Property owner getting grief for cutting access to bike path

By Kathryn Reed

A private property sign where one has not existed for at least a decade is causing some unrest on West Way in South Lake Tahoe.

In October, when Paul Lara bought the house that backs to the Pope Meadow he knew a trail skirted the far edge of his property. What he didn't know is how well used it is. With biking season having arrived, he has found out the hard way.

"When I bought the property I could see there was a spot where people could come through. My intention was never to keep it open. My intention was to close it off," Lara said.



The Laras' house is on the far side of the trail they blocked off. Photo/Kathryn Reed

But he doesn't want to build a fence. One of the appealing

things about the parcel is the openness of it.

To stop people from riding on his land Lara has erected a barrier with wood and posted a “Private Property, No Trespassing” sign. But not everyone is thrilled with not being allowed to pedal or walk through the meadow that leads to Pope Beach and onto Camp Richardson. Nor has it stopped everyone.

Lara called South Lake Tahoe police officers to his residence three times last week because of threats from disgruntled trail users.

“It’s amazing the anger coming out of a lot of people. I haven’t accosted anyone. I have been calm. I’m trying to be understanding,” Lara said.

Lara said one irate user threateningly drove a vehicle toward him.

“Technically if people are on his property (even if it’s unfenced), it could be considered trespassing. The fact that it is a well used trail is another issue,” police Lt. David Stevenson said. “If he leaves town and there is no fence, I would think people would use the trail again.”

Lara and his wife are part-time residents. Their jobs as a firefighter and nurse are in the Central Valley. The 51-year-old has been coming here since he was a kid and intends to live in South Lake full time one day.

“I’m up here a lot. I would like to have some privacy,” Lara said. “My main windows point that way.”

A significant number of trail users, including this reporter, come from the Tahoe Keys and Tahoe Island area. It provides a scenic, less crowded route to places off Emerald Bay Road. It also means not dealing with the hordes of people on the paved Pope-Baldwin trail.

Lara said farther up West Way, closer to Highway 89, is a

California Tahoe Conservancy lot people have begun to use to reach the meadow.

The distinct trail on his property is closer to his neighbor's house than his, but his neighbor has a fence. The Laras own a double lot, with the bike path on the far side of the undeveloped lot. They have chairs sitting in the lush grass. They would rather be watching the aspens quake than cyclists fly by.

He also worries about liability issues if someone were to injure themselves on his land. Plus, next to the dirt trail is a shallow gully that still has water in it.

Even if people get used to not using this trail starting from West Way, it doesn't mean they won't end up on it coming from the other direction. That's because the meadow and the property leading to it is U.S. Forest Service land.

Garrett Villanueva, assistant forest engineer, will be taking a look at the problem soon.

"We don't endorse any trail that goes across private property without the owner's permission," Villanueva said. "But we do sympathize with the users and landowner."

This particular trail through the meadow is unauthorized. Villanueva said closing it and restoring the area could compound the problem.

A potential concern for the Forest Service is if people are leaving the trails near Pope Beach, head across the meadow and then are stuck if Lara and others create a dead-end by preventing people from accessing West Way to get to their final destination.

"As the situation evolves, we will look at the actions we need to take," Villanueva said.

He is extremely familiar with land use issues like this.

Villanueva dealt with the Dundee Circle issue from a few years ago when a new homeowner cut off access to a highly popular mountain bike trail in the Tahoe Mountain area. A Forest Service gate went up, but the owner also eventually sold her place.

Neighbors at the time brought up the issue of prescriptive easements. These easements on private property are acquired by continued use without permission of the owner. Each state has different rules for how these easements are handled.

Whether that issue would gain traction on West Way remains to be seen.

One thing Villanueva said is with his agency looking at all the bike trails in that area, many changes are likely to be forth coming in the near future for cyclists and pedestrians.

Aspen stands along Upper Truckee River to be restored

Crews from the U.S. Forest Service and California Tahoe Conservancy will work this summer and next restoring about 60 acres of aspen groves near the Upper Truckee River and around the Angora Fire area.

The projects are made possible by $285,000 in funding from the South Tahoe Public Utility District, as part of a plan developed in collaboration with the League to Save Lake Tahoe to mitigate recycled water export line construction impacts on Luther Pass.

Aspen grove restoration is critical in areas disturbed by fire

or construction because the groves provide habitat to multiple wildlife species. They are also a key element of a healthy, fire-resistant forest.

Discount tickets available to Tahoe’s celeb golf tourney

Raley’s, Bel-Air and Nob Hill Foods supermarkets are selling discount ticket for the American Century Championship at Edgewood Tahoe Golf Course, July 13-18.

Tickets are on sale at 128 locations throughout Northern California and Nevada through July 17. Stores will offer tickets to the celebrity golf tournament for $22, or $18 with a grocery purchase of $50 or more. These one-day tickets are for Friday, Saturday or Sunday of the tournament. Ticket purchases are limited to four per person. For a full list of stores selling discounted tickets, click here.

Tickets are also sold online here and at the gate.

Reno trying to alter reputation of being bike unfriendly



By Kara Lapoint, Reno Gazette-Journal

Verdi resident John Leeming has been screamed at, honked at, foghorned and has had doors opened at him from moving vehicles – all while riding his bike around Reno.

Dean Deming shares similar experiences, and then some: being run off the road and getting hit from behind.

“Every time I go out, I wonder if it will be the last,” Deming said.

Leeming and Deming are among bicyclists who say they feel a sense of fear when riding. And according to Sgt. Jim Stegmaier of the Reno police Traffic Division, that fear is legitimate.

Read the whole story

Green Thumb Gardening Series

A variety of gardening related classes are being offered on the South Shore starting June 27.

The Green Thumb Gardening Series is sponsored by the Tahoe Resource Conservation District, Lake Tahoe Community College and UC Cooperative Master Gardener.

Classes include learning about soil, landscaping with stone, selecting trees, water conservation, BMPs and more.

For more information, click on green or call (530) 543.1501, ext. 107.

Swim and other rec programs in South Tahoe

Summer registration is under way for all programs and classes at the South Lake Tahoe Parks & Recreation Complex.

There are Saturday, evening and morning swim lesson sessions available. Private lessons are going on now and continue throughout the year.

Saturday Drop-in Swim Clinics run 8-9am with Derek Beller.

Another CPR/AED class is running July 12 from 5:30-9pm.

Water Exercise runs Monday–Saturday 9-10am and the Deep Water Vertical Exercise class runs Monday and Wednesday at 6:30pm.

If you have questions, call (530) 542. 6056, check out www.recreationintahoe.com or stop by the Recreation & Swim Pool Complex at 1180 Rufus Allen Blvd., South Tahoe.

Popular fishing holes filled with contaminated fish

By Alex Breitler, Stockton Record

Reel in a reality check: Your catch of the day might contain high levels of mercury or other contaminants, even if you’re fishing in what seems to be a fairly clean mountain lake.

Now there’s a user-friendly way to check before you cast.

The results from the largest survey of fish tissues from 272 lakes across the state are featured on interactive maps recently posted on the website of the State Water Resources Control Board.

Read the whole story

Full moon hikes along Tahoe Rim Trail

Everything changes after dark – the trails, the trees, and the lake. Experience the Tahoe Rim Trail in a whole new light with full moon hikes in the Tahoe Meadows led by experienced guides.

Enjoy views of the lake as the moon rises over the Lake Tahoe Basin. Experience the peace, tranquility and beauty of the Tahoe Rim Trail at dusk.

Expect casually paced hikes for all ages, while slowing down to enjoy the current happenings in the natural world and nighttime senses.

Bring a flashlight, a wind-proof layer and water.

This may not be the best hike for children under 10 years old. Please, to respect the night sounds, no dogs.

Dates:

June 25, July 25, Aug. 24, Sept. 23 and Oct. 23.

Details:

TRTA membership is required to attend. (Memberships start at $20 for one year.)

Space is limited, sign up in advance. All Full Moon Hikes will start at the Tahoe Meadows Trailhead.

For more information or to sign-up call (775) 298.0238 or email programs@tahoerimtrail.org.

Tour de Nez winner looking to repeat

By Maggie Thach, Reno Gazette-Journal

There was no one around him. It was just Brett Melcher and the finish line. The wind was strong, but he could hear the spectators calling his name. All his focus pointed to crossing that line.

Tim Healion was leaning over the rail at the finish line, arm outstretched and waiting for a high five. Melcher, widely and affectionately known as “Bubba,” lifted his left arm. With that exchange, he had won a Tour De Nez for the first time in 13 tries.

“He’s a local guy and people have gone out there and seen him come in second or third or fourth,” said Healion, the Tour de Nez’s race director. “The crowd went crazy. It was extreme excitement.”

He has won other races – Melcher, 50, was a U.S. cycling national criterium champion in 2001 and 2004 and was ranked third in the country in the 45-49 Masters classification last year – but there was something special about the hometown guy

winning the local race.

Read the whole story

Mix of regulars, newbies to play Tahoe celeb golf tournament



The American Century Championship, the celebrity golf tournament at Lake Tahoe, celebrates its 21 birthday July 13-18. Michael Jordan, Charles Barkley, Tony Romo, Bode Miller, Troy Aikman, Jerry Rice, Don Cheadle, Mario Lemieux, Taylor Hicks are among the 80 sports and entertainment stars and Hall of Famers competing in the 54-hole, $600,000 tournament on NBC Sports.

South Shore Lake Tahoe is the place to be for celebrity sightings, parties and superstar entertainment throughout the week. The increased participation of entertainment luminaries and new personalities and athletes has tournament buzz starting early. The event has evolved into a local and national institution, attracting record galleries and attention.

For the fifth consecutive year, the official tournament charity is Livestrong – the organization founded by cancer survivor and champion cyclist Lance Armstrong to inspire and empower people affected by cancer. Since the tournament's inception in 1990, more than $3 million has been raised for a variety of national and local charities.

Newcomers this year include Jared Allen, the Minnesota Vikings' All-Pro, 2010 Olympic U.S. Hockey Team captain Jamie Langenbrunner, professional skateboarder Ryan Sheckler, former Major League Baseball All-Stars and teammates Greg Maddux and John Smoltz.

More than two decades of memories plus sports and entertainment superstars has made the American Century Championship network television's longest running celebrity golf tournament. NBC Sports will televise the second and final rounds of the tournament live on July 17 and July 18 from noon-3pm, with Friday's opening round on ESPN2, 4-6pm.

Tickets are available in advance and daily at the gate. Prices are $15 each day for the Lake Tahoe Celebrity-Amateur on July 13, the practice round on July 14, and for the American Century Celebrity-Am on July 15; and $25 for each tournament round, Friday, Saturday and Sunday. A Season Pass for $60 provides admission for all six days. Kids 10 and under are free with a paid adult. For tournament tickets, information and lodging packages click here. Discounted tickets are on sale at participating Raley's, Nob Hill and Bel Air Foods supermarkets.