

Sierra snowpack at 33% of average



Shasta Lake is well below normal for this time of year. Photo/Kathryn Reed

By Kathryn Reed

Even though the snowpack was increasing as it was being measured Tuesday morning near the entrance of Sierra-at-Tahoe, it will need to keep falling the rest of the winter to significantly ease the impact of California's drought.

The Dec. 30 reading was the first manual measurement of the season. Frank Gehrke with the Department of Water Resources found 21.3 inches of snow at Phillips Station, with a water equivalency of 4 inches. This is 33 percent of average.

Even so, it's an improvement over last year at this time when the measurement was at a record low of 20 percent of average, which was the same reading in 2012.

Water content at this location is normally 12 inches for this time of year.

Phillips had its lowest early-January water content reading of 0.1 inch in 2012, in a snow depth of 0.6 inches. On Jan. 3, 2014, Phillips had 2.3 inches of water content in 9.3 inches of snow. Besides that reading and the similar one in 2012, the

driest January readings at Phillips were in 1987 (0.9 inches of snowpack water content), 1981 (2 inches), 1976 (2.7 inches) and 2000 (3 inches). Records at Phillips go back 50 years.

“Although this year’s survey shows a deeper snowpack than last year, California needs much more rain and snow than we’ve experienced over the past two years to end the drought in 2015,” Mark Cowin, director of the Department of Water Resources, said in a statement.

If the snow doesn’t come, this would be the fourth consecutive drought year.

While December rains in much of the state have been above normal, the snowfall has not kept pace. And on the South Shore there has been even less compared to the North Shore-Truckee region or even Kirkwood. Part of the problem is the storms, until now, have been relatively warm.

Without a large accumulation of snowpack, the reservoirs downstream are apt to remain low. The Sierra snowpack supplies about one-third of the water needed by residents, agriculture and industry.

Lake Oroville in Butte County, the State Water Project’s principal reservoir, is at 38 percent of its 3.5 million acre-foot capacity (61 percent of its historical average for the date), while Shasta Lake north of Redding, California’s and the federal Central Valley Project’s largest reservoir, is at 41 percent of its 4.5 million acre-feet capacity (66 percent of average for the date).

Wind may be an issue at SnowGlobe



Cold temps and wind could be trouble for those attending SnowGlobe on Dec. 30. Photo Copyright 2014 Carolyn E. Wright

By Kathryn Reed

Wind could affect Day 2 of the SnowGlobe music festival in South Lake Tahoe.

"We will be monitoring the winds out there. If there are prolonged gusts in the 40 mph range, we will shut it down. That is in the emergency operations plan. It would not be a surprise to anyone," Fire Chief Jeff Meston told *Lake Tahoe News*.

The temporary structures for the three-day concert are engineered to sustain 70 mph winds. However, a concern if winds ever got that strong, is that trees could topple.

The National Weather Service in Reno has issued a wind advisory for the area until 4am Dec. 31. The northeast winds are expected to be 15-30 mph, with gusts of 45 mph. Above 8,000 feet the gusts could reach 100 mph. Waves on the lake

may reach 3 to 5 feet.

There is a weather station at the top of the main stage that officials are monitoring. Wind gauges that are used for fire weather forecasting are also utilized. Meston said because the winds are not expected to be as gnarly as earlier forecasted, Tuesday's show might not be in jeopardy.

Firefighters are also watching the wind to make sure it does not pose a threat to the fireworks show that takes place each night at the close of the concert.

"The fireworks are in really good shape. I was standing underneath them yesterday and as soon as they hit the ground there are little embers, but they died out right a way," Meston said.

The humidity, air temperature and snow on the ground are good conditions for fireworks. But if the winds are whipping, that could force officials to cancel the pyrotechnic show.

Truckee providing free ride home NYE

The business community and town of Truckee are providing a free ride home for people who need it New Year's Eve.

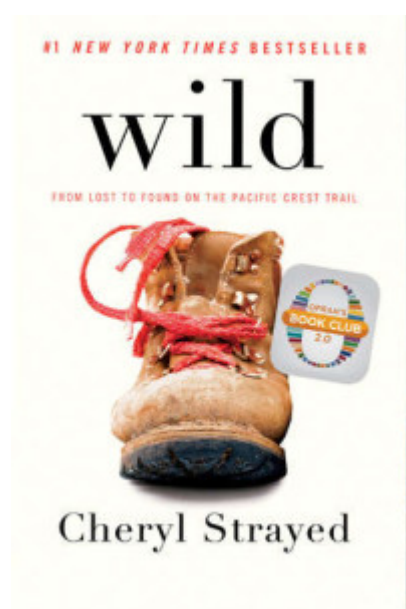
Buses will leave the train depot at 12:15am, 1:15am and 2:15am on Jan. 1. Drivers will drop people off at Sierra Meadows, Northstar, Glenshire, Prosser, Tahoe Donner, Squaw Valley, Donner Lake and Donner Summit, and Boreal.

The TART buses will have extended service until 2am New Year's Day on some routes.

‘Wild’ – a book of self-discovery along the PCT

By Kathryn Reed

It takes a certain type of person to hike the Pacific Crest Trail. Well trained and experienced are not requirements. Cheryl Strayed proved that.



Her *New York Times* bestseller “Wild” is a testament to how tenacity and perseverance are two important components to backpacking one of the West’s most famous trails.

Strayed’s memoir came out in 2012, while the film starring Reese Witherspoon was released earlier this month. The book is a definite page-turner.

My mom and I last weekend were reading it, with me a few chapters ahead of her. We had to drag mom out of the house to snowshoe because she was so engrossed in the book. She would come downstairs saying something in disbelief about Cheryl – as though we are on a first-name basis with her. And we jokingly referred to Cheryl as “our new best friend” because of how much conversation centered on her.

The fact Strayed survives out in the wild for the better part of a summer is remarkable based on a number of factors – starting with she had never backpacked before, her pack was so heavy she was stooped over and her boots caused her to lose multiple toenails.

If you are looking for an in-depth look at the PCT – a true outdoors book – this isn't it.

“Wild” is about a woman who in her 20s lost her mom, divorced and saw her relationship with her siblings unravel. The backpacking excursion was about finding herself and overcoming obstacles that were not just on the trail – though there were plenty of trail encounters that also led to a better understanding of herself and the way her life had turned out to that point.

Is drinking alcohol going to make you fat?

By Jill U. Adams, Washington Post

Are beer bellies a real thing? Do social drinkers really carry around an extra five pounds of weight?

I have avoided investigating the answers to this question for all my adult life – and all my years as a health reporter. Call it denial by someone who likes her wine.

Recently I learned that the caloric content of alcohol is higher (seven calories per gram) than that of proteins and sugars (both four calories per gram), and nearly as much as fats (nine calories).

That sounded very worrying, I'll admit. But remember that for managing weight, a more important number is the total number of calories in your beer (about 150 calories in a 12-ounce serving of regular brew, a reminder that there's more to a drink than the alcohol) or your glass of red wine (125 calories in a five-ounce serving). A sugar-heavy 12-ounce cola also carries 150 calories.

And as far as common wisdom on drinking and weight gain goes, I am here to report, the science is murky.

Read the whole story

SnowGlobe vibrates with techno flare

By Kathryn Reed

Meghan Trainor's song "All About that Bass" could be the anthem for SnowGlobe. It really is all about the bass. And that's just what fans of this three-day music festival in South Lake Tahoe want.

It was a raucous eruption of DJ induced music by Disclosure that brought screams from the crowd at the main stage on Dec. 29. The throngs of people bounced to the beat as the techno sound reverberated across what is normally the community ball field next to Lake Tahoe Community College.

Dressed in all sorts of headware – from beaded masks to ski

beanies to SpiritHoods to lighted get-ups – the rave is a place for self-expression.

With lights illuminating their jackets, friends Tori Kobayashi of Sacramento and Lina Kudinar of Fremont made the trek east for their first SnowGlobe experience. It was all about the lineup of artists that brought them to Tahoe. Disclosure and Porter Robinson topped Kobayashi's list of people to hear. For Kudinar, the big draw on Monday night was Thomas Jack.



Emancipator Ensemble has people bouncing to the sound on Dec. 29 at SnowGlobe. Photo Copyright 2014 Carolyn E. Wright

“The vibe here is better than other places. There’s more chill here,” Dylan Bivens, who graduated from Whittell High in 2008 and now lives in Reno, told *Lake Tahoe News*.

He has a three-day pass for his third SnowGlobe.

At the Sierra tent Bro Safari was a big draw as people spilled

out into the walkway. Not being able to see the stage is no big deal – the sound is blasting forth.

Exaggerated icicles hang from the roof like something that could have been from “Alice in Wonderland”, changing color as the strobe lights lighted the three-sided tent.

SnowGlobe is considered a boutique festival, but is still able to bring in some of the biggest names in the business. Zedd won a Grammy this year for best dance recording. He will be on the main stage New Year’s Eve. He’s ringing in the New Year at a gig in Las Vegas, while Flume does the honors at SnowGlobe.

Now in its fourth year, SnowGlobe is a multi-million dollar event when it comes to the economic impact on the community.

“I heard from a number of lodging properties and the association that if it were not for SnowGlobe again this year, they would have few bookings due to the lack of snow,” City Manager Nancy Kerry told *Lake Tahoe News*.

Chad Donnelly, the promoter of the three-day event, is expecting crowds of 15,000 each night.

Traffic was a nightmare on both ends of town hours after the concert had started at 2pm Monday – with vehicles backed up on Echo Summit, and Highway 50 and Pioneer Trail near Stateline cluttered.

For those in the neighborhoods, it was a mixed night of disturbances because of the booming bass.

“About 8pm the SnowGlobe bass got extra strong for a few minutes and Charter cable went goofy. I had it on a TV cable music jazz station with my sound bar bass higher than usual, so we were co-existing pretty well but for the occasional thought that there was a semi-truck going down our street,” Diana Hamilton, who lives near LTCC, told *Lake Tahoe News*.

Another nearby resident told *LTN*, “This year’s first night at

6-ish is like last year's last night at 10. At times it can be like living in a duplex with the world's worst neighbor and other times not so bad."

The city is monitoring complaints and ensuring the bass does not exceed the decibel level outlined in the three-year contract with Donnelly. (This is the first year of the contract.)

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Notes:

- SnowGlobe is Dec. 30 2:30-11pm, and Dec. 31 2:30pm-Jan. 1 at 1:30am.
- The city's complaint hot line is 530.542.6001.
- There will be fireworks each night.

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Editorial: Social media firms put business before free speech

Publisher's note: *This editorial is from the Dec. 25, 2014, New York Times.*

Dissidents in Russia and elsewhere are upset that Facebook has blocked an event page for a demonstration to support a leading opposition figure at the behest of the government of President Vladimir Putin. While their outrage is understandable, Facebook's decision serves as an important reminder that

social media companies are under no obligation to support free speech if doing so would harm their business.

Facebook officials have declined to address publicly their decision to remove the page for the Jan. 15 event for Aleksei Navalny, a vocal critic of Putin; the page is still available outside of Russia. But the company says that it will restrict content in countries when a government asks it to do so if it determines that the information violates local laws.

Data from Facebook show that it has increasingly blocked content in response to government requests. For example, in the first six months of 2014, it removed content in Russia 29 times, up from four times in the last six months of 2013. The increase on removals was even more stunning in Pakistan – 1,773 times in the first half of this year, up from just 162 times in the previous six months.

Read the whole story

Prosecco replacing Champagne as bubbly of choice

By Jillian Eugenios, CNNMoney

Even at some of the fanciest parties this New Year's Eve, the bottles of bubbly that will be popped open won't be classic French Champagne but its sparkling Italian cousin, Prosecco, instead.

Prosecco sales have been booming in recent years, partly due to its affordability. But that's starting to change. Higher-end Proseccos have entered the market, with prices of as high

as \$160 a bottle – and, in some cases, these sparkling wines may even start commanding the same respect as a chilled bottle of Veuve Clicquot.

“Cava and Prosecco are shedding the idea of the poor man’s alternative for Champagne,” said Chris Deas of New York’s Zachys Wine & Liquor, a family-owned wine shop that sells nationwide. “People are becoming more educated and more experienced.”

Deas said sparkling wine is a “huge growth area” for his business, especially in cities like New York and San Francisco. “There’s a hip wine culture in places where the sommeliers are able to educate the buyers who are coming in,” he said.

Read the whole story

Netflix countdown helps fool kids on NYE

By Frank Pallotta, CNNMoney

NEW YORK –Thanks to Netflix, many parents will be ringing in 2015 a few hours early.

While the childless might be popping Champagne and staying out late, 87 percent of parents are planning to celebrate New Year’s Eve with their kids, according to a Wakefield Research survey conducted by Netflix.

Midnight, however, is a bit late for most youngsters. Already, 34 percent of parents “fool” their kids into thinking it’s midnight at an earlier time.

That is why Netflix created an on-demand countdown hosted by King Julien, the animated lemur from the company's series "All Hail King Julien." Families can start streaming it any time they please.

[Read the whole story](#)

Nevada wants park users in Tahoe to pay

By Benjamin Spillman, Reno Gazette-Journal

It's no surprise business is booming at Nevada's Lake Tahoe State Park, Spooner Backcountry.

The park is home to stunning Lake Tahoe views, its own alpine lake and the Flume Trail which is probably the best mountain biking experience in Nevada.

The only problem is not everyone who visits pays the entrance fee, especially if they're coming from the north via Tunnel Creek Road.

That's the explanation behind a newly posted sign at Tunnel Creek Road reminding hikers about the \$1 fee to walk in and mountain bikers about the \$2 fee for riders. It's one of a few projects State Parks has in the works to improve fee collection in the coming year, said Eric Johnson, Nevada State Parks administrator.

[Read the whole story](#)