Failed Tahoe City condo project returning to marshland

By Ed Fletcher, Sacramento Bee

Bulldozers aren't typically welcome sights around Lake Tahoe, but just outside Tahoe City they're being used by construction workers and engineers to restore the natural habitat – not disturb it.

The project calls for turning 35 North Shore acres prepared for a failed condominium development back into natural marshland.

At $2.6 million, the project is one of 700 identified in the Tahoe basin aimed at rectifying environmental wrongs.

Approximately 300 projects of varying complexity have been completed, officials said.

Read the whole story

LTCC's green choices reap enviro, economic dividends

By Kathryn Reed

Looking for Lake Tahoe Community College's fall schedule?



It’s going to be a little harder to find a hard copy of the two-year institution’s schedule as it follows the lead of other colleges by not mailing them out as well as reducing the content. Officials envision the print version going away completely in the future.

This fall and for the foreseeable future it is available via the college’s website or by clicking schedule. Hard copies will be at the South Lake Tahoe college starting Aug. 16 – the only place they will be in hard copy. Open registration begins Sept. 3, with classes starting Sept. 20.

“Where we see the possibility of losing students is people taking the occasional class who are quite used to getting the schedule in their mailbox as their reminder of class availability,” Christina Proctor, LTCC spokeswoman, said.

Besides this being one of the college’s green initiatives, it also is a cost-saving tool. Printing fewer schedules, along with not including a detailed description of the course will save $10,000 a year.

“We have to make sure our limited dollars are going where they need to, which is students. This is one easy way to save money and not really affect services to students,” Proctor said.

The college is hoping people will recycle the schedules by having multiple people use a single copy. With it all being online and the college having computers for the public to use, everyone still has access to a schedule.

This is not the only way the college is going green. When Craig Brinkman came onboard as a contract employee through a federal grant, he noticed most printers on campus were ink jets.

The IT department has wiped out the active inventory of

printers by 40 percent. This means a whole lot of people adjusting to not having a personal printer. Laser jets are what they are sharing.

The change also comes with a reduction of ink by 50 percent. Monetary savings comes with fewer cords plugged into a wall as well as less ink needed to be bought, and what is purchased will cost less.

All of this is environmentally beneficial, too.

Everyone is also going to a terminal server. It should reduce the demand on the information technology employees.

“There have been some bumps along the way. It’s a change in the way we do business, a change in thinking,” Proctor said.

Brinkman is also responsible for implementing Datatel, a software system that is supposed to make the college run more efficiently. Brinkman wrote an article for *TechEDge* about this and IT issues at LTCC.

Another way the college would like to be green is by creating a geothermal facility. It has gone after a number of grants, but continues to be bypassed. The plan is to tap into the geothermal power of Lake Tahoe.

“I have also implemented an online campaign on the college Facebook page and this fall students will find the logo around campus with explanations about other green projects the college is implementing,” Proctor said.

2 Santa Cruz residents reportedly died in Sierra Nevada plane crash

By Alia Wilson, Santa Cruz Sentinel

EMIGRANT GAP – Two people, both believed to be from Santa Cruz County, died in a plane crash in the Sierra Nevada Friday afternoon, authorities reported.

Don French, manager of the Watsonville Municipal Airport, confirmed that the plane left from Watsonville on Friday morning. The single-engine Piper Cherokee Arrow was a rental from Monterey Bay Aviation Inc.'s United Flight Services, one of the oldest and busiest flight training and plane rental companies at the Watsonville Municipal Airport, French said.

According to French, who spoke to United Flight owner Bob Ross, Ross was shocked to hear the news because the pilot was "a well-trained and very competent individual; a guy with experience." Ross could not be reached to comment Friday.

A hiker found the wreckage about 1:45 p.m. near the Sierra Nevada community of Emigrant Gap. There were two bodies inside, according to Dena Erwin, public information officer with the Placer County Sheriff's Department. Erwin said the two people killed were the only ones on board the plane.

Read the whole story

South Shore bus agency maps route to bankruptcy court

By Kathryn Reed

Another major entity on the South Shore is headed for bankruptcy. Joining the failed convention center in debtors' court is South Tahoe Area Transit Authority.

The board, at least those members who showed up for the Aug. 13 meeting, unanimously agreed to file for Chapter 11 bankruptcy in Nevada.

With bills topping seven figures that can't be paid, the agency that runs BlueGo buses on the South Shore and in the Carson Valley is ready to reorganize. Like all Chapter 11 filings, the creditors will have a say in the outcome.



Bankruptcy is not supposed to affect BlueGo bus service. Photo/Kathryn Reed

MV Transportation out of Fairfield is owed the largest sum. However, that dollar figure is in dispute. MV says the total is close to $3 million, while STATA says it's closer to $2 million. Either way, STATA doesn't have the money to make good

on that debt.

Tahoe Regional Planning Agency is owed at least $50,000, though an exact figure could not be secured. Legal fees are also mounting.

Things have only gotten worse since MV, the former bus operator, got a judge in Minden to freeze STATA's assets. Not having access to that pot of $677,000 is making it difficult to run the day-to-day operation.

Still, even with the official bankruptcy filing that will occur in the next month, the buses will roll, according to STATA officials. Riders should see no change in service for the time being.

A group of students and parents representing Grace Christian Academy in Minden helped fill the room Friday, worried their route will be cut as the agency keeps tweaking the schedule.

The board voted to keep it going because about a dozen families at the lake use the bus that goes over Kingsbury Grade. It serves the greater public, not just these students. Plus, one reason Big George Ventures wrote a hefty check for what had been called the Kingsbury Express was so fewer passenger vehicles would go by the owner's neighborhood.

It's still not known what El Dorado County is going to do with their residents in the basin who want/need public transit. The county pulled out of the public-private transit agency last month.

Derek Kirkland, transportation planner with Nevada Department of Transportation, spoke about route changes before the bankruptcy issue was voted on.

NDOT in a letter dated July 12 had threatened to pull its funding because of its lack of confidence in STATA.

STATA, at NDOT's urging, then contracted with Tahoe

Transportation District to handle the bulk of the operation, except for the actual buses. That will continue to be the agreement as STATA enters bankruptcy.

Mike McLaughlin is STATA's attorney, but the board will hire a specialist to handle this situation.

Even though it is creditors who have a large say in what STATA's reorganization looks like, it is not likely the players will want to lose control and still contribute financially.

South Lake Tahoe, Douglas County, Harveys, Harrah's, MontBleu, Horizon, Lakeside, Heavenly, Ridge Tahoe and Tahoe Transportation District are voting board members. TRPA is a non-voting member.

Besides bankruptcy court, STATA is dealing with three lawsuits from MV. One was misfiled in El Dorado County, that's why it's down to three.

The audit for fiscal year 2008-09, which is well overdue, was on the agenda. The board tabled it because TRPA has concerns about some of the wording in the document.

El Dorado County bomb threat suspect in custody

By Cathy Locke, Sacramento Bee

A man from the Madera County community of Bass Lake has been arrested on suspicion of a making a bomb threat at a Walmart store in El Dorado County.

Nicholas Gregorio, 18, was taken into custody Thursday at a residence on Forni Road in Placerville.

The El Dorado County Sheriff's Department was called to the Walmart store in Diamond Springs about 11am Tuesday. The bomb threat was written in ink on a surface in the men's restroom, and store managers were evacuating the store when deputies arrived, according to a Sheriff's Department news release.

Read the whole story

Airport axed from South Tahoe redevelopment area

Updated Aug. 16, 2010, at 12:18pm.

By Kathryn Reed

South Lake Tahoe and El Dorado County officials have resolved their differences regarding redevelopment.

The City Council, acting as the Redevelopment Agency, had a special meeting at 4:30pm Friday to approve the agreement. The vote was 3-0, with Councilman Bill Crawford leaving before the vote and Councilman Hal Cole recusing himself.

Crawford left after Councilman Bruce Grego decided to have a special one-on-one with City Attorney Patrick Enright after coming out of closed session and going into open session.

The Board of Supervisors voted 5-0 on Aug. 16 to sign the agreement.



Lake Tahoe Airport will not be part of the city's newest redevelopment area. Photo/Kathryn Reed

It has been agreed by both sides to remove Lake Tahoe Airport from the redevelopment area known as area No. 2. Also being removed are seven parcels the county owns along Julie Lane.

Two parcels on the eastern edge of the airport near Kyburz Street will remain in the redevelopment area. This is because one day the city would like to develop it into a business park.

The need for a formal agreement instead of just having the city change its document is so the county has leverage if a future council were to want to add the airport back in.

This means the county will not be suing the city.

Small plane crashes near Emigrant Gap

By Cathy Locke, Sacramento Bee

The Placer County Sheriff's Department is working to identify two people who were found dead this afternoon inside a crashed airplane near Emigrant Gap.

The plane, a single-engine Piper Cherokee Arrow, initially was believed to have departed from Watsonville for Auburn, but a Federal Aviation spokesman said later information indicated the pilot had departed from Auburn. His intended destination is not known.

The FAA's online registry identifies the registered owner as Monterey Bay Aviation Inc. of Wastsonville, which does business as United Flight. A representative of the firm could not be reached for comment.

Read the whole story

Budget stalement ties up billions of dollars in Caltrans work

By Tony Bizjak, Sacramento Bee

State highway officials said Wednesday they may be forced to slow or halt more than $3 billion worth of road projects statewide – including several in the Sacramento area – if the

state budget is not passed by September.

Several planned projects already have been placed on hold pending budget impasse resolution, state Department of Transportation officials said.

Read the whole story

Moore about to call it quits at South Tahoe Parks and Rec

By Kathryn Reed

Gary Moore is ready to redefine recreation.

South Lake Tahoe's director of Parks and Recreation is retiring Oct. 1. His wife, Angela, is retiring the day before as manager of the infusion center at Barton Memorial Hospital. Travel is a big part of their plans – and recreating.

Tahoe will always be home even if they spend a bit more time in Angela's native New Zealand. But no longer will either have to ask for time off or worry about work while away.



Gary Moore is sprinting toward retirement. Photo/Kathryn Reed

Though only 56-years-old, Moore is practically an institution in the department. He started full time with the city rec department June 2, 1975. Prior to that he spent three summers lifeguarding at El Dorado, Regan, Ski and Connolly beaches.

Although the city was incorporated in 1965, parks and rec wasn't part of the plan at the beginning. Keith Gottschlak was the initial director in 1971 when the department got its first facility. El Dorado County leased Campground by the Lake to the city that year.

Moore started the same month the recreation complex opened its doors. Before that the department rented space from the U.S. Forest Service when its offices were on Tata Lane.

"We were the first wave of professionals brought into the department," Moore said of he and the four young guys who were hired. With his bachelor's in recreation administration from San Diego State University and a master's in the same subject from CSU Sacramento, he thought Tahoe would be a stepping-stone to another job. It was – and several times. Only he never left the department.

When Moore started his career, parks and recreation had been around a while, but the '70s is when it began to boom, and cities saw the need to acquire open space and initiate more innovative programs.

For the past four years he has been at the helm of the department. Prior to his ascension, he was superintendent of the recreation side. For about a decade the department didn't

have a director, it had superintendents – one over recreation, one over parks.

City Manager Tony O'Rourke said his initial reaction is to hire a director. He's heard he has big shoes to fill with Moore's departure. A changing of the guard had nothing to do with Moore's decision to leave. It was just time.

"We like the direction right now that Lake Tahoe and South Lake Tahoe is going. Finally, the bell went off that we have this big blue thing out there," Moore said. "We are now saying we are a recreation paradise, guys."

He likes that his department is part of the greater effort of defining how Lake Tahoe will prosper in the future.

A life of recreation

Moore has done it all in his 35 years with the department. He's scrubbed toilets at the campground, he ran the Senior Center, oversaw the ice rink, has been at Bijou Golf Course.

His fingerprints are on just about everything that involves recreation in South Lake Tahoe.

"Times change. You try to look at the crystal ball and find trends. We don't say, 'We don't do that'," Moore said. "I have more ideas than I know what to do with."

He admits his eyebrows have been raised at times by some of the suggestions that have been brought to his department. Disc golf was the community's idea.

"They walk in and say can we do disc golf at the park," Moore recalls. "We said, 'What's that?'"

Trash can lids were the early baskets.

It was more recent that a group of women approached him about having a roller derby rink at Bijou Community Park. The

department went with it.

When the City Council wanted a dog park, it was parks and rec that went to work.

The department has branched out into interpretive services with Explore Tahoe near Stateline.

Moore credits his father, good mentors, an incredible staff and the will of councils for the department's success.

His background was traditional sports – football, basketball and baseball. It was his dad who told him, "Get off the tree trunk and get out on the limbs" when it comes to thinking about possibilities.

With the groundbreaking of Lakeview Commons earlier this month, Moore is excited about the direction the city as well as the department is going. After all, El Dorado Beach is part of his jurisdiction.

Leaving an impression

From a department of about a half dozen employees when Moore started, he now oversees 225 workers in full season who work in nine divisions.

The length of time people stay in parks and rec is a testament to the cohesive working atmosphere, one of openness and respect that Moore has fostered.

"He is real accessible to the employees. Everyone has appreciated that," said John Collins, who runs the senior center. "When I came back to the senior center it was tough because everyone was sad to see him go."

Moore and Collins have worked together for 30 years, with Moore starting out as his boss. Collins likes that Moore has knowledge about all areas of the department, that he isn't afraid to get his hands dirty.

Greg Ross, who runs Bijou Golf Course, has also worked with Moore for about 30 years.

For those who know Moore, they know not to stand close. His hands are never stationary.

“You need your defensible space around him,” is how Ross describes it.

Steve Weiss, who retired as superintendent of parks in 2006, has told a story to others about he and Moore driving to Sacramento. Moore was the passenger. By the time they got back to Tahoe, Weiss’ shoulder was bruised from Moore’s gesturing.

“He is hard to capture in a sentence or two. His personality is what you remember,” Ross said.

Dive into Lake Tahoe paralyzes North Bay teen

By Dan Johnson, Argus-Courier

A 2010 graduate of Petaluma High School broke his neck while diving at South Lake Tahoe on Tuesday, and is paralyzed from the chest down.

Danny Cox, the son of Graffiti restaurant owner Maureen McGowan, was on vacation at a beach, playing with some friends, when he did a flat dive into the water at around 4pm.

“A friend pulled him out within a minute, and three doctors who happened to be at the beach helped out,” said McGowan, who rushed to the area after she was notified at 4:15pm.

Cox, 18, was airlifted to Renown Hospital in Reno, Nev., where he immediately underwent surgery to remove a broken vertebrae. He also suffered damage to his spinal cord.

Read the whole story