

Crews losing ground on King Fire



A huge plume of smoke covers Placerville.
Photo/Renee Gorevin

Updated Sept. 15 11:55pm:

The King Fire near Pollock Pines grew to 8,600 acres on Monday night, with 5 percent containment.

Highway 50 is reduced to one lane through the fire area.

The California Air Resources Board will be installing a temporary PM2.5 monitor at South Tahoe High School to monitor smoke from the King Fire in Pollock Pines.

Under normal circumstances there is a PM10 monitor located in South Lake Tahoe. It only measures coarse dust particles such as rushing or grinding operations and dust stirred up by vehicles traveling on roads – not smoke particles.

The smell of smoke is evident in parts of the basin, and from many areas it can be seen.

Several firefighters on Sept. 15 had to deploy their fire shelter. CalFire said everyone is safe. Earlier a firefighter had been injured. The extent of the injuries is unknown.

The fire, which erupted in the late afternoon Sept. 13, is burning in a canyon of the South Fork of the American River, northeast of Pollock Pines. It is spreading at a rapid rate.

All Pollock Pines schools will remain closed on Sept. 16.

Highway 50 remains open. However, Forebay Road at Blair Road and Forebay Road at Pony Express Trail are closed.

Mandatory and voluntary evacuations remain in effect for hundreds of residents. Sierra Ridge Middle School is being used as a shelter for people and small pets.

The cause is under investigation.

Agencies from throughout Northern California are working the fire, including crews from Lake Tahoe.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Kings Beach hotel crawling with bugs, garbage

By Thom Jensen, KXTV-TV

JMA Ventures owns some of the priciest resorts and restaurants from San Francisco to Seattle. It also operates Homewood Mountain Resort.

But one of JMA's lesser known properties is not living up to the same reputation among travelers.

Inside room 224 at the Tahoe Inn in Kings Beach cameras captured ants crawling across bed sheets, blankets and pillows. Under a nightstand were dozens more ants. Beneath the bed was a collection of garbage, which included two nitrous oxide dispensers known as "Whip-Its." Nitrous oxide is also known as laughing gas and is a popular drug with young partiers that's known to cause dizziness and feelings of euphoria. Also in the room was a pill that a narcotics detective identified as a Ecstasy. Ecstasy is another drug known to bring on feeling of euphoria, but unlike "Whip-Its" Ecstasy is illegal.

JMA declined an on-camera interview, but in a written statement, founder Art Chapman said, "We take News10's allegations very seriously and will investigate them thoroughly." He also wrote that the Tahoe Inn is, "scheduled for demolition by spring 2015, at which time the land will be fully restored to its natural state."

Read the whole story

Businesses compete for next generation's spending

By Ashley Oñoz-Wright, Las Vegas Sun

The largest consumer group in history is entering the marketplace. Their wallets bulge with \$1.68 trillion in buying power, and by 2020, they are expected to make up one-third of the adult population.

They're the millennials, the generation generally defined as being born between the early 1980s and early 2000s.

Unlike Baby Boomers, who marketers typically target with print ads, billboards and television commercials, millennials get their messaging through social media. Facebook, Twitter and Instagram influence them to try a restaurant, visit a music venue or check out a nightclub. Recommendations can come from friends or total strangers.

Reaching a millennial audience demands new marketing sensibilities and approaches. Local public relations professionals have had to learn how to use social media as a promotional tool. It's not as easy as it might sound.

Read the whole story

Millennials are saying no to credit cards

By Blake Ellis, CNN Money

NEW YORK – Debt-fearing millennials are saying no to credit cards.

More than six out of 10 millennials, or 63 percent, don't have a single credit card, according to a Bankrate survey of 1,161 respondents. That compares to a mere 35 percent of Americans who are over the age of 30.

A tanking economy and mounting student loan debt have scared many millennials away from opening credit cards, says Jeanine Skowronski, an analyst at Bankrate.com. The CARD Act of 2009, legislation introduced to protect consumers from high interest

and fees, also made it more difficult for younger Americans to get credit cards.

Instead, Millennials are turning to debit cards – especially prepaid debit cards, which are reloadable and often linked to bank accounts.

This credit card exodus is part of an ongoing trend. Last year, a report from credit scoring firm FICO found that the number of young Americans without credit cards had doubled between 2007 and 2012.

Read the whole story

DCSD looking at future of lake schools

Six meetings are scheduled this fall to address concerns of Douglas County School District parents at the lake.

The study group was the idea of the superintendent and approved by the board this summer.

The three main topics are:

- What should/could the format and course offerings look like if Whittell stays approximately the same size? (There are about 200 students in grades 7-12.)
- What should/could the format and course offerings look like if Whittell grows in enrollment?
- What should/could the format and course offerings look like if the lake schools decline in enrollment – to 350 or less for

grades K-12.

Meetings are from 4:30-6:30pm at Whittell High School on Sept. 23, Oct. 7, Oct. 21 Nov. 4, Dec. 2, and Dec. 11.

Applications to be on the committee are being accepted until noon Sept. 18. Contact Superintendent Lisa Noonan at 775.782.5134. Meetings will be open to the public.

Interscholastic cycling League launching in Nevada

Nevada in 2016 is set to join the National Interscholastic Cycling Association, a youth development organization governing interscholastic mountain biking in the United States.

Already student-athletes from Nevada are traveling to compete in events in California, including Incline Village's Meghan Kelley who won the 2014 California junior varsity state championship.

If there is enough interest, racing could begin in 2015. With many of the league's participating communities located in the Eastern Sierras, events will take place during the summer and fall months to align with the region's mountain biking season.

The Nevada League will have its headquarters in Incline Village, home to the Flume Trail, and most participants will come from the Tahoe-Reno-Sparks area. Mammoth Lakes is expected to play a key role in the league, and Susanville in the north and communities to the east have expressed interest too.

Squaw to channel Bavaria for Oktoberfest

Fresh-baked pretzels from the Truckee Sourdough Company and a disc jockey are two additions to North Lake Tahoe's largest Oktoberfest celebration in the Village at Squaw Valley.

The annual event will transform Squaw's village into a miniature Bavaria on Sept. 27.

Squaw Valley's event is modeled after the original Oktoberfest, a 16-day annual festival in Munich. Guests can enjoy traditional German entertainment including performances by Joe Smiell and his 20-piece Bavarian band with the Almenrauch Schuhplattler Bavarian Folk Dancers on the main stage. Additional music and dancing will take place on the First Street stage with the Alpentanzer Schuhplattler Austrian Dance Troop accompanied by the Alpentanz Kapelle band.

There will be a wide selection of authentic German brews. The first beer, sold in a commemorative festival mug, is \$10. Additional beers will be available for \$5, with all proceeds from beer sales benefiting the High Sierra Lacrosse Foundation.

In addition to the live music and beer tasting, event attendees can compete for prizes in the Oktoberfest Games, which include stein holding competition, keg-rolling race and the bratwurst toss.

Ironman Lake Tahoe – ultimate endurance test



Dan Starkey before he begins the 2013 Lake Tahoe Ironman. Photos/Provided

By Dan Starkey

Born and raised in the East Bay, Lake Tahoe has always held a special place in my heart for winter skiing and summer getaways. Last year, I added another unforgettable experience to my lifelong love of Lake Tahoe. On Sept. 22, 2013, I completed my first Ironman at Lake Tahoe.

This is my experience.

The conditions on race day were challenging, but they could've been a lot worse. The whole week leading up to the race was beautiful weather in the mid to upper 70s. Then, on Saturday, the day before the race, the weather turned awful. Cold wind

and rain in the 50s, with waves crashing at Kings Beach. It even snowed in surrounding areas.

I spent the night before the race at the Resort at Squaw Creek. After a restless night's sleep filled with anticipation, I got up at 4am to have a light breakfast of a bagel, yogurt, and a banana with a few sips of Diet Coke for caffeine. On a day that I would burn more than 15,000 calories, you would think I would eat a larger breakfast. However, I found swimming with a full stomach (the first of three legs of a triathlon) can lead to nausea. When we woke up on race day, the temperature was 29 degrees with a sunny forecast into the 60s. I took a hot shower to raise my body core temperature before bundling up and heading out to the bus.



Kings Beach is where the swim takes place.

The bus ride from Squaw Valley to Kings Beach was in the pitch dark and we arrived 6am. I wore sunglasses, a 49ers ski hat and closed my eyes to visualize the day. Naturally, a Blues Brothers quote struck me as we drove away from Squaw Olympic Village knowing that I would return there some 14-plus hours later to cross the finish line: "It's 140.6 miles to complete an Ironman. I've got a full a tank of gas (full stomach). A half of a banana. It's dark. And I'm wearing sunglasses. Hit it!" – Elwood Blues

At the transition area at Kings Beach, the dangerous surf from just hours before was now glassy water in one of the most beautiful mountain lake settings in the world. The sun was

starting to illuminate the sky as we neared the age-group swim start at 6:40am. The water temperature was in the low-mid 60s, providing excellent swimming conditions.

At 6:45am, my Ironman experience would begin telling myself "Pace, don't race". The swim course is a two-lap counter clockwise rectangular 2.4-mile course. Nine hundred meters out a long straight, 200 meters to the left then back in for lap one. Lake Tahoe is a dream to swim in, compared to say the Pacific Ocean where I completed my first 70.3 triathlon. In Santa Cruz, the water has a green tint and is freezing relative to Lake Tahoe. I remember wondering if a shark was going to attack. In Tahoe, the water is crystal clear and you can distract yourself watching peaceful sandy bottom, with its occasional boulders or fallen trees.

I maintained a steady stroke and stayed wide to seek calm waters where I would get kicked/punched less by other swimmers. I did get knocked about half a dozen times, but it's to be expected. At the far turns, you lose sight of the lake floor in depths of more than 40 feet, but you are rewarded with 360 degree views of freshly dusted mountain tops surrounding the lake now illuminated by the rising morning sun.

"I can't believe how beautiful this is," I said to myself. "The day is here. I'm doing an Ironman."

On the final straightaway, I smiled when I started seeing the sandy bottom again. Approaching the shore, as you lift your head out of the water, the underwater silence is shattered with rock music blaring (mind you, it's still only 8:15am). The crowd is roaring and a guy on the loud speaker yelling out competitors' names as they head to the first transition (T1). A friend of mine spotted me and cheered me on. It was great to see a familiar face. I achieved my target time of 1 hour and 15 minutes for the swim and kept my heart rate in check the whole time. Good start – but there's a very long day ahead.

En route to the changing tent, two wetsuit strippers tell you to lie on the ground and they yank off your wetsuit in an instant. This was especially convenient since our hands on this morning were nearly frozen.

The swim-to-bike transition was a challenge. With temperatures still in the 30s, everyone was doing a full uniform change. The changing tent was over capacity so many of us had to change standing up balancing on one leg with racers all around us. While T1 usually takes about 5-10 minutes, it took most athletes 15-30 minutes on this day. Unfortunately, many athletes' days ended with the swim when they could not recover from hypothermia.



A select few have the coveted Ironman medal.

I left the warm humid T1 tent to jog out to my bike and head out on the chilly ride. The bike covered 112 miles over a 2 1/3 lap clockwise from Kings Beach through Carnelian Bay, Tahoe Vista, Dollar Point, Tahoe City, past Alpine Meadows and Squaw (I'll see you more later, Squaw), to Truckee down through Martis Camp and Northstar back over Brockway Grade (7,185 feet) back to Kings Beach.

I elected for function over fashion and bundled up in more clothes than I'd worn in training since mid-Spring. My toes were numb for the first two hours of the bike from the wind and cold. I ate a little Clif Bar and water while I settled into my cycling stroke.

The majority of your nutrition is consumed on the bike. It's hard on your stomach to eat much heavy food on the run. You need to hydrate well early in the race, especially being at 6,000-7,000-foot elevation. If you're dehydrated by the time you get on the run, you're probably not going to be able to recover. Ironman combines a physical test that you can't cram for – and the need to game plan your exertion, nutrition and hydration in the face of extreme fatigue and the elements for up to 17 straight hours.

The first 35 miles along Highway 89 past Squaw up through Truckee are flat-to-downhill so you can maintain a brisk pace of 20 mph or more in the aero position without using too much energy. I really enjoyed the first part of the ride though reserved proper respect for the serious climbing ahead.

I anticipated that Brockway Grade on Highway 267 was going to be among the toughest sections of the entire race based on previous training rides. Martis Camp was the wild card. It was a private community adjacent to Northstar Resort that was off limits to the public prior to race day. We only knew from the course map that there was definitely climbing.



All events are on the North Shore.

It turns out Martis Camp was a million switchbacks and lots of ups and downs that got you sweating, then cold on the downhill, then sweating and cold, etc. I was thrilled to see Northstar signs because it meant I was done with Martis Camp for this lap. Just past the entrance to the Ritz-Carlton was the dreaded Brockway Grade. Brockway is 2.5 miles of unforgiving uphill with grades up to 8-10 percent (that's hard ... wink!). My first ascent up Brockway actually went better than expected. At the top, I couldn't believe I was thinking to myself that Martis Camp may have been more tiring than Brockway. As I started the 35-40 mph descent on the backside of Brockway into Kings Beach, I was already dreading those back-to-back climbs in about 45 miles.

By 11am, I was almost done with lap one on the bike under clear blue skies. I was right on pace with my pre-race target and feeling strong with nearly two hours of smooth road ahead. But before I got too satisfied, I reminded myself that I still had almost 100 miles of riding/running to go. Reality check.

In mile 60 past Tahoe City, I took my first dip into my Special Needs bag. Before the race, you can put anything you want or need into a bag that's waiting for you halfway through

each the bike and the run. My bag included ibuprofen, Tums, extra energy food and drinks, plus some fun snacks to just break up the monotony like Lay's BBQ potato chips (tasty salt intake) and a Coca Cola (sweet tasting caffeine). I was fueled up and hoping to see my family in Truckee.

Through historic downtown Truckee, I coasted while standing up out of the saddle stretching my calves, hamstrings and lower back scanning both sides of the barricaded street for my support crew. I was so happy to spot them on the far side of Bridge Street. I stopped and chatted with everyone for a couple of minutes while the kids were jumping up and down and yelling excitedly! I shed my jacket now that it was up to 64 degrees – the ideal race temperature I never thought we'd see 24 hours before when it was snowing.

I hesitated to push off because I didn't want to say goodbye so quickly. I got such a lift from seeing everyone that I carried with me into the mountain climbs ahead. The roads were definitely less crowded than earlier. On the second climb up Martis Camp, fewer riders nearby made the uphill feel even slower and longer. It wasn't just a feeling. My second lap was about 1 mph slower than the first one, but I was still going steadily.

Brockway was definitely tougher the second time around. I counted down each 0.1 of a mile through the final steep half-mile section. At the top of Brockway, I stopped at the aid station to collect myself. I made a point of thanking volunteers as often as I could.



Dan Starkey all bundled up for the bike ride.

The support on this race was truly exceptional thanks to all of their help. They would hold your Needs bag for you while you picked what you needed from it. At aid stations (every 10 miles on bike and every 1 mile on run), they would take your bike bottles from you, twist off the cap, refill it and replace the cap and return it to you while you caught your breath for a moment. They would do anything that would make life easier on you in that moment.

Every gesture of kindness was welcomed on this tiring day. My favorite sign on the road was held by an 11-year-old boy: "I trained 6 months to hold this sign!" Honorable mention: "Pain is temporary. IM is forever." I was also told, "You're almost there!" about 12 times. Even in my poor mental state, I was onto them after the first 11 times.

Speaking of kind gestures, there were thousands of cheering people throughout the race course. It was fun to watch the reactions. There was an excitable group of twentysomething guys/girls on the left side of the road near Tahoe City at mile 95. I played along with them and waved my hand up, up telling them to raise the noise level. They ate it up and went crazy! They were as pumped for my participation in their rowdiness as I was to receive their energy. They may have been drunk.

Miles 90-110 to Squaw were pretty leisurely. I ate some Clif Bar, drank as needed and even chatted up a rider I'd seen many times on the ride. He was on his third IM and he called the Tahoe bike "10 times harder than Canada". This sentiment would be repeated many times over. This was the highest Ironman ever held in North America and the most climbing (7,500 feet) on the bike ever.

Approaching Squaw Village for the second transition (T2), I was treated to lots of cheering family and friends. I was on a high! The swim and bike were done – and I was surprised how good I felt. In the T2 chute (like the end of a leg of the Tour de France), I yelled to no one in particular in the cheering crowd, "This is awesome!"

To make you feel like a champion, as you approach the T2, someone is waiting there to take your bike from you while you jog off in your bike shoes to go change into your running gear. I thought this only happened at Kona on TV. Nice touch.

A few minutes before 4pm, I was in my running shoes and heading off for the run – a 26.2-mile double lap out-and-back course along the Truckee River trail to Tahoe City. I saw more family as I started the run and rounded the corner through the throngs of cheering fans in the village. I actually started the run thinking that I could beat my personal best time for a marathon. This was a humorous delusion.

The first five miles of the run were good, but that's where my feelings of "This is awesome!" abruptly came to end for good. I was having stomach pains that were aggravated with every step of running. I walked for the next five miles straight. Every time I tried to run again the pain in my gut jabbed at me. I couldn't stomach eating anything either. No nutrition with 16 miles to go was not sustainable.

After turning around at mile 10 in Tahoe City, the stomach pain subsided enough for me to start mixing some jogging (very

little ... like 0.2 mile at a time) with the walking. I started extrapolating how long this marathon would take at this pace. Oh geez ... this was going to be the longest 5-plus hours in my life.

Still, I reminded myself of Goal No. 1: Finish the Ironman.

I had these images in my mind of people collapsing and not finishing the Ironman. I would rather finish with a longer than expected marathon time than not finish at all.



A smile from Dan Starkey after a grueling day at the Lake Tahoe Ironman.

This race is a test of survival. My stomach would eventually accept some potato chips (to replenish some lost sodium), grapes, oranges and cola. On my return to the Squaw Village area, more family and friends cheered me on. My wife, Erica, ran along with me for several minutes and I got emotional in her confidence that I was on my way to becoming an Ironman. I still had 10 miles of foot numbing walking/jogging ahead.

Though, the last four miles in the dark seemed to take absolutely forever. I saw my buddy Jeff Judson on the course a

couple of times on the run so we pumped each other up. I also talked to several multi-Ironman finishers. I asked them all the same question, "How does this one compare?" and I always got the same answer "This is the toughest one I've ever done ... that bike was brutal."

After the sun went down, the temp dropped quickly. I wore a space blanket over my shoulders and a headlamp for the last 2.5 hours of the marathon. The temperature had dropped back down to 40 degrees. I tried to stay "present" enough to acknowledge the encouragement of strangers, but to be honest, even a thumbs up (frequent throughout the bike course) was too much to muster.

Within miles of the finish line, the Squaw Village lights shined brightly through the darkness and you could hear the finish line announcer celebrating each finisher's name. As I entered the final half-mile within the village, I soaked in the crowds along the barricades and slapped five with as many kids as I could. Approaching the grandstands, I was smiling broadly and searching to find my wife and kids. As the announcer boomed "Dan Starkey from Danville, California ... You Are An Ironman!", Erica screamed out my name from just right of the victor's arch. My experience was complete to have Erica and the kids sharing it with me.

No more than three steps after crossing the finish line, a handler puts his arm around your shoulders – probably so you won't fall over. He was also the handler for the third place pro, who called IMLT the toughest IM he's ever done. The best pro time in IMLT (8 hour 55 minutes) was nearly an hour longer than Kona, for example. Most of us in IMLT found this race to take at least an hour longer than expected.

Finishing time: 14 hours, 44 minutes, 0 seconds.

After my photo was taken in front of the IM backdrop and I got hugs from the family, I scarfed down about seven pieces of

pizza and a plate of chicken and pasta before getting a massage in the heated medical tent. It was also amazing to stay until almost midnight and watch some of the finishers who could barely stand upright shuffle across the line to earn their medals.

The memories of completing my first Ironman in Lake Tahoe remain a daily inspiration to me. The experience profoundly embodies the Ironman motto that "Anything Is Possible".

Note: I'm looking forward to returning to complete the Ironman Lake Tahoe 70.3 on Sept. 21.

TRTA to recognize Challenge participants

How do you sustain a world-renown trail with state and government funding down 70 percent? Ask the community to help support the trails they cherish.

The Tahoe Rim Trail Association did just that with its Tahoe Rim Trail Challenge starting in 2013. This year more 2,300 miles were traveled by 452 participants.

Participants paid for a membership that helps support the 165-mile loop, and joined friends and co-workers to see who could travel the most miles throughout the year.

During the summer, sponsors of the challenge hosted a trail day on a designated section of the loop which helps support the challengers by giving them a little bit of extra love. In the first year membership to the TRTA increased by 20 percent.

TRTA on Sept. 22 will honor the 16 sponsors and celebrate the

33-year anniversary of the completion of the Tahoe Rim Trail loop. This event is also recognized as an official Nevada sesquicentennial anniversary celebration. The celebration will be at Coffeebar, 682 Mount Rose St., Reno at 4:30pm with light food and drinks.

For more info, call Shannon Skarritt at 775.298.4490.

Small vegetation fire in Truckee

CalFire and Truckee firefighters on Sunday night extinguished a small vegetation fire in Olympic Heights.

Officials believe the Sept. 14 9:20pm fire may have started from a discarded cigarette.

A plot about 20 feet by 30 feet burned. Officials said it was luck there was no wind that neighbors jumped on the fire before firefighters arrived.

“Remember it is still fire season and vegetation is very dry. Some of the largest fires in California have happened in September and October,” Truckee firefighters said in a press release.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report