Kirkwood gearing up for Freeride Flow Fest

Kirkwood Mountain Resort is hosting the inaugural Freeride Flow Fest on March 16-18.

The three-day event brings together novice and recreational winter athletes with professional athletes, backcountry experts and top industry vendors for clinics, demonstrations, electronic disc jockeys, performances and a whole lot of après ski.

Tickets are on sale online.

Confirmed athletes include: Sage Cattabriga-Alosa, professional big mountain skier; Alison Gannett, leading the KEEN Rippin' Chix Backcountry Camp and Steeps Clinics; legendary ski pioneer Kent Krietler, as backcountry guide and yoga instructor; Lorenzo Worster, world renowned telemark skier; Hanna Hardaway, two-time Olympian; Brooke Edwards, freeride instructor and Tough Guy Productions event coordinator; Maeve Nevins, backcountry instructor; and Wendy Lautner, published author and backcountry enthusiast.

Clinics focus on backcountry skiing including avalanche and beacon search, alpine, telemark and snowboard freeriding, women's only clinics, park riding, big air bag jumping and yoga. As well as being a leave no trace earth conscious event, a portion of the proceeds from the festival will go to Protect Our Winters, an environmental center point of the global winter sports community, united towards a common goal of reducing climate change effects on sports and local economies.

Cross country ski event benefits search and rescue team

On March 4 at 9am, cross country ski racers will gather to embark on the 36th annual Great Ski Race.

The Great Ski Race covers 30 kilometers beginning at the Tahoe Cross Country Center in Tahoe City to the Cottonwood Restaurant in Truckee.

Race registration is available online. Prices go up Feb. 16.

The Great Ski Race is the main fundraising event for the Tahoe Nordic Search and Rescue Team, a nonprofit all volunteer organization. Team members, along with community supporters, organize the Great Ski Race, which continues to be one of the largest Nordic ski races west of the Mississippi. Race proceeds are used primarily to purchase equipment for the team and to support winter survival and avalanche education programs sponsored and conducted by the team.

The Great Ski Race has gone from 60 racers being manually timed in 1977, to more than 600 racers with electronic timing in 1985, to more than 800 racers in 2001. In 2005 all records were broken, with 1,109 registered racers, 1029 finishers, and the fastest men’s and women’s times to date. Registration fees: $55 before Feb. 15; $65 Feb. 16-March 3; $100 if registering on race day; and juniors 18 and under are $25. The entry fee buys a pre-race package, T-shirt, refreshments and a

hot lunch at the finish, a chance to win numerous prizes, live music and dancing at the finish.

Vonn wins super G, Mancuso 5th

By USSA

CORTINA d'AMPEZZO, Italy – Lindsey Vonn of Vail dominated the Cortina super G to notch the 47th Audi FIS Alpine World Cup win of her career and launch ahead of Austrian great Renate Goetschl to stand alone at third on the women's all-time win list.

"Cortina is a very special place for me. It's where I got my first World Cup podium and I've always had success here, so I was really trying hard today and risking a lot," Vonn said. "My run was a good combination of risk and aggression, but I still stayed in control. The high speed made it more challenging than normal. I was on the limit the entire race."

Julia Mancuso of Squaw Valley was fifth and Leanne Smith of North Conway, N.H., 10th as the U.S. Ski Team captured the Cortina Trophy on Sunday, recognizing the most successful nation over the two-day race series.

Stacey Cook of Mammonth was 26th.

The women's World Cup moves to Kranjska Gora, Slovenia, for a giant slalom and a slalom Jan. 21-22.

Discovering history en route to a scenic mountain bike ride

By Kathryn Reed

TRUCKEE – Scanning the vast open space, with tall grasses dancing in the gentle breeze and pines looming overhead, the solitude is extraordinary. That's what makes it so hard to imagine this used to be a bustling outpost in the mid-1800s.

Called the Henness Pass, it linked the Gold and Silver states – still does, but not with nearly the same amount of traffic.

A marker at Kyburz Flat says, "Henness Pass Road was used in the 1850s for travel to the mining camps along the North and Middle Yuba rivers. After the Comstock silver strike in 1859, Henness Pass Road was improved to attract travel between San Francisco and Virginia City via Sacramento, Auburn, Nevada (City), and Camptonville."



Wide-open spaces north of Truckee off Highway 89 used to bustle

with silver and gold miners. Photos/Kathryn Reed

More’s Station was a 320-acre ranch.

Three points of interest are marked in this area that is one mile off Highway 89 between Truckee and Sierraville.

In a quest to find someplace new to mountain bike while the ground is snowless in January, we ventured just outside the Lake Tahoe Basin. I can’t count the times we’ve driven by this dirt county road. This time we turned right and drove a mile in.

Wow. What history tucked back into this near pristine acreage that is mostly on Tahoe National Forest land.

A sign talks of a once thriving hotel being two-feet from that marker. It would still make for an ideal place for a lodging establishment. But, selfishly, it is so wonderful to look at such a large swath of undeveloped land.

A little boardwalk makes a loop, with markers pointing out where a hotel, well, barn, corral and root cellar once stood. Rocks that are likely from that time period are still there.

Getting on our bikes, we ride less than a mile to what was the Wheeler Sheep Camp. A brick oven still stands – though volunteers, in cooperation with the U.S. Forest Service, rebuilt it. It works today and can be rented.

It’s easy to imagine sheep roaming in the adjacent meadow, munching away on the native grasses.

No one is here.

It’s quiet, except for the wind in the trees.

We ride up a bit farther, but the road dead ends. We turn around, but instead of making a left to go back to the Jeep, we go right to explore more.

Done with our cultural and historical portion of our outing, we get some exercise.

The trail is really more like a logging road. Evidence is everywhere that thinning projects have been going on recently in this section of the forest. The grade is gradual. A few spots have snow and ice, some places are hardpack, while others are dry and dusty.

It’s chilly and the light doesn’t last as long this time of year. We don’t venture that far in. Next time, on a summer day, we’ll explore even more.

Getting there:

From the South Shore, get to Truckee going up either side of the lake you like. Then get onto Highway 89 north going out of Truckee.

Between Truckee and Sierraville, which is 25 miles from Truckee, is Sierra County Road 450. Turn right.

One mile in is Kyburz Flat, where we parked. Seven miles is Sardine Valley and 14 miles in is Stampede Reservoir.

A four-wheel drive is not necessary to get to where we parked.

Signs point to where the historical sites are located.

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Kashima doesn’t make podium for first time this season

By USSA

MONT GABRIEL, Quebec – Olympic champion Hannah Kearney of Norwich, Vt., captured her first victory at Mont Gabriel, extending her FIS Freestyle World Cup win streak to 10 consecutive.

Jeremy Cota of Carrabassett Valley, Maine, joined Kearney on the podium with a career best second behind winner Mikael Kingsbury of Canada.

Action continues Sunday with the opening aerials event of the season before the World Cup swings to Lake Placid.

Sho Kashima of Stateline was fourth. It was Kashima’s first time off the podium this season.

The U.S. Freestyle Ski Team qualified four men and four women into the finals.

Truckee man part of U.S. Standup Paddleboard Team

By Sparks Tribune

COSTA MESA – Truckee resident Jay Wild has been selected as a

member of the United States Standup Paddleboard Team in the upcoming World Championship in Miraflores, Peru, Feb. 20 through 25.

This first of its kind event pits individual standup athletes together into a team event, much like the Davis Cup in tennis or golf's Ryder Cup.

Wild will compete in the standup paddle (SUP) elite race event, a 4.5-km technical slalom course around buoys placed inside the surf zone. Elite race courses are typically the most exciting for spectators because of the challenging design of the course and frequent collisions in the surf.

Joining Wild on the U.S. team is Matt Becker from Santa Barbara, Calif., who will also compete in the elite race; Rob Rojas from Dana Point, who will handle the distance race; and former World Longboard Champion Colin McPhillips from San Clemente, who will compete in the SUP surf event with Florida's Sean Poytner.

Read the whole story

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3 American women in top 9 in downhill at Cortina

By USSA

CORTINA d'AMPEZZO, Italy – Lindsey Vonn of Vail fought gusting winds to finish second on the Olympia della Tofane downhill in Cortina today.

Stacey Cook of Mammoth was sixth and Julia Mancuso of Squaw Valley was ninth.

Italian Deniella Marighetti captured the first victory of her career.

Vonn now leads the Audi FIS Alpine World Cup overall standings by 244 points and the downhill standings by 127. Mancuso is sixth in the World Cup downhill standings, with Cook 10th.

Cook's sixth-place finish ties for her third-best career World Cup result.

"It (the wind) was definitely was a factor, and I'm not really sure what side of it I was on. I know that I definitely had some wind over the first jump, and I wasn't sure how I was going to pull out of it. If it was any bigger, I think it would have taken me," Cook said. "I felt a little out of control at the bottom, which usually means you're going fast."

LTVA attempts to lure motorcyclists with money

By Kathryn Reed

STATELINE – Expect to see hundreds of touring motorcyclists on the South Shore in August.

The Lake Tahoe Visitors Authority on Jan. 12 authorized $15,000 for the inaugural Lake Tahoe Moto Adventure. The Tahoe-Douglas Visitors Authority is putting $5,000 toward the event.



Mike Frye, who is the events guru for LTVA, said the Street Vibrations crowd is not the demographic tourism officials want to bring to this area.

Of the touring biker crowd, he said, “They probably don’t have a six-shooter in their pocket.” This was in reference to the gunfight last year in Reno involving Street Vibrations participants.

Touring riders are in the 35- to 65-year-old group, with a household income of more than $100,000.

The touring event is tentatively set for the last weekend of August, with MontBleu being the host hotel. During the day on and off road rides would be staged throughout the area. Vendors would be set up at the casino.

“The other piece is we’d have guest speakers these guys want to hear and other activities,” Frye told the LTVA board at the Thursday meeting.

He estimates the economic impact on the South Shore ranging from $100,000 to $500,000. The span is based on a participation guess of 200 to 500 people.

Mike Bradford, who is on the TDVA board, told his LTVA counterparts, “No one else is doing anything like this. People know this niche is not being satisfied.”

A member of the audience, who is also a motorcycle owner, questioned whether summer 2012 is logical when Highway 50 in South Lake Tahoe will be torn up again, causing delays. The board in its unanimous vote to fund the event didn’t make mention of the Caltrans project. (Tom Davis was absent.)

Public input changes USFS Fallen Leaf Lake plans

By Kathryn Reed

CAMP RICHARDSON – People are cycling and walking on what's commonly referred to as the Camp Rich bike trail. A red-tail hawk soars overhead. Fallen Leaf Lake is glassy, almost inviting to water ski on. An embankment at Taylor Creek along a user-created trail exposes tree roots. The bridge at the dam is accessible only to the able bodied and to those who get off their bikes.

The U.S. Forest Service has big plans for these 13,000 acres on the South Shore that encompass more than 40 miles of trails.



This section of Taylor Creek may no longer be an equestrian crossing.

Photos/Kathryn
Reed

Based on comments received regarding the Fallen Leaf Lake Trail Access and Travel Management Proposal, changes are already in the works. Comments for this scoping segment of the project ended Jan. 13.

The 285-foot long dam/bridge at Fallen Leaf Lake-Taylor Creek needs to be replaced to accommodate modern day uses and meet current access standards.

“This was never intended for public access,” Garrett Villanueva, forest engineer with the Forest Service, said while standing on the bridge.

A significant portion of the nearly 50 comments received mentioned the federal agency’s idea to expand the bridge to accommodate equestrian use. And people didn’t favor the original idea.

Now the USFS is considering a 6-foot-wide bridge, which would meet its minimum requirements and likely better satisfy those who have said a bridge twice that wide would have changed the character of the area.

It’s about 3-feet-wide now. It was built in 1934 with Anita Baldwin’s money.

The concrete spillway would remain. No changes are slated for the dam. Just the bridge will be altered. A cut out is likely to be incorporated into the design so people could stop to look at the scenery without impeding the flow of people.

Equestrians currently cross Taylor Creek about one-third of a mile from the bridge. While this location is also a popular swimming area, especially for people from the Fallen Leaf Lake campground, it’s not where USFS officials want horses.

Looking at the tree roots exposed near the creek, Forest Service engineer Mike Gabor, says, “It’s not natural. It’s an indication of how much sediment is going in the creek.”

Bare soil is in abundance here.

“We are not trying to stop people from swimming, but how they get to and from there is the challenging part,” Gabor told *Lake Tahoe News*.

The plan is to move the equestrian crossing closer to the bridge.

Protecting resources and providing recreation are the two main reasons to create what is essentially a master plan for the area. While talk about doing much of what is proposed first started in the 1980s, a comprehensive plan never got off the ground.

With an average of 1,600 people using the paved bike trail at Camp Richardson during peak season, this area is among the most popular and heaviest used areas in the Lake Tahoe Basin. It is also part of the National Trail System.

The paved area would be brought up to AASHTO (American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials) standards – so 10-feet wide, shoulders 2-feet wide, and a grade of no more than 5 percent.

Many of the trails on both sides of Highway 89 were user created – not ones developed or maintained by the Forest Service. These types of trails have been created since the beginning of time, and even more recently by people with the last names of Gilmore, Price and Baldwin.

The problem is trampling on so much land compromises vegetation and habitat. It’s also a safety concern because land managers may not travel those routes and therefore not find someone who is injured.

Some people, though, are concerned the trail closest to the creek by the bridge will be removed. With the embankment eroding, Forest Service trail gurus say it has to go or at least be moved back.

Another concern is a heavily used trail traverses two private parcels at the far end of Fallen Leaf Lake. Those are Forest Service managed trails that have existed for 100 years. But without permission by the owners, which has not been granted yet, those routes could be off limits.

More information about the proposed project, including maps, is online.

A public workshop will be conducted in the next few months. The public will be able to comment again when the draft environmental assessment comes out, which is likely to be late spring/early summer.

The Camp Richardson project ties into the Fallen Leaf Lake plans. The environmental assessment is done, with comments regarding Jameson Road still being worked on. A written finding on that project could be released in a matter of weeks.

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Free admission to national parks this weekend

By Keri Oberly, McClatchy Newspapers

National Park Service sites will be open for free Saturday through Monday to mark Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.’s birthday.

They are just the first of several days this year when admission fees will be waived.

Fees vary at various National Park Service sites. For example, the fee for Yosemite National Park is $20. Tioga Pass – usually closed during the winter due to snow – remains open for easy access to Yosemite National Park from the east.

Read the whole story