

Ski resort focuses energy on reducing consumption

By Daniel Gross, Newsweek

The balmy weather in Vancouver, which delayed some of the Olympic downhill events, highlights the danger warmer winters pose to ski resorts. The situation isn't as dire in the higher-elevation resorts of the Rockies, however. But these large businessesâ€”think of the Trapp Family Lodge on steroidsâ€”still worry that a warming planet could melt their businesses.

Vail, the home base of gold medalist Lindsey Vonn, where I spent a chunk of a recent week desperately trying to maintain my balance, is the largest single ski area in the United States: 32 lifts, 198 trails, 63 miles of snowmaking pipe, and six on-mountain restaurants. Its parent company, Vail Resorts, which has a \$1.3 billion market value, has a lot to lose from climate change, and a lot to gain from cutting energy use. The company spent about \$27 million in energy in 2009.

[Read the whole story](#)

El Dorado, Placer county killers up for parole

By Sacramento Bee

Wife killers, one from Placer County and one from El Dorado County, are scheduled for parole hearings within the next two weeks.

Here is the list of Sacramento area convicts serving life sentences who are due hearings by the end of the month:

-March 23, Ronald LeRoy Koehler, 66, California Men's Colony.

A Placer County Superior Court judge sentenced Koehler to life in prison in June 1982 for murdering his wife, whose body was found in September 1978, a few weeks after the couple separated, according to records and Bee reports.

[Read the whole story](#)

Dugard case brings changes to how state monitors sex offenders

By Sam Stanton, Sacramento Bee

California corrections officials have increased scrutiny of paroled sex offenders, a move that follows years of failures in how Phillip Garrido, now accused in the kidnapping of Jaycee Lee Dugard, was monitored.

A policy that took effect Thursday calls for parole agents to check records of GPS tracking for offenders who are on "passive" monitoring.

Those offenders wear GPS monitoring devices. Previously, the records of their whereabouts were checked only if a crime had been committed or questions arose about an offender's movements, said corrections spokesman Oscar Hidalgo.

[Read the whole story](#)

Protected habitat for endangered frog expands in Sierra

By Julie Cart, Los Angeles Times

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on Tuesday designated 1.6 million acres in California as critical habitat for the endangered red-legged frog, made famous by Mark Twain in his story, "The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County."

The amphibian, once so plentiful that it was commonly featured on restaurant menus, eventually became endangered because of development encroaching on its habitat and the effects of pesticides and other chemicals.

The habitat area is divided into 50 units across 27 California counties, including six counties that previously did not have designated critical habitat and the effects of pesticides and other chemicals.

[Read the whole story](#)

Commissioners' decision puts Stateline strip club on ice

By Kathryn Reed

Plans for a strip club in the old Bill's Casino at Stateline was effectively killed by the Douglas County Commissioners on Thursday when on a 3-1 vote they agreed to grant an adult business permit to a body paint company.

Douglas County Code 5.36.030 (E) says, "An adult characterized business shall not be located within 250 feet of another adult characterized business."

"That provision means that there must be a 250-foot distance between the respective property lines of the businesses," Douglas County Manager Michael Brown told *Lake Tahoe News*.

Less distance than that separates MontBleu and the old Bill's site.

Brown said his interpretation of county code is that a strip club could not go into what was Bill's.

Michael Laub, who bought the building for \$5.22 million late last month, was not available for comment. His desire is to turn the facility into a strip club.

The only place zoned for a strip club at Stateline is in the casino corridor. However, to operate one the owner needs the adult entertainment license from the county.

When reached for comment the day after the meeting, Commissioner Nancy McDermid said she was not aware the board's decision could preclude Laub from opening his desired business.

"I don't know that that's true. The sheriff's department recommended approval of this license," McDermid said of the body painting operation at Opal and Blu nightclubs. "In our meeting it was made very clear how this all came about in terms of MontBleu changing hands (last fall). Their people are the ones who called the county and asked if they needed any licensing and if they were in compliance. The District

Attorney's Office said, "No you are not."

Kings Beach affordable housing project gets green light

A major project to build affordable housing in Kings Beach took a giant step forward Tuesday when the Placer County Redevelopment Agency board approved a series of actions that will put together financing and development agreements for a joint project between the county and Domus Development.

The project, also known as the Kings Beach Scattered Sites Housing development, will build 77 units of rent-controlled housing at five locations in Kings Beach.

The Placer County Redevelopment Agency has been working with Domus for several years to put together the deal, which required the acquisition of several parcels in the north Lake Tahoe community, development of the plans for building the housing and getting the project through the complex regulatory approval process in the Tahoe basin. The project will remove 35 substandard residential units, mostly 1950s-era converted motel units and vacation cabins, and replace them with 77 modern, spacious units with full amenities and significant upgrades to landscaping, drainage, utilities and street improvements.

With the approval of these items, the Redevelopment Agency has contributed \$7.9 million of the estimated \$33 million project cost. RDA contributed the funds through a pre-development loan and property acquisition through funds provided through the

North Lake Tahoe Redevelopment Project Area Housing Set-Aside and 2006 Housing Tax Allocation Bond proceeds.

The housing units will be rent controlled for 55 years. Domus Development will be submitting an application later this month for Federal Low Income Housing Tax Credits and, if that application is successful, the project is planned to break ground in August.

Environmental review was conducted on all the sites and was certified under the California Environmental Quality Act.

South Tahoe initiates plan to cutback use of all bags

By Kathryn Reed



Reuse, reduce, recycle. That's the vocabulary the South Lake Tahoe Sustainability Commission wants the community to learn.

The idea is to prolong the life of what's considered a one-time bag from all stores, whether it's plastic or paper, by reusing it, not using it or recycling it. Keeping them out of the garbage and landfills is the ultimate goal.

Commissioners would like to eliminate their use completely, but legal issues prevent that from being the mantra, plus it offends some who may partner with the all-volunteer panel.

Much of Wednesday afternoon's discussion centered on defining the goal of the community education campaign. With input from South Tahoe High School students, South Tahoe Refuse and the American Chemistry Council, the final verbiage of the goal is, "Promote reduction, reuse and 100 percent recycling of one-time use bags to improve sustainable consumer behavior."

Vocalizing the message begins March 27 at Lake Tahoe Community College at Sierra Nevada Alliance's 5th annual Wild and Scenic Environmental Film Festival.

The idea is a slow, gradual roll-out of what the commission wants to do, with a possible major launch of the education campaign in June. Commissioners are thinking of having one month devoted to not using single-use bags.

Commissioners will spread the R words at the Earth Day celebration at the college on April 17 as well as at the Green Business mixer at Embassy Suites on April 22.

Plastic bags have dominated the commission's agenda in the 10 months that it has existed. This action plan is one of the more substantial things the seven members have accomplished. A full report of their activities and future goals will be presented to the City Council in May.

Bags present several concerns. One is the amount of petroleum products needed to create them, with paper being a bigger culprit than plastic. Plastic bags, though, tend to end up strewn about and create a different environmental headache.

Ryan Kenny with the American Chemistry Council said his group based in Sacramento wants to help South Lake, but believes the plastic bags as garbage is the biggest issue.

"Our membership will have a difficult time participating in a plan that eliminates our product," Kenny told the commissioners.

With that said, commissioners reworded their goal so the word “eliminate” was no longer part of the sentence.

Jeanne Lear of South Tahoe Refuse said her company is talking to Trex, which makes pseudo wood products out of recycled plastic at its Fernley plant.

Right now grocery stores have bins for people to recycle plastic bags that are then picked up by their respective companies. (STR will separate them out if people put them in the blue bags for recycling.) The refuse company may create a route where it would pick up the bags at the stores, then assemble them to be delivered to Trex.

Ashley Richardson, a senior at STHS, said students have talked about the idea of having bins to recycle plastic bags in parking lots. People could load their goods in their vehicle and then dispose of the bag right away.

The way the commission is going to get the words “reuse, reduce, recycle” out are through advertising; social media and existing websites; signs at businesses that distribute bags; partnering with agencies and interested individuals; and having booths at events.

The end result the commission would like is for the public to change its behavior when it comes to one-time use bags – to essentially eliminate them from their lives. Instead of plastic or paper being the question, the idea is the consumer would come with their own bag.

California bond sales to pay for projects in Tahoe basin

By Kathryn Reed

Word came this week that funding for Lakeview Commons in South Lake Tahoe, Lakeside Trail in Tahoe City and Blackwood Creek restoration on the West Shore is unofficially on its way.

Bond sales last week by the state of California were better than expected. This means cash will be flowing to a number of entities, with the California Tahoe Conservancy one of those.



State money
will repair
the
retaining
wall at El
Dorado
Beach in
South
Tahoe.
Photo/Kathr
yn Reed

This state agency based in South Tahoe is a major partner in these three projects in the basin.

Lakeview Commons rose to the top of the priority list after it was deemed a public safety issue because of the dilapidated retaining wall. It's so bad that fencing has been erected around it so people won't sit on it or hurt themselves.

South Lake Tahoe expects to go out for bids on the project by the end of the month. Construction would then start this summer. What all the \$6 million will buy remains to be seen.

Conservancy officials expect to have final word about the funding next week.

Slew of positions up for grabs on EDC June ballot

By Kathryn Reed

El Dorado County's June primary ballot has been determined.

Norma Santiago, who represents Lake Tahoe on the Board of Supervisors, is running unopposed.

What may prove more interesting about the Board of Supervisors is how the Census turns out later this year and if Tahoe will continue to have a dedicated supervisor. Population shifts, with the West Slope having gained and Lake Tahoe losing residents in the last 10 years, could see supervisor boundary lines being redrawn.

Supervisor Ron Briggs is being challenged by business owner Todd Schwenk, consultant Wendell Smith, and engineering technician Shawn Gulling.

The six sheriff's candidates are John D'Agostini, district attorney's investigator; Larry Hennick, retired sheriff's sergeant; Ernie Hillman, retired sheriff's captain; Bob Luca, retired chief of the California Bureau of Investigation; George Nielsen, Placerville police chief; and Craig Therkildsen, El Dorado County sheriff's captain.

County Assessor Tim Holcomb is retiring . Going after his seat are Michael Gordon, the county's senior appraiser, and Karl Weiland, assistant assessor.

Also not seeking re-election is county Surveyor Dan Russell. His deputy, Richard Briner, is going for the job.

The following people will be on the ballot without challengers: Auditor-Controller Joe Harn; District Attorney Vern Pierson; Recorder-Clerk William Schultz; Treasurer-Tax Collector C.L. Raffety; and Superintendent of Schools Vicki Barber.

DUI checkpoint keeps drivers on a straight path

By Kathryn Reed

Balancing on one foot with the other off the ground, but parallel to it, the South Lake Tahoe man counted to 30. He walked a straight line while counting. He did everything the officer asked him to do.

Even though the pupils of his eyes bounced around enough for him to be pulled out of the line of cars during the St. Patrick's night DUI checkpoint, this local was let go. He and his female passenger, who was wearing a festive green and white hat, were allowed to drive home. At least that's where they said they were headed after being at McP's.



SLT police
Officer Berry
Rider at
Wednesday's
DUI
checkpoint.
Photo/Kathryn
Reed

People under the influence usually cannot track well with their eyes. The same goes for someone with a head injury.

Wednesday night was the second of five DUI checkpoints the South Lake Tahoe Police Department will conduct in a year's time, with funding through a grant.

Another grant that multiple agencies in El Dorado County were just awarded means another three to four more checkpoints will be added to the calendar. The AVOID grant is from the California Office of Traffic Safety.

"The overall goal of the awareness campaign is to let drivers know about the countywide increased enforcement periods and warn drivers that the only way to AVOID the county's law enforcement officers is to drive sober," the state website says.

Netting drunken drivers isn't the main goal of checkpoints "it's awareness.

"It's more of a deterrence," said South Lake Tahoe police Sgt. Shannon Laney as he stood on the edge of Highway 50 near Heidi's restaurant.

A steady stream of cars passed through the checkpoint near Fairway Avenue between 9pm and 1am. The backup determined whether it was every third or fifth car that was stopped. Driver's licenses were checked. Citations were issued for those without one.

One young woman said she had a permit from Arizona but couldn't produce it.

With it being such a small town, officers recognized a parolee in one passenger seat.

Cabbies seemed to be doing well on this night known for massive beer drinking. All of their vehicles were full. Even though they were the designated driver, so to speak, it didn't mean they automatically got to pass through the checkpoint without being questioned.

Caltrans workers, semis, beat-up Tahoe vehicles, BMWs " no one was immune from being stopped. One officer asked for to see the driver's license. The cop on the passenger side shined a flashlight to see what might be inside " open container, weapons, drugs, children not in a car seat.

During the December checkpoint three male juveniles from out town, and all wearing red, were drunk. They also had a Samurai sword in the trunk. They were detained.

Everyone the cops spoke with was handed a little information flyer about what to do if they suspect a person is drunk behind the wheel. Call 911.

Plenty of warning goes into the checkpoints. Besides having the information broadcast by the media, a sign before the stop alerts drivers about the checkpoint. Legally, officers must allow drivers an opportunity to drive around the checkpoint.

Even with the warning, people still make it to the front of the line.

Laney said it's often people who are too drunk to know any better or someone who had a couple drinks and has no idea they are past the 0.08 limit for blood alcohol.