National Ski Patrol needs members at Kirkwood

Kirkwood Mountain Resort is with the National Ski Patrol for the 2011-12 season.

The National Ski Patrol is a federally chartered nonprofit membership association dedicated to serving the public and the mountain recreation industry. With more than 27,000 members nationwide, NPS represents 96 percent of the nations ski patrollers.

Kirkwood Mountain Resort and the National Ski Patrol are currently recruiting NSP members and non-members to join the Kirkwood team. Only advanced or expert skiers comfortable in all types of conditions are eligible. Having medical and first aid experience is an asset, but not required.

The NSP is hosting an orientation and ski check weekend Jan. 7-8. Pre-registration is required. For more information or to sign up, contact Dore Bietz at dorebietz@aol.com.

Terrain park competition for kids at Sugar Bowl

Sugar Bowl Resort has partnered with KidZone Museum to host four children’s terrain park competitions this season.

The first competition is Jan. 8 from 11am-noon in the Caboose Terrain Park. The competitions teach kids terrain park safety, and introduce them to a safe but competitive skiing/riding atmosphere, ultimately having fun while competing for great

prizes.

Competition entry fee is $15 and participants receive half price lift tickets and a free barbecue voucher. Prizes for winners include Dynastar skis, a Flow snowboard, a Giro helmet, jackets from M3 and Vans and other prizes.

Registration for all competitions begins at 9am in the Judah Lodge. All kids 12 and under are welcome to compete and must wear a helmet.

Other competition dates are Feb. 12, March 18 and April 15.

More information on these events is posted online.

Gray wolf returns to California after nearly 84 years

By Cathy Locke, Sacramento Bee

A gray wolf that has been monitored in its wanderings through southern Oregon has entered California.

The California Department of Fish and Game announced today that the animal has crossed the border. The last confirmed gray wolf in California was killed in Lassen County in 1924, according to a department news release.

The Oregon Department of Fish and Game has monitored the travels of the 2 1/2-year-old male, which was collared with a Global Positioning System device in February. The wolf, formerly from a pack in northeast Oregon, is now more than 300

miles from where his journey began.

Read the whole story

Even small amount of exercise is good for the heart

By Janice Lloyd, USA Today

More research shows that even small amounts of aerobic exercise help lower coronary heart disease risk, according to a review published Monday in Circulation, the journal of the American Heart Association.

The mega-study is part of a growing body of research showing that some physical activity provides health benefits – even when levels fall below the recommended federal guidelines of 150 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity a week. For the first time since 1998, the American College of Sports Medicine updated its exercise guidelines in June, including information on how little exercise is needed to achieve health benefits.

“The biggest health benefits we saw were for those who went from doing nothing to those doing something small,” says Jacob Sattelmair, author of the new AHA study. “Even a little bit of activity makes a significant difference.”

A little bit means 10 to 15 minutes a day. Sattelmair says the new findings are the first to make quantitative assessments of the amount of physical activity a person needs to reduce risk.

Read the whole story

State panel to reconsider Washoe Meadows decision

By Kathryn Reed

Second thoughts are what the California State Park and Recreation commissioners are having regarding the October decision to approve the final EIR for the Upper Truckee River restoration project, and to swap land between Washoe Meadows State Park and Lake Valley Recreation Area to allow Lake Tahoe Golf Course to be reconfigured.

Commissioners at their Jan. 27 meeting in the Bay Area are having another public hearing on the state park in Meyers.

The agenda item says: Reconsideration of, and upon reconsideration, action on approval and findings for the Environmental Impact Report, General Plan Amendment & Classification Adjustment related to the Upper Truckee River Restoration & Golf Course Reconfiguration Project.



Without snow, Washoe Meadows is still good for mountain biking -- though if the

decision is not overturned, this section will become a golf course. Photo/Kathryn Reed

No one from State Parks or the commission was available for comment Tuesday night. So it’s not known who asked for the issue to be heard again or how often this happens by the state commission.

At the Lake Tahoe meeting two months ago the decision was unanimous to accept staff’s recommendations.

The decision by the commissioners came as Ruth Coleman, director of the Department of Parks and Recreation, sat to their left. She is now in jeopardy of losing the job she was appointed to in 2002 by then-Gov. Gray Davis.

The State Parks Peace Officer Management Association sent a letter Dec. 14 to Gov. Jerry Brown that said 93 percent of the 56 percent of the members polled want a new director.

Whether her tenuous situation played a roll in rehearing the Washoe project is not known.

Before the public items are addressed next month the commission will go into closed session to discuss the lawsuit filed by the Washoe Meadows Community. This group filed a lawsuit Nov. 23 in Alameda County Superior Court on various grounds in an attempt to halt the project as approved.

Both sides have agreed to push back some of the deadlines regarding filing of papers in the case.

Washoe Meadows Community supports Alternative 3 – which would

take the 18-hole course down to nine holes or convert it to an 18-hole executive course.

The reason the golf course would be altered is to accommodate restoration of the river – an ongoing project by all parties who own property where the river runs through it. It's all about reducing sediment that reaches Lake Tahoe and restoring the ecosystem.

The Tahoe Regional Planning Agency Governing Board still needs to vote on the Washoe Meadows section, but that has been pulled indefinitely at the request of State Parks.

Lynne Paulson, a member of the Washoe Meadows Community, said her group would be present at the January public hearing.

She had not been given a heads up about the issue being on the January agenda; learning about it when notification of the meeting was sent via mass email Dec. 27.

"I hope this leads to a better alternative," Paulson told *Lake Tahoe News* of the Jan. 27 meeting.

Regarding the lawsuit, Paulson does not expect a settlement conference to be scheduled before the commission meets.

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Meeting info:

• Jan. 27 at 9am in the Community Room of the Brentwood Community Center, 35 Oak St., Brentwood.

• To comment on agenda items, write to State Park and Recreation Commission, Box 942896, Sacramento, CA 94296-0001, or email LNastro@parks.ca.gov, or call (916) 653.0524.

• The meeting agenda is online.

Court: Tahoe beaches do not have to be open to the public

By Cy Ryan, Las Vegas Sun

CARSON CITY – A general improvement district that purchased four beaches on the Nevada side of Lake Tahoe in 1968 is not violating the U.S. Constitution in barring the public from the areas, a federal court has ruled.

The U.S. Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals has denied the petition of Frank Wright, who contends the ordinances of the Incline Village General Improvement District are invalid.

The appeals court, in a decision Tuesday written by Judge Milan D. Smith Jr., quoted a prior ruling that said, "The First Amendment does not guarantee access to property simply because it is owned or controlled by the government."

Smith wrote, "The government may limit the use of properties under its control to the uses to which the properties are lawfully dedicated."

Read the whole story

Heavenly, Northstar and Mammoth score well with Facebook fans

Heavenly and Northstar are listed as two of the top 10 most popular ski resorts, according to a poll taken on Facebook.

SkiReports.com in Boston crunched the numbers that were released Dec. 27.



Heavenly has a lot of Facebook fans. Photo/LTN

Here's the list:

1. Mammoth Mountain – 99,458 fans

2. Heavenly Mountain Resort – 93,887 fans

3. Whistler Blackcomb – 87,477 fans

4. Vail – 79,765 fans

5. Breckenridge – 66,060 fans

6. Jackson Hole – 62,088 fans

7. Keystone, Colo. – 56,145 fans

8. Northstar – 49,498 fans

9. Beaver Creek – 40,068 fans

10. Mountain High, Calif. – 39,742 fans.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Woodpecker may alter how USFS manages its land

By Kathryn Reed

A woodpecker may change the way the U.S. Forest Service and others approach thinning projects and forest restoration work in California.

This is because on Dec. 15 the state Fish and Game Commission on a 3-1 vote said the black-backed woodpecker is a candidate for protection under the state's Endangered Species Act. (Commissioner Daniel Richards was the dissenting vote.)



Black-backed woodpecker

This is the same woodpecker species that Earth Island Justice's John Muir Project said should prevent the Lake Tahoe

Basin Management Unit from initiating the South Shore Fuels Reduction Project and the same animal Earth Justice wants to protect in its quest to halt the Angora Fire restoration project.

It could be a year before the state decides what to do about the woodpecker. The Department of Fish & Game has until next December to prepare a status review on the species. After that, the commission votes on whether to protect the bird.

It's the Center for Biological Diversity and the Earth Island Institute's John Muir Project that are pushing for the woodpecker's protection.

"Black-backeds are heavily associated with areas burned at higher fire severities, much more so than unburned forest or low-intensity burn areas (Hutto 2008). Unless steps are taken to ensure that significant habitat is created and allowed for this species in the project area, the project could threaten the viability of the black-backed woodpecker by further reducing potential habitat across the landscape, thus violating the forest plan's requirement to ensure viability," Chad Hanson, director of the John Muir Project, wrote in his October letter to the USFS. His group wants the final environmental impact statement for the South Shore Fuels Reduction Project to be withdrawn and a supplemental environmental impact statement be prepared.

Those same arguments are being used to lobby the state.

Hanson is the author of a paper titled "Myth of 'Catastrophic' Wildfire".

A judge sided with the Forest Service over conservation groups regarding the Angora project. This meant work started this summer to thin the area – an area the John Muir Project believes should be left alone because it says it provides habitat for the woodpecker.

This is the Forest Service owned land near where 254 houses burned to the ground in June 2007.

The Forest Service says not clearing the trees will increase the threat of another catastrophic fire.

While the thinning project started this summer, the case is still tied up in the Ninth U.S. District Court of Appeals. If the state says the woodpecker should be listed as endangered, it could make the court case a moot point.

The bird is rare, with people differing over whether it’s always been rare or if its numbers are in decline.

Lose the fleece, bring out the shorts in Tahoe

After frigid temperatures, it’s like a heat wave has hit the Lake Tahoe Basin. South Lake Tahoe on Sunday tied a record and Monday broke a record for the high of the day.

At Lake Tahoe Airport the mercury crept up to 56 degrees Dec. 26, breaking the record of 55 set in 1976. Truckee had a high of 54 Monday, but it was not a record.



It was warm enough for shorts at Heavenly Village on Dec. 25. Photo/Kathryn Reed

On Dec. 25 the 55-degree reading in South Lake Tahoe tied the record first set in 1980.

The National Weather Service in Reno says to expect balmy weather into the New Year, with temps hovering around 50 degrees.

The high pressure system that had been sitting off the coast bringing the dry conditions is now directly above the region, which is the cause of the warmth.

A 20 percent chance of moisture is in the forecast for the basin from Tuesday night into Wednesday, but if anything comes of it, meteorologists say it won’t amount to much. More rain than snow is likely to fall because it’s so warm out.

– Kathryn Reed

Nevada looking at ways to deal with sage grouse

By Jeff Delong, Reno Gazette-Journal

Nevada wildlife officials continue to survey prime sage grouse habitat across the state and plan a meeting next month to take stock of efforts to prevent its listing under the Endangered Species Act.

The state will likely use Wyoming's approach to conserving bird habitat as a template for its own policy – a direction recommended early this month by Interior Secretary Ken Salazar.

"We want to avoid listing in a big way," said Ken Mayer, director of the Nevada Department of Wildlife. NDOW will host a meeting of stakeholders in the sage grouse issue in Carson City on Jan. 18.

In March 2010, U.S. Fish and Wildlife officials declared listing for the greater sage grouse is "warranted but precluded" across its range of 11 western states. That means federal scientists believe listing would be justified, but other species in bigger trouble have a higher priority.

The population of the chicken-sized bird has declined for decades, and it now occupies only about half of its original year-round habitat, experts said.

On Dec. 9, Salazar said Wyoming's approach to conserving "core" sage grouse habitat on Bureau of Land Management land can be adopted by 10 other western states, including Nevada.

Wyoming is home to roughly half of the West's greater sage

grouse population, while about 25 to 30 percent are in Nevada, Mayer said.

Read the whole story