

Lake Tahoe not chosen for 2012 Tour of California

By Kathryn Reed

Lake Tahoe will not be part of the 2012 Tour of California.

The 13 host cities for the prestigious bike race in May were announced early this morning. Santa Rosa, hometown of three-time Amgen Tour of California Champion Levi Leipheimer, long ago had been picked as the start city.



Amgen cyclists will not have to contend with Tahoe snow in 2012.
Photo/Lisa J. Tolda

The route for next year is:

- Stage 1: May 13 – Santa Rosa
- Stage 2: May 14 – San Francisco to Santa Cruz County
- Stage 3: May 15 – San Jose to Livermore
- Stage 4: May 16 – Sonora (new for 2012) to Clovis
- Stage 5: May 17 – Bakersfield (Individual Time Trial)

- Stage 6: May 18 – Palmdale to Big Bear Lake
- Stage 7: May 19 – Ontario (new for 2012) to Mt. Baldy
- Stage 8: May 20 – Los Angeles/L.A. LIVE.

Lake Tahoe was one of the more than 100 places wanting to be part of the race in 2012.

Before today's announcement, Carol Chaplin who heads LTVA, had told *Lake Tahoe News* she would not be surprised if Tahoe were not on the list of host cities for next year, but that would not preclude the area from trying to be on the map in the future.

This year the race was supposed to start on the South Shore, with the first day ending in Northstar. The second leg was to start in Squaw Valley.

Snow prevented the riders from doing either section. It came down to the last second before the race was called. The cyclists had been dressed on their bikes for the start.

Securing the event had been a joint endeavor by the Lake Tahoe Visitors Authority and North Lake Tahoe Resort Association.

LTUSD, LTCC candidate has multiple run-ins with the law

By Kathryn Reed

Michael Bischoff, candidate for Lake Tahoe Unified School District and Lake Tahoe Community College boards of education, was back in court last week.

This time it was for violating his probation stemming from a July 2010 felony driving under the influence arrest which he was convicted of in November 2010.



Michael
Bischoff

In August, he told *Lake Tahoe News* he had been living in South Lake Tahoe for a little more than a year. This means the arrest came just after getting to town.

This is not the first DUI the 60-year-old has had, as was reported in the August story.

The Oct. 28 hearing was continued to Dec. 9.

Bischoff last week told El Dorado County Superior Court Judge Steve Bailey he has been attending AA meetings, is receiving counseling through Tahoe Turning Point, is on new medication and is looking for a job.

But this is not the only run-in with the law Bischoff has had in the 16 months he has lived in South Lake Tahoe. There are two restraining orders against him.

A woman who works for El Dorado County mental health department obtained the first restraining order in May. She crossed paths with Bischoff through his drug rehab program.

In a police report she says, "(Bischoff) began leaving sexually explicit messages, including what sounded like him masturbating while leaving the message."

The second restraining order was issued in August. This was obtained by his now ex-girlfriend who he had been living with at Sky Lake Lodge.

She told officers Bischoff forced her to have sex, called her names and abused her cat.

It is not known where Bischoff is currently living after leaving the hotel in August.

He is on the Nov. 8 ballot for both boards of education.

Royal Gorge ski area, Rainbow Lodge for sale

By Tim Hauserman

Royal Gorge Cross Country Ski Area, including more than 3,000 acres on Donner Summit and the Rainbow Lodge along the Yuba River, is being put up for sale this month by a court appointed receiver.

The receiver, Douglas Wilson, took possession of the property after the owners of Royal Gorge defaulted on a \$16.7 million loan on the property. It is the end of a short, tumultuous chapter in the history of what is known as the largest cross country ski resort in North America, a centerpiece of the Donner Summit community.

How did this happen?



Royal Gorge plans to operate this winter, but it is for sale.

In 2005, developers Kirk Syme and two brothers, Mark and Todd Foster, purchased Royal Gorge from its long-time owner and original developer, John Slouber. They paid a reported \$35 million and set out to get approval for a cross country ski area based development that would include 900 residential units, several small lakes, retail and restaurant establishments and several new lifts.

Things didn't work out like they had planned. They had difficulty finding enough water and sewage capacity. Public officials said they would need to build a second access road to the development because the current two-lane road that goes over a busy railroad track would be insufficient in an emergency.

Then there were those "Save Donner Summit" bumper stickers which popped up everywhere as folks on the summit railed loudly against the development.

But the nail in the coffin was the real estate bust. With a built up inventory of luxury golf course homes in nearby Truckee it is hard to picture someone beginning a 900 unit residential and commercial development at this point in the economic cycle.

What happens to the ski area?

Douglas Wilson's managing director for Brokerage Services, Tom Olson, says the receiver will keep Royal Gorge Cross Country operating and will maintain the level of service. Royal Gorge General Manager David Achey agrees, stating that the receiver has been supportive of the ski area.

"We got guys painting, doing maintenance, summer trail work, looking into signage, maintaining grooming fleet. We are putting out a great product," Achey told *Lake Tahoe News*.

This year Royal Gorge will allow dogs on several trails for the first time. The Wells-Fargo and Emigrant trails will form a dog friendly loop on Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays.

Olson says the property is being put up for sale for \$24 million and is being marketed extensively internationally. The receiver is contacting cross country and downhill ski resorts, as well as individuals who in the past have purchased large parcels for conservation purposes. In addition to the 3,000 acres of Royal Gorge, which includes the Summit Station building and a number of huts along the trail, the sale also includes Rainbow Lodge with its 114 acres along the Yuba River and about 300 acres of land in Negro Canyon above Donner Lake.

One party that has already expressed interest in the property is the Truckee Donner Land Trust. Trust Executive Director Perry Norris said his group has been interested in the Royal Gorge property for more than 20 years, especially the environmentally sensitive Van Norden meadow. Norris says the trust sees the best use of the land is for conservation, not development, and to keep the cross country center operating.

He doesn't believe the value for the property is \$24 million, however.

"We are banking that at the end of the day the bank that is foreclosing on the property will see us as the best and strongest buyer. They had a very competent developer who tried to develop the property for six years and he didn't move it

one inch closer to the goal line," Norris said.

NV Energy income less than a year ago

NV Energy today reported that income for the third quarter is less than it was this time last year.

For the quarter ending Sept. 30, the energy company posted net income of \$173.5 million, or 73 cents a share. In 2010, the company earned \$177.5 million, or 75 cents a share.

Normally this is a high-demand quarter for NV with all the users in Las Vegas turning on their air conditioners.

The company is awarding a cash dividend of 13 cents a share, payable on Dec. 21 to shareholders of record on Dec. 6.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

False alarm sends fire sprinkler mixture flowing from Raley's

An alarm technician working at Raley's at the Y in South Lake Tahoe accidentally tripped the fire sprinkler system today about 2:25pm..

The water contained a non-toxic glycerin additive.

About 200 gallons of the water spilled into the parking lot between Raley's and Tahoe Donuts, creating slippery conditions.

Officials say there is no danger to the public.

Criteria for closing state parks murky

By Matt Weiser, Sacramento Bee

Leaders of the California parks department on Tuesday were unable to explain to lawmakers the full list of criteria they used to pick 70 state parks for closure.

One-fourth of the state's 278 parks are set to be shuttered by next July, a move required by budget cutbacks. The parks agency must trim \$11 million in the current fiscal year, and another \$11 million in the next.

Some of the parks slated for closure by July 1 are encumbered by legal restrictions that could result in lawsuits. Others are defined by the state as "outstanding" resources that require special protection.

Some house a wealth of historical artifacts that must be carefully packed, shipped and stored to protect them from vandals and thieves.

Parks officials said at an Assembly oversight hearing that the closure list was assembled by a dozen park executives who met for three weeks.

They looked at park revenue, visitation, maintenance needs and historical value – criteria approved by the Legislature in Assembly Bill 95 in March.

But they otherwise used largely subjective criteria and used no formal ranking method, said Bill Herms, deputy director of the department.

Read the whole story

Stampede Reservoir brush fire extinguished

Updated Nov. 2 4:08pm:

The Stampede Fire has been contained and firefighting resources are being released. Mop-up is continuing. The cause is still under investigation.

Tahoe National Forest officials are reporting a 1.5 acre fire northeast of Stampede Reservoir (east of Truckee).

It is burning in timber and brush and was reported earlier this morning.

Approximately 20 firefighters are on scene. The smoke is visible from Interstate 80 and Highway 89.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Caltrans installs weather station; who clears sidewalks not resolved

By Kathryn Reed

With a storm brewing, Caltrans will be able to use its Roadway Weather Information Station that was installed Monday to know more about what is going on in the South Shore.

The station, which is in the maintenance yard on top of Echo Summit, is about 20-feet tall and is triangular shaped. The installation marks the end of the Echo Summit road project. That was mostly about replacing the rock guardrail.



The Echo Summit project is officially completed.

Photo/LTN

The point of the weather station is to help dispatch Caltrans resources more effectively, while also helping Caltrans to inform motorists of fast-changing travel conditions.

Also, a mile of Highway 50 at the summit was paved.

The other paving project in town is wrapping up. What was slated to be a three-year endeavor may turn out to be two, but that won't be known until the project is well under way again in 2012.

As it stands, the Trout Creek to Ski Run project – which involves water quality improvement, road surface upgrades and bike trails – is 55 percent finished after the first season.

According to Deanna Shoopman with Caltrans, Disney – the contractor, does not receive a bonus for finishing earlier.

“This is his first big contract with the state so he is excited to finish early,” Shoopman said of the contractor. “He’s coming up with a better traffic plan for next year.”

Once the project is completely finished, it will be up to the city to maintain the sidewalks. However, Shoopman said Caltrans will not be plowing the sidewalks this winter despite that they are under the state’s responsibility until the project is done.

The city and Caltrans are still negotiating whose responsibility it is this winter to keep those sidewalks clear.

When the contractor leaves for good, anything behind the curb will be South Lake Tahoe’s responsibility, while the street is still the state’s job to clear.

An ordinance mandating private property owners shovel their walkways in the public right-of-way is now in effect.

City Manager Tony O’Rourke said the city is meeting next week with BlueGo officials to talk about having a plan to coordinate clearing some sidewalks under the city’s responsibility at the same time bus shelters are cleared.

The city, Caltrans and Disney officials are still talking regarding who shovels the sidewalks this winter. A resolution

may be needed by Friday based on the forecast.

Long-awaited Harrison Ave. upgrades in works in S. Tahoe

By Kathryn Reed

While South Lake Tahoe is never likely to have a downtown based on how haphazardly the city was allowed to develop and that the main road is a state highway, another five blocks are about to be removed from the blighted category.

Harrison Avenue between Los Angeles and Lakeview avenues is ranked No. 2 on the city's list of priorities for capital improvement projects.



The dirt area will become diagonal parking, Harrison Avenue (on the right) will be one-way, and sidewalks along Highway

50 are already
in (not
shown).
Photo/LTN file

No drastic changes are proposed from what has been talked about for the last 14 years. But the funding to do the complete streets overhaul is still not in place. The price tag in 2006 was at least \$1 million. The total amount today is projected to be \$1,625,844.

The bulk of that money (\$805,770) is likely to come from the certificate of participation bond the council will vote on and likely execute early next year.

Money is starting to trickle in. At the Nov. 1 City Council meeting the five electeds accepted \$275,074 from the Tahoe Metropolitan Planning Organization's Regional Surface Transportation Program to begin the planning and design of Harrison Avenue.

"We think the economy has persuaded business owners to look at things differently now," Jim Marino, South Lake Tahoe capital improvement project manager, said.

In the past, the owners on this frontage street paralleling Highway 50 have dragged their feet. Coverage is a big concern, along with parking.

What has been on the books for years are what the city is going with – making Harrison Avenue one-way, diagonal parking, sidewalks and a class 1 bike trail.

Part of the bid package for the project includes looking at forming a business improvement district, much like what the Ski Run area has.

Mayor Hal Cole is concerned if one property owner disagrees with the plans that the whole project will be doomed. With a

BID, that is less likely to happen.

A design proposal is expected to be presented to the council at the Nov. 15 meeting.

Marino said business and property owners have been involved in design aspects.

With Caltrans this summer-fall putting in curbs and gutters along this stretch of the highway, the transformation has begun. Plus, the area ties into all the improvements being done at Lakeview Commons.

In waiting this long to actually move forward, the California Tahoe Conservancy has changed its mind about the parcel it owns next to the *Tahoe Daily Tribune* building. It is now willing to swap it for the land the city owns on Glenwood Avenue where the old drive-in was. The city would use the Harrison land for parking.

Marino expects to have Harrison Avenue be a shovel-ready project in 2012, with building starting the following construction season.

In other action:

- A contract with Clean Tahoe Program that ends Sept. 30, 2015, was signed, with the contingency an audit or review of the books is done this year because one has not been done since 2008.
- An agreement was signed with Nichols Consulting Engineers to begin the planning process of putting in sidewalks on Pioneer Trail between Highway 50 and Larch Avenue.
- The city is paying nearly \$35,000 to equip the snow removal fleet with GPS navigation systems. It will cost the city nearly \$6,000 a year to keep the system running. The point of it according the staff report is to provide "greater flexibility in vehicle assignments for the streets

superintendent.” The public will also be able to view snow removal by neighborhood or street.

- A two-year contract with the Stationary Engineers, Local 39 was approved. Those general and public works employees will pay 4 percent of their PERS contribution this fiscal year and the full 8 percent in 2012-13. No COLAs are part of the deal. They agreed to changes in the health care plan which would take effect when all other groups sign-off on that aspect of the deal.

State panel allows firearms in Nevada parks

By Sean Whaley, Nevada News Bureau

CARSON CITY – A regulation eliminating a prohibition on carrying firearms in state parks has been approved by the Legislative Commission.

The regulation still prohibits the discharge of a firearm in a state park with some limited exceptions, such as designated target shooting areas.

But a provision included in the original draft regulation to specifically recognize the right to self-defense in a state park was not part of the final changes approved last week by the panel of state lawmakers.

A state lawmaker who supported the regulation said the ability to use a weapon for self-defense is covered elsewhere in state law.

Statutory changes were mandated in Assembly Bill 282, a pro-

gun omnibus measure that passed with bipartisan support during the 2011 legislative session.

The ban had also been the subject of a federal lawsuit.

Steve Silva, senior law enforcement specialist for the Division of State Parks, told the Legislative Commission that much of the public comment concerned a desire to include, "an affirmative acknowledgment of the right to self-defense."

But the language was removed from the regulation when it was returned from the Legislative Counsel Bureau, he said.

The wording was supported by some who testified at a public hearing on the regulation on Oct. 12, particularly from concealed weapons instructors who argued that not including self defense language would cause confusion in teaching their classes, Silva said.

It did not end up being a part of the regulation, however, he said.

"I've been with the division for just short of 32 years," Silva said. "In that entire period we've never prosecuted somebody for utilizing a firearm in self defense."

Sen. James Settelmeyer, R-Gardnerville, said in a phone interview Friday that the right to self-defense is provided for elsewhere in Nevada law, and that it was not needed as part of the state parks regulation.

"That was my concern as well and that's why I pulled the regulation during Legislative Commission . . . to have it reviewed by us," he said. "Because it kind of perplexed me that, yes you can carry a gun on a state park however you cannot discharge it."

But Settelmeyer said it is covered elsewhere allowing the discharge of a weapon to protect one's self or another.

"You don't have a right to walk down the center of the street and discharge a weapon, but you do to save your life," he said.