

Calif. pool, hot tub filling bans have industries steaming

By Nicholas Weiler, San Jose Mercury News

It's hard to imagine a California summer without long days lounging by the pool. But as unprecedented drought sears the state, the backyard swimming pool has become a target for cities desperate to save water.

As cities and water districts put the squeeze on water users, even pool lovers are canceling construction contracts. Pool builders are steamed, accusing water officials of stressing symbolism over science. And contractors are getting increasingly creative in finding sources of water for pools that cities won't fill.

The new restrictions – largely the result of Gov. Jerry Brown's order to cut water use 25 percent statewide – have become a nightmare for pool builders and hot tub retailers.

Read the whole story

SLT woman dies in plane crash in Mexico

By Janene Scully, Noozhawk

A fundraiser and memorial are being planned for a former employee at Skydive Santa Barbara at the Lompoc Airport after she died in a plane crash last week in Mexico.

Robin Ballachey, 33, was one of two women reportedly killed when a Cessna 180 plane crashed off the coast of Puerto Vallarta, Mexico.

Ballachey, who is from South Lake Tahoe, lived in Pismo Beach and had previously worked for Skydive Santa Barbara for a couple of years starting in November 2012 and staying until late last year.

Read the whole story

Sierra Club hosting hikes

The Tahoe Area Sierra Club is guiding two hikes.

The first one is on May 13 to Dardanelles Lake. It is approximately 7 miles round-trip and starts at the Big Meadows trailhead on Highway 89. Start time is 9am. Space is limited. Please RSVP to tahoehikers@gmail.com.

The next hike is on June 5 and is to Showers Lake. It is a 10 mile round-trip. It will be begin at 9am at the trailhead on Carson Pass. Space is limited. RSVP to tahoehikers@gmail.com.

Lawsuit: Hard Rock owners stiff contractor



David and Jon Park, owners of the Lake Tahoe Hard Rock, are being sued for \$10 million by one of the contractors. Photo/Denise Haerr

By Kathryn Reed

A contractor who did millions of dollars worth of work at Lake Tahoe Hard Rock is suing the owners for lack of payment.

"There are a lot of good people out of a lot of money right now. We are fighting for all of them," Joe Stewart with SMC Contracting told *Lake Tahoe News*. "They haven't given us a legitimate reason why they won't pay us. They have used a lot of stall tactics."

SMC did most of the work on the ground level – meaning the casino floor and restaurants.

The original contract was for \$9.6 million. It ballooned to more than \$19 million. To date SMC has been paid about \$10 million and has about that much more to collect.

"We worked with them on a daily basis, almost hourly," Stewart said. "They signed change orders they have not paid us on."

Stewart said the owners were well aware of what the costs were as they requested changes.

Brothers David and Jon Park own the property. In October 2013 it was announced that the Park family, which has a number of holdings on the South Shore and in the Carson Valley, would be dividing their assets. The brothers got possession of what was the Horizon at the time.

These two have nothing to do with the Edgewood Lodge that will break ground in August – which SMC is working on – nor Edgewood Tahoe Golf Course.

When the lease was about to expire at the Horizon they initially were going to create what was going to be called the Park Tahoe, which is what MontBleu was named when it first opened. Then last summer it was announced the brothers were infusing \$60 million into what would become the Hard Rock hotel-casino.

Rumors had been swirling even before the Jan. 28 opening that there were cost overruns and not all of the improvements originally planned would be developed.

Neither of the Park brothers returned calls.

According to the lawsuit that was filed last week, the owners submitted revised drawings in November – this was listed as revision No. 9. But the changes didn't stop there, they just weren't numbered after that.

“... the fact that eight revisions beyond that were contracted for were provided during the course of construction, the value of work performed more than doubling the original contracted contemplation by the contractor, all demonstrates the bad faith and unscrupulous practices of Neva, its agents and its representatives,” the court documents states.

Neva is the name of the company the Park brothers started for the Hard Rock project.

Many of those who are owed money are subcontractors from the

Lake Tahoe and Reno area, with a few from Sacramento. SMC has paid a few of the smaller ones out its pocket.

“The short story is the owners made an incredible amount of changes to the project after it started and they demanded it get open by Jan. 28, but that came at a big cost,” Stewart said. “Once the building opened, they said they won’t pay us.”

High Fives helps Tahoe photographer recover

The High Fives Foundation is awarding Jason Abraham, 35, an empowerment grant to help aid in his recovery from a life-altering injury he sustained while skiing in the Palisades at Squaw Valley in April.

The injury happened when Abraham fell while skiing in Main Chute. The impact broke his neck and resulted in a subluxation of his C5/C6 vertebrae, causing temporary paralysis from the shoulders down. He is undergoing intensive rehab at Craig Hospital in Englewood, Colo.

Abraham is a professional photographer in the Tahoe area and has photographed High Fives athletes in the past.

Abraham’s recovery goals are to return to enjoying Tahoe with his wife and 3-year-old son.

Since the High Fives Foundation’s January 2009 inception, the empowerment program service has assisted 79 athletes from 20 states in nine respective funding categories which include: living expenses, insurance, travel, health, healing network, adaptive equipment, winter equipment, programs and “stoke”

(positive energy, outlook and attitude).

Meditation workshop in South Lake Tahoe

There will be Mindfulness Stress Reduction Meditation workshop on May 30 in South Lake Tahoe.

Colleen Camenisch has been teaching mindfulness meditation for more than seven years, including a specialty in working with survivors of trauma. She has taught at the University of Massachusetts Center for Mindfulness and at UNR.

This six-hour silent retreat is designed for beginning or experienced meditators. Camenisch will be leading a series of guided meditations that include: mind-body practices, working with concentration, and gentle stretching yoga. The last portion of the program will offer time for participants to have dialogue about the experience and share insights that may have arisen throughout the day. Camenisch will offer suggestions for working with the meditation practice and how to integrate it into our daily lives.

The workshop is from 9:30am to 2:30pm at Unity at the Lake, 1195 Rufus Allen Blvd., South Lake Tahoe. Preregistration is \$50, registration at the door is \$60 with cash or check.

For more information, contact Rosemary Manning at tahoehealthtouch@gmail.com.

Calif. bottled-water business grows despite drought

By Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO — A new Crystal Geyser Water Co. plant opening at the foot of Mount Shasta is adding to criticism of companies that are bottling water in California's drought.

Crystal Geyser plans to eventually tap up to 365,000 gallons a day from groundwater in Northern California's Siskiyou County, the San Francisco Chronicle reported Sunday.

Converted from an old Coca-Cola bottling plant, the facility will become the latest of 108 bottling operations by various companies in the state, the Chronicle reported. Operations are due to start this fall.

Crystal Geyser executive vice president Judy Yee said Crystal Geyser officials are in contact with local residents to ensure its groundwater pumping "will not impact the environment in any detrimental way."

Resident Raven Stevens, however, says she fears groundwater pumping by the bottled-water plant will use up the water that she and her neighbors depend on for their households.

"Crystal Geyser in one day plans to pump more water than any three of my neighbors will use in an entire year," Stevens said.

California law in general places no limits on the amount of groundwater that property owners can pump, although legislation passed last year will start phasing in regulation of the most endangered aquifers after 2020.

Grass-roots objections to bottled water companies tapping and selling groundwater are increasing as California's drought moves deeper into its fourth year. Bottled-water companies tapping into groundwater on their own property are exempted from the 25-percent mandatory water cutbacks that Gov. Jerry Brown ordered for cities and towns earlier this spring.

"Bottling water is a legal use of water under the law," said Nancy Vogel, spokeswoman of the California Department of Water Resources.

While local officials say the water bottling operation will bring jobs, some residents object to the heavy water use.

Joyce Kyle, 77, told the Los Angeles Times that she and her family have lost grazing business because local water authorities have restricted use of her property's water.

In the drought, "everybody's suffering, not just the people in the lower half of the state," Kyle said. "Letting Crystal Geyser come in and draw down groundwater, it's not right."

Airlines not tolerant of passengers with cameras

By Christopher Elliott, Washington Post

Next time you're tempted to take a snapshot of an interesting cloud formation or your seatmate sprawling into your personal space on a plane, remember Arash Shirazi and Steven Leslie.

Both of them are law-abiding citizens and air travelers. And both recently ran afoul of the airline industry's confusing photography rules.

With only days before the busy summer travel season unleashes millions of shutterbugs on America's airports, it's helpful to know about the airline industry's little problem with cameras, so that your own camera doesn't become hung up on it.

Read the whole story

Snippets about Lake Tahoe



- Truckee is having a public hearing on its 2015-16 budget on May 18 at 2pm at the town hall, 10183 Truckee Airport Road.
- University of Nevada Cooperative Extension's Master Gardeners' annual Plant Faire is May 16, 7-11am at the Washoe County Cooperative Extension office, 4955 Energy Way in Reno.
- Tahoe Donner Golf Course will open for the season May 15, conditions permitting.
- Howard Jarvis Taxpayers Association President Jon Coupal will join Board of Equalization members Diane Harkey and George Runner as well as state Sen. Mike Morrell for a telephone town hall on the fire tax on May 13 from noon-1pm. Register in advance by calling 844.829.8353.
- North Tahoe High has been selected by California as a Gold Ribbon School.

WHS baseball team headed for state tourney

Whittell High School's baseball team will be traveling to Las Vegas this week in a quest to become state champions.

The Whittell softball and South Tahoe High School baseball teams did not make it past the Northern League Softball Tournament this weekend.

Seeded second in the tournament, the Warriors will face Pahrnagat Valley on May 14. Win or lose, they play a second game the following day. The championship game for Division IV is May 16.

WHS finished the regular season with a 22-5 record. The last time the Warriors were in contention for the state title was 2011 when the school was in Division IIA.

The softball team traveled to Wells over the weekend to determine whom from Northern Nevada would be vying for the state championship. The Warriors lost to Eureka 11-1 and then to Coleville 10-8.

The STHS Vikings lost the first round of the Northern League postseason play to Elko 6-5, then beat Spring Creek 10-9. On May 9 it was a rematch with Elko, with the same outcome, a 9-4 loss.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report