USFS taking comments on plans to revamp Tallac Site area

The U.S. Forest Service Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit is asking for public input on improvements proposed under the Historic Facilities Best Management Practices Retrofit project. The proposal would improve water quality and enhance sustainable recreational opportunities at the Tallac Historic Site on Lake Tahoe's South Shore.

The Forest Service is proposing to implement a variety of water quality BMPs. These would include installation of infiltration basins, slope and fence stabilization along the shoreline, installation of a fence along Kiva Point Beach on the Taylor Creek Marsh border, installation of informational signs, removal of select user-created trails, and revegetation with native plants.

The project is designed to improve site circulation by reconfiguring the three intersections along Highway 89 (Valhalla, Tallac, and Taylor Creek) into two entrances. A new road would connect the reconfigured intersections within the site, allowing visitors to enter the site and access all areas without returning to the highway.

A 120-space parking lot is proposed at the Tallac Site public parking area, as well as new parking spaces along Highway 89 near the Valhalla entrance. These additional parking areas are intended to offset the proposed reduction in roadside parking associated with Caltrans work along Highway 89.

The project also proposes the installation of a six-unit restroom at the Kiva Point parking area. Improvements to the volunteer RV area and the addition of 32 parking spaces at the Valhalla Estate parking area are also proposed to meet the changing needs of the site.

Project implementation and bathroom construction could begin as early as September 2013. The project is expected to be finished by 2015.

Comments are due by the close of business on Oct. 1. For more information on the proposal and how to submit comments, go online or contact Ashley Sommer at (530) 543.2615 or email asommer@fs.fed.us.

Placer County man dies from West Nile virus

By Cynthia H. Craft, Sacramento Bee

Placer County has seen its first human fatality from West Nile virus this season, a reminder, officials said, of the very real danger posed by the mosquito-borne disease.

Howard Stolz, a prominent community volunteer, died Saturday after being hospitalized for 10 days with encephalitis, a severe neuroinvasive condition brought on by the virus.

At 74, Stolz fit the profile of those most likely to succumb to the disease, which tends to strike down older people. The four other fatalities in California this year were of a similar age: an 88-year-old woman in Kern County; an 86-year-old woman in Merced County; an 86-year-old man in Sacramento County; and a 76-year-old woman who died in Fresno County.

In Texas, the epicenter of the West Nile virus epidemic in the United States this year, the same pattern holds, with older people making up the bulk of fatalities.

California has had a relatively mild season this year compared

with the peak in 2004, when 779 cases of West Nile virus were detected in the state. So far this season, 75 cases have been confirmed in California.

But the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention warned Wednesday that, nationwide, the country seems to be on track for its worst West Nile year ever, with Texas producing the most alarming number of outbreaks.

Meanwhile, in the Sacramento region, high-profile aerial spraying has given way to less invasive ground treatments, and public mosquito districts are focusing on the prevention measures that people have heard about all summer.

The region is on the cusp of the season's singularly most aggressive period of West Nile virus onset – late September and October – mosquito district officials warn.

Consider the case of Stolz, a community volunteer many times over, whose daughter, Janet Stolz, points to her father's death as a signal to people to continue to guard against mosquito bites wherever they go.

"His story puts a face to that 1 percent – the 1 percent of cases where West Nile virus advances into encephalitis or meningitis," his daughter said.

"His message would be, 'Do take all the precautions necessary, especially with young children and the elderly, because they are the most vulnerable,'" she said.

The loss of Stolz is being felt in many corridors of the public safety sector where he dedicated himself to volunteering after retirement: at the Foothill K-9 Association; the Placer County Sheriff's Department; the National Night Out Movement against crime; CPR instructional units; and more.

No one knows where he contracted the disease. But many people

have bemoaned the loss of a man with a “huge heart” in dozens of tributes on Foothill K-9’s Facebook page.

Gaines to face fellow Republican Pugno in Assembly race

By Torey Van Oot, Sacramento Bee

The race is officially on in the 6th Assembly District.

Republican Assembly candidate Andrew Pugno announced Monday that he plans to move forward with his bid to unseat Assemblywoman Beth Gaines, R-Rocklin, on the Nov. 6 ballot, despite an earlier pledge to stop campaigning if another Republican came in first in the June primary.

The Folsom attorney said in a statement that he has concluded he “cannot, in good conscience, endorse (Gaines’) dishonest and unethical campaign tactics,” citing what he called “last-minute attack ads that she knew were lies.”

“As the only other candidate on the November ballot, stepping aside and simply handing the election to Beth Gaines would be fundamentally unfair to the voters in light of a primary election tainted by her blatant dishonesty,” Pugno said in the statement. “Whether or not the incumbent should be re-elected is a decision that belongs to the voters, not just to me.”

Pugno said at the launch of his campaign that if Gaines got more votes in the primary he would “endorse her campaign and

not actively campaign myself.”

Both Republicans went on the attack in the safe GOP district ahead of the June primary, which also featured a Democrat who failed to make the runoff. One mail piece sent by the Gaines campaign in the final days of the race included misleading and false claims about Pugno’s business and involvement in a nonprofit that organizes junkets for lawmakers.

Despite coming in second to Gaines in the June primary, Pugno continued to raise money this summer as he weighed whether to drop his campaign. Monday marked the first time Pugno – the lead attorney for Proposition 8, the voter-passed state initiative against gay marriage – made his plans for the remainder of the election public.

Gaines’ political consultant, Dave Gilliard, criticized Pugno for not following through with the pledge. He said he believes his candidate is better positioned to reach out to Democratic and independent voters in the newly drawn district, which includes southern Placer County, Folsom, Fair Oaks, Orangevale and El Dorado Hills.

“I don’t think the voters will let him wiggle his way out of that pledge,” Gilliard said.

The race is one of more than two dozen Nov. 6 contests featuring two candidates of the same political party affiliation, an outcome allowed under the state’s new top-two primary rules.

Nevada parks has firewood for sale

Permits go on sale Sept. 15 for the Nevada Division of State Parks' annual wood sale. The sale starts at 8am in the main lobby of the Richard H. Bryan state office building located at 901 S. Stewart St.

Permits are $50 per cord – cash or check only – and are limited to one cord per address/family. Approximately 100 permits/cords will be available on a first-come, first-served basis. The sale will end at 11am or when sold out.

The mandatory pick-up schedule days will be on Sept. 21-23 and Sept. 28-30. There are two available pick-up locations: the North Canyon and Kings Canyon areas near Spooner Lake in Tahoe.

Access into North Canyon requires navigation through areas of loose, sandy soils and access into Kings Canyon navigates through multiple, sharp angle water bars. Four-wheel drive vehicles are strongly recommended. Trailers are allowed at the discretion of staff. Trailers deemed unsafe by staff must remain at the staging area.

The wood consists of a mixture of pine and fir, some seasoned and some green. Most of the wood is approximately 18 inches, although some odd sized and large rounds are possible.

Call Joy Elwood for more information: (775) 684.2793.

Snippets about Lake Tahoe



• The speed training season is officially under way in South America as the women's U.S. Ski Team, including Olympic gold Julia Mancuso of Squaw Valley and medalists Lindsey Vonn of Vail are in their second week in Portillo, Chile. The World Cup season opens Oct. 27 in Soelden, Austria.

• Bike Habitat in Carson City is hosting a free Women's Bike Maintenance Clinic on Sept. 25 at 6:30pm.

• Tahoe Youth & Family Services is having a grand re-opening party Oct. 11, 4-6:30pm, 1021 Fremont Ave., South Lake Tahoe.

• A memorial service for Lucille Holmlund will be Sept. 15 at 3:30pm at Sierra Community Church in South Lake Tahoe.

• Did you miss this year's Tour de Tahoe bike ride? Then check out this video from First Tracks Productions.

USFS wants people to steer clear of tree-felling projects

As tree-felling operations under the South Shore Fuels Reduction and Healthy Forest Restoration project move to new areas, the U.S. Forest Service Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit reminds the public to stay clear of active operations.

Thinning in the first unit along Highway 89 has been

completed, and mechanical operations in the Nez Perce Drive area also nearly complete. Once that unit is complete, the contractor will be working near Fallen Leaf Campground and along Trout Creek off Pioneer Trail.

Noise from the operations near Fallen Leaf Lake may affect campers, although operations will occur during the daytime only. The work will also limit access to the Moraine Trail and other trails from the campground leading to Fallen Leaf Lake. The Trout Creek work will limit access to the Railroad Grade Trail.

Once work is complete, the Forest Service will restore official trails such as the Moraine Trail and the Railroad Grade Trail to their previous condition. The agency does not restore user-created trails, and these trails may be covered with slash that has been left behind for soil stabilization.

The Forest Service has also issued a number of contracts for hand-thinning and piling operations, in project areas around the Lake. South Shore project activities will continue as conditions allow, including possible over-the-snow operations during the winter.

The South Shore project includes mechanical and hand-thinning to reduce wildfire risk to communities, improve forest health and restore aspen stands. The project will treat approximately 10,100 acres from Cascade Lake to Stateline on the California side of Lake Tahoe over the next eight years.

For more information on the South Shore project, go online. You can view current forest closures here.

Opinion: Revisiting Leopold could move NPS in the right direction

By James D. Nations

When a team of scientists and conservationists led by A. Starker Leopold wrote the Leopold Report in 1963, national park visitors were still feeding bears through their car windows, nocturnal wildlife still feasted on park garbage dumps, and park rangers still shot cougars and wolves to maximize the number of visitor-friendly elk and pronghorn.

Prompted by a population explosion of elk – and the subsequent need to cull them – Secretary of the Interior Stewart Udall established a Special Advisory Board on Wildlife Management and asked it to examine wildlife management in America's national parks. The committee's response, the Leopold Report, became the first concrete plan for the use of scientific principles in managing national park visitors, wildlife, and habitats. The report prompted a revolution in wildlife and habitat management and set the National Park Service on a trajectory to utilize the best available science as a foundation for decision-making.

The national parks, their wildlife, and park visitors all benefited from this redirection.

Last month, almost 50 years after the release of the Leopold Report, the Science Committee of the National Park System Advisory Board presented a 21st century version of this important document and recommended a new basis for policy, planning, and management to confront new challenges to our national parks as we approach their 2016 centennial.

After attending the committee's presentation of the new report

to the Park Service in late August, I fully expect the agency will accept these recommendations – a move that would put our national parks on the right track for the future.

The new document, Revisiting Leopold, comes from a team of the nation's most accomplished scientists and conservationists, including a Nobel Laureate and two recipients of the Presidential Medal of Science. They revisited A. Starker Leopold's questions from 1963 and molded their answers with the realization that, "Environmental changes confronting the National Park Service are widespread, complex, accelerating, and volatile."

They specifically identified biodiversity loss; climate change; habitat fragmentation; groundwater removal; invasive species; overdevelopment; air, noise, and light pollution; and the erosion of cultural resources.

The committee noted that cultural and socioeconomic changes confronting the National Park Service in the 21st century "include an increasingly diversified, urbanized, and aging population, a transforming US economy, and constrained public funding for parks."

Given these constraints, the committee concluded, the overarching goal of park resource management should be, "to steward NPS resources for continuous change that is not yet fully understood, in order to preserve ecological integrity and cultural and historical authenticity, provide visitors with transformative experiences, and form the core of a national conservation land- and seascape."

Revisiting Leopold calls for new strategies that go beyond park boundaries and extend over longer periods of time. The authors note the need to expand representation of unique ecosystems and a special need to protect habitat that may help wildlife survive and disperse in an era of rapid climate change.

Because ecological and cultural systems are continuously changing and not fully understood, the committee recommends that Park Service managers and decision-makers embrace “at all levels” the precautionary principle, which requires that stewardship decisions reflect science-informed prudence and restraint. When in doubt, the precautionary principle suggests, err on the side of protection.

To implement these policies, the authors of Revisiting Leopold recommend a systematic review of NPS policies to align them with the goals proposed in their study. But they warn against revising the Organic Act, altering the mission of NPS, or relaxing restrictions on impairment of park resources. They also call for a significant expansion of science within NPS by hiring a new and diverse cohort of scientists, supporting their research, and applying the results of their findings.

In conclusion, the committee warns against basing future park resource management on past practices and points to an urgent need for structural changes and long-term investment in preservation.

They urge the Park Service to “act immediately, boldly, and decisively,” noting that the 2016 centennial of the National Park Service provides an extraordinary opportunity for action and a critical benchmark for progress.

Some of the recommendations in Revisiting Leopold can be achieved through a change in perspective. Viewing national parks as anchors in greater landscapes, for example, costs nothing. To fully express this concept on the ground, however, requires financial investment: creating and maintaining a trained staff and establishing partnerships with owners and managers of adjoining lands. Here, Revisiting Leopold zeroes in on the most serious challenge facing NPS in 2012: the lack of adequate funding. “The NPS has an excellent corps of resources managers,” the committee writes, “but these managers must be supported with the necessary funds and personnel, as

well as with training and professional development.”

Just as the initial Leopold Report of 1963 revolutionized Park Service wildlife management, its new iteration, Revisiting Leopold, can ensure that America’s national parks thrive during their second century of existence, continuing to serve as lifeboats for our nation’s biological inheritance and as the cultural landscapes of our nation’s history.

The authors of Revisiting Leopold should be lauded for providing a brilliant vision for protecting our nation’s natural and cultural heritage. Assuming these recommendations officially guide scientific policy moving forward, the men and women of the National Park Service should be commended for taking the front line in helping us turn that vision into reality.

James D. Nations is vice president of National Parks Conservation Association’s Center for Park Research.

Book sale benefits Douglas County libraries

The Douglas County Public Library’s annual book sale is Sept. 22 from 11am-5pm and Sept. 23 from 9am-1pm.

The sale will be at the C.V.I.C. Hall, 1602 Esmeralda Ave. in Minden.

Hundreds of used books and audio books will be for sale; DVDs and VHS tapes will also be available.

A special preview will be on Sept. 22 from 9-11am for members of Friends of Douglas County Public Library. Become a member

and attend the preview by joining the Friends of the Library at the door on Saturday morning. Save 10 percent and get first choice of sale items.

Low and slow – the best approach to dieting

By Patti Neighmond, NPR

If you're dieting, you know you've got to count calories, carbs and fats. But if you really want to take off the weight and keep it off, you might want to pay more attention to the glycemic index, which is essentially a measure of how quickly foods are digested.

That's because high glycemic foods cause a surge in blood sugar, followed by a crash. That biological reaction releases hormones that stimulate hunger and, according to David Ludwig of the New Balance Foundation Obesity Prevention Center at Boston Children's Hospital, actually lower metabolism, adding up to a dismal recipe for people who want to lose weight and keep it off.

"One of the unfortunate aspects of weight loss maintenance is that it takes fewer and fewer calories to just stay the same," Ludwig says. "As the body loses weight, it becomes more efficient and requires fewer calories," making it harder and harder to continue losing and making it difficult to maintain weight loss without continually dieting. By some estimates,

only 1 in 6 Americans who lose weight are able to keep it off after one year.

But Ludwig and colleagues recently published a study in the Journal of the American Medical Association that offers some tools you might use to fight back. Researchers compared the low-carb, low-fat and low-glycemic diets to see which one burned the most calories per day. The low-carb diet was the clear winner. The low-fat diet was the loser. But it was the diet in the middle, the low-glycemic index diet, that Ludwig suggests is more promising. It burned more calories per day than the low-fat diet and proved easier to stick to over the long term than the low-carb diet.

Mike Rogers, 43, was a participant who managed to keep off the 40 pounds he lost. He says the difference in the three diets was “enormous,” adding that “the low-glycemic diet reminded me of the way my mom and grandmom cooked while I was growing up; I felt far better on the low-glycemic diet than on either of the other two.”

Still trim, Rogers now eats far more fruits and vegetables than he did in the past, and, when it comes to carbohydrates, he opts for those with a lower glycemic index. That means brown rice versus white, whole grain pasta and steel cut oats instead of “quick-cooking” oats. He pretty much stays away from all processed foods.

Highly processed and refined foods, like packaged items, white bread, white rice, prepared breakfast cereals and crackers have a high glycemic index. “The body can digest these foods into sugar literally within moments after eating,” says Ludwig.

Low-glycemic foods tend to be natural foods like most vegetables and fruits, nuts, beans and whole grains. They actually wend their way slowly through the body’s digestion system, using up more energy and burning more calories in the

process. And, best of all, says Ludwig, they actually “increase the metabolic rate and decrease hunger, giving us a biological advantage” in losing and maintaining weight.

Read the whole story

River cleanup day expanding into Washoe Meadows State Park

Washoe Meadows Community will be participating in the annual Great Sierra River Cleanup event Sept. 15 from 9am to noon.

Meet at the Lake Tahoe Boulevard entrance to Washoe Meadows State Park to pick up instructions and supplies. Wear comfortable trail walking shoes, bring something to drink, and use sunscreen.

The first 80 volunteers that show up at Regan Beach will receive a T-shirt.

An optional volunteer appreciation party will take place at Regan Beach from noon to 2pm.

All volunteers must sign a liability waiver form. All participants under 18 must have a form filled out by a parent or guardian.

For more info, email info@washoemeadowscommunity.org or call Krissi at (530) 307.1357.