USFS to resume burning in the basin

U.S. Forest Service fuels management crews expect to continue prescribed fire operations beginning April 7.

Recent rain and snow made conditions too wet for burning this past week, but fire management staff expect conditions to dry out next week. Burning may take place on Spooner Summit, in the Luther Pass Campground off of Highway 89, and on the west side of Highway 89 near Tahoma. Operations are ongoing and may continue through the week and next weekend if weather, staffing, and conditions allow.

Forest Service staff will post road signs around the areas affected by the prescribed fire, send email notifications, and update the local fire information line at 530.543.2600, No. 6. To receive prescribed fire notifications, send an email to pa_ltbmu@fs.fed.us.

Study: Morning light can help reduce body fat

By Karen Kaplan, Los Angeles Times

To maximize your chances of fighting flab, new research offers some simple advice: Wake up early and go outside.

People who loaded up on light exposure at the beginning of the day were most likely to have a lower body mass index, according to a study published Wednesday in the journal PLOS ONE. That relationship between morning light and BMI was

independent of how many calories the study participants consumed.

It may sound crazy, but there is sound scientific evidence to back up the link. Circadian rhythm plays an important role in regulating metabolism, and studies have shown that exposure to morning light can influence body fat and the hormones that regulate appetite.

Read the whole story

Heavenly Mountain's zipline propels riders toward Lake Tahoe at speeds up to 55 mph



Heidi Wiemokly flies down the Blue Streak at Heavenly Mountain Resort. Photo/Trish McGraw

By Kathryn Reed

Zipping through the air at speeds up to 55 mph, legs dangling 160 feet above the ground and Lake Tahoe getting closer by the second.

Aptly named the Blue Streak, Heavenly's zipline is about whisking thrill-seekers down 3,300 feet in about one minute. Whether it's the blue sky – or more gray as the case was on Friday – or the varying shades of blue from the lake – the views are stunning.



This is the view from the top of the Blue Streak zipline. Photo/Kathryn Reed

From the launching pad it looks like the endpoint is Round Hill. On the ride down it appears the landing point is the lake itself.

Two people may go at once on separate cables. The heavier rider tends to finish first. It's not uncommon to get a little spin action going, but it's impossible to turn the seat all the way around.

It's hard not to smile, even with a cold wind blowing. But if the wind is sustained at 25 mph or more, the operations cease immediately. Safety will take precedence over fun.

Redundancy is built into the harness system, as well as at the end to stop riders. This ride has a much smoother, less jarring finish than the previous zipline.

Everyone wears a helmet and harness, sunglasses are a good idea.

The only drawback is that it feels so controlled that the adrenaline rush is not sustained for the entire ride – at least according to a couple *LTN* riders.



Two people ride at a time – heading toward the gondola building and Tamarack Lodge. Photo/Trish McGraw

The ride opens today for the rest of the winter season – which ends April 20. (The zipline will be open Memorial Day weekend.)

This is one of Heavenly Mountain Resort's attractions to lure the non-skier to the mountain, give riders something more to do and make it a year-round destination. It's possible mountain biking and a gravity fed ride through the woods will be added in 2015 and available for use the following summer.

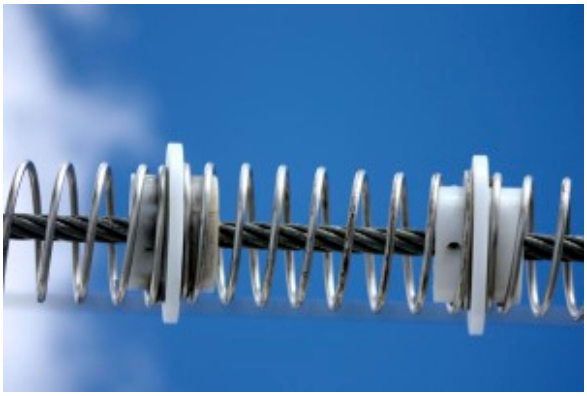
"Part of the reason why we are expanding is to give a full-day summer experience," explained Matt Eaton, senior manager of activities. "There's nothing like it on this end of the

Sierra.”

Blue Streak is the larger of two ziplines that will be open every day when the summer season begins June 13. (The smaller zipline needs a little more work before it opens.) For now Blue Streak will operate from 10am-3pm Friday-Monday. It costs $40 per ride, plus $45 to ride the gondola. Pricing for the summer has not been established.

It starts to the west of the top of Tamarack chairlift, the same spot the former zipline was located. It ends above the terminus for the gondola.

“It’s been completely re-engineered, especially the retrieval process. And we’ve increased training for staff,” Sally Gunter, spokeswoman for Heavenly, told *Lake Tahoe News*.



Spring coils help stop people after a 3,300-foot ride. Photo/Trish McGraw

In September a lawsuit from the 2009 death involving the old zipline was settled. A newlywed who was on the Tamarack chair with his bride fell to his death when a rope from the zipline, which is 100 yards away, got entangled with the chairlift.

For the past five months the U.S. Forest Service, OSHA and the manufacturers have been inspecting the new zipline. Staff has been undergoing rigorous training.

Today anyone who is not pregnant, is at least 42-inches tall and weighs between 75 and 275 pounds may step into a harness, get hooked into the chair and be whisked down the mountain on the South Shore’s only zipline.

Weekly bird walks to start in Incline in May

Every Wednesday during the month of May, Tahoe Institute for Natural Science will lead morning bird walks at the Village Green in Incline Village.

It will be a leisurely stroll to see and hear the numerous bird species that are returning or migrating through Tahoe this spring. Leaders will identify songs, calls, and field marks of birds while walking through different habitats: riparian areas, across streams, and through pine forests.

These free bird walks are open to birders of all experience levels.

Meet at 7:30am at the Aspen Grove parking lot (960 Lakeshore Blvd.) at the Village Green, Incline Village. Bring binoculars.

For more information, contact Robin Jones at robin@tinsweb.org or 775.298.0066.

Workshop focuses on weed identification

Truckee River Watershed Council is providing lunch for people who attend the April 23 weed warrior workshop.

The River-Friendly Landscaping/Weed Warriors Lunch & Learn is from noon-1:30pm and the Weed Warriors Weed Identification Workshop is from 1:30-3:30pm.

The event is at Cedar House Sport Hotel, 10918 Brockway Road, Truckee.

This is intended for BMP contractors and landscape professionals serving the Truckee area. Information will focus on implementation of river-friendly landscaping measures.

CATT members will be placed on a list of area contractors that is provided to river-friendly landscaping participants.

For more information or to register, contact Jeannette Halderman at jhalderman@truckeeriverwc.org or 530.550.8760.

Massive mackinaw caught at Lake Tahoe



Holy mackinaw, Gene St. Denis reeled in this 29 pound, 11 ounce fish on March 28 from Lake Tahoe. It was 43-inches long. Photo/Provided

By Kathryn Reed

“The thing I love about going out fishing is you never know when you are going to get the big one.”

Those are the words of Gene St. Denis of Blue Ribbon Fishing Charters in South Lake Tahoe who for the past 15 years held the record for the biggest two-fish catch at 44.8 pounds.

On March 28 he broke his own record when he reeled in two mackinaw – one weighed in at 29 pounds, 11 ounces and the

other at 18 pounds, 15 ounces for a total of 48 pounds, 10 ounces.

He was on the lake by himself that day. After nearly landing a much bigger one, but having it break the line near the boat, St. Denis almost gave up. He was sure that one was in the 35-pound class. When it got loose he told *Lake Tahoe News* he was "devastated."

St. Denis was using large 10-inch lures called monster sticks on the Nevada side of the lake between Cave Rock and Edgewood.

"It was just a remarkable day. These fish are 40- to 60-years-old," he said. "The clear water in Tahoe makes it tough for them to make a mistake."

St. Denis reeled in a 21-pounder on April 2.

He said the nutrients from the recent runoff are probably what are causing the fish to bite.

"These lake trout are phenomenal game fish," St. Denis said.

They also make for some good eating, he added. He said they have two to three times the omega 3 that king salmon have and they are cleaner than arctic shark.

Trout Creek Trail in Truckee moving forward

Truckee is taking comments on the initial study/mitigated negative declaration for the Trout Creek Trail project. The Trout Creek Trail is proposed to connect Northwoods Boulevard near Coyote Moon Golf Course to downtown Truckee at Bridge

Street just north of Highway 80.

The proposed trail is a 10-foot-wide paved Class 1 trail along the future alignment of the third Tahoe Donner connector and along portions of Trout Creek. It is approximately 7,900-feet long.

While future trail sections within Tahoe Donner are described in the Town's Trails and Bikeways Master Plan, this is the only section being considered at this time.

Comments must be submitted by April 22 to Jessica Thompson, associate engineer, at jthompson@townoftruckee.com.

Adventure camp available to Tahoe youth

Berkeley's Adventure Risk Challenge Program and its sister sister course in Yosemite National Park are available to youth residing in Lake Tahoe.

Outdoor adventures like rafting, rock climbing, and backpacking will be combined with an academic curriculum that strengthens students' English literacy and leadership skills.

Tahoe Program Coordinator Sean McAlindin will be accepting applications through April.

All Tahoe students in grades 9-12 are eligible to apply for ARC's summer immersion courses.

Go online to learn more about the program and download applications for the summer immersion course.

USFS sides with Alta in ban of snowboarders

By Brady McCombs, AP

SALT LAKE CITY — The U.S. Forest Service says it supports one of the last U.S. ski resorts to prohibit snowboarding in a court battle over a ban that snowboarders call discriminatory.

The decision by the Alta ski area to promote a snowboarder-free experience to lure skiers and keep them safe is a rational rule that violates no constitutional rights, attorneys for the Forest Service said in court arguments filed this week.

“Even if plaintiffs established that they are similar to skiers and have been treated differently, they have failed to show that the federal defendants’ treatment of them was irrational,” Forest Service lawyers wrote.

Four snowboarders filed the lawsuit in federal court in January. They’re claiming discrimination on national forest lands that make up most of the Alta ski area in the mountains east of Salt Lake City. The U.S. Forest Service was named as a defendant in a lawsuit, in which the snowboarders argue the ban violates the promise of equal treatment under the 14th Amendment.

The legal back-and-forth has reignited a long-festering culture clash on the slopes between skiers and snowboarders.

The new Forest Service brief comes a week after the ski area's lawyers said that the lawsuit degrades the U.S. Constitution and should be thrown out.

Jon Schofield, an attorney for the snowboarders, said both filings mischaracterize the complaint, confuse applicable law and avoid the fact that Alta discriminates against snowboarders based on an inaccurate stereotype. Schofield said they'll address the issues fully in an upcoming brief.

"Before bringing suit, we considered every issue raised in these motions, and we believe the case rests on solid legal ground," Schofield said.

Under a 40-year permit issued to Alta by the Forest Service in 2002, the ski area is allowed to restrict any type of skiing device that creates an unnecessary risk to other skiers.

The Forest Service said it agrees with Alta that the way snowboarders slide down the slopes is a legitimate safety concern for skiers. In a filing last week, Alta attorneys explained that skiers find the slopes at Alta more peaceful, safe and enjoyable because they don't have to worry about being hit by snowboarders whose sideways stance leaves them with a blind spot that can make their wide, sweeping turns a danger to others on the slopes.

"These differences create safety concerns that can be avoided or minimized by not allowing snowboarders," Forest Service lawyers wrote in the new filing.

Alta is one of 120 ski resorts that has a permit to use Forest Service land, the court brief says. The agency's lawyers say they are aware of Alta's snowboarding prohibition but argue the agency was not part of the decision to enact the ban and does not make a profit from it.

Based on a congressionally mandated formula, Alta paid the Forest Service between $305,000 and $474,000 each of the past

five years. That represents less than 1 percent of the Forest Service’s annual budget, their attorneys said.

The two other resorts that ban snowboarding are Deer Valley, also in Utah, and Mad River Glen in Vermont.

TRTA offering summer youth camps

Three- and five-day backcountry camps are being offered this summer for ages 12-17.

They are put on by the Tahoe Rim Trail Association, Tahoe Institute for Natural Science, and American Red Cross.

These programs teach: wilderness first aid, leadership skills, navigation (map/compass), leave no trace wilderness ethics, local ecology and geology, wilderness tracking, and backcountry cooking and nutrition. Participants will backpack approximately 3 to 7 miles per day while participating in activities which will teach the above skills.

Gear, food and transportation will be provided for all participants. All programs are instructed by experienced and well-trained staff from the TRTA, TINS and American Red Cross.

Online registration may be completed on the TRTA website. For more information, call 775.298.4493 or email programs@tahoerimtrail.org.