

Recreation advocates want South Shore to function better

By Kathryn Reed

Coordination and connectivity are two of the main items missing when it comes to recreation on the South Shore.

People don't know what's available, where things are, how to find out about them and once they figure it out things are not linked together.



Survey takers said South Lake Tahoe's pool is an important asset. Photo/LTN file

An example is bike paths don't lead to the parks that do exist on the South Shore.

Consultants putting together the recreation plan for the area found that 85 percent of the survey respondents believe it is either essential or very important for South Lake Tahoe and El Dorado County to offer recreation facilities, programs and public parks to residents.

"If it should be us, then the resources should be provided.

It's the only way to meet that demand," Lauren Thomaselli, South Lake Tahoe recreation manager, said at a recreation commission meeting Oct. 17.

But the county does not provide any recreation services in the basin. It's facilities are limited at the lake with owning Lakeview Commons and the rest of the 56-acre project area which it leases to South Lake Tahoe, and there are parks in Tahoe Paradise and Tahoma, but not run by the county.

El Dorado County Recreation Commissioner Bob Smart pointed out how the basin wasn't even included when the county did its master plan for recreation.

Now officials are acknowledging this part of the county matters.

The South Lake Tahoe and El Dorado County recreation commissions met Thursday to get an update on where the joint Parks, Trails and Recreation Master Plan is at as well as to figure out how their respective entities could help. (Commissioner Rebecca Bryson from the city and Commissioner John Hidahl from the county were absent.)

It's possible Douglas County will be at the table in the future because it has hired the same consultant to work on a complementary rec plan so the entire South Shore is tied together.

The master plan the city and El Dorado are putting together goes from the state line, to Tahoma and out to Twin Bridges.

Vickie Sanders, parks manager for El Dorado County, explained how the county is looking to hire a firm to create an all-encompassing website for recreation. The goal is to have links to relevant recreation partners like the U.S. Forest Service and Tahoe Rim Trail Association so it's not just city or county provided recreation – but all recreation in the county. It would also have a calendar of events.

But it was pointed out how the end product is only as good as what gets submitted to the site for inclusion.

Because it is an El Dorado County product it will not have Douglas County information. This means the coordinated-connectivity piece for the South Shore will still be missing, at least online for the public through this future site.

City Commissioner Bonnie Turnbull expressed concern about yet another website when there are so many now.

Some of the discussion on Thursday centered on the results of the survey that asked people a slew of recreation questions. It was brought up how the city's ice rink was not deemed very important by people but before it was built it ranked higher than bike trails and ball fields. But that was 13 years ago and demographics and items to choose from in the survey were much different.

In ranking the top three recreation items in order of importance out of a list of 18, bike trails had 55 percent of the votes, Lakeview Commons 41 percent and the recreation-swim complex 39 percent.

City Commissioner Scott Valentine mocked the 8 percent who said there is nothing to be done to improve access to parks and recreation facilities on the South Shore.

It is possible people don't want their tax dollars spent to upgrade facilities, or they don't use them, or all of their time is spent on the lake or in the mountains and not on/at man-made recreation entities, or maybe they don't recreate.

What survey takers said the top three things they want are parks to connect to bike trails (62 percent), improve sidewalk access (44 percent) and provide more neighborhood parks (38 percent).

The two volunteer boards expressed a desire to meet more

often. There was a time when they had meetings twice a year. They are also going to begin to share their respective minutes and agendas with each other.

Future happenings:

- In the next couple weeks the full survey will be available online via the city and county's websites.
 - A meeting on Dec. 11 at 6:30pm (location still being determined) will be the public's opportunity to participate in a roundtable discussion about the recreation master plan.
 - In January subcommittees made up of the commissioners from both jurisdictions and those on the recreation master plan committee will meet to work on six specific areas.
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Debating what to do with all the wood in the forests

By Lauren Sommer, NPR

The record-breaking wildfire in Yosemite National Park is almost fully contained, two months after it started. The blaze calls attention to a problem across the Western U.S. – after a century having its fires routinely extinguished, the forests are overloaded with fuel.

A heated debate has flared up about what to do with that forest fuel. California is hoping to reduce its fire risk through renewable energy, but some worry about the environmental costs of thinning the forests.

The forest right after a big fire is incredibly quiet. There

are no birds. No bugs. No pine needles rustling in the breeze. Just row after row of blackened trees. Their bark feels like charcoal.

At more than 400 square miles, the Rim Fire is the largest Sierra Nevada fire in recorded history.

For decades, the Forest Service tried to put out every fire by 10 in the morning after it started. Small trees grew in, and during the Rim Fire they became ladders, carrying flames up to the tree tops and leaving just charred trunks. But just across the road, it looks entirely different.

Brett Storey thinks there's a solution. He's a program manager for Placer County and he's showing me around a recycling facility between Tahoe City and Truckee.

The plant would turn tree branches and scrap into a gas that runs a generator, supplying about 1,500 homes with electricity. It would be fueled by Forest Service projects within 30 miles.

Read the whole story

Shutdown – a \$24 bil. hit to U.S. economy

Publisher's note: Sens. Dianne Feinstein (D), Barbara Boxer (D) and Harry Reid (D) voted to end the government shutdown and raise the debt ceiling, Sen. Dean Heller (R) voted against it; Reps. Tom McClintock (R) and Mark Amodei (R) voted against it.

By Toluse Olorunnipa, Kathleen Miller and Brian Wingfield,

Bloomberg

Gum Tong owns a diner in Washington, D.C., and Matt Bellinger charts fishing boats in the Florida Everglades. They have this in common: The shutdown of the U.S. government cost them money they will never get back.

Pete's Diner & Carryout, a 50-year-old Capitol Hill eatery frequented by House Speaker John Boehner, lost about 80 percent of its usual business, said Tong, surrounded by empty seats and Halloween decorations. Bellinger missed out on \$1,000 a day in canceled charters because Everglades National Park was closed.

"What people have been doing in droves is saying 'We'll go to Disney World,' or 'We'll cancel our trip and go home'," Bellinger said in a telephone interview. Nineteen groups dropped plans for four-hour fishing trips.

"I can't make that money back," he said. "It's gone."

The U.S. economy is big and resilient. Now with the 16-day shutdown ended and the threat of a U.S. default at least delayed, economists will probably look back on this as a glitch, one of those passing crises that seem so common nowadays.

For people like Tong and Bellinger, and for thousands of small businesses, this was no glitch. It's money that can't be easily recovered, creating a long-term ripple effect – with the holidays approaching – that will be difficult to forget.

Business leaders say they are nervous. Companies from Knoll Inc. to NCI Inc. have said they expect the shutdown to affect fourth-quarter revenue. Knoll, an office furniture maker, expects about \$10 million of government business to be pushed into next year, Chief Executive Officer Andrew Cogan told analysts Wednesday on a conference call.

Americans were the most pessimistic about the nation's economic prospects in almost two years in October, as concern mounted that continued political gridlock will hurt the expansion. The monthly Bloomberg Consumer Confidence Index expectations gauge plunged to minus 31, the lowest level since November 2011, from minus 9 in September, a report showed today.

Standard & Poor's Ratings Services yesterday said the shutdown has shaved at least 0.6 percent off of fourth-quarter 2013 gross domestic product growth, or taken \$24 billion out of the economy.

Read the whole story

Crews quickly extinguish fire near Amacker Ranch

A brush fire behind the Amacker Ranch on the South Shore burned about a 100-foot-100-foot swath of land.

"It was next to a hiking trail. It could have been anybody or anything at this time," Brad Zlendick, Lake Valley battalion chief, told *Lake Tahoe News*.

The investigation into the cause of the Oct. 16 fire on this state-owned parcel is ongoing.

"It's still very dry and we are still in fire season so be very careful," Zlendick warns. He added if people see smoke they know is not from a controlled burn, they should call the fire department.

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*

Indian casino boosting minimum wage to \$10.60/hour

By Brian Hickey, KCRA-TV

JACKSON – Employees at the Jackson Rancheria Casino will soon have a starting wage that is \$2 higher than the statewide minimum of \$8 per hour.

The Indian casino, owned and operated by the Jackson Rancheria Band of Miwuk Indians, announced that in January, pay for its employees will start at \$10.60 per hour.

The raise will mean an increase of nearly \$5,000 a year for several hundred employees currently making the statewide minimum wage of \$8 per hour.

[Read the whole story](#)

Calif. water managers urging conservation

By Bettina Boxall, Los Angeles Times

Water managers Monday urged Californians to step up their conservation efforts, warning that many parts of the state could face water shortages next year if this winter proves to be another dry one.



Lake Oroville in April 2010.
Photo/LTN file

Officials are not ready to declare a statewide drought. And managers of the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California, the region's wholesaler of imported water, said they have sufficient supplies in regional storage to avoid mandatory cutbacks for at least another year.

But two dry years in a row have pushed water levels in the state's biggest reservoirs to below normal. Lake Shasta is at 66 percent of the average for this time of year and Lake Oroville is at 73 percent of average.

Read the whole story

Head of Tahoe Area Sierra Club dies on safari

By Charles S. Johnson, Billings (Montana) Gazette

Bob Anderson, chair of the Tahoe Area Sierra Club, died in a rollover accident Friday in Serengeti National Park in Tanzania, Africa.

His wife, Grace, was injured in the accident but survived.

They were among the passengers in a Land Rover that rolled over.



Bob Anderson

Anderson was a leading Montana conservationist and a former state public service commissioner. He had lived in Helena for many years, but more recently resided in Meyers.

He and his wife were celebrating his 70th birthday in Africa and had completed a successful ascent of Mount Kilimanjaro, reaching the 19,400-foot summit.

“Bob Anderson was a great citizen of the wilderness,” said one of his friends, Bob Decker, of Helena. “He wasn’t just a lifelong recreationist in the backcountry, but a dedicated conservationist who always returned to town to organize and lead efforts to win community support and political protection for wild public lands.”

Read the whole story

Government leaders reach

shutdown, debt deal

By Lisa Mascaro and Michael A. Memoli, Los Angeles Times

WASHINGTON — The top Senate leaders jointly announced an agreement Wednesday on a bipartisan proposal to raise the nation's debt limit and re-open government that Congress is expected to approve to prevent an economically dangerous default.

Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid, D-Nev., and Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., revealed the agreement shortly after the Senate session began.

"The eyes of the world have been in Washington all this week," Reid said. "Today, they will also see Congress reaching a historic bipartisan agreement to reopen the government and avert a default on the nation's bills. The compromise we reached will provide our economy with the stability it desperately needs."

McConnell said he was "confident" both those goals would be reached Wednesday.

Read the whole story

S. Tahoe reaffirms decision to ban plastic bags

By Kathryn Reed

Advocates for banning plastic bags in South Lake Tahoe got a partial win Tuesday.

While the ordinance for the ban was on the consent agenda as a second reading, it got pulled for discussion.

Tim James, manager of the California Grocers Association, wanted time to explain how without putting a fee for paper bags in the ordinance, the council would hurt businesses.

"When you only ban plastic, there is a move to paper," James told the council on Oct. 15. "In South Lake Tahoe, if you go without a fee, it will be about a \$60,000 increase in bag costs to have free paper and no plastic available."

James represents the two Raleys and one Safeway in town.

Ryan Schouten, whose family owns the Grocery Outlet, agreed with most of what James had to say.

"We don't offer paper bags because of the cost. They are 9 to 10 cents for us," Schouten said. He expects his store alone will take a \$50,000 hit each year to provide paper bags.

Plastic grocery bags on average cost 3 cents each.

The ordinance takes effect Jan. 15 for all grocery stores in South Lake Tahoe and on Oct. 15, 2014, for all other retail establishments.

Resident Norm Strobel told the council he and his wife would shop outside the city if the ban were approved.

Eleven of the 13 people who spoke at the meeting favored the ban. One of those advocates was B Gorman, CEO of Lake Tahoe South Shore Chamber of Commerce. She said not putting the fee in for paper was a vote against business.

Many of the 80-plus jurisdictions in California that have implemented plastic bag ordinances also impose a fee for paper. This is designed to be an incentive for people to switch to reusable bags that they would bring to the store.

Councilmember Hal Cole believes charging a fee for a bag is a tax that shoppers should not have to endure. He was the deciding vote Tuesday as well as earlier this month.

Councilmembers Tom Davis and JoAnn Conner have been adamantly against the ban. He believes there is not a plastic bag issue. She believes there are health concerns with reusing canvas bags or the like. He would support the state taking the lead. She doesn't believe stores have been part of the discussion.

The bag ban has been discussed for four years in South Lake Tahoe. And stores like Safeway, T.J. Maxx, Kmart and Big 5 operate stores in jurisdictions that have banned plastic bags and have managed to survive.

Councilmembers Angela Swanson and Brooke Laine wanted the fee for paper. But what they wanted more was for plastic to be banned, so they voted for the ordinance without the fee.

It was the same 3-2 vote as two weeks ago to ban plastic bags, with Davis and Conner in the minority.

It was agreed that a few months after the plastic ban has been in effect the council would revisit the ordinance to see how it is working.

In other action:

- The second reading of the tourist core area plan was voted on. This time Conner voted for it. It passed unanimously, where it was a 4-1 vote at the first reading earlier this month.

Canines poisoned by pot becoming common

By Lydia O'Connor, Huffington Post

Veterinarians have have seen an increase in animals with pot poisoning, a KTVU report says.

According to veterinarians at the Berkeley Dog and Cat Hospital, the majority of incidents are accidental and the result of pets sneaking snacks from their owners' medical marijuana products, most notably baked goods.

The veterinarians also cited the increasingly strength of pot-laced goods.

The increase is not unique to the Bay Area. A five-year study in Colorado found that pot-poisoning in dogs quadrupled after the state legalized medical marijuana in 2000.

Read the whole story