Fees may be going up at Lake Forest boat ramp

The Tahoe City Public Utility District, operator of the Lake Forest boat ramp, is hosting a public workshop March 27 from 11:30am-1pm about plans and proposals for the upcoming season.

At this workshop, TCPUD will share a proposal to change operations and to increase the daily launch fees and season pass rates for 2012. Currently, revenue from pass sales and launch fees do not cover the operational costs for the boat ramp and the proposed rate increase would help meet the TCPUD's goal of reducing the property tax subsidy of the boat ramp.

The workshop will be in the TCPUD Board Room, 221 Fairway Drive, Tahoe City.

Rahlves' Banzai Tour part of TV special

As part of the Red Bull Signature Series, Rahlves' Banzai Tour airs March 27 on NBC Sports Network at 10pm.

This one-hour special pits four skiers head-to-head in an intense top-to-bottom competition at four Lake Tahoe resorts – Kirkwood, Alpine Meadows, Squaw Valley and Sugar Bowl.

The brainchild of 12-time World Cup winner, world champion and four-time Olympic skier Daron Rahlves, this ski cross event

features shoulder-to-shoulder battles on ungroomed terrain, with riders making a run for it with the most decorated U.S. male downhill athlete ever.



Contenders in Rahlves' Banzai Tour at Alpine Meadows. Photo/Jeff Engerbretson

Rahlves’ Banzai Tour is part of the Red Bull Signature Series – made up of 35 hours of one-of-a-kind programming on NBC and NBC Sports all year.

Educational snowshoe trek on North Shore

Alpenglow Sports is partnering with Tahoe Institute for Natural Science to bring a unique type of guided snowshoe to the North Shore. The tour will last approximately three hours

and will focus on winter survival strategies of the flora and fauna found throughout Page Meadows.

Meet at Alpenglow in Tahoe City on March 31 at 10am. Bring warm clothes. Participants will carpool to Page, leaving about 10:30am. The hike is free, but space is limited to 25 slots. Preregister by emailing will@tinsweb.org.

For more information, call (530) 583.6917 or email brendan@alpenglowsports.com.

Spring training – where the score is secondary to the fun

By Kathryn Reed

SCOTTSDALE – Eighty-degree days in March and beer vendors meandering through the outfield grass. Clearly this is not AT&T Park in San Francisco.

It's Scottsdale Stadium – where the Giants call home during spring training. They will be playing there for another week to get ready for the real season.

It's appropriately named the Cactus League based on the flora throughout the Phoenix area where 15 teams play in 10 stadiums.



Fans are closer to the field at spring training. Photos/Kathryn Reed

There is something special about spring training. Parks are more intimate, fans of the sport – not just of the teams playing – fill the stands, beer is brought to you, a slew of players fill the lineup, and the sun is beating down. It's less intense – maybe because the score doesn't have the same meaning as during the regular season.

It's hard not to run into someone from Tahoe. The Merkleys were sitting a few rows in front of us on the grass, with one of the boys wearing a South Tahoe High shirt. John Rice's trip overlapped with ours. For many in Tahoe, it's an annual ritual – where that crack of the bat sounds rhythmic and the thought of snow melts.

Players make a habit of signing autographs for throngs of fans. It's almost like you could be on a first name basis with them. If only Buster would want to play a game of catch.

Load up your wallet

Spring training is big business for Arizona. And it's not cheap.

Bring cash. Many vendors at this particular park wouldn't take plastic. Food prices are creeping up to what AT&T charges,

what with $6 garlic fries and $8.50 for Gordon Biersch beer.

Tickets, too, are pricey – $25 to sit on the grass on a Sunday. This is more than any of my season ticket games at AT&T ballpark. The price dropped to $12.50 for a Tuesday afternoon game.

In addition to the ballpark prices, extra taxes are levied on visitors to provide all the fun. The Arizona Sports and Tourism Authority collects a 1 percent hotel tax, which will expire in 2031. Maricopa County adds a 3.25 percent tax on car rentals.

But tax revenue for the tourism agency is short $165 million, in large part because of the recession. That money was supposed to go for stadium improvements. Individual towns may need to pony up the cash for the upgrades to satisfy agreements with various baseball teams.

The state brings in about $350 million a year off people coming to the region for spring training, according to the *Arizona Republic*. A record 1.59 millions fans filled the 10 stadiums for about 230 games in 2011, the newspaper said.

How to save

But not everything is expensive. We parked in the free, unlimited parking lot owned by the city of Scottsdale. Parking on city streets was available for free for three hours.

And the trolley is free, too. And the sign for it makes sense – visitors know it's public transit and the schedule is posted. How refreshing.

Meandering up and down the streets of Old Town Scottsdale can fill hours. It's just a couple blocks from the stadium. Stores are varied, sidewalks wide and most are covered – which on a hot day would be incredibly welcome. It's touristy without having the feeling it was created just for tourists.

The Old Town Tavern is perfect to sip a local brew after the game. Baseball chatter echoes from most of the tables.

Lodging is all over the board. We stayed at a friend’s condo in Scottsdale at the Troon North Golf Club. Perfect accommodations for the four us – me, Sue, mom and my sister, Pam.

For golfers, this is an ideal location. For those more interested in listening to songbirds announcing the arrival of a new day, bunnies hopping at twilight, and cacti flowers sprouting, then Troon North is still the place to stay.

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Biathlon combines two opposing sports

By Holly Heyser, Sacramento Bee

It’s something about the insanity of biathlon that lures people in: First, ski fast and hard. Then, stop, drop and try to shoot five targets while your thumping heart makes the sight on your .22 rifle bounce like hail on a tin roof.

Now, do it all again – but this time, shoot from an even more challenging position: standing.

Crazy, right?

Exactly the point.

“It intrigues people because it’s a combination of two completely opposed sports: The cross-country ski racer is going really hard, and the shooter has to be really focused, calm and deliberate,” said Auburn Ski Club biathlon coach Glenn Jobe. “Combining the two sports is one of the most challenging endeavors you can make in athletics.”

Biathlon is a sport most Americans glimpse just once every four years, when the Winter Olympics put it front and center. If you watched biathlon during the 1980 Winter Olympics at Lake Placid, New York, chances are you saw Jobe race in the 20-kilometer event.

Now 61, Jobe still competes in masters races on occasion, but his main focus is introducing people to the sport, which he does through clinics at the Auburn Ski Club’s facility next to the Boreal Ridge ski area.

If you want to learn biathlon in California, this is where you go. The next-closest ranges are at the Soldier Hollow Cross-Country Ski Resort in Utah and at West Yellowstone in Montana.

Read the whole story

Tahoe bears won’t be part of Nevada hunt

By Jeff Delong, Reno Gazette-Journal

Black bears will not be hunted in the Lake Tahoe Basin and a swath of the Carson Range near Mount Rose during the coming summer, Nevada wildlife officials decided today.

After two days of hearing from those opposed to and in favor

of the hunt, the Nevada Wildlife Commission selected hunt boundaries that exclude the Tahoe Basin and the Mount Rose area south of Thomas Creek.

“I just truly believe that it’s reasonable,” Commissioner David McNinch said of a proposal supporters said may diminish controversy over the hunt and at the same time possibly position the hunt to withstand scrutiny during the 2013 Legislature.

Read the whole story

Golf tournament benefits South Shore high schools

The 25th annual Booster Club Golf Tournament is May 5-6 at Edgewood Tahoe in Stateline.

Edgewood donates the course so all funds raised benefit South Tahoe and Whittell high schools.

Entry fee is $125, which includes 18 holes of golf, golf cart and lunch. Or play both days for $225.

Each day is an individual tournament with a scramble format. Individuals, couples, and foursomes are welcome. Trophies will be awarded to the top the teams each day.

Registration and raffle ticket sales open at 9:30am, the tournament begins with a “shotgun” start at 11am. Lunch will be provided as golfers pass between the 9th and 10th holes.

To register or for questions, call Kevin Kjer at (775) 588.6354 or email KJKjer@aol.com.

Sand Harbor parking, kayak access concern beach-goers

By Anne Knowles

CARSON CITY – Capacity and kayakers top the list of issues to be addressed in the Lake Tahoe Nevada State Park general management plan update.

The Nevada Division of State Parks had meetings this week with interested agencies and the public to get input on the blueprint for managing the park that runs along the East Shore of Lake Tahoe, from Incline Village to Spooner Lake, and contains the popular Sand Harbor beach and miles of hiking trails.



Bus access to Sand Harbor may ease parking issues. Photo/LTN file

The update, which will revise the current plan done in 1990,

will cover everything from natural resources to recreation as well as fiscal management of the park. The division plans to produce a draft by the end of this summer, followed by a 30-day review period with another public meeting, and a final version by the end of the year.

First on the list of challenges is Sand Harbor beach, which on summer days quickly fills up, causing cars to back up on Highway 28 and creating a public safety hazard.

“Capacity at Sand Harbor is a huge issue for us,” Jay Howard, park supervisor III at Lake Tahoe Nevada State Park, told about 100 people during the public meeting. “We close the gates as soon as it is full and may reopen them at 3(pm), but we don’t have the staff to open, close, open, and close the gates.”

Inadequate staffing is a problem that may not be resolved any time soon due to budget constraints. In the last two years, the Nevada parks division has cut staff in department offices and the state’s 25 parks by 60 percent.

“It’s a challenge, but we have found some opportunities,” said Dana Dapolito, environmental planner with California Tahoe Conservancy, who attended the meeting the Nevada parks division hosted for agencies. “What it has done is made us more creative in pursuing public-private partnerships.”

CTC, while it operates in California, is interested in what Nevada State Parks does because the two agencies jointly run Van Sickle Bi-State Park on the South Shore. A general management plan for it was created in 2005.

To address the capacity problem on the East Shore, the Tahoe Transportation District is launching a shuttle bus service between Incline Village and Sand Harbor. Scheduled to start in mid-June, the service will run two to three 40-foot buses with room for people and gear back and forth between the sites. Tickets are expected to cost $3.

Howard said the location of the Incline Village bus stop is still being worked out because it will need adequate parking.

If successful, the East Shore Express will be extended to Spooner Lake, taking in Chimney Beach where parking is also is short supply, said Howard.

Meanwhile, a 1.5-mile zone around the entrance to Sand Harbor is being marked to deter people from parking on Highway 28, said Howard. Signs going up before the summer season will clearly delineate the area and warn drivers of a $115 fine for parking there.

Howard said the division will monitor for overcrowding at Sand Harbor, but he expects attendance to remain about the same as people deterred by fines along the highway will be replaced in equal numbers by beachgoers who take the shuttle bus to the beach.

Sand Harbor has another capacity conundrum: kayakers. Kayakers must use the boat launch, where parking is limited, because kayaks are a hard-bottomed boat which cannot be launched from swimming beaches.

“There are only 14 places to park,” said Lola Mitchell, an Incline Village resident and kayaker who attended the meeting. “So we need new access. They are talking about letting them access the beach.”

Howard said a designated launch for kayaks and paddleboards – another hard-bottomed vessel – on the beach is being considered but nothing has been decided yet.

Paddleboards are competing with kayaks in popularity and visitors are requesting the park add a concession for renting the boards, said Curtis Appling, principal with Ascent Environmental, a Sacramento-based environmental planning firm hired by the parks division to develop the general management plan.

During the public meeting, at a series of information stations for different parts of the park, the division was writing down concerns and suggestions from the public. At the Sand Harbor station, for example, one attendee suggested requiring reservations to reduce traffic jams. At the station for the Spooner Lake backcountry, mountain bikers said visibility is poor on the path dedicated to bikes.

Another issue of concern to the division and public alike is fuels management and indentifying priority areas, such as Tunnel Creek, where ladder fuels in dense forested areas can develop. The division's plan is to control it through hand thinning and controlled burns.

Howard said the agencies that met with the division at a separate meeting voiced concerns about fuels management as well, and about protection of certain species including bald eagles, mountain beaver and Northern Goshawk.

Officials said information on the developing general management plan would be posted at the parks division website.

Bowman to give clinic to young snowboarders at Sierra

Dew Tour champion, X-Games silver medalist, South Lake Tahoe local, and professional skier Maddie Bowman will be hosting an introduction to freestyle skiing class this weekend at Sierra-at-Tahoe – her home resort.

Bowman will educate Sierra Resort Rippers, children ages 5-12,

on everything from terrain park safety to freestyle skiing.



Maddie Bowman

She will also talk to the Rippers about her journey from Sierra to the X-Games podium.

Bowman will ski with the kids on March 24 and March 25 from 1-3pm in the Burton Progression Park located on Broadway trail.

3-day academy for skiers, riders at Heavenly

For three days, the best of the best in snowsport education will share their knowledge in an exclusive clinic at Heavenly Mountain Resort.

Michael Rogan, Robin Barnes and Josh Spoelstra, all Professional Ski Instructors of America or American Association of Snowboard Instructors National Demo Team members, will work with skiers and snowboarders at the Peak Performance Academy from March 26-28.

The Peak Performance Academy will pair participants with elite ski and snowboard instructors for an all-mountain clinic that focuses on steep and mogul techniques, video analysis, high-

end riding and off-piste tactics, as well as addressing personal goals.

Registration is $1,550 and includes three nights lodging at the Marriott Grand Residence Club in the Heavenly Village, a three-day lift ticket, daily on-mountain lunch, hosted après party, and a dinner on March 27. Book online.