

Later trash pick up best thing for Tahoe bears

By Cheryl Millham

The problems of bears and garbage have gotten worse over the past 15 or so years.

Put yourself in a bear's mind for the next few minutes. It's about 5:30am with no humans and no cars in sight. You (the bear) walk around the corner and the street ahead of you has bear-size bowls (trash cans) at every house. How kind the humans are to feed me out of these wonderful bear-size bowls or easy to open plastic bags.

Now I don't have to go out of my way to forage out in the forest all day. Never mind the mess I make. The humans will clean it up.

This is the thinking of a bear.

Lake Tahoe Wildlife Care starts getting calls about "bad bears" because of situations like this. People want us to come and take the bears back out to the forest. We try to educate the public that we are in the forest and that the bears come to where the "easy" food source is located. We try to plead with them to not put their garbage out until just before it is to be picked up.

That will help solve the problem of bears coming around neighborhoods for food.

One comment we hear is, "I'm not going to get up out of bed at 5am to put out my trash. Period!" I can totally understand. I am not a morning person either, but, Tom gets all the trash ready the night before and at 5:15am on trash day, he gets up and takes it out. What a guy.

We have spoken with the South Tahoe Refuse company and asked if there were any way the trash pick-up hours – for residents – could be a little later in the morning. We were always told what a large job it would be to change all the pick-up routes and we were always told how sorry they were, but “no”.

About two weeks ago, as I was sorting through the mail, I threw out a flier from the refuse company, but noticed on the front cover a line (in red) that said there would be a change of pick-up hours. I was so excited I picked up the flier. This is monumental. I would encourage all South Lake Tahoe residents (and visitors) to get behind these new hours and clean up Tahoe’s trash problems.

The new hours started March 1. So, we all have time to figure out what time pick up will be at your house.

The male bears should start coming out of hibernation in the middle of March. If they find no garbage to eat, they should go back to the normal grazing on grasses, which should be plentiful then because of the rain we have received lately.

Another interesting fact is that if the sows don’t have all that food out of garbage cans to put on the extra weight, they should go back to having one cub and not 2 or 3.

So, come on Tahoe, let’s get behind the new pick-up times. You have no more excuses.

Oh, and one more thing, thank you South Tahoe Refuse.

Cheryl Millham is executive director of Lake Tahoe Wildlife Care.

Calif. carbon tax would be first at the pump

By Michael B. Marois, Bloomberg

California would be the first U.S. state to impose a “carbon tax” directly on motorists at the fuel pump under a plan by a leading Democratic lawmaker to ease greenhouse-gas pollution.

Senate President Pro Tem Darrell Steinberg wants to shift responsibility for emissions on gasoline sold by companies such as Chevron Corp., a cost that would otherwise be passed on to consumers in fuel prices. Instead, Steinberg wants to directly tax motorists 15 cents a gallon, rising to 24 cents in 2020.

California was the nation’s first state to set a limit for most carbon emissions, with regulations that aim to achieve a reduction of about 15 percent by 2020. The state auctions a limited number of pollution permits that industries can use to help meet the limit under a system called cap-and-trade.

Read the whole story

Horizon hotel-casino to be reincarnated

By Kathryn Reed

Say goodbye to the Horizon.

While it isn’t going to be bulldozed, it is going to be gutted

after the lease with LV Casino LLC expires March 31.

Taking over operations is Warner Hospitality Group out of Las Vegas. The company is under contract with the owners to remodel the dilapidated Stateline casino. It will be a multi-phase project, with the first phase slated to open in June.

The Park family has forever been the property owners. Family members were having disagreements on how to manage the business that includes cattle in the Carson Valley, the Horizon and MontBleu casinos, Edgewood Tahoe Golf Course and the future Edgewood Lodge so they opted last year to divide holdings among family members.



Called "The Ho" by locals, the Horizon hotel-casino is about to undergo a remodel.

Photo/LTN

Jon and David Park now own the Horizon and the cattle company. Neither is returning phone calls.

Horizon Stadium Theaters operators have been told they will be out of business at the end of the month. Reservations for the hotel are not being accepted beyond the night of March 30.

"We are in the dark," a reservation specialist said of his future and the property's after this month.

Warner Gaming officials declined to say anything other than a plan is being worked on.

A person close to the changes, but who could not speak on the record, *told Lake Tahoe News*, "They're looking to do some Hard Rock-related stuff with the Horizon, but some licensing stuff has to be worked out, including what to do with the corporate owned Hard Rock in Harveys."

Warner runs the Hard Rock hotel-casino in Las Vegas and is developing one in Sioux City, Iowa, among its other properties.

The Hard Rock inside Harveys is a concessionaire for the casino company. This means Caesars Entertainment, parent company of Harveys, does not have a say if a Hard Rock-themed hotel goes in next door. Nor have Harveys officials been approached about what Horizon plans to become.

The local Hard Rock, which has a restaurant and retail outlet, deferred comment to corporate PR, which deferred to Brookfield Real Estate Management Partners in New York. Multiple calls were not returned.

Nichols Engineering and Environmental Services in Stateline is working on the remodel, but would not comment about specifics.

"Both the county and TRPA will sign off on the permits. TRPA will authorize the changes under their conditional permit, and building department will authorize any construction required of building and fire codes – e.g., electrical, mechanical, plumbing, structural, etc," Mimi Moss, Douglas County community development director, told *Lake Tahoe News*.

Jeff Cowen, with the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency, told *Lake Tahoe News*, "They are looking to do improvements at the property that are consistent with the South Shore Vision Plan." He said no application for a permit has been submitted.

The 539-room hotel has been on the decline for years. The gaming floor only has slot machines. The place is often like a ghost town.

The building opened in 1965 as Del Webb's Sahara-Tahoe. In its heyday Elvis Presley, Phyllis Diller and the Osmond Brothers would play there. It was like having a Las Vegas style hotel-casino in Lake Tahoe.

In 1983, it was renamed Del Webb's High Sierra. At that time it had a western theme.

Columbia Sussex took over the operations and renamed it the Horizon in 1990. LV Casino, a subsidiary of Columbia Sussex, took over operations in 2009.

Injured bear interrupts skiing at Heavenly



A bear is rescued March 3 from Heavenly. Photo/ Jeff Cassetta

A bear rescued from Heavenly Mountain Resort on Monday is recovering at Lake Tahoe Wildlife Care.

The 1-year-old was getting first tracks off Powderbowl when ski patrol saw it the morning of March 3. The bear caused some delays for skiers.

Nevada Department of Wildlife officials found the bear had a cut on its shoulder and was bleeding. It's pads were also torn.

LTWC veterinarian Kevin Willitts took X-rays and found no broken bones.

Normally bears would still be in their dens this time of year. However, the spastic winter of Lake Tahoe this year has animals acting like it is spring.

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*

1 dead, 1 injured in Truckee area plane crash

A Tahoe City woman died and a Tahoe City man was critically injured Monday morning when the plane they were in crashed about six miles from the Truckee airport.

Darla Sue Farnell, 55, was pronounced dead at the scene. Ray Richard Farnell, 70, was listed in critical condition the evening of March 3 at Renown Medical Center.

At this time it is not known why the Piper PA-46 Malibu crashed Monday just before 11am on Martis Creek near Juniper Creek. The FAA and National Transportation Safety Board are investigating.

Placer County sheriff's deputies learned of the crash from the Oakland Air Traffic Control Center.

It took a couple hours for rescue personnel to find the downed plane in rugged terrain.

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*

4 hurt when chairs fall from British Columbia ski lift

By CBC News

Two children, one of whom was on a chairlift at the Crystal Mountain Ski Resort near Kelowna, B.C., when a number of ski chairs fell more than 20 feet to the ground Saturday, say it's an experience they'll never forget.

Two people are in critical condition and two others sustained minor injuries after an empty chair at the West Kelowna ski hill hit a tower and fell more than 20 feet causing other chairs to fall.

Crystal Mountain Ski Resort General manager Mike Morin says 15 people were evacuated from the lift after the accident, none of whom sustained injuries.

Morin says an empty chair started swinging and then hit a tower, causing the line to go off the track, and other chairs to fall.

Read the whole story

Vineyard managers using dowsers to find water

By Jason Dearen, AP

ST. HELENA — With California in the grips of drought, farmers throughout the state are using a mysterious and some say foolhardy tool for locating underground water: dowsers, or water witches.

Practitioners of dowsing use rudimentary tools — usually copper sticks or wooden “divining rods” that resemble large wishbones — and what they describe as a natural energy to find water or minerals hidden deep underground.

While state and federal water scientists disapprove of dowsing, California “witchers” are busy as farmers seek to drill more groundwater wells due to the state’s record drought that persists despite recent rain.

The nation’s fourth-largest wine maker, Bronco Wine Co., says it uses dowsers on its 40,000 acres of California vineyards, and dozens of smaller farmers and homeowners looking for wells on their property also pay for dowsers. Nationwide, the American Society of Dowsters, Inc. boasts dozens of local chapters, which meet annually at a conference.

“It’s kind of bizarre. Scientists don’t believe in it, but I do and most of the farmers in the valley do,” said Marc Mondavi, a vineyard owner whose family has been growing grapes and making wine since the mid-20th century in the Napa Valley.

Mondavi doesn’t just believe in dowsing, he practices it.

On a recent afternoon, standing in this family’s Charles Krug

vineyard holding two copper divining rods, Mondavi walked slowly forward through the dormant vines.

After about 40 feet, the rods quickly crossed and Mondavi – a popular dowser in the world famous wine region– stopped. “This is the edge of our underground stream,” he said during the demonstration. Mondavi said he was introduced to “witching” by the father of an old girlfriend, and realized he had a proclivity for the practice.

After the valley’s most popular dowser died in recent years, Mondavi has become the go-to water witch in Napa Valley. He charges about \$500 per site visit, and more, if a well he discovers ends up pumping more than 50 gallons per minute.

With more farmers relying on groundwater to irrigate crops, Mondavi’s phone has been ringing often as growers worry about extended years of dryness.

He had six witching jobs lined up over a recent weekend, three homes whose springs were running dry and three vineyards. It’s so popular that he’s even created a line of wines called “The Divining Rod” that will be sold nationwide this year.

While popular, scientists say dowsers are often just lucky, looking for water in places where it’s already known to likely exist.

“There’s no scientific basis to dowsing. If you want to go to a palm reader or a mentalist, then you’re the same person who’s going to go out and hire a dowser,” said Tom Ballard, a hydrogeologist with Taber Consultants, a geological engineering firm based in West Sacramento.

“The success is really an illusion. In most places you’re going to be able to drill and find some water,” he said.

Still, the consistent interest in water witches nationwide even spurred The U.S. Geological Survey to officially weigh in

on the fairly harmless practice.

Dowsing has not held up well under scientific scrutiny, the USGS said, adding that dowsers are often successful in areas where groundwater is abundant.

“The natural explanation of ‘successful’ water dowsing is that in many areas water would be hard to miss. The dowser commonly implies that the spot indicated by the rod is the only one where water could be found, but this is not necessarily true,” the survey said in its report.

Christopher Bonds, senior engineering geologist for the state Department of Water Resources, said his agency does not advocate using witchers.

“DWR is an advocate for having qualified and licensed water professionals locate groundwater resources using established scientific methods,” Bonds said in an email.

Don’t tell that to John Franzia, co-owner of Bronco Wine Co., the nation’s fourth-largest wine producer based on sales. It makes wine under hundreds of labels, including the famous “Two Buck Chuck.”

Bronco also owns more vineyard land in California than anyone else, and when it needs a new well there’s a good chance a dowser will be employed.

Franzia said the company uses many technologies to find water on its 40,000-acres, but turns to dowsers often and with great success.

“I’ve used witchers for probably the last 15-to-20 years,” Franzia said. “Seems like the witchers do the better job than the guys with all the electrical equipment. I believe in them.”

Brown not sure legalized pot a good idea

By AP

Gov. Jerry Brown said he is not sure legalizing pot is a good idea in his state because the country could lose its competitive edge if too many people are getting stoned.

If pot smoking gains more legitimacy in the nation's most populous state, Brown said he worries it could have negative ripple effects.

"The problem with anything, a certain amount is OK. But there is a tendency to go to extremes," he said in a wide-ranging interview aired Sunday on NBC's "Meet the Press." "And all of a sudden, if there's advertising and legitimacy, how many people can get stoned and still have a great state or a great nation?"

Californians voted to legalize medical marijuana in 1996. But Brown said he is watching closely to see how Colorado and Washington handle their new laws that go a step further by regulating the growth and sale of taxed pot at state-licensed stores.

"We have medical marijuana, which gets very close to what they have in Colorado and Washington. I'd really like those two states to show us how it's going to work," he said. "The world's pretty dangerous, very competitive. I think we need to stay alert, if not 24 hours a day, more than some of the potheads might be able to put together."

Brown, who was interviewed remotely from San Francisco, also

discussed California's drought problems, climate change and his future political career.

Now, as he prepares to run for his fourth term as governor, Brown said that despite his progressive politics, the key to turning California's budget deficit into a projected multibillion-dollar budget surplus was exerting fiscal discipline.

"You've got to be tough on spending. No matter how liberal you want to be, at the end of the day, fiscal discipline is the fundamental predicate of a free society," he said.

Calif. cities, police chiefs change tune on pot

By Peter Hecht, Sacramento Bee

The last time lawmakers tried to regulate California's medical marijuana industry, the League of California Cities warned of "a radical expansion of existing law" and "a slippery slope to distribution of marijuana for recreational use." And police groups rushed out talking points protesting the "creation of a massive, for-profit medical marijuana model."

California cities and police were long considered obstructionists to regulatory legislation they said would legitimize marijuana businesses. But now they are jumping into the marijuana-regulation effort out of fear that the state is inevitably moving toward a sanctioned cannabis industry with or without their input.

Expressing alarm over the changing "marijuana arena," the

League of California Cities and the California Police Chiefs Association announced Feb. 21 that they are dropping their policy of “unconditional opposition” to laws sanctioning marijuana businesses in California. They are backing a new bill that would license medical marijuana dispensaries and cultivators while setting new restrictions on doctors recommending marijuana to patients.

Read the whole story

Parvo infected pups at Meyers shelter died

Updated March 3:

El Dorado County officials neglected to inform the public until today that the two dogs that had parvo were actually two puppies that had died by the time they sent out the notice last week.

“We did not feel that information was relevant as the primary purpose was to notify the public that the facility kennels were closed and to emphasize the importance of prevention,” Margaret Williams, spokeswoman for the El Dorado County Health & Human Services Agency, told *Lake Tahoe News*. “In addition to the two puppies, we were informed of two dogs that were impounded at the shelter but released to their owner on Feb. 18. These dogs came down with parvovirus after leaving the shelter. We are not certain if they acquired the virus at the shelter or through another contact in the community. We believe one of those dogs is doing well and recovering, and one has since passed.”

The remaining six dogs at the shelter are healthy, however adoption of dogs at the Meyers shelter have been suspended until March 11.

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Dog adoptions at the animal shelter in Meyers have been suspended because of two cases of parvo this week.

The dog kennel area at the shelter will be closed until March 11 while shelter staff investigate, perform additional deep cleaning and disinfecting of all kennels and monitor the current dogs on site.

“We want to keep a watchful eye on the dogs and take every precaution to ensure that they are healthy,” said Robert Gerat, supervising animal services officer in South Lake Tahoe, said in a statement.

The business office and cat adoption area will remain open.

Canine parvovirus is a highly contagious viral disease that can produce life-threatening illness in dogs. The virus can be spread to other dogs through direct contact with an infected dog’s feces. Symptoms of parvovirus typically include lethargy, vomiting, loss of appetite and bloody diarrhea that can lead to dehydration.