Opinion: Tribes should not influence online gaming in California

Publisher's note: ***This editorial is from the June 19, 2012, Los Angeles Times.***

Despite federal and state bans on online poker, as many as 1 million Californians spend a total of about $300 million annually playing the game — typically on websites based outside the country. Lawmakers have been debating for more than four years whether to create a legal outlet for these players but have been stymied by opposition from powerful Indian gambling interests. Those forces appear to have scuttled a new proposal by state Sens. Roderick Wright (D-Inglewood) and Darrell Steinberg (D-Sacramento) that was sidelined by a Senate committee last week just before a scheduled vote. There's a good argument to be made for legalizing and regulating online poker or, conversely, working more aggressively to ban it. With the tribes pulling the strings in Sacramento, however, California isn't doing either.

Wright's bill (SB1463) would allow a limited number of parties in the gambling business — tribes with state gambling compacts, card clubs, horse racing tracks and "advance deposit wagering" websites that take bets on horse races — to run poker games online for adults in California after they've been overseen by state regulators for at least three years. To obtain an online poker license, however, they and the company they hire to operate their site would have to undergo a rigorous background examination. They'd also have to pay the state $30 million upfront as a licensing fee and, eventually, 10 percent of their gross earnings.

Some tribes are backing the bill and have already started to

forge relationships with online poker contractors in Nevada and overseas. Others want the state to authorize online poker, but they object to the proposed background checks or the exclusion of tribes without state compacts. Some argue that racetracks and off-track-betting operators have no expertise in poker, unlike tribal casinos and card clubs, so shouldn't be included. And some contend that legitimizing online poker will threaten the revenue and jobs created by tribal gambling.

Read the whole story

Preliminary work begins on river restoration near old Sunset Stables

The U.S. Forest Service Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit's has begun constructing the staging area for the Upper Truckee River restoration project that will begin in 2013 at the former Sunset Stables site.

The work, which will continue for approximately two weeks, includes the installation of an approximately2 acre aggregate base pad, which is designed to prevent the spread of noxious weeds into the project area.

In addition, the path of the new channel will be irrigated this season. Irrigation will promote vegetation growth for sod and other riparian vegetation that will be harvested and used in the new channel. Stakes marking the new channel and irrigation equipment will be installed in the meadow adjacent to the airport on the south side of the river. Irrigation likely will occur one to two times per week during July,

August and September.

For additional information, contact Theresa Cody at tlcody@fs.fed.us or Sue Norman at (530) 543-2662 or email snorman@fs.fed.us.

Mountain bike lesson proves the sport is more than pedaling

By Kathryn Reed

TRUCKEE – “Don’t be nervous. If anything, you should feel more secure with all the gear. You can roll down the mountain with all this gear and you won’t get hurt.”

Then David Fox asked me to sign a liability waiver. The irony would have been amusing if it weren’t me and Sue in the get-up that had us resembling the gnarly biker chicks we don’t even aspire to be.

Wearing what looks like flak jackets, except for the fact the arms – especially the elbows – are super padded, we then put on the kneepads. But they also protect the shins, so we look like we could be doing battle. We are just hoping it’s not a fight with terra firma, because we’re afraid she may win.



Kathryn Reed and Sue Wood ready to tackle Northstar's mountain bike park. Photo/Luke Sheppard

Our cycling helmets won't do. Nope. Here at Northstar it's the full headgear that covers our face and chin.

Not even our gloves are acceptable. No fingertips are showing once we are fully outfitted.

Sue looks at me in bewilderment or maybe it was disgust. This was my idea and she came along reluctantly. Before we arrived at the resort I had joked it wouldn't be so bad; it's not like we'd be wearing all those pads the expert riders wear.

Next time I'll do more research about the activity before opening my mouth.

I say all this because it was getting the gear on that was the most nerve wracking part of the adventure. Riding under the direction of Luke Sheppard, while not always easy or comfortable (which had nothing to do with him), was an experience I would highly recommend. He is the manager of the 4-year-old bike academy at Northstar.

Northstar knows what it is doing. Not everyone wants a paved bike path. And not everyone is willing to go it alone at a bike park.

After all, a recent report from the Outdoor Industry Association says Americans spend almost $650 billion on

outdoor recreation each year. The bulk of those billions is spent on guides, hotels and restaurants. Less than 20 percent is spent on goods like backpacks and bikes. The same study revealed that between 2006 and 2011, the outdoor recreation industry grew by an average of 6 percent a year.

Northstar's bike academy has been growing as well – a testament that those who like to play outdoors will do so even in a recession.

This Truckee-area resort has a variety of classes available for anyone who can operate a bike with hand brakes.

We take the gondola out of the village to mid-mountain. Every third car is a bike rack. We walk past the lodge to the mountain bike center to get fitted for our bikes. Giant sponsors this park; so all the bikes are that brand.

With hydraulic brakes, Sheppard says to use one finger to operate them. This also allows for a better grip while riding.

"Brake early, gently and confidently," he advises.

We then take the Zephyr chairlift up. (Vista is open to cyclists on weekends.)

Live Wire – a trail with 50 jumps on it – is being irrigated to keep the dust down.

"It's very similar to a BMX track," Sheppard says as we pass above some of the trail.

We spend our morning on TryUmph. It starts out like a fire road, so I'm thinking this will be easy. But Sheppard wants us to stand. This is completely foreign to us. Stand tall – not just our butts off the seat. This is so the bike is absorbing the terrain and not our bodies.

We are supposed to trust our bikes.

Riding over the rocks that are clearly embedded in the ground gets us used to the bounce. We dodge the loose rocks.

Stopping to the side Sheppard is almost giddy talking about the tread on the tires. It’s important stuff – especially when it’s time to brake or turn.

We practice turns on a straightaway to get the feel for leaning the bike into the turn while keeping our bodies upright. This helps keep the tread on the dirt so the tires don’t slide and the rider doesn’t tumble. Something feels weird. Sheppard says it’s because I’m leaning and the bike is straight.

Here comes a real turn. I want to lean into it, but only the bike is supposed to be tilted. I’m thinking too much. I’m going so slow I should be able to do this. Making the turn was no big deal, but I’m sure a video replay would show it was not executed well.

We get onto the Easy Rider trail beyond the mid-mountain lodge. This is where we put our skills to the test. While not a true single track, the route is much narrower. Rollers are fun, reminding us of a trail near Lake Tahoe Airport. Sharper corners don’t allow time for thinking – lean, stand – and breathe. Platforms are on the trail to get us used to the transition from dirt to manmade structures – just in case one day we are out doing jumps.

If we ever take the Bumps and Bends class, we would be taught how to corner faster, jump and ride rocky terrain.

While more lifts are not likely to open to cyclists, resort officials are talking about expanding the trail system. There are more than 30 trails now.

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Notes:

• The website has prices, hours and full explanation of what the bike park offers.

• Helmets are required for all riders.

• The park will be closed Sept. 22-23 for Tough Mudder.

If competition is what you want, Northstar has it:

• Tahoe Trail 100 (Leadville 100 Qualifier) – July 22.

• Pro Gravity Tour – Aug. 3-5.

• Tara Llanes Classic – Sept. 28-30.

• Downhill Mountain Bike Race Series will kick off July 8.

• Thursday night Cross-Country Race Series begins July 12.

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2 Eldorado Forest campgrounds open for holiday

By Cathy Locke, Sacramento Bee

Eldorado National Forest officials are gearing up for a busy Independence Day holiday and report that all facilities in the

forest will be open, including the newly renovated Gerle Creek and South Fork Group campgrounds.

The Gerle Creek campground renovation was funded by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, otherwise known as the federal stimulus program. The South Fork Group Campground project was selected by the El Dorado County Resource Advisory Committee from more than 100 projects to be funded with Title 2 Secure Rural School Act monies and was accomplished with the help of volunteers, according to a Forest Service news release.

Although the Fourth of July is typically celebrated with fireworks, officials remind visitors that all types of fireworks are illegal in the National Forest, due to the risk of wildfire.

Read the whole story

Bill would expand fireworks sales in California

By Hannah Madans, Sacramento Bee

In California, Fourth of July is the one holiday that gets the fireworks pass – for one summer week, starting today, you can buy sparklers and fountains to celebrate Independence Day.

In a couple of years, you may be able to hoist a champagne glass as your fireworks light up the winter sky to toast the new year.

A bill that has already passed the state Senate – unanimously – would double the weeks fireworks can be sold, from June 28

to July 4 and from Dec. 26 to Jan. 1.

A second week of sales would not only give New Year's celebrants another way to party, but also would ignite sales for wholesalers such as TNT Fireworks, the sponsor of the bill.

The companies have some key supporters in their corner – the nonprofits that set up those plywood roadside stands that dot the Sacramento area this time of year.

"The fact that we're cutting back on all the programs, safety net programs and what not, a lot of the money that nonprofits used to get, they don't get anymore," said Sen. Ron Calderon, D-Montebello, who is carrying the measure. "The sale of fireworks on a local level helps create a lot of revenue."

Senate Bill 1468 would add that second week for just two years, 2014 and 2015. It's pending in the Assembly.

Under current law, about 290 California communities allow nonprofit groups to sell fireworks, including churches, high school booster clubs and sports organizations.

Among them is the Rosemont Little League, whose treasurer Dennis Gallagher said fireworks sales make up 20 percent of the league's budget.

Adding more sales between Christmas and New Year's Day "would be an additional revenue stream that we would definitely pursue," he said.

Read the whole story

Anderson, White nominated for ESPY awards

Two Tahoe area athletes are up for ESPY awards.

South Lake Tahoe’s Jaime Anderson has been nominated for Best Female Action Sports Athlete.



A slopestyle pioneer, Anderson produced eight podiums last winter, including gold in the Aspen and European X Games. The Sierra-at-Tahoe rider also posted a clean sweep of the Burton Open series with wins in the U.S., Europe and Canada.

Slopestyle snowboarding will make its debut at the 2014 Olympic Winter Games in Sochi, Russia, where Anderson is looking to secure gold.

Shaun White, who had a halfpipe built to train at Northstar, is nominated for Best Male Action Sports Athlete.

Last winter, he became the first snowboarder to receive a perfect score of 100 to secure a halfpipe gold medal at the Aspen X Games. White also won gold in the European X Games slopestyle event.

The ESPYS are determined entirely by popular vote. Polling is open until July 9. The awards will air live on July 11 at 6p on ESPN.

Lindsey Vonn and Kelly Clark are also up for Best Action Sports Athlete category.

5 Tahoe Keys board members face recall

Five out of the seven Tahoe Keys Property Owners Association board of directors are being recalled.

The five are Susan (Joey) Wolff, Jim Siegfried, Mark Koffman, Sam Pavone and Alexandra Musser. The board was served notice at the June meeting.

According to the petition the reasons for the recall are the board does not enforce the CC&Rs, members are not treated fairly, executive sessions are abused, fiduciary duties have been breached, and board members act in a secretive manner.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Personal fireworks illegal everywhere in Lake Tahoe Basin

Not only are fireworks illegal in the entire Lake Tahoe Basin, but numerous fires result from their use, not to mention the severe injuries they may cause to the users.

The South Shore area provides the locals and visitors a world-class fireworks display on the evening of July 4 at 9:45pm. This display is visible over the lake from the South Shore

beaches on both the California and Nevada sides of the state line.

The SLTFD wishes you a safe and sane 4th of July celebration.

– Sallie Ross-Filgo, South Lake Tahoe Fire Department

TTD board awards initial phase of bikeway construction

By Anne Knowles

The Tahoe Transportation District Board of Directors awarded the first phase of construction on the Stateline- to-Stateline Bikeway Project to Herback General Engineering after dismissing a protest to the award.



During a special meeting held Friday, the board approved the contract after determining that Herback, the lowest of five bidders with a bid of $1,498,835, had fully met the requirements of the project.

A&K Earth Movers Inc., the second lowest bidder, filed a complaint based on Herback's lack of any disadvantaged business enterprise (DBE) participation. Contractors on public projects are required by law to utilize a small percentage of subcontractors or suppliers classified as DBEs, a for-profit small business concern that is at least 51 percent owned by one or more individuals who are both socially and economically disadvantaged.

"It was well documented that Herback made a 'good faith' effort," to find DBEs for its bid, said Carl Hasty, district

manager, TTD.

Construction on the first phase, from Kahle Drive to Elks Point Road, should begin this summer, said Hasty.

The board also voted to amend the South Lake Tahoe Short-Range Transit Plan to include upgrades to a fueling station and computer hardware and software. The new fueling station will be located closer to the service yard and add biodiesel fuel.

The board's approval was needed to secure $778,306 in Proposition 1B funds from the state.

The board also received an update on the first week of operations for the East Shore Express service of the BlueGo bus system. The service carried 291 passengers in its first week, from June 15-21, with more than half, or 186, on the Sunday of that week. Sixty eight of the riders were either reduced fare, for children aged 5 to 12 or adults over 60, or free, for kids younger than 5.

Taste of Home looking for cooks to be magazine spokeswoman

Taste of Home magazine is looking for an official holiday ambassador.

The woman selected as "Mrs. Holiday" will receive $50,000 and a spokesperson role with *Taste of Home*. Once crowned, Mrs. Holiday will have the opportunity to conduct interviews, participate in cooking segments and blog, as well as make appearances across the country at retailers and some of the

more than 300 *Taste of Home* cooking schools.

Between now and Sept. 7, women age 18 and older are invited to log on to Facebook.com/TasteofHome to upload a short video and signature recipe that demonstrates how they bring the holidays to life for their family and friends. The winner will be selected from the top 100 entries that receive the most votes from the public.

Mrs. Holiday candidates can submit videos for Independence Day, New Year’s, Valentine’s Day, St. Patrick’s Day, Easter, Mother’s Day, Father’s Day, Halloween, Thanksgiving, and Christmas.