Measurable snow expected in basin on Sunday

Put the rake away because it’s time to get out the shovel.

The National Weather Service in Reno has issued a winter weather advisory for Sunday from 5am-11pm for areas above 6,500 feet. Expect it to be raining or snowing the better part of Oct. 30.

Snow above 7,000 feet could reach 18 inches, with up to 6 inches down to 6,500 feet, and 2 inches at lake level.

Temps for the next few days will top out in the high 40s, with overnight lows near freezing.

There is a 20 percent chance of showers Halloween night.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

The war against wildfire

By George Wuerthner, Earth Island Journal

Chad Hanson lopes over to a patch of young conifers and waves an arm at me. “Come over here, he says excitedly, pointing to dozens of 1- to 3-foot-tall saplings. “Look at pines and firs growing under these snags. See how healthy they are? And here, see these holes in the blackened bark? Those were made by black-backed woodpeckers. They are seeking the grubs of beetles that burrow into the dead trees after fires. Can you imagine how much energy it takes to drill these holes?” he says, his voice a mix of amazement and admiration.

We are walking through Stanislaus National Forest, about a mile from the border of Yosemite National Park, in a patch of woodland that the Rim Fire swept through back in the summer and fall of 2013. It’s a pleasant summer afternoon. A faint breeze offsets the bright glare of the sun high overhead in the cloudless blue sky. The blackened trunks of the pines Hanson is standing amidst cast linear shadows on the ground. Patches of tender green shrubs and pine and fir seedlings cover the forest floor. Three years after the Rim Fire, this patch of forest is clearly regenerating itself.

Hanson, a tall, lanky figure dressed in khakis, is a forest ecologist who specializes in wildfires. He is also the director of the John Muir Project of the Earth Island Institute, a nonprofit that uses science and legal means to push for ecological management of forestlands, especially ones that have been severely degraded and damaged by decades of commercial logging and fire suppression measures. A California native, Hanson began studying the aftereffects of the Rim Fire – the third largest wildfire in California since the early twentieth century – almost as soon as the smoke cleared. As we walk through the charred trees, he can barely hide his enthusiasm, constantly pointing out signs of new life sprouting up amid the dead stands. “To me this habitat is fascinating. Every time I go out to a burn area I learn something new,” he says.

Read the whole story

Placer County to develop

countywide parks plan

Placer County about to prepare its first countywide comprehensive park and trail master plan that will be the blueprint for the next 10 years.

“As our communities continue to evolve it is important to meet their unique recreational tastes,” Supervisor Jennifer Montgomery said. “I am truly excited about how this plan hopes to promote healthy and thriving active communities throughout our county. Enjoying activities in these venues with family, friends or even going solo can create some of life’s best moments.”

The master plan is intended to update the county’s General Plan standards put in place in 1994 and to serve new trends and demographics.

The proposed plan will also work with neighboring agencies that border Placer County, such as Truckee, California State Parks, U.S. Forest Service and various cities to develop a connected trail network throughout the region.

Next steps also include determining available countywide inventory, demand, funding availability, priorities, service standards, fee program and strategic plan.

Registration open for annual bird count

The Christmas Bird Count, widely regarded as the largest and oldest citizen science project in the world, will be Dec. 17

in South Lake Tahoe.

Each year, Dec. 14-Jan. 5 tens of thousands of volunteers throughout the world head out into the winter to count birds for a day. This tradition goes back to 1900, and in the intervening years, these birders have built a database on bird populations that is unmatched by any other wildlife census.

TINS co-founder Will Richardson has coordinated the South Lake Tahoe count since 2004.

Meet at Alpina Coffee Cafe on Emerald Bay Road at 8am. The group will bird at Cove East before splitting into groups to bird at other areas. A pizza party, complementary of TINS will conclude the day.

To register, go **online**.

Women runners turn to technology to feel safe

By Amanda Loudin, Outdoor

Erin Kelly, 34, has been running since she was in the fifth grade. Over the years, the teacher from New Hampshire has logged miles on streets and sometimes trails in France, Morocco and all over the United States. She is devoted to a sport that keeps her mentally and physically fit, and she will run wherever and whenever she has the opportunity.

But like many female runners these days, she also runs with caution in mind. High-profile stories of women who have been assaulted or even murdered while running can make the sport feel risky. Expecially for those like Kelly, who have no

choice but to get out before the sun has fully risen and their workday begins.

These days, many women are also turning to technology to improve their sense of security. Kelly is a case in point. Her high-tech tool of choice is the smartphone app Road ID, specifically its “e-crumb” feature. “Users can pick up to five emergency contacts to enter,” says P.J. Rabice, director of marketing at the app’s company, which is based in Erlanger, Ky. “The contacts can then follow their runner via text or email as she heads out the door and along her route.”

Read the whole story

Can bettors trust that e-sports aren’t fixed?

By Thomas Moore, Las Vegas Sun

The challenges of getting e-sports into sports books and onto casino floors were the focus of two sessions of a conference on the popular form of competition Tuesday in Las Vegas, with discussion focusing on how gaming operators could ensure bettors that the outcomes weren’t being manipulated.

“My question is how will these sports be regulated and how do we ensure their integrity,” said Chuck Esposito, director of Sunset Station Race and Sports Book. “I don’t know if I can watch an e-sports event now and know if something is right or wrong.”

Esposito put the question to two e-sports industry experts during a panel session at the conference, being held through

today at SLS Las Vegas. Both said they weren't especially worried about fixing or other integrity issues.

Read the whole story

Storms bring flood risk to fire ravaged areas



The Emerald Fire scorched trees on both sides of Highway 89. Photo/Kathryn Reed

By Kathryn Reed

All the moisture that is in the forecast for the next week is a mixed blessing.

Five years of drought in California and western Nevada have left so many areas parched. The tinder dry brush has also contributed to horrendous fires throughout both states.

Now potential flooding is the major threat.

It is so worrisome to California officials that the state Department of Water Resources in conjunction with CalFire and the National Weather Service this week issued flash flooding warnings for not just this week, but the entire wet season.

“With an increased number of burn areas comes increased potential for flash flooding in those areas,” Bill Croyle, deputy director of Statewide Emergency Preparedness and Security for DWR, said at a press conference Oct. 24. “Flood preparedness is even more important this year due to widespread wildfires the state has experienced.”

Crews have been busy laying down tightly woven straw bales to prevent the burned hillside of the Emerald Fire along Highway 89 from washing down. The fire earlier this month burned nearly 200 acres on both sides of the highway, though mostly it was on the west side of the roadway.

DWR uses monitoring tools that synthesize multi-agency data to understand detailed, real-time ground conditions, helping to inform officials of developing areas of flood concern. The NWS is responsible for issuing flood watches and warnings. CalFire at different burn locations has taken measures to stabilize several slopes, including straw-mulching and installing early warning system rain gauges linked to local government emergency response systems to trigger evacuations.

As of Oct. 15, California had experienced 6,726 fires burning a total of 560,888 acres.

According to the National Weather Service in Reno, heavy precipitation is headed for Lake Tahoe on Thursday night. There will be a break Friday afternoon before the rain begins again Saturday afternoon and should last through Sunday.

Snow levels are expected to drop Saturday night to about 7,000 feet.

Avalanche prep key to surviving the elements



Sierra Avalanche President Todd Offenbacher shows off avalanche beacons on Oct. 15. Photo/Jessie Marchesseau

By Jessie Marchesseau

“You can know everything there is to know about snow, but if you don’t make good decisions, that doesn’t do you any good,” said Mike Ferrari, patrol director for Mt. Rose and board member of the American Avalanche Association.

Making good decisions was a predominant theme throughout the

California Avalanche Workshop at Lake Tahoe Community College this month. Now in its third year, the annual workshop is a one-day event designed to educate snow industry professionals as well as backcountry enthusiasts about avalanche safety. It also serves as a networking opportunity for people who love snow.

Sierra Avalanche Center Director Todd Offenbacher called the CAW invaluable, and said it’s the best service available to the local snow and winter sports community.

Presentations from professional skiers opened and closed the day with South Shore local Hazel Birnbaum kicking off the event by sharing her personal experience being caught in an avalanche at last year’s Freeride World Tour competition in Fieberbrunn, Austria. Her story emphasized that just because you are at a resort, or someone else tells you an area is safe, doesn’t necessarily mean it is.

As the day progressed, Steve Reynaud from the Sierra Avalanche Center gave a recap of last year’s snow and avalanche season. Nate Greenberg, president of the Eastern Sierra Avalanche Center in Mammoth, shared his own backcountry experiences and hindsight lessons before offering a preview of an upcoming backcountry app designed to help users apply avalanche forecasts to make better decisions about ski terrain.

SAC forecasters Brandon Schwartz & Andy Anderson recapped the most significant lessons of the recent weeklong International Snow Science Workshop in Colorado. And Alex Taran, founder of the South American Beacon Project, talked about the need for more avalanche education in the mountains of South America.



Abe Greenspan of TahoeLab talked gear with skiers and snowboarders at the California Avalanche Workshop. Photo/Jessie Marchesseau

To wrap up the afternoon, professional big mountain skier Cody Townsend introduced the crowd to the concept of the “normalization of deviance” and how it applies to snow safety. What it comes down to is this: when we do something dangerous without catastrophic results, the behavior begins to seem normal, even though the danger has not dissipated. This can lead to a habit of bad decision making or pushing limits too far. The end result is often disastrous. Luckily, Townsend recognized and corrected these habits in his own skiing before a disaster happened, and he encouraged listeners to do the same.

This was an eye-opening idea for Jason Champion, a mountain guide from Truckee, attending the workshop for the first time. Like many others, he felt the overall emphasis of the day was on good decision making while in the mountains. He was glad to hear the presenters voicing the importance of this and of communication within groups. In the end, Champion said he hopes it will result in fewer fatalities in the mountains.

But backcountry skiing almost always involves an inherent amount of risk. After his presentation, Townsend was asked how he balances good decision making with conquering new and difficult terrain, he responded: “It’s all about timing. There’s a time and a place for everything in the mountains, you just have to wait for it.”

The workshop featured eight speakers divided up into four sessions. Short breaks in between allowed attendees a chance to converse, make new contacts and check out tables featuring info, representatives and gear from Sierra Avalanche Center, TahoeLab boards, Mammut and the American Institute for Avalanche Research and Education.

Workshop organizer David Reichel, who is also the wilderness education coordinator at LTCC, said the personal connections people make in between presentations are equally as important as the information offered by the speakers. These are relationships attendees will follow up on later, when ski season is here, and they’re headed out into the backcountry.

USFS resuming controlled

burns in basin

The U.S. Forest Service is scheduled to begin prescribed fire operations this week in areas south and west of Lake Tahoe.

If conditions are favorable, operations may take place on urban lots near Heavenly Mountain Resort, around Big Meadow off Highway 89 (Luther Pass) and north of Meeks Bay, near Timberland in Tahoma. Operations will continue as conditions allow.

Each prescribed fire operation follows a prescribed fire burn plan, which considers temperature, humidity, wind, moisture of the vegetation, and conditions for the dispersal of smoke. This information is used to decide when and where to burn.

Smoke from prescribed fire operations is normal and may continue for several days after an ignition depending on the project size and environmental conditions.

Before prescribed fire operations are conducted, agencies post road signs around areas affected by prescribed fire, send email notifications and update the local fire information line at 530.543.2816.

Cubs-themed World Series could set wagering records

By Matt Youmans, Las Vegas Review-Journal

For star power and fascinating storylines, it’s tough to top the Chicago Cubs. A team of future superstars – starting with Kris Bryant and Anthony Rizzo – leading a popular franchise

with more than a century of suffering in its past is more than enough to make this October unforgettable.

In case anyone has forgotten, the Cleveland Indians are a part of the story, too, and they add another element of intrigue.

When the numbers are totaled, this might be the most-wagered World Series in history.

Read the whole story