Opinion: How to have a great time on the North Shore

By Andy Wirth

With more than $100 million invested in ongoing capital improvements, destination travelers to Lake Tahoe ski resorts can look forward to new chairlifts, on-mountain improvements, base area renovations and a variety of guest amenities – there's no better time to book a ski vacation in Lake Tahoe than now. Of course, if you want to make the most of your ski vacation, there's a lot to take into consideration. Here are a few suggestions on what to think about when planning your next Lake Tahoe ski vacation.

• **Get out and explore.** Whether you decide to stay for two days or six, I highly recommend taking the time to explore our mountain communities beyond the ski resorts. While every ski resort is proud of the resort experience that we have to offer, we also feel that there is great value added to the vacation experience when guests take the time to explore the surrounding attractions. Whether making the short drive to Tahoe City for truly stunning views of Lake Tahoe, or paying a visit to historic Truckee for an amazing dinner and night on the town, you'll find some incredible mountain towns that you'll be glad you didn't miss.



Andy Wirth

• **Give yourself enough time.** While it's easily possible for

some travelers to get up to North Lake Tahoe and back in a day, your experience will be infinitely better if you plan to stay the night – or a few nights. This way, you will be able to get the full experience and enjoy all of the amazing activities, restaurants and après ski scenes that the area has to offer. You might be tempted to try to fit it all in – morning fresh tracks, afternoon ice-skating, night skiing – but remember to fit in some time to relax and be spontaneous.

• **There's no perfect formula.** Some groups will want to ski or ride from dawn until dusk every day of their ski vacation – others, not so much. If you're going with a larger group, be sure that you are staying somewhere where everyone will be able to pursue their favorite activities. If everyone in your group wants to ski or ride every day and call it an early night, a more back-to-the basics resort might be the ticket. If people in your party want to split their time on the hill and fit in some shopping, dining and ice skating, look for a larger resort that offers a wider variety of amenities.

• **Maximize your budget.** Ski resorts now work the same way as airlines – if you plan and buy early, you're going to save money. If you show up to the ticket window last minute, you can't expect the best deal. Many resorts including Squaw and Alpine offer discounts if you book lift tickets online three or more days in advance. If you're going to ski more than five days in the season (be it overall or just in one week), be sure to consider resorts' season pass deals. The same goes for lodging rates. Book early and take advantage of the best rates. Mid-week rates are usually the best and think about visiting during non-holiday, off-peak periods. Spring can be a great time to visit. Lake Tahoe is known for superior spring conditions – the sun almost always is shining and the calendar is chock full of amazing spring events.

• **There's a vacation for every budget.** If you love living in the lap of luxury, consider some of Lake Tahoe's most luxurious properties, including The Resort at Squaw Creek or

the Ritz Carlton Lake Tahoe. If you'd rather save your money for lift tickets and a few nights out on the town (or maybe a snowcat or snowmobiling adventure) there are plenty of other lodging properties in the area to fit every budget. Condo-style units such as The Village at Squaw Valley offer plush accommodations with incredible access to the slopes, as well as full kitchens and living areas so you can save some money by not eating out every night. Smaller hotels in Tahoe City and Truckee also offer highly affordable lodging, leaving the rest of your budget for the fun stuff. For help with finding the best fit for lodging accommodation, whether it is ski-in/ski-out, in historic Truckee or on the shores of Lake Tahoe, check with Squaw Valley Lake Tahoe Reservations – they can work with you to tailor your vacation by helping you decide the best lodging and activities to build your ultimate vacation.

• **It's easy to learn.** There isn't a single mountain in the North Lake Tahoe lineup that doesn't have an exceptional learn-to-ski and ride program. My suggestion: Bring your previously non-skiing friends, family or spouse, and have them all join you for a great ski vacation. The learn-to-ski and ride programs are affordable and provide a great experience. There's no reason for one person in your group to feel like they have to stay home or post up in the lodge all day. You'd be surprised how easy and inexpensive your experience can be by taking advantage of a learn-to-ski and ride program. Introduce someone new to the sport you love and you'll be giving them the best gift of all.

• **The most important aspect of the trip?** Bring your favorite people. Whether it's your family, your girlfriend or your long-lost college friends, pack your car full of the people that make you the happiest and your trip to the mountains will be truly unforgettable.

Be a part of all the excitement that is taking place. The time is now, and North Lake Tahoe is the place. Start planning your

ski vacation now so you can experience of one of the best mountain resort destinations in the United States.

Andy Wirth is president and CEO of Squaw Valley and Alpine Meadows. This column first appeared in Northern Nevada Business Weekly.

Letter: Time to leave South Lake Tahoe

To the community,

Cannabis is legal in two states. The seeds of legalization, planted and cultivated all these years has finally born fruit. My work is done. Effective immediately I am retiring from marijuana politics, heading for Whistler Blackcomb and taking over as CEO of a publicly traded company.

It has been my honor and pleasure to serve the medical marijuana community over the past two decades. During that time, I have been profoundly moved by the courage, intelligence and integrity shown by my fellow cannabis warriors. Together we have made history, saved lives and established new civil rights for sick, disabled and dying patients.



Steve Kubby

Looking back on all those years, I find myself overwhelmed with gratitude for everything that cannabis activists have done for me and for our cause. When I was fighting for my life in the Placer County jail, pissing blood, puking my brains out and shivering violently from solitary confinement in a freezing cold cell, they saved my bacon. Sick and disabled patients joined dedicated activists who showed up at my trials, held vigils while I was being tortured by my captors, gave me money and protected me in so many ways. Ultimately, I was cleared of any wrongdoing and my record expunged. Together we defeated these public serpents and their evil plan to felonize, discredit and destroy me and the medical marijuana movement.

Like so many other cannabis activists, I've paid some very painful dues in this brutal drug war. For me, the absolute most painful punishment was the loss of my courageous and inspiring wife, Michele. We lived together in loving bliss for ten years without a single argument, disagreement or even a hard word between us. Michele was everything to me. I loved her with all my heart and soul.

All that changed when I was arrested and Michele was threatened by Child Protective Services with the removal of our two young daughters. It was then that the one and only true love of my life was forced to choose between me and our precious children. Michele did what any good mom would do under such terrifying circumstances and acted to protect our kids from being abducted by CPS – she filed for a divorce. Heartbroken, I had no choice but to accept her decision. Despite the divorce, we've remained good friends. We've accepted what has happened and she has her own life now. Best of all, my kids and I have remained close, sharing many wonderful adventures on the slopes of Heavenly, Squaw and the 'Wood.

Thus far, I've kept my personal feelings hidden, but now that I am preparing to leave the United States, I believe it is

appropriate for me to finally disclose publicly what was done to our family by those who used CPS to punish me for my role in the legalization of medical marijuana. Even now, six years after our split, not a day goes by that I don't think about Michele or how much I still love and miss her.

The last time I held Michele in my arms was when I departed from Vancouver and flew to SFO in January 2006. After the plane landed, it inexplicably stopped in the middle of the runway and we were suddenly surrounded by cop cars with flashing lights. Next came the announcement, "Passenger Steve Kubby please come forward." My attorney, Bill McPike was with me and went up to the front to explain that he had arranged for me to turn myself in at Placer County and this was only an alleged violation of probation. McPike was ordered by an air marshal to shut up and return to his seat. I was ordered to come forward immediately.

Once outside the aircraft, I was forcibly slammed against the fuselage and handcuffed. I struggled desperately to catch my breath, while I was frogmarched down the stairs and past an army of heavily armed soldiers from the DEA, ICE, FBI, U.S. Customs, Homeland Security and several other agencies. As I was paraded like a trophy past a formidable army of hostile law enforcement, I tried to understand how I had become such a dangerous international criminal. I've never harmed anyone, there were never any victims and my only accusers were all government agents. Incredibly, my medicinal use and cultivation of a natural healing herb had become so dangerous and so threatening that all these tentacles of the federal government were now on full alert, determined to destroy me and everything I represented.

We arrived at a waiting cop car and I complained that the cuffs were too tight and my wrists were bleeding. I was told to "shut the f– up and get in the f–ing car." Without any warning, a big man inside the cop car ordered the officer to remove the cuffs and re-cuff my hands in front of me and make

sure I was comfortable.

“You’re famous!” exclaimed the burly sheriff’s deputy as we pulled away in his cruiser. We made eye contact in his rearview mirror. I held up my bleeding wrists next to my eyes, so he could see them and replied, “lucky me.”

“No, you don’t understand,” he pleaded, “All the media and a big crowd of people were there at the airport waiting to greet you. That’s why they arrested you, before you could get in front of Fox and CNN.”

About this time, to my utter astonishment, the officer became very emotional and actually got teary eyed. Then he told me the rest of the story.

“All of us thought this medical marijuana thing was a fraud. A total scam. Then my dad got cancer and we went out and got the marijuana for him. He got better and lived for another two years. We got to spend time together, fishing and talking about all the stuff we’ve shared. We had time to say goodbye and it made all the difference in the world. If it were up to me, I’d take you home right now as a hero to my entire family, but I have to take you in instead.”

Then it hit me, like an angry tidal wave, that we are all suffering from this insane drug war, even the police.

Looking forward, I am embarking upon an extraordinary new opportunity in Whistler Blackcomb, doing something I’ve been dreaming about for years. I can’t tell you what I am up to just yet, but it is what I came here to do and I am thrilled to finally be working with elected officials in BC, on a project that is truly breathtaking in scope and impact. A public announcement about this new project will be forthcoming.

Steve Kubby, South Lake Tahoe

Editorial: Thanksgiving – a day to remember not everyone has a bounty to be thankful for

"The Pilgrims made seven times more graves than huts. No Americans have been more impoverished than these who, nevertheless, set aside a day of thanksgiving."

– H.U. Westermayer

Most people will gather this Thanksgiving Day with family and friends to celebrate this iconic American holiday. We will do so with tables full of food that becomes refrigerators overflowing with leftovers.

And as we do so, plenty of our neighbors are struggling to find something to be thankful for – either because they are alone on this holiday that screams to be with others or because the bounty before them is anything but that.



With South Lake Tahoe's unemployment rate of 12.3 percent being higher than California's (10.1 percent), higher than Nevada's (11.5 percent) and higher than the national average (7.9 percent), we are a community overflowing with have nots. And while South Tahoe once had an unemployment rate at nearly 18 percent, the decline of more than five percentage points does mean full employment. It means some have left the area, some have stopped looking for work, some are working multiple jobs,

and so many are underemployed.

Many don’t know where the rent or mortgage payment will come from in a week.

While we live in an extremely pretty place, the beauty of the mountains and the lake don’t pay the bills. They are good for providing solace in times of struggle, but not much else.

Maybe there is something we can learn from the pilgrims who in 1621 celebrated what is considered the first Thanksgiving. They did so with the Wampanoag Indians. It was a time to be grateful for the fall harvest – for what the land had provided.

Perhaps locally, we should be thankful for our harvest this time of year – the snow. While the white stuff itself does not provide nourishment to be shared at a table, it provides work for so many who call Lake Tahoe home. And work provides the money to buy the fixings for every meal.

We don’t all work in the field of tourism, but we all ride the roller coaster of economic good and bad times because tourism is the thread that binds us.

The fabric of this community is thread barren. Instead of picking at the loose ends and watching them unravel into an abyss, perhaps it’s time we started to stitch the pieces back together.

The anger, the hate, the divisiveness in the world permeate our little town, our shores, the region. We need to stop beating each other up and start lifting each other up. It is time to be thankful that we have the ability to help and thankful for the help that is offered.

Thanksgiving – it’s really two words – *thanks* and *giving*.

Opinion: It’s time Tahoe moved beyond ‘arrested decay’

By Steven Frisch

On Dec. 12 the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency will vote on adoption of a new 2012 Regional Plan. The outcome will send a powerful signal to community, local, state and federal partners and private capital about whether stewards of Lake Tahoe will take control of their future and the resource that draws us together, or whether we will accept another decade of divided vision and environmental conflict.

The choice is between “arrested decay” – stalemate in the state of the lake – or advancing real restoration.

Sierra Business Council believes the best strategy to ensure the future of Lake Tahoe is to adopt the 2012 Regional Plan and leverage the power of private investment to partner on restoration of the lake.

Through the fog of debate about policies and thresholds is the light of an underlying truth: what we’re doing now isn’t enough, isn’t working, and needs to change. With the effort of thousands of residents, numerous agencies, and more than $1.6 billion of public investment in environmental improvement, Lake Tahoe is in a state of arrested decay. We have stabilized but not truly restored the resource.

Restoring Lake Tahoe and protecting it for posterity will require replacement of old infrastructure, fundamental redesign of urban centers, new transportation solutions, housing for working families, jobs to build the constituency for restoration, and treating almost every drop of water

reaching the lake.

The reason we haven't restored the lake is that environmental resources don't exist in isolation – people are involved – resources exist in a social and economic context. Restoring the environment without connecting the dots between nature, people and dollars is magical thinking – a resource doesn't get restored unless people support it and capital gets directed to it. Permanently restoring the lake must harness the power of all three to succeed.

To achieve real restoration will also require real money. To implement the environmental improvement program – and go beyond it to meet new challenges like invasive species, changing climate, and increasing uses – will cost hundreds of millions of dollars. Traditional funders, local, state and federal government, are unlikely to have the financial resources to fully support restoration over the next decade.

This is where harnessing the power of the private sector comes in.

Twentieth century environmentalism focuses its attention on slowing the encroaching impact of the industrial revolution – stopping bad things from happening – in the belief that environmental exploitation is an inherent part of capitalism. Traditional planning approaches, like the previous Regional Plan, rest on this premise and adopt a strategy of regulate, block and mitigate.

A whole new generation of environmentalists think capitalism is here to stay; that we have already begun to adjust our systems, providing prosperity in ecologically sustainable ways through use of new technologies and improved design. The adoption of new community planning techniques, smart transportation, green building, applied erosion control, renewable energy, and by engaging a larger population in the solution, we can restore resources and promote prosperity at

the same time. The proposed 2012 TRPA Regional Plan adopts this more modern and pragmatic approach.

We’re not saying that a regulatory structure is not necessary; without the good work of the Sierra Club and the League to Save Lake Tahoe to watchdog regulation we could not have arrested decay. The future requires a layered approach, with appropriate regulation, while harnessing the power of the private sector to assist in the restoration of the lake. We can’t afford to have private capital sit on the sidelines. We must adopt a strategy of “stop bad things from happening” while actively encouraging good things to happen. We need the private sector to be a powerful force for good and invite in the capital that shares this ethic.

The risk of adopting this strategy is substantially less than the risk of signaling stalemate. The TRPA has designed a process to monitor and adaptively manage implementation of the 2012 Region Plan on a regular four-year cycle; we can measure performance and make changes when necessary.

We’re all environmentalists when it comes to Lake Tahoe. The question is do we adopt a new environmentalism harnessing all of our resources to reach for real restoration or do we settled for old environmentalism and risk arrested decay.

Sierra Business Council believes that new environmentalism, harnessing all of our resources, and adaptively managing outcomes, is the more rational course.

Steven Frisch is CEO of the Sierra Business Council.

Letter: Tips to make holidays safe and happy

To the community,

The El Dorado County Sheriff’s Office wishes for everyone to have a safe and enjoyable holiday season, and has the following safety tips to offer:

Do not drink and drive.

Do not leave presents visible in your parked car, while shopping.

Lock your doors and windows when you leave your house.

Be prepared for winter weather at home and while driving.

Be cautious with your mail. The holiday season is when most mail thefts occur. Drop off mail at your closest post office if you are mailing money, checks, or gift cards. Pick up your mail promptly and report any suspicious activity immediately to the sheriff’s office, your police department, or your local post office.

If you are leaving for the holidays, suspend your mail and paper delivery, or have a neighbor pick up these items for you and ask them to watch your house while you are gone. I

f you live in the county, contact the El Dorado County Sheriff's STARS at (530) 621.7545 and schedule vacation house checks any time of the year.

The holiday season can be a time of loneliness and depression for some. If you are depressed, and need to talk with someone, please call Community Crisis Services, 24 hours a day, at (530) 622.3345.

On behalf of the El Dorado County Sheriff's Office, Happy Holidays!

John D'Agostini, El Dorado County sheriff

Letter: Thankful for a caring community

To the community,

I would like to thank all the people who helped make the fundraiser at Ernie's so successful: Paul and Judy Bruso, the Ernie's staff, the volunteers and to all the wonderful people in our community for their generous support.

Thank you to Gia Richards for organizing everything and to all who donated auction and raffle items. I was overwhelmed by the amazing turnout.

Also, thank you to Jim at Primo’s and Dan at Passaretti’s for their contributions.

To my family, friends, customers, coworkers and many supporters: I can’t thank you enough for your kindness and being there for me. I am blessed to live in such a great place.

Chris Alper, South Lake Tahoe

Letter: Reflecting on Armistice Day

To the community,

Veterans Day was once upon a time Armistice Day, which became Veterans Day in 1954. When World War II started for the United States, two of my Crawford uncles were in the Army at Hickam Field when the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor. They survived the war. Another Crawford uncle was killed in the Battle of the Bulge. A Crawford cousin, a gunner on a B17, was killed in combat. My wife’s father joined the Seabees and was with the Marines when they island hopped across the Pacific.



Bill Crawford

So, on the recent Veterans Day, I wrote:

After

the eleventh month

the eleventh day

the eleventh hour,

we’re still producing

weapons and wars

and veterans galore,

dead or alive.

For armistice lost

we should mourn.

Bill Crawford, South Lake Tahoe

Letter: Diverse groups help Bread & Broth

To the community,

Bread & Broth would like to express its sincere gratitude to Hope Lutheran Church of the Sierra, which sponsored the Adopt A Day of Nourishment on Oct. 29. Members of the Hope Lutheran congregation collected $250 in donations to sponsor the AAD and church members, both regular B&B volunteers and sponsor night volunteers, were on hand to assist with serving almost 100 meals. Their generous donation of their time and money is

greatly appreciated.

Bread & Broth could not provide these community meals without dedicated teams of volunteers. We had “all hands on deck” on Oct. 29, with teams from Hope Lutheran Church of the Sierra and Hard Rock Cafe helping out. David, Cathy and John Haynes from Hope Lutheran helped with sorting and preparing items to be distributed to diners, along with Brett Melickian and Jessica Astorga of Hard Rock Cafe.

In addition, Kimberly Templeton, Taylor Corsin, Lizzy Gates and Nate Schrimshire from Hard Rock Cafe helped with cleanup efforts.

“We had a lot to coordinate that afternoon and their help was invaluable,” said one Bread & Broth volunteer. “We were grateful for the extra helping hands.”

Bread & Broth is able to continue its mission of feeding the hungry of South Lake Tahoe due in large part to the generosity of the local community. For more information on how to Adopt A Day, contact Carol Gerard at (530) 542.2876 or carolsgerard@aol.com.

Georgette Riley, Bread & Broth

Letter: TRPA Regional Plan must be approved

To the community,

I’m writing to our community to share my thoughts about the Regional Plan update because I care about the future of Lake Tahoe.

I love Lake Tahoe –in sickness and in health and I'm committed. I was born and raised here and now, with my wife of 13 years, I'm raising my family and working in the ski industry. I'm a community volunteer for nonprofits and have worked on large scale events for our communities around Lake Tahoe.

A while back, things were good in South Lake Tahoe, and our economy was good. Work was easy to find and many families enjoyed a high standard of living. I was able to build a career, buy a home and become an active part of this wonderful community.

Things are different now. We're losing the community feeling, young people don't feel this is a place to come to find a career or purchase a home. The street I live on has changed. Kids have grown up and moved away because they can't find viable options to build their new careers. I see very few new families moving in to the area because they can't afford to live here.

We can't stay the same. "The same" is a losing proposition. We must attract new residents to help us recreate back into the viable community that our region once was. I think the Regional Plan with its focus on mixed-used design and community centers is step in the right direction. A big step.

Think of all the businesses that didn't change and they went out of business. Are we willing to let Tahoe go out of business because we won't change? Because we won't put a plan together that protects the environment and allows the economy to thrive? We can do this, but will we?

Thank you for listening to my comments. Please approve the Regional Plan on Dec. 12 without delay.

Sincerely,

Sean Sweeney, South Lake Tahoe

Opinion: Cutting National Park funding is a bad idea

By Mary G. Martin

After spending 38 years working for our federal government and national parks, including two years as superintendent of Lassen Volcanic National Park, 11 as superintendent of Mojave National Preserve, and time spent in Yosemite National Park and Alaska's exquisite parks, I am no stranger to the power and beauty of our most special places.

That's why it disturbs me in the most personal way to know our National Park Service is facing across-the-board cuts that, if implemented, will compromise that great experience visitors have come to expect. Such cuts would eliminate park ranger positions, close visitor centers and campgrounds, and even close entire parks.

Children are my passion. Seeing a child discover the smallest element of a park and exclaim wonder is heartwarming. My grandchildren cherish their national parks and national park experience. Every child should have an opportunity for similar experiences. The National Park Service is instrumental in adding that dimension to a child's growth and, with partners, reach out to children who otherwise might not have had nature experiences. Your national parks already operate on a "shoestring" budget, and cuts would have a devastating impact on programs such as the growing youth program in most parks.

At one-fourteenth of 1 percent of the federal budget, cutting

National Park Service budgets will not solve our deficit problems, but has the power to severely harm local economies, in particular small businesses, that depend on healthy parks and strong park attendance.

Investing in our national parks is the best idea that our country can make. In California alone, visitors spent over $1.3 billion in economies surrounding national parks in 2010, and national parks created nearly 17,000 jobs. Locally, visitors to Whiskeytown National Recreation Area contributed over $32 million to local economies and businesses in 2010, and my alma mater, Lassen Volcanic National Park, generated more than $16 million. On a larger scale, the National Park Service reports that every dollar invested in park operations generates about $10, and every two Park Service jobs yields one outside the park service.

Our nation's treasures are entrusted to the National Park Service for preservation. The Statue of Liberty, the Washington monuments, Mt. Rushmore, the Gateway Arch in St. Louis, the USS Arizona and most iconic monuments and memorials that define our nation are a part of the National Park System. Upkeep and maintenance on these treasures currently poses a challenge to meet unique needs with limited budgets.

America's national parks already suffer from an annual operations shortfall of $500 million to $600 million. Parks are falling into disrepair and are more vulnerable than ever to inappropriate development within park boundaries. Another deep cut of 8 to 10 percent across the National Park Service will mean even fewer rangers, less maintenance and almost certainly park closures. Given the negative consequences this could have for visitors and local businesses nationwide, Congress needs to find a more balanced solution to our deficit problem.

As the National Park Service looks to its centennial in 2016, I call upon Congress and the administration to ensure that our

national parks are protected and funded for the continued enjoyment of our generation, and our children and grandchildren to come. Funding our national parks will help protect the positive visitor experience that I helped create while working with our National Park Service, and will protect the continued successful tourism economy in Redding, throughout northern California, and beyond. Our national parks are a legacy worth preserving and fully supporting them is without question the right thing to do.

Mary G. Martin is the retired superintendent of Lassen Volcanic National Park and a board member of the Lassen Park Foundation and the Mill Creek Conservancy. This first appeared in the Redding Record Searchlight.