World Water Day organizers need volunteers

Who is monitoring the water quality in your local creeks, rivers, lakes and ponds? Don’t know? It could be you.

The World Water Monitoring Challenge kicks off March 22, coinciding with the United Nations’ World Water Day, and runs through Dec. 31.

The Challenge is designed to build public awareness and involvement in protecting water resources around the world by engaging citizens in the monitoring of their local water bodies.

Participants sample local rivers, creeks, lakes, ponds and reservoirs, and test them for four key water quality indicators: dissolved oxygen acidity level, temperature and turbidity. Sampling kits are available online.

For about $21 including shipping, or $15 if 10 or more kits are ordered. Classroom kits are available for about $60.

Water Environment Federation and the International Water Association are the coordinators of the event. Major sponsors include Xylem Inc., Smithfield Foods and the U.S. Geological Survey.

Last year, groups and individuals from 66 countries from Albania to Zimbabwe participated, monitoring 5,978 sites, including 2,971 sites in the United States. In California, 105 sites were monitored, ranking the state sixth among the 50 states.

There is plenty of opportunity to monitor water in California, noted Erick Burres, who coordinates the state Water Resources Control Board’s volunteer water monitoring program, called the

Clean Water Team. The Clean Water Team is a more formal program of water monitoring that relies on non-profit groups and individuals to regularly sample and test California water bodies. The state Water Board's Surface Water Ambient Monitoring Program provides training and support for the volunteers, whose work helps state scientists track the health of California's water resources.

The primary goal of the World Water Monitoring Challenge is to educate and engage citizens in the protection of the world's water resources. Conducting simple monitoring tests teaches participants about some of the most common indicators of water health, and encourages further participation in more formal citizen monitoring efforts.

For more information about the World Water Monitoring Challenge, go online.

Cold Creek controlled burn planned

U.S. Forest Service fuels management crews will resume prescribed fire operations in the Cold Creek area near South Lake Tahoe on March 19.Crews expect to burn approximately one-half acre.

Operations may continue through the week, weather and conditions permitting.

Residents and visitors can expect to see smoke from this prescribed fire project area. The Forest Service strives to minimize the impacts of smoke on local communities. Smoke-sensitive residents should consider staying indoors and

keeping doors, windows and outside vents closed.

To directly receive prescribed fire updates, send an email to pa_ltbmu@fs.fed.us.

Forest Service staff will post road signs around areas affected by prescribed fire, and update the local fire information line at (530) 543.2600, No. 6.

Mancuso 4th overall in GS standings

By USSA

LENZERHEIDE, Switzerland -– Julia Mancuso (Squaw Valley) skied into eighth place Sunday during the World Cup giant slalom final, finalizing her fourth place overall finish in the Audi FIS World Cup standings for the second year in a row.



Julia Mancuso

Sunday capped a historic season for the Best in the World U.S. Ski Team with 18-year-old teammate Mikaela Shiffrin (Eagle-Vail, Colo.) climbing to the fifth overall position and taking the globe for slalom. Lindsey Vonn (Vail) won a record 17th globe for downhill and finished eighth overall despite her season-ending injury in Schladming. Slovenian Tina Maze won

the giant slalom race Sunday.

Next the team returns home for the Nature Valley U.S. Alpine Championships at Squaw Valley.

Shiffrin became the first U.S. slalom World Cup champion since Tamara McKinney in 1983-84.

She made history as the fourth youngest woman to win a globe and the sixth youngest woman to win any World Cup title. She was also the third non-European woman to ever win the slalom crystal globe after McKinney and then Betsy Clifford in 1970-71.

Sugar Bowl – laid back charm, rugged terrain

By Kathryn Reed

NORDEN – Old. It's what Sugar Bowl is all about. And, yet, it feels so incredibly modern.

Disney isn't just the name of a chairlift at this resort tucked off Interstate 80. It's the last name of one of the founders – as in Walt Disney. Near the top of that lift are remnants from California's first chairlift that was built in 1939.

Going into the Sugar Bowl Lodge black and white photos are everywhere you look. One even shows a woman decades ago as part of the ski patrol.



Workers start at day break to get Sugar Bowl ready. Photos/Kathryn Reed

The lodge is a mix of rustic and contemporary. The upstairs rooms are not fancy, but they have what a skier needs – comfortable bed, hot shower and view of the mountain to get you going, and plenty of space to put the trappings of a winter getaway. Downstairs are the lockers for skis and boots.

It didn't matter that the wireless didn't extend upstairs. Working in front of the roaring fire in a comfortable chair or on the couch made it feel less like work. This lounge area is only for hotel guests or homeowners.

The exclusivity of it makes us feel a bit like it's our living room – with a few friends over for the weekend. No TV made it even more relaxing. Games are being played, books being read, people sipping Mt. Vernon wines on Saturday night (throughout the season different vintners sponsor tastings), some people are having a meal.

The dining room is adjacent the lounge. And it's not typical ski resort fare. This is fine dining. We weren't super hungry, so one night Sue and I opted for appetizers as our meal. I had the Baked Polenta and Brussel Sprouts: Gratineed with Blue cheese and toasted pine nuts finished with white truffle oil ($11) and a cup of the special mushroom soup ($5). Both were outrageously good. Sue had the French Onion Soup: Flavored with Port wine, and fresh thyme with a French bread crouton

and Gruyere cheese ($9) and Pan Seared Diver Scallops: Garnished with Pancetta crumbles on a butternut squash mash with a beurre noisette, ($12). Both were so rich and yummy that she didn’t even look at the dessert menu.

On the other side of the lounge is the Belt Room Bar. I highly recommend the mixed green salad ($9) and jalapeno fries ($6) – best to share the fries. Sue barely spoke between bites of her cheeseburger ($11.50).

It requires a gondola ride to get to the lodge. During the season it runs 24 hours a day to accommodate guests and residents. When the resort closes, access is through the Judah parking area.

Both routes are the main ways to access the mountain.

Sugar Bowl calls itself the only snowbound village in the United States. It is definitely ski-in, ski-out.

Sugar Bowl’s future

The foundation has been poured for the Sugar Bowl Ski Academy that will house 70 athletes. It will be the only ski-in, ski-out academy on the West Coast. Some of those skiers and boarders have the Olympics as a goal.

With Daron Rahlves calling Sugar Bowl home and often seen on the slopes, they know this resort has what it takes to make an Olympian.

The academy building is part of the $7 million in improvements the resort plans to make in the next few years.

Crows Peak is a new lift that will likely go in the ground this summer. This will give riders a bit more vertical in the Disney area.

A sport house is in the design phase. It will be a fitness and aquatic center for hotel guests, academy students and

homeowners. It will include weights, sauna and a lap pool.

The Summit Chair near the top of Mt. Judah opened in 2009. This lift accesses the backcountry. With it the resort opened a backcountry center to take people into the remote terrain and teach them how to ride it safely – including avalanche rescue training.

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Squaw gearing up for Pain McShlonkey Classic

The Pain McShlonkey Classic returns to Squaw Valley March 30. Now in its third year, this action packed on- and off-mountain event serves as a tribute to legendary skier Shane McConkey where the winner is crowned fastest snow blader on the planet.

Hosted by the Shane McConkey Foundation, the event has grown to be a highly successful fundraiser for local nonprofits. This year's event will benefit Make-A-Wish Foundation and the Tahoe Truckee Unified School District's environmental education programs.

The festivities begin that Saturday at 9am as athletes line up atop KT-22 chairlift for an all-out snowblade blitz. The pros

will take on 30 amateurs in an anything-goes battle to the finish on Squaw's GS Bowl, named for the original 1960 Olympic Giant Slalom course. Pros are invited to compete, while amateur contestants are selected by submitting their most embarrassing moment in an online contest.

Later, spectators gather below the outcroppings of Squaw's Enchanted Forrest for the Extreme Snowblade Small Mountain Invitational.

The Shane McConkey Foundation encourages skiers, riders and resorts around the world to celebrate the spirit of McConkey during this weekend.

For event details, registration information, after party tickets or to make a donation to the Shane McConkey Foundation, go online.

Spooner, Tahoe Mountain areas targeted for controlled fires

U.S. Forest Service fuels management crews will continue prescribed fire operations near Spooner Summit beginning March 18.

Crews expect to burn approximately 40 acres.

In addition, operations begin Monday on Tahoe Mountain near Dundee Circle. Crews expect to burn approximately 6 acres.

Operations in both locations may continue through the week, weather and conditions permitting.

Residents and visitors can expect to see smoke from these prescribed fire project areas. Smoke may be visible on Highway 50 near Spooner Summit. The Forest Service strives to minimize the impacts of smoke on local communities.

Smoke-sensitive residents should consider staying indoors and keeping doors, windows and outside vents closed. To directly receive prescribed fire updates, send an email to pa_ltbmu@fs.fed.us.

X Games drops snowmobile, motocross best tricks

By Jason Blevins, Denver Post

ESPN on Tuesday announced it was ending best trick contests for motocross and snowmobile disciplines at the Summer and Winter X Games.

“This change reflects our decision to focus on motor sports disciplines which feature athletes who also compete in multiple, world-class competitions (e.g. professional events and tours) reflecting the highest degree of athlete participation, competitive development and the global nature of our X Games franchise,” read a statement from ESPN.

ESPN, which created and hosts the X Games events, has made more than 60 changes to competition disciplines over the X Games’ 18-year history. The network said Tuesday that dropping motorcycle and snowmobile best trick contests would continue the growth of the games and were designed “to capture the evolution of the sport.”



Snowmobiler Caleb Moore practices during the Winter X Games on Jan. 24 in Aspen. Photo/RJ Sangosti/Denver Post)

The decision comes as ESPN is reviewing its Winter X Games freestyle snowmobile contests following the first X Games death of a snowmobile athlete and four-time X Games medalist Caleb Moore. Moore, 25, of Texas, under-rotated a backflip during the Winter X Games snowmobile freestyle competition at Aspen's Buttermilk ski area on Jan. 24, and snagged the skis of his sled on the landing ramp.

The 450-pound machine struck him as he tumbled down the ramp. After he was helicoptered to Grand Junction's St. Mary Hospital, he developed brain complications following heart surgery to address a cardiac contusion. He died a week after the accident.

The day Moore passed, Scott Guglielmino, ESPN's senior vice president of programming and global X events, said in an interview on the network's "Outside the Lines" show that X organizers would conduct a "thorough review" of all snowmobiling events.

Guglielmino said he would enlist athletes and course designers in an effort "to make sure that we take as much risk as we can out of (freestyle snowmobiling)."

He said he was most concerned with stunts where athletes

briefly leave the machine, spinning in the air before mounting the sled and landing. Those body-variation backflips are common during X Games, moto X and snowmobile freestyle contests.

“We are certainly interested in when they become separated from the snowmobile and they go downhill after that – such as Caleb’s crash,” Guglielmino said during the ESPN show. “We do not want to see snowmobiles landing on athletes, so that is something that is going to be very much the focus of our review in this instance.”

ESPN spokesman Danny Chi said the removal of “best trick” contests was under consideration before the Winter X Games in January in Aspen and the network’s review of snowmobile freestyle continues.

S. Lake Tahoe, Tahoe City set record highs

Lake Tahoe’s seesaw weather pattern will continue. Last week it was snow. Now there are record highs. Next week plan for rain and snow.

South Lake Tahoe on Wednesday and Thursday hit record highs. On March 13 the high was 69, while the previous record of 64 was set in 2007. On March 14 the mercury hit 66. The previous record was 62, also set in 2007.



Flowers are already blooming on the South Shore. Photo/LTN

Tahoe City also hit a record on Wednesday at 63. The previous high was 58 from 2005. The March 14 high is 63 from 2007. But with the temps not called into the National Weather Service in Reno until the morning, it's not known if Tahoe City hit a high Thursday. The forecast, though, called for a high of 64.

Reno on Wednesday broke a long-standing record with its 77 degrees. The previous high of 76 was set in 1888. Cloud cover prevented Reno from hitting consecutive highs.

The normal high for South Lake Tahoe this time of year is 48 degrees.

"We're going to see the ridge flatten by the weekend and see a cooling trend," Jessica Kilhorn, meteorologist technician, with the National Weather Service in Reno, told *Lake Tahoe News*.

Rain is expected to roll into the basin on Tuesday night, with snow dropping to lake level on Wednesday.

While the Weather Service isn't predicting precipitation amounts at this point, Kilhorn said, "It could be very moist."

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Sierra introduces untraditional ski event

Sierra-at-Tahoe will host freeskier Tanner Hall and the inaugural Tanner Hall Invitational on March 30.

Linked to the birth of freesking, Hall is an accomplished all-around freeskier with multiple X Games gold medals in slopestyle and superpipe.

Hall has invited 15 of the best skiers in the world to participate in a one-of-a-kind event with a feature that will offer a different format than the traditional slopestyle contest.

Snow Park Technologies, the Reno-Tahoe-based company that builds the X-Games courses, will work with Sierra Resort to build the unique feature that will incorporate a hip and quarterpipe. The contest will be a jam format with the athletes also serving as judges.

The hip session will be 1 hour, 15 minute-long jam session, followed by a quarterpipe jam session of the same length.

The cash purse will be a minimum of $10,000.

World-class skiers including Henrik Harlaut, Phil Casabon, Sammy Carlson, Torin Yater-Wallace, Mike Hornbeck, Joffrey Pollet-Villard, Duncan Adams, and more will attend the event.

The contest will be broadcast on a live webcast.

Mancuso 2nd overall in super G for season

By USSA

LENZERHEIDE, Switzerland -– Julia Mancuso (Squaw Valley) capped an incredible super G season with a second place finish in the women's super G standings. She was in contention for the title, but high winds and heavy overnight snow forced officials to cancel the final Audi FIS Alpine World Cup Final super G, handing the title to Slovenia's Tina Maze.

Mancuso finished top six, including four podiums in the six contested super G races this season.

Mancuso ended the season just a mere 55 points behind Maze, who locked in the overall title nine races before the end of the season.

Also in super G, Lindsey Vonn (Vail) missed the final two races due to injury, but captured two wins and finished fourth.

Leanne Smith (North Conway, N.H.) was 12th, Laurenne Ross (Bend, Ore.) 13th and Stacey Cook (Mammoth Lakes) 34th.

This was the second day in a row that finals races had to be canceled due to challenging weather.

Canceled races at the World Cup Finals cannot be rescheduled.