

Editorial: California's most pressing need – water

Publisher's note: *This editorial is from the April 1, 2016, Sacramento Bee.*

As if we needed more proof, the Sierra snow survey last week made clear that Californians must continue to conserve water while working to build a more reliable water system.

The snowpack is roughly normal in Northern California. But the situation is worse in Southern California, where El Niño was a bust, delivering half of normal rainfall.

Yet more evidence arrived Friday in the form of a U.S. Bureau of Reclamation announcement that while many customers will receive adequate water from the Central Valley Project, farmers on the west side of the San Joaquin Valley will receive a mere 5 percent of their contracted allocation.

California's existing plumbing is in need of help. The state must protect the environment, but also ensure a reliable water delivery system.

Read the whole story

Body found in road near Truckee

A woman's body was found Monday morning near Interstate 80 in the Truckee area.

Nevada County sheriff's detectives are treating the death as suspicious because of the trauma to her body.

The body was found April 4 about 6:20am under the interstate overpass at Farad.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Poverty rates jump among Calif. seniors

By Claudia Buck and Phillip Reese, Sacramento Bee

The older you are, the poorer you get.

For a growing number of California seniors living on the edges of poverty, that's the uncomfortable reality.

In the Sacramento region, the number of residents 65 and older living at or below the federal poverty line – \$11,400 for a single individual – roughly doubled from 2005 to 2014, according to a Sacramento Bee review of U.S. census data. That means 28,000 seniors, or 9 percent of the region's elderly population, are officially considered poor.

Statewide, the number of impoverished residents age 65 and older increased by 85 percent, to roughly 520,000, between 1999 and 2014, more than double the rate of population growth among the elderly.

Poverty among seniors is not new, but has been exacerbated in recent years by a cyclone of factors, especially in California.

Read the whole story

Is iron the answer to training at altitude?

By Erin Beresini, Outside

Athletes live and sometimes train at high altitude for one main reason: it stimulates erythropoiesis, or the production of red blood cells and hemoglobin, the protein inside red blood cells that carries oxygen around the body.

That extra hemoglobin should bring more oxygen to muscles, which should lead to improved muscle function and endurance when an athlete competes at a lower altitude soon after leaving the mountains.

The problem is, individual athletes respond differently to altitude. Even after the generally recommended four weeks of living between about 5,200 to 9,800 feet, some athletes won't show much increase in hemoglobin. That's why researchers have begun experimenting with iron supplementation.

Read the whole story

Cops targeting distracted

drivers

Distracted driving is such an important safety issue that April is recognized as National Distracted Driving Awareness Month.

In California, law enforcement officials are joining the Office of Traffic Safety, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, and the National Transportation Safety Board to focus on education as well as enforcement. The purpose of the campaign is to raise awareness about the dangers of distracted driving in an attempt to change behavior and save lives, not just in April but also year-round.

South Lake Tahoe Police Department will join statewide enforcement campaigns on April 7 and April 20 when all agencies will be especially vigilant for distracted drivers. Although the purpose of the campaign is not to write as many citations as possible, sometimes citations are necessary for drivers to understand the importance of focusing on their driving.

Distracted driving continues to be a problem, especially as the use of Smartphones increase. Although such crashes are often difficult to prove, California had at least 84 fatal distracted driving collisions in 2013, 85 in 2014 and 67 in 2015, with the actual number of cases likely higher. The number of injury collisions for the same three-year period shows an increase: 10,078 in 2013; 10,463 in 2014, and 11,023 in 2015. NHTSA data for 2014 show nationwide, 3,179 people died in distracted driving collisions, which is 10 percent of all crash fatalities. An additional 431,000 people, or 18 percent, were injured in motor vehicle collisions involving distracted drivers.

Distracted driving is any activity that could divert a person's attention away from the primary task of driving.

These types of distractions include:

- Texting
- Using a cellphone or smartphone
- Eating and drinking
- Talking to passengers
- Grooming
- Reading, including maps
- Using a navigation system
- Watching a video
- Adjusting a radio, CD player, or MP3 player.

Judge: Climate change imperils wolverines, feds must act

By Matthew Brown, AP

BILLINGS, Mont. – The Obama administration brushed over the threat that climate change poses to the snow-loving wolverine when it denied protections for the elusive predator also known as the “mountain devil,” a federal judge ruled Monday.

U.S. District Judge Dana Christensen ordered wildlife officials to act as quickly as possible to protect the species

as it becomes vulnerable to a warming planet. Wolverines need deep mountain snows to den, and scientists warn that such habitat will shrink as Earth heats up.

The ruling comes two years after the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service rejected the views of many of its own scientists and decided not to protect the wolverine under the Endangered Species Act, saying the effects of climate change on the animals remained ambiguous.

The judge said in his 85-page order that the “time is now” to take action to protect the wolverine.

“No greater level of certainty is needed to see the writing on the wall for this snow-dependent species squarely in the path of climate change,” Christensen wrote.

The case carries potential ramifications for other species affected by global warming – including Alaska’s bearded seals, the Pacific walrus and dozens of corals – as scientists and regulators grapple with limits on computer models of climate change.

Based on those models, some wolverine researchers predict almost two-thirds of the species’ denning habitat will disappear by 2085.

Fish and Wildlife Service officials were reviewing Monday’s ruling and did not have immediate comment, agency spokeswoman Serena Baker said.

Christensen pointed to “immense political pressure” from Western states that appeared to drive the government’s decision not to protect the wolverine. He also rejected the government’s assertion that the species’ small population size and low genetic diversity pose no threat to its long-term viability.

Wolverines, a member of the weasel family, once were found

throughout the Rocky Mountains and in California's Sierra Nevada mountain range. They were wiped out across most of the U.S. by the 1930s due to unregulated trapping and poisoning campaigns.

They have since recovered in parts of the West, but not in other areas of their historical range. In the Lower 48 states, an estimated 250 to 300 wolverines survive in remote areas of Montana, Wyoming, Idaho, Oregon and Washington state, according to wildlife officials.

Individual wolverines have been documented in Colorado and California, but there has been no evidence of breeding populations in those states. Larger populations live in Alaska and Canada, and those animals were never proposed for federal protection.

Fish and Wildlife officials declared in 2013 that future temperature increases could melt snowfields occupied by wolverines in some high-elevation mountain ranges in the Lower 48. They called for increased protections to keep the species from going extinct – a conclusion backed by most outside experts and the agency's own scientists.

The government reversed course when a Fish and Wildlife regional director in Denver overturned her staff's recommendations to protect wolverines. Regional Director Noreen Walsh cited uncertain climate models that prevented accurate predictions of whether future den sites would be available to female animals.

Officials from Western states including Montana, Wyoming, Utah and Idaho opposed federal protections, saying the animal's population had increased in some areas in recent decades.

The judge's ruling sends a message to federal officials that politics don't trump science, said Matthew Bishop with the Western Environmental Law Center, who represented some of the environmentalists who sued over the decision not to protect

the wolverine.

“Our hope is that if they apply the best available science and look at the threats, they’ll make the right decision,” Bishop said.

SLT cracking down on illicit massage

By Kathryn Reed

South Lake Tahoe wants to go after storefronts that claim to do massage when in fact human trafficking and prostitution may make up the better part of their business.

The police department devised a worksheet listing potential criteria. The department in the past has regulated individual massage therapists and establishments, but stopped doing so in 2009 when the California Massage Therapy Council was created by the state. (This reporter is a certified massage therapist.)

The state issues a license that is good for two years. Therapists must prove they’ve received 500 hours of training from a certified institution.

Going forward the city will likely mandate therapists show proof of the state certification in order to obtain a business license. All therapists must have a business license even if they are an employee.

Detective Jeff Roberson, who gave a presentation to the City Council on April 5, clarified that of the 113 people in town who have a business license for massage, most are providing

legitimate, therapeutic massage. And while everyone who calls himself or herself a therapist would have to adhere to the new rules, they are not designed to be onerous.

"I'm concerned about the reputation of our community and the massage industry in our town and throughout California," Teresa Bertrand, owner of Bio Spirit Spa, told the council.

She told the electeds she welcomes more oversight.

This was the sentiment from other therapists who spoke as well.

City staff was careful not to single out any one business, though the ones advertising themselves as Asian massage inevitably were targeted. No one from those establishments spoke Tuesday. However, six owners wrote a letter to the council saying they are legit and would like the city to limit the number of establishments to lessen competition for everyone.

Asian massage is not a modality like Swedish or Thai or deep tissue.

Roberson showed images of some ads for massage in South Lake Tahoe that offer prostitution without using that word.

Some of the new rules under advisement include mandating therapists be fully clothed, that they can't come in contact with a client's genitals, and no condoms would be allowed at the business. None of those things would occur at an upstanding massage venue.

Roberson also expressed concern that the women working at the shady places may be doing so under duress, be cycled through from one city to the next, and are not free to leave.

He is a vice specialist and recently received specialized training in going after illicit massage parlors.

City staff will be working to come up with specifics that will be brought back to the council in the form of an ordinance.

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In other action:

- The City Council continues to tweak the vacation home rental ordinance. While no action was taken Tuesday, the subcommittee will be working with those affected by the law to come up with revisions to be voted on in the future.
- The city is going to come up with a policy regarding when opening public comments are televised, and criteria to prevent staff and others from being slandered.

Letter: EDC electeds lobby for next CAO

Publisher's note: *The following letter was sent to the El Dorado County Board of Supervisors on April 5, 2016. The signers are all elected officials.*

Dear Supervisor [Ron] Mikulaco:

We, the undersigned elected officials for El Dorado County, hereby submit our unanimous recommendation of and support for Don Ashton as the next El Dorado County chief administrative officer.

As you are no doubt aware, over the last few years El Dorado County has experienced a series of transitions in key county management positions. The many transitions in such critical positions as chief administrative officer, assistant chief

administrative officer, human resources director, and county counsel create an atmosphere of uncertainty and discontinuity. The citizens of El Dorado County have been promised the highest quality service delivered by an efficient, cost effective county work force. The employees tasked with delivering on that promise deserve stable, competent administrative leadership.

The seven elected department heads are unanimous in supporting Don Ashton as the person to provide this stable administrative leadership. Don has a proven record of fiscal prudence and no nonsense leadership. He was a respected executive officer in Los Angeles County with increasing responsibility over more than 10 years. Since moving to El Dorado County, he has served admirably for six years; first as the sheriff's CFO, then as a principle analyst in the Chief Administrative Office, and most recently as the director of Health and Human Services, the county's largest department. As the HHSA director, Mr. Ashton managed the department through a chaotic and tumultuous consolidation, a solid example of his leadership ability. Significantly, Mr. Ashton came to live in El Dorado County not seeking to climb the ladder, he did that quite successfully in Los Angeles, he came here to live and make this the home for his family.

Simply stated, we are confident your board will have many well qualified candidates for CAO from which to choose; however, none will possess the depth of quality in character, competence and community as Don Ashton.

Respectfully submitted,

Vern Pierson, district attorney

John D'Agostini, sheriff

Karl Weiland, assessor

Cherie Raffety, treasure-tax collector

Joe Harn, auditor

William Schultz, recorder-clerk

Rich Briner, surveyor

After school tennis available for kids at ZCTC



Benn Peterson learns how to hit a forehand from Ross Rittiman.
Photo/Provided

Zephyr Cove Tennis Club in May will offer a variety of youth programs. When school is out, even more tennis will be

available.

Deanne Larsell, a USPTA professional, will be leading the May 2-19 classes for students in grades 1-8. This is open to students from any school.

Beginner classes will be tailored to getting youngsters familiar with the basic strokes, while the advanced beginner sessions will refine skills and touch on strategy.

Each session costs \$65.

Classes are:

- Beginner for grades 1-3: Monday and Wednesday, 3:20-4:20pm. (May 2, 4, 9, 11, 16, 18)
- Beginner for grades 4-8: Tuesday and Thursday, 3:20-4:20pm. (May 3, 5, 10, 12, 17, 19)
- Advanced beginner for grades 1-3: Tuesday and Thursday, 4:20-5:20pm. (May 3, 5, 10, 12, 17, 19)
- Advanced beginner for grades 4-8: Monday and Wednesday, 4:20-5:20pm. (May 2, 4, 9, 11, 16, 18).

If rain or snow cancels a day, those lessons will be made up the week of May 23.

Space is limited. To sign up, go **online**.

There will be a limited number of rackets available to borrow. Players should be dressed in athletic wear so they can easily run around and tennis shoes that won't leave black skid marks. Bring a water bottle, sunscreen and hat. Meet outside the clubhouse (next to Zephyr Cove Library) 10 minutes prior to the start of each program.

Larsell will also be offering a summer program at Zephyr Cove for grades 1-8. For more information, go **online**.

Zephyr Cove Tennis Club is on Warrior Way off Highway 50 in Zephyr Cove; the nonprofit Zephyr Cove Tennis Club Foundation operates it. For more information, email zctennisclub@gmail.com.

Suspect in chase that caused STHS lockdown escapes



A rider abandoned his motorcycle April 5 in the Sierra Vista Apartment parking lot. Photo/Kathryn Reed

Updated 2:27pm

By Kathryn Reed

South Tahoe High School was on lockdown this morning after a high-speed chase ended near the campus.

Carson City sheriff's deputies started the pursuit April 5 after being called to Carson Tahoe Hospital for a disturbance. The man who was there claimed to have been drugged by his roommate. He left the facility and got on a motorcycle.

About 9am Tuesday he was in Meyers, at which time the California Highway Patrol got involved.

While officers know the registered owner of the Harley Davidson that has Nevada plates, it is not confirmed this is the same person who was riding the bike so no name is being released.

The white male who is believed to be in his 50s dropped his bike in the parking lot Sierra Vista Apartments and presumably ran into one of the units. However, once officers went inside the suspect was not there and no one knows where he is. A helicopter had been circling the area in case the suspect fled, but was called off once officers believed he was holed up. The CHP does not consider him to be dangerous.

The suspect was weaving and riding with his helmet partially off, CHP Officer Angela Dean told *Lake Tahoe News*. She said he then ran the light at the Y.

The high school is just up the hill and that is why it was on lockdown.