Shortened Greenway bike trail out for environmental review

By Kathryn Reed

It's not exactly what planners had hoped to bring to the table, but the proposed 3.86 miles of bike trail being studied would connect a significant chunk of South Lake Tahoe.

Though still known at the South Tahoe Greenway, the environmental documents being released today do not provide a continuous trail from Meyers to Stateline. Instead, the route under review goes from the end of Sierra Boulevard at Barbara Avenue to Van Sickle Bi-state Park at the state line.



Money and land ownership are preventing the full 9-plus miles from being studied as this point.

"Connecting to the Y, connecting to Meyers are important parts of the overall network in South Lake Tahoe," said Sue Rae Irelan, program analyst for the California Tahoe Conservancy. "It's certainly not off the table. It is still part of the bike and pedestrian master plan."

Irelan has been working on this project since 2002. Four years ago the thought was pavement would start to be laid this summer. Clearly, that isn't going to happen.

First, the environmental impact report and the U.S. Forest Service's environmental analysis will be out for comment for 30 days. The final environmental documents should be done this fall. At that time funding will be sought. Not a penny is in place to build this trail.

Irelan said having the final environmental documents signed off is a criterion for many funding sources to start writing checks.

When California was flush with cash the CTC had relatively easy access to money for projects like this. Not so anymore. But the agency is going forward with planning so it can seek funding.

The soonest Irelan foresees any ground being disturbed for the Class 1 trail is 2013. Even then it's likely this stretch of trail will be built in phases.

Irelan won't put a dollar figure on the trail, saying others are working on those estimates, which should be available this month. It has been costing between $1.5 million and $2 million per mile of bike trail in the Lake Tahoe Basin.

When it comes to building the boardwalk bridge over Trout Creek, the expense shoots up.

One thing that will keep costs down is much of the land is high-capability and disturbed – meaning laying the 10-foot-wide asphalt trail won't be as expensive.

The Conservancy owns much of the land that follows the old Caltrans right-of-way. (At one time a four-lane highway was going to be built by the state.) The Forest Service, city and county also have land along the route.

The route will allow the Sierra Tract area access to Lake Tahoe Community College and the Bijou area a trail to Bijou Community Park.

"What we recognized is we need to make the highest value links that we can to produce the network benefits people are looking for," Irelan told *Lake Tahoe News*.

With the trail that is in place now, this section of the Greenway will provide a little more than 4 miles of continuous

cycling through the center of South Lake Tahoe to Nevada.

There is still a chance the Stateline demonstration part of the Stateline-to-Stateline bike route will break ground this year. This, then, means eventually having an even longer continuous trail. The Forest Service needs to sign off on paperwork for movement to begin.

For the Greenway, it will start on the east side of Barbara near where Caltrans dumps snow at the end of Sierra Boulevard. It will follow Martin, cross over Trout Creek via a new bridge, head toward the South Tahoe Public Utility District on Meadow Crest, and then connect with the trail by the ball field at Lake Tahoe Community College.

It connects to the bike route on Al Tahoe Boulevard for people wanting to get off there.

Then the Greenway crosses Al Tahoe, following along the edge of Bijou park on the old Caltrans right-of-way toward Glenwood Way. From there it crosses some neighborhood streets before angling toward Herbert and Aloha.

At this point it heads toward Pioneer Trail. It hits Ski Run Boulevard, crosses Pioneer Trail and hooks up with David Lane. A steep grade will require it to wind a bit, along with the need to build retaining walls.

The route stays upslope of Pioneer Trail, following the old right-of-way to Van Sickle park where it will end below the barn.

“The trail we are designing is capable of being plowed. We would have to find a separate funding source for that and that has not been real obvious,” Irelan said.

What isn’t plowed, she foresees being used as a cross country ski trail in the winter.

The document may be viewed online as of 5pm today or at the

Conservancy's office on Third Street, the Forest Service office on College Drive, the county library on Rufus Allen Boulevard – all in South Lake Tahoe, or the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency office on Market Street in Stateline.

An open house is scheduled for June 15 from 6-8pm at the Forest Service office, 35 College Drive, South Lake Tahoe.

Reno Rodeo officials expect virus to run its course before event

By Susan Voyles, Reno Gazette-Journal

Reno Rodeo officials said they expect a virus that has afflicted cutting horses at two recent events in Utah and California to fully run its course before the rodeo opens June 16.

With the rodeo almost a month away, "there's enough time to be relatively sure the outbreak is behind us," said Joe Coli, a veterinarian with the Comstock Large Hospital and chairman of the rodeo's animal care committee.

The deadly and highly contagious virus has infected more than 30 horses in nine states and Canada at the height of show season. Horse shows and sales have been canceled, and some competitors are backing out of the professional rodeo circuit.

The Senior Pro Rodeo in Elko has been postponed. The *Elko Daily Free Press* reported that the Elko Convention and Visitors Authority will work with rodeo producers on rescheduling the event, which had been set for June 1-3 at the

county fairgrounds.

Read the whole story

Efforts moving forward to restore fire lookout near Truckee

The Grouse Ridge Restoration volunteers are planning several events to continue the restoration of the lookout in the Tahoe National Forest and fundraising efforts this year, however, heavy snow may limit access until mid-summer.

According to Larry Gruver, volunteer project coordinator, several work weekends will be hosted this season at the lookout and in the local area.

“One work day is planned locally to paint all the siding and trim. And before work on the actual lookout can be done by public volunteers, some preliminary work will be done by the Forest Service and licensed volunteer contractors to complete the hazard mitigation on the lower part of the lookout, reconstruct the outhouse, and concrete work. Later in the summer, four or five work days will be scheduled at the lookout once the pre-work is completed. The big unknown right now is when snow melt will allow access,” stated Gruver.

Fundraisers

Two fund-raising efforts are under way to raise the last $4,000 needed to complete the purchase of supplies/materials. A raffle will be held with prizes including: stays at the lookout; a sailing trip on San Francisco Bay; a bench made

from a ski chairlift from Sugar Bowl; a Ride with a Ranger; and many other prizes of local wine, food and services. Tickets are available for $5 per ticket or $20 for five. For more information on the raffle, to donate prizes, or to obtain tickets, contact Rich at (530) 272-7109.

In addition, a benefit dinner will be hosted by Jerry Cirino at Cirino's At Main Street in Grass Valley on July 27. The theme of this dinner will be to celebrate the Grouse Ridge Lookout and its history. A special menu with "rustic fare" will be served. Reservations can be made at (530) 477.6000. The winning raffle tickets will be drawn at the dinner.

Grouse history

The lookout was constructed in 1923 and has not been used since 1970s. Intense summer sun, winter storms, and vandals have taken their toll on the building. The interior was gutted, windows broken, and cabinets damaged. The exterior has suffered as well. Monetary donations will be used to buy supplies/materials for the restoration with the labor being donated by the restoration team. Once restored, the lookout will be a rental facility in the Tahoe National Forest.

The restoration effort is a part of the Forest Fire Lookout Association, a not for profit organization so that all donations are tax deductible.

Additional information is available online.

Grouse Ridge Lookout is located north of Interstate 80, about half way between Nevada City and Truckee, overlooking the popular Grouse Lakes/Bowman Reservoir area.

Tour de Nez cycling event moves to July

By Jim Krajewski, Reno Gazette-Journal

The Tour de Nez cycling race is returning to its roots this year, but at the same moving up in the cycling world.

The 19th annual local cycling race will be just a one-day affair this year, July 31. In recent years it has been held over three days.

The race has always been held in mid-June, to coincide with the anniversary of its namesake, the Deux Gros Nez coffee shop. But Deux Gros Nez closed five years ago, and owner Tim Healion, who produces the Tour de Nez, said there were too many other cycling races in June.

So when he found an open date in late July, he snapped it up.

“There are too many conflicts in June every year. Last year there were six other significant races in North America on our weekend,” Healion said. “This should be the biggest and strongest pro field ever for us.”

This year, the Cascade Classic in Bend, Ore., is the week before the Tour de Nez and a major race in Elk Grove, Ill., is the week after.

Healion said the July 31 date should attract a strong field of riders, especially as teams wrestle with budget concerns.

Read the whole story

Scientists track seldom seen Pacific fisher in Sierra

By Erik Skindrud, Sacramento Bee

OAKHURST – Deep in Sierra National Forest, field biologists Carrie O'Brien and Jodi Berg pushed their way up a mountainside.

There was no trail to follow, just GPS readings to guide them through incense-cedar branches and mats of mountain misery. After half an hour they reached their goal – a dead white fir tree.

This tree was special. Inside it, a mammal called a Pacific fisher was tending her young.

Experts want to know whether numbers are going up or down for the fisher, a member of the weasel family whose Latin name is Martes pennanti.

The forest dweller is a candidate for listing as threatened or endangered under the federal Endangered Species Act, and it's been at the center of rhetorical and legal fights for decades over timber cutting in the Sierra.

Read the whole story

Tough Mudder competition at

Squaw in September

Athletes will be tested on an extreme on-mountain obstacle course on Squaw Valley’s legendary terrain for the 11th Tough Mudder event Sept. 17-18.

Chosen for its challenging landscape, Squaw Valley is one of 10 Tough Mudder venues across the country and this fall marks the second time the endurance event has come to Northern California.

Mudders will scale the Sierra throughout the 10- mile long course complete with 19 obstacles.

The military-style event challenges are strategically placed across the peaks that make up Squaw Valley. With more than 10,000 men and women expected to participate, those interested are encouraged to register early for the event with other comrades. Spectator tickets are also available for friends and family who wish to cheer on participants and enjoy the resort.

The top 5 percent of finishers will qualify for the World’s Toughest Mudder, a 48-hour death race Dec. 17–18 in Englishtown, N.J., in which the winner will receive $10,000.

For more event details, go online.

Founder of Mammoth Mountain to be honored by ski

association

The Far West Ski Association annually names persons from the snowsports community whom have made an indelible positive impact on skiing. The association will honor three pioneers of snowsports at its annual meeting and awards banquet June 11 at the Pacific Palms Hotel in Industry Hills.

The Snowsports Builder honorees for 2011 include:

• Dave McCoy, the man who, from 1942, made Mammoth Mountain from scratch. Hundreds of thousands of skiers from the metro areas of Southern California learned to ski on Mammoth and it was and is a center for snowsports competition and training,

• Norbert Olberz, a German immigrant who started with a small ski shop in La Canada and built Sports Chalet into a multi-state, multi-sports retailing business with travel services as well, and

• Martha Perez, a travel professional who was hired initially in 1968 from volunteer status to manage the European charter flight programs and then the domestic travel programs of Far West Ski Association, position she held for 10 years. She continues to serve a 43-year loyal customer base with Ski.com. Her career has spanned a number of travel agencies, including Sportours, and a 16-year partnership with Norbert Olberz, founder of Sports Chalet.

The 79th Annual Far West Ski Association Convention is scheduled for June 9-12.

Pine Nuts lure mountain bikers with dry, challenging terrain

By Joel Fleishman

PINE NUTS – “Damn, that was a good ride. Only thing missin’ were dancing girls around every corner.”

“Yeah, naked ones,” a fellow dirt biker chimes in.

Soon, the snap, crackle and pop of Budweiser cans opening complement the macho banter, along with some very impressive expectoration. Gunshots echo from a firing range somewhere distant in the sagebrush. No question, this is Nevada.



Pine Nuts offer mountain biking while trails in Tahoe are soggy. Photo/Jeff Moser/BikeCarson.com

To be exact, we’re at “The Tree,” the access point to the labyrinth of off-road trails leading into the Pine Nut Mountains at the southeast corner of the Carson Valley. I have

come here not to ride a motorcycle nor to shoot a gun, but to venture out on a mountain bike.

I had heard of the “Pine Nuts” before, but with world-class mountain biking just out of my Lake Tahoe backyard (the Flume, Mr. Toad’s, Corral) I hadn’t bothered with the 30-mile drive. And no one had ever said, “Man, you just gotta ride the Pine Nuts.” But with our local trails still saddled with snow and mud, it was time to give it a try.

At “The Tree,” an unmistakable, solitary pinion off Pine Nut Road, I’m not sure how to proceed into this maze of unfamiliar trails. Luck intervenes as I see another cyclist and flag him down.

“This is my first time out here … can you tell me where to go?” I plead.

“How ’bout I show you? Come on, let’s go,” urges fit-looking Mark, whom I would find out trains triathletes. I get the feeling I’ll have to bring out my A-game to hang with him.

Immediately, we are hammering on a dirt road that soon morphs into roller-coaster single track heading east into the hills. We crest the short, steep climbs only to dive back down, keeping the low gear handy for the next ascent. On one furious attempt up, my right foot loses contact with the pedal, which comes around and slams my shin.

“That’s going to leave a mark,” I mutter to myself. The impact also draws some blood, which seems to christen me to the Pine Nuts. A little bit of blood on a ride is fine; a lot, on the other hand, is another story.

We swoop around banked turns on firmly packed dirt with just enough rocks to make it interesting. But this in no way is technical mountain biking – my hardtail (a bike with only front suspension) handles it just fine.

Worries over a rampant motorcycle presence are unfounded on this day. The few dirt bikers we do see are courteous, albeit noisy. We all just want to get along and enjoy this place.



Joel Fleishman

After about an hour in, I realize from the view that we've gone up more than down. The Carson Valley below is abnormally green due to the big winter and wet spring. To the west, the Sierra Nevada mountain range explodes an almost perpendicular 5,000 feet from the valley floor. Job's and Job's Sister, both 10,000-foot peaks, are still covered with a massive, winter-like blanket of snow.

When you ride in the Sierra, sometimes it's hard to the see the Sierra. Sure, riding through a dense alpine forest in a bowl known as the Lake Tahoe Basin offers plenty of eye candy. But out here in the Pine Nuts, a valley away on the next mountain range, you can better appreciate the immensity of that 400-mile-long wall of Sierra granite.

Looping back west and mostly down, view-gawking competes with concentrating on the trail. The predominant single-leaf pinions, from which the Pine Nuts gets its name, are too squat to obscure the panoramic scene. Neither better nor worse, it's a different experience than riding under the canopies of the 200-foot pines up at the lake.

Back at "The Tree," I thank Mark for his patience, and we go our separate ways. With a few hours of warm daylight left, I look for a mellow way to soak up some high-desert solitude. I cross Pine Nut Road and hit the Teacher's Trail, so named

because it’s a good place for beginners. A couple of local bicyclists are on the trail and I mention how much I’m enjoying my first trip out to the Pine Nuts.

“This is our little secret. Don’t tell anyone,” says one of them.

I grin and think, “Yeah, right.”

National Trails Day focuses on Van Sickle Park

Join the Tahoe Rim Trail Association for American Hiking Society’s 19th annual National Trails Day event on June 4.

Celebrate the start of the trail season by volunteering to build trail or by learning more about Leave No Trace principles. The event begins at Van Sickle Bi-State Park off Lake Parkway in South Lake Tahoe.

To participate, register online or contact Max at (775) 298.0239 or trails@tahoerimtrail.org.

Volunteer trail work: 9am–4pm, Van Sickle Park

Enjoy free coffee donated by Seattle’s Best, then help the TRTA build trail for the first time this season. Volunteers of all skill levels and physical abilities are welcome and encouraged to participate – no prior experience necessary.

Volunteers will receive free lunch sponsored by REI. The event will conclude at 4pm with a volunteer party at Explore Tahoe, including free food and drink. This event opens the third trail-building season of a multiyear project, which will

connect the Tahoe Rim Trail with Van Sickle State Park, reroute the TRT off paved roads, and provide stunning views of Lake Tahoe to more people. Volunteers must wear long-sleeved shirts, long pants, boots, and work gloves; bring sunscreen, bug spray, water and a backpack. The Tahoe Rim Trail Association will provide hard hats, trail building tools and crew leaders.

Leave No Trace Activities: 10am-noon, Explore Tahoe

Learn about the seven Leave No Trace principles in a fun, interactive format. The hands-on activities in this program are appropriate for all ages from kindergarten through high school and adults. Leave No Trace principles are relevant for everyone – hiking, biking, camping, backpacking, climbing, skiing, or even just walking through the local park. Activities will take place at Explore Tahoe, 4114 Lake Tahoe Blvd., South Lake Tahoe.

LTBMU firewood permits to go on sale

The U.S. Forest Service Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit will begin the sale of fuelwood permits on June 1. Permits cost $20 per cord with a 2-cord minimum purchase. There is a 10-cord per household limit.

Permits have specific conditions and full information is provided when the permit is issued. Maps to designated cutting areas are also provided and must be in your possession along with the valid permit. The permit is for collection of “down-dead” wood up to a 30-inch maximum diameter in designated fuelwood areas within the Lake Tahoe Basin. “Down-dead” means

the tree is down on the ground and dead, rather than dead and standing.

Cutting any standing tree, whether dead or green, is not allowed.

Permit holders must keep vehicles on National Forest System roads. No off-road travel is allowed and permit holders must comply with all permit conditions. Be aware that some designated fuelwood areas are only open during specified dates and all areas are subject to closure at anytime. Due to remaining late-season snow, higher elevation areas will open when conditions permit. Also, be aware that a number of forest areas are off limits to fuelwood collection.

Permit holders are asked to stay off private property and demonstrate courtesy regarding noise or collection activity on National Forest System lands near homes or neighborhoods.

Permits will be available through Oct. 28 at the LTBMU Supervisor’s Office at 35 College Drive in South Lake Tahoe, Monday through Friday, 8am to 4:30pm. For more information, call office at (530) 543.2694.