Truckee biomass unit would curtail the number of U.S. Forest Service control burns

By Kathryn Reed

TAHOE CITY – If the biomass facility that is proposed to be built between Truckee and Tahoe City comes to fruition, it will mean the U.S. Forest Service would be burning less material that is left over from fuel reduction projects.

It also means energy will be created and put into the state's grid.

What makes this system different than most biomass facilities is that it would be a gasification unit.



This is what the proposed biomass facility would look like. Rendering/Wood Rodgers

"It heats the wood without burning it. You don't have the smoke," Gerry Haas with the Placer County planning division told planning commissioners last week. He said the plant would create a thermo-chemical reaction.

The two people who spoke at the public hearing at Granlibakken

conference center had mixed things to say about the Cabin Creek Biomass Facility project. The public has until Sept. 10 at 5pm to submit comments on the draft environmental impact report.

One person who spoke would like the plant to make biodiesel and do more than what is proposed. A spokeswoman for the Sierra Business Council said her group is worried federal air quality standards will not be met and would like a baseline established before the facility is built.

Placer County supervisors in 2007 adopted a plan to deal with excess wood materials.

Originally, Kings Beach had been targeted as the site for the biomass facility. However, vocal opposition nixed that idea. That is when the Eastern Regional Landfill and Materials Recovery Facility entered the discussion. It is two miles south of Truckee off Highway 89.

What is being proposed is an 11,000-square-foot, two-story structure to convert the wood waste into energy. It would be a 2-megawatt facility.

The infrastructure is in place to carry the energy that would be generated. It would go along a transmission line crossing the Truckee River to the main line.

“The U.S. Forest Service Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit supports the development of a biomass facility close to Lake Tahoe. We’ve worked closely with Placer County to find ways to increase biomass utilization,” USFS spokeswoman Cheva Heck told *Lake Tahoe News*. “Over the next 10 years, we will be implementing an aggressive hazardous forest fuels reduction program on national forest system lands around the lake, and a biomass facility located nearby increases our options for eliminating these fuels, while helping to address energy needs.”

If the Cabin Creek facility is built, it would be considered a pilot project, according to Haas. He said it’s possible another one could be built at Forest Hill.

The draft EIR is online.

Hike at Spooner raises funds for affordable housing

El Dorado County Habitat for Humanity and St. Joseph Community Land Trust’s annual Hike for Housing Fundraiser is Sept. 15 from 9am-3pm at Spooner Lake.

The event raises funds for local affordable housing.

Bring the family and enjoy a leisurely 2-mile stroll around Spooner Lake or hike all the way to Marlette Lake. Preregister by Sept. 10 for $15 or $25/per family. Day of the event registration is also available at $20 or $30/per family. Parking is extra.

For more info or to register, call (530) 541.2551 or eamil sltahoehabitat@gmail.com.

Opinion: Why is Timber Cove Pier charging for access?

To the community,

I went to Timber Cove Pier to watch the fireworks last Sunday night and “they” were charging to go out on the pier to watch the show. Then we sat on a bench and half an hour later we were informed by a large family that the bench we were on was reserved for them and “didn’t we see the caution tape” indicating the “reservation” they had made through the Bistro restaurant manager?

What the heck is going on? Is it a public pier or privately owned and selling “views” to the highest bidder? We checked with someone at the Bistro and they didn’t seem to know anything about it.

What’s the story on Timber Cove Pier?

Denise Upton, South Lake Tahoe

Report: More Americans struggling to put food on table

By NPR

An estimated 14.9 percent of U.S. households — 17.9 million in total — “had difficulty” at some point last year getting food because they just didn’t have enough money or other resources,

the U.S. Department of Agriculture reported this morning.

In 2010, 14.5 percent of households were similarly “food insecure” at some point, USDA says.

Even worse: “In 2011, 5.7 percent of U.S. households (6.8 million households and one-third of all food-insecure households) had very low food security. In these households, the food intake of some household members was reduced and normal eating patterns were disrupted at times during the year due to limited resources.”

In other words, people went hungry.

An estimated 5.4 percent of households suffered such “very low food security” in 2010.

Earlier, NPR’s Pam Fessler reported for our Newscast Desk that the food security report “comes a day after the agriculture department reported that food stamp usage hit an all-time high in June. In June, 46.7 million people received what are now called supplemental nutrition assistance program, or SNAP, benefits.”

Californians debate merits of death penalty before November vote

By Sam Stanton, Sacramento Bee

Sharron Mankins, McGregor Scott and Bill Babbitt each have watched a man die inside the death chamber at San Quentin State Prison, and each has a strong view on whether voters

should end California's death penalty in November.

Even after 20 years, Mankins has no regrets about watching Robert Alton Harris die by cyanide gas for the 1978 murders of her 16-year-old son, Michael Baker, and his friend John Mayeski.

"We saw justice served," the 69-year-old Southern California woman said in an interview last month. "It took a long time, but it helped us all.

"I think it helped the whole family."

Scott, who witnessed the lethal-injection execution of Darrell Rich in March 2000 as the Shasta County district attorney, remembers the event with almost clinical precision.

"I do not want to minimize or downplay the fact that the man's life was taken that night," Scott said of the so-called "Hilltop Rapist," who killed four young women in a 1978 crime spree.

"But what I observed that evening could not in any way be described as cruel or unusual punishment. It was a very calm process in which he appeared to go to sleep. And that was it."

To Mankins and Scott, the death penalty is an important tool for prosecutors and victims, one that they both believe should be retained.

For Babbitt, it is a costly waste and a reminder of the night in 1999 that he watched his brother, Manuel Babbitt, die by injection for the murder of 78-year-old Leah Schendel of Sacramento.

"Why don't we take the money and fix people like Manny Babbitt …, take that money and try to solve crimes?" asked Babbitt, who turned his brother in to police after Schendel's slaying.

These are the opposing viewpoints that will play out in the

coming weeks over Proposition 34, which asks voters to end the death penalty in California and allow death row inmates to be resentenced to life in prison without any chance of parole.

Read the whole story

Study: Organic not necessarily a healthier option

By Elizabeth Weise, USA Today

Organic products have no significant nutritional advantage over conventional foods, even though consumers can pay more for them, a new study finds.

The findings suggest that a key reason behind why many people buy organic products – a $28.6 billion market last year – may not be borne out by the science.

The four-year project began when two doctors wondered what advice they should give their families and patients about whether to buy organic or conventional foods.

“It became much larger than we expected,” says Crystal Smith-Spangler, a primary care doctor at Stanford University and lead author on the study appearing Tuesday in the journal Annals of Internal Medicine.

Eventually, 12 researchers looked at 240 studies conducted from 1966 to 2011 covering nutrient and contaminant levels in foods.

Among the findings:

•There were no significant differences in the vitamin content of organic and conventional fruits and vegetables. The studies looked specifically at vitamins A, C and E.

•Detectable pesticide residue was found in 7 percent of organic produce and 38 percent of conventional produce. However, only three studies found pesticide residue that exceeded maximum allowed limits in the European Union on organic or conventional produce.

Read the whole story

Win tickets to the Signature Cocktail Contest

Lake Tahoe News is giving away two tickets to Barton Foundation's Signature Cocktail Contest.

The Sept. 13 event is from 5:30-8pm at Riva Grill in South Lake Tahoe. Ten bartenders will compete for the best drink of the night as a fundraiser for Barton Health Foundation.



A libation from the 2011 event.

Photo/LTN file

If you don’t win, tickets are $25 each in advance or $30 at the door.

Participating bars-restaurants are Cantina, Edgewood, Embassy, Heavenly, Lakeside, LewMarNels, Naked Fish, Riva, MontBleu, Fox & Hound.

To win the tickets, you must either submit a recipe (via a comment) using vodka or tell us about your favorite vodka drink. The other criterion is that you must be part of *Lake Tahoe News’* special NEWS team. To be a team member, fill out the paid subscriber form. The winner must be willing to have their full name published. Winners will be announced the week of the event.

S. Tahoe council, city manager reach contract agreement

South Lake Tahoe City Manager Nancy Kerry has agreed to a 3½-year contract that pays $170,000 a year, has the same health and retirement benefits as other employees, and does not come with any extras.

She told the council she does not want a car allowance. Instead, the council has agreed to put aside $4,800 a year into an employee incentive account. This will be used to recognize employees who do exemplary work.



Nancy Kerry

Kerry also agreed to 80 hours of administrative time, which is 40 hours less than the department heads receive.

No automatic raises are built in. It will be up to the City Council if her salary increases between now and when the contract expires in April 2016.

When Tony O'Rourke left in June he was making $188,000, which included the car allowance.

The three previous city manager contracts included nine months of severance pay if the council let them go. Kerry would receive six.

Another cost savings to the city is not paying moving expenses.

The council in closed session Sept. 4 agreed to this contract on a 3-0 vote, with Mayor Claire Fortier absent and Councilwoman Angela Swanson not taking part per legal advice. It will come back to the council in open session on Sept. 18.

– Kathryn Reed

Humans to gather in support of bears

To commemorate bears who have been killed legally and illegally by human causes a team of cyclist will deliver a Bear Hug Around the Lake Sept 9.

The community is invited to gather at Beats For Bears, a community drum circle facilitated by Liz Broscoe. The event will be at the Sand Harbor amphitheater from 1-3pm.

Beats For Bears is free and open to the public. Sand Harbor parking fees apply.

For information, go online.

The seasons are changing – what do you like most about fall?