Reward for water conservation is higher utility bills

By Sharon Bernstein, Reuters

Their lawns dry and their trees on the verge of dying, Californians have dramatically cut water use during the state's relentless drought, only to learn that many local utilities are hiking rates to make up for the lost revenue.

Water providers in Los Angeles, the San Francisco Bay Area and other parts of the state have recently told customers that rates will go up at least temporarily, as utilities struggle to pay for building and repairing pipes, buying water and other costs, even as customers cut back.

"Droughts are costly for water agencies," said Lisa Lien Mager, spokeswoman for the Association of California Water Agencies. "Revenues are being affected by the mandatory conservation but at the same time costs are going up."

Read the whole story

Snippets about Lake Tahoe



· Tahoe Best Friends' Howl'oween Party is Oct. 31 from 1-2:30pm. Dogs and people are encouraged to come in costume to the free event on Ruth Avenue in South Lake Tahoe.

· Zephyr Cove Elementary School is recognizing Red Ribbon

Week this week. It is about making healthy choices, especially when it comes to saying no to drugs.

· The court hearing involving Lake Tahoe Hard Rock owners and the construction firm that did the renovation has been pushed back to Oct. 28.

· The World Series of Poker circuit event will be at Harveys Oct. 29-Nov. 8.

· Radio stations KRLT/KOWL are bringing the 13th annual Halloween Treat Street to Lake Tahoe Community College on Oct. 31 from 5-8pm in the main building for indoor trick or treating, games, music, a mad scientist laboratory, spooky stories, a fortuneteller, and more surprises.

Widespread prescribed fire operations in basin

North Lake Tahoe and Tahoe Douglas fire protection districts, California State Parks and the U.S. Forest Service will conduct prescribed fire operations this week in multiple locations around the Lake Tahoe Basin.

Operations may take place near Incline Village, Tahoe City, Meyers, Stateline and Zephyr Cove. Operations may continue over the next several weeks as conditions allow.

Smoke from prescribed fire operations is normal and may continue for several days after an ignition depending on the project size and environmental conditions.

Before prescribed fire operations are conducted, agencies post road signs around areas affected by prescribed fire, send

email notifications and update the local fire information line at 530.543.2816. To receive prescribed fire notifications, send an email to pa_ltbmu@fs.fed.us.

Tahoe Tails – Adoptable Pets in South Lake Tahoe



Alllington and Akero

Alllington and Akero are Poodle/Bichon Frise mixes, about 12 pounds each. They are 2 years old, and appear to be related, but they do not need to go home together. Both little boys are very friendly and love to play with other dogs, but they cannot go to a home with cats.

They arrived at the shelter very matted, a kind volunteer cleaned them up. They will need regular grooming.

Allington and Akero are neutered, microchipped, heart worm negative, and vaccinated. They are at the El Dorado County Animal Services shelter in Meyers, along with many other dogs

and cats who are waiting for their new homes. Go to the Tahoe animal shelter's Facebook page to see photos and descriptions of all pets at the shelter.

Call 530.573.7925 for directions, hours, and other information on adopting a pet.

For spay-neuter assistance for South Tahoe residents, go **online**.

– Karen Kuentz

S. Lake Tahoe picks airport plans with flexibility

By Joann Eisenbrandt

The South Lake Tahoe City Council last week took the next step in the Airport Master Plan process by selecting the preferred airfield and land side alternatives which will determine the future configuration of the airport. This update of the 1992 Master Plan looks out 20 years and determines not only the types of aircraft using the airport, but also potential non-aeronautical uses of airport property.

Michael Hotaling of C&S Companies, the Airport Master Plan consultants, went over the steps in the process for the council during the Oct. 20 presentation.

Hotaling reviewed their analysis to date, noting that there would be relatively modest growth for Lake Tahoe Airport in the next 20 years and that due to a shift in the aircraft industry the return of commercial service to Tahoe in the near term was unlikely. In August 2014, the council decided to

release the airport's Part 139 certificate for commercial service and **embrace the general aviation** alternative as the airport's best future use.

He termed this meeting the "decision-making" step where the City Council chooses the preferred airport configuration, which will then go through an environmental review under CEQA.

There were seven airfield alternatives and four land side alternatives that were studied. They ranged from no-action through middle ground alternatives that combined retaining flexibility for future airfield uses with releasing some of the land for non-aeronautical uses to bring in needed revenue, to the most expensive alternatives releasing little land and requiring major airfield and taxiway changes to accommodate larger planes and possible commercial service in the future.

After reviewing choices made by the public at an earlier public meeting where residents chose preferred alternatives by placing dots on maps, as well as a more technical analysis of the alternatives using the EOS (Economic Vitality, Operational Efficiency, Natural Resource Conservation and Social Responsibility) scoring scale the consultants recommended Alternative 2C.

The council expressed concern that some of the land designated for release to non-aeronautical uses would not work for that purpose because of terrain and steep slopes. They reviewed the alternatives and came up with a blended alternative 2B/C allowing for the most potential non-aeronautical uses such as warehousing, a fly-in campground, or a training center for the Forest Service, which could bring in added airport revenue while retaining airfield flexibility. The release of land for non-aeronautical uses will require review and approval by the FAA.

The consultants will now complete the Airport Layout Plan (ALP) and publish a draft final report. A CEQA analysis is

then performed. This is a separate process for which the city will put out a request for proposal. City Manager Nancy Kerry said either C&S Companies or a new consultant could be chosen to undertake this analysis. The ALP is then adopted by the City Council and goes to the FAA for approval. Hotaling estimated this process will take about a year. Once the ALP is approved by the FAA the airport becomes eligible to receive federal grant funding.

Opinion: The faces of homelessness in SLT

By Nicole Zaborsky

Allow us to introduce Stan and Karen. Stan is a 20-year resident of South Lake Tahoe, college educated, a chef, articulate, friendly, and Christian. Karen is a local, grew up in Tahoe, and has a college degree and a professional career.

These are two of the many faces of homelessness in South Lake Tahoe.

We met Stan recently and had a chat about his particular situation. After the economic down-turn, Stan was laid off which led to him becoming homeless. Last year Stan secured a job at a local motel as a maintenance worker. A job that despite the low pay came with free housing and an opportunity to rebuild his life. Sadly the winter of 2014-15 did not produce heavy snowfall and the local motel did not possess the means to keep Stan on staff resulting in him becoming homeless once again. Stan inspired us with his determination as he continues to be motivated to find work and is utilizing employment leads and contacts to find a job.

Karen’s story is all too common within the homeless community. A medical catastrophe blindsided her. Following her health issue she lost her job and then her home. She currently lives in her car, and her health continues to decline. She told us that she is constantly on alert for her safety, which makes sleeping and rest a challenge.

Each homeless person has a unique story and includes people with college degrees, long-time locals, death of a primary income earner, and those with catastrophic medical conditions. Homelessness does not discriminate. Some formerly homeless locals include a lawyer, engineer, small business owner, religious leader, and a high school student.

How do people become homeless? According to the Housing Assistance Council, homelessness is primarily the result of poverty and a lack of affordable housing. Ending homelessness in a community like South Lake Tahoe requires jobs that pay a living wage, adequate income supports for those who cannot work, affordable housing, access to healthcare, and reliable transportation.

The California median monthly rent is $1,300. In order to afford this, an employee needs to make at least $25 per hour, or $52,000 per year (assuming they will spend no more than 30 percent of their income on rent). A worker who earns the minimum wage in California, $9/hour, will have to work 111 hours per week to have an income high enough to afford this rent.

Homelessness is often considered an urban problem, but homelessness and its underlying causes are challenges that communities of every size face. Due to the fact that South Lake Tahoe has no homeless shelters our homeless live in their cars or campers, with relatives in overcrowded or substandard housing, and are employed.

The Tahoe Coalition for the Homeless will run a “warm room”

for our homeless community throughout the 2015-16 assistance season and are accepting donations to fund its operation. Checks may be made payable to Live Violence Free (our fiscal sponsor), note “Warm Room” in the memo line, and mail donations to P.O. Box 13514, South Lake Tahoe, CA 96151.

We are also inviting volunteers for warm room setup and overnight staffing this season. Trainings will be Nov. 10th from 6-8:30pm and Nov. 18 from 10am-12:30pm. Email TahoeWarmRoom@gmail.com to register.

Nicole Zaborsky is a member of the Tahoe Coalition for the Homeless.

Famous restaurateur getting rid of tipping

By Jordan Weissmann, Slate

Forcing waiters and waitresses to survive on tips from customers rather than normal wages is a pointless, gross, and uniquely American custom that, in the past several years, a handful of progressive restaurant owners have attempted to do away with, often with positive results.

On Wednesday, one of the most famous names in the dining business says he’s about to join their ranks. Danny Meyer, CEO of Union Square Hospitality Group, has announced that he plans to gradually eliminate tipping at the company’s 13 restaurants and charge higher menu prices in order to pay staff fairly. Diners won’t simply be discouraged from leaving a gratuity; their checks won’t even include a line to write one in.

What, exactly, is wrong with tipping? As Brian Palmer has explained at *Slate*, more or less everything. To start, leaving a waiter's pay in the hands of fickle customers reeks of classism. But in theory, handing restaurant patrons the power to tip is at least supposed to motivate better, more attentive service. This fails in practice because humans turn out to be pretty arbitrary about their tipping behavior.

Read the whole story

Funds roll in for South Tahoe bike trails

Money is coming from the state to help with South Lake Tahoe bike trails.

The California Tahoe Conservancy is receiving $1.928 million for a 1.8-mile segment of the South Tahoe Greenway Shared Use Trail. The Conservancy will use that money plus $2 million in local and matching funds to link the Sierra Tract and Bijou neighborhoods to Al Tahoe Boulevard.

The first part of the Greenway was laid this summer. One day it will go from Meyers to Stateline.

South Lake Tahoe is receiving $2.145 million for the Al Tahoe Boulevard Safety and Mobility Enhancement Project. The project area extends from the intersection of Al Tahoe and Johnson boulevards to Highway 50. It will upgrade road crossings and add Class I and Class II trails to improve access around South Tahoe Middle School.

The money is part of the California Transportation

Commission’s 114 biking and walking projects that in all are valued at more than $262 million.

“Caltrans has a strategic goal to triple cycling and double walking and transit trips statewide by 2020,” Caltrans Director Malcolm Dougherty said in a statement. “We are committed to investing in projects that expand the availability of bike and pedestrian access throughout the state.”

Lawmakers demand plan for collecting El Niño water

By Sarah D. Wire, Los Angeles Times

The Republican members of California’s delegation are demanding a government plan to store the deluge of water that could come with El Niño this winter.

Fourteen GOP lawmakers sent a letter to President Obama and Gov. Jerry Brown on Thursday asking for specifics about how federal and state agencies expect to capture, save and transport water.

A new federal forecast released last week showed El Niño is continuing to strengthen, with experts saying it’s on track to potentially produce record rainfall across the state.

Read the whole story

Fire destroys structure in Kings Beach



Firefighters contain flames to one structure on Oct. 24 in Kings Beach. Photo/Provided

A commercial studio was destroyed by fire Saturday night in Kings Beach.

Flames and heavy smoke were billowing out of the commercial structure on Speckled Street with North Tahoe firefighters responded about 10pm Oct. 24.

There were no injuries and the cause is under investigation.

Fire personnel said it was a 500-square-foot studio with no business name.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report