

Talk centers on plants that may lead to cures

Searching for plants that will lead to curing diseases has kept Paul Alan Cox traveling the world, protecting rain forests and coral reefs and studying patterns of wellness and disease among indigenous peoples. Cox, a renowned ethnobotanist, will talk about his work at UNR on March 10.

Cox is the director of the Institute for Ethnomedicine in Jackson Hole, Wyo. His current ethnobotanical research is focused on neurodegenerative illness with the goal of discovering new therapies for ALS and Alzheimer's disease.

The free lecture will be at 7pm in the Redfield Auditorium in the Davidson Mathematics and Science Center on the university campus.

For more information, call 775.784.4591.

Unknown source contaminating water in SLT



Danny and Jenn Lukins of Lukins Brothers Water Co. listen to water officials talk about PCE in the groundwater near the Y in South Lake Tahoe. Photo/LTN

By Kathryn Reed

Two underground plumes of a highly toxic chemical are inching their way toward Lake Tahoe. Even though tetrachloroethylene, or PCE, was first detected in South Lake Tahoe near the Y in 1989, the source of these plumes remains a mystery.

To no avail Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board through a \$69,000 grant from the state tried to find the source. The results were released last week at a meeting hosted by Lahontan.

The area that was tested was between Patricia Lane on the north, Fifth Street on the east, Roger Avenue on the south and 11th Street on the west. This area was chosen because it is adjacent to the affected wells. The PCE was found in the **Lukins' wells in 2014.**

"There is no connection between the two plumes. This tells us the source of the PCE is farther up gradient," said Chani Hutto, with URS, the company that did the testing. "PCE could still be in the site boundary, but deeper."

Lahontan plans to drill deeper the next go round. Last year the 22 borings went down between 22 and 40 feet.

“No new sources of contamination were determined. That is why we are going to go deeper,” Jenn Lukins, who runs Lukins Brothers Water Co., told *Lake Tahoe News*.

If the source is located, the responsible party will be liable for paying for the cleanup.

“This is a communitywide issue,” Lukins said. “The next step is to plan for remediation. We need to remediate the plume out of the aquifer.”

Lukins has had to shut two of its wells down because of the contamination. In the meantime, South Tahoe Public Utility District is supplying the private company with water to make up for what it can’t produce on its own.

A Tahoe Keys well is also affected by PCE.

Lukins and the Keys water systems are building filtration units to treat their water so the inactive wells can be put back into service. Lukins hopes to put in two 3,000-foot long granulated carbon filters this year. The proposal is before the California Public Utilities Commission.

Who will pay for this remains to be seen – local ratepayers or everyone via a state grant.

California in 2008 banned new PCE machines. And all such machines are to be out of commission by 2023. However, PCE will still be able to be used.

PCE was a commonly used chemical in dry cleaning and automotive businesses. Lake Tahoe Laundry Works used to be at Y in the Raley’s center. That is a known source for PCE contamination right there and had originally been thought to be the source of the plumes below TJ Maxx and Classic Cue. In 2010 company officials said it could clean up the groundwater

in four years and then monitor the situation for one. That did not happen. And while there is improvement at that site, PCE is still detected there.

A draft remediation plan is out on the street for comment, with the deadline to do so being Feb. 11. The plan is expected to be adopted in April. An advisory team at Lahontan will decide what the next steps are for the former laundry facility.

Opinion: California needs to embrace the apocalypse

By Joe Mathews

Is California being governed by apocalyptic French philosophy?

Oui. But it's not the end of the world.



Joe Mathews

Indeed, apocalyptic French philosophy may finally provide a resolution to that age-old California mystery: What is the meaning of Jerry Brown?

In recent years, our governor's statements have taken an end-of-days turn, Jerry channeling Jeremiah, with the governor warning of nuclear holocaust, apocalyptic wildfires, the collapse of Silicon Valley if his water plans aren't adopted, and Armageddon if we don't reduce carbon emissions.

Where is he getting all this angst? Here's one answer: Brown is a longtime friend of the French techno-philosopher Jean-Pierre Dupuy, who practices what is called "enlightened doomsaying" from perches at Stanford and Paris' École Polytechnique.

Dupuy's long-running conversations with Brown have become high profile, with Dupuy joining him at events in Paris during December's climate change talks.

I am neither French nor a philosopher. But I've been reading everything Dupuy has published in English. I'm glad I did.

Dupuy's work not only provides reassurance that there is a coherent philosophy behind our governor's ramblings. The work itself is irresistibly thought provoking, brilliantly connecting history, science, religion, economics, and art in an open spirit. I'd recommend that all Californians—as citizens of a global hub for apocalyptic and utopian thinking—read his most accessible book, "The Mark of the Sacred". It should be required for state workers.

Here's a summary: We are doomed to destroy ourselves because humanity has lost touch with its sacred origins—not just faith but rituals and traditions that remind us how many things are beyond human control.

This hubris creates two problems. First, we no longer understand our own limits, and recklessly reshape the world without anticipating the consequences. Second, without a respect for the sacred, we can't convert our knowledge about the threats we've created to our own existence—from nuclear weapons to climate change—into the visceral belief necessary

to galvanize humanity to save itself.

"It is my profound belief that humanity is on a suicidal course, headed straight for catastrophe," Dupuy writes.

Dupuy's solution: "enlightened doomsaying." We must imagine ourselves in the unthinkable future, peering into the black hole of nonexistence so that we might understand our limits and sacred origins. "To believe in fate is to prevent it from happening," he writes.

That may sound awfully French, but he grounds his philosophy in a California classic: Alfred Hitchcock's film "Vertigo", a tale of humans falling, from the Golden Gate Bridge to Mission San Juan Bautista. Dupuy calls the film "the womb from which I am issued," and sees humanity's delusions in the fictions within that movie's fictions, particularly Jimmy Stewart's imposition of a false reality on Kim Novak's character.

So now—at the risk of repeating Jimmy Stewart's mistake—I will read Dupuy onto Gov. Brown.

Brown's famous skepticism of new programs makes sense if you believe, as Dupuy argues, that man is blind to the consequences of his own belief in progress. Brown's focus on avoiding catastrophes—from his rainy day fund to his prioritization of climate change—reflects Dupuy's "prophet-of-doom" calls to focus on postponing the apocalypse.

Brown's criticism of "desire" echoes Dupuy, who argues that as we lose our sense of the sacred, we fill the void with individual desires that produce conflict. Here's Brown in a recent speech: "California is so full of low-priority needs... First we get a desire; and then the desire is transmogrified into a need; and then we get a law; and then we get a right; and then we get a lawsuit."

Of course, Dupuy, as philosopher, poses questions you'll never hear on the stump in Stockton: Has Christianity obliterated it

by replacing so many traditional religions and rituals? What are the virtues of scapegoating? And which would be worse: the annihilation of the human race, or the totalitarianism that might be necessary to prevent said annihilation?

There are obvious objections to Brown, and to Dupuy. There is a dissonance between their respect for the unknown and the certainty with which they predict Armageddon. I find it unsettling to be governed by someone so focused on the apocalypse. (Of course, my anxiety may be the reaction doomsayers want).

But I'm also comforted that our governor's warnings have deep philosophical foundations. Dupuy writes that we should think in the "future perfect" tense—as in, by tomorrow, the apocalypse will have happened. From there, we work backward to find the limits that might save us.

While there are happier ways to confront the dangers ahead, there may not be a smarter one.

Joe Mathews writes the Connecting California column for Zócalo Public Square.

National parks trying to appeal to millennials

By Andrew Demillo, AP

LITTLE ROCK, Ark. — The National Park Service needs to broaden its appeal to millennials as it celebrates its 100th birthday this year, the director of the agency said last week as he touted civil rights sites that aren't traditionally viewed as

parks to a younger audience.

Park Service Director Jon Jarvis spoke during a visit to the Little Rock Central High School National Historic Site, marking the formerly all-white institution that was desegregated by nine black students in 1957.

Part of the plan to attract more 18- to 35-year-olds to national parks, Jarvis said, includes a Find Your Park website and social media campaign that the service and the National Park Foundation launched last year to promote the parks and encourage people to share their experiences.

“We set a goal for our centennial, which is to create and connect with the next generation of park visitors, supporters and advocates,” Jarvis told the Associated Press in an interview at the Central High site. He says he’s tasked every park to “think about what they do on a day-to-day basis, in their existing operations and what more they could do that will achieve that goal. What are they doing to connect with the next generation?”

Jarvis said the effort includes highlighting civil rights sites such as Central High School. He also plans a visit this month to the Colonel Charles Young Buffalo Soldiers Monument in Ohio, which commemorates one of the first African-Americans to graduate from West Point and the first black to achieve the rank of colonel in the U.S. Army. After that, he plans to visit the New Orleans Jazz National Historical Park.

“We put a lot of emphasis on them because we think they are key to being relevant to a much more diverse generation that we have out there,” Jarvis said. “Clearly we already know statistically that the visitation to the national parks does not represent the diversity of the nation and we want to change that dynamic.”

Jarvis compared the effort to reach a younger audience to the National Park Service’s 10-year Mission 66 program launched in

1956 to expand and improve its facilities.

"It's a modern invitation to that generation to find their park, find that space, find that place, find that story that resonates with them," he said.

DCSD classified staff set to get raise

A one-year contract with Douglas County School District's classified staff is expected to be approved at the Feb. 9 school board meeting.

The union ratified the agreement on Saturday.

It calls for a 2.68 percent increase retroactive to July 1 and the district will not pay for longevity or step increases for this school year. Other changes to personal, sick and long-term leave are included in the contract.

Going forward DCSD will be implementing interest based bargaining.

"It's a nontraditional type of bargaining where you come together to talk about the interests of the organization rather than management versus the employee groups," Superintendent Teri White told *Lake Tahoe News*.

Carson City uses this method. The goal is that it is a more amicable process with better outcomes for all involved, including students.

District staff with representatives from the three bargaining units went through training on this method two weeks ago. This

spring the process will be implemented.

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Notes:

The school board meets Feb.9 at 3:30pm at the airport training center in Minden.

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*

Expect delays in Tahoe City for pothole repairs

Caltrans will be performing grinding and paving work on sections of Highway 89 in the Tahoe City area this week.

The work will take place from Blackwood Creek Road to and including Fanny Bridge. It's scheduled from 8am-3:30pm, Feb. 9-11. Expect one-way traffic control.

A number of potholes have developed on the highway because of the heavy amount of precipitation so far this winter, necessitating this repair work prior to a construction project resuming this spring that will rebuild the highway.

Record \$132.5M bet on Super

Bowl in Nevada

By Scott Sonner, AP

So you thought the Panthers and Broncos would put up a lot more points in Super Bowl 50, that Carolina quarterback Cam Newton would score at least once and probably be named the game's most valuable player?

So did a lot of people, and that had Nevada sportsbooks smiling a day after they took in a record \$132.5 million in wagers on the big game.

"It was a very good day," Johnny Avello, executive director of the sports book at Wynn Las Vegas, said Monday.

"A defensive battle was something we were rooting for and fortunately, that's exactly what it was," added Jay Kornegay, the odds maker at the Westgate Las Vegas Superbook.

A 5.5-point underdog at the casinos, Denver upset Carolina 24-10 — a total well below the over-under projection of between 44 and 45. Newton was the overwhelming favorite to win this year's MVP, but he failed to score and watched Denver linebacker Vonn Miller take the honor at 12-1 odds.

Odds makers said gamblers bet heavily on the Panthers in the weeks ahead of the game.

"But over the last few days, the pendulum swung in Denver's favor and really balanced a lot of things out," Kornegay said. "Our best case scenario was for the Panthers to win the game, but not cover. So it wasn't a best-case, but as long as we stayed under the total, we were in good shape."

The Nevada Gaming Control Board said in its preliminary estimate Monday that Nevada's 194 sports books kept about 10.1 percent of the \$132.5 million in Super Bowl wagers, for a total win of \$13.3 million.

The previous record of \$119.4 million was set two years ago when Seattle beat Denver 43-8. The total win that year was the best recorded over the past 10 years, about 16.5 percent or \$19.7 million. Wagers totaled just under \$116 million last year, with a casino win of 2.8 percent.

The last time Nevada books lost money on the Super Bowl was 2008 when they paid out about \$2.6 million more than they took in as the New York Giants beat New England, 17-14.

This year marked the first time Nevada sportsbooks could accept bets on the MVP. Traditionally, bets can be made only on things that happen during the game. But the Nevada Gaming Commission made the change after allowing bets on the Heisman Trophy for the first time last year.

"We were blown away by the wagering on the MVP," said Michael Grodsky, director of marketing at the William Hill Race & Sports Book. "It was a very healthy handle on that, and Von Miller winning the MVP was a big winner for the public. Ten percent of all the tickets we wrote were on Von Miller."

The odds makers said a low scoring Super Bowl usually translates into success for the house when it comes to the so-called prop bets – things like will so-and-so score more than so-many touchdowns, or will there be a safety, a 2-point conversion, or an overtime?

The betting public tends to bet "more overs and more yes than no" on those questions, Kornegay said.

"Cam not scoring a touchdown was a very good result for us so was Greg Olsen's performance overall," he said about the Panther tight end who was held to four catches for 41 yards. "(Carolina receiver) Ted Ginn not getting a rushing attempt was another one that went our way."

Nevada sports books avoided the controversy that plagued some off-shore betting sites that had accepted bets on such things

as how long it would take Lady Gaga to sing the national anthem. The actual ending point wasn't clear when she repeated the final word of the phrase, "home of the brave."

"That's exactly why we don't take wagers on that." Kornegay said. "There's no official result in a box score."

Calif. drought's hardest-hit may need years of support

By Ellen Knickmeyer, AP

A state analysis warns that some sectors hit hardest by California's drought may still need help long after the current dry spell ends.

The report Friday by the nonpartisan Legislative Analyst's Office singles out Central Valley communities that will need years of state assistance getting new sources of drinking water, after drought and overuse that dried local wells.

Analysts say the state's native fish species also may need years of extra state support to save some of them from extinction.

The report in all notes more than \$3 billion in drought-response programs by 13 state agencies. It urges the state to study the success of the state efforts in this drought to better manage future ones.

Online service helps SLT residents interact with city

South Lake Tahoe Public Works Department has launched of a web-based service portal to allow anyone to add service requests, concerns, or issues that need to be addressed by city engineering, streets-transportation, and/or facilities department.

Simply go **online** to submit a request.

The purpose of the portal is to expedite community requests, concerns or issues.

The asset management component allows the city to track asset conditions, prioritize risk, forecast capital budget needs and create and manage capital projects.

Being avalanche aware with kids in the backcountry

By Katie Arnold, Outside

Just after the New Year, my husband and I skied in with our daughters and family friends to High Camp Hut, a rustic four-bedroom cabin without running water or electricity at 11,000 feet elevation in the San Juan Mountains of Colorado. This was our fourth backcountry ski trip in as many years, and we've become addicted to the silence and stillness that you only get when go off the grid for a few days.

To get to the hut, our group skied three miles, up 1,000 feet

of vertical gain, and through a snowstorm. We had three kids on nordic skis and a fourth being pulled in a sled, and the meadow surrounding the log cabin was blanketed in pristine powder. All this is to say, our pace was anything but electric. But when we arrived, it felt as though we were the first people in the world to set foot in that gorgeous alpine basin rimmed by spiky 13,000-foot peaks.

The U.S. Forest Service's National Avalanche Center reports that, in the past decade, an average of 27 people died annually in avalanches in the U.S.—and not just in the big mountains out West. New York, Maine, New Hampshire, and Vermont all have recorded fatalities. The problem is happening overseas as well. For instance, last winter more than 100 people died in avalanches in the Alps.

Read the whole story