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Letters to the editor 6/29

Local hero reports wildfire

June 29, 2007

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I just wanted a local hero to get recognition. On June 27 at 9:30 a.m., Kim Ingstad of the North Tahoe Parks and Recreation Department spotted and called in a fire that had just started.

This fire could have potentially gone through all of Kings Beach and Tahoe Vista due to all of the dead trees in th area. I want to thank Kim for saving all of our homes and families from a very real disaster!

Ginny Ruthven

Tahoe Vista

Seeking women for cancer study

The Sister Study, conducted by the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences, is seeking 50,000 wome whose sisters had breast cancer to help find the causes of breast cancer. For more information visit www.sisterstudy.org, or for Spanish www.estudiodehermanas.org. Call toll-free 1-877-4SISTER (877-474-7837) Deaf/Hard of Hearing call 1-866-TTY-4SIS (866-889-4747).

Barb Johnston

Pahrump, Nev.

TRPA will help basin progress

We have been warned about the potential of fire in the Tahoe Basin now for years. The message is not if it comes when it comes, do what you can to defend your property, reduce fuels, coordinate how you fight the fire and prov support to those impacted. There are many dedicated agencies and organizations that have come together to work this problem, including TRPA.

Now a major fire has occurred in one of the worst areas, Tahoe Paradise between Meyers and the Y, on forest ser lands and in residential areas. It is a timbered area and conditions were such Sunday that a fire could be and did become a disaster.

We are all thankful that there are no reports of major injuries and our thoughts and prayers are for those impacted this disaster. In addition, all those associated with fighting the fire, providing emergency support and lending a he hand deserve a huge well done and thank you.

In regard to allegations that TRPA hinders the reduction of fire threat, our district has observed that TRPA is a big supporter across the board of such programs.

In meetings hosted by TRPA regarding fuel reduction it has been the theme that fuel reduction supports more thar obvious regarding fire impact, there is also reduced erosion control issues after a fire, less health problems during fire, reduced rehabilitation time, reduced costs both during and after the fire, just to mention the obvious.

Starting now and commencing soon after the end of this fire, many agencies will be getting together to mitigate tf impacts, from rebuilding, to re-vegetating, to erosion control, to planning for the future. I know TRPA will be par this process and they will be helping, not hindering as we move forward.

Doug Martin,

District Manager

Nevada Tahoe

Conservation District

Fire donations

The Children's Cabinet at Incline Village is collecting new or slightly used children's and baby clothes, toys and t to be distributed to children of families whose homes were destroyed in the Angora Fire.

Distribution sites: The Children's Cabinet at Incline Village administrative offices in the Donald W. Reynolds Parasol Building, CCIV Thrift Store, The Village Square Family Store and at I CAN Run on July 3.

These items will be given to families with children who have lost their homes in the Angora Fire through a collaborative campaign with the American Red Cross of Incline Village.

Thank you for helping CCIV support these children and families.

Barbara Richard

Executive Director of Children's Cabinet

Criticism of TRPA unfounded

Over the last three years, I have worked to establish a Fire Safe Chapter in Round Hill. Many residents have volunteered their time to help organize, talk to neighbors, mark properties for fuel reduction, and manage paperwork. We have been fortunate to receive grant funding to assist with these fuel reduction efforts. We have been trained and supported by the Nevada Fire Safe Council, and have worked closely with the Tahoe Douglas Fire Protection District.

In May, with the help of the Skyland Fire Safe Chapter, we conducted an education event for the entire Nevada side of the south shore. We were supported by the US Forest Service, the Nevada Tahoe Conservation District, the Tahoe Douglas Fire Protection District, the University of Nevada Cooperative Extension, and the Nevada Fire Safe Council.

Our process for removing fuels in the neighborhood includes: asking the property owners to join the chapter, helping them mark their property according to the Living With Fire Guidelines, scheduling fire crews to remove and chip brush and limbs, arranging for a defensible space evaluation, arranging to have trees marked by a forester, scheduling tree removal, and having the defensible space evaluation signed off.

The Tahoe Regional Planning Agency has been very supportive of our efforts. They have endorsed the Fire Department Forester, and have authorized the marking of trees and permitting of tree removal for defensible space purposes. Limbs are removed within ten feet of structures and chimneys. Dead trees are removed. Trees which are too dense are thinned, and trees which create too much continuity of crowns which would allow fire to travel through the crown are removed. Consideration is given to erosion control and forest health, and when the forester is in doubt of TRPA regulations, he refers the resident to TRPA. There has been very little interference by TRPA with our efforts to create defensible space. In fact, TRPA has done far more to support our efforts than interfere.

I think that recent comments in the news criticizing TRPA for preventing tree removal for defensible space are not based on fact. There have been numerous news items covering TRPA fines for removing limbs to improve views, but I have never heard of property owners being fined for removing limbs or trees when they were following the Living With Fire Guidelines and having trees marked and permitted by the Fire Department Forester. I would encourage property owners to work together to establish and support fire safe chapters, apply for fuel reduction grants, and work with their local fire department to create defensible space. This is far more effective than criticizing TRPA.

Glen Smith

Chairman, Round Hill Fire Safe Chapter

Tahoe forests are mismanaged

You should call the "League to Save Lake Tahoe" and the "Tahoe Regional Planning Agency" (TRPA) to see if they were going to put out the Angora fire in South Lake Tahoe.

They are the responsible agencies that have actively impeded tree removal for years in that area - mainly because they are concerned that someone might see a citizen's home from the lake or it would improve the home-owner's view.

Even though they were provided with scientific data over 20 years ago that the fuel load in the Tahoe forests was at or above 26 tons per acre -whereas a healthy forest at Tahoe should be less than one-third of that - they consistently have impeded aggressive fuel management programs.

The fire is nature's answer to their mismanagement of our forests.

Now these agency miscreants are blaming global warming and overbuilding -- as the cause of the fire -- when they should be looking into a mirror as the reason for this conflagration.

We should all feel sorry for the folks that have lost their homes and the beauty of the forest that surrounded them -- and pray that no lives are lost.

Jerry Stewart

Incline Village

Loss and Tragedy!

A time filled with loss and tragedy; our love and support goes out to the families

The sadness for these families who've lost so much; sympathy and caring, all are touched.

Traveling from all around to assist in every way; courageous heroes fighting fires all day.

Putting their lives on the line; protecting us all in this devastating time.

Bringing with them a hope and belief; with their tools and knowledge for relief.

Hoping God will send some rain; to lessen the heartache and pain.

Ryan Cunningham

Coos Bay, Ore.

Fire will come,

no matter what

As long as humans put themselves above the environment, as if the wildland urban interface is our playground where we can live in our picture postcard dream home (with fire insurance), then "we" are the invasive species. When we declared war on fire a hundred years ago and labeled (for the records) fire "evil," we lost touch with our "purpose" as human beings. As a wildland firefighter certified in many areas in wildland fire operations as a "single resource," it is clear to me that we humans are out of touch with why we are here on this planet. We invade other countries out of selfishness and greed. We invade the forests out of selfishness and greed. We invade other human and animal "spaces" out of selfishness and greed. Like the fuels that have built up in our forests because of prolonged fire suppression, the same insatiable human appetite for more and more, with disregard for the effects, has reached the point of an inevitable catastrophic (economical, social & environmental) collapse.

We are out of touch with who we are as a culture. We are out of touch with what we are and why we are. We are more concerned with buying more useless material items while staying in debt, rather than taking responsibility for the well being of everything around us. Those who choose to live in a wildland urban interface to satisfy personal motives need to snap out of DENIAL (a contagious dis-ease that is running rampant throughout this culture) and learn to become "Stewards of the Land."

Fire was once a natural part of our landscape. Low intensity fire helped maintain balance and order in the forests and kept forests "healthy and biodiverse." (Many Native Americans understood this principle and, prior to the arrival of European settlers, practiced "prescribed burning" methods that supported the health of themselves and the health of the forests and animals.) However, that knowledge was lost when the European settlers came to understand "timber" as a valuable commodity and perceived fire as "evil" and actually declared war on it. (Good old Smokey the Bear became the perfect propaganda prop to further their cause.) Unfortunately, without low intensity fire to keep forests healthy and diverse, we now have a catastrophic problem on our hands. The amount of accumulated "bio mass" needed to be removed from our forests, to help nature recover somewhat, is massive! Like the karma that will come to all Americans for, directly or indirectly, invading and destroying other peoples culture, a similar Karma is now at our doorstep.

You want fire insurance? Look inside yourself. Learn to connect to your true nature and how that supports and nourishes your environment...the land your home is on. Each and everyone of us has a purpose on this planet, unrelated to the fashionable addictions most Americans have to any and everything that keeps them constantly preoccupied with being busy doing absolutely nothing worthwhile.

We each need to realign ourselves with our purpose and mission in life; not to serve oneself (always first), but to serve the greater good of all living creatures. Time is growing short on all fronts. Our forests need to be intelligently and carefully thinned (leaving all old growth) with minimum impact on the sensitive ecosystem. Low intensity fire must follow.

Jeffrey Learned

Crestone, Colo.

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