USFS cutting off access to roads for the winter

The U.S. Forest Service Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit has begun the annual closure of forest roads around the basin.

Fall closure dates are established by the motor vehicle use map. The MVUM also establishes target opening dates after the winter season. These dates are dependent on soil conditions in order to avoid resource damage and erosion potential.

Consult the MVUM by going online to find specific roads and dates.

For more information on gate closures, contact the Forest Supervisor’s office at (530) 543.2694.

Opinion: Cutting National Park funding is a bad idea

By Mary G. Martin

After spending 38 years working for our federal government and national parks, including two years as superintendent of Lassen Volcanic National Park, 11 as superintendent of Mojave National Preserve, and time spent in Yosemite National Park and Alaska’s exquisite parks, I am no stranger to the power and beauty of our most special places.

That’s why it disturbs me in the most personal way to know our National Park Service is facing across-the-board cuts that, if implemented, will compromise that great experience visitors

have come to expect. Such cuts would eliminate park ranger positions, close visitor centers and campgrounds, and even close entire parks.

Children are my passion. Seeing a child discover the smallest element of a park and exclaim wonder is heartwarming. My grandchildren cherish their national parks and national park experience. Every child should have an opportunity for similar experiences. The National Park Service is instrumental in adding that dimension to a child's growth and, with partners, reach out to children who otherwise might not have had nature experiences. Your national parks already operate on a "shoestring" budget, and cuts would have a devastating impact on programs such as the growing youth program in most parks.

At one-fourteenth of 1 percent of the federal budget, cutting National Park Service budgets will not solve our deficit problems, but has the power to severely harm local economies, in particular small businesses, that depend on healthy parks and strong park attendance.

Investing in our national parks is the best idea that our country can make. In California alone, visitors spent over $1.3 billion in economies surrounding national parks in 2010, and national parks created nearly 17,000 jobs. Locally, visitors to Whiskeytown National Recreation Area contributed over $32 million to local economies and businesses in 2010, and my alma mater, Lassen Volcanic National Park, generated more than $16 million. On a larger scale, the National Park Service reports that every dollar invested in park operations generates about $10, and every two Park Service jobs yields one outside the park service.

Our nation's treasures are entrusted to the National Park Service for preservation. The Statue of Liberty, the Washington monuments, Mt. Rushmore, the Gateway Arch in St. Louis, the USS Arizona and most iconic monuments and memorials that define our nation are a part of the National Park System.

Upkeep and maintenance on these treasures currently poses a challenge to meet unique needs with limited budgets.

America’s national parks already suffer from an annual operations shortfall of $500 million to $600 million. Parks are falling into disrepair and are more vulnerable than ever to inappropriate development within park boundaries. Another deep cut of 8 to 10 percent across the National Park Service will mean even fewer rangers, less maintenance and almost certainly park closures. Given the negative consequences this could have for visitors and local businesses nationwide, Congress needs to find a more balanced solution to our deficit problem.

As the National Park Service looks to its centennial in 2016, I call upon Congress and the administration to ensure that our national parks are protected and funded for the continued enjoyment of our generation, and our children and grandchildren to come. Funding our national parks will help protect the positive visitor experience that I helped create while working with our National Park Service, and will protect the continued successful tourism economy in Redding, throughout northern California, and beyond. Our national parks are a legacy worth preserving and fully supporting them is without question the right thing to do.

Mary G. Martin is the retired superintendent of Lassen Volcanic National Park and a board member of the Lassen Park Foundation and the Mill Creek Conservancy. This first appeared in the Redding Record Searchlight.

Increase in travelers expected during Thanksgiving weekend

AAA projects 43.6 million Americans will journey 50 miles or more from home during the Thanksgiving holiday weekend, an increase of 0.7 percent from the 43.3 million people who traveled last year. This increase marks the fourth consecutive year of growing holiday travelers.

The Thanksgiving holiday travel period is defined as Nov. 21-25.

Ninety percent of those travelers, or 39.1 million, will travel by automobile, an increase of 0.6 percent

AAA estimates the national average price of gasoline will drop to between $3.25-3.40 a gallon by the holiday, similar to last year's average of $3.32, which was the most expensive average ever on Thanksgiving. Despite the historically high prices paid by motorists this year, the national average has declined by nearly 40 cents a gallon since early October and should continue to drop through the end of the year, according to AAA. The national average price of gas for Thanksgiving from 2007-11 was $2.75 a gallon.

AAA asked intended travelers which days they would depart for and return from Thanksgiving travel. Among those surveyed, the majority of travelers plan to leave the Wednesday before the holiday (45 percent) and return the following Sunday (36 percent), with another 25 percent expecting to return Nov. 26.

LTUSD, LTCC investigating altering how boards are elected

By Kathryn Reed

Early next year the boards of Lake Tahoe Unified School District and Lake Tahoe Community College are expected to decide if they will alter elections to no longer allow candidates to be elected at-large.

The California Voting Rights Act is forcing K-12 and community colleges to look at their demographics to ensure everyone is represented.

“The data shows we’re at risk if we keep it at-large,” LTUSD Superintendent Jim Tarwater told the board at the Nov. 13 meeting. “We have 40 percent Latino population. We don’t reflect our population.”

LTUSD and LTCC have formed committees to work on this together with their top administrator. LTUSD’s committee is board members Wendy David and Larry Green, and Tarwater. The college committee is board members Molly Blann and Roberta Mason, and President Kindred Murillo.

They are all scheduled to meet after Thanksgiving, with the respective boards expected to take action after the first of the year. Both have elections in 2013.

Lawsuits filed elsewhere have involved schools, though it does not mean municipalities are immune. South Lake Tahoe City Manager Nancy Kerry told *Lake Tahoe News* the city wants to be

part of the discussions, but that the city is different because it doesn't have the disparity issues the schools do because the boundaries are different. LTUSD and LTCC include the unincorporated part of El Dorado County in the basin.

If either LTUSD or LTCC abandons at-large elections, each of the five board members would be elected from a geographic area. This is different from South Tahoe Public Utility District which has districts, but they have nothing to do with geography.

Young voices express the spirit of holiday season

By Kathryn Reed

Holiday music spills into the hallway, beckoning visitors to find the classroom the sounds are emanating from.

Swiveling to the song, two rows of young women are lined up between the desks and chairs. Some know the words by heart, while others read them on the screen.

"Guys, it's the twist. You really need to get into it," Paul Kushner instructs them.

This is the weekly rehearsal of the Blue Ribbon Choir – an all girls choir open to high school-age students. They are gearing up for the 18th annual Holiday Extravaganza in December. These 18 are part of an ensemble of nearly 300 students who will share the stage at MontBleu casino in Stateline for this two-day event.

The range of voices makes one think this is a professional, and definitely older, group. In just two hours the improvement is noticeable. If they sound this good in mid-November, what will the harmony be like in another month?

Sitting in the front of the room the harmonies – some four-part – are distinctive, rich and captivating. And to think they only practice as a group for two hours a week shows the natural ability as well as the work being put in outside of the four walls of South Tahoe High School. Each singer has a CD of the music and binder with the lyrics.



Blue Ribbon Choir members practice Nov. 13 for the December Holiday Extravaganza. Photo/Kathryn Reed

When one of the singers wants to go over a part Kushner is able take out the accompaniment on the computer and just play their part. There is no money to pay someone to accompany them, so the music is all computerized.

It helps that Kushner has a master's degree in computer education. He has been teaching in Lake Tahoe Unified School

District for decades and is the founder of the district's choral program.

"More T's and D's" is a common refrain from Kushner. It is all about annunciation. It is knowing how to breathe when singing the word "Christmas" – not holding the vowel sound.

The Blue Ribbon Choir is the elite group – the one younger kids aspire to be in. Many of the girls in the room remember when they were little and knowing that it was this choir that they are now part that would mean they had accomplished something special.

A teacher recommendation or having been in an advanced choir are the ways to gain entry into this choir.

During a break they explain the reason they like being part of the choir is that it is challenging, allows them to express themselves, they meet new people, learn new music, they become a family.

Four of them want to carry their interest in music beyond high school. Sara Ortega wants to compose music, while Kaylee Chandler wants to teach it as well as perform professionally.

Yari Torres isn't sure what she wants to do with music, but knows it is something she could fall back on. She has been singing since third-grade – the age where LTUSD starts its students in choir. (However, Zaira Monette started in second grade because no one knew how old she was so they didn't kick her out.)

Sammi Bender wants to go to a top music school and see where it leads her. In December she will sing the national anthem at a Kings basketball game. She sang the "Star Spangled Banner" all summer at the standup paddleboard races in South Tahoe.

Bender, who is home schooled, says she got her voice from her grandfather, not her parents. She likes being in the Stadium

View Building – one of the new facilities at STHS in the last few years – because the acoustics are much better. She's taking acting classes at Lake Tahoe Community College and hopes to try out for the winter production. Not being a student at STHS prevents her from being in plays at that school.

The choir comes under the auspices of the South Lake Tahoe Children's Choral Society. All the adult leaders volunteer their time and expertise.

"Because it's not school affiliated, we can do some very sacred music," Kushner explains. Christian and Jewish tunes are part of the repertoire, so is a rap song.

The Holiday Extravaganza includes all the choirs in the district, which started practicing their tunes a month ago. In all, 31 songs will be sung. And for the finale, everyone will participate.

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Notes:

• 18th annual Holiday Extravaganza

• Dec. 19 and Dec. 20, 7pm, MontBleu showroom in Stateline

• $10 adults, $5 students and seniors, younger than 5 free. Tickets available at the door.

Man accused of S. Tahoe murder awaits trial

Sacramento Bee reporters answer questions about area crime news, trends and other issues.

QUESTION: What is going on with the man/case who was arrested in Carmichael this year for a killing that took place 30 years ago in South Lake Tahoe?

Submitted by: George, Fair Oaks

ANSWER: Andrew Evan Sanford is in El Dorado County Jail awaiting trial in the death of 16-year-old Richard E. Swanson.

Swanson was killed Aug. 14, 1980, at what was then a Shell gas station at what is known as the Y intersection of Lake Tahoe Boulevard and Emerald Bay Road in South Lake Tahoe. He was working alone that night and was killed during a robbery.

According to a story in the *Bee*, Swanson's head had been severely beaten and he was robbed of his wallet, which contained $190 in cash from his first paycheck at the station. In addition, $761.02 was reportedly taken from the gas station's cash drawer.

Sanford, 51, a Carmichael resident, was arrested in March of this year. He has pleaded not guilty to the 32-year-old crime.

Upper Kingsbury Grade burn

scheduled

U.S. Forest Service fuels management crews will conduct prescribed fire operations on Upper Kingsbury Grade near North Benjamin Drive on Nov. 15.

Crews expect to burn one-quarter acre, conditions permitting. In addition, prescribed fire operations continue in the Bunker Road area near Tahoe City.

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.

Ski-Snowboard Hall of Fame to induct 6 newcomers

Freestyle skiing pioneer Wayne Wong and world champion freestyle moguls skier Jeremy Bloom lead a class of six inductees elected to the U.S. Ski and Snowboard Hall of Fame.

Joining them will be Alpine World Championship medalist Kirsten Clark, world champion and snowboarding pioneer Craig

Kelly, acclaimed international ski instructor and leader Horst Abraham and ski resort developer Hans Geier.

Wong is regarded by many as a living legend. He was the leading and most popular skier of his day when hotdog or freestyle skiing was emerging on the scene. The inventor of the famous “Wong Banger” and a star of countless skiing movies, Wong packaged his fame into being a true ambassador for skiing and continues to this day to convey his passion and enjoyment for the benefit of ski sports across the country. Skiand Powder magazines have named him among the most influential skiers in the 20th century.

Bloom was also a star of freestyle skiing who won two World Cup titles and a World Championship and was one of America’s most visible skiing stars in the mid-2000s. In 2003 he won gold in the dual moguls event at the World Championships and a silver in the individual moguls. Two years later he won his third World Championship medal as well as earning the moguls and overall World Cup titles. His six straight wins in World Cup competition set a record that stood for seven years. Bloom was also a football star at the University of Colorado and played for two years for the NFL’s Pittsburgh Steelers.

Clark started racing at the age of 7, developing her skiing skills at Maine’s Sugarloaf Mountain. During her 13-year career on the U.S. Ski Team she won 12 U.S. titles and reached the World Cup podium eight times. In 2003 she won a World Championship silver medal in the super G. From 1998 to 2002 she strung together five straight U.S. downhill titles. A three time Olympian, Clark was respected for her quiet leadership and the high standards she set preparing for competition.

Kelly is the third snowboarding honoree to be elected to the U.S. Ski and Snowboard Hall of Fame. A winner of four world titles in the early days of the sport, Kelly was one of its most influential pioneers working with Jake Burton Carpenter

to open countless ski areas to the sport in the 1980s. He also played a key role during the early years of Burton Snowboards. The holder of an honors degree in chemical engineering, he starred in numerous skiing and snowboarding films over 20 years. The first true professional snowboarder, he was awarded TransWorld Snowboarding's Lifetime Achievement Award in 2002. He died a year later in an avalanche while seeking to become the first fully certified Canadian Mountain Guide as a snowboarder.

Abraham is an Austrian native who rewrote the script for American ski instruction that had a significant impact internationally. Through his work America's ski instructors emerged as world leaders in their field. Starting with the Aspen Ski School and later the technical director for the Vail Ski School, he eventually became the education vice president for the Professional Ski Instructors of America. As the developer of what became known as the American Teaching Method in 1980, focusing on teaching skiing skills instead of skiing turns, he led the U.S. to become the world leader in snow sports education.

Geier was a leading manager and developer of ski areas across the United States for nearly 30 years. From the time he completed Pennsylvania's Ski Round Top in 1971 until his retirement in 1998, he had a large impact on the growth of the sport. Most notably he was the general manager of Steamboat Springs resort in Colorado from 1981 to 1990 when he led it through a $43 million expansion, growing annual skier visits from 360,000 to over a million and putting the resort's finances in the black. In 1994 he was hired as president of Doppelmayr Corporation for North America, a position he held until his retirement in 1998. He also served on numerous ski association boards including the National Ski Areas Association (NSAA) and chairman of Colorado Ski Country. In 1988 the NSAA presented to him its Lifetime Achievement Award.

The induction of the class of 2012 will take place at the

Marriott Vail Resort in Vail on April 13 as the concluding event for Skiing Heritage Week celebrating Vail's 50th anniversary.

USFS Christmas tree permits available after Turkey Day

The U.S. Forest Service Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit will begin the sale of holiday tree permits Nov. 23.

Permits cost $10 each (cash or check only, no credit cards) with a limit of two permits per family.

Permit holders may choose from a variety of pine, fir or cedar in designated cutting areas and must abide by specific permit conditions for proper and responsible collection. Harvesting smaller diameter trees offers residents and visitors a traditional holiday experience while helping to thin the forest.

Permits will be available in two locations:

· On the South Shore, permits will be sold at the LTBMU Forest Supervisor's office, 35 College Drive, South Lake Tahoe. This office is open Monday through Friday from 8am-4pm.

· On the North Shore, permits will be sold at the Incline Village Forest Service office, 855 Alder Ave., Incline Village. This office is open Wednesday through Friday from 8am-4:30pm. During winter weather driving conditions, call the Incline office to make sure it's open – (775) 831.0914.

This year the LTBMU will issue 3,000 permits available on a first-come, first-served basis. The last day to purchase a

permit at the South Lake Tahoe office is Dec. 24, and at the North Shore office the last day is Dec. 21.

Individuals purchasing permits will receive information to help them make the best selection, as well as maps designating the tree cutting areas.

El Dorado County man arrested in museum heist

By Cathy Locke, Sacramento Bee

The California Highway Patrol has announced the arrest of three men in connection with the Sept. 28 robbery of the California State Mining and Mineral Museum in Mariposa.

The robbery involved the theft of more than $1 million in precious metals, mostly gold.

Search warrants were served Tuesday morning in El Dorado, Sacramento and Sutter counties.

Edward Rushing III, 40, of El Dorado County was arrested on suspicion of multiple felonies, including drug charges, and is believed to be a conspirator in the Mariposa heist, according to a CHP news release.

Two men were arrested in Sutter County.

Matthew Campbell, 43, was arrested on suspicion of conspiracy to commit robbery, and Jonathan Matis, 41, was arrested on suspicion of conspiracy to commit robbery, armed robbery, vehicle theft and vandalism.

Officials said the investigation is continuing, and there may be additional arrests and charges.

The robbery occurred while the museum was open for business.

The suspects smashed display cases to steal the gold and gems, and their actions were captured on surveillance cameras at the museum, officials said.

CHP investigators, in cooperation with the Mariposa and Placer county sheriff’s departments, and the Sacramento Police Department identified the suspects in the museum heist and linked them to other crimes in Sacramento and Placer counties, according to the news release.