Vail Resorts’ CEO talks about the future of the ski industry

By SKI

As CEO of Vail Resorts, which owns Vail, Beaver Creek, Breckenridge, Heavenly, Northstar and other properties and ventures, Rob Katz oversees one of the largest and most sophisticated ski-resort operations in the world. Katz is a strong believer in the power of emerging technologies to connect skiers to each other and to their favorite mountains.

SKI › What areas of a resort’s operation will change the most in the immediate future?

RK › Snowmaking. The snowmaking of the future will use vastly less energy and will have a very tight system of recycling water, automated in such a way that snow is only made in exactly the right moments during the day, and you can use snowmaking not just for early or late season but also cost effectively during the season to continually optimize the conditions.

SKI › How will skiers and boarders get to the top of the mountain?

RK › We will still be using the same basic technologies, but the lifts will run much faster, be much larger and will carry more people. The process will be more streamlined, but the modern lift system works pretty well today. We need to make it easier to get from your transportation to the lifts. That’s where you could see giant conveyor belts.

SKI › What about trails? How will they differ?

RK › Trail design hasn’t changed radically in the past 75

years. Honestly, we don't want to alter the mountain experience so much that people lose a sense of nature. Terrain parks are a completely different story. There is unlimited potential for new features and experiences. You could ski loop-de-loops, moderating thrill and creativity with safety. The runs will look the same. The parks, however, will look nothing like today.

Read the whole story

Transporting firewood could mean moving invasive species

As part of a nationwide effort to encourage the public to buy and burn firewood locally, CalFire and the California Firewood Task Force kicked off a public outreach campaign this fall to inform campers, wood cutters, arborists, and the general public about the risks of long-distance movement of firewood.



"Firewood can carry insects and pathogens that may or may not be visible, making it impossible to know if you are transporting an invasive pest from one location to another when moving it," CalFire's Don Owen, chair of the California Firewood Task Force, said in a statement. "Once an invasive species is established in a new area, it can do a lot of damage environmentally and economically as the trees in those areas have no natural defenses to fight off pest attack."

The multi-pronged campaign includes surveying camper knowledge about invasive species and firewood in areas affected by the goldspotted oak borer (an invasive beetle in San Diego County

likely brought into the state on firewood), providing firewood posters to campgrounds and parks for posting in public locations, mailing information to industry professionals, and offering educational Frisbees and playing cards to campers as a way to facilitate one on one interaction with campers while also providing them with useful information.

“As we increasingly become a global community, the movement of invasive pests and pathogens is becoming more frequent. Buying and burning wood locally is a simple way to help minimize the chances of spreading invasive species, and it is something everyone can do with little impact,” Owen said. “The feedback gathered through the surveys will be useful for developing our long-term outreach campaign, helping us ensure that we reach out to our audience as effectively as possible.”

S. Tahoe figure skater competing on world stage

South Lake Tahoe figure skater Deirdre Faegre is in Italy to compete in the Junior Grand Prix of figure skating.

The Oct. 5-8 competition at the Trofeo Walter Lombardi is an International Skating Union event.



Deirdre Faegre

is in Italy competing. Photo/Provided

In July, Faegre, 17, represented the Ice Skating Association of Ireland at the Liberty Summer Competition in Aston, Pa. Liberty is one of the largest competitions on the East Coast of the United States. That is where competitors often showcase their new programs early in the figure skating season.

Storm lays foundation for Tahoe resorts to open next month

Snow is likely to keep falling on-and-off today in the greater Lake Tahoe area.

Chain controls are in affect this morning on Interstate 80, the Mount Rose Highway and Highway 88 near Kirkwood. (Click on the state icons on *Lake Tahoe News'* home page for up-to-date info on road conditions.)



At the Heavenly tram terminal on

Oct. 5.
Photo/Provided

There must be something about Oct. 5 because in 2010 Heavenly Mountain Resort received about 5 inches of snow and this year it tallied about the same amount by 11am Wednesday.

All Lake Tahoe ski resorts are covered in the white stuff, with Kirkwood early on boasting of about close to a foot of snow. Farther south, Mammoth had more than a foot from this quick storm. Both resorts last had people schussing down their slopes in July.

With it dumping hard Wednesday night, most Tahoe resorts today are reporting about a foot and a half of snow on the ground.

While storm totals will increase as the day goes on, forecasters do not anticipate there being enough accumulation for resorts to open this month. A few years ago people were skiing before Halloween. Still, many Tahoe resorts are continuing with their pre- or near Thanksgiving opening dates.

With record snowfall a year ago, forecasters are saying it could be another doozy of a year. The National Weather Service says La Nina conditions are returning to the area.

– Kathryn Reed

Decrease in land sales affects both ends of Nevada

By Ed Vogel, Las Vegas Review-Journal

CARSON CITY – Through the sale of $3 billion in public land in

Clark County, cities and counties throughout Nevada have built hundreds of parks and trails, pollution has been kept out of Lake Tahoe and forest fires have been prevented.

The Southern Nevada Public Land Management Act of 1998 has been a boon for the entire state. The federal program has saved taxpayers' money and made life more pleasant and safer for residents and visitors. In Clark County alone, the sales have funded 691 projects. The money paid for park and trail construction, purchases of land for open space, and making water delivery system improvements.

But the good times are about over.

Once the recession reared its ugly head in Nevada, people stopped buying U.S. Bureau of Land Management property in what had been one of the fastest-growing areas of the nation. Just five acres were sold in the most recent auction last year, and that sale brought in only $457,000. That pales in comparison with the heyday in 2004 when 10,329 acres sold for $884 million, of which Las Vegas received $248 million and Clark County $280 million.

Clark County and Las Vegas elected officials acknowledge they relied too much on the land sale revenue and now don't have other sources of money to build additional parks. But they are confident there is enough general fund revenue to repair and maintain all the parks that have been built.

"There are no guarantees anymore," said Nancy Lipski, Clark County's comprehensive planning director. "It has been a very good source of funding that allowed us to do things more quickly than normal."

Read the whole story

Snow keeps falling; makes driving a challenge

A little snow doesn’t stop people in Lake Tahoe from doing what they want.

Swimmers were found at the South Lake Tahoe city pool this morning – even though the bubble has not been put on yet.

Snow will continue throughout today, with a 50 percent chance of the white stuff falling on Thursday, according to the National Weather Service in Reno. Tonight’s low is expected to be 29 degrees in South Lake Tahoe.



Lifeguard Tiff at the South Lake Tahoe city pool on Oct. 5 with water exercisers Gina and Linda. Photo/Cindy Beberg

The high in South Tahoe will be 38 on Thursday and in the high

50s by the weekend. Plus, the sun will return by Friday. Truckee is expected to be warmer on Saturday and Sunday – reaching the mid-60s.

The snow started on the North Shore late last night, while it was hard rain most of the night on the South Shore. Even though the white stuff is sticking to lawns at lake level, not enough has accumulated to shovel.

The drive into Carson City this morning from the South Shore was sketchy at best, but reports are the sun is shining in Nevada's state capital.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Shoveling in the forecast for Tahoe residents

Are you shoveling today?

Send a picture of yourself with the white stuff to info@LakeTahoeNews.net – and feel free to write something about this fall tradition in Lake Tahoe.



South Lake Tahoe eight months ago.

Photo/LTN file

Include your full name, mailing address and T-shirt size. The first 10 people seen shoveling will be sent a *Lake Tahoe News* T-shirt.

The other way to get a T-shirt is for subscribers to send in a check of $40. In addition to the T-shirt, you will be added to our special NEWS list. People on this list are qualified for special benefits like ticket give-aways.

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– Lake Tahoe News staff report

STHS student in middle of shark documentary

By Sid Loomis

Last month I was proud to be apart of the 30-mile dive with the Undersea Voyager Project. I was stationed on my dad’s boat

as a primary support diver.

As a primary support diver I was the one who would jump in the water at anytime if Scott Cassell, the diver, needed any help. I had to get in the water when Scott needed help to take his fins off, get a GoPro camera that had used all the battery, when his tow sled broke and when he needed to change from his rebreather to his double set of scuba tanks.



Sid Loomis and Scott Cassell

One of the things that most people don't understand is that when you are making documentaries it's definitely not as glamorous as the camera makes it look. On this mission the saying "if it can go wrong, it will go wrong" was just not a saying it became reality.

The mission was for Cassell to dive underwater the whole way from Catalina Island to San Pedro using a dive bell to help change out his tanks, but due to equipment malfunctions he had to surface and lose the world record.

But this mission was not about the record it was about the sharks. My dad was telling me that when he grew up that there were thousands of blue sharks everywhere.

Cassell was underwater for 11 hours and he saw no sharks at all. That is just amazing. What Cassell did for the sharks was the most inspiring thing I've ever seen a single human do. He faced black outs, low blood sugar and fatigue. Yet he still got back in for the sharks and finished the dive.

He is one the strongest people I have ever met. This was a wonderful experience for me and I cannot wait for our next mission.

Sid Loomis is a junior at South Tahoe High School.

Heavenly, Sugar Pine Foundation team up to plant 1,000 seedlings

Armed with gloves, shovels, sugar pine seedlings and the knowledge of proper planting techniques, volunteers planted 1,000 seedlings across 10 acres on Oct. 1 at Van Sickle Bi-state Park.

For more than three hours 114 Heavenly Mountain Resort volunteers gathered at the Stateline area park to help restore the Gondola Fire scar area as part of Vail Resorts Echo Day.

“I am proud of the Heavenly staff for their continued dedication to preserving the local environment and their willingness to give back to their local community on Echo Day and throughout the year,” Pete Sonntag, vice president and general manager of Heavenly Mountain Resort, said in a statement. “We all love and appreciate the Lake Tahoe Basin and want it to be as beautiful 100 years from now as it is today. We certainly hope to see these newly planted sugar pine seedlings thriving 100 years from now.”

The Sugar Pine Foundation is dedicated to saving Tahoe’s sugar pine trees. Since 2008, the foundation has planted more than 500 acres with more than 30,000 sugar pines and other native

trees to maintain Tahoe’s legacy of beautiful, healthy forests.

“We are excited to partner with Heavenly and grateful for their efforts to restore some of the fire scar in the area,” Maria Mircheva, Sugar Pine Foundation’s executive director, said in press release. “Through the support of Vail Resorts Echo, we are able to kick off a series of tree planting days that will improve forest health in the area.”

In total, the Sugar Pine Foundation plans to plant 10,000 seedlings this fall.

The seedlings planted Saturday, supplied by the Sugar Pine Foundation, are resistant to the invasive fungal pathogen blister rust. By planting seedlings that are resistant to the fungus, Heavenly is helping to restore the Sugar Pine species in the Lake Tahoe Basin and work toward eradicating the devastating pathogen.

Time running out to request chipping, defensible space services

In order to service all remaining requests for defensible space evaluations and chipping in a timely manner and prior to potential inclement weather approaching, the North Lake Tahoe Fire Protection District has set Oct. 14 as the last day to request these services.

This will allow the district time to complete the last requests for the 2011 season.

Call (775) 831.0351, ext. 8118 and leave your name, service requested, address and phone number.

To date, the district has completed approximately 164 defensible space requests and 174 chipping requests for the 2011 season.