

the green sheet

All Things Green in the Eastern Sierra

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FREE

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PHOTO: MONO COUNTY

For out of the box thinking on local solid waste issues, see Ron Cohen's story page 5.

JUNE LAKE TRI SOAKS UP THE SUN

Celebrates fifth anniversary with solar power

By Geisel

The June Lake Triathlon is billed as the toughest race in the most beautiful place, but despite its natural beauty, its remote location also makes it a tough race to stage. June Lake's beachfront has great sand, water access and spectacular mountain views. What it DOESN'T have are modern conveniences of any kind.

High Sierra Triathlon Club organizer Alana Levin has put on the event for the past four years. Each year, she has had

to bring everything in ... including generators for power. Considering she's always tried to keep the event sustainable to some degree, those generators have always represented an affront to her sensibilities.

This summer, however, the JL Tri celebrates its fifth anniversary with a great gift, in the form of Scott Smith from High Point Solar. Smith will bring his newly modified work trailer to June Lake and power the triathlon by soaking up the sun and turning it into

clean, green electricity.

"We've always tried to give [the triathlon] a green component," Levin said. "We use recycled paper, soy ink, compostable material on site, Brian Robinette from Sierra Conservation Project collects bottles and cans, and we use shuttles instead of having mass parking."

Levin, it turns out, has known Smith for years ... she and his wife, Amy, are cycling buddies. "So, we're always talking," she said. Plus, Smith

see SOLAR TRI, page 15



PHOTO COURTESY HIGH POINT SOLAR

The small trailer at the back of this truck will power the entire June Lake Triathlon this year.

FINALLY, SOMEONE'S DOING SOMETHING

Private entities take geothermal risks

By Kirkner

There's a common saying that "nothing happens, nothing happens and then, everything happens!" Well, it seems the time may have arrived for "everything" to happen with geothermal in the Eastern Sierra.

In the past year, several exciting projects have gone online that use geothermal as heat sources, including a home in Lee Vining and a home in June Lake. ORMAT has also been doing some geothermal test drilling in Shady Rest Park (the company recently held two public scoping meetings, see this week's story in The Sheet) and drilling is also taking place on Alpine Circle in Mammoth.

"Someone is finally doing something, and with private money," exclaimed Rick Phelps, Executive Director of the High Sierra Energy Foundation, about all of the geothermal projects and exploration currently in the works.

"Geothermal is like oil, it is not without risk," Phelps explained. "They [private parties] are pioneers and we're all going to benefit from it. There is no taxpayer money

involved."

One such pioneering entity is Britannia Pacific, which has been exploring geothermal on its property in Mammoth where the company plans to build a boutique hotel known as Mammoth View, A Hand-made Hotel. If all goes well, and the project is completed, it would be the first commercial property in Mammoth to be heated by a geothermal system (not a ground source heat pump), according to the company's Portfolio Manager, Hector Caldera. We caught up with Caldera, who has been the face for the project, in order to get an update on the progress.

1. What is the current status of the Mammoth View project?

The current status is that the financial analysis for the fee modification request is complete. A Town Council meeting is tentatively set for May 4 to discuss it. We are expecting to have an ADP (Advisory Design Panel) meeting on the same week to go over the planning application from a design perspective.

see GEOTHERMAL, page 15

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GEOTHERMAL

continued from page 1

2. You have drilled one well so far, correct? Were the results successful?

Yes, we have drilled one test well. We are about 900 feet in depth.

The temperature profile is mirroring the test wells done during the mid-eighties. Because of that, we decided to drill deeper, up to 1,500 feet, with the goal of reaching higher temperatures of 150-170 F.

3. What is the ultimate goal of all this drilling? Just to heat the boutique hotel?

The goal of the drilling is to investigate the use of geothermal to help promote sustainable development and offset high heating demand during the winter months and help provide a unique experience.

4. Why did your company want to invest in exploring geothermal on this property?

Sustainable development is very important to us – and is at the core of this project – so consequently the investment into exploring geothermal was a necessity to the project as a whole. We are also cur-

rently working with Southern California Edison, in various programs they offer, to further progress our sustainability strategy for Mammoth View, A Handmade Hotel.

5. What has been the cost so far?

It's not as expensive as we first thought, but it is still a substantial investment.

6. How has the High Sierra Energy Foundation been involved with your endeavors?

Rick Phelps, the Executive Director has given us access to useful pre-existing geothermal data and reports in Mammoth. In addition, he has also been instrumental in making introductions to key industry people.

7. It is my understanding that there are few properties in town, yours being one of two, where the owners of the property actually own the rights to the geothermal. Is this correct? Would you have pursued geothermal drilling if the rights had been owned by the feds and therefore the bureaucratic process would have been much lengthier?

We can't speak for other property owners, but based on our legal review, we own the mineral and water rights associated with our property.

Yes [in regard to whether or not they would have drilled even if they had not owned the rights], as sustainability is very important to the ethos of this project. Regardless, we had to go through a regulatory approval process from the Town of Mammoth Lakes, to the Mammoth Community Water District; from the County and to the State of California. All those regulatory agencies have been very cooperative.

8. Do you feel like a geothermal pioneer in Mammoth?

While we don't consider ourselves pioneers in the drilling, our company conceptualizes and brings to life truly one-of-a-kind and innovative projects in the U.S. and around the world, and we feel, through this project, that we are embracing the uniqueness of Mammoth and its geothermal possibilities, and are excited to play

an instrumental role in ongoing developments.

9. Do you plan to share the information that you gather from this process with the town and others who might be interested?

We are going through the CEQA process and a lot of the results will be reviewed under CEQA and will eventually become public information.

10. What type of system (open loop, closed loop or something else) do you plan to install once you get to the point of building the hotel and heating it with geothermal?

It will be a combination system consisting of open loop system – where warm water is produced, the heat is extracted from it and is re-injected back into the ground without ever being daylighted – with the second part being a closed loop system, which will take the heat from the open loop system via a heat exchanger and distribute the heat throughout the entire project.

SOLAR TRI

continued from page 1

ran the triathlon last year. After each of the last four years, Levin explained that she usually chats with Chris Hollingsworth from Colfax-based Seven Seas Industries, who has produced the JL Tri from day one. "He's great. Chris always has fantastic ideas. He's a big supporter. We're always talking about how to market it better, make it more eco-friendly. After last summer's race, he suggested making it solar," Levin recalled.

It only took a moment for Smith to spring to mind. "I said to Chris, 'I think I know who to talk to about that!'"

Smith said once he met with Levin, it was game on. "I had my work trailer already solarized, but I needed more battery capacity. It's all about the storage," Smith said. His trailer is typically used on High Point's customer job sites, essentially to "install solar with solar," but Smith has always harbored the idea of using the trailer for a va-

riety of other gigs after hours and between jobs. "I decided this was the time to add more capacity."

Smith said he's all about solar, and can now bring it to all sorts of events. "The JL Tri is just the beginning," Smith said. "I can do triathlons to weddings and back again." A big fan of alternative energy sources, he decided to take the plunge into the electric car world after seeing "Who Killed The Electric Car?" and is almost done retrofitting a Rhino, switching it from gas to solar-driven electric power. His client: none other than Dave McCoy. "He loves solar," Smith enthused. "Dave's got almost 100 kilowatts of solar on his own workshop!"

Gas-fueled generators are probably out of a job if Smith and Levin have their way. "Instead of the gas generators, I'll pull up and angle the panels for maximum sun and hook everything up via solar," Smith stated. Anything needing

electricity on site will be run off the trailer, including computers, timing and scoring, the Public Address system and even power for some of the food vendors and exhibitors. Levin and Smith said a couple of generators will be on hand as backup, but both think it's unlikely they'll be used.

Levin and Smith both agree that one of JL Tri's biggest attributes is the education and awareness it brings to sustainability. "It's not just about supplying the solar power," Smith said. "It's also about improving the footprint. The solar panels will make a great visual statement!"

Building up to the triathlon, Smith has been gathering power requirements for anything electronic that will be used on site, but is confident in his trailer's ability to meet the power demand. Of course, all the new EnergyStar-certified and other low-power consumption monitors and other

equipment certainly enhance the trailer's ability to provide many hours of stable electricity. "The greener the gear, the more efficient the system," he pointed out.

Meanwhile, in addition to the solar power system, look for Dave McCoy's new electric Rhino to be employed during set up and course construction. (Maybe Dave will be on hand to help pilot it ... you never know!)

The 5th Annual June Lake Triathlon will be held on Saturday, July 9. For more information, including how to register and lots more, log on to www.highsierratri.org.

To enter to win a free entry into this year's June Lake Triathlon, "Like" The Sheet News on Facebook (<http://www.facebook.com/TheSheetNews>) and then simply post a comment that says "Enter me to win!" before June 1 and you will automatically be entered into the drawing.

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