

Snippets about Lake Tahoe



- The Great Lake Tahoe Sternwheeler Race between the Tahoe Queen and M.S Dixie II is Sept. 5 at 11am on the South Shore.

- Liberty Utilities is planning an outage on Aug. 19 from 11pm to Aug. 20 at 5am in South Lake Tahoe to replace a bad cable. It will affect Tahoe Beach Retreat, Days Inn, Lake Shore condos and the surrounding area.

- Chef Mark Estee and butcher Damon Ewasko will host Anatomy of a Pig, the second cooking class of a four-part series at Reno Provisions, on Aug. 26 from 7-8:30 p.m. Go **online** for tickets.

- Some of the West Coast's most sculpted bodies will compete Aug. 22 at the 5th annual **Tahoe Show** competition at MontBleu in Stateline. The event, featured on two giant onstage screens, attracts dozens of the region's fittest men and women to compete for cash prizes in a judged competition by International Federation of Bodybuilding and Fitness and National Physique Committee Bodybuilding.

- Ironman Lake Tahoe and Ironman 70.3 Lake Tahoe triathlons are Sept. 20. For more info, go **online**.

10,000 acres in Sierra Nevada protected



Lyons Ridge was purchased by the Northern Sierra Partnership, American River Conservancy and Nature Conservancy. Photo/American River Conservancy

By Paul Rogers, San Jose Mercury News

More than 10,000 acres of scenic meadows, forests and trout streams in the Sierra Nevada 10 miles west of Lake Tahoe have been preserved in a deal in which environmentalists hope to prove that thinning out overgrown forests can increase California's water supply.

The Northern Sierra Partnership, an environmental group based in Palo Alto and founded by longtime Silicon Valley leaders Jim and Becky Morgan, joined with the Nature Conservancy and the American River Conservancy to buy the land for \$10.1 million from Simorg West Forests, a timber company based in Atlanta.

The deal, which closed Aug. 5, preserves a landscape south of Interstate 80 in Placer County adjacent to Granite Chief

Wilderness in the Tahoe National Forest. The land contains more than 20 miles of blue ribbon trout streams.

Read the whole story

Opinion: Caltrans needs to go on a staffing diet

By John Moorlach

This year, the majority Democratic Party found new ways to spend the \$6 billion to \$9 billion in additional tax revenue, passing the largest state budget in California history.

Funding to fix our roads and bridges, however, was woefully inadequate.



John Moorlach

Now the majority party has decided that California's roads are a mess. The governor has called the Legislature into a special session, which has manufactured a sense of urgency. Statistics have been gathered; analyses have been performed; bills to address the problem have been put forward. What is the one common component? The majority wants more of your money to "fix" the situation.

In fact, the “transportation” special session appears to be an exercise designed to pressure legislators into supporting a tax hike on gasoline – even though Californians already pay the nation’s highest taxes.

Raising revenue is one option. However, cutting costs is a better one that should not be passed over. A great place to start is to review the agency charged with care and maintenance of your state’s transportation infrastructure – the California Department of Transportation.

In 2014, the non-partisan Legislative Analyst’s Office reported that Caltrans’ Capital Outlay Support program, which oversees improvement projects and has been very opaque in its manpower management responsibilities, was overstaffed by approximately 3,500 full-time equivalent positions, at a cost of nearly \$500 million annually. That’s a half-billion tax dollars – for salaries, health care and pensions for extra staffing – that does nothing to improve our roads.

Caltrans must become a lean and efficient agency with staff focused on projects and outside consultants utilized when workloads increase. It is much easier to reduce outside contractors than it is to reduce staff. Yet, early retirements are in order, and streamlining must be proven long before taxpayers are asked to contribute more.

During these special legislative sessions bills can be introduced. Consequently, I introduced Senate Bill X1-9, the Responsible Contracting for Caltrans Act. It addresses the glaring flaws at Caltrans.

First, SBX1-9 would prohibit the use of temporary funding sources, such as loan repayments, bond funds and grant funds, to hire permanent staff.

Second, SBX1-9 would increase the share of contract employees in the Caltrans’ COS program by 5 percent annually, beginning in 2016, until a 50/50 ratio of state staff and contract

employees is reached in 2023.

Controlling the hiring of permanent staff with limited-term funds and increasing the requirement to contract out are simple, no-nonsense approaches to reining in a department that has lacked forward vision. Who could be opposed to such common sense? You guessed it – the public employee unions – whose primary role is to increase their membership at any cost.

Does California have an infrastructure maintenance deficit? Absolutely. Reducing Caltrans' bloated size before proposing that California families pay even higher taxes to fix our roads is the right thing to do.

John Moorlach is a Republican California state senator from Irvine.

TV watchers don't want 100-channel packages

By Meg James, Los Angeles Times

VH1 Classic, with music videos from the 1980s and '90s and movies like "The Breakfast Club," was designed as a nostalgic stop for channel surfers.

Viacom Inc. launched the channel 15 years ago during the last big boom in cable programming. Back then consumers were hauling home high-definition big screens, and cable and satellite TV operators were eager to offer cutting-edge lineups with hundreds of channels.

Media companies laid claim to the channel space. Viacom figured it could milk its valuable MTV and Nickelodeon brands

by creating offshoot channels such as Nicktoons, MTV Hits, MTV Jams and others. VH1 Classic was a hot ticket, featuring footage from old Led Zeppelin and Rolling Stones concerts and documentaries on the Beatles.

But the world has changed.

American TV viewers receive an average 194 channels, and most people watch only about 17 – a number that has not budged despite the proliferation of networks, according to measurement firm Nielsen.

Read the whole story

Truckee food fest celebrates 30th year

The Autumn Food and Wine Festival will return to Truckee for its 30th anniversary Sept. 11-13.

Events are at the Village at Northstar and Ritz-Carlton Lake Tahoe.

Renowned regional chefs will compete head-to-head for the coveted first place award during the Culinary Competition and Grand Tasting which will be on the final day of the festival. Leading up to the grand finale are special events and seminars including a Vintner-Inspired Painting Class, the Farm to Tahoe Dinner, a Progressive Picnic, and the Blazing Pans Mountain Cook Off featuring executive chefs Robb Wyss of Sunnyside and Jason Friendly of the Resort at Squaw Creek.

For more info and to purchase tickets, go **online**.

Calif. plans taking land for huge water tunnels

By Ellen Knickmeyer, AP

SAN FRANCISCO — State contractors have readied plans to acquire as many as 300 farms in the California delta by eminent domain to make room for a pair of massive, still-unapproved water tunnels proposed by Gov. Jerry Brown, according to documents obtained by opponents of the tunnels.

Farmers whose parcels were listed and mapped in the 160-page property-acquisition plan expressed dismay at the advanced planning for the project, which would build 30-mile-long tunnels in the delta formed by the San Joaquin and Sacramento rivers.

“What really shocks is we’re fighting this and we’re hoping to win,” said Richard Elliot, who grows cherries, pears and other crops on delta land farmed by his family since the 1860s. “To find out they’re sitting in a room figuring out this eminent domain makes it sound like they’re going to bully us ... and take what they want.”

Officials involved in the project defended planning so far ahead regarding the tunnels.

“Planning for right-of-way needs, that is the key part of your normal planning process,” said Roger Patterson, assistant general manager for the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California, one of the water agencies that would

benefit from the twin tunnels.

The district serves 17 million people in Southern California as well as large farms and businesses.

Brown's administration said re-engineering water flows of the delta – the largest estuary on the West Coast – is essential to undoing mistakes of past water projects and to supplying water to Southern California.

Brown has pushed for a massive delta makeover since his first stint as governor in the 1970s and 1980s. In May, he told critics of the tunnels to "shut up."

Opponents say the tunnels would jeopardize delta farming and destroy vital wildlife habitat.

"If these reports are correct, then we have further confirmation that the tunnels project has been a forgone conclusion," state Sen. Lois Wolk, D-Davis, who chairs a committee on the delta, said in an email Monday.

The environmental review, "which should be used to choose a project, is simply being used to justify the favored project," she wrote.

Through October, the project officially is in a period of public comment on the environmental impact of the tunnels. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, which opposed an earlier version of the project, also must still weigh in.

Restore the Delta, a group of farmers, fishing associations, environmental groups and other opponents, released the property plan that was obtained with a request made under the state open records law. The plan targets public and private land in Sacramento, San Joaquin, Contra Costa and Alameda counties to be acquired for the project.

Under the plan, landowners would have 30 days to consider and negotiate a one-time state offer, while officials

simultaneously prepare to take the land by forced sale if owners declined to sell. "Negotiations to continue in parallel with eminent domain proceedings," the plan notes.

Contractors also appear to call for minimal public input.

"All transactions are conducted, reviewed and approved internally by DCE staff and managers to maintain control and avoid unnecessary delays to schedule," the property plan outlines. "DCE shall seek to minimize external review and approval requirements."

DCE is short for Delta Conveyance Facilities Design and Construction Enterprise, a private-contractor group embedded within the state Department of Water Resources to work on the proposed tunnels.

In a June interview, Neil Gould, an attorney for the Department of Water Resources, said planning for the proposed tunnels was no more than 10 percent complete and had focused on assessing the environmental impact.

Asked if planning the process of eminent domain was warranted as part of the project's environmental review, Department of Water Resources spokeswoman Nancy Vogel said Monday in an email, "identification of properties that may be within the project area is necessary ... as DWR needs to estimate the proposed project's potential impacts to those properties."

Public water agencies paid for the property acquisition plan, Vogel said. Those include water agencies in the San Francisco Bay Area and Central California, as well as Southern California, she said.

Patterson, with the Metropolitan Water District, said the latest revisions to the overall tunnels project laid out using more public land and less private land.

Osha Meserve, an attorney for some of the delta farmers

fighting the project, said the latest plans still proposes taking roughly the same land as before.

EDC judge ousted from criminal bench



El Dorado County Superior Court Judge Suzanne Kingsbury, left, was at Dylan Sullivan's election party last year. Photo/Provided

By Kathryn Reed

El Dorado County Superior Court Judge Dylan Sullivan has been removed from all criminal cases and instead will hear civil issues.

The reason for this change has not been disclosed.

Presiding Judge Suzanne Kingsbury, who makes the assignments, deferred comment to the El Dorado County District Attorney's Office. She would not explain why.

"The legal system is designed so both the District Attorneys Office as well as the Public Defenders Office is offered the opportunity when appropriate to exercise the legal authority to exclude a Superior Court judge from a case. At this time the District Attorneys Office has chosen to utilize this legal right," Deputy District Attorney David Stevenson told *Lake Tahoe News*.

The DA's Office has filed a number of preemptory challenges against Sullivan. However, the reasons are not being disclosed. The DA's office said Sullivan would be challenged on a case-by-case situation.

These types of challenges are not routine, but neither are they rare, according to legal officials. They must be made in a timely manner and can only be filed once per case.

Filing such a challenge is equivalent to saying one does not believe the judge will be able to handle the case, perhaps for ethical reasons. The attorney doing the challenge does not have to prove bias. While California is not alone in allowing this type of procedure, it is not the norm in most states.

The judge has no recourse and essentially does not get her day in court to prove she is or is not biased or that she is being wrongfully persecuted in a reverse case of bias.

People close to the issue told *Lake Tahoe News* things came to a head last week with Kingsbury clearing Sullivan's court calendar starting on Aug. 10. By the end of the week Sullivan was told to go home. This week she has been seen following Judge Nelson Brooks who handles probate, an area of law Sullivan isn't familiar with. Reports are the two judges will be swapping departments.

Even so, this will not eliminate Sullivan from interacting with deputy district attorneys. They are involved in delinquency and other cases in that department.

“There are judicial ethics that make it difficult for me to comment,” Sullivan told *Lake Tahoe News*. She would not say anything more.

The normal process if someone has an issue with a judge is to file a complaint with the Commission of Judicial Performance.

“We can’t talk about specific cases. We can’t say who is under investigation,” Victoria Henley, director and chief counsel for the commission, told *Lake Tahoe News*.

If a challenge for cause were filed, that is when the challenger has to prove bias or misconduct by the judge.

Sullivan, 49, was elected to the job in June 2014. She filled the vacancy of retiring Judge Daniel Proud. She was to begin the job in January, but instead Gov. Jerry Brown appointed her to the seat early. Kingsbury swore her in Sept. 19, 2014.

At that time Kingsbury said she assigned Sullivan to Department 7, the criminal pre-trial department in Placerville, to handle misdemeanor arraignments, hear preliminary matters, traffic issues, and drug court because of Sullivan’s training and experience.

Snippets about Lake Tahoe



- Citywater, a contemporary classical music group, will play at the Boathouse Theatre on the South Shore on Aug. 19 at 7:30pm. Tickets may be purchased **online**.

- Nevada County’s Citizens’ Academy is Sept. 14-Nov. 23.

For more info, go **online**.

· Squaw Valley Institute's 4th annual Farm to Table Dinner is Aug. 27 at the Poulsen estate. For tickets and more info, go online.

· Kirkwood's 14th annual Thin Air Chili Cook Off is Sept. 5 starting at noon. Get tickets **online**.

LTN subscribers receive free T-shirt

Lake Tahoe News likes to reward our subscribers. T-shirts are going to Mike Ritter and Eve Roberson, two long time supporters.

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Options for disabled adventurers on rise in Calif.



Adaptive Action Sports snowboard coach Chris Koeppe gives Gary Nolte a few pointers as they head down the run. Photo/LTN file

By Ben Egel and Brenna Lyles, Sacramento Bee

Like most state recreation areas, Nevada County's South Yuba River Park has plenty of trails to hike on. Unlike most others, though, it also has a path to roll on.

About half of the gently sloped, 2.5-mile Independence Trail on the west side of Highway 49 has been renovated for wheelchairs, part of a statewide move to open up rivers, parks and other outdoor spaces to easier use by people with disabilities.

The accessibility push is also being taken on by private travel outfits who have designed packages for the disabled.

In its 37 years of operation, Sacramento whitewater rafting outfitter W.E.T. River Trips has accommodated people with visual and auditory impairments, as well as those with physical and intellectual disabilities. Other local

organizations let disabled adventure-seekers try their hand at rock climbing, rope courses, boating, water-skiing and four-wheel off-roading in the warmer months, as well as skiing and snowboarding in the winter.

In the settlement to the 2005 lawsuit *Tucker v. State of California Department of Parks & Recreation*, the state promised to improve parks access, including creating wheelchair-accessible trails, signs for the blind and captioned educational videos for those with hearing impairments.

Read the whole story