Fallen Leaf Lake plan gets USFS green light

A five-year project to improve the Fallen Leaf Lake area could begin next spring.

Approval for the U.S. Forest Service Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit upgrades came last week.

The project includes improving the Fallen Leaf Lake trail system, while reducing congestion and user conflict. Some of the user created trails will be eliminated. Upgrades and new trails are included in the plans.

The bridge over Fallen Leaf Lake dam will be replaced with one that meets today's building codes and standards. This includes making it easier for cyclists to cross.

Parking would be expanded and improved, too.

People have through October to appeal the decision.

For more information about the project, go online.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Fall starts off with snow on higher peaks in Tahoe



Heavenly Mountain Resort’s tubing hill’s first snow of the season. Photo/Provided

With the thermometer in the 30s this morning, it’s going to be a chilly Lake Tahoe Ironman. By 7:30am Sunday the first swimmers were out of the water.

For their bike and run in the Tahoe-Truckee area the athletes will get to see snow on the higher peaks in the Lake Tahoe Basin.

A quick one-day storm brought snow to the higher elevations, but flakes were also reported falling in Meyers. Most of the basin was soaked by rain on Saturday.

It’s only supposed to hit 59 degrees today as a high, but it should be 70 on Monday on the South Shore.

A chance of snow returns to the forecast Wednesday night into Thursday.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Network of Lake Tahoe bike trails increasing

By Kathryn Reed

TAHOE CITY – Piece-by-piece agencies in the basin are putting together a comprehensive bike trail system with the goal of eventually being able to ride a bike around Lake Tahoe on something other than a state highway.

At this month's California Tahoe Conservancy meeting the board awarded $500,000 to the Tahoe City Public Utility District to build a one-mile section in Homewood that will link Tahoe City with Sugar Pine Point State Park.

TCPUD has 22 miles of trails that are well used. It's estimated 400,000 people are on the paths each year. And there are only 7,000 permanent residents in the area.



Today cyclists must ride next to traffic in Homewood. That will change next summer. Photo/LTN

Most of the new trail will be Class 1, meaning it will be separated from traffic. It will be 8-feet-wide, with 2-foot shoulders. Part of the trail will be Class 3, meaning next to a vehicle lane. This is when it veers off Highway 89 and goes

onto San Souci Terrace.

A new bridge will also be built to cross Madden Creek.

The plan is for the trail to be constructed on the west side of the highway in 2014. This will be concurrent with a Caltrans water quality project.

The total cost of this one mile is $1,557,970. The North Lake Tahoe Resort Association has contributed $600,000, the Tahoe Fund $34,375 and Placer County $25,000. The remaining nearly $400,000 is expected to come from a grant, additional county park fees or TCPUD capital funds.

The trail will be striped in front of Homewood Mountain Resort. If JMA Ventures, the property owner, redevelops the resort, then it would be mandated to put in a more formal bike path to complement what will be constructed next summer.

Also on Sept. 19, the CTC board agreed to award Placer County $500,000 for it to buy a 19.5-acre parcel from NV Energy that will be used for the Dollar Creek Shared-Use Trail project.

The 2.2-mile section of trail will tie into the TCPUD's 22 miles of trails on one end and to Kings Beach on the other.

Connections beyond the parcel that was just bought will involve the U.S. Forest Service because that is where its ownership begins.

Larry Sevison, board chairman, said Northstar is interested in creating a loop that would link up with the newly acquired property.

There is also a cross country ski resort that abuts the parcel.

"We are talking to the ski center. There is a bridge crossing Dollar Creek that could be upsized for their groomer," Jon Mitchell with Placer County told the board.

This means the trail could become accessible year-round.

The first priority is to get the trail built and then land ownership will be discussed. CTC, Placer County, California State Parks and North Tahoe Public Utility District all own a slice of where the trail will go.

The entire network of trails helped the North Lake Tahoe area in May to receive the League of American Bicyclists' bronze level Bicycle Friendly Community.

Volunteers needed for Lake Tahoe Marathon

The Lake Tahoe Marathon needs a few more volunteers to help pass out T-shirts and race numbers on Sept. 27 and Sept. 28 at the expo located inside the Lake Tahoe Resort Hotel in South Lake Tahoe.

Interested volunteers may call Les Wright at (530) 559.2261 or show up at the volunteer meeting on Sept. 25 at 5:45pm at the hotel.

Settlement opens trails in Eldorado National Forest

Off-roaders can rev up their engines.

An agreement reached by conservation groups, off-roaders and the counties of El Dorado, Alpine and Amador settles litigation going back to the 1990s by resolving the status of contentious trails in Eldorado National Forest.

Under the agreement, some trails and dirt roads will reopen, others would remain closed and still others would begin restoration of past damage.

The deal allows for 24 routes to open immediately, closure of 18 routes, and commits the U.S. Forest Service to review all the routes over the next three years and take corrective action to protect meadows, streams and springs.

Forty-two routes in the Eldorado National Forest were closed in 2012 because a federal judge determined designating the routes through meadows violated the forest plan, which bans roads in meadows. Subsequently, forest managers did a new analysis.

Now is not the time to be lax about wildfires

By Gwen Ernst-Ulrich

In spite of last weekend’s weather that caused 10 small lightning-ignited fires across all four Tahoe National Forest ranger districts, the majority of the 76 reported fires on the TNF since the beginning of 2013 have been either human-caused or of undetermined origin, prompting officials to urge everyone to use extra caution to prevent uncontrolled

wildfires, especially as drying weather patterns increase fire danger.

Human activity ranging from debris burns, equipment heat or sparks, juvenile mischief, and unmanaged campfires are some of this year’s specific actions that have caused crews, engines, and other resources to race to the scene of a fire start. Even though fewer campers are enjoying the forest now that summer is ending, fall brings hunters along with those who like to gather firewood or ride off-highway vehicles, all of which are activities that could cause a fire.

Sparks or heat from equipment are leading wildfire causes. People can prevent these types of fires by following a few principles.

· Make sure equipment and off-road vehicles, such as chainsaws, portable generators, and all-terrain vehicles, have a working spark arrester.

· When touring the forest in a vehicle, including trucks, motorcycles, and so on, stay in designated areas and on established roads and trails to avoid exposing your vehicle’s hot parts to dry vegetation.

· Sparks from dragging chains and flat tires can also ignite nearby dry grasses.

Improperly handling stoves, lanterns, and heaters in the forest can also cause wildfires.

· When filling, place them on the ground in a cleared area and move the appliance to a new clearing before lighting it.

· Recap and store flammable liquid containers in a safe place.

· Never light lanterns or stoves inside a tent, trailer, or camper.

People should follow a few simple rules to reduce the risk of

an escaped campfire.

· Stay with your campfire at all times.

· Always keep water nearby to extinguish uncontrolled flames.

· Before leaving the area, thoroughly douse your campfire with water and mix (stir) the water in with ashes and embers to ensure the fire is completely out.

Careless smoking in the forest is another wildfire danger.

· Smoke in at least a 3-foot clearing and grind out cigarettes, cigars, or pipe tobacco in the dirt.

· Do not smoke while walking or riding a horse or trail bike.

· Use your ashtray while in your vehicle.

Through the “One Less Spark, One Less Wildfire” interagency fire prevention campaign, the California Wildland Fire Coordinating Group is working to raise awareness, and agencies, businesses, and Fire Safe councils across the state are engaged and supporting this effort. More information is available on the Forest Service Pacific Southwest Region’s website.

“Everyone pays the cost of uncontrolled wildfires,” said Tahoe National Forest Supervisor Tom Quinn. “The costs come in the form of lost lives and damaged or destroyed property and natural resources in addition to tax dollars that could be used for efforts other than fighting fires.”

Quinn encourages people to be aware of wildfire conditions and to take appropriate prevention measures while helping protect their own property by creating defensible space around their homes.

For more fire prevention information, go to the Tahoe National Forest website or the Forest Service National website.

Gwen Ernst-Ulrich works for the Tahoe National Forest.

Golf story will win someone a golf trip

Have an epic story to tell about your most memorable golf shot? It could be worth a $1,500 golf trip.

“Hooked On Golf,” the seminal radio show on KNBR 680 in San Francisco and the Divine 9, Northern Nevada golf co-op of courses and lodging properties, are looking for best golf shot tales ever told, where writers take a whack via keyboard at anecdotes generally reserved for the 19th hole.

The winner of the contest will win a spot aboard Nevada’s Divine 9 Media Tour on Oct. 1 in Carson City and Carson Valley. The winner also receives four nights lodging, two traditional rounds of golf at Divine 9 member courses, select meals, and a $150 travel allowance.

The winner also be interviewed on the radio post-event by Abendroth and Juricich, hosts of “Hooked On Golf.”

Entrants have until noon Sept. 27 to submit their entry. The winner will be announced on the “Hooked on Golf” program on Sept. 28. Go online for entry information. The contest is open to anyone 21 and older.

Great Sierra River Cleanup is Saturday

The annual community cleanup day is Sept. 21 from 9am–noon.

In three hours, volunteers from all across South Tahoe will be out in force, cleaning up litter and debris from local beaches, rivers, and meadows. The event is part of a larger effort, the Great Sierra River Cleanup, where volunteers will clean waterways in the Sierra Nevada from Mt. Whitney to Lassen National Park.

The local event is being coordinated by the Sierra Nevada Alliance, Clean Tahoe Program and AmeriCorps. Volunteers can choose from 11 cleanup sites or drop-in at Lakeview Commons at 9am Saturday.

All volunteers will receive a goodie bag as a thank you, and the first 40 volunteers to register will get a Great Sierra River Cleanup T-shirt. All ages are welcome.

Last year volunteers on the South Shore picked up nearly 2,000 pounds of trash during the event.

Signup online.

For more information, contact Nikki Thompson at (530) 542.4546, ext. 321.

Study: Ocean species change

locations based on climate

By Melissa Pandika, Los Angeles Times

As climate change heats our oceans, you'd expect temperature-sensitive marine species to flee poleward to cooler waters. So why have some headed to warmer regions toward the equator?

Scientists have solved the puzzle. For the most part, these animals are relocating to cooler waters. But since the effects of climate change can vary widely across regions, sometimes those cooler regions are closer to the poles and sometimes they're closer to the equator.

In other words, marine animals are still reacting to climate change, but at a local scale. And they're doing it so reliably that you can actually measure the speed and direction of those changes by watching where animals go, according to a study published Thursday in the journal Science.

The mystery began with observations of species such as the shortbelly rockfish and torpedo ray, which live along the California coast. As Pacific waters got warmer, these creatures moved farther south, to seemingly warmer waters.

Read the whole story

Snow at higher elevations possible this weekend

Snow is in the forecast. Yes, *really*.

Not much is expected to fall on Saturday and what does is

likely to stay above 7,500 feet, according to the National Weather Service in Reno.

A low-pressure system will be moving into the Lake Tahoe Basin on Sept. 21 that will bring wind, rain and snow. The bulk of the precip and coldest temps are forecast to be north of Tahoe.

It’s supposed to be a fast moving system that will arrive in the morning.

While the mercury fell to the low 30s overnight Tuesday, no records were broken.

The low in South Lake Tahoe for Wednesday and Saturday nights is expected to be 30 degrees, with it in the 40s in between those days.

The highs are expected to fluctuate Thursday to Sunday from 73-to-70-to-59-to-62.

The Weather Service says the temperature swings are normal for the basin this time of year.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report