California becoming more bike friendly

By Tony Bizjak, Sacramento Bee

California is now the ninth “friendliest” biking state in the country, jumping up from 19th place last year, according to the latest rankings by the League of American Bicyclists.

For the seventh year in a row, Washington is ranked first nationally in the league’s Bicycle Friendly States analysis.

California leaped into the top 10 mainly because the state committed to increasing bike funding 30 percent last year after the federal government cut back on bike and pedestrian funding. The league also cited the state’s new law requiring drivers to give cyclists 3 feet of space when passing on the street.

Read the whole story

Signal keeps hands on the bike

By Judi Dash, Los Angeles Times

These turn signals should help improve bike safety

The LED signals on the bike are very visible to motorists behind you.

Motor vehicles come with bright rear turn signals, but cyclists must rely on arm signals, which requires one-handed

steering. Not safe.

Help has arrived from the engineers at Buztronics, thanks to an easily installed Signal Pod Wireless LED Bike Turn Signal system. A big, wide flashing signaling unit (called the pod) mounts to the bicycle's rear seat post, behind the rider. A three-button wireless remote-control unit attaches to either side of the handlebars for easy access.

Read the whole story

USFS taking comments on Incline Lake dam removal

U.S. Forest Service would like to remove the Incline Lake dam in a year.

Before it can do so, comments must be taken on the proposal.

The Forest Service purchased the 777-acre parcel off Mount Rose Highway in July 2008 for its recreational, scenic and natural resource values. During the acquisition process it was determined that the Incline Lake dam and spillway do not meet federal, state or local standards for a high-hazard dam. Incline Lake was subsequently drained.

The Forest Service is proposing to remove the dam and spillway and rehab the area to complement what exists. The agency proposes converting the minor dam to a low-water crossing.

As a result of initial public scoping, the Forest Service also analyzed reconstructing the dam in its current location and configuration. It was determined this is not a viable option.

Funding for the project comes from the Southern Nevada Public Land Management Act. Once the Forest Service reaches a decision on the future of the dam, it will begin planning for the remainder of the site.

Comments are due June 6.

More info is online or call Matt Dickinson 530.543.2679 or Anjanette Hoefer 530.543.2822.

Boat inspection stations opening at Lake Tahoe

Roadside stations for inspections and decontamination of motorized boats and watercraft are opening in Lake Tahoe.

Locations, hours of operation and opening dates are:

Now open –

8:30am-5:30pm, seven days a week

Meyers: at the junction of highways 50 and 89

Spooner Summit: at the junction of highways 50 and 28

Alpine Meadows: Highway 89, off Alpine Meadows Road north of Tahoe City

Opening May 22 –

8:30am-5:30pm, Thursday-Sunday

Northstar: Highway 267, at Northstar Drive south of Truckee

All motorized boats and watercraft require inspection for

aquatic invasive species prior to launching into Lake Tahoe. Invasive species, such as Quagga mussels, New Zealand mudsnails or hydrilla, are known to multiply quickly and colonize underwater surfaces, including docks and piers, water supply and filtration systems, buoys, moored boats and even the beautiful rocky shoreline.

For more info, call 888.824.6267.

Snapshot Day to test Tahoe's water quality

The 14th annual Snapshot Day is May 17 from 9am-noon.

Snapshot Day is a citizen-based environmental effort designed to take a "snapshot" at one moment in time of the water quality throughout the Lake Tahoe and Truckee River watershed. The goal is to stimulate citizen interest and participation in local water quality issues.

The information gathered by volunteers is compiled into long-term data sets on water quality conditions within the watershed. It is also intended to provide baseline data that potentially could be used in ongoing and future environmental projects, and to stimulate a large-scale collaborative educational effort.

Meet at Lake Tahoe Community College in South Lake Tahoe.

Sanctuary being sought for ‘Heavenly’ the bear

The bear that was caught at Heavenly Mountain Resort earlier this year is back at Lake Tahoe Wildlife Care.

The bear had been released into the wild, but was too acclimated to people.

He was caught in Nevada and returned to LTWC where he will be “taken care of until we can find a good permanent-care sanctuary who will give him a forever home,” according to the Bear League.

The goal now is to find a sanctuary for the bear dubbed Heavenly.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Drought drags down skier visit numbers

By Jason Blevins, Denver Post

One of the worst winters ever on the West Coast dragged total visits to the nation’s ski resorts down to the third-lowest mark in a decade.

The National Ski Areas Association’s tally of U.S. skier

visits for the 2013-14 season reached 56.2 million, a decline of 1.3 percent from last season and below the 10-year average of 57.3 million.

Blame it on the lingering drought in California, where visits to ski resorts dropped 27.8 percent. Visits to resorts in the Pacific Northwest, which shared the super-snowless start to the season, declined 27.5 percent. The West Coast's dry 2013-14 season sunk resort visits to the second-lowest mark in 36 years.

Read the whole story

Zephyr Cove tennis facility being elevated



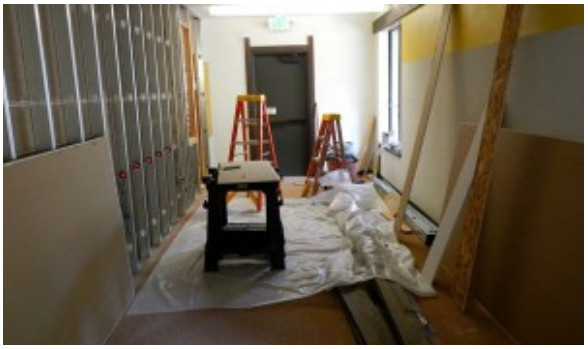
Becky Darrow returns a shot while practicing at the Zephyr Cove courts May 2. Photos/Kathryn Reed

By Kathryn Reed

Douglas County is about to redefine what public tennis courts are all about.

County commissioners at their May 15 meeting are expected to sign a contract for the Zephyr Cove Tennis Club Foundation to operate the six courts in Zephyr Cove for the next five seasons.

“Overall, it will make for a better tennis facility,” Scott Morgan, who runs the county’s recreation facilities, told *Lake Tahoe News*. “Money from the contract will go back into the courts. The tennis operator saves us money.”



A back section of the library will become the pro shop.

The county has had a tennis professional operate the facility for the last 15 years. And while a pro was one of the two to bid on the concessionaire contract, it is the foundation (which is awaiting its official nonprofit status) that the county staff is recommending be the operator. Morgan said part of the reason to do so is the foundation intends to hire a pro, plus do much more than what a pro has done in the past.

Rob Wheatley is set to return as the pro. The foundation is

expected to execute his one-year contract after the commission meeting.

“This kind of operation on public courts is unique, but successful,” Brian Fitzgerald, with county parks and rec, told *Lake Tahoe News.*

The contract calls for the foundation to pay the county $3,000 this year, $3,500 in 2015, $4,000 in 2016, $4,500 in 2017 and $5,000 in 2018.

Like in years past, the foundation will charge a seasonal use fee, or people may pay by the hour. Here is the list of court fees.

While people at times gripe about paying to play at public courts, property tax dollars don’t fund Zephyr Cove Park. It is hotel room and sales taxes that pay for it.

Improving the facility

The operation and look of the facility will be more like a traditional tennis club.

Morgan said the physical upgrades should be complete in the next two weeks.

Already gates have been put in on the right side of the courts, on the library side. This is because the library is going to have another purpose – it is going to be a clubhouse of sorts for the tennis foundation.



Spectators will be among the trees, with better views of more courts when improvements are complete.

This means players will be more apt to congregate there instead of by the shack and slab of concrete on the other side.

Paths, built with a permeable material, are being created that will lead to the courts so people aren't tromping through manzanita.

"We are adding a viewing area that will add much better viewing for play," foundation President Carolyn Wright told *Lake Tahoe News*. "It will be an elevated area where the sun is behind you."

Seating will be the next item to be installed.

"It's a beautiful facility that we are enhancing," Wright said.

Besides no longer having to sit in the dirt to watch play on the upper courts, the new area should allow spectators to see more courts at once as well as a sliver of Lake Tahoe.

The backboard on court two will be moved to the other end so it blocks the shack. The shack will remain for storage. This is also where the ice machine will go. It can't go in the pro shop area because there was not a water line that would work.

A little remodeling is taking place at the library so a pro shop will operate there. It will carry basic tennis supplies, food and beverages. The county negotiated a deal with the library folks to make all of this work.

Whenever the pro shop is open, players will have access to the library bathrooms. Hours have not been set, but will most

likely be at least from 8am-noon.

The foundation

An 11-person board is in charge of the foundation.

As with so many things, it was a simple idea that then led to the creation of the 501(c)3 and subsequently the desire to be the operators of the tennis courts. Players just wanted something other than the nasty port-a-potties, which were overused when beach-goers would stop by.

With eight USTA teams playing out of Zephyr last fall, it was getting embarrassing to have such rank bathroom facilities for locals, and especially for the teams traveling to the South Shore to play. (This reporter plays on a USTA team at Zephyr Cove.)

Wright, along with Ross Rittiman and Bob Beutenmiller, were the three main people responsible for working with the county and getting the foundation off the ground. They are all board members.

(Other board members are Grant Thompson, Bob Green, Holly Rittiman, Joyce Youngs, Neil Trebotich, Ray Fugitt, Sheryl Herschman and Hersch Herschman.)

Membership allows people to vote on the foundation’s board of directors. Members will serve for two- and three-year staggered terms. Everyone is a volunteer. Committees are set up to handle fundraising, operate the facility and put on events. The season kickoff party is May 24.

The foundation will now run the annual Tahoe Tennis Classic tournament in August.

The contract with the county mandates two youth events be put on each year, and a certain amount of free play time allowed.

Foundation documents call for all proceeds to return to the

facility.

“The foundation will keep the courts in better repair than what the county can provide,” Wright said. “The long-term goal is indoor courts for year-round play.”

The county has talked about this for a number of years.

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Notes:

• Douglas County Commission meeting is May 15 at 1:30pm, 169 Highway 50, Stateline.

• Zephyr Cove Tennis Club is online; memberships are available online.

• Questions about the club or foundation may be emailed to zctennisclub@gmail.com.

• The club is also on Facebook.

Training can help teens avoid knee injuries

By Katherine Hobson, NPR

If you’re a teenage athlete, or the parent of one, you probably live in fear of a torn anterior cruciate ligament, one of the knee’s key stabilizing ligaments.

A torn ACL often requires surgical repair. But so-called neuromuscular training programs can cut the risk of a serious ACL injury and should be recommended to at-risk young

athletes, especially girls, according to a clinical report from the American Academy of Pediatrics.

ACL injuries, which can sideline an athlete for months, hit both genders, but right after puberty they occur as much as six times more frequently in young women, depending on the sport. Female high school soccer players experience 11.7 ACL injuries per 100,000 exposures, for example, compared to 4.7 for the males.

Read the whole story

Wildfire preparedness important for Tahoe residents

May is Wildfire Awareness Month in the Lake Tahoe Basin. This year's theme is Prepare Your Home for Wildfire.

A fire adapted community is a community located in a fire-prone area that requires little assistance from firefighters during a wildfire. Residents of these communities recognize the responsibility of living in a high fire-hazard area. They possess the knowledge and skills to prepare their homes and property to survive wildfire, evacuate early, safely and effectively, and survive, if trapped by wildfire.

Things homeowners can do to become more fire adapted include:

- Talk to local fire departments about how to prepare for a wildfire, situational awareness, when to evacuate, and what communities should expect during a response.
- Contact local fire departments to conduct a property risk assessment.

- Develop a personal and family preparedness plan.
- Support land management agencies by learning about wildfire risk reduction efforts, such as using prescribed fire to manage local landscapes.
- Contact local planning/zoning offices to find out if the home is in a high wildfire risk area and if there are specific local or county ordinances to follow.
- Work with homeowner associations to identify regulations that incorporate proven preparedness landscaping, home design, and building material such as the recommendations from the Lake Tahoe Basin Living with Fire website.

Create a plan to address issues in the defensible space zone, including:

- maintaining a non-combustible area around the home perimeter
- managing vegetation along fences
- clearing debris from decks, patios, eaves, and porches
- selecting proper landscaping and plants
- knowing the local ecology and fire history
- moving radiant heat sources away from the home (wood piles, fuel tanks, sheds)
- thinning trees and ladder fuels around the home.