4 minor lightning caused fires in TNF

Four fires on the Tahoe National Forest were burning Monday that were caused by lightning strikes over the weekend.

All are contained or controlled.



Tahoe National Forest lightning strikes map.

Two are on the east side – small spots – one south of Loyalton on TV Hill and one east of Stampede Reservoir. Two other fires on the west side near Bullards Bar are contained with crews mopping up. Bar Fire burned 15 acres and the Pendola fire 1 acre.

U.S. Forest Service crews and equipment worked the fires with assistance from North San Juan and Camptonville fire departments and CalFire air tanker drops.

Crews expect to pick up “sleeper” fires throughout the week as temperatures warm up. Additional showers and thunderstorms are expected today before tapering off through the week.

TV series delves into the world of terrain parks

By Kathryn Reed

It's easy to name athletes who make doing tricks on skis and snowboards seem either like child's play or death defying feats depending on one's perspective. But how did the terrain park or half pipe come to be?

There's a good chance Chris Gunnarson had something to do with it. Better known as Gunny, he's been leaving his mark on the industry for more than 17 years.

It was 17 years ago that Snow Summit in Big Bear in Southern California hosted the first Winter X Games. Gunnarson designed that park and has done so for each X Games since then. His company also does work on the summer games.

"I guess I had all the right skill sets and the right kind of passion and enthusiasm. They put me in charge of the terrain park at Snow Summit. I was right there on the forefront of this whole niche industry as it was being developed," Gunnarson told *Lake Tahoe News*.



Chris "Gunny" Gunnarson is

the man behind the X Games terrain parks as well as many of Lake Tahoe's parks. Photo/Provided

His story and that of his company Snow Park Technologies will be the subject of an eight-part series to air on the National Geographic channel starting May 9.

He says the episodes are designed to appeal to people who've never been in a terrain park or might not even know what one is. Five are in the can, with three still needing final edits.

The show was Gunnarson's idea. Not one to watch much reality TV, he had the television on to something he wouldn't name and said how bogus it was.

"I thought what we do is more interesting, more different, it's in remote locations, and with elite athletes," Gunnarson said. He started talking to people, the shows got taped and the network secured to air them.

Filming started in mid-October and ended in mid-March.

Tahoe connection

Gunnarson is well known around Lake Tahoe. He has close partnerships with Squaw Valley, Alpine Meadows, Northstar, Heavenly Mountain Resort, and Sierra-at-Tahoe.

For the TV series, Squaw, Alpine and Sierra will be featured. One episode involves Jaime Anderson who is from South Lake Tahoe and rides at Sierra.

Gunnarson says Anderson is "unequivocally the best female freestyle snowboarder on the planet."

Like Shaun White, who rides at Northstar and has a half pipe built for him each season, Gunnarson grew up skateboarding and then took up snowboarding.

“I would love to see the X Games come to Tahoe. So many resorts are doing a great job embracing the action sports culture,” he said.

While Gunnarson has not worked for the Olympics, he looks forward to 2014 being the first time slopestyle will be a medal event – and not just because it was his sport.

“Slopestyle is a condensed terrain park being judged,” Gunnarson said. “Kids relate more to slopestyle than pipe.”

The average athlete

But parks that Gunnarson designs are not all for the elite athlete.

“I get to create very unique fields of play out of nature,” Gunnarson said.

Gunnarson has noticed it’s not just twentysomething males in the parks. It’s skiers and boarders, guys and gals, and parents of those twentysomethings.

“First and foremost it starts with creating something that is appropriate for that particular resort,” he said.

Terrain, snow conditions and natural features all play a role. But who the customer is is even more important. Resorts attracting families wouldn’t want the gnarly terrain park, while the resort attracting adrenaline junkies would want some extreme features.

“Most conventional sports are very fixed. With terrain parks, it is very much open to interpretation,” Gunnarson said. “We can try to dictate a line, but everyone interprets it differently. Only they can experience it personally.”

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Notes:

• Here is a little video teaser for the show.

• “Mountain Movers” begins May 9, 8pm on National Geographic channel.

Nevada beefing up motorcycle safety

Thirty-seven motorcycle fatalities occurred in Nevada in 2012, according to the Nevada Office of Traffic Safety. With a continuing goal of zero fatalities, Gov. Brian Sandoval proclaims May 2013 Motorcycle Safety Awareness Month.

The proclamation calls on motorcyclists and motorists to be vigilant in their efforts to share the road to ensure the safety of everyone on Nevada’s roadways.

“Respect my space. Respect my life. Share the Road” will be communicated throughout Nevada on outdoor bulletins and on radio.

Specific Share the Road guidelines for both motorists and motorcyclists to reach the goal of zero fatalities include:

– Give motorcyclists a full lane of travel

– Keep three to four seconds behind a motorcycle

– Remain alert and look for motorcyclists on the roadway, especially before making a left turn

– Always wear a properly fitting helmet and eye safety gear

– Be visible; wear proper clothing or reflective decals and ride with your headlight on

– Remain alert and give yourself time to react

– Participate in rider education programs.

Winter sports thaws tensions between U.S., Russia

By Kelly Whiteside, USA Today

Political relations between the U.S. and Russia have been especially icy this year, but eight months before the start of the Sochi Olympics, the relationship between the countries' skiing federations continues to be warm.

"We'll see how it plays out in Sochi itself, but the U.S. Ski and Snowboard Association has created a great relationship with the Russian skiing federation, where there's exchanges. They come over here for early snow and our athletes spent extra time on the hill in Russia," U.S. Olympic Committee sport performance team leader Kelly Skinner said Tuesday.

Away from the slopes, there's been considerable tension. After the U.S. took steps to punish Russians accused of human rights violations, Russia passed legislation barring Americans from adopting Russian children and recently released its own list of Americans banned from traveling to its country.



Ted Ligety

Even though a bit of schussing diplomacy isn't expected to smooth out these political moguls, the partnership will likely benefit both teams at the Olympics next February. Russia gained insight into the factors behind the United States' success by training with the Americans at Copper Mountain in Colorado and in New Zealand. In exchange, Russia gave the Americans special access to the Olympic venue.

After the world championships where he won three gold medals, U.S. skier Ted Ligety spent five days in Sochi testing out the venue. "That's a huge opportunity," Ligety told USA Today Sports on Tuesday. "They are not a huge Alpine nation at this point (two Russian men earned World Cup points this season compared to 14 American men) but they've become a lot better the last couple of years as they've put more money and attention to it."

With just one winter world championship remaining, men's hockey which begins Friday, the U.S. has reason to brag. The Americans won 34 medals at world championship competitions, including 14 golds.

The season before the 2010 Vancouver Games, the U.S. won 28 medals at world championships, including 13 golds. In Vancouver, the U.S. won a whopping 37 medals. It was the first time the Americans won the overall medal count in the Winter Games since 1932 in Lake Placid.

It will be difficult for the U.S. to match its record medal haul since Russia won't offer the same comforts of home, in

language and culture, as Vancouver did. But the ski team's extra time at the Krasnaya Polyana mountain venue and other test events at Olympic venues can help. Mikaela Shiffrin, the world champion who also won the overall World Cup season title in slalom, trained on the Olympic venue along with slalom specialists Resi Stiegler and David Chodounsky.

Ski jumper Sarah Hendrickson won her first World Cup of the season in December in Sochi. "That gives me a lot of confidence going into the Olympic year and getting a feel of what the conditions are like and how that hill is different from others," said Hendrickson, who won gold at the world championships. "I'm definitely keeping that in the back of my head."

Other standout U.S. performances this season: In addition to Ligety and Shiffrin, Lindsey Vonn also won a World Cup title while the Alpine team produced 33 World Cup top-three results from 10 different athletes, including 18 golds. Success on the slopes also led to prominent sponsorship opportunities, with Ligety and Hendrickson becoming the latest winter athletes signed by Kellogg's.

Hannah Kearney won the overall World Cup moguls title. Cross country skier Kikkan Randall won the World Cup sprint title.

Biathlete Tim Burke ended the USA's 26-year medal drought with a world championship silver. Ice dancers Meryl Davis and Charlie White won their second world title. The women's ice hockey team won gold after beating Canada. As the short track speedskaters struggled, Heather Richardson claimed the overall World Cup title in long track.

Roar of Cascade Falls lures hikers in

By Kathryn Reed

Songbirds sing a tune that seems to say, “Welcome to our little piece of paradise.”

We smile as we enter their world.

Soon the roar of Cascade Falls fills our ears.

In the distance we see it cascading into its namesake.

A lone fishing boat is on the glass-like water of Cascade Lake.



Hiking to Cascade Falls provides stunning views of Cascade Lake with Lake Tahoe behind it. Photos/Kathryn Reed

It’s only April and the trail to Cascade Falls is clear. We start at a reasonable hour on April 20 and nearly have the path to our ourselves – except for the birds flitting about. Coming back, well, the route was a bit more crowded.

One guy in a party of two couples was carrying a mini music

device. How annoying. Why pollute the outdoors with “unnatural” sounds? Why hinder communication with friends?

Glad he was not where we chose to soak up the sun on sprawling slabs of granite. The cadence of the water on the rocks was music to our ears.

Not a cloud in the sky.

Summer in Tahoe in April? We smiled again. The views of Cascade Lake and Lake Tahoe are fabulous on this jaunt.

With the lack of snow this winter it will mean waterfall season will come early and be bit short-lived. Driving down Highway 50 the previous weekend gave us a glimpse of the always-mesmerizing Horsetail Falls. It made us realize we better start getting in our waterfall hikes now.

It’s a relatively short hike to Cascade Falls. Beauty is everywhere. What can be challenging is having a dog on a leash who wants to go faster than you over the rocks because it tests your balance. It’s the up and down over the rocks that can provide some difficulty.

Many people on the trail who were a decade or two older than us had poles. I would recommend using them to anyone who likes a bit more stability.

This is definitely a hike to do this time of year, early on a weekend day and take water – it’s exposed.

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Getting there:

From South Lake Tahoe, go north on Highway 89 through all the hairpin turns. Before Emerald Bay, park to the left at the Bayview Trailhead. The campground is not open yet, so parking is near the gate.

The trailhead is at the far end of the campground. A sign points left to Cascade Falls and right to Desolation Wilderness.

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Bike ride meanders through Carson City

The 6th annual Tour of Carson City Bike Ride is May 5 at 9:30am.

The route tours around the perimeter of Carson City for a moderately paced 27-30 mile bike ride.

The event is free, though donations are being accepted to support Muscle Powered of Carson City to promote a more bike friendly community.

The ride will begin at Bike Habitat.

Call Denis for more info, (775) 267.5053.

Lack of keys prevents bear

from driving off

By Barbara Barte Osborn, Sacramento Bee

It’s not unusual for bears – especially juveniles – to wreak havoc at winter’s end in Truckee, but it is surprising to see one at the wheel of a pickup.

According to the Truckee Police Department, a young bear entered the cab of the unlocked truck Wednesday evening and was unable to get out when the door closed behind it.



This bear forgot to get the keys. Photo/Truckee Police

Police officers arrived at the home on St. Bernard Drive in the Tahoe Donner subdivision and quickly released the frightened bear.

There was significant damage to the interior of the truck, authorities said.

Bear scat was also left inside. Police are encouraging residents and visitors to lock their vehicles and not keep any food or other scented items that could attract hungry bears to their cars.

Festival teaches about native Tahoe species

The U.S. Forest Service Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit will host the third annual Native Species Festival on June 9.

This free family event is from 10am-4pm at the Taylor Creek Visitor Center, located three miles north of South Lake Tahoe on Highway 89.

This festival is a great way to spend the day outdoors and learn about the native species of the Lake Tahoe Basin. Attend walks led by field professionals and local students to learn about native Tahoe yellow cress, the invasive Eurasian water milfoil, the basin's native Lahontan cutthroat trout and the invasive American bullfrog.

Live music will be provided by the local band Fugitive Dust.

The festival will offer 14 educational booths from various public and nonprofit agencies, featuring topics like the American black bear, native bats, the American beaver, and Tahoe yellow cress. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will return this year with the popular large fish tank, which holds native Lahontan Cutthroat Trout, and the giant inflatable fish.

For more information, contact Jean Norman at (530) 543.2694.

Volunteer to test Tahoe water

on Snapshot Day

The 13th annual Water Quality Snapshot Day is May 11 from 9am to noon throughout Lake Tahoe and the Upper Truckee River area.

Volunteers are needed to conduct near shore water quality sampling and habitat assessments. The event 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. Water quality monitoring will take place from the tributaries flowing into Lake Tahoe all the way to the waters of Pyramid Lake.

It is sponsored by the Tahoe Resource Conservation District, League to Save Lake Tahoe, Nevada Division of Environmental Protection, UCCooperative Extension, Tahoe Regional Planning Agency, Incline Village General Improvement District, Tahoe Water Suppliers Association, UC Davis and the Truckee River Watershed Council.

Lake Tahoe and Truckee community volunteers will meet at central locations for an overview briefing about water quality measurements.

South Lake Tahoe volunteers meet at Lake Tahoe Community College. North Lake Tahoe volunteers meet at Patton Landing (Waterman Landing) on Highway 28 in Carnelian Bay.Truckee-area volunteers meet at the Truckee River Watershed Council office, 10418 Donner Pass Road.

Volunteer teams, led by trained group leaders, will then fan out to take samples and measurements at various locations at the same time on the same day. The teams will field-test streams for dissolved oxygen, total dissolve solids, pH and temperature; collect water samples for laboratory analysis of nutrients, sediment and bacteria; and conduct visual habitat assessments of the sites.

To sign up as a volunteer or team leader, you can register online at www.snapshotday.org or call the local SSD coordinator:

• Mary Kay Wagner (Truckee River-Nevada portion) – (775) 687.9454

• Andy Otto (Truckee River – California portion) – (530) 550.8760

• Emily Mathews (South Shore Lake Tahoe) – (530) 541.5388

• Rebecca Williams (North Shore Lake Tahoe) – (775) 832.1284.

Boats must be inspected before entering Tahoe

Boat inspections in the Lake Tahoe Basin have resumed.

All motorized boats and watercraft are required to be inspected for aquatic invasive species prior to launching into Lake Tahoe.

Knowingly transporting AIS into Lake Tahoe is against the law, and violators may be subject to monetary penalties.

Locations, hours of operation and opening dates are as follows:

Effective now:

Sunday-Wednesday 8:30am-5:30pm; Thursday-Saturday

Meyers: at the junction of highway 50 and 89

Spooner Summit: at the junction of highway 50 and 28

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

Starting May 23:

Thursday-Sunday 8:30am-5:30pm; Monday-Wednesday closed

Northstar: Highway 267, at Northstar Drive south of Truckee

Homewood: Highway 89, at Homewood Resort.

The annual watercraft inspection fees remain unchanged from 2012. The “Tahoe In & Out” sticker ranges from $35 for personal watercraft and vessels less than 17 feet and up to $121 for vessels longer than 39 feet. The “Tahoe Only” sticker fee is $30. An additional fee of $25 is being charged for any boat requiring decontamination and an additional $10 fee for the decontamination of each raw water system such as ballasts, generators, live wells, etc.

For more info, call 888.824.6267.