

Overhaul of Kingsbury Grade likely to create traffic nightmare throughout the summer

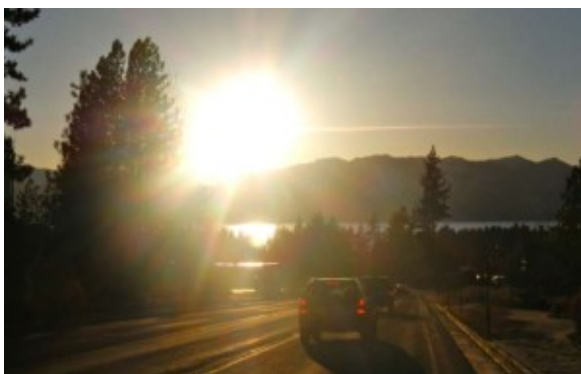
By Kathryn Reed

Construction this summer on Kingsbury Grade is going to require patience from drivers, businesses and residents. Expect the roadway to be torn up until just before July 4, 2015.

If the weather holds, the work could begin before May 1.

This stretch of road that connects Lake Tahoe to the Carson Valley has been worked on since 2009. That was a water quality project, while this is more about the road surface and making other improvements.

“Ultimately, the contractor did not complete all of the contracted work. The current project will construct improvements to realize the final goals and objectives of the earlier project as well as reconstruct the roadway pavement and make safety improvements,” Meg Ragonese, with the Nevada Department of Transportation, told *Lake Tahoe News*.



The sun is setting on

Kingsbury Grade being an easy commute. Photo/Kathryn Reed

Last year NDOT told *LTN* this project would cost \$7.5 million. Now the price tag is \$14,877,619. Bonds, state funds and federal dollars are financing it. Q&D Construction out of Reno is the contractor.

“The goal is to take the opportunity to incorporate as many needed road enhancements as possible into this project. The project team conducted detailed analysis of the pavement design and constructability and identified issues that were not anticipated in the initial scope of this project,” Ragonese said.

Additions from the original plans include:

- Subsurface water mitigation of natural springs located directly beneath the pavement at three locations along Kingsbury Grade.
- Improving poor sight distance at Tramway Drive. A left turn lane and advance warning flashing lights will be placed at Tramway alerting drivers that there is vehicle movement at this intersection.
- Luminaries will be placed at the existing crosswalks to enhance pedestrian visibility.
- Sidewalk and ramps will be improved to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act.

At the end drivers will be left with what will essentially be a brand new road that will be constructed to a depth of 13 inches. This should last 20 years. However, it's possible that repaving could be needed in 10 to 15 years. That is largely dependent on the weather. The freeze-thaw cycle at Tahoe is extremely detrimental to roads.

Here is the current work schedule:

- May: Roadway reconstruction from Pine Ridge to Katherine and drainage improvements from Pine Ridge to Buchanan.

Work will be around the clock Monday-Saturday.

Kingsbury Grade will be closed to through traffic near the summit, just east of Tramway Drive. Residences and businesses located on Kingsbury Grade between the closure and Highway 50 will only be accessible by Highway 50 at Tahoe.

- June-August: Roadway reconstruction from Highway 50 to Pine Ridge and drainage improvements from Buchanan to the summit.

Work will be nights only Monday-Friday.

One lane will be closed from Pine Ridge Drive to Highway 50 every day, every hour. This will still leave one lane of traffic open in each direction with no flagger controls.

Flagger controls with one-way alternating traffic only during night shifts.

Road will be open with one lane in each direction for days, weekends, and holidays.

- September-October: Roadway reconstruction from Katherine to Buchanan and drainage improvements from Pine Ridge to Buchanan.

Work will be 24 hours per day, Monday-Saturday.

- Following the Labor Day holiday: Kingsbury Grade will be closed to through traffic near the summit, just east of Tramway Drive. Residences and businesses located on Kingsbury Grade between the closure and Highway 50 will only be accessible by Highway 50.

- May 2015: Roadway reconstruction from Buchanan to the Summit. Work will be 24 hours per day Monday-Saturday. One

lane will be closed with flagger controls during this period.

“The amount of traffic will dictate how long the delays will be. The anticipated maximum delays before Memorial Day and after Labor Day are 30 minutes,” Ragonese said. “The anticipated delays during the nighttime work between Memorial Day and Labor Day are 30 minutes. During the day between Memorial Day and Labor Day, there will be one lane of traffic open in each direction with no flagger controls.”

NDOT says between 9,000 and 14,000 vehicles a day on average pass through the intersection of Highway 50 and Kingsbury Grade. This compares to the 4,300 vehicles on the Grade at Foothill Road. At Daggett Summit the average is 10,000 vehicles a day.

People will have access to businesses and residences the entire time. It just might take a while to get anywhere, though.

Ridge Tahoe officials did not return multiple calls, so it's not known what they plan to do for their guests. The Ridge is at the very top of Kingsbury Grade. South Lake Tahoe and Douglas County officials said they are working with NDOT and others to help alleviate problems.

“The intersection of U.S. 50 and Kingsbury Grade will be monitored and flaggers will be utilized throughout the project to better handle and direct traffic. If backups on U.S. 50 persist, the group will reconvene and work together until a solution is found,” Ragonese said.

NDOT is recommending people use Highway 50 – Spooner Summit – as an alternative to Kingsbury Grade.

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Notes:

- Go online to sign up for email updates on the project.

- March 19 is the first Kingsbury Grade Pavement Reconstruction Project public information meeting. It's at the Ridge Tahoe, 400 Ridge Club Drive, Stateline. March 20 there is a meeting at Douglas High School, 1670 Highway 88, Minden. Both meetings will provide the same information and will be in an open format from 4-7pm. A project presentation will be given at 5:30pm.
- Comments may be made until April 4 to info@dot.state.nv.us.
- Lake Tahoe South Shore Chamber of Commerce is taking a survey to collect information on how many people would utilize a commuter bus if available.

Thunderbird Lodge to receive state bond money

By Cy Ryan, Las Vegas Sun

CARSON CITY – The state Board of Finance approved the sale of \$1 million in bonds to preserve historic buildings in Nevada, with a small share going to Clark County.

There were 15 requests to the commission asking for a combined \$2.1 million, but the commission was limited to allocating \$1 million.

The commission approved \$180,000 to the Nevada Indian Commission and \$100,000 each to the White Pine Historical Railroad Foundation and the Thunderbird Lodge Preservation Society at Lake Tahoe.

Read the whole story

Lake Tahoe's clarity declines by 5 feet



The Tahoe Keys, once the largest marsh in the basin, has long been a source of degradation of clarity for Lake Tahoe. Photo/Kathryn Reed

By Kathryn Reed

Lake Tahoe's clarity took a turn for the worse in 2013, with visibility decreasing by 5 feet.

Data released March 13 show the average annual clarity level for 2013 at 70.1 feet. This breaks a two-year gain. The

measurements have been taken continuously since 1968, when the Secchi disk could be seen to a depth of 102.4 feet.

UC Davis researchers use what looks like a white dinner plate to measure clarity by dropping it over the side of a boat at various locations throughout the year to record how far down someone on the boat can see it. The highest value recorded in 2013 was 90 feet and the lowest was 49 feet.

“Clarity in Lake Tahoe largely reflected what we saw in the weather in 2013,” Geoff Schladow, director of the UC Davis Tahoe Environmental Research Center, said in a statement. “At the beginning of the year, clarity was lowered by large stream inflows. At the end of the year, the low inflows resulting from the drought conditions helped to improve clarity.”

Clarity continues to improve in the winter (December-March) and decline in the summer (June-September).

Researchers said the large stream inflows in winter 2012-13 were mainly responsible for the lower values. At 63.8 feet, summer clarity nearly mirrored 2012’s 64.4 feet. Still, summer clarity is trending downward.

Through various programs agencies around the lake are trying to restore clarity to 97.4 feet. Reducing fine sediment from reaching Lake Tahoe is one of the major goals.

Even though the 1997 inaugural environmental summit created the environmental improvement program and more than a billion dollars have flowed to the basin for water quality projects, it wasn’t until 2013 that a regional monitoring program for urban stormwater was initiated in the basin. Urban stormwater runoff is believed to be the major contributor to reduced clarity

Lake Tahoe Clarity Readings	
• 2013:	70.1 feet
• 2012:	75.3 feet
• 2011:	68.9 feet
• 2010:	64.4 feet
• 2009:	68.1 feet
• 2008:	69.6 feet
• 2007:	70.1 feet
• 2006:	67.7 feet
• 2005:	72.4 feet

at the lake.

All of the programs and money spent, though, have nothing to do with the shoreline where most people recreate. It wasn't until last year that the powers that be decided to make a concerted effort to study the muck that is making swimming at some beaches resemble any lake in the U.S. because of the algae and murkiness.

- 2004:
73.6 feet
- 2003:
71.0 feet
- 2002:
78.0 feet
- 2001:
73.6 feet
- 2000:
67.3 feet

– Source:
UC Davis

Avi dogs – the difference between life and death

By Susan Wood

Ski trail maintenance worker Jeff Eckland can thank his lucky stars he had man's best friend looking for him when he broke his back tumbling in a massive avalanche at Kirkwood Mountain Resort a decade ago.

Although the highly trained canine leaped across the rainbow bridge 14 years ago, the golden retriever named Doc will live on in the heart of Eckland. The Kirkwood staffer is only one of three people in 159-chronicled avalanches who was rescued alive by a dog in the United States since records were kept by the National Search and Rescue organization in 1969.

"It was 11:30," Eckland recalled as if it were yesterday. "It had been snowing for days."

The snow stopped, and the Kirkwood snow safety crew had

already blasted the night before. But the wind loaded the slope above Button Bowl.

The three off-duty employees made a short hike up. Eckland took off first on his skis in front of his colleagues on snowboards when a soft slab avalanche wider than the length of a football field gained on him. Trees that appeared 300 yards away were suddenly in his face and scooped him up like a ragdoll.

"I went 80 mph in the blink of an eye," he told *Lake Tahoe News*.

He was held against the tree debris for 20 seconds, then buried under 4 to 5 feet of snow just above the lifts along Buckboard flats.

"I thought 'I'm going to die here'," Eckland recalled.



Jeff Eckland and
Doc Photo/Provided

One friend rode down to Chair 3 to call in the destructive slide. The other went to the ski patrol station at Chair 2, where longtime ski patroller and Doc's handler Dave Paradysz was digging a pit. He quickly took Doc on the snowmobile as far as he could go along the slide path while another dog looked at the end of the slide. Doc immediately headed for the trees debris.

Eckland was motionless and hypothermic, folded upside down in half with his ski boots next to his head. A piercing pain came

from his back, prompting him to think a tree impaled him.

"I didn't know which way was up. I was losing air and going black, when a paw broke the snow. I knew what it was, then all the oxygen rushed in," he said, adding how his body corrected like a spring when the very excited dog dug him out.

Eckland estimated he was buried for about 15 minutes, the golden quarter hour for avalanche victims to survive.

It took three months of mainly rest for Eckland to recover from a broken back.

It broke his heart when Doc died in 2000. He immortalized the dog with a tattoo on his chest.

Eckland certainly is a believer in the avalanche dog program and tells his story whenever he can.

"If not for the dog, I'd be dead. This was the only tool we had that would've found me," he said. "Their sense of smell is so incredible."

In the land where skiers and riders may boast some of the deepest snow – at times on the planet, snow safety is serious business. Kirkwood maintains a program with seven dogs: Logan, 8; Stella, 8; Boji, 6; Pearl, 3; Huckleberry, 3, MoMo, 10 months; and Chewy, 7.

Fred Newberry, a Kirkwood ski patroller since 1999, handles Chewy, a golden retriever. He admits snow safety work can be unpredictable and "not an exact science."

What he does count on is the dedication, training and drive of his dog, who primarily works inside the ski resort boundaries, but ventures out to assist Alpine and Amador counties in this rugged Sierra Nevada mountain country. The dogs are there to protect in-bounds skiers and boarders, along with the patrollers.

“The dog saved his life,” Newberry said of Eckland. “It’s why we not only have the dog program, but we support it.”

Many of the Lake Tahoe area ski resorts have dog avalanche rescue programs. Golden retrievers like Doc and Chewy are commonplace.

“They’re very obedient, trainable and have a good fetch drive,” Newberry said.

A godsend to Heavenly

With seven dogs of its own, sister ski area Heavenly Mountain Resort would add “good victim loyalty,” “high energy” and “good physical condition” as characteristics that make for an ideal avalanche rescue dog. Some of the dogs are related to others at fellow ski resorts.



Truckee bounds up the slope at Heavenly Mountain Resort.

Photo/Kathryn Reed

Heavenly patrollers got to prove the traits firsthand on a recent demonstration drill with 3-year-old black Lab Truckee. According to his playing card that Heavenly hands out, Truckee is Heavenly’s first Lab on its rescue dog team.

Truckee came down Milky Way Bowl on handler Chris Child’s shoulders, ready and eager to work. Some ski resorts have leaned toward delivering smaller dogs that way.

Child met up with fellow handler Colton Terry, who acted as a witness to the mock scene. The two discussed clues, then the collar came off and that was Truckee's clue to go to work searching for a buried Heavenly employee.

"The idea is to get him downwind (to pick up the scent)," Terry said.

With a few quick, shallow digs at the snow, Child kept Truckee focused. His nose covered what appeared to be a mock slide path in a grid pattern. In a matter of a few minutes, the canine started digging feverishly where the staffer was buried more than 3 feet.

Truckee slid on his belly down the hill afterward to celebrate his find.

"The dogs always find their person," Terry said.

The patrollers bring in a few tricks of the trade to try such as using squares of wool against a sweaty body to simulate the human smell.

Terry has assisted Douglas County sheriff's deputies with his golden, Summit, who's in his ninth season.

Apparently, Summit's work ethic is even better than Terry's. The patroller admits when he wants to relax on his day off, Summit acts like he's ready to work every day. And this could mean appearances at schools and events and serving as ambassadors of the resort. Guests can't help but surround the canines and pet them like one recent day at the top of the Sky Express chairlift when a few people had their pictures taken with Summit and Madeline, another golden retriever.

But one thing is clear. These dogs are working machines, and they must go through a rigid certification program to do what they do. Terry mentioned the dogs having to locate two people in 15 minutes in a 200-foot square area.

Sierra's new pup to follow in proven path

"Search," the stern call came from Sierra-at-Tahoe ski patroller Tim Owen to his 2-year-old golden retriever, Kopa, in the trees alongside Castle where a resort employee was buried on another recent drill.



Kopa furiously digs for the buried person at Sierra in a training exercise.
Photo/Susan Wood

In his second season at Sierra, Kopa comes from a long line of patrol dogs. Boomer Murphy from Squaw Valley is his father. Kopa, who has been in training since he was 6 months old, is thought to be "extremely playful, but disciplined."

After a few minutes passing and a few nudges from Owen "to go to work," Kopa went right to the hole. Sierra patrollers have a few holes they dig on Castle, but move them often to test the dogs.

Kopa has not been on a mission yet, but "we do train for the worst and hope for the best," Owen explained. The dogs use the Swiss standards for avalanche dog rescue training, which involve phases of progress.

Kopa and 5-year-old Khuno, the senior dog in the group, assist in backing up the patrollers, especially when they sweep Huckleberry Canyon. The gates leading to the El Dorado County

backcountry are increasingly enticing for riders seeking powder.

With more skiers and boarders each year going into the backcountry to make fresh tracks, the dogs become more of an asset. Varying layers of snow from soft to hard contribute to the chance of more avalanches.

"I think the combination of more backcountry users in general and having weather patterns we're not used to out here make it more of a factor. People in the backcountry take it for granted that the conditions could be the same (all the time)," fellow Sierra ski patroller Shannon Maguire, who handles the newest addition to the resort's pack of dogs, told *Lake Tahoe News*.

Nine-month-old Hunter, another golden, has been "killing it" in his training. Owen praised, as Hunter and Kopa played outside the Grandview Lodge.

Maguire said it's been a learning experience for both handler and dog. Each handler of the 22 patrollers at Sierra becomes an alternate handler before making the grade. Each dog goes to school for up to two years.

"It's definitely a learning curve. He's a puppy. It's a lot of work because he's surrounded by people and smells. It can be a challenge," she said, smiling.

Maguire played hide-and-seek last summer to get Hunter in the mode of finding people.

Then after training switches to snow, the idea is to have the dogs ready in two seasons.

The avalanche rescue dog program was initiated in the 1997-98 ski season with patroller Bob Schults and his dog Sirius, who was tragically killed when he was struck by a vehicle on Highway 50 about a decade ago. The program was diligently

maintained through the efforts of Keebah, Rush-To and later Cruiser in 2005.

“They’re a valuable asset when you consider most people in the ski area aren’t wearing beacons,” said Sierra Avalanche Center forecaster Brandon Schwartz, who works for the U.S. Forest Service in Truckee.

Avalanche conditions have been all over the map this season with varying layers of snow when it does appear.

A small avalanche recently occurred in Eagle Bowl at Kirkwood and someone had to be dug out.

Devastating avalanches have happened this year in the West from Colorado to Oregon, with some resulting in fatalities and living up to its name “the white death.” A book under that name highlights the large avalanche at Alpine Meadows north of Lake Tahoe in 1982.

House to debate USFS, ski resort water rights

By Jason Blevins, Denver Post

The Water Rights Protection Act – which would prohibit the federal government from seizing privately-acquired water rights used on federal lands – arrives for debate on the House floor Thursday.

HR3189 – sponsored by Rep. Scott Tipton, R-Colo., and co-sponsored by 15 Western members of Congress – stems from the ski industry’s now 3-year-old fight with the agency, which sought in 2011 to revise permit regulations to require ski

areas to transfer water rights used on public lands over to the Forest Service.

The ski industry – which sued to stop implementation of the new water-rights clause – argues the permit change amounts to illegal takings of private property. The Forest Service says the water regulation is a return to original policy outlined by the 1986 National Forest Service Ski Area Permit Act and keeps water resources connected to public land.

A U.S. District Court judge in December 2012 overturned the water clause and required the Forest Service to gather public input on the change to federal permitting.

Read the whole story

Drought driving up food prices

By Dana Hull, San Jose Mercury News

With 2013 the driest year on record and 2014 possibly worse, the devastation of California's drought is trickling down to crops, fields, farmers markets, grocery stores – and the kitchen table.

While it's too early to tell precisely how much the drought will push up household grocery bills, economists say consumers can expect to pay more for food later this year because fewer acres of land are being planted and crop yields are shrinking.

Large grocery chains have distribution networks and can import produce from around the world to keep customers in everything from cantaloupe to cauliflower, but experts say California's

smaller yields will inevitably lead to higher consumer prices here and elsewhere. Some consumers already are plotting ways to keep their food budgets under control if there is a big spike in prices.

Read the whole story

Douglas County's economic recovery in place; infrastructure, employment challenges remain

By Anne Knowles

MINDEN – Douglas County is back on track, but it's unlikely the county will return to the earlier high growth that once fueled its budget.

In 2013, 947 homes were sold, the most sales since 2005, at an average price of just less than \$300,000, the highest since 2008. Assessed values, which dropped 29 percent from 2009 to 2014, are expected to increase 4 percent in 2015. And 108 residential building permits were issued last year, the most since 2007, although well below the 537 permits issued in 2005.

"Building permits are a good leading economic indicator," Steve Mokrohisky, county manager, said at the second annual Financial State of the County on March 10 at Carson Valley Inn. "That pales in comparison to the 500 plus permits we had

in the 2004, 2005, 2006, but we probably won't get back to those levels ever."

Taxable sales are also up. In 2013, they approached \$600 million, the highest since 2008, and are already ahead of \$300 million at the halfway point in fiscal year 2014. But Mokrohisky warned that taxable sales fund little in the county, which depends on Nevada's consolidated tax for more than a quarter of its budget.

And unemployment in Douglas County, he said, remains stubbornly high at 9.6 percent in December 2013, although that's the lowest rate in five years.

Among the highlights for the county is a recent bond upgrade to AA from Standard & Poor's, the first upgrade in 10 years and the highest rating in the county's history.

Mokrohisky, who is leaving April 11 to take a new job in Lane County, Ore., said the county faces several challenges, including deteriorating infrastructure such as roads and water systems. On March 20, the Douglas County Board of Commissioners is having its meeting in Stateline to discuss consolidation of aging water systems at Lake Tahoe.

Another goal is to revitalize the downtowns of Gardnerville, Minden and the South Shore using Genoa as a model, said Mokrohisky.

And the county must balance the need to control expenses with maintaining "our greatest asset," a vibrant workforce, he said. During the downturn of the last half decade, the county has reduced its personnel costs by \$1 million, eliminating 65 full-time equivalents and negotiating contracts with employees that have stabilized costs. That's helped bring expenses below revenues. From 2002-09, county revenues grew 5.7 percent while expenses climbed 7.5 percent. From 2010 to 2013, revenue growth dropped to 1.8 percent while expenses were kept to 0.4 percent growth. The projected annual average growth for the

next five years is 2.3 percent for revenues and expenses.

At the meeting, the county also launched an annual award for local businesses called the Spotlight Award. Seven businesses were honored in categories such as retail, manufacturing and hospitality. The businesses were American AVK, a maker of water hydrants and valves in Minden; Carson Valley Inn, the Minden casino/hotel/motor lodge/RV park; Edgewood Companies, owner of 500 Lake Tahoe acres and operator of Edgewood Tahoe Golf Course; Fresh Ideas, a Gardnerville gift shop; R0 Anderson, an engineering firm; Red Hut Café, the 55-year-old restaurant operator with locations in Lake Tahoe, Carson City and Reno; and Soaring NV, a gliding school which took home the entrepreneur award for its owner, Laurie Harden.

Google building off-road map for hikers

By Jame Sturz, Outside

Last summer, Google launched a unique program in which it loans out backpack versions of its car-mounted Street View cameras, called Trekkers, to intrepid explorers. It's an ingenious idea: put these devices in the hands of the people who know a trail, river, or stretch of wilderness best, and let them map it out.

Last August, the first loaner was taken to Hawaii's Big Island, where Rob Pacheco, cofounder of outfitter Hawaiian Forest and Trail, was charged with mapping the island's most important and accessible trails. Street View product manager

Evan Rapoport says he chose Hawaii from “tens of thousands” of applications because of its ecological diversity, visual lushness, focus on preservation, and accessibility. “It’s a place where people go, but it’s also a place they dream of going,” he says.

On Nov. 25, 2013, I joined Pacheco for his final day of mapping the 116,000-acre Kahuku section of Hawaii Volcanoes National Park. We hiked past koa and ohia lehua trees, lava flows, and a 400-foot-deep pit crater. (Rangers were still talking about how a mouflon had recently tumbled into it.) The unit, which came with a 32-ounce Maltene that dangled from one side at hip-level, was wired to a Galaxy Nexus, housed in a near-indestructible case that dangled from the other. The phone served as the pack’s controller, letting users tap in their manner of travel, with options including everything from canoe, to dogsled, to horseback. It also streamed a checkerboard of images across its screen as we hiked. Then the GPS-stamped, 360-degree pictures were saved to an ejectable, 480-gigabyte SSD disk.

Read the whole story

Heroin use up because of crackdown on prescription drugs

By Jerry Markon and Alice Crites, Washington Post

From the beginning, the U.S. government’s decade-long crackdown on prescription drug abuse has run an unsettling risk: that arresting doctors and shuttering “pill mills” would

inadvertently fuel a new epidemic of heroin use.

State and federal officials have pressed their campaign against prescription drug abuse with urgency, trying to contain a scourge that kills more than 16,000 people each year. The crackdown has helped reduce the illegal use of some medications and raised awareness of their dangers.

But at the same time that some pain medications have become less available on the street and pricier, many users have switched to cheaper heroin, since prescription pills and heroin are in the same class of drugs and provide a comparable, euphoric high.

Read the whole story

Getting schooled in science by snowshoeing



McKenna Villa, left and Braya Weaks from Zephyr Cove Elementary trek at Heavenly. Photos/Kathryn Reed

By Kathryn Reed

Students at Zephyr Cove Elementary School spent a day learning via a different kind of white board – snow.

Thirty-two students in Damon Kixmiller's fifth-grade class spent a recent Thursday snowshoeing at Heavenly Mountain Resort as part of the U.S. Forest Service's Winter Trek Conservation Education program.

Kixmiller believes place-based education – like this field trip – helps cement science concepts into the children's brain. Plus, some of the kids had never been up the gondola before.

Braya Weaks liked the gondola the best.



Volunteer Ranger Bob Sweatt talks about what can be seen from the mid-station.

“It was cool to see all the tracks beneath us. I saw some bear tracks,” she said.

The entire experience is rooted in education. It starts at Explore Tahoe where the kids learn about the old style snowshoes they would be wearing. They were once handwoven by the Washoe Indians.

While Kaleb Villa was having fun, he said, “It’s pretty tiring” using the long bamboo snowshoes.

On the ride up the gondola the students learned about the history of Van Sickle Ranch, which they pass over. They see the remnants of the 2002 Gondola Fire, point to where the Upper Truckee River flows into Lake Tahoe, and see Mount Rose in the distance.

Stopping at the mid-station they get out to see the sights and learn some more – like how Mount Rose, Mount Pluto and Mount Watson are old volcanoes.

They are able to answer volunteer Ranger Bob Sweatt’s question about how the area was formed – by glaciers, volcanoes and faults.

Youngsters know the trees were harvested for the silver mines in Nevada.



Emma Snipes tightens her snowshoe binding.

The learning started in the classroom before they got to the mountain and continues after. Kixmiller's class creates a webpage and students do writing assignments related to the experience.

Volunteers help the Forest Service run the program. This has saved the agency money so it can keep offering the program to schools in the area. Some schools have had to skip the program because of financial reasons, like ones in Nevada City and Fallon.

Volunteer Ranger Tim Kosier has the kids sitting in an open space looking at their surroundings and asks them questions.

They know that the tree stump could be habitat for animals. And many of the prints they are likely to see in this area not far from the terminus of the gondola are bounders like rabbits, squirrels and the American pine marten.

"The American pine marten is an indicator species," Kosier tells the students as they rest in the snow. "They indicate the health of the forest. By putting up cameras and collecting fur from pine martens we see if they are healthy. We are finding that they are healthy."

