Letter: Mt. Tallac High grateful for support

To the community,

It is with the greatest joy, respect and admiration that I thank the 33 business owners/managers, South Tahoe Refuse, City Council, service organizations, fire department, Forest Service, community college, hospital staff, district staff, news reporters and community members who attended the Mt. Tallac High School community meet and greet.

The experience was amazing. Our students felt valued, excited and pleasantly surprised by the community's interest in their future plans and needs. We can't wait to work with each and everyone one of you who attended.

We are grateful and proud to belong to this community.

Respectfully,

Holly Greenough, director Mt. Tallac High School

Letter: Important to get involved at Tahoe

To the community,

For decades, Lake Tahoe has been viewed as one of the clearest and most beautiful lakes in North America. In the past 50 years, however, Lake Tahoe's water clarity levels have dropped from about thirty meters of clarity to just over

20 meters of clarity today.1

This lack of clarity makes the lake less appealing, and it can be harmful for native species living in the lake. One of the main causes of this lack of clarity is urban stormwater runoff.

My name is Sam Ross and I am 15 years old. I have been coming up to Tahoe each summer for as long as I can remember and I always loved and still do love swimming in Lake Tahoe and enjoying its beautiful beaches. This past summer, I resolved that I wanted to help preserve the lake that I love so much. So, I decided to join the League to Save Lake Tahoe as its natural resources student intern.

At the League, one of the most important things I learned was that stormwater runoff is harming Lake Tahoe. Many stormwater pipes simply drain directly into the lake or into streams running into the lake. The water from these pipes is a murky brown color and often has a putrid smell. The fine sediments from
this runoff disperse into the lake, causing lake clarity to decrease which in turn makes the lake less attractive. In addition, these sediments often contain nutrients that can cause algae growth. Excessive algae growth can also decrease clarity and can be harmful to native species.2

Although this situation is pressing, it is not hopeless. The League to Save Lake Tahoe has organized a program called Pipe Keepers. In this program volunteers monitor stormwater pipes by taking observations of the pipes' runoff and reporting the data that they find to the League. The League can then push for
these pipes to be better controlled and can report the data to the proper authorities.

Hopefully, if enough volunteers join the League's efforts, the stormwater drains will be controlled and the lake will be kept

blue.

Sincerely,

Sam Ross, Burlingame and South Lake Tahoe

1 Anon, “Fun Facts & History”, League to Save Lake Tahoe, Accessed August 9, 2015, https://keeptahoeblue.org/abouttahoe/history-facts/.

2 Anon, “Why should we protect Tahoe’s shoreline?”, League to Save Lake Tahoe, Accessed August 9, 2015, https://keeptahoeblue.org/protect/shorelinebeauty.

Letter: Elks volunteer at Bread & Broth

To the community,

The volunteers at Bread & Broth would like to thank the Tahoe Douglas Elks Lodge No. 2670 for sponsoring their third Adopt A Day of Nourishment this year on Aug. 17. One of B&B’s most ardent supporters, the Elks Lodge has been hosting several B&B Monday evening dinners annually since the inception of the Adopt A Day program over five years ago.

Their help in feeding those struggling with hunger is just one of the many ways the Tahoe Douglas Elks Lodge supports the South Lake Tahoe community.

“We appreciate the opportunity to serve the nutritious meals served at B&B dinners and work with people that care about the needs of the community,” explained Jeanne Barragan as to why

the Elks Lodge sponsors so many B&B dinner.

Barragan was joined by fellow Elks Lodge members Roger Barragan, Jay Bryan and Don and Dee Young, all of who have served on Elks' AAD sponsor crews many times over the years.

Thanks to the Elks Lodge's donation of $250 and the support of its members, over 100 members of our community were served hearty servings of spaghetti, mixed veggies, green salad and desserts and then sent home with bags filled with fruits, vegetables, dairy products, breads and pastries. Kudos to the Tahoe Douglas Elks Lodge for helping people in need.

Carol Gerard, Bread & Broth

Landscaping workshops focus on drought issues

Tahoe Resource Conservation District in partnership with the South Tahoe Public Utility District is hosting free outdoor water conservation classes this summer.

Tree Care in the Time of Drought and Water Restrictions is Sept. 1 from 5:30-7:30pm at the South Lake Tahoe Public Library, 1000 Rufus Allen Blvd.

The last workshop is How to Convert your Lawn to a Water Wise Landscape the Easy Way. It is Sept. 12 from 9am-1pm at the Lake Tahoe Community College, Room B103, One College Way, South Lake Tahoe.

For more information on Tahoe friendly landscaping, go **online**.

Opinion: The difficulties of enrolling a kid in school

By Joe Mathews

“Is this the line for the U2 tickets?” a neighbor asked me.

Nope. The line extending down the block was just another group of California parents forced to prove that we actually live where we’re trying to send our kids to school.



Joe Mathews

With a new school year comes another fraught season of student enrollment. After years of hearing political rhetoric about the centrality of educational access to California’s civic life, I’ve been surprised to discover, as a father, all the official hurdles to putting your kid in public school.

The long line I was standing in represented just one step in the process of making sure my 6-year-old had a seat in first grade. Mind you, I wasn’t signing up for a charter school or any special program, but merely re-enrolling him in the same neighborhood school where he completed kindergarten in June.

To do that, I first had to complete the online “student verification” process of our small San Gabriel Valley school district. It took me an hour to provide contact and demographic info and review 17 legal documents, whose 54 pages covered privacy, complaint procedures, media access to students, and my responsibility to help with homework and regulate my son’s TV watching.

With online registration complete, I searched for paper documents that I had to present in person at the district office to show I lived in the district. I would need one document from each of three categories. The first included a deed of trust, closing escrowing papers, a lease (which had to have children’s names), a property tax bill, or a mortgage payment receipt from the last month. The second category covered utility, cable or phone bills (all had to be within last month). A third category consisted of car registration, health insurance, bank statements, pay stubs, or tax returns.

I have covered gubernatorial candidates who didn’t disclose this much. And there were caveats. No online bills or direct deposit pay records would be accepted.

The district offered hours on three August weekdays to show documents. Fortunately, I had taken off the week in question, knowing that I’d have to deal not only with my 6-year-old’s enrollment, but also with hundreds of pages of other forms to cover child-care arrangements for my two younger sons.

While navigating school enrollment requirements is time-consuming and frustrating, figuring out whom to blame is even harder.

My district is no outlier; school districts around the state have similar rules. And given the dysfunction of California school finance, it’s hard to blame local districts for making sure they don’t allow non-residents to slip into their schools. The state has often sent IOUs instead of cash to

districts, and currently restricts how much school districts can save for rainy days. Local districts, including mine, have convinced voters to raise parcel taxes to fill state funding gaps, and must assure taxpayers that only local families are benefiting.

Even so, the zeal to make sure we all live within the right district lines is a form of statewide madness. Despite recent reforms, California's educational system remains so centralized in Sacramento – funding, curriculum, and regulations come from there – that all 38 million of us live, effectively, in one statewide school district.

That makes it especially frustrating that, even as parents are required to produce so much data on their kids, the state shirks its responsibilities to collect and utilize student data.

Specifically, the state has been slow to build and fund its system for K-12 data; Gov. Jerry Brown even vetoed an effort to compile attendance data statewide with the goal of reducing truancy. More crucially, California has failed to follow other states in building databases to link individual data from preschool, community college, universities, and employment.

Brown has portrayed the collection of such data as a state imposition on local communities. But such a database provides the best chance scholars and policymakers to judge how the state is preparing tomorrow's workers, and help teachers identify ways to improve. A good database might even relieve school districts of some hassles of pressing parents for information each fall.

In line at the district office, I waited nearly an hour before reaching the room for residency verification. First, I produced a driver's license, then my documents at a second table. After a few minutes, I was told my child was enrolled.

But three days later, I got a robo-call from the district

saying my child wasn’t enrolled. No one could help me at the district office, so I banged on the locked elementary school door. An administrator let me in, checked her computer, and said everything was in order.

The robo-call had been just another glitch in a system that doesn’t make much sense at all.

Joe Mathews is California & Innovation editor for Zócalo Public Square, for which he writes the Connecting California column. He wrote this for Thinking L.A., a partnership of UCLA and Zócalo Public Square.

Letter: Making a difference at Mt. Tallac High

To the community,

As we quickly approach the start of the new school year, there is great excitement and anticipation for the developing Career Technical Education (CTE) Pathways throughout the Lake Tahoe Unified School District for all students designed to lead to rewarding careers.

As an alternative choice school in the district, Mt. Tallac High School has been working closely with our community and is implementing Phase II of our School to Career Pathways program. Similar to the world renowned Homeboy Industries of Los Angeles, we believe the business of second chances is everyone’s business. We recognize and embrace the fact that many of the Mt. Tallac students choose to stay in Lake Tahoe making up a large portion of our community work force and therefore, we have designed our program to meet the needs of

our local community.

With the launch of Phase I of the school to career program last year, we incorporated a student time clock, community day, and various guest speakers from local businesses. This year we are adding certificates of skill, internships, and job placements to create a seamless transition from school to work.

We are thrilled to have South Tahoe Refuse as our partner in education, internship, and job placement as appropriate, and we are optimistic this model will expand to other local businesses interested in working with as we grow our school to career partnerships.

Holly Greenough, Mt. Tallac High School director

Opinion: When surveillance is a feature, not a bug

By Joshua Kopstein, Aljazeera America

There’s a saying you’ll hear in certain tech circles: There is no cloud, just other people’s computers.

The cloud is, of course, the vast collection of distant databanks we use to back up our vacation photos, search the Web, make online purchases, find the quickest route home and

do pretty much everything else. It is owned by unaccountable corporations, is regularly accessed by police and intelligence agencies and creates a convenient gold mine of credit card numbers, nude photos and other private data for malicious hackers to steal.

And increasingly, using it is no longer optional.

Read the whole story

Letter: Tahoe not on cutting edge of environmental planning

To the community,
Although TRPA has spent a lot of time since 2012 touting messages about how *"Lake Tahoe is often looked to as an area on the cutting edge of environmental planning*" (e.g. **1, 2, 3**), we beg to differ. This may have been the case decades ago, but other areas now surpass Lake Tahoe in terms of environmental protection, stormwater technology, and natural resource protection. Here are some examples of how our local planning isn't quite 'ahead of the game:'

- California's Water Board **promotes natural infiltration** instead of large stormwater facilities to help reduce polluted stormwater runoff, yet TRPA's 2012 Regional Plan promotes more pavement in **areas closest to Lake Tahoe** and encourages large "areawide" stormwater facilities;
- The Environmental Protection Agency encourages the **elimination of curb and gutter systems,** however extensive systems are being installed and/or planned

around the Basin;
- Caltrans reports and numerous traffic studies note **increasing highway capacity leads to more traffic and driving**, but the TRPA and transportation agencies are **approving more**;
- **Other local government** regulations protect natural ridgelines, while Tahoe agencies are **contemplating new ridgeline development**; and
- Tahoe plans include **more parking spaces** as groups undertake efforts to **remove them.**

Making matters worse, the proposed **2015 Lake Tahoe Restoration Act** would amend the TRPA Compact to weaken TRPA's role in environmental protection by **requiring TRPA** to consider the (presumed) economic impacts of plan regulations. *Keep in mind this is often what the corporations and large developers claim to be 'economic.' Their ideas of 'economic' (increasing their immediate [short-term] profits) are not based on truly helping our locally-owned/small businesses and communities, or long-term protection of Lake Tahoe.* TRPA is currently the only agency with land use authority in the Lake Tahoe Basin charged with protecting Tahoe's environment; the economics of the basin are already being monitored and prioritized by local entities (e.g. counties), along with numerous groups (e.g. **Resort Associations**). Notably, the original TRPA Compact was strengthened in 1980 because local governments eyeing tax dollars were approving projects that harmed Tahoe's environment (although TRPA has, unfortunately, returned most project approval authority back to the counties, oversight is still required). The proposed Compact amendment will leave us with no land use authority that truly prioritizes Lake Tahoe's environment.As depicted in our **"Tahoe Regional Overgrowth" map**, the North Tahoe region is already facing substantial development proposals that will bring more people, more cars, and more crowding. We are not opposed to new development, but believe it should complement and respect Lake Tahoe's fragile environment and our unique communities – not *overwhelm* them. We will continue to keep you informed as these plans and projects proceed.

Sincerely,

Susan Gearhart, Friends of the West Shore president

Letter: EDC needs to listen to residents

Publisher's note: ***This letter was originally sent to the El Dorado County Board of Supervisors and reprinted with permission.***

Supervisors,

Last year, at your annual Tahoe Board of Supervisors meeting, you couldn't swing a dead cat in that room without hitting a grant writer or grant getter – often one and the same person. The rest of the room was packed with Nevada groups, government/agency employees and "sustainable" agenda pushers. The deck was stacked against the people of Meyers; most of whom had to stand out in the hall, and of course, we weren't being paid to be there.

To date, the TRPA has directed our plan and we, residents and businesses, have had little say. We have asked for an independent, expert-run survey, something the city of South Lake Tahoe invested in with much success, to more accurately write a community plan that we can live with for years to come. Petitions, letters, and grass roots neighborhood canvassing have shown a very different feedback than what has been presented to you. A lot of important issues have been ignored.

As I see it, issues with the new Meyers Area Plan include the new allowable building and land use information that is not being accurately compared to the existing allowables in our 1993 plan; such as the "anything goes mixed-use" zone change, taller building heights with incentives to go higher – disregarding community meeting decisions, and larger building

densities – in some cases, four times more units per acre.

Changes in the new plan are advantageous to large investors, but don't do a thing for small business. Say an investor wants to build a three-story apartment but the code allows four stories. Wanting the most return on his investment, he will build out to the maximum allowable height and density. The county Building Department cannot stop or deny this if it is in the plan. This is why it's so important to spend the time, inform the community and weigh publically in real English the long-term impact of our plan. This is not the TRPA's plan to live with. We have to live with the outcome.

Furthermore, we have no representation. Trying to explain the powerful agency influences to an "off the hill" supervisor simply doesn't work. Supervisor Sue Novasel does understand, but apparently, cannot communicate or advise you other supervisors? Not sure how that works or how we, as a community, can be fairly heard.

Please consider the new Meyers draft as just a draft – don't put it forward for CEQA review. It ain't cooked yet.

Thank you,

Angela Olson, Meyers

Opinion: The nature of fire has dramatically changed

By Mike Benefield, High Country News

It's time to move irrigation pipe. It's one of those things you have to do when you have a certain amount of land and

enough water to irrigate it. My knees hurt as I walk each piece of pipe over to the next dry spot. Here in central Oregon, it’s always a race with evaporation. The sun beats down hot as I hear that familiar sound overhead; it’s a DC-7 air tanker flying to another wildfire.

I didn’t always spend my summers moving irrigation pipe. I was a city kid growing up on the beaches of Southern California until I turned 18 and started fighting wildfires. At 19, my wife and I loaded up all our possessions in a Volkswagen bus and moved to north-central Washington.

It was 1978, and a new world lay before us. We had both ended up working for the Forest Service. We rented an old, five-bedroom farmhouse on the banks of the Entiat River for $185 a month. It was surrounded by massive black walnut trees and heated by a woodstove. I was fighting fire in the summer and doing whatever I could do in the winter to survive until the next summer. Some winters, I’d work at the local salmon hatchery. As the years passed, I worked as a fire lookout and served as a fire-prevention technician, while gaining more fire experience on hotshot, helitack, engine and fuels crews.

Read the whole story