

Record snowfall may mean summer skiing in Tahoe



Kirkwood Mountain Resort staffers had to often dig out this winter. Photo/Provided

The king of deep snow – Kirkwood Mountain Resort – plans to not only stay open until May 1. It's very "likely" the Alpine County ski resort will reopen for the Memorial Day and July 4 weekends. Bonus days are also slated for May 7 and 8.

"We've had an enormous amount of snow," Kirkwood spokesman Michael Dalzell told Lake Tahoe News, referring to a recorded 729 inches in snowfall. Kirkwood's record was set in 1982, an El Nino year, with 775 inches. "These are mid February conditions now."

On Saturday, Kirkwood hosts its annual Spring Jammin', with a pond skim, ice bar and live music. Other upcoming events include a ho-downhill and barbecue on Saturday, a ladies' clinic on April 16 and a sunset ski and wine tasting event on April 30 with Northwest Magnum running through 7:30 p.m. and wine and appetizers in the Timbers Bar.

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Alpine Meadows, like most Lake Tahoe resorts, will extend its ski season thanks to the history-making, late-season windfall the region received in 2011. More than 61 feet of snow has fallen in the Sierra high country so far, second to the 1950-51 season, when a total of 65 feet fell. A set of stairs that guides Alpine Meadows visitors up to the resort's second-story sun deck had vanished last weekend, buried under record amounts of snowfall.

Alpine, which received more than 48 feet of total snowfall at mid-mountain, will continue full operations until April 24. Select lifts will be running Fridays through Sundays until May 15.

"With this much snow, Squaw Valley will have great coverage through May 30 and possibly even longer," said Andy Wirth, Squaw Valley's chief executive officer. "We will certainly be examining the possibility of opening for July 4, conditions permitting."

And Squaw touted a record Friday of their own in hitting a 700-inch cumulative snowfall mark – the first time in the resort's history. The resort has floated being open over the Fourth of July. If it reaches the holiday, it would be the fifth time in history that it has hosted skiing on that date.

After May 8, Squaw moves to Friday-Sunday operations, offering skiing and riding May 13-16, May 20-22 and May 27-30. Additional days of operation include May 16, the Stage 2 start of the Amgen Tour of California; and May 30, the Memorial Day holiday. Through the end of May, Squaw's High Camp Swimming Lagoon and Hot Tub will host pool parties at the top of the mountain.

On Saturday, join Olympic gold medalist Julia Mancuso at the

Julia Mancuso Kiss My Tiara Pool Party followed by a free outdoor concert by Donovan Frankenreiter on the KT Sundeck. On Easter Sunday, ski with the Easter Bunny and participate in the on-mountain egg hunt.

With a April 24 closing scheduled, Heavenly is celebrating a 100-inch base, marking one of its best snowfall seasons in a quarter of a century. The ideal conditions will help with the annual Gunbarrel 25 slated Saturday morning at the South Shore ski resort. The homespun event is just what the name implies. Participants try to barrel down the ominous face dotted with Volkswagen-sized moguls as many times as they can in the allotted time.

Adding to the event lineup, Heavenly is hosting "Springloaded 2011," a giant marathon party scheduled for April 8 through 23 with music and entertainment such as the wild and wacky "pond-skimming" event.

"This year's winter storms gave us an outstanding base for spring skiing, and I am thrilled with the incredible snow conditions at Heavenly," Vice President of Sales and Marketing John Wagnon said.

Sierra-at-Tahoe has lined up a slew of events of its own to commemorate some of its best conditions ever for its later closing – April 24. It boasts 712 inches of snowfall as of April 1, with 40 powder days. Only 11 winters have surpassed 500 inches of snowfall there.

Here is more information on resort closures and events:

-Mt. Rose Ski Tahoe: Season extended through May 6 for the general public.

-Mammoth Mountain: The ski area south of Lake Tahoe but situated at high elevation, also has hinted on its website that it's shooting for a Fourth of July finale. The resort's Red Bull Schlittentag is today, and its annual Season Pass Party is April 16. The Ice Bar Spring Bash is April 17, and

the the Beacon and Eggs beacon search contest is April 24.

-Boreal Mountain Resort: The resort extended its season until April 24. Boreal also reports on its website that it will be open on weekends during May, conditions and business levels permitting.

-Diamond Peak Ski Resort: The Incline Village-owned and operated resort closes April 24, a week after its originally scheduled closing date.

- Donner Ski Ranch: The family owned resort will be open daily through the end this month. Starting May 1, it will go to Saturdays and Sundays through the end of May.

- Homewood Mountain Resort: The resort will remain open through Monday, then transition to a spring schedule that include skiing April 15-18 from 9am to 2pm and April 22-24 from 9am to 2pm. The South Lodge base area will be closed during the two additional weekends. Homewood will offer live music on its North Lodge patio April 16, 23 and 24. April 16 also is Super Hero Day – wear your Batman suit on the hill.

- Northstar-at-Tahoe Resort: Northstar reports it will close April 24. The resort is offering discounted daily lift tickets (for \$61) available at participating outlets in Reno, Sacramento and San Francisco. Visit www.northstarattahoe.com for more information and a full calendar of events.

- Sugar Bowl: The Donner Summit resort this week extended its season through May 1. Easter weekend festivities include a Golden Egg Hunt and live music on the Mt. Judah Lodge deck.

-Tahoe Donner: The Truckee resort extended its season through April 17. The End-of-Season Party still is planned for Sunday. The event includes a downhill dummy, food and beverage specials, a bounce house, local ski and board shop exhibit, and the second Boxing Match Rail Jam. All-day lift tickets will be discounted to the half-day rates.

A number of resorts are offering discounted spring season passes. Prices can be found on each resort's website.

-Lake Tahoe News and Reno Gazette-Journal staff reports