

Nevada treasurer rewrites state budget

By Laura Myers, Las Vegas Review-Journal

Putting together a budget for the state of Nevada isn't so easy after all.

State Treasurer Dan Schwartz, who proposed to the Legislature a spending plan to rival fellow Republican Gov. Brian Sandoval's budget, said he's rewriting it because Nevada can't raise \$540 million as he'd like from a proposed \$5-per-passenger airport fee. That's because those fees are controlled by the federal government and prohibited by states.

"It doesn't work," said Schwartz, a conservative who's working with state Controller Ron Knecht on his budget plan.

Schwartz was scheduled to present his proposed alternative budget to the Senate Finance Committee today.

Read the whole story

TRTA taking sign ups for summer hikes

Enrollment is open for the Tahoe Rim Trail Association's Segment Hiking Program and the annual Through Hike.

Both groups will circle the 165-plus mile rim of the Lake Tahoe Basin. Both treks offer participants a supported method to complete the entire trail, the opportunity to meet hiking

friends, the chance to disconnect from modern life and a traveling adventure through some of the most beautiful scenery in the Northern Sierra Nevada and Carson Mountain Range.

The Through Hike is a 15-day, fully supported backpack trip. The Segment Hike completes the route on a series of day hikes.

For information about dates, cost and details, go online.

Human skull found on West Slope

A resident panning for gold on the West Slope found more than he wanted. He unearthed part of a human skull.

The El Dorado County resident was in the Bear Creek picnic area near Traverse Creek Road on Feb. 10 when he came across the remains. The person had been digging in the dirt when the discovery was made.

El Dorado County sheriff's detectives have anthropologists assisting with the investigation.

No other body parts have been located.

– Read the whole story

Weight loss or not, exercise yields benefits

By Rachel Bachman, Wall Street Journal

Mary The Trieu does hourlong workouts at a CrossFit gym three to five days a week. She is also 5-foot-3 and weighs 205 pounds.

Trieu avoids junk food and eats balanced meals, but she's not on a diet. She works out to keep her weight stable and because she enjoys it.

"As I started exercising, I just got this adrenaline rush," says Trieu, an admissions officer at Columbia Business School. "It feels good to sweat. And it's hard. Part of it is my ego: 'Yes! I'm a bigger person, but I can still do the exercises you're doing.' "

A recent study underscores that there are significant health benefits to overweight and obese people being physically active, even if they don't lose a pound. The study, of 334,000 Europeans over 12 years, recorded twice as many deaths due to a lack of physical activity as due to obesity.

Read the whole story

Roof reimbursement program not adding up

By Kathryn Reed

Nancy Gaynor has been waiting nine months for a check to arrive from Lake Valley Fire Protection District. This is

three months longer than what was promised to be the absolute deadline. And the latest word is that it could be a couple more months, maybe longer.

The South Lake Tahoe woman is one of the 366 homeowners participating in the shake roof rebate program.

The grant through FEMA allowed homeowners in Lake Valley, South Lake Tahoe and Meeks Bay fire districts to be reimbursed 70 percent, up to \$7,500, to get rid of their fire hazard roof for something more fire resistant like a composite roof.

Applications were taken two years ago, with 2014 being the first building season and 2015 being the final year of the grant.

The problem is that of the 231 roofs that were completed last year, 108 of those residents are still waiting to be paid.

"We are getting smaller chunks of money than we anticipated. We are pretty caught up right now. It's not overwhelming right now like it has been," Terri Tucker, coordinator for the program, told *Lake Tahoe News*.

But still, nearly half of the people who got roofs last year have not been reimbursed.

Tucker called people "impatient".

Lake Valley's board members, though, see there is a problem and at their last meeting agreed to front \$200,000 to speed up the process, according to spokeswoman Leona Allen.

"It's not a program that is living up to its promises. It sounds like a really good deal, so a lot of us bought into it," Gaynor told *Lake Tahoe News*.

The homeowner must qualify for the program, use one of the nearly 30 roofers who were certified by Lake Valley, pay the roofer and then submit paperwork to be reimbursed.

Gaynor took out a loan to cover the cost of her nearly \$9,000 roof. The expectation was that it would be paid off in three months, with the bulk coming from the reimbursement check.

While she is grateful to have the new roof, had she known there would be any question about a prompt reimbursement, she likely would have figured out a different way to front the money than to be paying interest on a loan.

“What is disheartening is that you are told one thing and nothing happens,” Gaynor said.

Lake Valley officials say it’s not their fault the money isn’t flowing.

“They will get their money. It is guaranteed. It’s a very cumbersome process,” Allen told *Lake Tahoe News*. “We recognize it is a slower process than we imagined. The money is coming from FEMA, they send it through Cal-EMA.”

But neither Allen nor Tucker could explain the hold up other than to say it’s government and then pointed to how long it took people to get paid by FEMA after Hurricane Katrina.

The point of the grant was to get as many people as possible to have a more fire safe roof, which in turn protects neighborhoods. People in the program also had to have their defensible space done. From that standpoint, as well as keeping roofers busy for two seasons – making it an economic boon, the fire folks say the grant has been successful.

Opinion: Warm rains dictate

new reservoirs

By Dan Walters, Sacramento Bee

California's winter storms come in two varieties – cold ones from the Gulf of Alaska and warm ones that pick up moisture from more tropical portions of the Pacific Ocean.



Dan Walters

The cold ones dump lots of snow, while the warm ones bring rain, sometimes torrential rain.

Those who believe in inexorable climate change tell us that in the future, Californians will see less snow and more warm storms, such as those that whipped through Northern California over the weekend.

The storms dumped copious amounts of rain, providing respite, if not relief, from the state's prolonged drought.

Operators of the big state and federal reservoirs – Shasta, Oroville and Folsom – lowered their discharges to a minimum in hopes of maximizing the capture of storm runoff and all remained in that operational mode Monday. As a result, all were seeing their water storage, which had dropped to ominously low levels, rise.

Read the whole story

Nevada health officials dismayed with asbestos find

By Deborah Blum, New York Times

For the past few years, the geologists Brenda Buck and Rodney Metcalf have combed the wild terrain of Southern Nevada, analyzing its stony dunes and rocky outcroppings – and to their dismay, tallying mounting evidence of a landscape filled with asbestos.

Asbestos occurs naturally in many parts of the country, mostly in the West but also along some mountain ranges in the East. But in Nevada, the scientists found, natural erosion and commercial development were sending the fibers into the wind.

Worried about the possible health risks, Buck and Metcalf, professors of geoscience at UNLV, reached out to experts in asbestos-related diseases. With data from Nevada's cancer registry, an epidemiologist prepared a preliminary report that outlined what she felt was a troubling pattern of mesothelioma – a cancer often related to asbestos exposure – among residents of the affected areas.

But if the scientists expected to be applauded by state officials for their initiative, they were mistaken.

Upon learning of the report, the Nevada Department of Health forced the epidemiologist, Francine Baumann of the University of Hawaii, to withdraw a presentation of the findings at a scientific conference and revoked her access to the state cancer registry. Metcalf and Buck offered to meet with state officials but say they were rebuffed.

K's Kitchen: Spinach becomes star of dish

By Kathryn Reed

Lately I've been having a hankering for fresh spinach. Anyone who grew up watching "Popeye" knows it will make you stronger.

While I haven't noticed any bulging biceps, I do know this green leaf is good for me. It is full of iron, which in turn gives me energy. It has a number of other health benefits too because it is full of vitamins.

But like any food, its nutritional value also has a lot to do with how it is cooked or what is added to it. Spinach salads are great for you depending on the dressing. Cooked spinach goes in the bad category with too much butter or cream.

I like buying a large quantity and doing a variety of things with it.

The recipe below would probably be a side dish for most people, but as a vegetarian it was my entrée. If using brown rice, it will take longer to cook. I've also messed up following the directions, so it's OK if the rice is cooked in the broth. The amount of spinach will depend on your preference or how much you have.



Spanakoriso (spinach and rice)

1 pound, or less fresh spinach

1 C uncooked rice

2 medium onions, minced

8 garlic cloves, minced

2 bay leaves

2 C vegetable broth

2 T tomato sauce

$\frac{1}{2}$ C olive oil, or less

Salt and pepper

Sauté onions, garlic and rice in olive oil until the onions are soft and golden.

Add tomato sauce and stir.

Add bay leaves, salt and pepper. Mix well and then add broth. Cover and simmer for about 20 minutes.

Add spinach and cook another 25 minutes.

Managing forests to prevent catastrophe

By Katie Campbell and Courtney Flatt, KCTS-TV

WINTHROP, Wash. – Snow blankets the landscape in north central Washington. What you can't see is the scorched earth left from last summer's Carlton Complex fire.

Even through the snow, Susan Prichard, a fire ecologist for the University of Washington, can see the damage. She can also see signs of recovery in the bitterbrush and aspen trees.

Susan Prichard, a fire ecologist for the University of Washington, looks for signs of recovery in the aspen trees.

"Aspen, and cottonwood and willow species are all very fire adapted and disturbance adapted in that they're sprouters," Prichard said. "We've already seen, even in the fall following the Carlton Complex fire, just amazing sprouting by the aspen in particular."

Although these aspen trees are resprouting, the fire this summer damaged other areas far more severely.

The Carlton Complex fire burned more than a quarter million acres – most of it in less than two days, as 30 mile-per-hour winds pushed hot smoke and embers through Okanogan County. Fire swept across shrublands and blazed through forests.

Prichard said it could take half a century or more for this area to recover. But she said there are ways to slow future wildfires.

"We know fire is going to re-occur. These are fire dependent

ecosystems,” she said. “It’s not a question about if fire is going to return, but how it’s going to return and how much it’s going to burn and how much it’s going to allow to survive.”

Prichard said the best way to help forests in the long run is through thinning and controlled burns.

The question is: How much acreage needs to be treated to make a difference?

Thinning forests reduces the amount of fuel, like small trees, fires have to burn. This could help prevent explosive wildfires.

Reese Lolley, the Eastern Washington forest program director for The Nature Conservancy, said the emphasis on fire suppression in the last century helped create the conditions that have lead to more extreme fires.

Lolley said some fires actually need to burn. Smaller wildfires reduce fire fuel and ultimately create habitat and help regenerate trees.

Liberty customers all out of the dark after storm

It took until Tuesday morning for Liberty Utilities to restore power to all of its customers after wind gusts between 130-150 mph along the Sierra Crest knocked over power poles and toppled trees onto electrical wires.

Liberty services the California side of the basin, as well as Truckee, Alpine and Mono counties. NV Energy provides power on

the Nevada side.

“Basically, crews have been working nonstop since the first storm arrived on Friday,” Mike Smart, Liberty Utilities-CA president, said in a statement. “For the past four days, we’ve reset poles, restrung wire and even made repairs to another utility’s infrastructure because it affected our ability to serve our customers.”

Approximately 16,400 Liberty customers were affected. When NV Energy has issues, Liberty has problems because the energy comes from NV.

Around South Lake Tahoe, there were three broken poles and six spans of electrical wire down due to trees falling, mostly in the Camp Richardson area. There were other smaller outages around town.

Tree related issues affected Tahoe City, the Truckee River corridor, and Glenshire as well as the communities of Portola, Loyalton, Hobart Mills, Russell Valley and Sierra Brooks in Plumas and Sierra counties. Two transmission lines serving that area went down at separate times. The 609-power line that runs from the Truckee substation to the Squaw Valley substation along Highway 89 was restored on Sunday morning. The 132-power line running parallel and to the east of the 609-power line went down on Sunday evening and wasn’t restored until Tuesday morning.

Liberty’s crews replaced nine downed power poles in the Coleville/Walker region in Mono County. Other repairs were made to poles that had wires downed and/or cross-arms on the poles broken by toppled trees.

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*