Prescribed fires to be ignited on South Shore

Tahoe Douglas Fire Protection District and U.S. Forest Service Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit personnel will conduct prescribed fire operations in numerous locations around the Lake Tahoe Basin beginning today.

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

To receive prescribed fire notifications, send an email to pa_ltbmu@fs.fed.us.

Project information:

- District 21 pile burns, multiple units off Tramway and South Benjamin, 20 acres of hand piles.
- Timberland ULM, Elizabeth Drive north of Tahoma, 26.02 acres of hand piles.
- Echo View, Sawmill Pond, 1.32 acres of hand piles.
- Angora Creek near Lake Tahoe Boulevard, 17.84 acres of hand piles. Bakersfield ULM
- Bakersfield Street near Lake Baron, 3.72 acres of hand piles.
- Waverly Drive off of Elks Club Road, 3.12 acres of hand piles.
- Genoa Peak Road, 25 acres of hand piles and underburn.

Training cuts down on ski injuries

By Kyle Swanson

Ski season is around the corner. As an orthopedic surgeon, I see many skiing and snowboarding related injuries. Consider the following tips to avoid preventable injuries and actively prepare for the season.

Equipment assessment

Start with an equipment check. For skiers, one major cause of knee injuries is improper binding settings. If the binding is too tight, the boot does not disengage from the ski and can torque the knee. Have a professional who understands different bindings adjust the setting. Settings are based on each skier's level, height and weight, and type of skiing.



Kyle Swanson

Tune the skis or snowboard. Sharpen the edges and wax the bottoms for appropriate snow conditions.

Wear protective equipment. Inspect the helmet for cracks or defects that make the helmet ineffective in preventing head injuries and, if necessary, replace it. Wrist guards for snowboarders decrease wrist injuries and should be considered, especially for beginners. Also, wear weather appropriate clothing for the mountain's conditions.

Strengthening exercises

Both skiing and snowboarding require strength and endurance. The muscles in the legs, hips, and core take the most impact. Strengthen these areas six to eight weeks before the season starts to decrease injuries later. Skiers and snowboarders at any level should try these simple exercises.

Band walks. Target the gluteus medius, the stablizing muscle on the side of the bum between the hip and top of the pelvis. Allow 15 feet of space. Wrap a mini-band, a workout rubber band, around the ankles. Stay low in a squat and take a large sideway step followed by a half step with the other foot. Repeat 20 sideway steps to the left for 15 feet then repeat to the right. Complete two sets in each direction.

Weighted Single Leg Box Squats. This comprehensive exercise uses the glutes, quads, hamstrings, calves, and core. Squat on one leg, as the other extends out, to a box or chair. Throughout, keep the knee facing forward, the chest out, and the chin up. Focus on pushing through the heel. Start with two sets of 10 repetitions on each leg.

Lateral Box Jumps. Work on balance and explosiveness. Start on one side of a stable box and jump up to the box and then jump down to the other side. Repeat jumping back to the other side. Go fast and maximize the number of repetitions in thirty seconds. Start with three sets for 30 seconds each.

Wall Sits. Help the quads, glutes and core. Rest back against a wall and flex knees about 60 degrees. Tighten the abdominal muscles and quads. Goal is to hold position for 60 seconds. Start with three sets of 60 seconds each.

Perform these exercises at least two times a week for six weeks. Incorporate them into a regular workout routine. Let’s hope for snow and prepare now for an injury-free ski season.

Kyle Swanson is an orthopedic surgeon with Tahoe Orthopedics &

Sports Medicine.

USFS sites in Tahoe basin close for season

The U.S. Forest Service Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit started closing recreational facilities around the basin this week.

Seasonal closures apply to many recreation sites including beaches, campgrounds, and picnic areas, which traditionally close in mid-October. Forest roads close around mid-November for soil protection and public safety. For specific forest road closing dates, consult the Motor Vehicle Use Map.

The following sites are closed: Nevada Beach, Fallen Leaf, Bayview, Meeks Bay, and Kaspian campgrounds, and Nevada, Pope, Baldwin, Meeks Bay, William Kent, and Kaspian beaches. Camp Richardson and Zephyr Cove resorts remain open year-round.

The Taylor Creek Visitor Center is open weekends through the end of October. The Tallac Historic Site closed at the end of September.

Weather Channel: Warm winter

in Calif.-Nev.

By Weather Channel

The Weather Channel has issued its winter forecast for 2014-2015, and it looks a bit different from last winter.

Compared to 2013-14, which was one of the coldest winters in recent memory in the Upper Midwest, this winter the chill looks to be more focused on the East Coast and Gulf Coast, according to the winter forecast prepared by WSI, which along with The Weather Channel is part of The Weather Company.

The forecast, which looks ahead to temperatures from Dec. 1, 2014, through Feb. 28, 2015, is based on an analysis of several large-scale factors in the land-ocean-atmosphere system.

One factor is, as you might expect, the presence or absence of El Nino – an area of warmer-than-average water in the eastern Pacific Ocean near the equator.

While El Nino has not developed yet, WSI forecasters expect a weak to moderate El Nino to emerge over the winter months and potentially persist into the spring.

Read the whole story

USFS planning fires throughout basin

The U.S. Forest Service Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit will begin the fall/winter prescribed fire program this week.

Operations may take place today on various urban lots around the Lake Tahoe Basin including Elizabeth Drive on the West Shore, Christmas Valley, Angora Creek, Elks Club Drive, Echo View Estates, and Bakersfield Avenue on the South Shore.

The Forest Service tries to give as much advance notice as possible before burning, but some operations may be conducted on short notice.

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

Before prescribed fire operations are conducted, Forest Service staff post road signs around areas affected by prescribed fire, send email notifications and update the local fire information line at 530.543.2600, ext. 6. To receive prescribed fire notifications, send an email to pa_ltbmu@fs.fed.us.

Community ski areas making a comeback

By Derek Taylor, GrindTV

Glen Plake, the famous South Lake Tahoe mohawked skier and sage of all things snow, once said that most skiing takes places at the end of a dirt road. He may have had Nevada's Elko Snobowl in mind.

The sign for this taxpayer-supported ski area is a rock on the ground painted with white paint and surrounded by spent shotgun shells. It has one chairlift, with chairs sponsored by

local residents and businesses, and just a few hundred vertical feet. It’s not easy to find, tucked several miles off the wrong side of the lonely stretch of highway connecting two of America’s great ski centers: Lake Tahoe and Salt Lake City.

For the past few decades there has been a stigma attached to small, community ski hills like Snobowl. They’re chastised by core skiers as “not very good,” and presented as places to be avoided if you value your time on snow. But to the communities they serve, they are indispensable.

“This area is mostly miners, and they want something for their families to do,” Roche Bush (pronounced Rocky, and yes, that’s his real name), manager of the Elko Snobowl, told me during my visit in 2013. “Skiing is good, clean, outdoor fun.”

For the ski and snowboard industry as a whole, community ski hills are even more important – if only the industry would just realize it.

“With the weekend average window ticket now over $93, and with baby boomers exiting faster than Gen X and Gen Y are entering skiing, the industry is cannibalizing itself,” says Jamie Schectman, chief executive of the Mountain Riders Alliance, an organization that aims to benefit small, independent ski areas. “Now more than ever, these smaller, feeder-breeder ski areas are important to the ecosystem.”

Read the whole story

1-day free chipping service

in South Lake Tahoe

Lake Valley Fire Protection District, South Lake Tahoe Fire Department and the California Conservation Corps are teaming up to help city residents with defensible space and slash removal.

On Oct. 18, members of the CCC are volunteering their time to provide free chipping to residents in South Lake Tahoe.

In order to participate in the chipping service, homeowners must:

- Place slash and brush piles adjacent to a driveway or street so the chipper crew can readily have access.
- Place piles in an area where equipment can easily turn around (chippers are on trailers).
- Place the cut ends of branches and trees facing toward the driveway or road.
- The chipper can only handle material up to 6 inches in diameter.
- Piles must be free of trash, including rocks, dirt, wires and lumber. They must also be free of pine needles, pine cones, leaves or shrubs.

After the pile has been placed, call 530.577.2447 and leave your name, address and phone number to get on the list. State that you are in the city limits for the Oct. 18 chipping day.

Drought a concern for aspens



Aspens along Armstrong Pass. Photos/Kathryn Reed

By Daniel R. Cluck

Concern for the health of California's quaking aspen (Populus tremuloides) habitat has increased in recent years due to heavy wild ungulate and domestic livestock browsing, competition from conifers and other vegetation in the absence of fire, the impacts of drought and the potential negative impacts of climate change.

In response, land managers are taking inventory of California's aspen resources and identifying the magnitude of these threats. These inventories have thus far included assessments of aspen regeneration, conifer encroachment and animal browsing as indicators of aspen health. Restoration treatments have also been implemented to rejuvenate and protect individual aspen stands. These include removal of competing conifers,
fencing, prescribed burning and/or a combination of treatments.



Spotted aspen leaves are the norm this year.

Recent California aspen studies have examined regeneration response to conifer removal treatments (Jones et al. 2005, Shepperd et al. 2006), simulated browsing (Jones et al. 2009), and white fir competition (Pierce and Taylor 2010). To date, no inventories or studies in California have assessed the impacts of native insects and diseases to aspen health or their responses to various restoration treatments.

Daniel R. Cluck is a forest entomologist with the U.S. Forest Service. Here is a link to the full report.



With a change in weather coming this week, autumn colors may quickly fade.

LTCC soccer teams play at home this week

Lake Tahoe Community College’s men’s and women’s soccer teams return home this week.

More than 300 people watched the Coyotes in the inaugural doubleheader on Oct. 3.

All the action takes place on the Community Playfield at 1300 Al Tahoe Blvd., South Lake Tahoe. This is next to the college's physical ed building.

The remaining home games are:

- Oct. 14 vs. Butte. Men play at 2pm, women at 4pm.
- Oct. 17 vs. Feather River. Women play at 2pm, men at 4pm.
- Oct. 21 vs. Shasta. Men play at 2pm, women at 4pm.

Both teams are still in contention to make it to the playoffs in the Golden Valley Conference.

Freakin' Fun Run embraces Halloween

South Lake Tahoe and the Tahoe Tri Club are partnering to provide a series of three fun runs this fall.

The first one is Oct. 25 – Tahoe's Freakin' Fun Run.

It will be at the Community Playfields located at 1300 Al Tahoe Blvd. It begin at 10am. Participants are encouraged to dress in Halloween attire.

Prizes will be given for best costume and most ridiculous costume being awarded.

For more information and to register, go online.

There will also be a Turkey Trot and Jingle Jog.