Ski report: Sun, cold, sun, cold

Curtis Fong, the Guy from Tahoe, is calling the conditions some of the best he's seen in more than a decade. So, finish reading *Lake Tahoe News* and head for the slopes before the next storm arrives mid-week.



Here is today's ski report.

Van Sickle Bi-state Park needs money to open in 2011

By Susan Wood

STATELINE – The giant boulder that serves as a welcome sign where Montreal Avenue and Heavenly Village Way meet signals a solid decade of vision and work. But the word that may keep the nation's first bi-state park from opening is money.

The park on the California-Nevada state line is feeling the constraints of budget issues from both states.



Van Sickle Bi-state Park will open in 2011 if funding comes through. Photos/Kathryn Reed

Lead agency Nevada State Parks just underwent a final inspection of Burdick Construction's work on the first of four phases of the Van Sickle Bi-state Park behind Heavenly Village and the Stateline casinos.

It was the long dream of rancher Jack Van Sickle, who donated more than two-thirds of the land for the 725-acre park to the state. Nonetheless, more work is slated to be done by the California Tahoe Conservancy and Tahoe Rim Trail Association. The former agency has placed a bond allocation item on its January board meeting agenda for trailhead interpretative facilities at the park's gateway. The latter organization has pledged to pick up utility costs and other maintenance expenses as well as continued connector trail work next spring.

Then there's the question of when the park will open. The answer teeters on money.

If all goes as optimistically planned, the urban trailhead may open next summer. Lake Tahoe's Environmental Summit, which will be hosted in August by Sen. Dianne Feinstein, D-Calif., is usually set against a beautiful backdrop. National Trails

Day scheduled in June could be another option.

Either way, Nevada Parks Deputy Administrator Steve Weaver has some doubts about the future of the park. He estimates it will cost up to $20,000 a year to operate – beyond the $2.8 million-plus spent on construction of the first phase. The fire hydrants alone – three in California and four in Nevada – will consume $157 a month.

“There’s nothing in this budget to operate this park, and I don’t see anything in the foreseeable future,” Weaver warned while on an exclusive tour with *Lake Tahoe News* this month. “I think it’s very challenging. I don’t think anything (more) will be developed in this park in the next decade.”

Despite the dire forecast, Weaver is pleased with how the three-season park is shaping up. A half-mile road with a storm drainage system leads up to a 2½-acre day-use area with four picnic tables, a vaulted restroom scaled down from the flush variety, the start of the irrigation system, fencing, landscaping and a parking lot with 29 spaces. Six are designed for horse trailers. Portions of trails for equestrians, hikers and mountain bikers lead up to a ridge known for its Heavenly-style views along the gondola tower line.

Now, bears and other wildlife mix with the homeless on the park’s ridge, which is susceptible to wildland fires. A small blaze started by a homeless encampment sent fire crews out last summer. In 2002, a 673-acre fire was ignited by a cigarette along the California side of the scenic ridge.

With no development money from California, the Nevada park service fronted the costs. But the park system has lost 46 percent of its funding since 2007 and resources are tapped. With Nevada Gov.-elect Brian Sandoval’s pledge of no new taxes and fees, the donation box may be out – literally.

Nevada Parks needs help from the patrons and its state neighbors next door even though California’s budget is in far

worse shape. The Legislative Analyst's Office just announced a shortfall climbing to $25 billion. Voters also failed to pass a measure that would have funded the Golden State's park system through vehicle license fees.

Bruce Eisner of the CTC figures his agency would cough up about $150,000 next year at its Jan. 11 meeting to help fund gravel roadwork at the gateway to the park where the old Van Sickle barn and cabins sit.

"The money is slowly being freed up. We're now in a state of catch-up (with Nevada)," Eisner said.

There are also plans for a restroom at the lower level of the park and an interpretative kiosk for visitors, who will probably wander up from the heart of the South Shore's bed base on both sides of the state line.

The park, which will be open for spring, summer and fall visitation, is expected to bring out a host of outdoor enthusiasts – including those who have ventured into it from the famed Tahoe Rim Trail which circles the lake.

"This park and trailhead will provide an easily accessible trailhead for the residents and visitors to the South Lake Tahoe-Stateline area and may become one of our busiest trailheads," Tahoe Rim Trail Association Executive Director Mary Bennington told *Lake Tahoe News*.

This is one reason why the association has promised its operational support to keep the park going year after year.

"We see this as a win-win, even though it is a bit outside our normal mission," she said.

Bennington added that 100 association volunteers spent National Trails Day last summer building a half-mile of trail. To date, they have completed at least 8 miles of the work called the Daggett project, which links the park trail to the

Rim Trail at Kingsbury Grade in two places. The goal is to finish the Daggett connection by the next Trails Day celebration.

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Squaw's Ganong posts best result of career in super G

By Elizabeth Karam, U.S. Ski Team

LAKE LOUISE, Alberta -– Two-time Audi FIS Alpine World Cup overall champion Bode Miller of Franconia, N.H., led the U.S. in Lake Louise with 12th in the super G. Tobias Gruenenfelder nabbed the victory for the first win of his career in 1:32.31.

Double U.S. champion Travis Ganong of Squaw Valley posted the best result of his young career with 20th, while 2006 Olympic champ Ted Ligety of Park Cit continued to show improvement in speed events with 23rd.

"It is nice to finally get a race under my belt," said Ligety, who was sitting second in the season opening giant slalom before the race was called due to fog. "I felt like I skied well but just didn't have the speed. For the whole U.S. team in general, it's been a lack of volume. Normally we get the bulk of our speed training in Chile and this year we didn't have the opportunity and then we went to New Zealand and had bad weather."

With a consistent track and clear weather, Miller posted another solid finish, just over a half a second behind Gruenenfelder. Rounding out the podium was Switzerland's Carlo

Janka and Austria’s Romed Baumann in a race decided by a mere 0.07 seconds.

For Ganong, who captured the U.S. downhill and super G title last season, it was all about pushing out the noise to find focus.

“Marco [Sullivan of Squaw Valley] radioed up saying it was in good shape and that was just perfect,” said Ganong, who climbed 26 spots in the race. “I changed my game plan to charge all the way, and it worked. In the start I was like, calm down, look at this view and let’s just have fun. That put me in a peaceful content light. Maybe that’s the new thing.”

The men will head to Beaver Creek for the Audi Birds of Prey World Cup Dec. 3-5. With weather reports pointing to snow throughout the week, organizers have bumped the first downhill training run to Nov. 30 in order to maximize training opportunities.

Official results, Audi FIS Alpine World Cup, Lake Louise, Nov. 28, Super G

1. Tobias Gruenenfelder, Switzerland 1:32.31

2. Carlo Janka, Switzerland, 1:32.38

3. Romed Baumann, Austria, 1:32.58

4. Mario Scheiber, Austria, 1:32.60

5. Didier Cuche, Switzerland, 1:32.67

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12. Bode Miller, Franconia, N.H., 1:33.12

20. Travis Ganong, Squaw Valley, 1:33.65

23. Ted Ligety, Park City, 1:33.79

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35. Andrew Weibrecht, Lake Placid, 1:34.47

44. Steven Nyman, Sundance, 1:34.84

46. Marco Sullivan, Squaw Valley, 1:34.91

47. Tommy Biesemeyer, Keene, N.Y., 1:35.01

49. Erik Fisher, Middleton, Idaho, 1:35.17

63. Chris Frank, Rhinelander, Wis., 1:37.09

Ski report: Dress warm, expect moisture in the morning

Remnants of the latest storm will hang around this morning. Make sure the waterproof jacket is worn today along with the warm fleece.



Here is the ski report from Curtis Fong, the Guy from Tahoe.

Drop in elevation provides scenic, easy hike near Tahoe

By Kathryn Reed

GARDNERVILLE – Every now and then I don't know what to do in Tahoe. OK, it's more like every May and early November. Too much snow to hike, not enough to ski.

Two weeks ago was no different.

On what started as a sunny Sunday, we headed to the Carson Valley in search of new terrain where we could get our hiking boots a little dusty. The drop in elevation (4,476 feet) brought us up close to terrain we don't find in the mountains.



Expansive views along the Faye-Luther trail. Photos/Kathryn Reed

Sagebrush is everywhere. The long spindly bitterbrush protrudes above other flora. A few of the rabbitbrush's yellow flowers are intact. A hint of fall lingers on the branches of trees lining Luther Creek.

Farther up, white alder, willow and Jeffrey pines fill the landscape.

Though we didn’t see animals other than squirrels and horses, this area is home to hummingbirds, Bullock’s oriole, yellow warblers and the California toad.

Dogs are allowed on leashes. The horse people weren’t following this rule. Of course they also don’t have to clean up after their animals even though they make bigger messes – and lots of them in this area.

Starting out from the Faye-Luther trailhead we check out the map at the entrance. Myriad loops interconnect in a relatively small area. A flyer tells us about the Carson Valley Trails Association – a 16-year-old nonprofit “working with partners to provide access to public lands through a recreational trail system for present and future generations to enjoy.”

Appropriately named, the Sandy Trail leads us from the parking area toward the mountains we just crossed. Not far in is a sign that points to California in the direction we are headed, to Nevada where we parked. I thought nothing of the sign as we went by. It made sense to me.

What I had a hard time accepting until I saw multiple maps is the sign was actually the state line. Most of our hike was in California even though most of our drive was in Nevada. It just didn’t seem right. But I think the Bureau of Land Management knows which state its land is in.

An interpretive loop guides us along. We’re slow as we read most of the signs. It’s an education about who the trail is named after. The Faye family started a ranch near Luther Creek in 1863 and in 1905 was the first family in the area to have electricity.

Luther Creek starts its migration to the Carson Valley from Jobs Peak. Today it is used by farmers and never reaches the Carson River.

Ira Luther, who the creek and Luther Pass are named after,

settled in the area in the 1850s. He tried to get the Central Pacific Railroad to cross what is now Luther Pass.

Luther is credited with naming Douglas County after Illinois Sen. Stephen Arnold Douglas.

We venture off on the Grand View Loop – figuring out quickly how it got its name. Here on the western edge of the Great Basin and in the Carson Range views of the Carson Valley are vast, with the Pinenut Range in the distance to the east.

A grove of Jeffrey pines fills the trail by the same name.

Had we not been taking pictures and reading the signs we would have finished these three miles in no time. For the most part it's an easy hike. The trail gradually climbs at the start. Grand View is a bit steeper. But for anyone used to Tahoe, this is easy.

Next time, which is likely to be in the spring for wildflowers and butterflies, we'll start at the Jobs Peak Ranch trailhead to add a little mileage – assuming it's not too hot then.

Getting there:

From the South Shore, take Kingsbury Grade to the Carson Valley.

Turn right at bottom of the hill on Foothill Road.

We parked at the second trailhead on the right. This has shorter loops. The first trailhead (Jobs Peak Ranch) gives you a longer trek.

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Mancuso leads U.S. in giant slalom

By Elizabeth Karam, U.S. Ski Team

ASPEN -– Three-time Olympic medalist Julia Mancuso of Squaw Valley showed she has the speed to return to the Audi FIS Alpine World Cup giant slalom podium finishing eighth Saturday to lead the U.S. at the Visa Aspen Winternational. France's Tessa Worley produced a blistering second run jumping seven spots to make it two Aspen wins in three years.

Sarah Schleper of Vail also bagged some World Cup points with 18th as three-time World Cup overall winner Lindsey Vonn, also of Vail, skied out in the opening run.

An overflowing sunglassed crowd roared as Mancuso rocketed to second in the opening run, just three hundredths of a second behind leader and Olympic gold medalist Viktoria Rebensburg of Germany. A small mistake at the top of the course slowed Mancuso enough to keep her off the Aspen podium, despite making up time through the bottom of the course.

"I remembered from the training session last time that you have to charge down the pitch through all the rolls," said Mancuso, the 2006 Olympic GS champion. "I skied pretty consistent with one small mistake in the middle, but then I really picked it up again toward the finish. All in all it was a good run. It's a fine balance between charging hard and taking it easy to finish."

The tricky Aspen set grabbed Vonn yet again as her skis locked up on the grippy snow and bounced her off course. The Olympic champion immediately turned her focus to Sunday's slalom by heading back onto the snow after the race to train.

"I just went a little too straight today and got a little too

excited and amped up," Vonn said. "I wasn't using the greatest tactics, but that sometimes happens in ski racing. I'm definitely disappointed in today but I'm still optimistic. My training has been going really well both in GS and slalom so I'm just looking forward to the next race and trying to stay positive and keep working hard."

Joining Mancuso in the second run was Schleper, who was laying down a solid run before a minor speed check bounced her coming onto the flats.

"The last three years I've been right around the top-20," said Schleper. "I want to start getting top-15s, top-10s. I want to get back into that routine."

Mancuso left the gate on fire in the second run, before a losing her balance on bump in almost the exact spot as Schleper.

"I had a little problem on top and I felt like I lost my ski," explained Mancuso. "It was hard to get back in mentally. It was something in my head and I backed off."

American's Megan McJames of Park City and Laurenne Ross Klamath Falls failed to qualify for a second run, while Leanne Smith of Conway, N.H., skied off course.

McJames, Ross, Vonn, Schleper and Mancuso will be back in the start Sunday along with Resi Stiegler of Jackson Hole, Wyo., Land Hailey Duke of Boise with slalom. It will be the first start for Stiegler in just more than a year.

Official results, World Cup, Aspen, Nov. 27, Giant Slalom

1. Tessa Worley, France, 2:06.81

2. Viktoria Rebensburg, Germany, 2:06.82

3. Kathrin Hoezl, Germany, 2:06.83

4. Elisabeth Goergl, Austria, 2:06.87

5. Federica Brignone, Austria, 2:07.24

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8. Julia Mancuso, Squaw Valley, 2:07.51

18. Sarah Schleper, Vail, 2:08.80

DNF: Lindsey Vonn, Vail, Leanne Smith (Conway, N.H.)

DNQ: Megan McJames (Park City), Laurenne Ross (Klamath Falls)

Ski report: Storm in Tahoe, wind may be an issue on slopes

With a winter storm warning for the Lake Tahoe Basin until 10 tonight, a day on the slopes may not be the warmest place to be.



Here is the ski report for the day from Curtis Fong, the Guy from Tahoe. Check the resort where you are skiing because it’s possible lifts will be on wind hold.

Cove East loop beckons on wind-whipped afternoon

By Kathryn Reed

One of the best things about living on a street that doesn't get plowed first or even on the same day a storm hits is the ability to cross country ski on it.

Heading to Cove East last Sunday we knew it could be a bit treacherous before we got to this oasis owned by the California Tahoe Conservancy. No worries. We made it to the entrance at the end of Venice Drive by testing our balance on road ice and chunky snow banks.



A cold, stormy day at Cove East. Photos/Kathryn Reed

No one was there. Solitude and silence except for the honking of geese who didn't get the message to head south and crows that saw us struggling to break trail.

At first it seemed like this popular 2-mile or so loop on state land would be fairly easy on cross country skis because someone had been there before us with boots.

Gray skies hovered above as snow danced in the air to a song

the wind was singing. It was beautiful and a bit ominous at the same time.

Traipsing along the Upper Truckee River the water didn't seem to be moving. The edges are frozen and it is only November.

Mother Nature seems to be laughing at us as we keep our heads down to ward off the chill.

Reaching the beach, Lake Tahoe doesn't look like herself. It could be any other unimpressive body of water. It's dark. The surrounding mountains are not visible. It's a bit eerie.

Bootprints lead to the water. I don't want to go there. I break trail and sink. I head toward the loop to circle around. This isn't fun anymore and I make my irritation known. Why am I on skis instead of snowshoes? This would be pleasurable on snowshoes.

I lead us across the open space, making it a shorter loop so there will be less time for me to whine.

The tracks resume. Finally. Still not gliding much, but breaking trail is over.

The trek becomes more pleasurable. It sure beats going to the gym.

Getting to Cove East:

In South Lake Tahoe near the Y, turn on Tahoe Keys Boulevard.

Go right at the stop sign on Venice Drive.

Go the end – park in the circular area if the roads are cleared, otherwise park in the lot to the left for the marina and Fresh Ketch.

Enter the path. It loops around.

Dogs on leash are welcome. Bring a bag or use one of the ones

provided.

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How green is your ski equipment?

By Rachel Harris, Ski

How sustainable is that sweet pair of skis you're about to buy? You may soon be able to find out how green all your favorite products are through a new tool called the Eco Index. Designed in collaboration with over one hundred retailers, brands, and suppliers, along with the Outdoor Industry Association, the European Outdoor Group, and Zero Waste Alliance, the Eco Index is an environmental assessment tool designed to advance sustainable practices within the outdoor industry.



The Eco Index is based on a framework created to guide product development. Developers assess where their materials came from and how they were processed along with packaging, product manufacturing and assembly, transport and distribution, use and service, and finally end of life. After assessment, the Eco Index scores a product on a 119-point scale. "There is a lot of green-washing going on right now because everyone has their own standards," said Beth Jensen, Corporate Responsibility Manager at OIA. "This will hopefully provide a way to measure products against a standard so that companies can make more informed product lifecycle decisions."

Read the whole story

Ski report: Good conditions today, storm on Saturday

Enjoy the slopes today because a winter weather advisory has been issued for almost all of Saturday.



Here is today's ski report from Curtis Fong, the Guy from Tahoe.

The National Weather Service in Reno has issued the advisory for Nov. 27 from 10am to 10pm. Light snow is expected in the morning, then increasing as the day goes on. Three to 6 inches are predicted at the lake, with 6 to 10 inches above 7,000 feet.

Roads will have restrictions. Carry chains. Be sure to check the state icons on the home page of *Lake Tahoe News* to find out all the latest road conditions.