support as we feed the hungry in our community.

This Thanksgiving we fed 148 households a turkey and bag of

all the fixings. We are also feeding record numbers each Friday afternoon at the Food Pantry. We have fed over 7,000 people this year.

Our thanks to American Century and the LTVA for their generous donation which helps us to give a generous amount of food each week to those in need.

Thanks to the Salvation Army for the 100 turkeys, and to MontBleu and its employees for turkeys, bags of fixings and pies. Thanks to Harrah’s-Harveys for the use of their freezer to store our turkeys. Thanks to Cub Scout Troop 592 for their service in helping to carry the Thanksgiving dinner bags to the cars of our clients.

A special thanks to all our volunteers.

We are thankful for Whittell High School students who donated food from their successful nonperishable Food Drive.

This community partnership is very important in helping us as we feed the those in need in this community.

Thank you!

Kathy Pavich, **Tahoe Community Church**