2-week mountain festival on North Shore

The first winter edition of the Alpenglow Mountain Festival is Feb. 14-March 2.

The two-week festival is a celebration of human-powered events, clinics, presentations, film and more. Participants may Nordic ski, backcountry ski, snowshoe and partake in natural history excursions.

The festival has been designed to inspire participants to enjoy and explore North Lake Tahoe’s playground with friends and family. Alpenglow Mountain Festival is geared toward beginner and intermediate winter recreation enthusiasts, offering a range of

activities for all interests and ability levels. The majority of events are free and space is limited. Participants are encouraged to register online in advance.

Bettors: 49ers are Super Bowl bound

By Case Keefer, Las Vegas Sun

The 49ers are channeling their namesake in Las Vegas.

San Francisco is inciting a sports-book gold rush in the form of betting slips. Coach Jim Harbaugh’s squad was the most gambled-on team of the weekend in each of their first two playoff games as slight favorites against the Green Bay

Packers and Carolina Panthers.

Nothing has changed now that they're taking points, three or 3.5 depending on the shop, on the road against the Seahawks in Sunday's NFC Championship Game.

While bookmakers would take a hit if the 49ers won in Seattle for the first time since 2011, it might be worthwhile considering the Super Bowl implications. San Francisco's presence in the game Feb. 2 at MetLife Stadium in East Rutherford, N.J., would boost Super Bowl betting volume up to 8 percent, according to Vaccaro. Last year's record of $98.9 million wagered statewide on the Super Bowl would find itself in imminent danger.

Read the whole story

Snowboarders sue for access to Utah ski resort

By Dennis Romboy, Deseret News

SALT LAKE CITY – Snowboarders have wanted to "free" Alta for years.

On Wednesday, four of them and a group called Wasatch Equality dropped a federal lawsuit on the Little Cottonwood Canyon resort, challenging its longstanding skiers-only policy.

A lawyer for the snowboarders said that because of Alta Ski Area's arrangement with the U.S. Forest Service, it must comply with the equal protection clause in the 14th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. The Forest Service is also named as defendant.

“Alta is one of only three ski resorts in the United States that does not allow snowboarding, and Alta is the only one of these resorts that is operated on public land controlled by the Forest Service,” said Jonathan Schofield, an attorney with Parr Brown Gee and Loveless.

Read the whole story

Snowboarders down to wire to qualify for Sochi

By USSA

MAMMOTH MOUNTAIN -– Rookie Taylor Gold (Steamboat Springs, Colo.) punched a ticket to Sochi Friday with his third-place finish at the fourth halfpipe qualifier at the Sprint U.S. Grand Prix.

Defending Olympic Champion Shaun White, who rides for Northstar, took the victory, putting him one podium away from clinching a spot on the U.S. Olympic team for halfpipe snowboarding.

Kelly Clark (West Dover, Vt.) took her second halfpipe victory of the day with Chloe Kim (La Palma) second and Hannah Teter (South Lake Tahoe) third, an identical podium to the third qualifier staged earlier in the day Friday.

The fifth qualifier on Sunday will be the last chance for the halfpipe riders to make their move to score a spot on the Olympic team.

Veteran rider Scotty Lago (Seabrook, N.H.) landed second, which also puts him in a valuable position going into the

final qualifier.

After Friday's qualifier only Lago, White, Gret Bretz (Mammoth Lakes) and Danny Davis (Truckee) can mathematically secure a top-three spot in the qualification standings.

Clark clinched her Olympic team spot at the Copper Grand Prix in December, while 13-year-old Kim is not Olympic eligible.

All other U.S. women are currently capable of mathematically securing a top-three spot in the qualification standings.

Tahoe area snowboarders make noise in halfpipe

By USSA

MAMMOTH MOUNTAIN -– Veteran rider Danny Davis (Truckee) pulled out a clutch victory in the third halfpipe snowboarding Olympic qualifier Friday at the Sprint U.S. Grand Prix at Mammoth Mountain. His victory in the progressive, high-scoring qualifier resurrected his Olympic chances and put him in a position to meet qualification criteria with a second place or better in the fourth qualifier.

Defending Olympic Champion Shaun White, who rides for Northstar, did not start the competition after he took a hard fall in Thursday's first slopestyle qualifier.

Kelly Clark (West Dover, Vt.) won for the women after clinching her Olympic team spot at the Copper Grand Prix in December.

Rookie Taylor Gold (Steamboat Springs, CO) finished second,

also putting him in great position to clinch a spot on the Olympic team with a podium in the fourth qualifier later in the day Friday.

Matt Ladley (Steamboat Springs, CO) took third with Louie Vito (Sandy, UT) fourth and rookie Ben Ferguson (Bend, OR) fifth.

Defending Olympic Champion Shaun White (Carlsbad, CA) did not start the competition after he took a hard fall in Thursday's first slopestyle qualifier.

Kelly Clark (West Dover, VT) won for the women after clinching her Olympic team spot at the Copper Grand Prix in December.

Rookie Chloe Kim (La Palma) slid into second place, while Hannah Teter (South Lake Tahoe) took third and Kaitlyn Farrington (Bellevue, Idaho) fourth. Chloe Kim, 13, is not Olympic eligible.

White clinches berth to Sochi in slopestyle

By USSA

MAMMOTH MOUNTAIN -– Olympic halfpipe champion Shaun White, who rides for Northstar, mathematically clinched a spot on the inaugural U.S. Olympic team for slopestyle snowboarding on Thursday at the Paul Mitchell Slopestyle at the Sprint U.S. Grand Prix.

White crashed hard in Thursday's earlier competition and was down for nearly five minutes before he rode away. He then

managed to refocus and put down a show-stopping run two hours later, posting a massive score and securing his spot on the Olympic team.

Three-time X Games champion Jamie Anderson (South Lake Tahoe) won the women's competition, going two for two during Thursday's slopestyle snowboarding doubleheader.

Thursday featured two slopestyle Olympic qualifiers after the Sprint U.S. Grand Prix at Breckenridge was canceled last week because of challenging weather conditions.

Sage Kotsenberg (Park City) took second, with Kyle Mack (West Bloomfield, Mich) third and Ryan Stassel (Anchorage) in fourth.

Jordie Karlinski (Snowmass, Colo.) sealed a second place finish for the women with Jessika Jenson (Rigby, Idaho) third and Ty Walker (Stowe, Vt.) fourth. Walker also endured a violent crash during her second run, when she skidded into the fencing, became tangled and slammed down hard, breaking her helmet in half.

The slopestyle snowboarding debut will open the 2014 Olympic Winter Games in Sochi, with the qualification round a day prior to the opening ceremony and finals the day after the opening.

Saturday's slopestyle will be the last chance for the athletes to meet the objective criteria for Olympic qualification.

Shaun White and other halfpipe athletes are set to compete in a halfpipe snowboarding doubleheader Friday, when they will battle for Olympic spots at the third and fourth Olympic qualifier events.

USFS waving fees in honor of MLK Day

The U.S. Forest Service will waive fees at most of its day-use recreation sites on Jan. 20 in honor of Martin Luther King Jr. Day.

The fee waiver day is the first of four such days and one full weekend offered by the agency during 2014.

The other scheduled fee-free days observed by the Forest Service are Presidents Day weekend Feb. 15-17; National Get Outdoors Day on June 14; National Public Lands Day on Sept. 27; and Veterans Day weekend from Nov. 8-11

Anderson secures spot on Olympic slopestyle team

By Nick Zaccardi, NBC

Jamie Anderson of South Lake Tahoe clinched the first U.S. Olympic berth in slopestyle snowboarding by winning the third of five women's events earlier Thursday, while Shaun White crashed in his first run and aborted his second run midway through in the third of five Olympic selection events.

No U.S. man has clinched one of three automatic U.S. Olympic spots in slopestyle yet. White fell from first place to fourth place in Olympic selection standings, but can clinch his spot with a win in either of the final two events Friday and Sunday.

Anderson, 23, is the two-time reigning Winter X Games champion and a gold-medal contender in Sochi. She won Friday with 92.7 points in her first of two runs, edging Karly Shorr by 2.9 points.

Read the whole story

Wildlife officers rack up convictions in 2013

California Department of Fish and Wildlife had several high profile criminal investigations and convictions in 2013 for resource violations.

In El Dorado County, two men shot, but didn't kill a deer that they then put in their small SUV. The deer woke up and panicked inside the vehicle. The poachers then hacked the deer to death with a machete. They were both convicted and received jail time for poaching and animal cruelty.

In Nevada County, a wildlife officer was able to apprehend two bear poachers through an in-depth investigation that revealed an abundance of criminal activity including drug trafficking, stolen vehicles and violence. The primary suspect, Jason Wilkison, baited and killed a bear out of season with a military style rifle with no tags and no license. Wilkison, a convicted felon, was sentenced to two years in state prison for his part in the crime.

Fourteen people were arrested in Sacramento and the Bay Area for illegally harvesting and selling abalone on the black market. Many of the suspects had previous poaching convictions and are now facing additional charges.

In Southern California, wildlife officers filed several cases of lobster poaching, illegally selling fish directly to restaurants and one case in which a diver attempted to catch fish by squirting rubbing alcohol into the rocks forcing fish into open water where he then netted them. Most of these cases are currently pending.

A Madera County wildlife officer jumped into the cold, swift current of a slough, twice, to save the lives of two small children clinging to a branch. With no equipment, life jacket or help, he brought each girl safely to shore. In Monterey, a wildlife officer took off his boots to help save a drowning woman in the ocean then gave her the boots so she could walk across rocks to the waiting ambulance. In five separate incidents wildlife officers along with local agencies prevented people from committing suicide.

In a case that brought national attention, wildlife officers and San Bernardino County Sheriff deputies spotted, pursued and exchanged gunfire with former Los Angeles Police Officer and murderer Christopher Dorner.

Other gunfire incidents occurred in three marijuana growing operations in Northern California. In a Shasta County incident, shots were fired during a marijuana raid. Two men were then arrested, both after being apprehended by a CDFW K-9.

More than 350 wildlife officers are responsible for patrolling 1.8 million acres in California.

Olympic qualifiers rescheduled for Mammoth

By USSA

PARK CITY -– The U.S. Ski and Snowboard Association has confirmed a plan to run U.S. only Olympic qualifiers this week at Mammoth Mountain to replace the snowboarding halfpipe and slopestyle competitions that were canceled due to snow and low visibility at Breckenridge on Saturday.

The canceled competitions were the third of five Olympic qualifiers.

Various options were considered by the USSA and it was determined that the most fair way to conduct Olympic qualification in slopestyle and halfpipe was to replace the events and stay at five qualifiers.

The new third qualifiers would be open to any U.S. athletes who were eligible to compete at Breckenridge. The field for the fourth and fifth qualifiers would remain as planned with only the top athletes in the rankings after three events.

Proposed schedule:

Sprint U.S. Grand Prix, Mammoth Mountain (all times local)

Jan. 16

9:30-11am – Slopestyle Final – U.S. Olympic qualification No. 3

1:30-3pm – Slopestyle Final – U.S. Olympic qualification

Jan. 17

9:30-10:45an – Halfpipe Final – U.S. Olympic qualification No. 3

12:10-2:30pm – Halfpipe Final – U.S. Olympic qualification No. 4

Jan. 18

11am-1pm – Slopestyle Final – U.S. Olympic qualification No. 5

Jan. 19

11:40am-2pm – Halfpipe Final – U.S. Olympic qualification No. 5.

Announcement of team nominations to follow.