Truckee Donner Land Trust recognized for environmental efforts

Truckee Donner Land Trust is one of *Sunset* magazine's 2012 environmental award winners.

Independence Lake won in the category of best lake or lakeshore preservation. As an award winner, the Land Trust joins the ranks of the most creative and effective environmental organizations in the West.

William Thauvette, president of the Land Trust, in a statement said, "Independence Lake was on and off the market for 50 years before it was purchased from NV Energy by The Nature Conservancy and the Land Trust. To receive this award really illustrates how important our work is in the northern Sierra."

Independence Lake, considered to be one of the finest pristine sub-alpine lakes in the West, supports California's last wild and self-sustaining lake populations of threatened Lahontan cutthroat trout.

In the 1970s, Disney Corporation planned on building a mega-modern ski resort and complex on the ridges and bowls encircling the lake. Disney had plans for a four-lane highway from the current turn-off to Sagehen Field Station on Highway 89. Mt. Lola, Carpenter Peak and other peaks were to be connected via gondolas and chairlifts.

Independence Lake would have been ringed with marinas, piers and docks leading to vacation homes and estates. Plans included a golf course, equestrian center, hotel, condos, hundreds of miles of roads, parking for 2,500 vehicles, and

hundreds of thousands of square feet of commercial development to accommodate visitors to the new resort.

The lake was again threatened by development in 2002 when the property was nearly sold to a Silicon Valley icon.

Today, visitors can enjoy the lake's day use facilities, which include, picnicking, swimming, mountain biking, hiking, wildlife viewing, and fishing. A fleet of boats and kayaks offered by the Land Trust and The Nature Conservancy are available for free to visitors.

The 2012 Environmental Awards are featured in the March 2012 issue of *Sunset* magazine.

Tahoe cyclists to be honored

On March 16, the Lake Tahoe Bicycle Achievement Awards Ceremony and Film will be at Mo's Place in South Lake Tahoe.

Awards will be given in four categories for the years 2010 and 2011 to those who have significantly contributed to the advancement of bicycling in the Tahoe region.

The free event starts at 7pm.

Following the award ceremony the mountain bike film "Lifecycle" will be shown.

Hight snares halfpipe win in Mammoth

By USSA

MAMMOTH MOUNTAIN -– Olympians Louie Vito of Sandy, Utah, and Elena Hight of South Lake Tahoe won Saturday’s halfpipe, concluding the Sprint U.S. Snowboarding Grand Prix at Mammoth Mountain.

Vito was crowned series champion while the women’s runnerup Kaitlyn Farrington of Bellevue, Idaho, won the women’s series title. It was a sweep for the U.S. women and men with Hight scoring an impressive 92.8 followed by teammates Farrington and Ellery Hollingsworth of Darien, Conn. For the men Greg Bretz of Mammoth Lakes finished second and Luke Mitrani of Breckenridge third.

Vonn blasts her way to second in GS; Mancuso doesn’t finish

By USSA

OFTERSCHWANG, Germany – Lindsey Vonn of Vail produced a scorching final run of giant slalom Saturday to finish second in spring-like Ofterschwang and boost her Audi FIS Alpine World Cup point total to 1,708.

German Viktoria Rebensburg won for the second straight day and leads Vonn in the giant slalom standings by 135 points with two discipline races left on the calendar. With the podium, Vonn became the first skier to produce four World Cup seasons with 15 or more podiums, breaking a tie she held with Austrian great Hermann Maier.

Vonn was 1.68 behind Rebensburg after hitting her face on a gate, which knocked her goggles sideways in the first run.

Julia Mancuso of Squaw Valley was seventh after the first run, but went out in the final.

There are seven races remaining in the World Cup season, including a slalom on Sunday in Ofterschwang.

South Tahoe woman wins

slopestyle in Mammoth

By USSA

MAMMOTH LAKES – After three days of wind and snow Chas Guldemond of Reno earned his second slopestyle win in a row, this time at the Paul Mitchell Progression Session at Mammoth.

Teammate Sage Kotsenburg of Park City finished second on Friday when conditions were sunny and beautiful, raising spirits, bringing smiles and getting the sunblock flowing.

Joanna Dzierzawski of South Lake Tahoe took the win for the women.

Guldermond scored a 94.5 and went huge on a backside double 1260.

Guldemond's first of two consecutive wins was at the Ticket To Ride World Championship Feb. 19 in Oslo, Norway.

Dzierzawski's run included switching up her rotations with a backside 360, and frontside 360.

Indigo Monk of Manhattan Beach took second in women's competition at 17-years-old and Karly Shorr of Milford, Mich., was third.

2 Heavenly Ski Foundation athletes headed to Junior Worlds

Two Heavenly Ski and Snowboard Foundation athletes have received invitations to attend the Junior Worlds in Valmalenco, Italy, March 20-24.

Representing the Heavenly Freestyle Team in singles moguls and dual moguls will be Anna Park. Park is 14,-year-old ninth-grader at Harper Junior High in Davis.

Park has been training with the Heavenly Freestyle Team under Coach Jere Crawford for the past three years and skiing for 11. In order to receive the invitation for Junior Worlds, Park had to be ranked in the top four U.S. athletes for freestyle aged 19 and under.

Representing the Heavenly Alpine Team in skiercross will be Whitney Gardner. Gardner is 18 years old and a senior at Whittell High School. Gardner has been training with the Heavenly Alpine Team under Coach Noel Dufty for the past six years and has been an athlete at the foundation since age 6.

Old ski lodge set to open on top of Echo Summit

By Kathryn Reed

ECHO SUMMIT – A true old-style mountain lodge is about to open in Lake Tahoe. Through large pane windows expansive views of

rugged Sierra peaks are visible. A woodstove flanks one wall, ready to get people warm.

This isn’t some newfangled structure designed to look old. This is the lodge that was built in the 1970s at the old Nebelhorn Ski Resort atop Echo Summit. For years it has sat idle.



Adventure Mountain's lodge at the top of Echo Summit is expected to open this month. Photos/Kathryn Reed

When Jim and Linda Mueller opened Adventure Mountain sledding hill six years ago their desire was always to have the lodge be part of the mix. Once the Lake Valley fire marshal signs off on the paperwork the Muellers will unlock the doors. That’s expected to happen this month.

Food choices will be limited to begin with –pizza, chili, hot dogs, hot cocoa and other drinks.

A beer and wine license might be secured down the road.

“It will be a work in progress,” Jim Mueller said standing in the lodge.

Old skis still need to be mounted on the walls and a little bit of artwork hung. Plenty of stacked wood is out back.

The Muellers have made a substantial investment in the property. When they entered the lease with the U.S. Forest Service there was no running water and the septic system wasn't working. Code upgrades were also necessary.

While the No. 1 complaint on Yelp is the vault toilets that sledders must use, when the lodge opens people will be able to use flush toilets.

The roof has been replaced, too.

"In the summer it will be available for weddings, conferences and day camps," Mueller said.

Cathedral-like windows reveal some of the 13 machine groomed sledding runs. Soon those people – there were 50,000 last season – will be able to come inside.

But guests have adapted to playing in the outdoors. Some bring barbecues and chairs, making a day of it. About 80 percent of Adventure Mountain's guests are day visitors from the Bay Area and Central Valley. The other 20 percent are mostly visitors to Lake Tahoe who are staying a week and want a break from skiing.

New this season is a beginner snowboarding run.

All the hills are accessed by walking as far up as allowed or until the person wants to start sledding.

There are also four miles of marked, ungroomed trails for snowshoeing and cross country skiing.

The old ski resort closed in 1988, with the Forest Service taking out the two chairlifts and rope tow 10 years later.

In 1968 a running track was put in so athletes could train at

a high elevation for the Summer Olympics in Mexico City. (The track was later moved to South Tahoe Middle School, but was replaced a few years ago.)

The California Conservation Corps called this site home for years before moving to their Meyers location in 2002.

Mueller said it’s possible the lodge will be open in the summer for recreationists.

From the parking lot several hiking and biking trails go off in nearly every direction. The Pacific Crest, Pony Express and Tahoe Rim trails touch the property. Mueller said the bike ride to Kyburz on the Pony Express Trail is a good one.

The Muellers, who live in Meyers, have big plans beyond opening the lodge this month.

“We hope to eventually have a special needs youth camp up here,” Mueller said.

He said regulators won’t allow overnight lodging even though the CCC did for years. The shower facilities remain. It is possible log cabins would be constructed.

——-

Details:

• Website

• Hours – weekdays 10am-4:30pm; weekends 9am-5pm

• Cost – $18 to park, unlimited sledding

• Other – equipment available to rent, small retail center.

ngg_shortcode_0_placeholder (Click on photos to enlarge.)

5 snowmobilers accused of riding in closed area

Five men were cited by the U.S. Forest Service for riding snowmobiles in the Mokelumne Wilderness on the Eldorado National Forest.

The five riders, residents of South Lake Tahoe and the Carson Valley, received mandatory notices to appear before the federal magistrate in Sacramento.

Per Forest Service policy the names of violators are not released when a citation has been issued. If they are arrested, the names become public information. The South Lake Tahoe man is 46-years-old, the Douglas County residents are ages 30, 41 and two 42-year-olds.

The wilderness area is accessed from the Blue Lake trailhead and the Forestdale area on Highway 88. The area is posted as closed to motorized use and maps are readily available.

“While on patrol, officers observed fresh snowmobile tracks passing directly underneath closure signs,” a USFS press release said of last weekend’s incident.

If convicted, the offenders would face a fine up to $5,000 and jail time of six months. They were cited for wilderness trespass, not damaging the terrain.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

High-tech skydiving equipment adds to risk

By Abby Sewell, Los Angeles Times

PERRIS — The competition was high-performance and high-risk, and Sean Carey and his 16 fellow skydivers knew it.

They were equipped with special parachutes that allowed a faster and better-controlled descent, and their goal Saturday was to dive toward a shallow pond in an advanced maneuver known as swooping.

One by one, they plummeted toward the surface, executing a last-minute turn to accelerate before leveling off and gliding just above the pond. But Carey, an instructor at Skydive San Diego who had done the maneuver successfully hundreds of times, made his turn too low and crashed into the pond.

Carey was the sixth highly experienced skydiver to be killed in the last year at Perris Valley Skydiving, one of the largest and most popular facilities for the sport in the nation.

The deaths reflect a divergent nationwide trend: equipment upgrades and safety rules have reduced overall skydiving fatalities among novices — but the smaller, more aerodynamically designed parachutes have allowed more

experienced divers to take more risks.

Increasingly, industry veterans said, fatal accidents involve experts attempting advanced maneuvers with high-performance equipment – people like Carey, who according to his employer averaged 1,800 jumps a year and had won previous swooping competitions.

Last December, another experienced canopy pilot, as they are known, died making a landing error while swooping at Perris. The facility temporarily suspended swooping while it conducted a review of safety procedures.

The company's general manager, Dan Brodsky-Chenfeld, said he found that Perris' safety standards were as high as or higher than other facilities' but further tightened requirements.

The facility had already required that before attempting a high-performance maneuver, a skydiver must have made at least 700 jumps. After the December fatality, it added a requirement that skydivers receive special training before attempting swooping.

In the wake of Carey's death, Brodsky-Chenfeld said he is again reviewing the standards.

Read the whole story

Protection sought for California wolf

By Matt Weiser, Sacramento Bee

Four environmental groups on Monday petitioned the California

Fish and Game Commission to protect the gray wolf under the state Endangered Species Act.

Led by the Center for Biological Diversity, the groups say the migration of a wolf from Oregon on Dec. 28 means the species will eventually establish itself in California.

Any wolves that migrate into California are automatically protected by the federal Endangered Species Act. But the groups want California to take charge of a recovery plan because the state endangered species law is stronger and federal officials remain focused on wolf recovery elsewhere.

Other groups behind the petition are Big Wildlife, Environmental Protection Information Center and Klamath-Siskiyou Wildlands Center.

The commission has 90 days to decide if the petition contains enough information to trigger a status review of the species. It then has nine months to conduct the review.

The wolf known as OR7 traveled as far as the outskirts of Susanville in Lassen County. Then it turned north and now lingers near the Oregon border in Siskiyou County.