Boat inspectors implement winter rules

Starting Oct. 1 boat inspections at Lake Tahoe will move to select launch ramps and winter hours will begin.

Tahoe RCD inspectors will be stationed at the Cave Rock boat launch from 6am-4pm seven days a week, weather permitting. No inspector will be stationed at Lake Forest boat launch from now through Jan. 2 as work is done on the ramp.

Call the hotline (888.824.6267) for availability of alternative inspection options.

All boats without an intact Tahoe wire seal are required to get an inspection during daylight hours. Decontaminations are available by appointment only for watercraft that are not clean, drain and dry. Decontamination fees apply. Boats with intact inspection seals are permitted to launch at all open facilities including: Obexer's Boat Company, Ski Beach (IVGID), Sierra Boat Company, Tahoe City Marina, Sunnyside Marina, Homewood Marina, North Tahoe Marina, Meek's Bay Marina, Lakeside Marina and Tahoe Keys Marina, but no inspections or decontaminations are available at these locations.

Public gets glimpse of S. Tahoe recreation plan

By Jessie Marchesseau

About 30 people gathered at the South Lake Tahoe Recreation

Center on Sept. 25 for a public open house to review the recently released draft of South Lake Tahoe's first Parks, Trails and Recreation Master Plan.

The plan, which has been in the works for more than a year, is collaboration between El Dorado County and South Lake Tahoe. During this time coordinators have gathered more than 1,200 surveys and questionnaires from residents indicating what they believe should be the community's park and recreation priorities.

The draft is available to view on the city's website, but this was the first public presentation of it.



Consultant Cindy Mendoza on Sept. 25 presents the recreation plan highlights. Photo/Jessie Marchesseau

At a long table on one side of the gymnasium sat four of the six core project team members: Norma Santiago, Angela Swanson, Vickie Sanders and Lauren Thomaselli, and five of the 11 master plan advisory committee members: Andrew Strain, Steve Yonker, Scott Valentine, Ty Polastri and Garrett Villanueva.

Thomaselli, Swanson, Strain, Polastri and Santiago each took a few minutes to speak to attendees about the plan, the process and their personal visions before handing the podium over to Cindy Mendoza, a project manager with planning and design firm MIG.

Mendoza has been helping the committee and team members develop the overall plan. She broke down some of the survey data for attendees revealing, for example, how 94 percent of residents agreed that trails, pathways and mobility were the most important areas needing improvement. One aspect she found surprising, however, was that people indicated they wanted these bike trails and paths not so much for recreation purposes, but for getting where they needed to go such as work and the grocery store.

Mendoza, in conjunction with the project team and advisory committee took these survey results and combined them with economic data, environmental concerns and recreation opportunities to create this master plan vision statement:

> *We envision an accessible, interconnected, and sustainable system of diverse, year-round recreation opportunities for residents and visitors. Our world-class parks, facilities, trails, and programs inspire and engage recreation enthusiasts, shape our community, connect us to our natural environment and support our shared future in the South Shore.*

The master plan breaks down projects into three main categories: quick wins, short-term projects, and long-term initiatives. Long-term initiatives are the lowest on the priority list and/or the larger, more time-consuming projects; these have a six- to 10-year time line. Short-term projects will have a two- to five-year timeframe, and quick wins are projects that can be done within the next year, offering instant gratification and a feeling of getting the ball rolling.

“We do feel like quick wins are demonstrating action,” Thomaselli said.

Some of these projects which can already be seen around town are the improvements to the Al Tahoe sports fields which were

completed this summer and the extensive resurfacing of city bike trails. Dirt is also piling up at the Bijou bike park which will undergo construction next spring.

Listed as short-term priorities are a number of projects including restoration of Regan Beach, improvements to Bijou Golf Course and implementing water efficiency programs.

Making the long-term list is the renovation of the recreation and swim complex, an outdoor amphitheater or events venue, and a new park for county residents among other things.

Even though the plan's vision statement calls for "year-round recreation opportunities," any mention of winter activities or improvements was noticeably missing from the evening's presentation. When asked about this oversight, Polastri said the city is going to try plowing the bike paths this winter. Beyond that, Mendoza said the focus would be more on providing people with indoor activities during the winter such as using the recreation and swim complex.

During open discussion, attendees brought up several other seemingly overlooked recreation concerns such as the Bijou skate park, fishing opportunities, rock climbing access, softball fields and sledding hills. Mendoza explained that most of these items did not show up as priorities in the public surveys, but encouraged participants to submit their concerns on questionnaire sheets available at the door.

The planners are adamant that the South Lake Tahoe of the past which had a tendency to do a lot of planning but never carry through on those plans is no more.

"We are great at planning," Santiago said, "but now we have a group of committed people that are good at implementation."

The projects already under way or completed appear to be a step in the right direction. However, financial funding for most of the short- and long-term projects is still unaccounted

for, though Thomaselli said she is confident if the plans are in place, the funding will come through.

The public has until Oct. 10 to submit comments and opinions on the master plan draft. The plan is online.

Olympic committee chief demands ‘sustainable’ Games

By Peter Hutchison, AFP

INCHEON, South Korea – Olympic boss Thomas Bach said future Games hosts would have to prove their “sustainability” and that there would be a shake-up of the bidding criteria.

The International Olympic Committee (IOC) president made the comments last weekend to Olympic Council of Asia delegates in Incheon, which has gone into debt to host the ongoing Asian Games.

The German official said the IOC has to “act now” to preserve its “relevance”, suggesting cities who pitch for international sports events need to think about the long-term impact.

“There is broad agreement that we need changes in the bidding and candidature procedure for the Olympic Games,” Bach told the OCA general assembly.

Read the whole story

Squaw to host World Cup event this season

Squaw Valley will host an Audi FIS Skicross World Cup and FIS Snowboard World Cup in the spring.

This will be the first time the International Ski Federation has brought a World Cup event to Squaw Valley since the FIS Alpine World Cup in 1969. The event will feature the top global stars in the sport, including local Olympian and seven-time X Games champion Nate Holland. Also expected to compete are Olympic SBX champion Seth Wescott, Olympic SBX medalists Alex Deibold and Lindsey Jacobellis, and World Cup skicross winner John Teller..

Cross racing pits athletes against each other to race head-to-had down a course of jumps, bumps and berms. Snowboardcross made its Olympic debut in 2006, with skicross in 2010.

The Tahoe event is March 4-8.

The event will be broadcast on NBC and NBCSN.

Judge: Alta can keep snowboarders out

By Tom Harvey, Salt Lake Tribune

A federal judge on Tuesday dismissed snowboarders' claims that Alta Ski Resort banned them because of stereotypes that they are "undesirable people with obnoxious habits and characteristics."

Instead, U.S. District Judge Dee Benson said there are rational reasons for Alta to ban snowboarding, one of only three resorts to do so in the United States.

Benson wrote in a 30-page opinion that federal court was not the right arena for the snowboarders to argue they should be allowed on the Utah resort's famed runs such as Baldy Chutes.

"There are many forums plaintiffs can resort to in an attempt to accomplish their goal of snowboarding down the Baldy Chutes at Alta," Benson wrote in his decision. "Seeking an injunction from this court is not one of them."

The boarders had sued Alta and the U.S. Forest Service in January, arguing they were being irrationally discriminated against and deserved protection under the 14th Amendment to the Constitution, which historically has been used on cases involving discrimination based on race, gender and sexual orientation.

Read the whole story

Nike pulls out of snow sports program

By Colin Bane, XGames

Nike confirmed Thursday that it is getting out of the snowboarding and freeskiing industry, just as its 2014-15 line of boots and outerwear is arriving in stores.

"Nike SB will focus its innovation, design and marketing resources on its biggest brand driver and growth opportunity, skateboarding," Nike spokeswoman Jenna Golden told XGames.com.

“The current Holiday ’14 Nike Snowboarding collection will be the final at retail.”

Rumors about the move had been circulating since the company’s fiscal year 2014 results statement in June, when Nike reported growth in every key area except its action sports division, and began escalating last week.

“It’s been a pretty open secret,” said Steve Ruff, vice president of the Action Sports and Olympics division at Wasserman Media Group, whose clients include Nike athletes like Olympic Snowboard Slopestyle gold medalist Sage Kotsenburg. “They’re going to honor and pay out everyone’s contracts that are in place. Sage is already getting some interest from other sponsors, and we’re certainly going to be taking some of those conversations.”

Read the whole story

Mammoth buys 2 SoCal ski resorts

By Hugo Martin, Los Angeles Times

The operators of the Mammoth Mountain ski resort, one of the nation’s most popular snow destinations, have signed a $38-million deal to acquire the Bear Mountain and Snow Summit resorts near Big Bear Lake in the San Bernardino Mountains.

The move, which comes in the midst of a historic drought, puts Mammoth Mountain in control of more than 4,000 acres of skiable land in California, visited by about 2 million skiers and snowboarders a year.

“My father used to say in business you want to do the opposite of what everyone else is doing,” said Rusty Gregory, chief executive of Mammoth Mountain. “This does look like a questionable time to buy a ski resort operation.”

Still, the slopes may not be the main focus of the deal. Mammoth Mountain’s biggest investors are resort developers who already have plans to build on the land around the newly acquired Southern California ski resorts. Bear Mountain and Snow Summit, about 100 miles east of Los Angeles, are operated by the Snow Summit Ski Corp.

Read the whole story

Skiers accustomed to Mother Nature’s cycles

By Skiing

While on a ski tour with a group of friends late last spring, I asked one of the old-timers, who has skied in the Sierra since 1967, if he’d ever seen a pair of consecutive below-average seasons stretch into a third year as the winter of 2013-14 had done. Without hesitation he replied, “Of course. This is California.”

One look at the Central Sierra Snow Laboratory’s historical snowpack and snowfall graph, which shows cumulative snowfall data from 1879 to the present, confirms his experience. The lines on the graph rise and fall as precipitously as the peaks and valleys of the mighty Sierra. But that’s part of the reason why skiers like him stick around. Each year can be different. Sure, some are better than others, but even the bad

ones are only as bad as you let them be.

In the mid-1800s, the California Gold Rush drew people hoping to strike it rich and helped populate this great state. While the California ski industry isn't exactly a gold rush, the frozen precipitation that falls from the sky each winter is nearly as precious, and not only because of the winter recreation opportunities it creates. Nearly one-third of the state's water supply is contained in the snowpack that accumulates along the spine of the Sierra. Spring runoff feeds numerous watersheds, countless reservoirs, the cities on the coast, and thousands of miles of farmland in the Sacramento and San Joaquin valleys of Central California.

Much like the Gold Rush – and modern-day equivalents like the real estate and dot-com bubbles – California's snowpack has been booming and busting for as long as records have been kept. Skiers of the Golden State are a hardy bunch who've learned to play the hand they're dealt. And it can go both ways. From Tahoe to Mammoth, resorts of the Sierra logged as much as 800 inches of snow during the winter immediately preceding the current rough patch. As deep as it seemed to be, the 2010–11 season of endless powder days doesn't even crack the top five winters on record. California can ski even better.

While it's certainly added to the climate-change dialogue, the recent demoralizing stretch has been more than just bad for the soul. Tough winters and tougher press have had real impacts on the region. According to the National Ski Areas Association, the Pacific Southwest region, which includes California, Nevada, and Arizona, has seen skier visit numbers plummet.

Last winter's late start led to employee layoffs and furloughs throughout the Tahoe region. Ski shops slashed prices shortly after New Year's to cut losses. In one of the more extreme cases, Porters Sports, a well-known ski shop with locations in

North Tahoe and Truckee, closed its doors for good last February.

“There were a couple of financial assumptions that didn’t pan out that were the real source of the demise of Porters,” says John Chapman, former co-owner of Porters. “But the past three abysmal seasons only nailed the coffin shut.”

Fortunately for many Tahoe-area businesses, summer tourism has been robust enough to keep the ink black regardless of the season’s snow totals.

Unlike many winter destinations, though, when California is dominated by high pressure, the weather is typically agreeable – sunny and 50 degrees – with corn and soft groomer skiing for days on manicured manmade snow blown by some of the world’s most advanced snowmaking systems. Even when battling thin cover, the adventurous can find backcountry turns on wind deposits in the high peaks.

(Just be sure to bring your rock skis.)

Read the whole story

Volunteers needed for Forest Stewardship Day

The League to Save Lake Tahoe needs volunteers to help stabilize stream banks, pull invasive plants and restore trails during the 17th annual Tahoe Forest Stewardship Day on Sept. 27 at Tahoe Paradise Park in Meyers.

The park lies along the Upper Truckee River, Lake Tahoe's largest tributary. This is the League's third year hosting the event at this location.

Volunteers should wear comfortable clothes that can get dirty, sturdy shoes, and sunscreen, and bring a reusable water bottle. The League will provide lunch, refreshments, gloves and equipment.

Work will be from 9am-2pm. Tahoe Paradise Park is at the end of East San Bernardino Avenue in Meyers.

To RSVP, email events@keeptahoeblue.org or call 530.541.5388.

Mt. Shasta mudslide blamed on drought, melting glacier

By Veronica Rocha, Los Angeles Times

California's prolonged drought is believed to have caused a massive mudslide on Mt. Shasta over the weekend after meltwater from a glacier sent torrents of debris and mud down the mountain, officials said.

Experts believe glacial melting, accelerated by the drought, may have released "pockets of water" that destabilized massive ice blocks and causing the debris flow Saturday afternoon in Shasta-Trinity National Forest, officials said.

No injuries were reported, and there was no immediate estimate for how much material was caught up in the debris flow, which occurred in Mud Creek Canyon on the southeast side of the mountain, according to the U.S. Forest Service.

Read the whole story