USFS set to pile burn on South and West Shores

U.S. Forest Service fuels management crews will conduct prescribed fire operations near Taylor Creek on Lake Tahoe's South Shore and on Alice Lane in the Meeks Bay area of the West Shore on Oct. 26.

Each area is approximately one-quarter acre.

On Oct. 28, prescribed fire operations will take place in the Timberland area of the West Shore, weather 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.

El Dorado County deputies scale back boat patrols

As boating activities slow down, the El Dorado County sheriff's boat patrol unit will appropriately modify its schedule to meet off-season boating needs.

Lake Tahoe, Fallen Leaf Lake, and Lower Echo Lake are

patrolled by deputies from the South Lake Tahoe station, while Folsom Lake, Jenkinson Lake, Union Valley Reservoir, Ice House Reservoir and the South Fork of the American River are patrolled by deputies from the Placerville office.

The department received a California Department of Boating and Waterways grant which with boat registration fees funded the boat patrol activities with no cost to the county general fund.

During the 2012 summer season deputies assisted 390 vessels and contacted 4,389 individuals. They conducted 20 searches for missing persons, 42 vessel inspections, investigated 13 boating accidents, issued 1,563 verbal warnings, 204 citations, and made six arrests for boating under the influence. During the 2012 season, there were two fatalities on El Dorado County waterways.

Hotels making it easy for guests to exercise outdoors

By Nancy Trejos, USA Today

Chris McGinnis travels with just a carry-on bag, which leaves little room for running shoes.

When he wants to exercise during a trip, he takes long walks. He prefers burning calories while strolling through the Hudson River Park in New York or Runyon Canyon in Los Angeles. It’s much nicer than running on a treadmill in a windowless hotel fitness room, he says.

“It’s just good to be outdoors after spending so many hours in

offices or on trade show floors full of stale air," says McGinnis, Best Western's business travel trends expert and a blogger at the company's travel site Youmustbetrippin.com.

The hotel fitness center has gotten fancier in recent years. But for many road warriors, that doesn't matter. They'd rather exercise in the great outdoors.

In a TripAdvisor survey of more than 1,400 U.S. travelers this year, 87 percent said walking is their primary exercise while traveling. Another 35 percent said they liked hiking, and 16 percent said they prefer biking.

In a bid to win those travelers, hotels are starting to give them exercise options beyond the fitness center. Many now offer walking tours and free bikes. Some have built outdoor areas for walking or running.

"There's clearly a group of travelers who like to work out in the gym and others who like to work out outside," says Chekitan Dev, associate professor of strategic marketing and brand management at Cornell University's School of Hotel Administration. "Hotels are recognizing that travelers need choices."

Dev also points out that many hotels are getting better at taking advantage of their surroundings. "It's sort of short-sighted to think of the facilities that guests can access as being just within four walls," he says. "Hotels realize they have a bigger landscape to choose from."

There's some scientific evidence to support the theory that exercising outside may be better than in a gym. A 2008 Glasgow University poll of about 2,000 people found a 50 percent improvement in mental health among those who worked out outdoors.

And studies show that frequent travelers could use a lift. In a Harris Interactive poll released this year, 75 percent of

2,000 working Americans said too much travel for work caused them more stress.

“You’re out of your normal element and surroundings, so even that can provide some level of stress,” says Cedric Bryant, chief science officer for the American Council on Exercise. “You’re not sleeping in your own bed. You’re not [following] your own routine as far as what you eat.”

Exercising outdoors, he says, can help moderate that.

“The fresh air and the changing scenery and so forth can serve as an even greater positive distraction to forget the various care and trials of the day,” he says.

Ted Mitchell, an engineer in Dallas, appreciates hotels that offer walking maps and other walking amenities. He tries to walk a couple of miles each night when he’s on the road.

“I am inside buildings in conference rooms all day,” he says. “Fresh air and being outside makes me feel like I am on vacation for a little while.”

At select Home2 Suites properties, guests can take advantage of a walking path surrounding the buildings.

“We just heard the drumbeats really loudly about customers wanting to stay healthy on the road and wanting to go out and get a breath of fresh air,” says Bill Duncan, global head of brand management for Home2 Suites and Homewood Suites by Hilton. “They want a variety of different ways to exercise.”

The Ritz-Carlton Dove Mountain north of Tucson, a Marriott property, offers a complimentary guided nature walk with one of their “rangers” every day. During the walk the rangers talk about the different types of plants and wildlife in the area and show participants ancient Indian petroglyphs. The Ritz-Carlton, Lake Tahoe provides maps for hikes that begin at the back doors of the property up to Sawmill Lake.

The Hotel Wolcott in Midtown Manhattan provides pedometers and walking maps at the front desk.

Affinia Hotels, which has properties in New York and Washington, D.C., offers guests a Walking Tour Kit that contains an iPod Shuffle or Nano loaded with Affinia Walking Tours and workout playlists, a City Walks deck of cards, a city guidebook, a map, pedometer and towel.

Some hotels are going so far as to give their guests a financial incentive to walk.

The Hotel Palomar San Diego has a “Walk this Way” package. In addition to a deluxe room, guests get a pedometer, bottled water, power bar and foot lotion. Those who walk more than 10,000 steps the day they check in get 50 percent off a room if they return to the Palomar San Diego or Palomar Los Angeles by the end of this year.

Bikes have also become more popular amenities at hotels.

At the Affinia Dumont and Affinia Shelburne in New York, guests have free use of a Republic Bike that comes with a map of popular routes and landmarks.

Kimpton’s four Chicago hotels have “Bike This Town Packages” that include, with a one-night stay in a deluxe room, two complimentary bike rentals, maps, energy bars, sun block and cyclometers to track distance. Kimpton’s Argonaut Hotel in San Francisco has a “Bike the Golden Gate Bridge Package” that includes a bike rental for two.

But travelers don’t have to rely on their hotels to find ways to exercise outside. All they have to do is get online and find out where the nearest park, hiking trail, beach, tennis court or golf course is. Or, they can search the Internet or community boards at coffeehouses for pickup basketball or volleyball games that may be happening while they’re in town.

Or, they can simply use their local park as an obstacle course, says Stacy Berman, owner and head trainer at Stacy's Bootcamp in New York. "Use a bench for dips and box jumps, sprint up a hill and use swings to do modified pull-ups," she says. "Be creative: Exercising outside is not just about running."

Fire restrictions in Lake Tahoe Basin lifted

With the arrival of cooler, wetter weather, the U.S. Forest Service Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit has lifted fire restrictions.

Additionally, Forest Service fire chief Kit Bailey, in conjunction with local fire chiefs, has opened residential burning.

Although the Forest Service is lifting the additional fire restrictions imposed in the summer, the Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit adopted a set of fire regulations in 2004 that restricts where campfires are allowed year-round. Most of the Lake Tahoe backcountry is stove only and a valid campfire permit is required. This same regulation applies within the Desolation Wilderness, where a "stove only" regulation has been in place for more than 10 years.

Developed campgrounds usually allow for campfires year-round in the facilities provided.

To obtain more information about backcountry fire regulations and how to obtain a campfire permit, call the Forest Supervisor's office in South Lake Tahoe at (530) 543.2694.

To learn more about residential burning, local restrictions and permits, contact your local fire department or fire protection district.

Tahoe National Forest lifts fire restrictions

Fire restrictions in the Tahoe National Forest have been lifted.

Recent rain and snow in the high country enabled the Forest Service to lift restrictions. Visitors can now have campfires in the backcountry with a valid campfire permit.

As fall progresses however, visitors are reminded to be fire safe as the weather can turn warm, dry and windy.

This past year in the Tahoe National Forest there were 65 lightning-caused fires and 52 human fires for a combined total of 38 acres, the largest being 2.5 acres.

For more information on fire restrictions, call(530) 587.3558.

More than a half ton of garbage plucked from Sierra's slopes

More than 1,400 pounds of trash was brought in off the slopes at Sierra-at-Tahoe on Oct. 21, including two snowboards, a few skis, a GoPro, a digital camera, a Blackberry, and water gun.

Plastic bottles, cans, trail fencing, and signs were also collected while cleaning up the mountain.

Sierra Resort employees spend the winter and summer months cleaning up the base area and parking lots, but cleaning up the slopes is a job that takes many helping hands. More than 250 members of the community came to Sierra-at-Tahoe Resort to help clean up the mountain at the annual Keep Sierra Clean Day.



An array of items found at Sierra the weekend before the season's first snowfall. Photo/Sierra Resort

"We're lucky to have such a loyal camaraderie of guests who care deeply enough about the environment to come up here on a Sunday and help us clean it up," John Rice, general manager of Sierra Resort, said in a press release. "It's important for

skiers and riders to be good stewards of the environment because they depend on it for their winter fun.”

Nevada working to bring major sporting events to the state

By Richard N. Velotta, Las Vegas Sun

With the U.S. Olympic Committee giving up on a U.S. bid to host the 2022 Winter Olympics, a coalition of winter sports enthusiasts will focus instead on attracting other sports competitions to Nevada, including the possibility of bringing a curling event to Las Vegas.

Lt. Gov. Brian Krolicki, who heads the Nevada Tourism Commission, said a group composed of several members of the Reno-Lake Tahoe Winter Games Coalition have met twice informally to explore strategies once the U.S. Olympic Committee officially agreed not to pursue the 2022 Games.

“It was always part of our conversation that the journey was well worth the effort, regardless of not capturing the Olympic dream,” Krolicki said after Wednesday’s Tourism Commission meeting.

“While the U.S. Olympic Committee has made decisions to postpone bidding efforts, we thought it was terribly important to stay on this path of securing sporting events,” he said.

The fledgling sports commission is expected to be a private

nonprofit organization dedicated to bringing elite international sporting competitions to Nevada. Initially, the group, comprising primarily winter sports boosters, would focus on winter events in the Lake Tahoe area, but it would expand to include summer events in the future, he said.

The state has hosted Junior Olympic cross country skiing events, and resorts also have worked to lure downhill competitions to the state's ski slopes.

Krolicki said he couldn't give details, but at the commission meeting said there are efforts being made to attract a major curling competition to Las Vegas.

Curling is an Olympic event in which players slide stones across a sheet of ice to a target. After a curler slides a 38- to 44-pound stone across the ice, two "sweepers" with brooms attempt to alter the state of the ice ahead of the stone to speed or slow its movement.

The marketing of winter sports in Nevada dominated the meeting, and the commission received several reports on strategies to attract ski enthusiasts to Lake Tahoe.

The Winter 2012-13 media strategy is part of a $1.5 million marketing plan within the state's controversial $3 million contract with Burson-Marsteller of New York.

The Tourism Commission will work with Burson-Marsteller to leverage social media posts and amplify content from outdoor recreation and travel sites.

It also will work on target audiences with a household income of $100,000. Commission officials said their primary market will be Southern California winter sports enthusiasts.

USFS schedules controlled burn on West Shore

U.S. Forest Service fuels management crews will begin prescribed fire operations in the Timberland area of the West Shore on Oct. 23.

Crews anticipate burning 3 to 10 acres per day, for a total of 10 to 20 acres, 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.

Other federal, state and local fire management agencies may also be conducting prescribed fire work during this period.

Sierra starts season with competitive ‘snowball fight’

Dodge, dive, dip, duck, and dodge Sierra-at-Tahoe style.

The first Sierra Snowball Fight will use the classic childhood game dodgeball to reconnect powder hounds and celebrate the upcoming winter before the lifts start spinning.

The Nov. 8 event is for all ages to compete in a variety of quirky games.

The event will take place at Brothers Bar and Grill in South Lake Tahoe starting at 7pm.

Grab five friends today and start training to be crowned Snowball Champions. Team space is limited. Sign up by calling (530) 543.3139.

Celeb golf regular Rypien wants to join Champions Tour

By Scott Hanson, Seattle Times

You’re one of the greatest athletes in Washington state history, you’ve quarterbacked a Super Bowl winner and your foundation just donated $3 million to a Children’s Emergency Center at Spokane’s Sacred Heart Hospital.

Having just turned 50, what do you for an encore?

Try to make it on golf's Champions Tour, of course.



Mark Rypien wants to do more than play at the ACC each year at Edgewood Tahoe. Photo/LTN file

That was the goal for Mark Rypien, who spent a week this month at the first stage of the 50-and-over Champions Tour qualifying school in Murrieta.

"I love challenges, and this Q school is a challenge," said Rypien, a star at Shadle Park High in Spokane before going to Washington State and the Washington Redskins.

It was more of a challenge than he might have thought. Rypien opened with an 81 after a double-bogey on his first hole, but he got progressively better, shooting 77, 75 and 71 on the final three days.

Although Rypien wasn't one of 14 players who advanced to the final qualifying (he tied for 25th in a field of 47), he was

pleased with the improvement.

“The first day I was over my head, and then I started playing golf,” he said. “These guys are just amazing. I didn’t make my first birdie until the 12th hole of the second round, and I started to wonder if there were any birdies out there. And the leaders are shooting 67 – now that’s golfing your ball.”

Rypien, who also starred in baseball and basketball at Shadle Park (he led the basketball team that beat Mercer Island in the controversial 1981 state championship), discovered when he was young he had a natural golf swing.

After getting drafted by the Washington Redskins in 1986, he lived a couple of blocks from Reston National Golf Course in Virginia. After finishing his morning work, he would walk to the course, carrying his clubs.

“It was a great chance to meet people, and I went from a 15 handicap to a 7 in one summer,” he said.

His pro football career took a little longer to take off. He didn’t play in a game in his first two seasons, but after starting six games in 1988, he became the team’s full-time starter the next five seasons.

Rypien led the Redskins to the 1992 Super Bowl title and was named the game’s MVP. He also played in two Pro Bowls before finishing his career in 2001.

Meanwhile, his golf game continued to improve. He won the inaugural Celebrity Golf Championship at Lake Tahoe in 1990, and finished second at the tournament this past summer.

That was just the continuation of good play this year, according to Rypien, who has all the competition he wants from his brother Tim, whose handicap is two shots better than scratch.

“I was playing well, creeping to 50, and it’s the youngest I

could ever be at Q school, so I decided to see what it looks like," he said.

Before Q school, Rypien talked with Rick Rhoden, the former major-league pitcher who spent time on the Champions Tour. He also found inspiration from John Brodie, the former 49ers quarterback who played on the Champions Tour for 14 years.

Rypien did well enough last week to try qualifying again next year, but he vows to be more prepared. When winter hits in Spokane, he quits playing, and he even takes time off in the summer.

"I will need to play and practice more," he said.

It's not like he has trouble finding things to do, between tutoring his nephew, Brett Rypien, Shadle Park High's star quarterback, and working with the Rypien Foundation, which provides assistance for families battling childhood cancer.

Rypien began the foundation six years after losing his 3-year-old son, Andrew, to cancer in 1998.

"It's the most rewarding thing that I do," Rypien said.

But he knows his game has to get better to make the Champions Tour.

"These guys out here are really, really good," he said.