

Tahoe works to consolidate environmental ed

By Kathryn Reed

Lake Tahoe is one step closer to improving environmental education in the basin for locals and visitors.

It all started about **a year ago** when the California Tahoe Conservancy gave the Tahoe Fund an \$85,000 grant to delve into what visitors' centers should look like in the future.

For Amy Berry, executive director of the Tahoe Fund, it was about "how to move the needle of environmental stewardship in the basin."

She gave an update to the CTC board on Dec. 8 about where things stand today. With her was Devin Middlebrook with the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency. The bi-state regulatory agency is now an active participant in the project and will coordinate the group going forward.

Under Berry's leadership various entities in the basin that have some sort of education component came up with a mission, vision and target audience:

- The purpose of this initiative is to connect people with the basin to nurture a culture of stewardship and sustainability.
- The basin is an environmental success story and global role model for sustainability.
- People who visit more than once a year or live in the basin and have the desire and ability to learn more about the basin.

They worked with Global Studios, the consulting arm of the San

Francisco Exploratorium, to come up with ideas and potential solutions to better coordinate the basin's message.

It was determined that a new paradigm is needed to create "a unified community mission that acts as an anchor for a larger network of educational and environmental organization across the region."

Going forward a website will be created to be a one-stop shop, a 12-month working plan will be developed. A formal name beyond the working names of Tahoe Basin Project and One Tahoe will be developed.

A more long-term goal would be creating an education center that all the agencies – from TRPA, to the U.S. Forest Service, state parks, CTC, resort associations, TERC and others – could be part of. A floating observatory is what is being envisioned. It could be built on a barge – perhaps the fire damaged Tahoe Queen.

CTC Chair Larry Sevinson said it should have a glass bottom. The Queen used to have one.

It would have the ability to travel between marinas, as well as be docked and have people come aboard to see the educational exhibits. This in turn would be an economic driver.

Penalty enacted to combat CEO-worker income inequality

By Hayley Miller, Huffington Post

In an effort to combat income inequality, Portland on Thursday

became the first jurisdiction to adopt a tax penalty on companies with excessive CEO-worker pay gaps.

Under the new law, companies doing enough business in Portland to pay the city's business fee will be taxed an additional 10 percent if their CEO makes 100 times what median workers earn – and an additional 25 percent if they make 250 times more.

"This is meant to be a signal that these kinds of ridiculous [pay] ratios are unacceptable," Portland's city commissioner Steve Novick told the *Huffington Post*. "You do not do better as a company because you decide to pay outrageous salaries to your CEOs."

Read the whole story

Casino industry adding more people to Black Book

By Nicole Raz, Las Vegas Review-Journal

Nevada casinos are kicking out and banning more people from their floors than possibly ever before.

"Definitely in the last four years we've seen what I would consider a bit of an uptick in individuals that we put on the Excluded Persons List (commonly referred to as the Black Book)," Gaming Control Board Chairman A.G. Burnett said. "We've probably included 25 percent more individuals on the Excluded Person List in the last four years than in the last 12."

A report on the U.S. gaming industry found the industry as a whole is banning more individual bad actors from casino floors.

Read the whole story

Skier missing from closed section of Mt. Rose

Updated 4:56pm:

By Kathryn Reed

A skier who went into closed terrain at Mt. Rose ski resort Saturday has not been heard from since about 10:15am.

A pair of 60-something year old men hiked up to the chutes area of the resort on Dec. 10. One friend saw the other disappear into what he told authorities was an avalanche. He called 911 and the search began.

This is the most difficult terrain at Mt. Rose and had not opened for the season, so what the duo was doing was illegal. Plus, they had to hike to access this virgin snow because the Northwest chairlift that reaches this area was not operating Saturday.

At the time the pair was on the mountain a foot of fresh snow had fallen. But 4pm another foot had accumulated.

Rescue teams had to stop the search to do avalanche control.

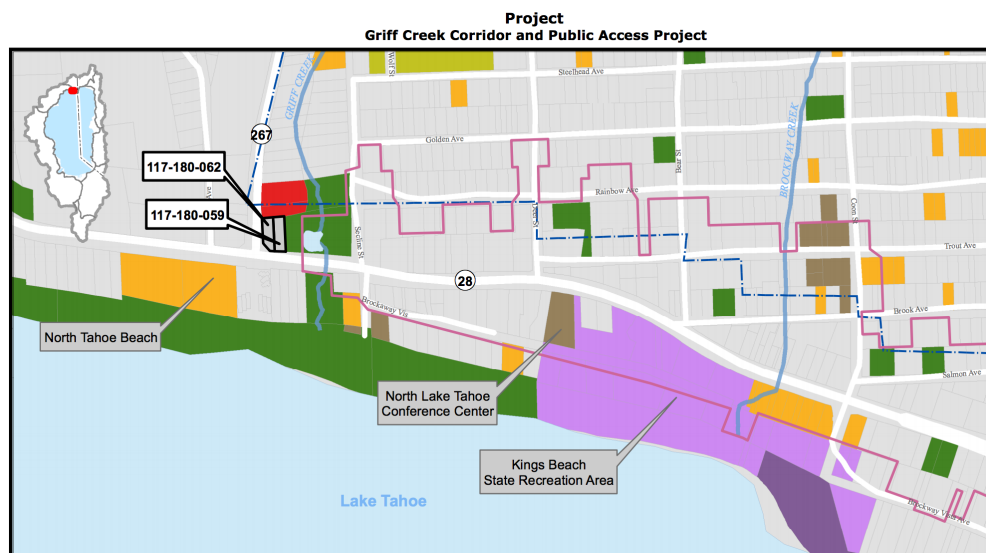
Bob Harmon with Washoe County Sheriff's Office told Lake Tahoe

New at 4:55pm that the search has been called for the night. At about 4pm a team with dogs went in, with no luck in finding the 64-year-old man. The search will resume Sunday morning.

In addition to the resort's ski patrol, teams from Washoe County search and rescue, REMSA, North Tahoe and Truckee Meadows fire departments, and Squaw Valley are helping.

"They were not wearing any backcountry gear, so no beacons, probes or shovels," Mike Pierce, spokesman for the resort, told *Lake Tahoe News*.

Land acquisition could beautify Kings Beach



Updated Dec. 12:

By Kathryn Reed

One of the eyesores entering Kings Beach will be gone by this time in 2018, according to the CTC.

Placer County with state funds funneled to it via the California Tahoe Conservancy is planning to purchase two

parcels on the corner of highways 28 and 267. An automotive shop currently operates there.

Both boards this week took action to solidify the deal. Placer County supervisors at their Dec. 6 meeting in Kings Beach approved the Griff Creek project, as well as the negative declaration. The CTC board on Dec. 8 allocated the \$1.2 million in Proposition 1 funds to purchase the properties. The Conservancy will retain the right to the coverage – a commodity the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency has created.

While the CTC staff made it seem like this was all a done deal, Placer County officials after the meeting told *LTN* not so fast.

“We now have to move into negotiations with the sellers of the properties – and so it is not a done deal, yet. And while it will be nice to have a more attractive entrance to Kings Beach, the goal of the agencies is to restore the environment in a stream environment zone – an area that we probably shouldn’t have allowed development on in the first place, but we are much smarter about those things now than we were back in the day. So we need to restore the area to its natural habitat... everything else is an added bonus,” DeDe Cordell with the county told *Lake Tahoe News*.

The goal is for the 4,300-square-foot auto shop to be removed, along with 11,000-square-feet of impervious surface. This acreage is considered 100 percent stream environment; 97 percent of the property is covered. Griff Creek borders the property.

According to the Placer County staff report, “Once the properties are acquired and site demolition and stabilization activities are complete, future improvements on the private properties will be planned and designed with further community input.”

CTC would like to turn this into a gateway for Kings Beach

that is more welcoming.

The tenant will receive \$70,000 to relocate. Relocation should occur by fall 2017, with the project being done by the end of 2018.

Placer County will be responsible for cleaning up the site, if need be. In the past it has been operated as a gas station.

Tax scheme lands EDC woman in prison

An El Dorado Hills woman is going to prison for two years for filing false IRS claims.

Sherry Taggart, 57, was also ordered to pay \$757,412. She had pleaded guilty to multiple charges in September.

According to court documents, in 2010 Taggart joined a scheme initiated in 2008 and operated by her co-conspirator Barbara Antonucci, an unlicensed tax preparer, to obtain false refunds by preparing and filing false claims on behalf of clients with the IRS. The two filed hundreds of false claims with the IRS between June 2012 and March 2014, seeking refunds totaling approximately \$1.4 million.

As a result, the IRS issued more than \$757,000 in illegitimate refunds. In total, including the period in which Antonucci operated the scheme by herself, the IRS issued more than \$1.8 million in illegitimate refunds from more than \$2.5 million illegitimate claims filed by the duo.

Antonucci was sentenced on Dec. 2 to three and a half years in prison.

Tahoe funding survives final federal water bill

By Sarah D. Wire and Bettina Boxall, Los Angeles Times

Over Sen. Barbara Boxer's objections, the Senate voted 78 to 21 Friday evening to pass sweeping water infrastructure legislation that changes how much water is pumped from the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta to San Joaquin Valley farmers and Southern California.

The bill – co-authored by Boxer – authorizes hundreds of water projects across the country, including new infrastructure to fix lead issues in Flint, Mich., and and millions of dollars for projects connected to the Los Angeles River, Salton Sea and Lake Tahoe.

Earlier in the week, House Majority Leader Kevin McCarthy inserted 90 pages of California water policy that drew Boxer's opposition, negotiated over the past year by the state's 14 GOP members, Sen. Dianne Feinstein, D-Calif., and a handful of House Democrats.

Now it goes to President Obama for his signature.

The bill would bring \$415 million to the Lake Tahoe Basin across seven years. The money would be used for wildfire prevention, the environmental improvement program, invasive species management, stormwater projects, Lahontan cutthroat trout recover, and other projects.

The original Lake Tahoe Restoration Act was passed by Congress in 2000, three years after President Bill Clinton was here for the initial Lake Tahoe Environmental Summit. The bill brought \$300 million in federal money to the basin in 10 years. Since the 1997 summit more than \$2 billion has been spent in the basin on what officials call environmental projects. This is a combination of federal, state, local and private dollars.

"I'm thrilled that the Lake Tahoe Restoration Act is included in this bill. We've been working to pass an updated Tahoe restoration bill for seven years," Feinstein said in a statement. "This bill authorizes \$415 million to carry on the work of the original bill, improving water quality, reducing hazardous fuels to prevent wildfires, fighting the spread of invasive species and restoring critical habitat throughout the Tahoe basin."

Lake Tahoe News contributed to this story.

Read the whole story

U.S. life expectancy declines for first time since 1993

By Lenny Bernstein, Washington Post

For the first time in more than two decades, life expectancy for Americans declined last year – a troubling development linked to a panoply of worsening health problems in the United States.

Rising fatalities from heart disease and stroke, diabetes, drug overdoses, accidents and other conditions caused the lower life expectancy revealed in a report released Thursday

by the National Center for Health Statistics. In all, death rates rose for eight of the top 10 leading causes of death.

“I think we should be very concerned,” said Princeton economist Anne Case, who called for thorough research on the increase in deaths from heart disease, the No. 1 killer in the United States. “This is singular. This doesn’t happen.”

Read the whole story

How to tell fake news from the real thing

By Wynne Davis, NPR

Fake news stories can have real-life consequences. On Sunday, police said a man with a rifle who claimed to be “self-investigating” a baseless online conspiracy theory entered a Washington, D.C., pizzeria and fired the weapon inside the restaurant.

So, yes, fake news is a big problem.

These stories have gotten a lot of attention, with headlines claiming Pope Francis endorsed Donald Trump in November’s election and sites like American News sharing misleading stories or taking quotes out of context. And when sites like DC Gazette share stories about people who allegedly investigated the Clinton family being found dead, the stories go viral and some people believe them. Again, these stories are not true in any way.

Read the whole story

USS Nevada, crew honored anew for Pearl Harbor exploits

By Keith Rogers, Las Vegas Review-Journal

HONOLULU – Resting at the bottom of the Pacific but very much alive in naval history books, the storied battleship USS Nevada received fresh accolades Thursday aimed at ensuring that she and her crew continue “inspiring sailors for as long as there is a United States Navy.”

On a drizzly Hawaiian morning the day after the 75th anniversary of the attack on Pearl Harbor, four USS Nevada veterans and a few dozen dignitaries and Nevadans gathered to commemorate a plaque dedicated to the ship and her crew.

The ceremony at Hospital Point – the spot where the Nevada was intentionally grounded – provided another opportunity to remember their exploits on Dec. 7, 1941, when the crew managed to get the Nevada underway after she was hit by a torpedo and bombs and make a valiant run for the open sea, fighting all the way.

They didn’t make it, but the maneuver spared the ship from possible ruin at anchor and inspired every American who saw or read about it, said Sam Cox, a retired rear admiral and director of the Naval History and Heritage Command.

Read the whole story