USFS resumes Blackwood Canyon work

The U.S. Forest Service Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit will resume restoration work at Blackwood Canyon starting July 9 and continuing through Oct. 1. The project involves construction activities with heavy equipment and dump trucks that will affect public use of the area.

This final phase of the project will include river floodplain excavation and restoration. Work will take place near the OHV staging area and near the old shooting range. Vehicles, bicyclists and other users should use caution when using these areas and Barker Pass Road due to the presence of trucks and heavy machinery. Brief delays may occur and work trucks will be required to observe a 20 mph speed limit. The Forest Service will post caution signs and station personnel along the road to maintain public safety.

Information on construction activities will be posted at the entrance to Blackwood Canyon and at the job site. The restoration at Blackwood Creek is funded through the Southern Nevada Public Land Management Act as part of the Lake Tahoe Environmental Improvement Program.

For additional information, contact Sue Norman at (530) 543.2662 or Craig Oehrli at (530) 543.2600 or visit online.

Snippets about Lake Tahoe

• Dozens of events at The Community of Writers at Squaw Valley Writers Workshops being held July 7-14 are open to the

public. This year’s lineup includes fiction writers Ron Carlson, Mark Childress, Glen David Gold, agents Michael Carlisle and B.J. Robbins, screenwriters Tom Rickman and Pamela Gray, and poets Robert Hass and Sharon Olds. Go online for the schedule of events and reserve seats in advance by calling (530) 581.5200.

• An Al Tahoe neighborhood clean-up day is being held July 14 from 9-11am. Meet at Regan Beach, corner of Lakeview and Sacramento avenues.

• The El Dorado County Sheriff’s Department has assigned an officer patrol full-time to the Rubicon Trail during OHV season.

EDSO takes over case of missing Placerville teen

The Sacramento County Sheriff’s Office has transferred the Linnea Lomax missing person case to the El Dorado County Sheriff’s Office. EDSO detectives have been assigned to the case and are in contact with the Sacramento police, the Lomax family and the searching organization the family has established.

Lomax was last seen on June 26 in the 800 block of Howe Avenue, Sacramento. At that time, she had been at a scheduled appointment in the area. Police understand that she left the building where her appointment was being held to go to lunch and never returned to finish her appointment.

Lomax is a student at the University of California, Davis and a resident of El Dorado County. She is 19 years old, 5’2″ 100 pounds, has blonde hair and was last seen wearing faded green pants, a dark blue sweatshirt with the word “Sweden” written on the front and black flip flops. Lomax is considered at-risk and needs her regular medications.

Anyone with information should contact the EDSO at (530) 621.6600.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Washoe County police arrest man who allegedly started Pinehaven fire

By KRNV-TV and MyNews4.com

RENO – Deputies say the man who started the Pinehaven fire has been arrested.

Washoe County Sheriff’s say they arrested Charles Asa Sanford after identifying him as the man who led deputies on a chase that ended after he set fire to his car and the adjacent forest.

On July 2, deputies tried to initiate a traffic stop after learning the license plates to a Toyota Land Cruiser actually belonged on a different vehicle. Sanford fled from the Deputies and led them to the Pinehaven Drive area and eventually onto a dirt road.

Read the whole story

Snippets about Lake Tahoe

• Tickets for Lake Tahoe Historical Society's garden tour are now available at the Lake Tahoe Museum and its four garden centers: Aspen Hollow, Nels, SunBasin and Tahoe Outdoor Living. Tickets are $20.

• Squaw Valley hosts Wild West Weekend July 21-22, featuring pony rides, a petting zoo, western shoot-outs, and two days of live music. The 601 Railroad Regulators will be performing reenactments and quick-draw demonstrations both days. For a schedule of events, go online.

• TahoeChamber is having a BAHM! dinner, raffle and networking event hosted by the Blue Angel Café on July 19 from 5:30-7:30pm. The event will be in the restaurant on Ski Run Boulevard. Tickets are $10 or $20 for non-members of the Chamber and are available online or at the door. Call (775) 588.1728 for more information.

• Tahoe City Public Utility District Parks and Recreation is having a public meeting July 11 at 8am at TCPUD offices, 211 Fairview Dr., Tahoe City.

Two EDSO deputies still owe pay awarded for bogus degrees

By Anne Knowles

Two El Dorado Sheriff's Department officers who were ordered to return pay increases they received based on diplomas from unaccredited colleges still owe the county more than $23,000, according to the county's recently released grand jury report.

Last year, the grand jury found that five of the department's officers had received Educational Incentive Pay (EIP) based on bogus college degrees acquired from so-called diploma mills. The officers were not criminally charged because it couldn't be proven beyond a reasonable doubt that they were aware the diplomas were worthless, but the officers were required to return the pay increases. The report never named them, but none worked in the Lake Tahoe substation.

In the 2011-2012 report released June 29, the grand jury said it found that one of the sheriff's officers had paid back 59 percent of the incentive pay while another had returned 67 percent, together owing the county $23,353.11.

The report said three of the officers had repaid the county in full.

The five officers initially owed a total of $166,459.72, according to the grand jury report released last year.

El Dorado County Sheriff John D'Agostini told *Lake Tahoe News* that the five employees and El Dorado County had entered into a civil agreement under which the county is recouping the pay, but that it was a personnel matter and he could not comment any further.

The grand jury has directed the El Dorado County District

Attorney's Office to sue to recover the money. It also told the county's human resources department to adjust the officers' CalPERS accounts and recommended that the sheriff's department "conduct regular reviews of their Code of Ethics and employ methods to constantly remind the staff of this required higher standard of ethics."

Last year's report found that former Sheriff Jeff Neves had been negligent in checking on officers EIP qualifications before awarding pay increases.

"The former Sheriff suggested that he and his administration were too busy to fulfill their oversight obligation to the county in so much as PPF forms were concerned. Retired Sheriff Neves testified that because they received so many PPF forms for review and signature, they adopted an unwritten policy of simply signing the forms and submitting them to county payroll without even attempting the most cursory or surface review of the forms and their content," the 2010-2011 report read.

Home builders hopeful at West Coast conference

By Sanford Nax, Sacramento Business Journal

The mood at the Pacific Coast Builder's Conference was the most upbeat in five years, according to industry types who attended.

Builders are reporting more traffic at subdivisions, and sales are picking up. Nationwide, lumber shipments are up, and

residential construction activity is increasing significantly.

Builder Magazine just reported the following, which is based on U.S. Census data: Private residential construction spending in May totaled $261 billion, a 3 percent gain over and an almost 7.5 percent gain from May 2011. The biggest boost was in apartment construction, which posted a "jaw-dropping" 50 percent increase, although single-family increased 15 percent from May 2011.

Locally, John Orr, CEO of the North State Building Industry Association in Sacramento, said new home sales totaled 149 through the first three weeks of June, which tops the 130 in all of June 2011. Through May, new home sales in the region totaled 1,052 versus 611 during the same five months in 2011.

The big question, of course, concerns sustainability. Is this a temporary boost or the real thing?

Read the whole story

Opinion: Trust in Nevada's burgeoning re-branding effort

By Richard N. Velotta, Las Vegas Sun

Bumper stickers with a prospective tourism tagline for the state were passed out at last week's meeting of the Nevada Tourism Commission.

They read, "Nevada: California's Man Cave."

Don't worry, it's a joke. No one is seriously considering that line.

The bumper stickers were sent to the state by author Jim Gilmore, who made a presentation at the Tourism Commission's "Rural Roundup" event in April at Lake Tahoe. He noted the state's efforts to brand itself – a difficult task, considering the diverse nature of Nevada.

As all of us who live here know, Nevada is many things to many people.

It is mountain vistas and desert landscapes. Glitzy entertainment extravaganzas and ghost towns. Pampering spa experiences and extreme sports adventures. Cruising casinos and road-tripping to wide-open spaces.

It's a monumental task for someone to develop a catchphrase that incorporates that personality without stepping on someone else's copyrights. But Seattle-based GreenRubino was contracted by the state to try.

Last month, the Tourism Commission's marketing committee met and talked about some of the finalists under consideration. Predictably, the public response was less than glowing.

Read the whole story

Help pull invasive weeds near Boca Hill

The Truckee River Watershed Council's Weed Warriors are leading a Weed Pull on July 14 and a Weed Walk on August 11. The Weed Warriors hope to bring awareness to the public about invasive weeds in our area and the proper disposal.

The Weed Pull, led by Jeannette Halderman, program manager at

the council, and botanist Susan Urie of the U.S. Forest Service, will be near Boca Hill. The Weed Pull will remove weeds as well as help reduce infestations in the Tahoe National Forest.

The Weed Walk, led by Halderman and Kathy Welch, botanist, will be in a location where infestations have been confirmed in order to learn which plants are invasive to the Truckee River. The Weed Walk is supported by the Martis Fund, a collaborative project of Martis Camp landowners, DMB/Highlands Group (the developers of Martis Camp), Mountain Area Preservation Foundation (MAPF), and Sierra Watch.

To volunteer, contact the Truckee River Watershed Council or call Halderman at the Truckee River Watershed Council at (530) 550.8760 ext.6.

Research says wildfires worsen after decades of deficit

By Tom Yulsman, Scientific American, and DailyClimate.org

BOULDER, Colo. – As the West has warmed and dried over the past 30 years, headlines describing fire season have grown ever more apocalyptic: “epic” dryness, “monster” fires, new records for damage and devastation.



Angora Fire

This year is no exception. The Waldo Canyon Fire has incinerated hundreds of homes in Colorado Springs, and every indication points to another big, early start to the wildfire season.

Recent research, however, suggests these severe conflagrations could be a prelude. Climate stressors are putting increasing pressure on a “fire deficit” the West has accumulated over the past 100 years, say scientists who have compared today’s burn rates with fire activity over thousands of years. As the West continues to warm, that debt will come due – possibly with interest – triggering fires that are fiercer and harder to contain, they warn.

“If you just look at what the current climate is like, the rate of biomass burning should be much higher than what we’ve observed over the 20th century,” said Patrick Bartlein, a climatologist at the University of Oregon and a co-author of the study, published earlier this year in the journal Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences.

Read the whole story