Forest sees rebirth after devastating King Fire

By Hudson Sangree, Sacramento Bee

The day after an arsonist pleaded guilty to setting the massive King Fire in September 2014, dozens of volunteers gathered Saturday near Stumpy Meadows Lake to help bring the forest back to life.

The volunteers ranged from children to senior citizens. They were members of the Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts, the Auburn Kiwanis Club and an off-road-vehicle club, among others. They planted hundreds of pine seedlings in the popular Black Oak Campground, which was singed by the King Fire.

With another fire season looming in drought-stricken California, the landscape decimated by the nearly 98,000-acre King Fire in El Dorado and Placer counties is slowly coming back to life. Wildflowers are blooming in the blackened earth, and the long, arduous task of replanting a vast swath of the Eldorado National Forest is just beginning.

“The recent fires are horrible events, but they present a great restoration opportunity,” Maria Mircheva, executive director of the nonprofit Sugar Pine Foundation, said last week. The foundation, based in South Lake Tahoe, helped coordinate the recent volunteer effort, as it has in other fire zones.

Read the whole story

Low maintenance vegetable gardening



Intensive planting and low maintenance techniques can increase a garden's harvest. Photo/Bonnie Plants

By Melinda Myers

Increase your harvest without increasing the size of your garden or workload. All you need is a bit of intensive planting, along with some low maintenance techniques.

Invest some time upfront to prepare the garden soil. This will save you time throughout the growing season. Add several inches of organic matter and a slow release fertilizer into the top 8 to 12 inches of soil. The organic matter improves drainage in clay soils and increases moisture retention in

sandy soils. The slow release fertilizer feeds the plants for several months, reducing the number of applications needed. You'll have healthier plants that are better able to fend off pests and outcompete the weeds.

Match the plants with the right growing conditions. Tomatoes, peppers, and other vegetables that produce fruit need full sun. Leafy crops like lettuce are more tolerant of shade. Check plant tags and seed packets for planting details or download a free gardening app for plant information, maintenance tips, weather reports, and more.

Plant seeds and transplants in blocks with fewer pathways. Give each plant enough room to grow to its full size. Your rows will be closer together with just enough paths for weeding, watering, and harvesting. You will be growing more plants and pulling fewer weeds with this strategy.

Interplant to further maximize your planting space. Plant short-season vegetables like lettuce and radishes in between properly spaced longer-season vegetables like broccoli and tomatoes. By the time the longer-season plants start filling the space, the shorter season plantings will be ready to harvest. You'll be pulling radishes or cutting lettuce instead of weeds. Plus, you'll harvest two crops from one row.

Plant successive crops throughout the growing season. Plant cool weather vegetables like spinach, radishes, and lettuce in spring. Once these are harvested, replace with warm weather vegetables like beans, tomatoes, or cucumbers. Finish off the season by filling any voids with a fall crop of cool weather vegetables.

Go vertical to save space, reduce disease, and make harvesting easier. Growing vine crops on supports lifts the fruit off the ground and increases the amount of light and airflow the plants receive, reducing the risk of disease. Plus, you'll do less bending when it's time to harvest.

Mulch the garden with pine straw/evergreen needles, shredded leaves, or other organic matter. These materials suppress the weeds, conserve moisture and add organic matter to the soil as they decompose. You'll have fewer weeds to pull and not have to water as often.

Save time and water with the help of soaker hoses or drip irrigation. These systems apply the water directly to the soil where it is needed. Less water is lost to overspray, evaporation, and runoff. They also reduce the risk and spread of disease by preventing water from settling on the leaves of the plants.

Try a few or all of these strategies this season for an abundant harvest without a lot of extra work.

Melinda Myers has more than 30 years of gardening experience has written more than 20 gardening books, including "Small Space Gardening" and "Midwest Gardener's Handbook".

Truckee cyclists survive winter trek over Sierra

By Benjamin Spillman, Reno Gazette-Journal

Matt Reynolds and Blake Bockius were pushing their bikes through wet snow when they should have been relaxing with a post-ride beverage.

They were making an over-the-snow crossing of the Sierra Nevada crest on fat tire bikes, a trek they planned to complete in 12 to 15 hours.

But their effort to make the first wintertime bike ride over

the route deteriorated into a rain-soaked, 22-hour slog.

Read the whole story

Prescribed fires to be set in Tahoe basin

Weather permitting, California State Parks, Nevada Division of Forestry and U.S. Forest Service may continue prescribed fire operations beginning April 11.

On the North Shore, operations may take place in Burton Creek State Park. On the East Shore, operations may take place near Sand Harbor, Spooner Summit and Camp Galilee. On the South Shore, operations may take place near Lake Tahoe Boulevard and Sawmill Road, Panther Lane near South Tahoe High School, off Highway 89 near Spring Creek, and off Santa Claus Drive and West River Parkway near Christmas Valley.

To view a map with project locations and details, go **online**.

Residual smoke may be seen in locations where operations have taken place over the last several weeks. To receive prescribed fire notifications, send an email to pa_ltbmu@fs.fed.us.

Calif. economy expected to

outpace that of U.S.

By Natalie Kitroeff, Los Angeles Times

California’s economy will grow faster this year than the national economy, and unemployment will drop to 5 percent in early 2017, according to a new report by the UCLA Anderson Forecast.

Personal income in California will increase more slowly than it has in recent years, when the state’s economy was bouncing back from the high unemployment of the recession.

In 2016, personal income in California will grow 3.6 percent, compared with 4.5 percent in 2015, the report said.

Read the whole story

Wise surprised even himself with world record

By Chris Murray, Reno Gazette-Journal

David Wise is used to catching big air, but not quite like this.

The Reno native and 2014 Olympic goal medalist set a world record last Sunday for highest freeski air on a hip, soaring 46.5 feet above the deck to best the previous record by nearly 10 feet.

“There’s a ton of fear,” Wise told the *RGJ* after returning to Reno. “I guess the way to explain it is it’s a combination of

exhilaration and terror. You’re having fun and flying high, which is what I love to do, but it’s also scary. I never expected to go anywhere near that high in my life. It was a totally new experience.”

Read the whole story

Bountiful snowpack extends Tahoe ski season

The snowpack is already good enough at Tahoe area resorts for most to stay open at least until mid-month, but the forecast could help extend the season.

Rain at lake level is expected today, including thunderstorms. That scenario will carry over to Saturday. Showers are possible through Wednesday.

Here are the projected closing dates for the resorts. Be sure to check their websites for updates.

Homewood: April 10

Tahoe Donner Downhill: April 10

Donner Ski Ranch: April 10, then weekends

Granlibakken: April 15

Boreal: April 17

Diamond Peak: April 17

Kirkwood: April 17

Northstar: April 17

Sierra-at-Tahoe: April 17

Heavenly: April 24

Mt. Rose: May 8

Squaw Valley: May 30

Alpine Meadows: May 30

Sugar Bowl: No date given

Soda Springs: No date given.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Volunteer to help improve Grover Hot Springs Park

On April 16, California State Parks Foundation will host its 18th annual Earth Day Restoration and Cleanup at 27 state parks across California, including Grover Hot Springs in Markleeville.

More than 3,000 volunteers are needed to help with environmental improvement projects statewide.

Since its inception in 1998, CSPF's Earth Day Restoration and Cleanup program has resulted in 81,670 participants contributing more than 334,300 volunteer hours, worth nearly $6.39 million in park maintenance and improvements.

Additionally, nearly $5 million has been raised to support the Earth Day program.

At Grover Hot Springs State Park volunteers will work on maintenance and development of the native plant demonstration garden. Check in is at 10am and work will be until 2pm.

To register, contact Hannah Drummond at awg.hannahd@gmail.com.

Area reservoirs filling up after wet winter

By Paul Nelson, KTVN-TV

Thanks to a wet winter, the area's reservoirs are beginning to see a rise in water levels. Sierra snowpack numbers are average and higher in most of Nevada. Now that the temperatures have warmed up, some of that snow is beginning to flow into the reservoirs.

"We're doing much better than we have," Chad Blanchard, U.S. District Court Water Master said. "We've stored quite a bit of water, already, and that will just continue."

Stampede Reservoir had more than 20,000 acre-feet of water, when the reservoir bottomed out. Today, it has about 65,000 acre-feet, rising nearly 6 inches since Sunday. One of the main reasons for the increase is the high amount of natural runoff, which was 230 percent of normal in March.

Blanchard says Boca Reservoir will get back up to natural levels, this year. The elevated water levels are already being noticed by campers and fisherman, including Matt Heron.

Read the whole story

Youth sought for spring basketball program

Players are being sought for a spring basketball team.

The South Shore program is in its inaugural season. Elevation Elite provides an advanced level of competition, skills and training.

Sessions run now through June 18. Grades 3-8, boys and girls may compete. There will be three evening practices a week at local gyms and five weekends of tournaments.

Cost is $275, which includes tournament entry fees and uniform.

For more info, contact Joby Cefalu at joby@elevationelite.net or David Finnegan at david@elevationelite.net.