Bear Valley expands terrain for skiers

By Union Democrat

Skiers and snowboarders will have more room to roam when they visit Bear Valley Ski Area this year.

Bear Valley has announced that it is opening the 2010-11 ski and snowboard season with 400 acres of new terrain. The new acreage is on the sunny southern slope of the main ski area, accessible via the Kuma and Koala chairs. It features intermediate and advanced terrain, said Rosie Sundell, senior director of marketing at Bear Valley.

Sundell said the new section makes Bear Valley the seventh-largest ski resort in the state, with more than 1,680 acres of ski terrain, surpassing Sugar Bowl near Lake Tahoe.

Skiers and riders who take advantage of the new area at Bear Valley will have an opportunity to ride and slide through challenging grades and chutes, Sundell said. Once at the bottom, a shuttle will drive them back to the chairlift at base lodge for another run.

Bear Valley is the only California winter sports resort to expand its ski terrain this season.

Read the whole story

Thanksjibbin’ rail jam at Squaw

Squaw Valley is giving skiers and snowboarders something to be thankful for Thanksgiving weekend. Nov. 27 is the Thanksjibbin’ rail jam.

The base mountain location means lift tickets are not necessary to watch or enter this rail competition.

Judges will be dishing out cash prizes as well as Thanksgiving treats including butterball turkeys, smoked hams and Cornish game hens for 1st, 2nd and 3rd place. Pumpkin pies will be handed out as seen fit for style, creative tricks and best outfit.

Squaw Valley Terrain Park Director JP Martin recommends skiers and riders dig out their retro outfits and polish off their old school tricks. Outfits and style will be rewarded.

Thanksjibbin’ is an open entry, jam style competition with four classes: men’s and women’s ski and snowboard. Registration is 3-4pm and the competition starts at 5pm. The competition entry fee is $10 and helmets are mandatory.

Athletes under 18 years must have a parent or guardian sign a liability release form. For more details see squaw.com.

State Parks regrouping after

ballot measure flops

By Matt Weiser, Sacramento Bee

The defeat of Proposition 21 on Nov. 2 means California State Parks will continue to experience partial closures, reduced maintenance and dwindling ranger patrols.

The measure failed by a 16-point margin, a spread that surprised many park advocates. It would have imposed a mandatory $18 annual vehicle license fee while giving vehicle owners free day use at all 278 state parks.

Only 10 of California's 52 counties leaned in favor of the measure. Just two were outside the San Francisco Bay Area: Yolo and Alpine.

Elizabeth Goldstein, president of the California State Parks Foundation, chief sponsor of the measure, held out hope that parks funding might improve with a new governor in office next year.

"We're going to have to regroup, no question about that," she said. "This park system didn't get any less important because of the vote (last week)."

Read the whole story

Sparks plans to be a player in 2022 Olympic bid

By David Jacobs, Reno Gazette-Journal

If the Reno-Lake Tahoe region were to land a bid for the 2022 Winter Olympics, Sparks would play a key role, the leader of the Regional Transportation Commission is telling city leaders.

“Clearly, Sparks first off has a significant number of the region’s hotel rooms, and that’s where folks are going to stay,” RTC Executive Director Lee Gibson said. “Secondly, Sparks is a strong partner in the RTC.”

Gibson made his comments during a recent visit to Sparks City Hall.

Besides hotel rooms for an Olympic Games, Sparks also would serve an important transportation center.

Read the whole story

Sugar pines get a little help from Soroptimist

By Sharon Sterling

Members of Soroptimist International of South Lake Tahoe participated in the Sugar Pine Foundation’s community planting event Nov. 6, helping to plant 750 sugar pine seedlings on U.S. Forest Service land in the Angora Fire burn scar area near Coyote Ridge Circle in South Lake Tahoe.

According to the Sugar Pine Foundation, the sugar pines of the Lake Tahoe Basin have been devastated by white pine blister rust, an incurable fungus that threatens the future of the world’s largest species of pine, known for its beautiful, enormous cones.



Sue Novasel and Ellen Camacho

White pine blister rust kills 90 percent of all the trees it infects and natural white pine



Sharon Sterling

regeneration cannot keep up with the pace of blister rust die-off. Fortunately, the Sugar Pine Foundation, founded in 2004, has identified and collected seeds from 64 rust-resistant trees in the Tahoe area which have been used to grow seedlings that are then planted by volunteers at community planting events such as this one.

Fewer than half of the 1-year old seedlings planted at the event are expected to survive, yet that didn’t dampen the spirits of the dedicated group of Soroptimist volunteers.

“It is such an honor to be a part of helping to restore the forests of Tahoe for future generations,” said SISLT President Ellen Camacho.

Restoring white pines in Tahoe forests not only benefits

nature-lovers; it has many long-term benefits for wildlife, watershed health and the local economy as well.

For more information on the Sugar Pine Foundation, visit www.sugarpinefoundation.org.

They have another event planned for this weekend; Nov. 13, 10am-noon: Community Planting at Zephyr Cove Park near Whittell High School.

Sharon Sterling is a member of Soroptimist International South Lake Tahoe.

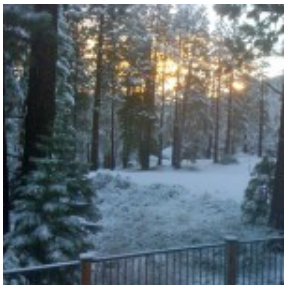
Snow blankets basin, slick roads greet commuters

By Kathryn Reed

It doesn't matter the calendar is closer to the fall equinox than winter's – white stuff is all over the Lake Tahoe Basin.

Rain began turning to snow off and on Sunday afternoon, with just snow coming down in the evening. About an inch fell at lake level in South Lake Tahoe, while the Meyers area got about four times as much.

Ski resorts like Heavenly that have been making snow for a couple weeks are in good shape as the season is about to begin. Heavenly plans to open Nov. 19, Boreal is already open. Other opening dates include Northstar Nov. 20, Squaw Nov. 25, Homewood Dec. 17.



Sunrise in Meyers on Nov. 8. Photo/Brenda Knox

Although it’s a bluebird morning, the National Weather Service is still calling for 30 percent chance of snow for today and 40 percent on Tuesday.

Black ice is being reported in the basin and surrounding areas between Carson Valley and Reno. As the temperatures rise, that threat will subside. Chain controls are in affect on some passes, so check the state icons on the home page of *Lake Tahoe News* for the latest info.

Highway 50 from the basin to halfway down Spooner Summit into Carson was called an “ice skating rink” by one driver who drove the route about 8am Monday.

Bundle up because the high today in Lake Tahoe is expected to be 38, with the low 18 degrees.

Mostly sunny skies are in the forecast for Thursday and Friday.

To ensure more white stuff covers the slopes, the annual Sierra-at-Tahoe Pray for Snow Party is Nov. 11 at 7pm at Mo’s Place near the Super 8 motel in South Tahoe. Fresh Ketch’s party is Nov. 17 at 7:30pm in South Tahoe.

Rahlve’s Banzai race expands beyond Sugar Bowl

By Jeremy Benson, ESPN

This winter, Daron Rahlves’ ski-cross-style Silver Belt Banzai Race, previously a one-off event held at California’s Sugar Bowl ski area, will become a three-series tour around Lake Tahoe.

Known as the Rahlves Banzai Series, the races will be held at Alpine Meadows (Jan. 22-23), Kirkwood (Feb. 5-6) and Sugar Bowl (March 12-13) and will feature skiers and snowboarders going head-to-head around gates set on big-mountain terrain.

“I thought, let’s start a new tradition and build a tour off the success of the last two Silver Belt Banzais,” Rahlves says, “and take it to other cool places like Alpine Meadows and Kirkwood.”

The first-ever Silver Belt Race was held at Sugar Bowl toward the end of the resort’s very first season, in April of 1940. The GS-style race ran skiers down the challenging natural terrain of Mt. Lincoln. In a time before World Cup competition, the race was widely considered to be one of the toughest of that era and often attracted the top American and European competitors. The Silver Belt Race was held for 35 seasons, the last in 1975.

After it ended, the race became something of a legend. A trail was named after it at Sugar Bowl and black and white pictures hung from the walls of the Belt Room Bar in the ski area’s Disney Lodge.

Read the whole story

Cohee revamping Central California ski resort

By Marek Warszawski, McClatchy-Tribune

FRESNO – Tim Cohee, the new owner of China Peak, is crossing his ski tips that this winter brings a ton of snow.

But not too soon. There's still too much left to be done during what has been an unusually busy offseason at the 1,300-acre ski resort 65 miles east of Fresno.

Cohee promised fresh ideas and a customer-friendly atmosphere after he and two partners purchased China Peak (formerly Sierra Summit) in May for $3.8 million. Judging by all the ongoing construction and general hustle and bustle observed on a recent afternoon, the former president of Kirkwood Mountain Resort is making good on that pledge.

"It's been pretty hectic, but all these improvements are sorely needed," Cohee said. "The difference will be very dramatic."

Read the whole story

Nevada creating plan to save rangeland

By Jeff Delong, Reno Gazette-Journal

Millions of acres are charred by wildfire. Millions more covered by invading grass. Elsewhere, pinyon-juniper trees are creeping downhill, overrunning a landscape that should be dominated by sagebrush.

Nevada's rangeland, simply put, is in trouble.

"We've got some pretty big problems on the range," said Lee Turner, a habitat specialist with the Nevada Department of Wildlife.

Turner is heading up a new state program to restore Nevada's range, crucial to ranchers and as habitat for wildlife.

Born as part of the "war on cheatgrass" declared in 2007 by Gov. Jim Gibbons and the governors of Utah, Idaho and Wyoming, the Nevada Partners for Conservation and Development program is designed to build on plans already developed by federal land managers and to achieve large-scale restoration of both public and privately owned range.

"There are a lot of planning efforts out there," Turner said. "We're a group that's going to put projects on the ground."

Read the whole story

Mt. Rose ski resort installs wind turbine

By Kara Lapoint, Reno Gazette-Journal

Mt. Rose Ski Tahoe installed its first Windspire vertical wind turbine Wednesday on the north side of its Winters Creek Lodge, and will install two more today.

The Windspire renewable energy sources will use wind power to provide electricity, offsetting a portion of the new lodge's electrical costs. The electricity will be funneled back into the region's power grid and will also qualify Mt. Rose for rebates.

Spokesperson Kayla Anderson said the wind turbines should cover lighting costs for Winters Creek Lodge during the upcoming season.

Anderson said the wind turbines function optimally with winds at 26 miles per hour, and that they'll stop spinning when winds hit about 34 mph. The structures are designed to withstand gusts up to 160 mph. The average wind speed at Mt. Rose's Slide Bowl is 14 mph.

Read the whole story