

Candidates forum on North Shore

The North Lake Tahoe Candidates and Issues Forum is Oct. 14 from 6-8:30pm at the Tahoe City Public Utility District board room on Fairway Drive in Tahoe City.

Candidates running for positions on the TCPUD board, NTPUD board, Tahoe Forest Hospital District board as well as proponents of the Tahoe Truckee Unified School District's bond issue for lakeside schools, Measure E, will be present to address the audience in a moderated question and answer program.

The format for the evening will be to allow candidates for each agency the opportunity to provide a one-minute opening. This will be followed by questions from the moderators as well as written questions collected from the audience. Candidates will be given a one-minute response time. At the end of the Q&A time, there will be a final opportunity for a one-minute closing statement.

Judge upholds Calif. humane hen housing law

By Jacob Bunge, Wall Street Journal

A federal judge has dismissed a lawsuit challenging a California law that requires all eggs sold in the Golden State to come from hens housed in roomier cages.

The ruling deals a blow to a joint effort by a half-dozen farm

states, including Missouri and Iowa, whose attorneys general have argued the law overstepped California's legal authority and violated principles of interstate commerce enshrined in the U.S. Constitution.

The law, which takes effect Jan. 1, requires all producers selling eggs in California to house egg-laying hens in enclosures spacious enough for birds to lie down, stand up and fully spread their wings. The rules stem from a voter-approved 2008 ballot initiative covering California farmers and a 2010 state law that extended the standards to all producers selling eggs in the state.

The attorneys general have argued California lawmakers were attempting to force expensive new rules on any U.S. farmer who might market eggs in the state. They said farmers would have to spend hundreds of millions of dollars overhauling farms to ensure they would have access to the California market, the most-populous U.S. state and the biggest for egg sales.

Read the whole story

Snippets about Lake Tahoe



- There will be a free Accessing Capital for Your Business Workshop and Lender Expo on Oct. 15 from 3-5:30pm at Lake Tahoe Community College cafeteria.

- "The Geology of Tahoe: A Story of Earthquakes, Glaciers and Volcanism" will explore the powerful forces that created Lake Tahoe and its surrounding mountains, and will shed some light

on why you may want to invest in an underwater bunker. The free slideshow and lecture is Oct. 10 at 7pm in the Duke Theater at Lake Tahoe Community College.

- The Incline Village General Improvement District recently launched a redesigned website.
 - Coldwell Banker Residential Brokerage Northern California raised nearly \$20,000 at a September golf tournament for food banks and other charities. Some of the money will be spent in Lake Tahoe.
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California water officials not conserving

By Lance Williams and Katharine Mieszkowski, Center for Investigative Reporting

RIVERSIDE, Calif. – Mike Soubious is a prodigious water user, pumping more than 1 million gallons per year at his lushly landscaped home on a hot, windy Southern California hilltop.

Soubious also is a member of the Riverside City Council, which in July voted unanimously to impose tough new water conservation rules in this desert city of 317,000.

Yet as California's drought worsened from 2012 to 2013, he consumed enough water to supply eight California households – more than any other top water official in the state, records show.

Soubious knows he should cut his water use to set a good example, he told The Center for Investigative Reporting. But he has a 1-acre lot with cascades of flowering shrubs and a

weeping willow tree, and summer temperatures hit 100 degrees. Conservation isn't that simple, he said.

"Do I have to sell my house to set that example, or do I have to just abolish all my shrubs?" Soubirous said. "I don't know what to do. I don't know how I can reduce my water rate."

Like Soubirous, many of the local officials urging the public to save water during California's crippling drought actually are profligate water users themselves, a CIR investigation has found.

Water bills obtained via the state's Public Records Act show that in 2013, nearly half of the officials who supervise the state's biggest water agencies used more water than the typical California household.

And water officials tended not to cut back as the drought persisted. Even as their agencies scolded ratepayers on conservation, 60 percent of these officials used more water in 2013 than they had in 2012, records show.

Some officials used extraordinary amounts.

In addition to Soubirous, two other officials – a Fresno city councilman and a member of Riverside's utilities board – pumped more than 1 million gallons in a single year during the drought, records show.

In 2013, eight other officials used more than 1,100 gallons per day. That's triple the state's average. Among them was Randy Record, chairman of the board of the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California, which recently launched an advertising blitz to persuade 19 million people to save water.

Fifteen additional officials used double the statewide rate. One was Ashley Swearingin, Republican candidate for state controller and incumbent mayor of Fresno, where residents are allowed to water lawns twice a week now and not at all in

winter.

As the drought has worsened, local agencies have kept up a steady public relations drumbeat, urging Californians to take shorter showers, limit car washing and even tear out their lawns in the name of conservation.

This summer, the state told local agencies to enforce tough new rules: Ratepayers can face \$500 fines for offenses such as permitting excess runoff from outdoor watering or cleaning sidewalks with hoses. Around the state, according to news reports, neighbors have begun reporting neighbors for wasting water.

When contacted, some water officials bemoaned how much they were spending on water and blamed undetected sprinkler leaks, overzealous gardeners or heavy use of the family swimming pool. All said conservation is important. All vowed to do better.

But not all are following their own water rules. Last month in Riverside, an NBC Los Angeles crew collaborating with CIR on this story witnessed sprinklers running seven nights in a row at Soubirous' home. Yet in July, Soubirous joined the council in forbidding watering more than four times a week. When asked about it, he acknowledged he might have unintentionally overwatered.

Trent Orr of the Earthjustice environmental law firm in San Francisco said the officials were "blatantly defying" the conservation ethos they impose on ordinary citizens.

"You should be leading by example," Orr said, "not telling the little people you regulate that they need to tighten their belts while you proceed as if nothing had happened and in fact use more water."

Water bills for most Californians are confidential. But bills for officials who set water rates and policies are public

under the state's open records law. CIR obtained more than two years' worth for the elected and appointed officials who oversee 22 of the state's biggest water agencies – about 150 officials in all.

For comparison, a 2011 study commissioned by the state Department of Water Resources found that occupants of a single-family home in California use, on average, 361 gallons per day – or nearly 132,000 gallons a year.

North and south, Californians use about the same amount of water indoors, the study found. But Southern Californians use far more outdoors to keep their landscaping lush and swimming pools full. Overall, Northern California households use about 295 gallons per day, while Southern Californians use 523 gallons, according to the study.

CIR's analysis found a similar variance: Water-guzzling officials were concentrated in the drier, thirstier parts of the state – the Central Valley and hot inland areas in Southern California. Bay Area officials used far less: 255 gallons per day – slightly below the Northern California average.

In the Central Valley, where summers are scorching, water officials included in the CIR analysis averaged 855 gallons per day in 2013. The Central Valley's average use was less than 565 gallons. Because cities in the region have been slow to install residential water meters, bills weren't available for many officials.

Fresno City Councilman Oliver Baines said a horrendous malfunction in his sprinkler system made him a million-gallon user in 2013, the first year that water meters kept track in his west Fresno neighborhood.

Baines' first metered bill showed he used 4,000 gallons per day that month – about 11 times the state average. The city, which says it has the lowest water rates in California,

charged him \$182.43 for that water.

One year and 1.24 million gallons later, Baines finally solved what he called a “freak situation” involving his sprinklers: In the middle of the night, water would stream from defective sprinkler heads, flooding the yard. The ground became so saturated that a sinkhole opened up behind his house, he said.

After repairs, Baines used 149 gallons per day in March. But the memory still rankles.

“Well, you know, I apologize,” he said. “Clearly, I am not a model of water usage.”

Nobody in the valley rivaled Baines, though. Swearengin, Fresno’s mayor, averaged 850 gallons per day in 2013. She didn’t respond to a request for comment.

In Southern California, water officials averaged 541 gallons per day, exceeding both the state and regional rates. Officials in coastal cities tended to have far lower water bills than those in hotter inland areas.

Riverside Councilman Soubirous was the only official to use 1 million gallons in successive years, but he was not the only mega-user in the Inland Empire city, which has outlawed watering between 10 a.m. and 6 p.m.

Andrew Walcker of the city Board of Public Utilities used 1 million gallons in 2012. In September 2012, he pumped 6,000 gallons per day – enough water for 16 households.

Walcker’s 2-acre property once was a grapefruit grove. Starting 18 months ago, he said he began a landscape makeover, installing a state-of-the-art sprinkler system and pulling out 12,000 square feet of lawn.

Water bills show Walcker’s use dropped by 35 percent in 2013 and is on a pace to drop 50 percent this year. Nevertheless, in June, he used more than 1,500 gallons per day, triple the

Southern California average.

The other big Riverside user was utilities board member Nick Ferguson. He used enough for six households in 2012 and slightly less in 2013.

Ferguson declined to be interviewed, but his bills may continue to decrease. In May, according to a news release, he won a \$10,000 Waterwise Landscape Makeover contest sponsored by the city and the Greater Riverside Chambers of Commerce. His prize: a turf-free front yard.

Big water bills also prevailed on the board of the Coachella Valley Water District, which supplies desert resort cities and golf courses near Palm Springs.

Water board President John Powell Jr. used 1,800 gallons per day in 2013 at his home on an Indian Wells golf course, slightly more than in 2012.

In an interview, Powell blamed his landscaper for favoring a green lawn over water conservation. Recently, Powell said he took drastic action: He locked up his irrigation timer to prevent overwatering.

He said he also replaced lawns with rock and artificial turf. He expects big savings. But through Aug. 27, his water use was down 4 percent from 2013, records show.

Fellow Coachella board member Peter Nelson used 1,500 gallons per day last year, a 10 percent increase over 2012. Nelson says a big water bill seems unavoidable in his home near the Palm Royale Country Club in La Quinta, where his son hosted his water polo team for weekly swim parties in the family's pool.

Also struggling to conserve water is Record, a Riverside County rancher and local water district official who was elected chairman of the Metropolitan Water District of

Southern California in May.

For years, the consortium of 26 Los Angeles-area water agencies has promoted water conservation. Now, facing cutbacks from Northern California, it has redoubled its efforts. In May, Record and other Metropolitan Water District officials held a news conference to warn that if voluntary conservation measures fall short, water rationing would begin.

At his ranch house on the outskirts of San Jacinto, Record has a history of letting the water flow: In both 2012 and 2013, he used enough water to supply four families, with a summertime spike.

But this year, in the name of conservation, he told CIR that he has dramatically cut back, turning off the sprinklers for a “big part of our lawn.”

The result: In August, Record’s water bill was half what it was a year ago. But he still used 1,300 gallons per day – more than twice the Southern California average.

In the Bay Area, where summer nights can be cool and foggy, local water officials don’t use much water: 70 percent were under the state average in 2013.

The region’s biggest user was Martin Koller, vice president of the board of the Alameda County Water District. He used 604 gallons per day, double the regional rate. Koller said nine members of his extended family live with him, and his wife operates a day care center for 14 children out of the home. “That’s taxed our water usage,” he said.

Otherwise, Bay Area officials dominated the list of water misers among their peers.

The most miserly official in California was Eric Mar of the San Francisco Board of Supervisors, who lives in a condominium in the Inner Richmond district, part of the city’s fog belt.

He used 45 gallons per day in 2013 – about enough to fill a bathtub.

San Francisco Mayor Ed Lee was not far behind: He used 53 gallons per day at his Glen Park home.

The mayor believes “conservation is a way of life,” said spokeswoman Christine Falvey, and he’s often out of town on official travel.

As a result, Lee had some extraordinarily low bills.

In July, he used 24 gallons per day – enough to wash a load of clothes. In March 2013, he used 12 gallons per day – the equivalent of one six-minute shower. And in December 2013, after trips to China and India, the mayor’s bill was even lower: zero gallons.

Actually, the zero is a billing anomaly, said Tyrone Jue, spokesman for the city Public Utilities Commission.

In San Francisco, water use is rounded off on monthly bills, he said. Customers get zeros when they don’t use enough water to make the meter tick – 748 gallons in a billing period. Their minimal use is carried over to the following month’s bills, Jue said.

There’s no way the mayor went an entire month without using a drop of water, Jue said. “Essentially, it is normal,” he said of the bill.

Collection of short stories

don't pair well

By Kathryn Reed

Each time I picked up “All is Well, Safely Rest and Other Stories” it was a mystery what I would be reading next.



This is a collection of nine works of fiction from Wade Morgan, who used to live and work in Lake Tahoe.

The biggest problem I had is that none of the stories seemed to go with the next one. It appears to just be a collection of his short stories. And while there is nothing wrong with this per se, it is a hard collection to recommend because they are all over the place.

Stories range from young firefighters to two couples targeted by Mexican outlaws to a woman looking to find a trumpeter from Hawaii. Each is well written. Some even have unexpected turns.

I could see Morgan developing some of them into a full novel. It's like he has the chapter or two of more than one novel written.

He is definitely a good storyteller with a good imagination.

These short stories also seem like they would have more readership appeal if they were sold separately – perhaps published in a magazine – rather than bundled in this collection.

Tahoe instructor pens war memoir

By Michael Doyle, Bee Washington Bureau

Fresno native Brian Turner packed his poetry and went to war. Now, he's returned with an acclaimed memoir.

With "My Life as a Foreign Country," Turner has earned both accolades and, it seems, a measure of peace. The former infantryman has also fleshed out what he previously hinted at in poems dug from the hard ground in Iraq.

"The landscape is war," Turner said in an interview, not for the first time, "but the actual subject is love and loss."

Turner, 47, is a thrice-published author. His first two volumes, "Phantom Noise" and "Here, Bullet," were published by a small, quality outfit called Alice James Books. His latest, 212 pages of prose armored between hard covers, was published by W.W. Norton, which is big time.

Turner chairs the master of fine arts program at Sierra Nevada College on the North Shore of Lake Tahoe.

Read the whole story

Editorial: Vote no on Measure F

Publisher's note: *Lake Tahoe News convened an editorial panel of seven community members to come up with this endorsement.*

For 40 years, Lake Tahoe Community College has served the needs of the community through excellent programs, outstanding educators and what are now adequate or subpar facilities.

But we believe the leaders need to go back to the white board, crunch the numbers again, perhaps even take an analytics class to come up with another bond.

It's great to dream, have aspirations and a vision for the future. But if they are not shared dreams, aspirations and visions, then they likely will never come true.

Lake Tahoe News dreams of a successful, viable two-year institution that continues to thrive in South Lake Tahoe. We want students to have state-of-the-art equipment and roofs that don't leak. We want the college to be a centerpiece of the South Shore. We want the college to succeed and even be more than it is today. But Measure F is not the way to get there.

The \$55 million bond on the Nov. 4 ballot is the gold-plated version. It's a pie-in-the-sky approach to getting things we are not convinced the college or community need. We don't believe that just because you build it, they will come.

There is more than \$5 million in the bond project list for an environmental studies and sustainability center. Clearly, the environment is a big deal here – so is studying it based on all the agencies that call the basin home. But where is the proof that this discipline needs its own multimillion-dollar facility? (The total price is nearly \$16.8 million; with the

rest of the money coming from the state.) Where are the statistics to prove we are losing enrollment by not having it or the figures that show LTCC would gain enrollment by having it?

If the college wants \$5.7 million of bond money to be spent on an \$18.5 million regional public safety training facility, maybe it should be working with the Legislature to get some of the fire tax money that was hijacked by the state. Maybe the college should explain how its much heralded fire academy would benefit. And with the city of South Lake Tahoe recently upgrading its emergency operations center and the ability to use the police station (which is across the street from LTCC), the need for such a facility has not been demonstrated.

With online education growing, do we need more brick and mortar?

LTCC has many wonderful programs. Enhance and grow what is working before becoming more than you are. There is room for improvement for what exists today.

Officials say they want LTCC to be a destination college. How is this even possible when there is no housing for students? Student housing is not part of the bond despite the fact that in September 2013 during a daylong visioning session dorms were at the top of the list of desires from the community.

We are not convinced more buildings and programs will bring more enrollment. And if enrollment doesn't increase, what would be the point of such a significant outlay of money?

It's alarming that \$2.25 million of bond funds are allocated toward planning, including state and federal documents, and Tahoe Regional Planning Agency permits. Bond management is another \$1.75 million. We realize there is a cost to doing business – especially here – but that is 7 percent of the bond. And that \$4 million doesn't even account for the bond financial advisory services and bond legal counsel.

We believe the college should come back to voters with a downsized bond that looks less like a wish list and more like a needs list. We want to know our money is going for substance and not fluff.

We know the college needs to upgrade its technology, science lab and work on safety issues. These needs we believe are things the voters should invest in.

While getting matching money from the state is great, sometimes it's OK to say no thank you.

We can't justify spending more taxpayer money on facilities when the college has clearly demonstrated it cannot maintain what it has. The college needs to get its house in order before it starts building new facilities.

For these reasons we urge voters to vote no on Measure F.

Tahoe National Forest opening roads, trails

Because of the progress in suppressing the King Fire and repair efforts the road and trail closures on the American River Ranger District are no longer in effect.

The Tahoe National Forest has also made repairs to the Western States Trail and reconstructed the Swinging Bridge and smaller Pacific Slab Bridge are complete. The trail closure across the North Fork of the Middle Fork of the American River has been lifted.

Ongoing salvage logging is making the Western States Trail not accessible from Devil's Thumb down to the Swinging Bridge.

The Tahoe National Forest routes that were reopened today include: National Forest System Road 96 (Mosquito Ridge Road); National Forest System Road 22; and National Forest System Trail 16E10, the Western States Trail, and Tevis Cup Trail.

Kingsbury Grade opening early

Kingsbury Grade is scheduled to reopen Oct. 7 at 6am.

Construction will continue for the next weeks. Motorists should expect construction-related traffic delays of up to 30 minutes over the next few weeks. Construction is scheduled to resume in spring 2015.

Since the project's start in May, nearly four miles of roadway have been reconstructed, including excavation of nearly 24,000 cubic yards of old road and placement of 21,000 tons of asphalt. Thus far, 5,900 linear feet of storm drain pipe have also been installed. More than 8,000 linear feet of curb and gutter work have also been put in place.

The \$15 million project is aimed at reconstructing pavement on Kingsbury Grade to a 13-inch depth from just east of Daggett Summit to the intersection of Highway 50 at Stateline.

In virtual mega-drought,

Calif. avoids defeat

By Bettina Boxall, Los Angeles Times

A few years ago a group of researchers used computer modeling to put California through a nightmare scenario: Seven decades of unrelenting mega-drought similar to those that dried out the state in past millennia.

"The results were surprising," said Jay Lund, one of the academics who conducted the study.

The California economy would not collapse. The state would not shrivel into a giant, abandoned dust bowl. Agriculture would shrink but by no means disappear.

Traumatic changes would occur as developed parts of the state shed an unsustainable gloss of green and dropped what many experts consider the profligate water ways of the 20th century. But overall, "California has a remarkable ability to weather extreme and prolonged droughts from an economic perspective," said Lund, director of the UC Davis Center for Watershed Sciences.

The state's system of capturing and moving water around is one of the most expansive and sophisticated in the world. But it is based on a falsehood.

"We built it on the assumption that the last 150 years is normal. Ha! Not normal at all," cautioned paleoclimate expert Scott Stine, a professor emeritus of geography and environmental science at Cal State East Bay.

"The weather record that we tend to depend on in California for allocating water ... is based on about 150 years of really quite wet conditions when you look back at, say, the last 8,000 years or so," Stine said.

He found evidence of two extreme droughts in ancient tree

stumps rooted in the state's modern lake beds. The trees could have grown only when shorelines beat a long retreat during medieval mega-droughts lasting a century or more.

Read the whole story