

NOAA: Climate change didn't cause drought

By Tim McDonnell, Mother Jones

California is in the middle of a really bad three-year drought that stretches across nearly the entire state. The drought has already wreaked havoc with the state's agricultural sector, is expected to take a \$2.2 billion bite out of the state's economy this year alone, and shows no sign of relenting anytime soon.

Climate scientists have warned for years that rising greenhouse gas concentrations will lead to more frequent and severe droughts in many parts of the world. Although it's generally difficult to attribute any one weather event to the broader global warming trend, over the last couple of years a body of research has emerged to assess the link between man-made climate change and the current California drought. There are signs that rising temperatures (so far, 2014 is the hottest year on record both for California and globally) and long-term declines in soil moisture, both linked to greenhouse gas emissions, may have made the impact of the drought worse.

But according to research by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, California's drought was primarily produced by a lack of precipitation driven by natural atmospheric cycles that are unrelated to man-made climate change. In other words, climate change may have worsened the impacts of the drought, but it isn't the underlying cause.

Read the whole story

Northstar hands out money to nonprofits

Northstar handed out checks to 28 local nonprofits for the 2014-15 through Vail Resorts' EpicPromise initiative.

EpicPromise is the company's way to support the communities surrounding each resort, encouraging environmental betterment, volunteerism and charitable giving among resort stakeholders.

Neither the total amount nor individual dollar amounts were disclosed.

Recipients include: Adventure Risk Challenge, Arts for the Schools, Big Brothers-Big Sisters of Nevada County, Boys & Girls Club of North Lake Tahoe, Disabled Sports USA Far West, Excellence in Education Foundation, Far West Nordic Ski Education Association, Girls on the Run-Sierra, Lake Tahoe Bicycle Coalition, North Lake Tahoe Truckee Leadership Program, Project MANA, Sagehen Outdoor Education Program, Sierra Avalanche Center, Slow Food USA Inc., SOS Outreach, Sugar Pine Foundation, Tahoe Food Hub, Tahoe Forest Health Foundation, Tahoe Fund, Tahoe Institute for Natural Science, Tahoe SAFE Alliance, Tahoe Truckee Community Foundation, Tahoe Truckee Unified School District, Sierra Watershed Educational Partnerships, Truckee Community Christmas, Truckee Donner Land Trust, Truckee River Watershed Council, and Truckee Trails Foundation.

TRTA offering wilderness first aid class

The Tahoe Rim Trail Association is hosting a two-day wilderness first aid course in January taught by the Wilderness Medicine Institute of NOLS.

This course will provide individuals with a foundation of important first aid concepts critical to responding effectively to emergencies in a remote backcountry environment.

The WFA course will help participants prepare for the unexpected. This fast paced, hands-on training is designed to meet the needs of trip leaders, camp staff, outdoor enthusiasts and individuals working in remote locations. It will introduce caring for people who become ill or injured far from definitive medical care. Classroom lectures and demonstrations are combined with realistic scenarios where mock patients will challenge participants to integrate their learning.

Learning takes place both in the classroom and in outdoor settings regardless of weather conditions. Dates are Jan. 24-25 from 8am-5pm, Tahoe Regional Planning Agency office in Stateline.

No previous first aid training is required. Participants must be 16 or older.

Successful course completion earns participants a WMI Wilderness First Aid certification. This certification is good for two years.

Register online.

Cole, David to lead South Tahoe council

By Kathryn Reed

South Lake Tahoe is moving forward with continuity and change when it comes to city leadership.

While it is normal for the mayor pro tem to take on the roll of mayor, that could not happen this year with Brooke Laine not being re-elected.

At the City Council meeting on Dec. 9 it was agreed that Hal Cole will continue as mayor and Wendy David will be mayor pro tem.

Cole started the discussion by saying instead of just nominating someone he would prefer those interested in the two positions say why they wanted it.

Cole, Tom Davis and JoAnn Conner each wanted to be mayor. Conner's belief is that the position should rotate and that newcomers should not be in either leadership role.

Her colleagues said the mayor and mayor pro tem need to be a person who treats their fellow members and the public with respect.

Voting for Cole were: Cole, David and Austin Sass. Davis and Conner voted for Davis.

When it came to mayor pro tem, David, Davis and Conner expressed interest in the job. Davis and Conner voted for themselves, while the rest voted for David.

When it came time for the council to make the positions official, those were unanimous votes for Cole and David.

David pointed to her vast experience in running boards, being in the community as well as being the top vote getter on Nov. 4.

There is precedence of the top vote getter becoming mayor pro tem. This happened in 2010 when Claire Fortier was elected to the council with the most votes.

Both terms are for one year.

Nevada college advisory boards draw criticism

By Bethany Barnes and Francis McCabe, Las Vegas Review-Journal

The Board of Regents last week created local advisory councils for the community colleges in the state, a move some education watchdogs fear is just window dressing to appease advocates who want local communities to have more say in the colleges.

The unanimously supported establishment of the Community College Institutional Advisory Councils on Friday comes in the wake of a heated battle to restructure the governance of higher education in the state.

In a showdown this summer, a panel of lawmakers rejected the idea of taking the community colleges out from under the Board of Regents.

Advocates argued the state needed a two-tier system that that would separate the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, the University of Nevada, Reno and the Desert Research Institute from the state's two- and four-year colleges.

The concept was that community colleges should be rooted in their communities. Oversight and advocacy end up neglected when the colleges are bundled in with the universities, proponents of local control argued.

Read the whole story

Snippets about Lake Tahoe



- Reno Tahoe Helicopters based out of Lake Tahoe Airport received its air carrier certificate from the FAA. This allows the company to offer charter services for air taxi in the United States, including tours to Napa, Calistoga, and Sonoma.
- Here are the El Dorado-Tahoe and Sierra roadwork schedules from Caltrans for this week.
- Diamond Peak has delayed its opening; with not set date on the calendar.
- Lake Tahoe Shakespeare Festival is putting on two plays in 2015 – “Romeo and Juliet” and “The Fantasticks”. Discounted tickets are on sale through Dec. 31.
- There will be a handbell concert at Hope Lutheran Church of the Sierra (930 Julie Lane, South Lake Tahoe) on Dec.14 at 6pm.

10 people evacuated from burning hotel



A fire Dec. 8 at the Tahoe Pines Lodge in South Lake Tahoe displaced 10 people.
Photo/Jonathan Moore

By Kathryn Reed

A South Lake Tahoe hotel fire Monday night displaced 10 people.

The 10:10pm blaze at Tahoe Pines Lodge started in a utility closet that contained a hot water heater and belongings from former guests, according to Fire Chief Jeff Meston.

“The fire investigators are going through that,” Meston said. An exact cause has not been determined.

This is a residential hotel, with many people living only on Social Security or disability checks.

“I believe most of these are an underserved population who live there, so it’s pretty devastating for those folks because they don’t have much in the first place,” Meston told *Lake Tahoe News*.

With the temperature dipping into the 20s, a Tahoe Transportation District bus was brought in as a means to keep people warm. Red Cross arranged for them to have a three-night stay at Howard Johnson, which should protect them from the storm that is moving into the basin. Many of the occupants also had dogs and cats that needed shelter.

The fire started on the first floor, moved to the second and got into the attic space. The ladder truck was deployed to the fire. Lake Valley and Tahoe Douglas also assisted with knocking down the fire.

“The fire was in concealed spaces so it was difficult. We had to cut a hole in the roof,” Meston said.

Three hotel units were damaged, with an entire wing of the Modesto Avenue hotel off limits. Part of the hotel remains open.

STHS football field scoring upgrades

By Kathryn Reed

By next football season Viking fans will be watching games from a new seating area.

At a January Lake Tahoe Unified School District meeting the board is expected to approve a contract for new bleachers at South Tahoe High School that will seat approximately 1,000 people. A press room and coaches box will be at the top of the structure.

“It includes emergency lighting for the field and seating areas. The back up lighting system is in the event of a power failure we have about 45 minutes of light to evacuate the facility,” Steve Morales, LTUSD director of facilities, told *Lake Tahoe News*.

The \$400,000 project is being funded by Measure G, the \$65 million school facilities bond voters approved in 2008.

The current home stands were built in 1966. They don't allow disabled access or meet federal regulations.

The new structure will meet the American with Disabilities Act, which includes a spot for a wheelchair and companion seating.

Today people in wheelchairs must watch the action from the end zone.

While both structures are bleachers, a difference with the new ones is the flooring is enclosed. This means no legs to dangle through the air, and no kids or personal items falling to the ground.

Officials also believe it will be easier to clean up any discarded trash.

"It will be weather dependent, but our hope is to have it installed prior to graduation," Morales said. Graduation is June 5.

The current stands have a capacity of less than 800. The visitor seating is about a decade old and has room for about 300 people. It is not being replaced.

The added capacity could also be a boon for organizations wanting to rent the field. The high school football and soccer teams use it today. Plus, it's where graduation takes place. The Come Up for Air Soccer tournament each June also uses this field.

Restrooms and a concession stand are still on the drawing board, but won't be part of this project. Porta-potties are brought in to accommodate ADA issues. The bathrooms at Mount Tallac High are open during games, but the road to get to them is not ADA approved. Next football season the district plans to bring in higher-end temporary restrooms; the ones that come on a trailer.

A donor wall was going to be installed by the concession stand, but with no date in sight for that building the district is going to use the bricks in next spring's project. There will be a permanent wall honoring the 118 people who donated to the field upgrades – which included the lights that were installed in 2011.

Editorial: Let Calif. plastic bag ban stand

Publisher's note: *This editorial is from the Dec. 5, 2014, Los Angeles Times.*

Some people just don't know when to stop fighting. Immediately after Gov. Jerry Brown signed the nation's first statewide ban on disposable plastic bags, the plastics industry vowed to overturn it.

Since then, out-of-state bag makers have contributed \$2.5 million to help collect 504,000 signatures by the end of the year to put a referendum on the November 2016 ballot reversing the ban, despite polls showing that it has widespread support.

Under the landmark environmental law, grocery stores and pharmacies are supposed to phase out single-use plastic bags by July 1; convenience and liquor stores have an extra year to comply.

But if the referendum qualifies for the ballot, the law is put on hold until after the 2016 election. That means another year and a half of plastic bags littering parks, rivers and

beaches, and more plastic debris polluting the ocean and killing marine life. There's no need for delay – Californians have already debated the issue ad nauseam and decided to ban the bag. Voters should just say no when asked to sign the petition for the referendum.

Read the whole story

Vail's \$50 mil. plan to combine Park City and Canyons

By Reid Singer, Outside

On Monday, Vail Resorts unveiled a \$50 million capital plan for upgrades to Park City Mountain Resort for the 2015-16 ski season.

Subject to approval by both Summit County and the City of Park City, the upgrades would include combining the ski area with nearby Canyons Resort. Visitors would ride a high-speed, two-way gondola between the two resorts to access the largest single ski area in the United States, with more than 7,300 acres of skiable terrain.

Efforts to combine the two adjacent ski areas will coincide with other major infrastructural improvements at PCMR, which Vail Resorts acquired only a few months ago following a three-year dispute that began when the ski areas' previous operator neglected to file the necessary paperwork to renew its lease with its landlord.

Read the whole story