

Opinion: China surpassing Calif. as environmental leader

By Diane Wittenberg and Michael Peevey

California is in the process of passing the baton of environmental leadership to China. But can it transfer the spirit of Californians as well?

The two of us have been participants and observers for decades as California extended its environmental leadership. In the process, we've learned that environmental leadership is not merely a matter of officials setting the right policies. It requires time, firsthand experience with the difficulties of pollution, and, most of all, a public that is willing to try new things in service of the environment.

The spirit of Californians is at the heart of any explanation of our state's commitment to advanced policies on the environment and climate change. California has been a progressive state from its inception, willing and able to push boundary after boundary. Its citizens, from the state's very beginnings in the wake of the Gold Rush of 1849, recognized few limits.

It was California that initiated direct democracy, with enactment of the initiative, referendum, and recall in statewide elections in the early 1900s. And citizen action has produced big changes—protection of the coastline through the creation of the California Coastal Act, a ban on new nuclear power plants, the recall of Gray Davis after rolling electricity blackouts and sky-high electricity prices, and more recently, a refusal to roll back stringent climate change regulation.

Californians have a special quality—they are willing to try things themselves, to be adventuresome in policy in ways that other parts of the United States aren't. Nowhere has this California progressivism been more dominant than in the areas of environment and energy.

In the early 1950s, Cal Tech Professor Arie Haagen-Smit discovered that the smog choking Southern California was not created by a poison gas attack from Asia (which was what the public widely suspected), but from California auto emissions. In 1959 the state authorized air quality and motor vehicle standards. In 1967, the U.S. Congress passed the federal Clean Air Act, which set national environmental standards. Because the only statewide clean air laws that already existed were in California, and they were more stringent than the new federal legislation, the federal act gave waiver authority to California, allowing it to adopt tougher standards than those set nationally. Furthermore, any other state could select to follow either federal air standards, or California's. Today, 14 states adhere to California's air standards rather than the federal rules.

On the energy front, California was the first in the nation to decide that energy efficiency must be effectively deployed before construction of any new power plants. After that, the California Public Utilities Commission determined that renewable energy, such as solar and wind plants, should be strongly encouraged over conventional gas-fired power plants. These policy commitments resulted in actions that changed the state's energy and pollution status quo. Fifty percent of California energy use will be renewable by 2030.

Today Californians buy one out of every two electric vehicles sold in the United States. The nation's largest electric car assembly factory, owned by Tesla, is in the state (and the batteries for the vehicles are made just across the state line in Nevada). Under Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger, the state embarked upon a program to install 1 million solar

rooftops—far and away the most in the nation—and has exceeded this goal, with no end in sight. And in 2006 California adopted the nation's first economy-wide program to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, the Global Warming Solutions Act.

All of these programs—renewables, energy efficiency, electric vehicles, solar homes, and cap-and-trade—were firsts in the nation and stamped California as an undisputed environmental and energy leader, not only in the United States, but worldwide. They helped give rise to many international efforts, some led by Gov. Jerry Brown and Schwarzenegger. Schwarzenegger founded and continues to lead the R20, helping regions worldwide develop and finance low-carbon infrastructure. Brown started the Under2 Coalition, under which 40 percent of the world's economy has committed to greenhouse gas reduction goals. He is hosting a global action climate conference in San Francisco in September.

But while California is a big state, it represents only a tiny piece of the world, in both area and population. And it is not its own nation. So it can't continue to beat larger and more important places, especially if China decides to seriously tackle climate change.

China is seizing the baton from California, and that's a good thing, because the country's scale and phenomenal growth give it the heft to lead the climate fight. In 2015, California had the world's sixth-largest economy, but ranked 20th in greenhouse gas (GHG) emission, largely because of its clean power mix and energy efficiency emphasis. To compare, the United States ranked first in GNP, and second in GHG emissions. And China? The giant country ranked second in GNP—and first by far in GHG emissions. Simply making its economy more efficient at turning fuel into GNP could lead to lower emissions worldwide.

China also shares some qualities with California; its people have deep firsthand experience with the dangers of pollution,

particularly fouled air and water. And the country has evidenced a spirited desire to lead in multiple areas. That's why China has quickly equaled California (and in some cases surpassed the state) in combating climate change.

China is now the world's largest market by far for new automobiles and trucks, and shortly will be the largest for sales of electric vehicles. Early in 2018, it announced it was about to stop producing more than 500 car models that do not meet its air quality standards, thus reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

China is the world's largest builder and seller of solar collectors, both at home and abroad, and already has installed far more solar power generation than the United States has. Most solar collectors sold in the United States are made in China and their price reductions have greatly stimulated our nation's rooftop businesses.

China also recently announced it is creating an economy-wide cap-and-trade system, which would dwarf what California and a few other like-minded states and Canadian provinces have developed. All this is happening at a speed that is fast making China the world's dominant country in the effort to reduce greenhouse gases.

California, with its characteristic spirit, has nurtured this Chinese leadership. Over the past two decades, California scientists, engineers, researchers, and policymakers have reached out to other nations, and China in particular, to impart the state's knowledge and experience. This has led to working relationships worldwide in the effort to curb adverse climate change and to support programs springing from the UN Conference of Parties 21 (COP) assembly in Paris in late 2015 and its aftermath.

All this doesn't mean California can stop. It should continue to develop innovative technology and ever more forward-

thinking policies on climate. The state should continue to be a case study, explaining both the positive results and unexpected pitfalls it found while piloting new ways. This allows others to do a fast follow to improve, as well as emulate, the state's successes. But even at its best, measured by impact and results, California will be taking a back seat to China.

California also labors under a handicap. The goals and policies of the current administration in Washington assure that our nation is a non-player in fighting the greatest environmental threat facing earth. Also, our nation is isolated by its plan to withdraw from the Paris climate change accord.

This explains why it's important that California stand apart from the federal government. The state will intensify its climate change mitigation efforts, create new adaptation policies, address resilience issues, and continue to provide the leadership for others. Such steps can limit, but not totally offset, the damage now being done to our planet by the current U.S. administration.

We Californians also need to maintain our adventuresome spirit. The attitudes of even a relatively small number of people can change the world.

Diane Wittenberg founded the Climate Registry and is chair of the California State Parks Commission. Michael Peevey served as president of the California Public Utilities Commission for 12 years. They are co-authors of "California Goes Green: A Roadmap to Climate Leadership."

Humanity's food security at risk

By Jonas O. Bergman, Bloomberg

On this winter day, the world was upside down: it was raining in the Arctic Circle and snowing in Rome.

The contradiction was not lost on those gathered at the Svalbard Global Seed Vault, located near the top of the world. The scientists, activists, executives and government officials were in Longyearbyen, to mark the 10-year anniversary of what has become known as the Doomsday Vault, which stores seeds of the world's most important crops deep in a mountain against the apocalyptic consequences of climate change and war.

The challenge they're facing now is that the climate is changing far quicker than they'd imagined. The facility sprung a leak last year after construction had failed to take into account that the permafrost could melt. Norway is now spending about \$20 million to secure and improve the facility. But it's not just the building.

[Read the whole story](#)

LT Humane Society board in disarray, fires staff

Updated March 23:

By Kathryn Reed

Lake Tahoe Humane Society has gone to the dogs – in a bad way.

Now the board is backpedaling a bit on what is going on.

Board secretary/treasurer Sue Pritchett on Thursday sent *Lake Tahoe News* an email stating, “The comment on the closing of the Humane Society was premature. We are reorganizing and will be open on Fridays to give out pet food.”

She would not explain the reorganization and stopped communicating with *LTN* when we started asking questions.

Judy Brown, who was on the board for 14 years before being termed out in 2013 and then became the office manager, said she was told by Pritchett on March 21 to post a **note on the door** saying the nonprofit was closed. Brown was also told that would be her last day of employment.

But she wasn’t given her last check, and she said the board is refusing to pay her her vacation and comp time.

Brown has been the acting executive director, at a pay of \$11 an hour, since last summer. This came on the heels of the former ED being fired for allegedly embezzling from the Humane Society.

“I was totally surprised by this. Apparently they had a secret board meeting on the 15th and decided they needed to sell the building and pay off the debt,” Brown told *Lake Tahoe News*.

The local Humane Society has been in operation for 51 years. The other board members are Lorna Lefler, president, and Kim Stephenson. They with Pritchett were the board members when the alleged illegal activity occurred.

“I think the board should resign if they are so tired and they don’t want to hassle with it anymore,” Brown said. “Turn it over to people who are willing to make the organization continue. If it means downsizing, fine.”

Brown said the Humane Society runs the Disaster Animal Response Team for the city. After Hurricane Katrina the federal government said cities had to have a plan to care for animals during an emergency.

Acting City Manager Jeff Meston told *Lake Tahoe News* the animals will be cared for.

“In a disaster we would address that working with the county, Fish and Game, state of California OES and the Wildlife Care center. This would be a process worked through our logistics, planning and operations sections,” Meston said. “We had a successful animal evacuation shelter as well as people shelter last year with the floods and actually never used the Humane Society.”

As for the two house cats at the Humane Society, Brown took them to her home and is finding people to adopt them.

Experts: Wet weather great, but no ‘Miracle March’

By Peter Fimrite, San Francisco Chronicle

It has all the earmarks of a “Miracle March” – heavy dousings of rain, intense flurries of snow in the Sierra mountains and roadway havoc – but the showy display of stormy weather across California this week isn’t fooling the experts.

Despite encouraging signs, including a Sierra snowpack that has risen to respectability from record-breakingly meager depths this month, meteorologists say California will almost certainly emerge from the winter drier than normal.

“I would call it a very helpful March,” said Daniel Swain, a climate scientist at UCLA. “It has brought us up from the bottom of the barrel in a lot of places, but it is not close to” a miracle recovery. “It may not actually increase the snowpack at all.”

Read the whole story

Lira's Market in Meyers sold

Lira's Market in Meyers is changing hands.

The Lira family opened the Tahoe grocery store in 2000. They have sold it to North State Grocery, which operates Holiday Market and Sav-Mor Foods. Reports are that Lira's will become a Holiday Market.

The new company is based in Cottonwood and has been in business since 1962.

No one from North State Grocery was available for comment. It is not known when the deal will be finalized, how things will change or what happens to the current employees.

Mike Lira declined to comment. This leaves the family with its original store in Rio Vista. There was a brief time when Lira's had a market in Minden.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

El Dorado County VHR meeting canceled

The special El Dorado County Board of Supervisors meeting scheduled for March 24 in Meyers has been canceled.

The incoming storm is the reason.

The meeting was to solely focus on vacation home rentals.

The county plans to reschedule at a later date.

Power out in parts of Lake Tahoe Basin

Liberty Utilities and NV Energy are reporting outages at various locations around the Lake Tahoe Basin.

Weather is the culprit. Rain, snow and wind have brought down lines.

Both companies said they are working as fast as they can to restore power to the affected customers.

"We do have a contract line crew on standby during this weather event in case things get really crazy," a Liberty official said.

According to the National Weather Service, a winter storm warning and flood watch remain in effect until 5am March 23.

The agency reported Thursday morning that Tahoe City in a 48-hour period received 3.52 inches of rain and 4 inches of snow.

On the South Shore at lake level it has been raining, with it turning to a rain-snow mixture in the afternoon of March 22.

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*

Crews search for vehicles in Mt. Rose Hwy. avalanche

By Marcella Corona and Yvonne Beasley, Reno Gazette-Journal

Trooper Matt McLaughlin of the Nevada Highway Patrol said one car was caught in the edge of the slide on Thursday, but the single occupant of the vehicle was able to escape.

But ski patrol from Mt. Rose Ski Tahoe is currently searching for a second vehicle that they suspect may have been also caught in the avalanche. But it's still unknown if there is a second car underneath the snow.

[Read the whole story](#)

Letters: Elks take turn at Bread & Broth

To the community,

The local Tahoe Douglas Elks Lodge No. 2670 has been an

ongoing sponsor for Bread & Broth's Adopt A Day of Nourishment and generously hosts two or three sponsorship dinners annually.

Their most current AAD sponsorship was at B&B's Monday meal on March 12 and thanks to their sponsorship, B&B fed 84 dinner guests a home style meatloaf dinner served with mashed potatoes with gravy, broccoli and a green salad lovingly cooked and prepared by the B&B's wonderful volunteer cooks.

Volunteering on their AAD crew team, Elks Lodge members Jeanne and Roger Barragan, Karen and Jim Plamenig, Steve Kurek and Gary R. Wendt helped B&B's setup and serving volunteer crew for three hours bagging food giveaway bags, setting up the dessert table, manning the dinner serving line, and cleaning and storing the dinner's tables and chairs. It's a busy three hours and the help the Elks Lodge members provided making the meal service run smoothly was greatly appreciated by the evening's B&B volunteers.

"We enjoy helping feed the needy and we are thankful for the chance to be a part of the community that assists easing hunger for those in need," commented Jeanne Barragan. She also noted the appreciation and the thanks expressed by the dinner's guest as they were served their heaping trays of the tasty meatloaf dinner.

Carol Gerard, Bread & Broth

Leagues, casinos lobby states

for cut of legal sports bets

By Ben Nuckols, AP

WASHINGTON — With the Supreme Court poised to rule on a case that could end the federal ban on sports gambling, more than a third of U.S. states are considering legislation to get in on the action, and professional leagues and casino interests are lobbying against each other for the biggest cut of the winnings.

The push to legalize betting on sports has already led to fractures in an uneasy alliance that had developed between leagues and gambling legalization advocates before Supreme Court arguments last fall.

The NBA and Major League Baseball have been asking states to give them 1 percent of the total amount wagered on their games, calling it an “integrity fee” so they can protect their products and snuff out attempts at cheating and game-fixing.

Read the whole story