Barton Foundation looking for golf players

The 18th annual Barton Foundation Golf Tournament is June 29 at Genoa Lakes Golf Course.

The 9am start is a shotgun scramble.

Cost is $150 per person. The Community Health Endowment Fund of the Barton Foundation is the beneficiary.

For more information, call (530) 543.5909.

Suggestions in changing Wildlife Services range from new practices to outright bans

By Tom Knudson, Sacramento Bee

Like many ranchers, Bill Jensen drives a pickup, shoots a high-powered rifle and loves to talk about sheep, cattle and the outdoors.

But unlike many ranchers, he no longer relies on the federal government for predator control.

Nor does the Marin County rancher have a choice. Ten years ago Marin, known for its environmental activism, halted lethal federal control and launched a program emphasizing nonlethal methods. Jensen, initially skeptical, has turned the program

into a success with miles of electric fencing.

“We’ve pretty much learned how to control coyotes on our own,” said Jensen, whose losses to coyotes have declined 60 percent to 70 percent – from about 50 lambs a year when a federal trapper worked there to 15 to 20 today. “Anything that can help you 24 hours a day, like electric fencing, is a good thing.”

What’s happening in Marin County shows that ranchers can co-exist with predators without lethal federal control. It is part of a broader and varied spirit of reform aimed at finding new, less destructive ways to live with predators and other wildlife.

The target of that effort – a little-known division of the U.S. Department of Agriculture called Wildlife Services – has long specialized in destroying animals considered to be a threat to agriculture, the public and the environment.

Since 2006, employees have trapped, shot and poisoned more than a half million coyotes and other predators, along with 300-plus other species, from non-native starlings and pigeons to red-tailed hawks, prairie dogs, beaver and other native birds and mammals. In the process, they have also accidentally killed more than 50,000 non-target animals, from domestic dogs to golden eagles to black bears.

“People want to see bears. They want to see wolves. They want to see mountain lions. It’s part of the natural heritage of the United States,” said Michael Mares, president of the American Society of Mammalogists. “We should be stewards of the system, not wiping out species and damaging ecosystems.”

Ideas for reform include more nonlethal control, curtailing aerial gunning, a ban on traps, snares and cyanide poison and pouring more resources into controlling invasive species. Some critics are calling for an investigation of Wildlife Services’ trapping practices and perhaps eliminating the agency

altogether.

“As a fiscal conservative and a budget hawk, why is the taxpayer paying for this?” said Rep. John Campbell, a Republican from Irvine and one of the agency’s leading critics.

“We’re in a period in which everything in the budget is being looked at,” Campbell said. “Here we have a program that is not very effective, has a number of unintended consequences and costs millions of dollars.”

Many, of course, do not support change, including the American Farm Bureau Federation, which represents more than 6 million farmers and ranchers nationwide. “They provide a lot of valuable services,” Richard Krause, senior director of congressional relations for the federation, said of Wildlife Services.

“They help control predators and pests that cause millions of dollars in damage to agricultural producers every year, from crops to livestock,” Krause said. “We support the idea of what Wildlife Services does.”

Read the whole story

Curling clinic at South Tahoe ice rink

On May 24 from 7:30-9:30pm there will be a free curling clinic at the South Lake Tahoe Ice Arena.

Participation is limited to the first 20 people who reserve a spot.

Participants should dress in warm clothes, clean, close-toed, athletic rubber soled shoes and gloves.

For more information or to sign up, call (530) 544.7465.

Residential burn permits required

By Cathy Locke, Sacramento Bee

Permits for residential burning are now required within state responsibility areas of Nevada, Yuba, Placer and Sierra counties.

Residents must obtain a valid burn permit and burn only on allowed burn days as determined by their local air district, according to a California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection news release.

In the Truckee area, burning is allowed only during daylight hours to minimize smoke complaints due to nighttime inversions.

Read the whole story

Sierra Nevada range rising rapidly

By LiveScience

The Sierra Nevada mountain range in California and Nevada is rising at what scientists call a pretty good clip, geologically speaking: 1 to 2 millimeters per year. That's roughly a half-inch every 10 years.

"The exciting thing is we can watch the range growing in real time," said University of Nevada, Reno's Bill Hammond, lead researcher on a long-term project studying the rise. "Using data back to before 2000 we can see it with accuracy better than 1 millimeter per year. Perhaps even more amazing is that these miniscule changes are measured using satellites in space."

The Sierra Nevada range includes the tallest mountain in the continental United States, Mt. Whitney at more than 14,000 feet. Around Lake Tahoe, the peaks are in the 10,000-foot range.

The amount might seem small, but the data indicate that long-term trends in crustal uplift suggest the modern Sierra could be formed in less than 3 million years, which is relatively quick when compared to estimates using some geological techniques.

Read the whole story

Nevada skier overcomes obstacles, helps others

By Dina Kupfer, KRNV-TV

Katie Lyons was 15 years old and at the peak of her ski racing performance when she learned she had scoliosis.

Beyond natural concerns about surgery, she needed to preserve her spine's range of motion because she was a competitive downhill ski racer and wanted to remain one. She had recently been named #1 in her age group and was poised to assume a role on the U.S. Ski Team. But her scoliosis was so severe that it would eventually begin to put pressure on her lungs and her heart and would begin to cause a visible deformity.

Read the whole story

Camping fees going up at USFS lands in Tahoe

Due to increased costs of doing business, fees at campgrounds operated by California Land Management on National Forest System lands in the Lake Tahoe Basin will rise by $2 this season.

Camping fees will increase at Fallen Leaf (now $30), Meeks Bay (now $25), William Kent (now $25), Kaspian (now $17) and Nevada Beach (now $30 for regular sites, $34 for premium sites) campgrounds.

The fees at Bayview Campground, beaches and day-use areas

remain the same.

Seasonal beach passes are $70 and may be purchased at the Fallen Leaf Campground store, as well as William Kent and Nevada Beach campgrounds. Beach passes are good during the Fourth of July weekend. Dog owners are reminded that dogs and other pets are not allowed on designated swim beaches including Nevada, Pope, Baldwin, Meeks Bay, William Kent and Kaspian beaches.

As a reminder, until recreation facilities officially open, there is no parking, trash removal, or restroom facilities available.

Boat inspectors working throughout Lake Tahoe Basin

Roadside stations for inspections and decontaminization of motorized boats and watercraft are open for the boating season at five locations entering the Lake Tahoe Basin.

Locations and hours are:

· Meyers, at the junction of highways 50 and 89, 8am-8pm;

· Spooner Summit, at the junction of highways 50 and 28; open 8am-8pm;



Boat inspections are designed to keep AIS out of Lake Tahoe. Photo/LTN file

· Highway 267, at Northstar Drive south of Truckee, open 8am-6pm;

· Highway 89, at Alpine Meadows Road north of Tahoe City, open 8am-8pm;

· Highway 89, at Homewood Resort, open 8am-6pm.

All motorized boats and watercraft require inspection for aquatic invasive species prior to launching into Lake Tahoe. Quagga and zebra mussels are especially problematic, as they are known to multiply quickly and colonize underwater surfaces, including docks and piers, water supply and filtration systems, buoys, moored boats and even the beautiful rocky shoreline.

Boats and other watercraft are the largest transporters of AIS. Knowingly transporting AIS into Lake Tahoe is against the law, and violators may be subject to fines.

A reminder of the need for watercraft inspections occurred on April 18, when inspectors at the Meyers roadside inspection station detected more than 40 zebra mussels on a boat. A Lake Tahoe resident, who had offered the boat for inspection training purposes, had recently purchased it from the Great

Lakes. The boat was immediately quarantined by the California Department of Fish and Game and decontaminated by Tahoe RCD staff multiple times using 140-degree hot water and until it was completely cleared of all signs of invasive species.

Annual watercraft inspection fees range from $35 for personal watercraft and vessels under 17 feet up to $121 for vessels over 39 feet. The annual “Tahoe Only” sticker fee remains unchanged from 2011. An additional fee of $25 is being charged for any boat requiring decontamination.

Volunteers needed to work in Desolation Wilderness

The U.S. Forest Service Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit is looking for volunteers who love working outdoors, educating and helping people, and would like to help preserve Desolation Wilderness.

The public is invited to attend one of two informational meetings in South Lake Tahoe this month to learn about volunteer opportunities, training, minimum requirements and how volunteer help is important to the preservation of Desolation Wilderness.

Desolation Wilderness is approximately 64,000 acres of pristine sub-alpine and alpine forest, granite peaks and glacially-formed valleys and lakes located on the southwest end of Lake Tahoe.

Volunteers work closely with Forest Service wilderness staff

and can choose from a variety of project based activities including newly developed trailhead and backcountry naturalist programs as well as visitor education, wilderness staff support for office and field projects and backcountry trail maintenance and campsite restoration. Field projects involve hiking in moderate to difficult terrain and require an appropriate level of physical ability. Volunteers should commit to a minimum of six days for the summer season. Additional information is available online.

Prospective volunteers should attend a 90-minute informational meeting on May 9 at 7pm or May 12 at 9:30am at the Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit Supervisor's Office at 35 College Drive, South Lake Tahoe.

For more information, contact Chris Engelhardt at (530) 543.2766.

Recreation in S. Lake Tahoe – a game of partnerships

By Kathryn Reed

South Lake Tahoe's recreation facilities are old and need to be overhauled.

That was the message delivered at this month's City Council meeting by Stan Sherer, community services director.

When asked if the ball fields or rec center should be the priority, he told the council the 37-year-old recreation center needs attention first.



South Lake Tahoe is recruiting partners to keep its recreation programs viable. Photo/LTN file

In his staff report, Sherer wrote, “The major items that need to be addressed include: The locker rooms need to be remodeled, the weight room needs to be expanded and new equipment needs to be purchased. It could be an asset to the efforts to attract high altitude training camps. The gym floor needs to be replaced.”

However, there is no capital improvement program for these facilities. And these facilities, while tourists use them, are a huge draw for locals.

Those in the tourism sector beating the recreation drum as a reason to visit the South Shore don’t seem to have looked at all the facilities to know that what tourists are likely to find are in many ways substandard entities from what they are used to.

In his report to the council, Sherer said he would like to see, “A multiuse athletic complex that could host large athletic events at one location (to) enhance our ability to secure future events. When coupled with the attraction of our natural environment and the other recreation opportunities in the area, the complex would become a regional-national draw for athletic tournaments and special events. Obviously, the complex would also enhance the recreational opportunities for

our local community.”

Community field

Sherer predicts the community ball field by Lake Tahoe Community College will need to be replaced in two years. That field was dedicated June 23, 2005.

Steve Weiss, former director of the city’s parks department and current member of the Measure R ball fields committee, said at the committee meeting last week that the seams coming up at that field are a result of how much action the artificial turf is subjected to.

Sherer said part of the problem with the seams is they were never properly glued. The manufacturer was out of business two years after it was put in.

That field has endured an unusual amount of scrutiny in the last few months because it is where the three-day SnowGlobe music festival was staged and people believe that contributed to the degradation of the field.

Recreation officials say otherwise – that the lifespan of the field is nearing its natural end.

While Weiss said he was at the field April 19 when a truckload of debris was sucked out of the carpet, Sherer told the council this is the first time the field has had such a cleaning since it was laid down.

Weiss also said, “I would deem it a playable field.”

To replace the field, Sherer estimates it will cost between $700,000 and $900,000.

From Measure S/R the city receives $50,000 to maintain that field and will continue to until the bond expires in 2030.

Each year the three jurisdictions that are part of the

recreation bond report their Measure S/R expenditures to the oversight board. In July 2011, when the last report was made, it was noted the city had received $300,000 for the field, of which $162,059.11 had been spent.

It's possible those remaining funds would go toward replacement costs.

According to John Upton, staff member for the recreation JPA, "The original bond had not been sufficient to construct the restroom/concession building at the site. In addition, the JPA has disbursed $202,500 to the city for that purpose, of which $187,484.99 had been spent."

Any revenues generated from that field go into the city's coffers.

Lake Tahoe News in an email dated April 29 asked:

> Who makes money off this field? What is the revenue to public entities – and what are those amounts – and the entities? And what is the revenue to private and/or nonprofit entities – and what are those amounts – and what are the entities?

Sherer and Upton were on that email. Upton deferred to Sherer because the JPA has nothing to do with revenue from the field. Sherer never responded.

Other recreation items

The city will see some new revenue this summer from various contracts it will have with vendors that didn't exist before. StandUp Paddle will rent equipment and store non-motorized watercraft at Lakeview Commons.

A food vendor is being sought for Regan Beach and Lakeview Commons, the latter being a new revenue stream.

In the last year with budget cuts, the rec department has lost

five of its six staff members. To keep services going partnerships have been formed.

Lake Tahoe Boys & Girls Club is helping with youth programs. The senior center is sharing facilities with El Dorado County. A master’s swim class through Lake Tahoe Community College has been added. The Red Cross is handling lifeguard training and certification.

“Our goal is to create partnerships in an effort to avoid duplication of services provide by local agencies and identify new programming opportunities to increase the diversity in what is offered,” Sherer wrote in the staff report.