

# Drones might be next search and rescue tool

By Paul Nelson, KTVN-TV

Many believe the sky is the limit for Unmanned Aerial Vehicle technology, including in Northern Nevada, where drones are being tested.

Warren Rapp is the Business Director of Nevada Advanced Autonomous Systems Innovative Center. He says using UAVs in search and rescue missions would be a huge step for law enforcement agencies.

"It's a great way that you can, whatever weather condition, just about, take small-sized drones with thermal cameras or regular cameras and start searching for somebody almost immediately," Rapp said.

Along with cameras, Rapp says drones can be equipped with radios or phones that can be dropped off to lost people, once they are found. That would help communication during the rescue operation, until help arrives. If someone is stranded in Lake Tahoe or Pyramid Lake, a UAV could even drop off a flotation device for that person.

**Read the whole story**

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## S. Lake Tahoe not playing

# around with recreation

By Susan Wood

Let's be honest. You'd have to be living under a rock to not know what's important to South Lake Tahoe residents and tourists.

Recreation. Recreation. Recreation.

So, the city – which is now all over recreation – is hoping you won't be living under a rock as it launches a series of four input-gathering meetings to talk about what to do with the South Lake Tahoe Recreation Complex. The site features a main building that by most standards is as old as dirt at four decades.

In a town that worships ways to play and get the blood pumping, the state the structure is in is unacceptable. It's cold, dingy and energy inefficient – costing the city more than \$170,000 a year just to heat and light it. And it leaks. Lauren Thomaselli, who runs the site, had to place trash cans in the gym to catch water dripping from the roof.



The men's bathroom reflects the age of the facility.  
Photo/LTN file

"This building has outlived its use," city Parks and Recreation Commissioner Pete Fink told *Lake Tahoe News* after this week's first meeting that brought out about 40 people to share their diverse ideas. The next gathering facilitated by planning consultant Greg Tonello is scheduled for February. Tonello plans to feature sketches of predominant themes.

Fink seemed as pleasantly surprised by the turnout as the prospect of wild-eyed ideas for the recreation-oriented site.

"We could have a SnowGlobe inside," he said referencing the three-day outdoor music festival.

Earlier, Fink had mentioned to the group the idea of perhaps treating a new building on the site as a focal point in town for routine gathering places and for events.

"The one thing we're lacking in our town is a hub," he said Dec. 8. "We might want to take this opportunity and make it

our town center.”

Fink admitted that now’s the time for those who are passionate about recreation to dream big with a “pie in the sky” attitude and through time what’s been deemed for years in government circles as “the scoping process” will weed out what’s secondary and elevate what’s primary.

Ideas abound in respect to what to build and what to consider when the infrastructure goes into place.

They include: a multi-sport complex, indoor soccer facility, bouldering wall, zero-energy pool, therapy tub, spa, arts gallery, kitchen, café, gymnastic center, racquetball and badminton courts as well as a place for the U.S. Ski Team and promising Olympians to train.

The mood of those who showed up resembled kids at Christmas.



Retaining a swimming pool is a priority with many people. Photo/LTN file

City Assistant Public Works Director Jim Marino and

councilmembers Wendy David and Austin Sass listened in as the attendees spanning three generations from a junior in high school to seniors seeking a hang out in their autumn years shared their goals.

Teenager Jordan Deas, who sat in the front row, urged the city to make a place for youth.

"Kids are looking for activities," he said.

Local arts guru Robert Schimmel suggested the theme expand into the arts as a "connected component" and use display areas to promote local artists.

"I don't know if we want a facility to be all things to all people, but the arts can be a real add-on as practically everything can be done with an eye to art," he said.

"We need this facility so bad for so many reasons," South Lake Tahoe Ice Arena operator Van Olson said.

Olson added he's enjoyed success at the rink since he's had "to run it as a business." He advised the city to do all it can to woo the locals who volunteer and make up team sports.

Marino also reminded the group of locals to keep in mind what keeps the city's facilities going.

"As much as we want a facility for us, we want to build a facility to drive tourism," he said.

The thought shared by Fink: "If it's a great place to live, it's a great place to visit."

Think sales tax and transient occupancy tax dollars.

A few ideas ranging from grants and taxes to a rich donor and a public-private partnership floated around informally about how to pay for such a venture, but nothing concrete. The council has had no formal discussions about the matter. The

new South Tahoe Middle School track was built under a nonprofit financial structure.

Marino cautioned that while dreaming big is a noble goal, the reality is the group of ambitious endorphin seekers may have just spent \$25 million with shared ideas in one meeting alone.

“If we make it so big, we’ll never build it. We might have to temper it,” he said.

The city staffer reiterated what he heard that a “pool component is huge” from many who came out to share their thoughts.

Marino was deadpan serious when he talked about how motivated he and his fellow public works staffers are to making things happen because the city’s recreation “train is rolling right now.” He explained that after years of working on storm drains they’re ready to dive into something above ground and prominent that the citizenry is likely to support.

“If we want to see a new recreation center on this site, we need to show up at meetings,” he said, as if speaking to those who weren’t there. “We’re tired of working long and hard on projects that get shelved.”

And don’t forget maintenance. For example, the city buys about 13,000 rolls of toilet paper just for Lakeview Commons.

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# North Shore marrying adventuring and beer drinking

By AC Shilton, Outside

After a long bike ride, it's natural that your mind shifts into beer mode—time to relax! In anticipation of that post-workout appetite, one of Lake Tahoe's tourism bureaus has commissioned an interactive map to help steer you from the trails to the nearest watering holes.

It's called the Ale Trail, and it's essentially a beer-drinking outdoorsman's dream itinerary planner: Pick an activity—hiking, road and mountain biking, and paddling are all included—choose a trail, and the Ale Trail Map will ensure there's a frosty pint somewhere near the finish.

To be clear, no new trails in North Lake Tahoe were blazed during the creation of the Ale Trail; it's simply an organization of trails that abut great bars, breweries, alehouses, and taverns. The map does, however, highlight some of Tahoe's lesser-known trails.

If you check out the map, you'll notice that most routes suggest an outdoor activity and then a single bar as a destination.

**Read the whole story**

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# **Foot of snow at lake level likely Thursday**



Wind churns up dust in the Washoe Valley on Dec. 9 in advance of a winter storm. Photo Copyright 2015 Carolyn E. Wright

Get the shovels ready and the snowblowers filled with gas, because 7 to 14 inches of snow is forecast at lake level on Thursday, with those numbers increasing to between 12 and 18 inches on the western side of the basin. One to 3 feet are expected at elevations above 7,000 feet.

It will start with rain and then change to snow.

And then it's not over. Another storm is coming Sunday.

"Two strong waves like this we have not seen in quite a while. It should be a good base builder," Zach Tolby, meteorologist with the National Weather Service in Reno told *Lake Tahoe News*.

The impending storm has forced the California Tahoe Conservancy to reschedule Thursday's open house regarding the Greenway Bike Trial to Jan. 7 from 6-8pm at Lake Tahoe Community College.

Wind will be a big component of the storm as it comes in tonight. Dirt was swirling in the Washoe Valley on Wednesday

afternoon. That area, including Reno, is still under a wind advisory. The strongest winds will be overnight.

The Weather Service has issued a winter storm warning for the basin for the 24-hour period starting 4am Dec. 10.

*– Lake Tahoe News staff report*

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## **Eldorado Forest closes roads for winter season**

Eldorado National Forest as of today has implemented the the annual seasonal closure of dirt roads.

Rainfall, soil moisture, road and trail conditions, and weather forecasts are factors that triggered a seasonal closure earlier than Jan. 1. The roads will remain closed until at least April 1.

The seasonal closure is designed to protect roadbeds and watersheds from damage and to protect water quality. A minimum three month closure period from Jan. 1 through March 30 was designated for the core part of the winter in the Eldorado National Forest Travel Management Plan.

Roads subject to seasonal closure are identified on a free map and available at all Eldorado National Forest offices and **online**.

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# California drafts plan for gray wolves

By Scott Smith, AP

Gray wolves could be stripped of state endangered species protections once at least 50 of the animals are roaming in California, wildlife officials said last week.

The California Department of Fish and Wildlife released a draft plan for managing gray wolves, which were granted protections last year but whose numbers are growing. It outlines efforts to minimize livestock loss and ways to ensure there's enough prey for wolves, other predators and hunters.

Under California's protections, gray wolves can't be killed or hunted. U.S. law also protects wolves in most of the nation, except for Idaho, Montana and parts of Washington, Oregon and Utah, but there is a pending proposal to strip federal protections from most of the Lower 48 states, including California.

Once there are between 50 and 75 wolves in California, the state's proposal suggests considering whether wolves should be removed from a list of endangered animals.

Wolves were hunted to extinction in California nearly a century ago, but a lone wolf called OR-7 crossed the northern border from Oregon in 2011, marking their return. Remote cameras in Siskiyou County earlier this year captured two adults and five pups, called the Shasta Pack.

Environmentalists herald their return as an icon of California's western landscape, while ranchers fear wolf packs will kill valuable livestock.

Fifty doesn't sound like many wolves, but Northern California

doesn't have enough wild prey to support that number of predators, said Kirk Wilbur, spokesman for the California Cattlemen's Association. He fears that wolves will remain forever under the state's protection, depriving ranchers of the ability to kill them and protecting their cattle.

"We had concerns with listing them in the first place," Wilbur said.

Amaroq Weiss, a wolf advocate at the Center for Biological Diversity, said the state proposes removing protections for gray wolves just as they gain a solid foothold in California.

"We disagree with the proposal to weaken protections before wolves have truly recovered in California," she said.

However, any discussion of removing protections at this point is premature, said Jordan Traverso, a spokeswoman for the Department of Fish and Wildlife. She said it is hard to know whether wolves will flourish to that degree in California.

"It's impossible to speculate what Mother Nature would do," Traverso said. "We have no idea."

Officials will take public comment on the plan through mid-February before it is adopted. Comments will also be accepted via e-mail at [atwolfplan@wildlife.ca.gov](mailto:atwolfplan@wildlife.ca.gov).

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## **Rail jam competition returns to Sushi Pier**

The fifth annual Shred for Sushi Rail Jam is Dec. 15.

This free event hosted by OnCourse Events in the Sushi Pier

parking lot (177 Lake Tahoe Blvd., Stateline) will feature a rail jam competition, disc jockeys, food and drink specials, photobooth, and other booths.

The rail jam competition is open to skiers and riders of all ages with a \$20 competitor fee.

Registration begins at 5:30pm with a 50-competitor cap. Competition starts at 7pm.

Proceeds from the rail jam, raffle, and venue proceeds will benefit the Boys and Girls Club of Lake Tahoe.

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## **Wet storm expected to blow into Tahoe basin**

A wet storm is headed for Lake Tahoe this week.

OpenSnow is saying it may be the biggest storm since March 2012.

The National Weather Service in Reno is forecasting the winds to arrive Wednesday – 40-65 mph, while ridgetops could see 100 mph gusts.

“Heavy, wet Sierra cement is likely, with 1 to 3 feet of snow possible above 7,000 feet and 5 to 10 inches down to Lake Tahoe level,” NWS said in describing Thursday’s forecast.

The wet windy weather is expected to stay around through the weekend.

Highs will be in the high 30s and low 40s.

# Jitloff scores points in GS at Beaver Creek

By USSA

BEAVER CREEK, Colo. – It was a heartbreaker for the American fans at Beaver Creek on Sunday, as expected winner Ted Ligety (Park City) fell on his first run and did not finish. However, Tim Jitloff (Reno) took a solid top-15 finish in 14th place and David Chodounsky (Crested Butte, Colo.) skied from bib 51 to 16th place.

In a first run that had its fair share of crashes, Ligety—who had won the Beaver Creek GS five times in the previous five years—was skiing strong, leading at each interval until he uncharacteristically pinched off the line over Harrier Jump, booted out and slid out on his side, crashing through a gate and ending his day prematurely.

With Ligety and French aces Alexis Pinturault and Thomas Fanara out in the first run, it left room for Austrian Marcel Hirscher to redeem his World Championships GS second place to Ligety's gold at the same venue.

Hirscher crossed the line 0.98 seconds ahead of Frenchman Victor Muffat-Jeandet, with Norwegian wunderkind Henrik Kristoffersen rounding out the podium in third, 1.31 seconds behind.

It was the 15th time Hirscher stood atop a World Cup GS podium, surpassing Herman Maier and Benjamin Raich for the all-time GS win record for Austrian men. Hirscher now sits one victory shy of tying Annemarie Moser-Proell's all-time Austrian record of 16 career GS wins.

"It's nice to always be in the points, but I'm looking for a little more than 14th place," Jitloff admitted. "I skied really good today, solid first run. I think I just could have cleaned it up a little on that first run. In the second run I felt like I skied really well ... I was pushing it toward the bottom, had a mistake there on the final pitch. The snow was super, super aggressive. I'm a guy that likes to push hard on the ski, so that's not necessarily my forte. I'll do better at places like Alta Badia where it's a little bit icy."

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## Vonn marks 70th World Cup win

By USSA

LAKE LOUISE, Alberta – Lindsey Vonn (Vail) took her 70th World Cup victory and third Lake Louise sweep on Sunday with a 1.32 second win over Austria's Tamara Tippler.

The third World Cup win of the weekend for Lindsey Vonn didn't matter quite as much to the speed queen as rounding off her career victory tally to a solid 70.

"My stepmom wrote me yesterday saying, 'Sixty-nine is great, but I like round numbers so could you please just make it to 70?' Last year I had 60 here, so it's kind of nice," said Vonn. "Seventy is a pretty big number."

Vonn hushed any doubters who wondered if she could put an end

to Swiss skier Lara Gut's super G streak at Lake Louise, which had spanned the past two seasons, but there were more than a few bets on the line before she even pushed out of the starting gate.

"It was a big deal. I feel like there were some people that doubted whether I could win today, especially because Lara had won the last couple races here in super G. Also my technician made some bets with people, so I felt a little bit like I had to come through. It was my physio Lindsay's last day with me traveling on the road, so I kind of wanted to end with a bang," said Vonn.

With her smoothest of three runs all weekend, Vonn unseated race leader and practical unknown Tippler. Starting third, Tippler had capitalized on an early run down a pretty clean track and held a somewhat miraculous lead over the field, considering that her previous best super G finish was 21st in the 2014 Val d'Isere race and her career best had come yesterday with 16th in the downhill. Only Vonn was able to overtake the 39th-ranked super G skier on the day.

For all the spectacle of Vonn's trifecta, Tippler's teammate Conny Huetter also leaves Lake Louise with three podium results herself after finishing third in the super G. Before coming to Canada this year, Huetter had only stood on a World Cup podium once in her career.

Gut was looking for her third consecutive super G victory at the venue, but her run – 1.77 seconds off Vonn's winning pace – proved only good enough for seventh place. She secured three top-10 results over the weekend but not a single top-five finish, and Vonn leapfrogged over both her and Mikaela Shiffrin (Eagle-Vail, Colo.) to take the lead in the overall.

In the finish area, Gut shook her head and said through a chuckle, "Europe. I have to go back to Europe," indicating that she is looking forward to stronger results on more

familiar snow surfaces.

Although Shiffrin yielded her overall lead to Vonn, she emerged from the day with a solid performance in the debut World Cup speed race of her career. From bib 32, she made technical turns down the top of the course and crossed the finish line in a respectable 15th place.

Two other U.S. Ski Team athletes finished in the points – Laureenne Ross (Bend, Ore.) was 12th, and Stacey Cook (Mammoth Mountain) 17th.