

# People still don't believe shooting causes wildfires

By Benjamin Spillman, Reno Gazette-Journal

Fire investigator Ryan Elliott is happy to talk about how shooting targets can lead to wildfires.

Unfortunately, the conversation often happens after the fire has already started.

"Almost every individual that has started a fire shooting has said to us, 'I didn't think I could start a fire shooting'," said Elliott, an investigator for the Bureau of Land Management. "Most people don't think it can happen until it happens to them."

**[Read the whole story](#)**

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## Expect heavy boat traffic during week of Fourth

Boat Owners Association of The United States says July 4th is shaping up to be the busiest time of the year on the water for the nation's recreational boaters, with boating traffic potentially surpassing last year's levels. This also means boaters will face additional safety concerns with waterway congestion and nighttime operation.

BoatUS is the nation's largest advocacy, services and safety group for recreational boaters.

In a recent survey of more than a half million BoatUS members, 88 percent of respondents say they are “very-to-extremely likely” to go boating during the July 4 holiday period (June 30-July 9). That compares to 73 percent who went boating over the similar period last year.

The BoatUS member survey also shows that about 1 in 3 (36 percent) of respondents are “very-to-extremely likely” to operate a boat at night to view fireworks display from the water. Three percent said that fireworks displays are the only reason they will venture out after dark all year.

There are nearly 12 million registered boats on the water.

### **The BoatUS Foundation has these holiday boating tips:**

- Wait to celebrate with alcohol. It could be a long day on the water, but waiting until after you’ve returned to home port for the night before celebrating with alcohol is a wise move. Added to the effects of sun, wind and waves, alcohol lowers situational awareness and increases reaction times.
- The more lookouts at night, the better. Having extra sets of eyes – family members or guests – can help prevent accidents.
- Go slow after the fireworks. After viewing fireworks from the water and pulling up anchor, you may have the urge to rush home. Don’t. Slow down. Be cautious, and the odds for a safe return increase.
- Get kids’ life jackets for free. Everyone has extra guests this time of year, but they don’t always have properly-sized life jackets for everyone on board. The BoatUS Foundation’s free Kids Life Jacket Loaner program gives boaters a chance to borrow child-size life jackets for the day, afternoon, or weekend.
- Don’t overload the boat. Everyone should have a seat inside the boat, and be careful about adding extra coolers and gear. It’s also a bad idea to allow to

passengers to ride on the top of a boat with an enclosed bow while under way.

- Be a safe paddler. Kayak, canoe or standup paddlers should understand all of the nautical rules of the road, practice defensive paddling and assume no one can see you. At night, paddlers are required to show a white light – colored glow sticks around the paddler's neck don't cut it. Avoid crowded anchorages and congested ramp areas.
- Never swim near a dock with electricity or in a marina or yacht club.
- Avoid the two biggest hassles. The nationwide TowBoatUS on-water towing fleet traditionally reports hundreds of battery jumps and anchor-line disentanglements over the holiday.

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## **4 wheels exchanged for 2 in bike challenge**

Thousands of miles were logged in this year's Tahoe Bike Challenge. Each year, for the first two weeks of June, hundreds of Tahoe residents and visitors participate in the Tahoe Bike Challenge in teams or as individuals to see who can replace the most car trips with trips by bicycle.

Staff with the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency and the League to Save Lake Tahoe took the top prizes in the event.

Students from North Tahoe School in Tahoe City and South Tahoe's Bijou Community School, Lake Tahoe Environmental Science Magnet School, Sierra House Elementary, Tahoe Valley Elementary School, and South Tahoe Middle School participated. More than 430 students rode their bikes, completing 837

bicycle trips. Bijou Community School took the lead with the most trips.

### **Here are the school rankings:**

- Bijou Community School: 326 trips
- South Tahoe Middle School: 189 trips
- Magnet School: 180 trips
- Sierra House Elementary: 87 trips
- North Tahoe School: 58 trips.

For the team prizes, the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency dominated the long game to handily win the 2017 prize for most total trips, with 545 bicycle trips and a 1,476 collective miles, while staff from the League to Save Lake Tahoe edged out a tight competition for the prize for most trips per employee, at 13.7 trips per staff member.

### **Top five teams for each category:**

#### **Most total trips:**

- Tahoe Regional Planning Agency – 545 trips
- League to Save Lake Tahoe – 233 trips
- South Tahoe Refuse – 182 trips.

#### **Most trips per employee:**

- League to Save Lake Tahoe – 13.7 trips per employee
- Tieslau Civil Engineering – 13.5 trips per employee
- Environmental Incentives – 9.3 trips per employee.

### **Winners for individual categories:**

#### **Most total trips:**

- Amy Fish: 54 trips
- Larry Green: 50 trips
- Scott Cecchi: 44 trips
- Jason Briedis: 42 trips
- Steve Froyum: 40 trips.

### **Most total miles biked:**

- Gianna Leavers: 311 miles
- Jennifer Capistran: 214 miles
- Patrick Johnson: 187 miles
- Sally Loomis: 180 miles
- Mike Niccoli: 160 miles

### **Most elevation gain:**

- James Kayser: 23,820 feet
- Gianna Leavers: 20,201 feet
- Jim Marino: 19,064 feet
- Mark Frisina: 18,690 feet
- Bob Albrecht: 15,004 feet.

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## **ZCTC doubles event celebrates Wimbledon**

On the weekend of the Wimbledon Championships in England, the courts of Zephyr Cove will be going all white.

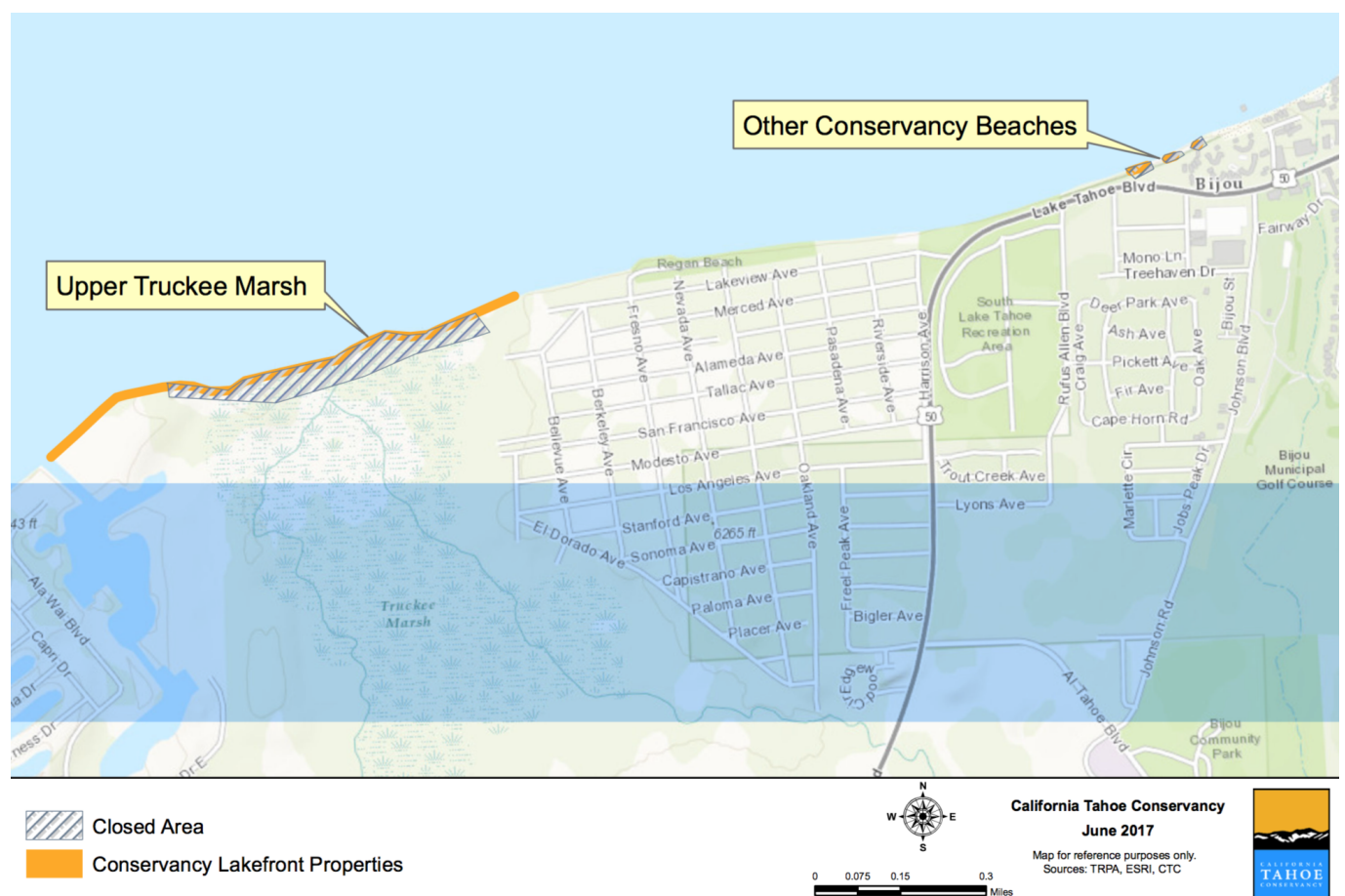
The annual Breakfast at Wimbledon at Zephyr Cove Tennis Club is July 15. Breakfast starts at 9am, with play at 10am. Participants will be paired with a partner in the doubles event. Wear white – just as the pros do at Wimbledon.

Cost is \$15 for ZCTC members, \$20 for non-members, and \$5 for spectators who want to eat. The first 32 paid entrants are guaranteed a spot. The deadline to sign up is July 10 at noon. To do so, go to the pro shop at the courts.

Membership is \$85 for the season.

While breakfast is included in the price, participants are asked to bring a dish to share and drink of choice.

# CTC banning public from select SLT beaches



By Kathryn Reed

As if Mother Nature hadn't taken away most of the sand in Tahoe via a full lake, now the state of California is cutting off what little access remains in parts of the South Shore.

The Upper Truckee Marsh and the beach below where the Alta Mira building used to be adjacent to Lakeview Commons became off-limits effective June 28. When that policy might be lifted

is anyone's guess.

It's all about protecting sensitive habitat and erosion concerns.

The new rules are happening days before the basin's busiest week of the year. The California Tahoe Conservancy, which owns the land, is laying down these rules – not the city of South of Lake Tahoe.

“Generally, people will need to get wet to access the closed areas and they are not the most desirable beach locations,” Nick Meyer with the California Tahoe Conservancy told *Lake Tahoe News*. “There isn't really much beach to access, especially near the Alta Mira site. The stretches where the beaches are largest will still be open to access.”

The Upper Truckee Marsh area is not entirely cordoned off, but a large swath is no longer open to the public.

“The Upper Truckee Marsh is the largest remaining wetland in Lake Tahoe. It hosts several special status bird species and the largest remaining population of Tahoe yellow cress in the world. The habitat for this endemic plant has become very limited as a result of the high lake level,” Meyer said.

If people don't comply, consequences will be handled on a case-by-case basis. The CTC board at its meeting earlier this month entered into an agreement for the California Highway Patrol to work its properties.

“We will use temporary fencing, signage, staff patrols, education, and law enforcement patrols,” Meyer said of how the agency plans to enforce this new edict.

According to Meyer, the following are potential laws people would violate if they disregard the signs:

- California Penal Code involving damaging plants on state property;

- South Lake Tahoe code dealing with closed park areas;
- City code involving tampering with signs and landscaping;
- City code banning removal of natural resources;
- City code about injury to or removal of plants.

However, according to city officials, the city ordinances are not applicable on state property.

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## Pollen not hurting Lake Tahoe's clarity



Pine pollen on the surface of Lake Tahoe. Photo/TERC

It is the time of year when the big blue turns yellow. Pine

pollen can be seen blowing out of the forest in great clouds with much of it landing on Lake Tahoe's surface.

When viewed from the air great swirls of yellow more than a mile long look like a giant hand finger painted on the surface. Despite the vast quantities, pollen does little to change Tahoe's water clarity. Pine pollen grains (50-80 microns) are relatively large compared to the <10 micron particles primarily responsible for clarity loss.

In the water, the pollen grains stick together and settle to depth quickly. Once on the bottom they add to the historical record. Pollen grains recovered from sediment cores have been used by scientists to determine historic vegetation and provide clues to climate conditions thousands of years in the past.

– UC Davis, Tahoe Environmental Research Center

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## Heavenly's leader leaves permanent tracks

By Kathryn Reed

STATELINE – Heavenly Mountain Resort is nothing like it was seven years ago when Pete Sonntag came to town. And that's a good thing.

"I did come in knowing there were challenges," Sonntag told *Lake Tahoe News* in 2010.

As he packs his bags to head north to take over the management of Whistler Blackcomb, Sonntag will leave behind a different mountain than what he inherited.

The local resort is a bigger player in the community. In part this has to do with Sonntag and his family living here and not off the hill like his predecessor. His kids (they were 6, 8 and 10 when he and his wife moved here from Vail) helped get the family enmeshed into the fabric of the South Shore.

The community mattered to him and soon it mattered to his employer. He is on the boards of the Tahoe Fund and Lake Tahoe Visitors Authority. Through his children he has been incredibly active in the hockey community.

Charitable contributions are now common from Vail Resorts; employees give back with time and money, as well.



Pete Sonntag is leaving Tahoe this summer to run Whistler ski resort. Photo/Kathryn Reed

On the mountain, well more than \$100 million has been invested during Sonntag's tenure. Summer activities keep growing; something that didn't exist when he started. Though, they pale in comparison to what Whistler has to offer – that will be a

substantive change to get used to.

Sonntag has literally weathered multiple years of drought and record snowfall. This will be good experience because Whistler can have its challenges with snow and weather in general.

When Sonntag came to Tahoe, Heavenly was still struggling in the guest services arena. Not so much anymore.

It's not that he really wanted to leave Tahoe; it's just that a unique opportunity presented itself. Dave Brownlie, after 30 years as chief operating officer at Whistler, gave notice. Three weeks later Vail Resorts announced Sonntag's ascension to run North America's largest ski resort, at 8,171 acres, with 16 bowls, three glaciers and an Olympic history.

The Broomfield, Colo.-based ski behemoth bought the Canadian resort in 2016 for \$1.1 billion. (This will be the first season the epic pass will be valid at the Vancouver mountain.)

Sonntag actually oversees Northstar and Kirkwood resorts, too. He had the title of senior vice president of the Tahoe region. Mike Goar, current vice president and chief operating officer of Keystone Resort in Colorado, will be replacing Sonntag.

The three Tahoe area mountains combined are about the size of Whistler.

"It's arguably one of the greatest ski resorts in the world," Sonntag said of his new mountain. And he considers it the flagship of the parent company. He calls this opportunity "a once in a lifetime chance."

Taking over a resort that hasn't had a top leadership change in three decades is a bit daunting. Sonntag has been up there meeting the team, getting familiarized with the operation. He doesn't plan to make major changes at the get-go because he said, "Nothing is broken that needs to be fixed."

He knows it will take time to build trust and respect.

Sonntag built a strong team in Tahoe. That is why what he will miss most is the people, along with those vistas.

“I will miss being on top of the mountain and the views – that never gets old,” Sonntag said. “This has been the best seven years of my career. I’m lucky to have spent it in Tahoe.”

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## Money needed to rid Tahoe of invasive weeds

Tahoe Fund and the Tahoe Water Suppliers Association are working together to raise more than \$26,000 to help purchase 175 bottom barrier mats that will be used to kill aquatic invasive weeds in Lake Tahoe.

The current inventory of bottom barriers is 1.6 acres short of the maximum 5 acres of coverage permitted by the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency.

Every dollar the Tahoe Fund raises will be matched by the Tahoe Water Suppliers Association.

Aquatic invasive plants negatively impact the water quality around the shoreline of Lake Tahoe. The Tahoe Resource Conservation District has been able to remove aquatic invasive weeds with the use of bottom barriers and diver-assisted hand pulling.

Donations in support of this and other environmental improvement projects around the lake can be made **online**.

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# Lichen study needs volunteers

Volunteers are needed for a lichen study in Great Basin National Park in Nevada.

The July 17-19 event is called Lichen BioBlitz.

There are more than 20,000 species of lichen in the world. The volunteers will learn about these organisms as they catalog them throughout the park.

For more info or to signup, go **online**.

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# Poker backing a sophisticated economic market

**By David Schoen, Las Vegas Review-Journal**

Joe Cada won enough money playing online poker to pay for his first house in cash.

But before his first World Series of Poker in 2009, the 21-year-old didn't want to risk a significant portion of his bankroll in Las Vegas.

"I gave my mom money, and I still had a few hundred thousand in the bank, but if you go out to the World Series, you're going to spend – if you want to play a complete schedule – 50 to 100 grand," Cada said. "At that time, I figured, hey, it might be a better idea just to have a backer."

Cada had full financial backing for all 16 events he played that summer and went on to win the \$10,000 buy-in No-limit Texas Hold 'em World Championship, commonly referred to as the Main Event.

In recent years, backing has evolved into a sophisticated market where top players sell and/or swap percentages of their action with one another.

**Read the whole story**