Fallen Leaf Lake ready to sign contract with concessionaire

By Kathryn Reed

Fallen Leaf Lake has a concessionaire lined up to operate the store and marina this summer, but the weather will make the opening impossible for Memorial Day.

With snow still in the parking lot, and more coming down, it's still not possible to get the docks into the water of this South Shore lake.



More snow needs to melt -- or to quit accumulating -- so Fallen Leaf Lake can open. Photo/LTN

However, the community services district board unanimously agreed on May 14 to enter negotiations with Tahoe Recreation, a division of California Land Management. A contract is expected to be signed at the May 28 meeting.

The district is looking to be paid $50,000 plus 10 percent of

gross sales up to $500,000. The half million-dollar mark has been met in the past six to eight years.

This private company also runs the U.S. Forest Service campground at the north end of the lake.

Tom Bacchetti, Fallen Leaf Lake board president, told *Lake Tahoe News* that Tahoe Recreation has a broad experience that includes operating marinas, stores and dealing with aquatic invasive species.

Tahoe Recreation has a type 20 liquor license, which allows for the sale of alcohol to be consumed off site. The company will be looking into getting a type 41 for people to drink at the café.

Serious injuries in 7-car accident in Douglas County

Nevada Highway patrolmen are saying a an 18-wheel big rig failed to stop at the intersection of Highway 395 and Jacks Valley Road on Monday afternoon, causing a seven-vehicle accident.

There were six other southbound vehicles stopped or almost stopped for the red traffic signal light at that intersection in Douglas County. Those vehicles included a green Honda Civic two-door, a green Ford Explorer SUV, a gold BMW X5 SUV, a black Chevrolet van, a white International dump truck, and a silver Buick four-door sedan.

Medical conditions and the names of those involved is expected to be released Tuesday.

The driver of the 18-wheeler applied the brakes and slammed into the green Honda and the green Explorer, according to the NHP. The Explorer was forced into the adjacent white dump truck and also struck the black Chevrolet van, while the Honda struck the back of the BMW. The Chevrolet van then struck the rear of the silver Buick four-door sedan.

There were two women and a young man riding in the Ford Explorer. They had to be extricated from their SUV by firefighters. The two women were airlifted by Care Flight helicopter to Renown Medical Center in Reno for injuries believed to be critical, while the young man was transported to a local hospital. The driver of the green Honda was airlifted in a second Care Flight helicopter and also flown to Renown for injuries believed to be serious. The only other claimed injured was from the female passenger riding in the silver Buick.

“Both southbound lanes were blocked because of the sandwiched vehicles and the completion of the on-scene portion of the investigation,” Trooper Chuck Allen said in a statement.

Caltrans clearing snow, ready to resume Echo Summit work

Caltrans is preparing to go back to work on Highway 50 at Echo Summit after approximately 9 inches of snow fell. Work was halted early Sunday.

Crews are on-site clearing off equipment and getting ready to resume work. According to officials, concrete can be placed in cold weather with no effect on strength if certain precautions

are taken. The poured concrete at Echo Summit was covered with insulated blankets, making temperature a non-factor.

The route leading to the South Shore from Sacramento-Bay Area was closed May 11 to replace the rock guard wall that is more dust than stone in some places.

The road is expected to be closed for 10-14 days before opening to controlled traffic for another six weeks.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Amgen totally bypasses Tahoe; cycling fans left in cold

Updated May 16, 2011, 7:10am:

Due to uncertain weather and road conditions, race organizers have determined that the best way to ensure a complete course for Stage 2 of the 2011 Amgen Tour de California is to move the official start to 12:15pm starting on Broad Street in Nevada City.

Today's start was originally scheduled to take place in Squaw Valley. This means Lake Tahoe totally missed out on the race.

Riders will finish 61 miles later in Sacramento.

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By Jessie Marchesseau, Stephen Ward and Brenda Knox

Sunday morning's snowstorm had cycling enthusiasts bundling up in their down jackets and winter beanies to cheer on racers on what was supposed to be Day 1 of the Amgen Tour de California.

They were at the would-be start in Stateline, the scheduled finish at Northstar-at-Tahoe, at the Y in South Lake Tahoe and other locations around the lake.



Even though the first stage of the Amgen Tour de California was canceled May 15, some elite cyclists ride to Cave Rock. Photos/Lisa J. Tolda

Dozens of fans lined the curb at the intersection of highways 50 and 89 about 1:15 pm, the scheduled start time after a morning snow delay that had also altered the course from 118 miles to 50. With flakes still coming down, little girls with painted faces, babies in strollers, parents, grandparents and all-around bicycle enthusiasts waited not-so-patiently for the first riders to arrive.

Every time a car with the word Amgen or the name of another sponsor drove by, cowbells were rung, cheers erupted and arms were raised. But soon, a wave of disappointment moved through the crowd as news spread the race was canceled at the last-minute.

Across town, at the start line, cowbells rang out and the

crowd along the casino corridor started to cheer as they saw the racers turn onto Highway 50, but seconds later “race canceled” was announced.

Disappointed fans headed into the warmth of the casinos and back to their cars. After waiting for hours as the snow showers came and went, listening to South Lake Tahoe Mayor Hal Cole describe Lake Tahoe as a year-round playground, and hearing cyclist Dave Zabriskie describe the day as “unbelievable”, the first stage of the 2011 Amgen Tour de California was officially canceled.

While the expos at Stateline and Northstar went on as planned, the delay in the start that never happened and wicked weather had fewer people turn out than originally expected or organizers had hoped for.

Eager to root on riders

Much of the South Shore was a bit like a ghost town during a mid-winter blizzard.

Driving down Lake Tahoe Boulevard from Stateline to the Y, South Lake Tahoe seemed eerily quiet Sunday. Hotel parking lots were mostly empty and traffic was sparse. Many of the spectators gathered at the Y were locals.

“I didn’t think it would be quite so cold,” commented Meyers resident Skye Schumaker.

“Oh well, it’s Tahoe,” his wife Kristie Schumaker said. “We’re used to it.”

The Schumakers, along with their daughters Jazmyn and Juniper, had pulled out their winter attire to come watch the day’s festivities. None of them had ever seen a bike race in person and were looking forward to it.

The hardy from near and far had gathered to watch the start of the United States’ most prestigious road race. The crowd wore

heavy jackets and gloves, beanie caps and smiles.

Maria Laudau, Greg Stevenson, and 3-year-old Sophia Landau, who was dressed in a warm, pink snuggly suit, waited at the start at Stateline. Laudau's excitement at having this "amazing event" in our backyard was apparent.

Kelly Barber and her 5-year-old twins were waiting to see their favorite team, the Jelly Bellies. This was the third year the Reno threesome had followed the tour.

Steven Castelletto and Jeannette Montgomery of Fresno had no trouble getting to the South Shore despite Echo Summit being closed. They enthusiastically called the event "fun, and loving it." Castelletto will be working security for the event in Sacramento during Stage 2, where it ends after starting in Squaw Valley today.

They aren't the only ones headed onto the next stage.

Mike and Trish Hallman and their two kids, Shayna, 12, and Hayden, 13, from Seattle, are avid fans, having been to all the Tour de California races. Last year they watched the finish in Thousand Oaks. Hallman called her husband "the biggest race fan" and said "we always bring our own cowbells with us." Saturday, they were excited to see the Italians practicing and said at other venues they had never been able to get so close to the racers.

Having never been to Lake Tahoe, they drove around the lake scoping out good spots to watch the racers. Now they are headed to Sacramento to see the Stage 2 finish today.

One business doing well on Sunday was Starbucks – on both ends of the lake.

Scott Trevithick and his family had come from Reno on Saturday to watch the race for the first time. Instead, they kept warm at the coffee house at the Horizon.

Trevithick said, “We just couldn’t miss this world-class event in our own backyard.”

They had hoped to go to Brockway Summit to watch the racers head into Northstar. That obviously didn’t happen.

After hearing about the race being canceled, Ryan Emery, 27, of Nevada City settled at the Starbucks coffee shop at the Village at Northstar.

“I have no idea what I’m going to do now, but I have coffee and banana bread, so I’m good,” Emery said, shrugging his shoulders.

Disappointment lingers

“Well, it’s snowing so it’s probably a high risk to the riders … so I guess it’s understandable,” Emery said.

Sid Forman, a 71-year-old, self-described avid biker from Incline Village, came to the event with his wife, June. Although he knows the decision was correct, Forman saw the cancellation as a lost opportunity for the region.

“I think it’s sad for the area. This would’ve been a great boon for the retailers here, hotels here, and the community at large that loves cycling,” Forman said from the Village at Northstar.

Lauren Lindley, manager of the Pearl Izumi store at the Y in South Tahoe, was disappointed in the cancellation, but said the store had been “shockingly” busy the last few days.

“If it had been sunny and amazing and the pass was open, it would have been crazy in town,” she said.

Adding to the day’s disappointment was the cancellation of the BMX exhibition by Olympic medalists Donny Robinson and Mike Day. It was the wind, not the snow that put a damper on their riding. A lake wind advisory by the National Weather Service

predicted gusts up to 40 mph over the lake.

“If we had snow and no wind, they’d be riding right now,” Lauren Thomaselli, one of the BMX event’s organizers, said.

But with wind in the air, and snow coming down, organizers of both events had little choice but to cancel for the safety of the riders.

With the economic impact to Tahoe from the race predicted to be down the road from media images of picturesque Lake Tahoe luring people to travel to the region, images of substantial snow in May could backfire.

“We chose the West Shore of Lake Tahoe because, in an ideal world, you look at the lake and our broadcast coverage would have been able to include Emerald Bay, and the decent into Northstar would paint an incredible view of Tahoe,” race director Jim Birrell said.

Time, though, will be needed to see if picking Lake Tahoe was a bad financial decision for all involved.

As for tour operators, they have already picked Santa Rosa as the 2012 start city. That’s not to say the route will not take a sharp turn east to hit the Sierra again. But considering their desire to move the race from February to May was so Tahoe could be part of it backfired, they too may not want to make that investment.

“When deciding to have Lake Tahoe host the start of the 2011 Amgen Tour of California, we looked carefully at weather patterns up here in May as part of the decision-making process with the local organizing committee,” said Andrew Messick, president of AEG, which owns the race. “The likelihood of severe winter weather in May was statistically low – we thought it might be cold, rainy and maybe windy, but we didn’t contemplate that it would be snowing, cold and windy. Our team and the athletes arrived here in the middle of the week and

the weather was fantastic. We would consider Lake Tahoe again to host the race in the future.”

Too treacherous to cycle

Amgen officials cited rider safety as the reason for the cancellation of this first stage of the largest cycling event in the Unite States.

“At this point in time, it’s probably better for cycling in general to play it safe,” said Allison Oliver, one of Sunday’s spectators and a former rider for the UC Davis bicycle team.

Less than a week earlier, 26-year-old cyclist Wouter Weylandt was killed in a bicycle crash during the third stage of the Giro D’Italia in Italy.

“I think it’s always better to err on the side of caution,” Oliver said as she waited in the snow at the Y. “No one wants to see anyone get hurt.”

Oliver was on the sidelines with friend and coworker, Lindley, waving a cardboard sign reading “Go Paul Mach.” Mach, one of the races’ participants, was one of the Oliver’s former teammates at UC Davis.

“Safety is paramount,” Birrell said. “We do everything in our power to provide the best chances of success on the road. Our team and course directors spend countless hours identifying any danger out there. We really take it to heart.”

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Financial problems soar for Red Hawk Casino

By Dale Kasler, Sacramento Bee

Red Hawk Casino's financial woes show few signs of abating – a situation that illustrates both the harsh new business reality confronting Indian gambling and the murky legal issues that arise when a tribe can't pay its bills.

The company that runs Red Hawk said Wednesday that the management fees it gets from the Shingle Springs casino declined during the first quarter compared with a year ago. The fees are directly tied to the casino's profits.

That same company, Lakes Entertainment Inc. of Minneapolis, revealed in March that Red Hawk had halted payments on a $66 million loan from Lakes. That made Red Hawk the latest in a series of tribal casinos to experience significant debt woes in the past two years.

"Until fairly recently, tribal casino growth was just phenomenal," said Nelson Rose, an expert on Indian gambling law at Whittier College.

Read the whole story

Echo Summit work on hold because of weather

Caltrans has temporarily halted construction work on Highway 50 at Echo Summit. Severe weather has brought heavier than

expected snow and wind that have made working conditions unsafe.



Construction crews continued to work through the night Saturday in the storm, and got slab poured at wall No. 5. Four of the seven walls now have slab in place.

The storm has brought about 6 inches of snow to the project so far. Caltrans will continue to monitor weather conditions as the day progresses and resume work as soon as conditions are safe for work to continue.

Caltrans has a website featuring a map, up-to-date information about the project, information about the alternate routes and sites to visit along the way, live traffic cameras, and answers to frequently asked questions.

The closure is part of the first stage of a safety enhancement project that will remove damaged rock walls and replace them with a barrier that meets current safety standards. The project is funded in part ($1.9 million) by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009.

Snow wins, Tahoe loses with cancellation of bike race

Updated: May 15, 2011, 7:27pm

By Lake Tahoe News staff

Riders' concerns played a role in the decision to cancel Stage 1 of Amgen Tour de California on Sunday.

“This morning, when there was so much snow, everyone knew we wouldn’t be racing,” said Alan Gallopin with Team Radio Shack. “Riders are worried about their safety in light of what happened last week (in Italy) . Nobody wants to race unsafe. We came in on Monday and experienced nice weather. Friday was good, but with today’s weather, the riders didn’t feel comfortable racing.”



This sign at Northstar-at-Tahoe will never be crossed by Tour de California riders.

Andrew Messick, president of AEG, at a press conference May 15 said not riding was the smart move.

“Five miles of the course had substantial accumulated snow and we made the right decision. We are disappointed. You can make the right decision and still be disappointed in the outcome,” he said. “We expected from weather forecasts that it would get warmer, the roads would be clear and the conditions for racing would improve. We believed that right until the very end. It was only in the last 15 minutes that it really became clear that weather conditions were not improving and in fact were getting worse.”

Plus, during the delay when everyone thought the race would be

starting in the afternoon, six photo motos crashed on their way to Northstar. No one was hurt in the incident.

Most of the concentration was on what the weather was like going down from the summits and high spots along the route that was to have gone from Stateline, around Lake Tahoe 1.5 times, and into Northstar-at-Tahoe. The afternoon route was to go from Stateline directly to Northstar in Truckee.

“We started to receive reports from our team about bad weather on the descents, with the final decent being the most critical. After two and a half hours of riding in inclement weather the cyclists are tired and cold and they don’t have the ability to apply their breaks, especially with the carbon bikes. These are elements they have to deal with,” race director Jim Birrell said. “The rain really helped us cement our decision. Had the race started, we would have had to cancel the race in the middle.”

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Updated: May 15, 2011, 2:12pm

By Lake Tahoe News staff

The weather finally won the first stage of Amgen Tour de California.

Riders are supposed to leave from Squaw Valley on Monday at 10:30am for what would have been the original start of stage two, but concerns about weather over Donner Summit still persist.

When the race was called before 1:30pm Sunday the weather had been a mix of snow and sun. Finally, though, it was decided that it was too dangerous to leave from the South Shore. This, despite the cyclists on their bikes near the start line and ready to go.

“We the riders are disappointed about not racing for the fans

but we agreed it was too risky in the ever changing weather," tour favorite Levi Leipheimer said in a Tweet. "We all hope the fans understand."

This is the first time a stage has been canceled, but the fourth year weather



Mother Nature should top the leader board. Photos/Stephen Ward

has been factor.

"We were monitoring weather conditions up until the predicted 1:15pm start time, and we just couldn't safely put the riders out on the course with the current forecast," Andrew Messick, president of AEG Sports, said in a statement. "We appreciate the support of all the fans that came out to the start line in South Lake Tahoe, and we hope they understand and respect our decision, but when the safety of riders and fans is involved, there is no leeway. We are looking forward to seeing everyone at the start (Monday) in Squaw Valley."

As the race was being canceled, three-time Tour de California champion Leipheimer addressed the crowd from the sign-in stage and said: "The riders discussed as a group and we just don't feel comfortable riding knowing what can happen, especially in light of what happened last Monday. We still have a full week of racing ahead of us, so we want to make sure everyone is healthy. With the weather conditions the way they are, racing

today is just not possible. On behalf of all the riders, we apologize and appreciate everyone's support and understanding."

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By Jessie Marchesseau

Riders and organizers of the 2011 Amgen Tour of California bicycle race woke up to snow this morning. The National Weather Service had predicted that up to 4 inches would fall in the Lake Tahoe area Saturday night into Sunday, and Mother Nature delivered.

With the safety of the athletes the number one concern, contingency plans in case of inclement weather were put into place earlier this week.

As a result of the winter weather conditions and the dangers that riding on snow-covered roads could pose to the riders, the official start of Stage 1 has been delayed until 1:15pm. The leg is also expected to be shortened. Originally planned to be one and a half laps around the lake, 118.7 miles, the new route from Stateline, up the west shore, ending at Northstar-At-Tahoe would be approximately 50 miles.

The race will follow the second half of the original route and feature highlights including:

- King of the Mountains (KOM) competition at Emerald Bay at approximately mile 13
- Sprint line at Tahoe City at approximately mile 31
- KOM competition at Brockway summit at approximately mile 43

The projected finish timing, which was to be between 3:15 and 4pm PT will remain unchanged.

Jim Birrell, race director, addressed the possible weather issues at last Friday's press conference, stating "Our concern

is going to be what's on the road. If it's just wet, it will be all systems go. We have the brightest and most experienced individuals on our team to help render the best decision given the circumstances. We'll work with the Lake Tahoe local organizing committee to determine where there will be the most accumulation. Our partners will be able to guide us in the decision making process and we'll figure out how to negate it. We'll look at all the variables we can to make the decision that's safest for these riders."

This statement was issued May 15 at 7:39am:

Due to current weather and road conditions, the Amgen Tour of California bicycle race will have a delayed start. The race will start at 1:15pm and will travel from the South Shore Casino corridor on Highway 50 and then turn north along Highway 89 to North Star at Tahoe. The highway closure will start at 12:45pm and is expected to be open by 1:40pm. – *Sgt. Shannon Laney of the South Lake Tahoe Police Department.*

Fate of stage 1 Amgen ride to be decided Sunday morning

This statement was issued May 14 at 10:15pm:

"The 2011 Amgen Tour of California is scheduled to kick off May 15, in South Lake Tahoe at 10:30am. As everyone is aware, there is a storm front predicted to reach the area. Therefore race organizers, in conjunction with the commissaires, teams and public safety organizations, have developed a number of contingency plans with the safety of the riders and fans being the No. 1 priority. The weather is constantly changing in the Sierras, and our team will be assessing weather conditions

throughout the morning. A decision on any changes to the route and timing will be made at 9am Sunday, and will ultimately be based on what is best and most safe for our riders and spectators. Details will be distributed on the official race website and via email." – *Andrew Messick, president of AEG Sports, presenter of the Amgen Tour de California*

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By Elliott Almond, San Jose Mercury News

STATELINE – The Amgen Tour de California braced for a surprise spring snowstorm overnight that could spoil plans for Sunday's start in Lake Tahoe and increase the dangers of a sport already reeling from the recent death of a Belgian cyclist.

Race officials huddled Saturday night to try to determine whether they can hold the 118.7-mile stage from South Lake Tahoe to Northstar-at-Tahoe Resort as planned. The first foray into the Sierra Nevada is facing a serious test by forecasts of as much as three inches of snow accumulating on the roads Sunday and Monday – the first two days of the mini-Tour de France event that are being contested around Lake Tahoe.

"There's a lot of different variables," race director Jim Birrell said. "If we have to reverse it and not hit the whole circuit, those are things we'll look at."

No decision on course changes will be made until just before the start at 10:30am Sunday, officials said. But if road conditions are too icy and snowy, tour organizers could scrap the clockwise stage around the picturesque lake and instead hold an abbreviated race such as a short time trial. The current route has two climbs over mountain passes 7,000 feet or higher, making it difficult to clear the roads, if snow does stick.

"If it is that slick, we won't be racing," tour favorite Levi Leipheimer said.

Read the whole story

Decision expected tonight regarding weather and Amgen

By John Schumacher, Sacramento Bee

With snow forecast for Sunday's first stage, and the tragic death of Belgian cyclist Wouter Weylandt still rocking the cycling world, Amgen Tour of California officials said safety would be their top priority.

Race director Jim Birrell said Friday a number of options were under consideration, including altering the opening 118.7-mile route from South Lake Tahoe to Northstar-at-Tahoe Resort if necessary.

Birrell said race officials would meet tonight and make a final decision Sunday before the 10:30am start.

"Safety is paramount," Birrell said. "We partner with Caltrans (California Department of Transportation) and CHP (California Highway Patrol). … We'll be able to inform (riders) of the road dangers that will be out there. We take (safety) to heart."

A big concern is the climb over 7,200-foot Brockway Summit on Highway 267.

"If there's ice on the road, we'll have a reactionary plan to that," Birrell said. "If it's wet, it will be all systems go."

Read the whole story

Nevada launches program to keep drivers safe

An average of 325 people lose their life annually on Nevada roads.

The Nevada Department of Transportation, Nevada Highway Patrol, Nevada Office of Traffic Safety and safety partners across the state have launched a Zero Fatalities traffic safety goal and educational campaign to save lives.

“When we each drive off to work, for a trip or for an errand, we expect to return safely,” NDOT Director Susan Martinovich explained in a press release. “Whether due to unsafe driving or something else, that tragically doesn’t always happen on Nevada roads. As drivers, as citizens, as transportation experts, it is time to stand up and say there is no number other than zero deaths that is acceptable on our roads. Zero Fatalities begins today with each Nevadan deciding to drive safely each time they get in their car.”

The Zero Fatalities goal is part of a revamped Nevada Strategic Highway Safety Plan. The plan, developed in 2006 by more than 75 Nevada traffic and safety experts, identifies five Nevada-specific focus areas including increasing seat belt usage and pedestrian/intersection safety and reducing impaired driving. Traffic engineering, enforcement, education and emergency response strategies were developed in each area to reduce road deaths and injuries. The Nevada safety plan was updated in 2010 with additional life-saving strategies to help reach the new Zero Fatalities goal.

Traffic fatalities have dropped from an all-time high of 434 in 2006 to 256 in 2010.

Over and above the life-saving strategies included in the safety plan, Nevada’s Zero Fatalities goal will be reached through a public education campaign educating motorists about traffic safety through public service announcements and other educational materials. The state’s Zero Fatalities goal is consistent with the national Toward Zero Deaths strategy led by the Federal Highway Administration and others.

Driving safety tips:

• Buckle up – Close to half of Nevadans who die in car crashes aren’t buckled up.

• Don’t drink and drive – 574 people died in Nevada alcohol-related crashes in a recent five-year period.

• Don’t speed – A car traveling at 60 mph travels 88 feet per second. Speed has a great impact on how much time drivers have to react to the road ahead.

• Drive safely near intersections/obey all traffic signals – 467 people died in Nevada intersection crashes in a recent five-year period.

• Watch for pedestrians/cross roads cautiously – 258 pedestrians lost their lives on Nevada roadways in a recent five-year period.

• Don’t let distractions take your eye from the road – Inattentive or fatigued driving can result in traffic injuries and deaths.