

Fuel reduction projects to resume in basin

If conditions are favorable, Tahoe Douglas Fire Protection District, California State Parks and U.S. Forest Service may continue prescribed fire operations on April 17.

Operations may take place near Meeks Bay, Tahoe City, Glenbrook, Round Hill, Lower Kingsbury Grade, South Lake Tahoe, and Meyers. Weather permitting, operations may continue over the next several weeks.

Each prescribed fire operation follows a prescribed fire burn plan, which considers temperature, humidity, wind, moisture of the vegetation, and conditions for the dispersal of smoke. This information is used to decide when and where to burn. When conditions meet the prescription, state and local air pollution control districts issue a burn permit allowing operations to proceed.

Tough trek to gauge California snow

By Brian Melley, AP

We were trudging up the side of a mountain on skis to measure California's massive snowpack when a late blast of winter stopped us in our tracks.

I started the morning less concerned about strong winds forecast and light snow than keeping pace with veteran snow surveyors in the thin Sierra Nevada air and getting over

steep, icy 11,700-foot Kearsarge Pass. Now, shy of that goal, I was struggling to keep warm and stay upright.

Howling gales warned to brace for impact. It didn't matter. Gusts bowled me over and toppled Kevin Klinefelter. Staggering to our feet, we followed John Dittli, making turns in a near-whiteout between foxtail pines. Blown downhill to our cars, we decided to return another day.

The arduous work of snow surveyors is largely unknown to most Californians, even as measurements they compiled of a near-record snowpack bolstered Gov. Jerry Brown's decision to lift an emergency declaration after five years of drought.

Crews stay out as long as two weeks in alpine wilderness, battling the elements, skirting avalanche terrain and plodding through deep powder to gather the data – a practice that has endured even as new technology tries to gauge the state's expected water supply from snowmelt.

Read the whole story

40 acres of Martis meadow to be rehabbed

By Michael Rohm

Beth Christman, director of Restoration for the Truckee River Watershed Council, knows exactly how small 40 acres is. Compared to the 90,000 acres of degraded watershed within the greater Sierra Nevada region, 30,000 of which are slated to be restored by 2030, 40 acres is a drop in the bucket.

But this is a bucket that has been jostled, kicked and

repeatedly drained by 150 years of harmful human impact. Every drop counts.

“We’re doing our part,” she said of her seven-member team at work to maintain and improve watersheds within the Tahoe region. “It all adds up.”



Crews work to restore meadows throughout the Sierra Nevada.
Photo/Beth Christman

Christman and her team are one of about two dozen natural resource groups within the greater Sierra Nevada region who have joined forces to create the Sierra Meadows Partnership, a multi-agency initiative to restore 30,000 acres in 15 years. Spearheaded by California Trout, this mixed-bag group of nonprofits, government agencies, universities and funding institutions have come together to restore crucial watersheds that account for more than 60 percent of the developed water supply in California.

For the Truckee River Watershed Council, that restoration began with a crucial 40 acres in the Martis Valley where Highway 267 meets the Middle Martis Creek. This watershed northwest of Lake Tahoe is a salient example of what environmentalists call legacy impacts: the actions of previous generations that affect us today. When the road that would become Highway 267 was first constructed in the 1860s, Martis Creek was channeled to the opposite side of the road, effectively bisecting the floodplain. Subsequent erosion destroyed 40 acres of meadow and contributed to frequent flooding across the highway.

“The infrastructure in that area is not going anywhere,” Christman said. “So we had to get creative to work around the legacy impacts.”

Creative action for Christman and the Truckee River Watershed Council involved efforts to recreate floodplain functions that had been damaged or destroyed by human impact, such as flow dispersal logs and beaver dams, manmade solutions that successfully mimic natural ones. Additionally, the creek at an existing culvert north of the highway was divided to allow the flow of water to continue on both sides of the road, rather than through the sole, and often overwhelmed, outlet. These actions restored the forty acres that had been lost to legacy impacts while preventing additional flood damage to human infrastructure.



This shows where logs will be placed in Middle Martis Creek off Highway 267. Photo/Beth Christman

"It may not seem like much," Christman said, "but we're doing our part to restore these important watersheds."

Also doing their part for Tahoe is the local chapter of American Rivers. With his four-person team based in Nevada City, Luke Hunt, director of Headwaters Conservation, focuses on headwaters restoration, a broad title for the holistic maintenance of meadows, forests, and forest roads as they pertain to water health.

"There are occasional blowouts, but most of this degradation can't be seen until years later," Hunt said of the damaged Tahoe ecosystem. "But the damage is definitely happening and it's only getting worse."

Nothing illustrates this quite like then-and-now photography, pictures of the same location separated by time. "You can see how there has been a network of erosion that continues to draw water out of the meadow," Hunt said, highlighting the post-1950s streams and channels that have leaked out of the

meadow like holes in a water balloon. “These days it’s either flooding or it’s dry. A watershed is not supposed to do that. You want the rainfall to slowly go in and out of the creek.”

This degradation of key watersheds explains a phenomenon that is especially relevant to California lately: the cycles of flooding and drought that result in water, or lack thereof, at entirely the wrong times.

Despite these environmental disasters, Hunt is hopeful. “I think there’s a great opportunity, especially right now, to restore the meadows,” he said.

And with so many local agencies coming together to address the issue of watershed management, the future looks restored. “We’re making a lot of progress,” Luke said. “These forests and meadows are part of California’s supply of clean water, and we’re working together to take care of them.”

Exact costs of all of the restoration work has not been determined. Until funding is secured, which could be in a phased approach, a time line for completion has not been set.

Montana law would target out-of-state cyclists

By David Ferry, Outside

Montana state legislators are considering a bill this week that will add a \$25 fee on all out-of-state bikers entering Montana. And to add insult to injury, the proposal—which has already raised the ire of cyclists across the country—was tacked onto a bill about invasive species management.

The amendment was penned by Scott Sales, a Republican from Bozeman, who last month killed a bill that would have mandated drivers going 35 mph to give bikers at least three feet of leeway when passing.

Sales, who is the president of the Montana State Senate, called cyclists “some of the rudest people I’ve ever—I hate to say it, but I’m just going to be bold—they’re some of the most self-centered people navigating on highways, or on county roads I’ve ever seen,” according to the *Missoula Current*. “They won’t move over,” he added. “You can honk at them; they think they own the highway.”

Read the whole story

USFS beginning to open Tahoe sites for the season

The U.S. Forest Service Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit will soon begin opening recreational facilities in the Lake Tahoe Basin.

Weather and snow conditions permitting, Inspiration Point will be the first site to open on April 15. The Taylor Creek Visitor Center opens May 19, and will be staffed weekends only until Memorial Day weekend. The Tallac Historic Site parking area opens May 1, and will be staffed beginning May 27.

The following is a list of opening dates, weather and snow conditions permitting:

Campgrounds

- William Kent, Kaspian, Meeks Bay, Bayview, Fallen

Leaf, and Nevada Beach campgrounds open May 12.

- Luther Pass Campground opens May 2.
- Blackwood Canyon and Watson Lake campgrounds open June 1.

Day-use areas

- Inspiration Point – April 15
- Baldwin and Nevada beaches – April 29
- Kiva Picnic Area, Chimney Beach, Secret Harbor, and Big Meadow Trailhead – May 1
- Sandpit Off-Highway Vehicle (OHV) Area – May 10
- Sawmill Pond and Tallac Point* – May 15
- Eagle Falls restrooms – May 19
- Pope Beach and McKinney Rubicon OHV Area restrooms – May 26

*The water in the marsh at Taylor Creek is much higher than previous years, which has moved the waterfowl nesting habitat closer to the edge of the marsh near Tallac Point. The Tallac Point parking lot will remain closed until May 15, and the public is asked not to allow their dogs in that area. This will give the waterfowl the opportunity to complete their nesting period without disruption. The Kiva Picnic Area parking lot will open on May 1 to accommodate visitors while the Tallac Point parking lot is closed.

Until sites officially open, there is no parking, trash removal or restroom facilities available.

Nevada OKs \$36.2M to build Incline trail

By Associated Press

Nevada transportation officials have approved \$36.2 million to build a bike and walking trail at Lake Tahoe along a busy stretch of highway connecting Incline Village to Sand Harbor State Park.

Project manager Nick Johnson told the state transportation board on Monday the 3-mile-long shared use path will improve safety along Highway 28 where a number of accidents occur each year.

[Read the whole story](#)

Time to get boat ready for summer fun

By Nevada Department of Wildlife

There are many items to check and recheck before launching a boat for the first summertime trip. If you want professional help, find a good boat mechanic and take your boat in for a full inspection and tune up. The Coast Guard Auxiliary conducts free vessel safety checks throughout the year, and they will check all your safety equipment to make sure you are ready for the water. If you do decide to “do it yourself” look

below at the list of ten items to keep in mind before setting your boat on the water:

Check life jackets: Life jackets are the most important piece of safety equipment on your boat. Ensure that they are still serviceable, with no rips, tears or other defects. Also make sure the kids' jackets still fit.

Check fire extinguisher: Fire extinguishers have a habit of discharging over the winter. Make sure you still have a fire extinguisher in your boat and that it is still charged.

Registration check: All boat registrations expire on Dec. 31 of each year. Make sure you get a current decal on your boat before heading out.

Charge batteries: This is an important on often-overlooked mechanical issue. No power, no boating. Charge batteries and make sure they hold that charge.

Electronics and lights: Electronics can fail over the winter even without use. You should also make sure you navigation lights still work and examine exposed wiring for cracks and wear. Make sure that bilge pump still works.

Test engine and components: Go ahead and fire up the boat before you leave the driveway. Don't forget your "outboard ears"—a device that cools the engine out of the water. Starting the boat before you leave can save you real agony, time and hassle at the boat ramp.

The hull: Just walk around the hull to make sure it's not cracked or damaged. A lot can happen in a year. Also make sure you have the plug for your boat and it is in good condition.

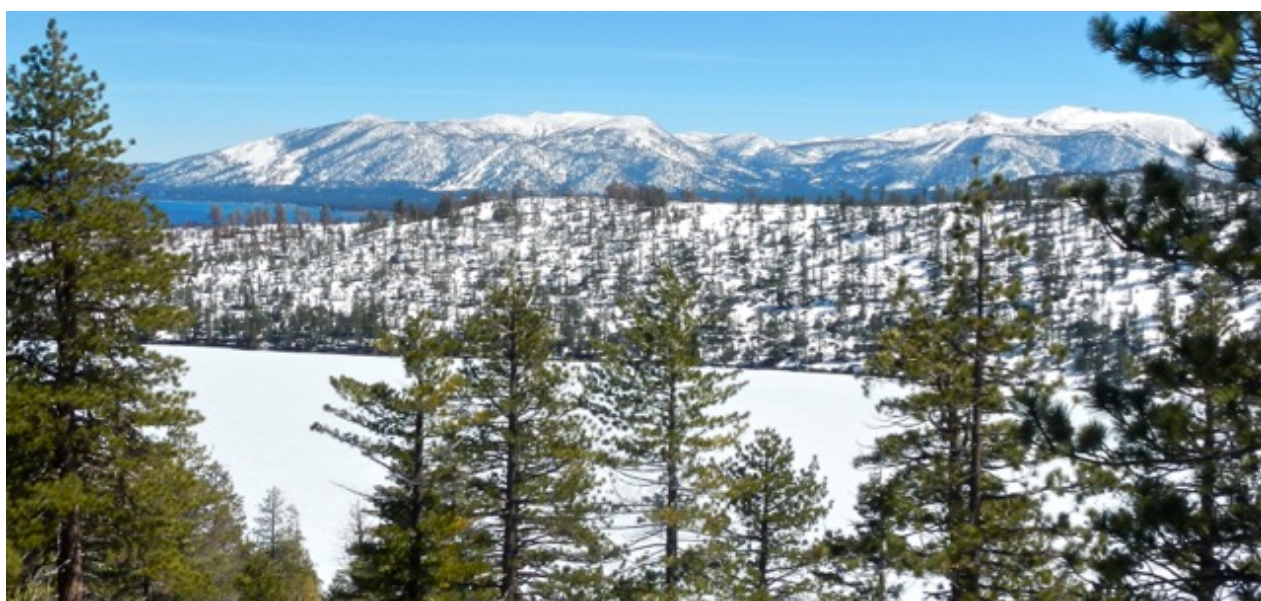
Tune up the trailer: The trailer wheel bearings need to be greased before you leave the driveway. If you have a winch and other equipment, make sure it works.

Ski and tow check: Tubes, skis and other equipment must also

be maintained. Rubber seals and inflatable devices can crack and leak. Make sure they are all ready to go, and don't forget to bring your orange ski flag if you are going to tow someone.

Gas up and go: It's always a good idea to replace the gas from last year. Make sure your fuel lines are connected properly and have no cracks or damage.

Cascade Falls tricky to get to in the snow



A frozen Cascade Lake with Lake Tahoe in the distance.
Photo/Kathryn Reed

By Kathryn Reed

I made the right decision in not snowshoeing to Cascade Falls by myself. The conditions, at least a week ago, were sketchy in places.

The narrow, slick route had many people turning around – us

included.

Originally AJ and I were going to go on a weekday. And while I would not have been alone, she doesn't know how to operate a phone to call for help. I know what this trail is like in dirt-granite-dry conditions; I wasn't sure what to expect with the winter-spring we've had.

So, the next day it was me, AJ and Sue. Starting off from the Bayview trailhead near Emerald Bay we had a choice to wear snowshoes or not. We opted to wear them thinking they would give us better traction when the trail narrowed.



Cascade Falls is bound to be even larger as the snow really melts.
Photo/Kathryn Reed

It's hard to know if that was the correct decision. One problem was the few barren patches were rocky and often

involved manzanita. This was more challenging with snowshoes than the soft, super narrow trail.

We encountered three people who were wearing appropriate footwear (many people had tennis shoes) who made it to the falls. They said it was hard and long to get there.

This trail in summer is not long; it can be mildly hard with all the granite steps. (I was looking forward to avoiding that with the snow.)



Sue gingerly snowshoes over granite rocks.
Photo/Kathryn Reed

It finally got to the point where safety outweighed winter at the falls. We turned around. Still, it was a worthwhile trek on a gorgeous, spring day. Temps allowed for short sleeves.

Even if you don't make it to the falls, like us, the scenery is idyllic. Cascade Lake is starting to melt; the white icy-snow looking like frosting, and the edges a dark chocolate layer. (Maybe I was just hungry.)

It doesn't take long for the roar of the falls to ring through the air. And there were times we saw it in the distance.

With all of this snow, every waterfall will be plentiful for months to come. I'll be back.



It may be a while before the Bayview parking lot is accessible. Photo/Kathryn Reed

Getting there:

From South Lake Tahoe take Highway 89 north toward Emerald Bay. Park near the Bayview trailhead. The parking lot is covered with snow, and therefore closed. The sign pointing to the falls at the far end of the parking is visible – you go left. Then follow the tracks. If there aren't any, you might not want to be breaking trail if you are unfamiliar with the area. You will be paralleling Cascade Lake – eventually.

New cloud types defined for

first time in decades

By Sean Rossman, USA Today

The world's cloud authority, having not classified a new cloud in three decades, arose this month to name about a dozen new types, including a rolling, slalom-like form known to blanket the Iowa sky.

The asperitas cloud is among the stars of the World Meteorological Organization's scarcely published International Cloud Atlas. A new version of the atlas, last published in 1987, was unveiled on World Meteorological Day.

Adding asperitas to the atlas' about 100 cloud combinations was the work of the world-wide Cloud Appreciation Society.

Read the whole story

Ranger led hike at Spooner for dogs, people

Spooner Lake is going to the dogs, with rangers leading an easy two-mile guided hike for social dogs with people at the end of their leash.

People should wear sturdy shoes or hiking boots, and bring water for themselves as well as their dogs.

Sign up for the April 16 event by emailing spooner.ranger@gmail.com or call 775.831.0494. It will be from 9-10:30am.

Meet in the upper section of the parking lot.

The event is free, but park entrance fees apply. Entry is \$10 per vehicle, Nevada residents receive a \$2 discount.