

Sensory overload on trot up Horsetail Falls



Horsetail Falls swooshes down through a wall of granite.
Photos/Kathryn Reed

By Kathryn Reed

If the drought continues for a number of years, one day it may be called “Ponytail Falls” instead of Horsetail Falls. But for now, the water is flowing as though there is no drought.

From a distance, especially driving west on Highway 50, the falls look like a horse’s tail – thus the name. It’s one of the most spectacular waterfalls in the area – from afar and close up.

This is one of those destinations where the end point can be anywhere one chooses because there are so many scenic vistas along the way.

There is designated a loop. While pretty, it doesn't go up to the falls. But there also isn't a sign saying when to get off this section of trail.



Pyramid Creek is either in view from or can be heard while on the trail.

Pyramid Creek is the early focal point. Downstream this water eventually ends up in the American River.

There was enough granite that AJ had booties on for the first time.

At times the trail is not well defined. Our group of 12 who was hiking there in June took a couple U-turns and crossed the

creek before we finally found our way to the end point we all agreed to. There we sat on slabs of granite eating our lunch, watching the water descend in all its glory. Absolutely stunning.

The water tumbling down comes from Lake Aloha. It's possible to hike there and to other lakes in Desolation Wilderness from this point. But this is only recommended for more advanced hikers.

Almost every year at least one person is seriously hurt or dies in this area because of climbing beyond his or her ability level, not respecting how cold the water is or the swiftness of the current.

Parking spaces fill fast, so go early – or don't go on a weekend. Our trek was about 4 miles round trip.

—



Several pools are inviting, though the snow-fed creek is

quite chilly.

Getting there:

From South Lake Tahoe, take Highway 50 west toward Placerville. The trailhead is outside the basin. Parking is on the right at Pyramid Creek. There is a fee to park.

Valhalla: Striving to be the best



Quinn De Veaux and the Blue Beat Revue will be at the Boathouse Theatre on the South Shore on July 29.
Photo/Provided

By Evangeline Elston

One of the many special attributes of the Valhalla Boathouse Theatre is its size. At 164 seats it is intimate with a unique, rustic elegance. You feel, when you walk in that magic is about to happen ... and it inevitably does.

Because of its size the boathouse requires a special approach

to programming for the Valhalla Art, Music & Theatre Festival. Artists and productions must be chosen specifically for their ability to bring the space to life and to fill it with something unique. Our artists don't always have the big names, but our venue and the quality of the performers are what set us apart from the big casinos and higher profile shows.

As the festival director I spend a great deal of time in the fall and winter selecting artists and performers and working with the Valhalla theater community to choose our line-up of summer entertainment. I look for an eclectic mix of music that I feel will appeal to a wide range of folks. And of course theater productions are selected with the Boathouse and our audience specifically in mind. Our patrons are locals and visitors. Campers and summer homeowners. They are families, young adults and mature people. I want to honor them all with the lineup I select.

For example, this summer we are presenting, with the Dakota Organization, the American classic adapted from the screen "On Golden Pond" featuring an all-star cast of local actors. This production is perfectly suited for our theater, the setting and our audience. It has been very well received and will continue July 11-12 and July 16-18.

For live music I strive to attract artists who I feel will embody the spirit of our unique festival and fill the Boathouse Theatre with sound and audience. I book world music, jazz, rock, singer-songwriters, bluegrass, R&B, classical and country. Pretty much every genre is represented in our summer season.

Coming up we have some of the finest songwriters, players and performers in the musical world where I dwell coming to Valhalla. On July 15 the stylings of songs from the American songbook by local jazz vocalist June Joplin and Me & Bobby McGee. Then, on July 22 it's two of the finest singer-songwriters that I know of together on the Valhalla stage,

Tasmanian born Audrey Auld and Sopchoppy, Florida native Grant Peeples. They are true song crafters and masterful, funny, engaging performers. From the urban grit of Oakland via the great state of Louisiana, Quinn Deveaux and the Blue Beat Revue will bring their full R&B sound, complete with back-up singers, to Valhalla on July 29. And it continues like this through August with bluegrass, roots rock, classical and country concerts.

The Tahoe Improv players continue their decade-long run at Valhalla all four Mondays in July and we have free outdoor concerts featuring the best local talent available on July 12, July 19 and Aug. 2 from noon to 2 pm on the Grand Lawn. And our artists in residence are showing in the Viking Gallery through mid-July daily from 11am to 4pm. Gina Stowell offers her kids painting camp July 13-17 and again in August.

I'm proud of what we are building at Valhalla. I work very hard to bring the finest entertainment available to our little corner of the globe, nestled in the tall pines and on the shore of beautiful Lake Tahoe. It may be the best kept secret in arts festivals west of the Rocky Mountains now, but little by little we're going to let the world know what an amazing thing is happening here at Valhalla Tahoe.

Information and tickets are online.

Evangeline Elston is director of the Valhalla Art, Music & Theatre Festival.

Truckee River trout

struggling in drought



The Truckee River in Reno is dropping as the drought continues. Photo/LTN

By Benjamin Spillman, Reno Gazette-Journal

The plight of Truckee River trout struggling to survive drought has anglers upset and some calling to suspend fishing in the stream until conditions improve.

But the Nevada Department of Wildlife says they don't have any plans to "close the river," as some have suggested because officials there don't believe it would help matters.

Although the department is urging catch-and-release anglers to avoid fishing in the afternoon and evening when the water is warm and fish are particularly stressed, they aren't calling for a total ban on angling.

Read the whole story

Tahoe celebrity tourney challenges pro athletes



Ex-49ers and hall of famers Steve Young and Jerry Rice are regulars at the ACC golf tournament. Photo/LTN file

Hall of famers driven to excel at secondary sport

By Susan Wood

If you think it's humbling to try to break into professional sports and then enter the Hall of Fame, then try golf once you've reached the top of your game. Golf can be the most humbling sport of all.

But that's all in the sport of life for 15 hall of famers who will be joining 78 other participants in the American Century Championship starting next week at Edgewood Tahoe Golf Course. Four of those hall of famers will be inducted this summer.

So what draws and drives these athletes who were once at the

top of their game in professional football, baseball, basketball and hockey to compete in such a different type of sport? And what do they do to prepare themselves for the crossover?

The reasons vary when you ask the athletes, doctors, golf pros and enthusiasts.

Some say a competitive nature brings them here to NBC's big golf stage. Another observer said the ability to excel in yet another sport motivates them. Others said the network encourages them with the promise of fun and frolic.

Former Pittsburgh Steelers running back Jerome Bettis, aka "The Bus," told Lake Tahoe News on a conference call this week that his reason runs a little deeper.

The sixth all-time leading rusher in NFL history, who will be inducted Aug. 8 into the Hall of Fame, explained how he feels he's in good company with other Hall of Fame entrants. He enjoys the camaraderie of what he calls "a fraternity and brotherhood" over their accomplishments.

"You definitely feel you're in great company and more so with hall of famers. You have a respect from all these guys. You know what it took to get there. These are the most competitive bunch of guys I've ever seen," said Bettis, who got his nickname while playing at Notre Dame. (Note: Pittsburgh games bring out a huge Fighting Irish following.)

The football great has shown he's willing to not only compete against his own brother, but in another sport beyond football and golf. They bowled.

Bettis recalled with affection how his family is so tight knit, especially given the struggles. The brothers lost their father and now are enduring their mother having cancer.

"It's a special weekend for us because of the journey we've

taken. Our mother and father have never missed a game the entire time I played in the NFL,” Bettis said. He added how he and his mother were both crying when he got the news of his Hall of Fame induction. Bettis’ brother will introduce him during the ceremony.

To Oakland Raider receiver Tim Brown, another inductee this year, the competition on such a stage is what brings him out to the golf course.

“This tournament is the only one of its kind. There’s nothing like Lake Tahoe. You go out there and think ‘I’m going to beat this guy.’ You can’t get this on the football field,” Brown told Lake Tahoe News on a conference call. To cross over to golf, Brown said he walks a lot, but admitted “I’d die” if he walked a lot at his home in Texas where the temperatures are scorching hot.

Another new participant this year, Steeler wide receiver Hines Ward, said he relishes the competition of golf.

“I wished I would’ve started golf a long time ago. We’re trying to work on my game,” the two-time Super Bowl champion said of his fellow teammate Bettis. The two have become close off the field.

So perhaps golf is more than a place for sales executives to solidify a deal. It can be a place for kinship among other athletes.

That’s at least what Phil Weidinger, spokesman for the tournament and a golfer, believes goes on with the players.

“Where else are you going to play with this guy?” Weidinger said, illustrating the uniqueness of the tournament.

Most of the Hall of Fame players hit the course for fun, but some have winning in their back of their minds, like San Francisco 49er receiver Jerry Rice.

"He works on this. That's his goal – to win this thing," Weidinger said of the well-liked participant. "There are four to five hall of famers who could win this thing."

Overall, Weidinger estimated about a dozen of the 93 participants have a shot at it.

And this friendly competition and the fierce competitive nature is just what the sports network is going for with inviting these hall of famers. Besides the exposure of bringing out an athlete at the top of their game gains much of the attraction, Weidinger pointed out.

"You have to have the skills – the skills that are inherent to any pro player or any college player and apply to any sport," Mike Fry, physician with Tahoe Fracture & Orthopedic Medical Clinic, told Lake Tahoe News of the crossover these athletes make on the golf course.

Fry cited the sports figures' mental game as coming into play.

"Most of these guys compete with personality. That's what makes them succeed at what they do," Fry said.

To fellow golfer Randy Fox, hall of famers in other sports competing on the golf course seems natural. Their intensity, competitive spirit and household name give NBC reason to attract viewers by bringing them on screen.

"Hall of gamers, along with many other athletes take up the game of golf. They all have very good hand eye coordination and with being very competitive individuals. Many excel in the game of golf and become very good golfers. Lots of celebrities from numerous occupations try to get into this event, but NBC chooses the players they feel will create the most interest," said Fox, who is manager of Edgewood Tahoe pro shop. He attributes the anticipated interest as a reason for the increased number of Hall of Fame participants.

Hall of Fame participants in the July 14-19 celebrity golf tournament: Marcus Allen, Charles Barkley, Jerome Bettis, Tim Brown, John Elway, Marshall Faulk, Tom Glavine, Greg Maddux, Mike Modano, Jerry Rice, Joe Sakic, Emmitt Smith, Ozzie Smith, John Smoltz and Steve Young.

National monuments expanding in Calif., Nev.

By Josh Lederman, AP

Mammoth bones, prehistoric rock carvings and more than a million acres of wilderness will be protected as part of three new national monuments that President Obama is creating in California, Nevada and Texas.

The presidential move, announced by the White House early Friday, brings to 19 the number of monuments that Obama has created or expanded since taking office. Environmental advocates hailed the new monuments as bringing sorely needed protection to natural American treasures, even as Republicans in Congress were pursuing legislation to stop the president.

In Texas, Obama is creating a monument at Waco Mammoth, a relatively small site in central Texas where archaeologists have discovered remains of 24 Columbian Mammoths – the largest of the mammoth species – from more than 65,000 years ago, the White House said. Like other mammoths, the Columbian Mammoth is now extinct, but roamed freely in North America during the Pleistocene epoch, known colloquially as the ice age. The site marks the only spot in the U.S. where a nursery herd of mammoths has been discovered, and is also home to preserved remains of other ancient species including the saber-toothed

cat, dwarf antelope and the western camel.

Nevada's Basin and Range, home to rare rock art from 4,000 years ago, will also become a national monument. The White House said more than 700,000 acres of public land will be protected in an untouched area of the Great Basin region. In addition to petroglyphs, the site also contains "City," an array of abstract sculptures that artist Michael Heizer has worked on for more than four decades. The project evokes elements of Mesoamerican life, with ceremonial mounds interspersed with more modern architecture. Nevada Sen. Harry Reid, the Senate's top Democrat, has been pushing for years to protect the site and its surroundings.

Tourists and nature lovers in California will see more than 330,000 acres in Northern California set aside for a new monument at Berryessa Snow Mountain. The White House touted the area's rich biodiversity and Native American cultural sites, but the area is best known as a destination for hikers, campers, fishermen and hunters. Officials said designating the site as a monument would likely prompt increased visits to the area and drive economic growth in the coming years.

"I applaud the president, because his historic action will preserve this magnificent area for generations and boost the local economy," said Sen. Barbara Boxer, D-Calif.

Some Republicans have complained for years that Obama has abused his authority to designate monuments. In anticipation of Obama's move, this week Nevada Rep. Crescent Hardy introduced an amendment to an Interior Department bill that would block Obama from creating monuments in areas where there's been local opposition. His amendment, which successfully made its way into the bill, lists counties in Nevada, Arizona, California, New Mexico, Oregon and Utah as off-limits.

"Any decisions that restrict ranching, recreation or other

types of land-use activities should have as much local input as possible,” Hardy said, adding that the amendment was “about empowering local communities and local stakeholders most affected by monument designations.”

Under the 1906 Antiquities Act, presidents have broad authority to designate historic or ecologically significant sites without congressional approval, protecting those areas from new development like mining, oil wells and grazing.

Obama has used that authority aggressively as he’s worked to secure a legacy of protecting the environment and warding off the effects of climate change. Earlier this year, Obama designated new monuments in Hawaii, Illinois and Colorado, and last year he expanded the Pacific Remote Islands Marine National Monument to cover 490,000 square miles, making it the largest marine preserve in the world.

California’s Berryessa Snow Mountain National Monument will be managed by the U.S. Forest Service and the Interior Department’s Bureau of Land Management, the White House said. The National Park Service will run Waco Mammoth National Monument in Texas, with help from Baylor University and the city of Waco. In Nevada, Basin and Range National Monument will be managed by the Bureau of Land Management.

Lack of supply hurts Tahoe real estate sales

By Ben van der Meer, Sacramento Business Journal

The major force holding back Lake Tahoe-area real estate through the first half of 2015 is the same as elsewhere: lack

of inventory.

And though many experts think a lot of new construction could solve the situation elsewhere, that's not likely for Tahoe.

Sue Lowe, corporate broker and senior vice president at Chase International in Tahoe, said the lack of supply is because improving economic conditions means no one feels compelled to sell.

Read the whole story

El Dorado County spending taxpayer money on PR agency for grand jury damage control

By Kathryn Reed

El Dorado County has hired a public relations firm to primarily focus on getting out a positive message about the latest grand jury report.

The scope of work with Endicott Communications out of Roseville says the primary objectives are:

"1. County more favorably perceived by residents and other key regional stakeholders.

"2. Media coverage and other external communications regarding grand jury reports reflect county key messaging."

Pamela Knorr, when she was acting CAO, signed the contract on

June 15. *Lake Tahoe News* has been trying to get a copy of it since June 17 when the unfamiliar contact information appeared on a press release. Knorr never responded to the request. Auditor-Controller Joe Harn provided a copy of the public document on July 8, the same day he received it. As of Wednesday he had not received an invoice from the firm.

The \$40,000 contract is below the threshold in which the Board of Supervisors would have to approve the expenditure.

The contract goes on to say the flacks are to develop talking points for county staff to use in regards to the grand jury, write and distribute press releases, develop content about the grand jury report for the county's website and social media, and monitor and report on grand jury related media coverage.

One of the more highly charged grand jury reports was about the Human Resources Department, of which Knorr is head of. She was also acting CAO from December 2014 until June 29.

This isn't the first time the county has sought outside help instead of relying on staff which it had done up until about three years ago.

Then CAO Terri Daly hired Stephanie McCorkle on May 13, 2014, to do public relations work. The one-year contract was not to exceed \$25,000. She left before half the year's term was up, but billed for nearly the entire amount of the contract.

There was also Kittelson and Associates, which entered a \$516,995 three-year contract with the county in December to provide public outreach for a five-year capital improvement program and traffic impact mitigation fee program updates. In the document is a \$44,720 contract with Flint Strategies to be a subcontractor of Kittleson's for PR work.

Truckee tackling climate change



The Truckee River is a trickle between Tahoe City and Truckee. Photo/LTN

By Linda Fine Conaboy

TRUCKEE – Whether to jump aboard the global warming freight train or to simply remain at the station as the issue continues to heat up was the question posed last week at a Truckee climate planning workshop.

Town Manager Tony Lashbrook explained that the mission, moving forward, is to scope out, process and budget a greenhouse gas inventory and how the town might pursue a climate action plan.

The meeting, though fairly well represented by interested and seemingly supportive stakeholders, among them Truckee Donner Public Utilities District, a parks and recreation manager, a representative from the Truckee River Watershed Council and several interested citizens, did not, according to Lashbrook, include all of those who could have been there.

"I'm happy with the way the meeting went, though," Lashbrook said July 7. "The objective was a workshop to educate community members, the town council and others on climate change. We wanted to point the compass to define the purpose and benefits of doing climate planning in California."

To that end, Sierra Business Council and a group called the Local Government Commission, both nonprofit organizations, led the workshop they dubbed Climate Policy 101, starting with a presentation followed by public comment, and a question-and-answer session.

According to its website, SBC works closely with Sierra Nevada cities, providing training to staff and assisting them in preparing greenhouse gas emissions inventories, a first step in a jurisdiction's climate protection initiative.

The carbon cycle, explained SBC President Steve Frisch, is a simple biochemical process where carbon is exchanged. It's a series of processes by which carbon compounds are interconverted in the environment, chiefly involving the incorporation of carbon dioxide into living tissue by photosynthesis and its return to the atmosphere through respiration, the decay of dead organisms, and the burning of fossil fuels.

Carbon dioxide makes up 1 percent of the world's atmosphere. Frisch said his agency's goal is to figure out how to advance California's policy, which demands that carbon be reduced to 1990 levels by 2020.

"When we burn fossil fuel, we return it to the atmosphere. The recent fire in Yosemite emitted as much carbon dioxide as all of the emissions recorded in Southern California in a year," Frisch said.

Reducing these emissions is Frisch's passion. What's happening, he said, is that across the board, state policy is driving reduction, and California is meeting its goals.

Cap and trade plays a role. However, according to Frisch, who presented an extremely simplified definition, those who reduce their greenhouse emissions can sell them and those who don't, can buy them, with all money from this project funneled into greenhouse emission reduction.

The Environmental Protection Agency, on its website, explained that successful cap and trade programs reward innovation, efficiency and early action and provide strict environmental accountability without inhibiting economic growth.

According to Frisch, this is important because the revenue side of the equation is driving a bunch of state programs – by 2020 the fund will total \$5 billion, portions of which can be accessed by local entities meeting their pre-established goals.

Lashbrook said because of its location Truckee is not required to do climate planning. However, there are definitely big incentives and benefits to developing such a plan, not to mention the residual good to be gained from efforts to reduce global warming.

Greg Jones, vice president of SBC, cited a litany of positive reasons to embark on these kinds of programs: cleaner air leading to a reduction of asthma and obesity; reduction in the probability of catastrophic wildfires, green building benefits, wiser water usage, advances in land use and big pluses on the business side of things.

While the reasons to actively seek to reduce our carbon footprints are compelling, the looming question is, how to do this?

Kate Meis, executive director of Local Government Commission, led that charge. By way of explanation, LGC is a nonprofit, fostering innovation in environmental sustainability, economic prosperity and social equity.

Since the majority of carbon emissions come from private vehicles, Meis discussed the need to make alternatives to driving cars more attractive and then how to optimize that driving. She also talked about the need for in-fill projects, more efficient vehicles, mixed-use neighborhoods, flood protection projects, green infrastructure, “cool” roofs and water recycling.

And when funds finally do become available, it’s important to be pro-active in how to spend the money. Meis discussed municipal leadership, regulations and community engagement. And most important to advocates is how to actively engage the public in these programs, should they finally come to fruition.

Meis said Truckee has done a good job in meeting the goals it now has in place, such as its low-impact development standards and green building policies. But the belief more needs to be done and this is the charge of Truckee’s community leaders. Now they must discern if the area’s citizens have the fire in their bellies to climb on board this quickly moving freight, and then they must determine how to get it done.

Meis said it’s important to have goals, even little ones that are easily measured and then to demonstrate a method as to how to get there. “There needs to be a broad and deep collaborative process among departments and the public to develop a plan for combatting climate change.”

Drought changes kitchen

habits

By Kim Severson, New York Times

SANTA CRUZ – Andrea Nguyen, who writes cookbooks for a living, knows that making pho in a pressure cooker is not the solution to California's drought. Still, developing a reasonable version of the Vietnamese noodle soup that can be made in less than an hour, with half the water, matters to her these days.

"We're all trying to do what we can," she said. "It's all about consciousness."

Across California, home cooks and restaurant chefs are adjusting to a new reality in kitchens where water once flowed freely over sinks full of vegetables, and no one thought twice about firing up a big pot of water for pasta.

The state is in the fourth year of a severe drought, but the reality of living with less water began hitting hard in the spring. For the first time, state officials ordered residents of every city and town to conserve water or face consequences.

Some residents had already taken the punishment into their own hands with drought shaming, using social media to call out people with well-watered lawns or other outward signs of excessive water consumption.

A culinary equivalent has yet to pop up, probably because running a kitchen is not as water-intensive as maintaining a yard or using the bathroom, where a bucket to collect water as the shower heats up has become an accepted part of home décor.

Yet the drought's impact is being keenly felt in culinary matters, from how Californians cook and clean, to how they shop and even what foods they can find at the market.

Read the whole story

Wacky weather to linger for a couple more days



Hail gathers along Highway 89 in Truckee on July 8. Photo/LTN

By Kathryn Reed

Rumbling, crackling and flashes of white light. It's just another day in Lake Tahoe. Oh, and there is fresh snow on Tioga Pass.

Hail has been common with this series of storms that is now in its second week. On July 8 golf-ball size hail was recorded in South Lake Tahoe. More typical has been marble-size hail. It has gathered in places to the point it looks like snow.

While summer thunderstorms are not uncommon in the region, they usually don't hang around this long or come at all hours of the day and night.

"This pattern has been very persistent in that it hasn't

shifted," Alex Hoon, meteorologist with National Weather Service in Reno told *Lake Tahoe News*. "A high pressure over the Great Basin brings moisture up from the south." These are monsoon-like storms.

In the last 36 hours a low pressure has come over California, which is cooling things down.

South Lake Tahoe's high on Wednesday was 69, while it was 85 in Reno. Normally these two cities are 80 and 91, respectively. Today's high in the city is slated to be 65 degrees, while it may reach 78 in Reno.

South Lake received 0.39 inches of rain on July 8 and 0.05 inches on July 7. Truckee on Wednesday recorded 0.11 inches. In Little Valley, which on the other side of Diamond Peak between Incline Village and Washoe Lake, the rain total was 0.57 inches.

Douglas County on Wednesday issued a disaster declaration for parts of the valley because of the flooding. The declaration will allow the county to call in additional crews to help clear roads, remove debris and repair public infrastructure that continues to be damaged as repeated storms cause flash flooding.

The most recent flash flood was primarily concentrated in the Stephanie Lane and Johnson Lane areas. Approximately 141 homes have been recorded as possibly having water and structural damage and an unknown number of homes with landscape damage, according to the Douglas County Sheriff's Department.

The Johnson Lane Firehouse Station 6 is being used as the local field office for citizens to report damage. Sandbags are available at Fire Station 6 on Stephanie Lane.

While the moisture is welcome in this fourth year of drought, it is wreaking havoc on traditional summer businesses in Tahoe. Ski resort gondolas and trams can't run when there is

even a threat of lightning, and boat-paddle-bike rentals come to a grinding halt.

Thunderstorms are still in the forecast and remain so through the weekend, though with a diminishing chance.

By next week the weather is expected to return to normal – dry, a little breezy and in the 80s at the lake.