

California vehicle owners may be asked to pay for state parks

By Paul Rogers, San Jose Mercury News

With the Schwarzenegger administration preparing to announce Sept. 18 the closure of up to 100 state parks, California's top environmental groups are quietly putting together a ballot campaign they hope will turn the bad news into a renaissance for the state's long-struggling park system.

The Nature Conservancy, National Audubon Society, Trust for Public Land, Save-the-Redwoods League and others have raised nearly \$1 million and conducted months of polling toward a November 2010 ballot measure that would increase vehicle license fees by \$15 a year to fund parks.

If voters approve the measure "which needs a simple majority to pass" it would raise roughly \$400 million a year, doubling the parks' budget and making it no longer dependent on the state's fluctuating general fund.

In exchange, all California motorists would get free admission to all state parks, which now charge up to \$14 for entrance fees.

Read the whole story

Cyclists protest Homewood road conditions

By Lake Tahoe Bicycle Coalition

A Class II Bike Lane in Homewood has been neglected by Caltrans for years. The pavement is seriously deteriorated and unsafe for bicycle and pedestrian use. Local residents are seeking the support of others in signing the petition in an effort to show community solidarity and concern for the safety of human-powered road users. You can sign the petition at the following locations:

Westshore Pizzeria (Tahoma), in Tahoe City – New Moon Market, Alpenglow Sports, Olympic Bike Shop, Grind and Gear Cafe, and in Incline at Village Ski Loft, Truckee at Paco's and Cyclepaths.

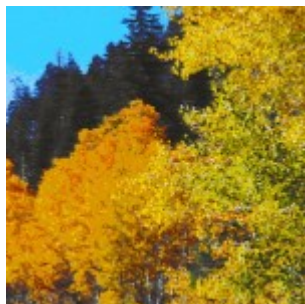
If you want your voice represented, then sign the petition no later than Sept. 30 – at which time the petition will be delivered to Caltrans.

Aspens to be more prolific

A multiphase project encompassing approximately 2,391 acres of National Forest aspen stands will be restored by the US Forest Service in the Tahoe Basin. The greatest number of stands is in the West Shore's watershed.

The degradation stems from grazing and fire suppressions stunting the natural aspen stand regeneration, plus conifers encroaching on the stands.

A full description of the project is at <http://www.fs.fed.us/r5/ltbmu/projects/>.



Kayakers growing in numbers at Tahoe

By Kathryn Reed



Massive boulders provide an obstacle course of sorts. Lakefront homes are called the architectural tour. Osprey and eagle nests provide intimacy with wildlife. Sore muscles at the end of the day prove it was a good workout.

Human powered recreation on Lake Tahoe is not new, but it is gaining in popularity.

Kayaking is still the predominate mode of transportation, with the less stable canoe occasionally seen plowing the waters, and the more coordination-strength sport of paddle boarding booming the last couple of years.

“We are finding the people who are kayaking on the lake tend to be affluent and tend to be older,” said Sue Rae Irelan, who is the California Tahoe Conservancy’s liaison to the Lake

Tahoe Water Trail Committee. "They are not the testosterone teenager that you might find kayaking on a river."

Retailers are noticing more people renting kayaks. Irelan also pointed to a large contingency of second homeowners who paddle.

Public land owners with their partners are making a concerted effort to put out a coordinated message. Coalition members include both state parks systems, public utility districts, South Lake Tahoe, CTC, U.S. Forest Service and business owners.

"Part of what we are doing is we've been trying to consider what do kayakers need and where can we help facilitate this use where there are conflicts," Irelan said.

One issue is the lack of parking where paddlers want to put in. Incline has storage for non-motorized boats. Lakeview Commons in South Tahoe will, too. The idea is kayakers could bike or take public transit to the boat storage so parking issues are eliminated.

Education is another part of the equation, with invasive aquatic species topping the list.

"The message we are sending is that whenever you move a boat from one body of water to the next it ought to be cleaned, drained and dry," Irelan said. "When it's taken out of the water they need to be turned over and drained so the water goes back into the water it was taken from."

Another issue is how California and Nevada allow access to private land. In the Golden State, the public has access to land that is below the high water mark.

"Last year and this year that can be the majority of the beach in some places. It is completely legal to land a kayak there and sit on a beach even if you are in front of a house,"

Irelan explained.

In the Silver State no public trust easement exists with private property. This means landing on a private beach in Nevada is equivalent to trespassing.

Because of this, vast portions of the East Shore are off limits. Under human power it's a long haul at times.

Irelan said this year and over the next several years public agencies will work to provide signage that explains to those on the water that there may be no public access for 10 miles, or that a particular parcel is OK or not OK to land on.

Circumnavigating the entire 72-mile shoreline is not for the novice paddler.

To make this endeavor a bit more comfortable, the water trail committee is working on a lodge-to-lodge program, starting with the South Shore. Dennis Liebl, one of the committee's founders, said the idea is still in the conceptual stage.

In theory a paddler could go from one lakefront lodging facility to the next. Their belongings would be transported for them. Tour guides might be part of the equation. Evening activities like special dinners, wine tastings and spa treatments may be part of the package.

"We would like to see it grow around the lake, except the East Shore has no lodging," Liebl said.

Some kayakers take camping gear with them. Again, the East Shore is lacking such amenities, something the committee would like to eventually rectify.

Liebl got involved in the water trail in 2003 when Tahoe Tomorrow was started. His committee was tasked with helping tourism. The members liked the idea of a water trail. That idea had first been broached by Bob Kingman, who at the time worked for the CTC. He won the Big Idea award at the SMG

Tourism Conference. Kingman joined the committee and was key to making the trail a reality.

“Our purpose is to promote kayaking use on the lake, boat safety and some of the other issues like invasive species,” Liebl said.

Although the trail has always existed in theory, promoting it, developing a map, creating a website and offering events all came about when the committee came along.

Lifetime membership costs \$25. Maps are available at retailers throughout the Lake Tahoe Basin and at www.laketahoewatertrail.org.

With Tahoe Tomorrow going by the wayside, the LTWTC has its nonprofit status under the Tahoe Truckee Community Foundation.

The committee usually puts on two events a year. The spring event was at Sand Harbor. The September event was nixed as organizers focus time on the lodge-to-lodge project.

A couple multi-day trips are planned through Tahoe Adventure Company – Sept. 24-27 and Oct. 1-4.

For information about the trips, call (530) 913.9212.

3 miles of Stateline bike trail under review



Discussion of how the Lam Watah trail will be used in the Stateline bike project was discussed Sept. 10. Photo/Kathryn Reed

By Kathryn Reed

STATELINE – Differing opinions and several questions were brought out Thursday night about the two routes being proposed for the southern demonstration project of the Stateline-to-Stateline bike trail.

A third alternative, which is to do nothing, was not endorsed by any of the five people who spoke. More than 20 attended the meeting.

The roughly 30-mile trail from Stateline to Crystal Bay will have a demonstration site on both ends that will be built before the bulk of the trail is developed.

Charles Dane, Douglas County parks commissioner, said his board voted 5-0 Sept. 1 for Alternative B because it better meets the goals of the project and needs of users, plus it's less intrusive to private property owners. Douglas County commissioners are scheduled to take up the issue later this

month.

Cyclists were well represented at the meeting. Richard Boyle of Zephyr Cove said he's already pedaled around the lake seven times this year. Peter Roth who lives in the Elk Point area wants the powers that be to look at using the trail the US Forest Service recently put in by Round Hill.

Ty Polastri, who runs Lake Tahoe Bicycle Coalition, had a slew of questions and concerns about what type of amenities will be at the trailheads – like bathrooms, bike racks and information kiosks.

He is concerned that when this three-mile long trail ends at Round Hill cyclists will be left at a dead-end with no information about what trails might exist in the area, nor prior knowledge that the initial route doesn't go far.

"We are patch working bicycle trails in the basin," Polastri said.

Deborah Moretto of Elk Point asked about maintenance of the trail and enforcement if people are not respectful of private property. Disrupting wildlife habit was another big concern of hers.

The comments will be incorporated into the environmental document. Anyone can comment on the three alternatives until Sept. 21. Address them to Melissa Shaw, 128 Market St., Stateline, NV 89449.

The schedule is to have the draft environmental analysis done this fall or winter, with its release in early 2010. The public will have 30 days to comment on it. The final EA is expected in summer 2010. It will go before the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency and US Forest Service, the joint lead agencies on the project, in summer 2010. Ground could be broken in 2011.

More information about the project is at www.nvtahoebikeway.com.

Aces captivate fans in inaugural season

By Kathryn Reed

RENO – If it weren't for the long-sleeve shirt, I would have sworn I was in Arizona.

Something about minor league baseball and spring training makes going to the ballpark an entirely different experience than the Bigs.

It's not just the caliber of play.

Walking around the Reno Aces stadium for the first time I keep having *deja vu* like it was March in the desert, the atmosphere relaxed, the crowd more jovial, grass in the outfield filled with fans. Here I was on a warm summer night with just a few weeks to go in the Pacific Coast League. (Season ended the first week of September. The 2010 season starts in April.)

The Aces – in their inaugural season in Reno as a Triple A affiliate of the Arizona Diamondbacks – are a fun team to watch. Of course a couple two-run homers and a 17-6 win helped create a festive mood.

Like most new ballparks these days, a few structural nuances make it unique. Picnic tables in the left field area are reserved this particular night for the Carson Tahoe Healthcare

Employee Association. It's a good vantage point to catch the action.

More tables are by the grass area in right field.

Railroad tracks parallel part of the outfield fence.

In the largest sky box on the left field side, employees of AAA Nevada are flitting in and out of the enclosure. Theirs are cushy seats (literally) on the outside where most of the gang is gathered.

Standard hard plastic is reserved for those seated below.

Still, walking around the stadium (three laps equal one mile according to the St. Mary's medical sign) I couldn't find a bad view.

Friday nights end with fireworks – as though there hadn't been enough with all the runs scored on this particular night.

TRPA cracking down on buoy owners

By TRPA staff

Orange notice tags have been showing up on buoys around Lake Tahoe and will continue all month as the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency gets the word out that a permitting and registration deadline is approaching for all Lake Tahoe moorings such as buoys and boatlifts.

TRPA's Watercraft Enforcement Team started attaching the notices to buoys and other moorings such as boatlifts and

boathouses at the end of August. Buoy and mooring owners have until Oct. 15 to begin the permitting and registration process required under the agency's shorezone ordinances.

The permitting and registration program will help fund enforcement on the lake to address the proliferation of unauthorized buoys in Tahoe. The agency's rules on boat mooring were updated in December 2008 in part to create an effective, locally operated buoy enforcement program.

Those who fail to meet the deadline risk penalties that could include buoy removal.

The orange tags being attached to buoys are a follow-up notification to buoy owners. Notifications were mailed to lakefront property owners in November and July.

Permitting and registration may be completed over-the-counter and applicants with minimum requirements are usually issued TRPA registration tags the same day. Latitude and longitude coordinates for buoys are one requirement of the application which TRPA customer service staff can help property owners gather.

There are approximately 4,400 mooring buoys in Lake Tahoe.

New registration and mitigation fees for buoys will help fund the watercraft enforcement program, buoy enforcement as well as scientific monitoring programs.

Owners of buoys and other moorings such as boatlifts and boathouses can access electronic forms at www.trpa.org and may submit the appropriate forms by mail or in person at the TRPA office at 128 Market Street in Stateline.

For additional information, call Dennis Oliver at (775) 589.5235 or email doliver@trpa.org.

Group kayak to Emerald Bay Sept. 12

Kayak, fun paddle on Saturday. This is an informal day of paddlers getting together to have an enjoyable day on the water.

When: Sept. 12th, 9am

Where: Baldwin Beach on the South Shore

What: Paddle to Emerald Bay and back

Bring: Kayak, paddle, personal floatation device, lunch, safety gear, water, sunscreen, hat, cash (for parking and tour of Vikingsholm, if you wish).

This is not a Lake Tahoe Water Trail sponsored event.

Stateline-to-Stateline bike trail pushing forward

By Kathryn Reed

Connecting Nevada from Stateline on the south to Crystal Bay on the north via a bicycle route is gaining momentum.

Known as the Stateline-to-Stateline route, the roughly 30-mile stretch has demonstration projects that will be built before the core center section. One is in the Incline-Sand Harbor

area, the other from Stateline to Round Hill.

As part of the environmental analysis, a scoping session for the southern section is slated for Sept. 10 from 6-8pm at the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency offices; 128 Market St., Stateline.

The northern demo project is lagging behind the southern route a bit. Design of the southern segment is slated for this winter.

The purpose of this 3-mile route, which is proposed to be a 10-foot wide paved path with 2-foot shoulders on both sides, is to link recreation and community facilities with a non-motorized route.

According to the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency and U.S. Forest Service (which are two of the partners in the project), "Separated bicycle facilities are not available along most of the Nevada side of Lake Tahoe. The proposed South Demonstration Project would provide a spectacular recreation opportunity to link the Stateline community and its casino core to public beaches and coves along the picturesque east shore up to Round Hill Pines Beach. Currently, these popular recreation areas are generally accessed by automobile."

A meeting about the entire route was conducted in mid-summer. Three alternative routes were presented on a series of maps. Those in attendance left comments about what they liked and didn't like. A mix of land owners, cyclists and those with a general interest showed up to give input.

Some of the obstacles facing trail builders are steep grades and private property.

A cantilever bridge around Cave Rock has been proposed since the get-go. Scott Morgan with Douglas County Parks Department said it would be cheaper to bore another hole into Cave Rock for a 5-foot wide bike lane than to build the bridge. How that

section of the route will be navigated is still up for grabs.

The rock is a sacred place for the Washoe Indians, so their input is likely to be great.

Some people mentioned a desire to follow the old Lincoln Highway. Pros and cons of going through Glenbrook were written down. Goshawk concerns were raised.

Comments on the South Shore demo project will be accepted until 5pm Sept. 21. Send them to the above address, attention Melissa Shaw. Project information is at www.nvtahoebikeway.com or, (775) 589.5242, or (530) 543.2762.

Tahoe on two wheels – Sept. 13

More than 1,800 cyclists are expected to turn out for the Sept. 13 7th Annual Tour de Tahoe – Bike Big Blue around Lake Tahoe.

For the “recreational” bicyclists, the Lake Tahoe Boat Cruise and 35-mile Half Ride features a sightseeing cruise on the Tahoe Queen paddle-wheeler, continental breakfast while crossing to Tahoe City, then the 35-mile ride to the Horizon at Stateline begins.

For the more seasoned bicyclists, the 72-mile Tour de Tahoe route around Lake Tahoe is not only scenic, it is also one of the only bi-state bike rides in the country. The route circumnavigates the highways around Lake Tahoe in a clockwise direction and has 2,600 vertical feet.

The fun ride is fully supported, with numerous rest stops.

Cyclists start between 6:30 and 7:30am.

KTHO AM-590 (www.kthoradio.com) will be broadcasting live from the event to keep motorists and residents informed.

Information is at www.bikethewest.com, (775) 588.9658 or tgft@bikethewest.com.