Abundance of invasive clams at Stateline beach

By Janine Green

This picture was taken at Nevada Beach on July 19, 2010. The kids were out swimming and began to collect these clams out of the lake. It is apparent to me by the number and size of the clams that the huge push they are making to check boats and prevent the clam population is too late.

These were gathered by children by just scooping them up in their hands. They said there were hundreds of them and they



Clams at Nevada Beach in Stateline. Photo/Janine Green

just wanted to show us.

Janine Green is a resident of Carson City

LT Golf Course, river's futures wrapped in EIR/EIS

By Kathryn Reed

MEYERS – With $6.1 million pumped into the greater South Shore economy each year from the Lake Tahoe Golf Course, officials are doing what they can to make sure those 18 holes exist when it comes time to restore the 1.5 miles of the Upper Truckee River that meanders through the greens.

"The revenues vary annually. In the economic study completed in 2008, the average was $981,000 per year, $139,000 of which was reinvested as capital improvements," according to the website.

State parks generally lose money. This is the only one in the Sierra District to make money, and it is in the top five for the entire state.

American Golf is the concessionaire. It's a month-to-month lease until a decision is made about what will happen on the South Shore course along Highway 50.



Lake Tahoe Golf Course and the eroding Upper Truckee River in Meyers.

Photos/Kathryn
Reed

Although California State Parks, which owns the land the course and river are on, did not select a preferred alternative in the EIR/EIS that came out Aug. 26, much of the discussion Thursday during the media tour was on Alternative 2.

This would move seven full holes and three half holes from what is now known as Lake Valley Recreation Area to Washoe Meadow State Park. About 37 acres of stream environmental zone would be restored.

Groups like Washoe Meadows Community have long been against moving holes into the 700-plus acre state park. These people and others believe it will take-away from the biking, hiking and cross country ski experience.

Though this undeveloped state park is unknown to many longtime locals, it’s popular every season with those who do use it.

Park officials say there would be a trade-off with acres taken from the state park for the golf course being exchanged for accessible terrain along the river. As it stands now, the river through the golf course is essentially off-limits except to golfers and youth who wander in in search of errant golf balls to later sell.

The five short bridges crossing the Truckee are considered in areas of play. In more than one proposal they would be replaced by one bridge, 120- to 150-feet long that would be accessible to everyone.

South Shore media reps were given a tour of part of the property on Aug. 26. Like previous tours, the decaying banks were pointed out, a short walk taken to the old sand and gravel quarry pit. But what is hard to envision is just how close the golf course might come to the old Celio barn or the

popular trails accessed from various sides of the park.

If the course were moved, then the lines of the recreation area and state park would be redrawn to reflect the golf course being in the former.

The environmental documents study 520 acres of the park. The federal document was required because the Bureau of Reclamation has contributed money to the process.

As with most reaches of the Upper Truckee River, which is the largest tributary to Lake Tahoe and biggest conveyor of fine sediment, the channel was straightened out years ago to accommodate the uses at the time. The problem is at the time no one was paying attention to erosion.

“What straightening the river means is it eats at the banks. As it ate its banks, it got larger so it had more power to erode,” explained Cyndie Walck, the state parks lone hydrologist.

She started monitoring erosion at the site in 1994.

The riverbank is obviously eroding. It is also evident stopgap measures to shore-up the banks have been unsuccessful.

The dispute rests in what may happen next.

The alternatives are:

1. Do nothing.

2. Restore the river and reconfigure the golf course to keep it an 18-hole facility.

3. Restore the river and reduce the course to nine holes

4. Leave everything intact, but stabilize the banks.

5. Restore the river and remove the golf course.

With 30,000 rounds of golf played at the course each year, officials looked at moving the golf course somewhere else on the South Shore, but no suitable land was found.

If the course is reconfigured, it will not affect winter snowmobiling.

Comments on the EIR/EIS will be taken until Nov. 4. The Tahoe Regional Planning Agency Governing Board is expected to discuss the documents in October. The documents are expected to be certified by state parks officials in the spring. At that time a more formal cost estimate will be available, though now $5 million is the amount talked about that is needed for river restoration. The soonest work would begin in 2012.

Walck says a project like this would likely rise to the top as her agency goes after grant money to fund it.

If golf course holes are moved, that will be part of a bid package for the next long-term concessionaire. In other words, it won’t be taxpayer dollars building the course.

More information:

• Restore the Upper Truckee River

• Washoe Meadow State Park

• EIR/EIS executive summary

• Washoe Meadows Community

Future meetings:

• Public Site Tour

Sept. 8, 2-4pm

Lake Tahoe Golf Course

• Public Site Tour

Sept. 22, 4:30-6:30pm

Lake Tahoe Golf Course

• Public Open House

Sept. 29, 6-8pm

Lake Tahoe Golf Course

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123 acres at Daggett Pass returns to public ownership

The deal was signed this week to protect a historic 123 acres at Daggett Pass, a portion of it containing the Pony Express trail, has been protected by being added to the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest.

The property was sold by Patricia G. Baker of Carmichael, the widow of John M. Baker, a native of Gardnerville, whose family acquired the parcel in the late 1930s.

On a relatively flat area halfway up the grade, there was an area known as “Peters Station.” It was the site in the 1860s of a booming three-story hotel owned by Elizabeth and Richard Peters. The teamsters, and their heavy horse-drawn rigs, would spend the night, rest the horses, and enjoy dinner and a night’s sleep before the next day’s arduous climb.

The $750,000 to buy the property came from the Federal Land Transaction Facilitation Act. The law lets money from lands

sold by the BLM which were identified for disposal in approved land use plan) be used to acquire private in-holdings in National Parks, National Forests, and BLM conservation areas.

The property will be managed by the Forest Service in coordination with Douglas County, which is turning part of the Old Kingsbury Grade into a segment of the Pony Express National Historic Trail. When that is complete, it will provide hikers, horseback riders, and bicyclists with a route between the Lake Tahoe Basin trail system and destinations in Carson Valley.

The Trust for Public land, a national nonprofit land conservation organization dedicated to preserving land for people to enjoy as parks, open spaces, and gardens, facilitated the purchase.

Growth puts pressure on California's state parks

By Marjie Lundstrom and Matt Weiser, Sacramento Bee

At the Riverwood Inn in rural Humboldt County, where a Harley-Davidson flag flaps on a light pole beneath the Stars and Stripes, the proprietor is steaming mad.

Some 15 miles south of Loreen Eliason's roadhouse, the California Department of Transportation is planning to widen a twisty stretch of Highway 101 through Richardson Grove State Park, home to one of the world's last old-growth redwood forests. Although Caltrans has assured the public the ancient giants won't be harmed, some residents and activists are alarmed by the very prospect of disturbing the trees' shallow

root systems.

“I was born up here. I’m connected to those trees,” said Eliason, who has joined a lawsuit to halt the road plan.

“Those uppity-ups in Sacramento. … They absolutely can’t say for certain they won’t hurt the trees,” she said. “I was more than glad to jump into the lawsuit.”

As civilization closes in on many of California’s 278 state parks, legal and emotional battles are erupting up and down the Golden State. With 1.3 million acres in public hands — much of it the most prized real estate in California — the state’s parks increasingly find themselves poked at and even assaulted by outside pressures.

Read the whole story

Annual Coastal Cleanup Day needs Tahoe volunteers

Last year, more than 3,000 volunteers around the Sierra came together to remove more than 100 tons of trash. More than 100 communities, across 22 counties and stretching across 500 river miles pull appliances, cigarette butts, beverage cans, baby diapers, tires, furniture, and more from the rivers and streams that supply California with 65 percent of its water.



El Dorado Beach in South Tahoe gets cleaned in 2009. Photo/Provided

This year’s cleanup day is Sept. 25 from 9am-noon. If you aren’t part of an assigned group, drop by El Dorado Beach to be assigned a location.

This event is in partnership with California Coastal Cleanup Day, an acclaimed statewide event that brings together tens of thousands of volunteers to clean up debris from our state’s beaches, lakes and waterways.

This year, six Tahoe area organizations have joined together to put on this event in South Lake Tahoe. Choose one of our 13 clean up sites to take part in this epic event. Click here to sign up.

Bring your own bag for the debris, plus gloves and water. Buckets could be used instead of individual bags.

All volunteers are invited to a cleanup celebration afterward. Enjoy food and drinks, local music and raffle prizes.

Call Ellen Nunes at Clean Tahoe for more information – (530) 544.4210.

Central Valley swimmer sets Tahoe record

By James Burns, Merced Sun-Star

Clark Bird became the first person in open water history to swim the length of Lake Tahoe at night without a wetsuit.

Delayed by 24 hours because of adverse weather conditions, Bird completed the 22.1-mile swim from Incline Village to Camp Richardson on the south shore on Monday morning.

He finished in 13 hours, 23 minutes unofficially, said close friend Bob Nutcher. Bird's time of record was not available by press time.

He is just the fifth person in history to complete the trans-Tahoe swim without a wetsuit, according to multiple Lake Tahoe-area publications, joining Ken Harmon, Patti Bauernfeind, Karen Rogers and Tom Linthicum.

Read the whole story

Fallen Leaf Lake residents learn about keeping invasives out

By Stephen Ward

FALLEN LEAF LAKE – A throng of fervent Fallen Leaf Lake residents gathered Saturday at the old local store for the

Aquatic Invasive Species Symposium to discuss a growing concern in the area; keeping Fallen Leaf Lake free from invasive species.

The event, hosted by the Tahoe Resource Conservation District, focused primarily on quagga and zebra mussels, including more than 30 slides depicting the nonnative species and describing the various threats they beget. There are currently no known invasive species in Fallen Leaf Lake.

According to the TRCD, many invasive species are nonnative species intentionally introduced to the region to increase sport fishing or enhance ecosystem resources. Over time, these species harm the body of water they occupy by altering nutrient cycles and adding phosphorus to the water, which increases algal growth. But they are also unknowingly transported on watercraft.



Fallen Leaf Lake residents don't want invasive species to enter the water. Photo/Kathryn Reed

Some measures the TRCD has taken at Lake Tahoe are the creation of the Asian Clam Pilot Removal and Aquatic Weed Removal Projects. Under these projects, studies and tests have

been conducted, as well as vacuum-assisted hand removal along newly established bottom barriers in potentially threatened areas.

In addition to invasive species, a lively discussion at the symposium was bowel tanks, and the hopeful dismissal from the region.

“We are trying to slowly stop allowing them at Lake Tahoe,” said Nicole Cartwright, watercraft inspection program coordinator at TRCD. “They cause a lot of erosion and pollute the water.”

The event was well received by the community, with many residents commending the presentation for its counsel and recommendations.

“Overall, I feel the slideshow had good, effective ideas,” said Mary McCullough, a Fallen Leaf resident. “What really caught my attention was the exchange. It’s also worth noting that this information doesn’t just apply to Lake Tahoe and Fallen Leaf, but to Central California as well.”

Another Fallen Leaf resident, Karl Stauffer, discussed his contribution to maintaining the cleanliness of the area.

“I have an old Chris-Craft I bought in the 1950s that has never been anywhere outside Fallen Leaf Lake. I was the first person on this lake to have a boat washing system, too. People don’t realize how much it pollutes the lake if the boats aren’t cleaned regularly,” Stauffer said.

More information about aquatic invasive species and preventing their infestation can be found on the TRCD’s website.

23-mile TRTA challenge hike

Determine your fitness level on a 23-mile challenge hike with the TRTA. Join experienced volunteer guides for a day of hiking on the longest segment of the Tahoe Rim Trail.

The trail from Kingsbury Grade south to Big Meadow maintains a 10 percent or less grade, however there are some steep rocky sections around Monument Pass. Much of this route is exposed and above 9,000 feet.

Meet at Big Meadow trailhead at 6am Aug. 27, where the appropriate number of cars will be selected to shuttle the Kingsbury South trailhead. After the hike, a couple volunteers will be needed to bring shuttle drivers back to their cars.

Meeting Place: Big Meadow Trailhead

Time: 6am

Distance: 23.1 Miles

Expected Length: 10 hours

Difficulty: Strenuous

Bring: Lunch, snacks, and at least two liters of water. Water is available to filter at Star Lake. If you have a filter, bring it on this hike. Bring raincoat, sun protection (hat, sunglasses, and lotion).

Fitness Level/Special Skills: Please note that this hike is designed for experienced hikers who are in good physical condition. This is a long hike. Hikers should be comfortable hiking all day. Although there will be periodic breaks, a steady pace needs to be maintained in order to finish the hike at a reasonable time of day.

Pre-registration is required for all hikes. For more

information or to sign-up for these hikes call the TRTA office at (775) 298.0012 or email jaimes@tahoerimtrail.org

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Combining art and hiking at Squaw

Music, art, dance and poetry unite in the Sierra Nevada at 6,200 feet in the seventh annual inspiring art hike produced by Trails and Vistas on Sept. 11-12 at Squaw Valley.

Audience members, led by an experienced guide, hike in small groups pausing at 10 art venues, each set against the striking backdrop of towering granite rock faces. Blending art with nature, the hike has had a profound effect on participants who become integral members of this unique experience. It has sold-out the last four years.

Artists and performers will present the expected and the unexpected. This year's theme, "If Dreams were Clouds" honors the dreamtime. Inspired by dream songs of the land and animals intertwined with the playful and powerful dance of clouds in the sky, artists play with the concept of dreamtime and clouds-floating, twisting, and holding a sculptural figurine before being carried away to another place or sculpted into a memory.

2010 Artists and Performers Capacitor headlines the 2010 Trails and Vistas art hikes throughout the weekend with poetic moving bodies in the landscape set to musical earthly sounds. San Francisco's interdisciplinary dance company collaborates with the scientific and art community to create mind-expanding, heart-gripping live performances.

Featured artists for Sept. 12 art hikes is the Banana Slug String Band.

Trails and Vistas is also collaborating with more than 20 other artisans to cultivate a transformational experience for every participant.

Hike information and tickets

The nearly 3-mile long hike is strenuous and includes approximately 1,500 gain in elevation. Hikers must be comfortable traversing some rocky areas, including some steep pitches. Hiking groups will depart every 15 minutes with a trail leader (dogs and photography are not allowed). Tickets are $30 for adults and $15 for children. Tickets may be purchased at www.trailsandvistas.org or by calling (530) 587.2757.

Taylor Creek Visitor Center may be torn down, rebuilt

By Kathryn Reed

It was never meant to be a visitor center. And, yet, what was supposed to be the bathroom and storage facility at Taylor Creek have been a visitor center for more than 40 years.

All of that is about to change.



Taylor Creek Visitor Center may be overhauled. Photos/Kathryn Reed

This seasonal South Shore outpost on Highway 89 run by the U.S. Forest Service could be demolished in the next couple years and replaced with a 3,800-square-foot facility that is designed to provide a better experience.

“We want to make it more functional and organized,” Jackie King, USFS interpretive program manager, said of the proposed center.

What is there now was designed in the 1960s. Bats and mice infested the upstairs (it’s been taken care of) – but the area cannot be used.

The originally planned visitor center was not built because funding never came through. The Forest Service adapted. The center is small. With five people it feels crowded.

Making it a better experience just walking from the parking lot is part the plans. It’s not welcoming how it is currently situated, nor from the outer parking area do visitors know a center even exists.



The current Taylor Creek center was built for storage.

A handful of years ago the idea was to construct a 10,000-square-foot center with classrooms and exhibit halls. The public nixed that idea, saying it would overwhelm the site.

Now out for public comment until mid-September is the smaller visitor center proposal. The idea is what's standing now would be torn down, the trailers would be hauled away and the new structure put up. The cement walkways with the animal tracks would have to be torn out, but King said they are such a talking point with guests that they would be replaced.

"What we've heard from the public is make sure you don't make it an architectural monument that overwhelms the site," King said.

The idea is for the center to beckon people to come in, to ask questions, to thumb through books. Then it will act as a gateway, much like it does now, to the Rainbow Trail, Lake Tahoe and the amphitheater.



Interpretive information will remain outside near the visitor center.

Interpretative exhibits will remain outdoors.

It’s the environmental analysis that is in circulation. It’s online and hard copies are at the Forest Service office in South Lake Tahoe and at Taylor Creek. Once comments have been scrutinized, it will be up to the forest supervisor how to proceed. If it’s signed off, at that point the agency will go after funding.

The project is estimated to cost just less than $3 million. It everything goes according to plan, the new center could be running in four to five years.

It would remain a seasonal facility – operating seven days a week from mid-May through October.

Click here for more information and ways to comment.