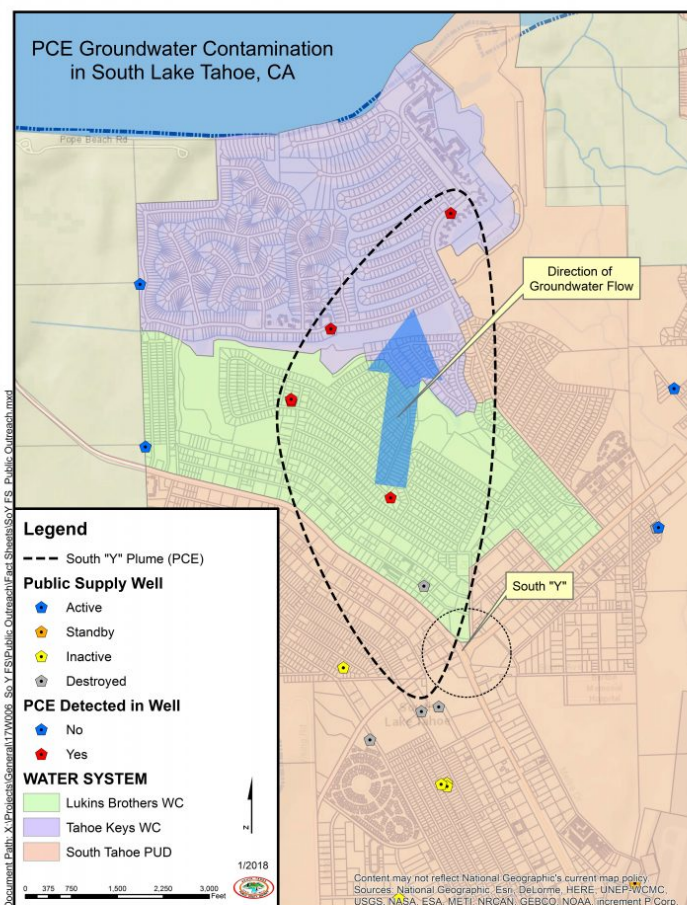


Toxic plume a concern for SLT water companies

By Kathryn Reed

Cleaning up the groundwater contamination at the Y area of South Lake Tahoe is moving at a glacial pace.

And while more than 60 people last week attended a meeting at Lake Tahoe Airport about PCE, or tetrachloroethylene, not much new was presented by the three water agencies affected by the solvent nor the regulatory agency responsible for overseeing the cleanup.



The arrow designates the direction of the PCE plume, while the circle is

the area it's believed to be in.

Map/STPUD

Representatives from South Tahoe Public Utility District, Lukins Brothers Water Company and Tahoe Keys Water Company all gave a spiel about the contaminant. Also at the meeting was Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board members. That state agency is responsible for determining who is responsible for the contamination, the cleanup method and overseeing that it is done.

While PCE has been written about for years by *LTN* and has been a known issue in town for decades, the plume continues to percolate beneath surface, polluting the groundwater. Remedies have been elusive.

Instead, the water companies have each had to shut down wells. Lukins is getting some of its water from STPUD.

Nothing new came out of the meeting. For the public, it was an opportunity to have all of these agencies in one room answering questions.

It was stressed by everyone that what flows from the spigot from each of the water purveyors is safe. There is no PCE in the water being delivered to any customer serviced by these three water companies. Someone would have to be regularly drinking PCE contaminated water for 70 years for there to be health risk, according to Lahontan.

STPUD accounts for 87 percent of the groundwater use on the South Shore, Tahoe Keys 10 percent, Lukins 5 percent, private wells 2 percent, and small water systems 1 percent.

It is believed PCE got into the groundwater from a dry cleaner at the Y. It is also used as a degreasing agent. It's heavier than water, so it sinks.

"Because it is not soluble in water, it can be more easily

removed," Richard Solbrig, STPUD general manager, said at the meeting.

Nonetheless, it hasn't been removed. This in part is because the culprit, while identified as the Lake Tahoe Laundry Works, may not be the only contributor to the problem. Then the state has been slow in mandating action be taken.

The status today is that a consultant is putting together a feasibility study.

Sachi Itagaki, an engineer with Kennedy/Jenks consultants, said her firm will be looking at alternatives for soil and groundwater remediation, how to dispose of the contaminant, coming up with what needs to be built to remove the product, and establishing a cost to build whatever is needed as well as the operating expense. An implementation plan is also part of the contract.

The report should be done this summer, with another community meeting likely to take place then.

Cleanup will be done vertically and laterally.

In the meantime, the three water companies are working together and independently to ensure their product is safe as the toxic plume continues to hover in the Y area.

Opinion: Time to fess up about taxes, pensions

By Dan Walters, CALmatters

California's political leaders don't have to look very far to

find a stark example of the pension cost crisis facing the state's 482 cities.

Three blocks from the Capitol, in Sacramento's city hall, Mayor Darrell Steinberg – a former leader of the state Senate – and other officials are seeing pension costs skyrocket.



Dan Walters

"Over the past nine years, the city's pension expense has increased by 28 percent or \$14.5 million," says a passage in the city's 2017-18 budget. "Over the next eight years, the city's pension cost is expected to more than double what is currently paid."

The California Public Employees Retirement System (CalPERS), which handles pensions for virtually all Sacramento city employees, says in its most recent "actuarial evaluations" that the city's costs will rise from \$92.8 million in 2018-19 to \$159.4 million by 2024-25, a \$66.6 million increase.

Keep that number in mind because it bears an uncanny resemblance to another figure.

Immediately after explaining the rising pension costs, the city's budget talks about Measure U, a half-cent increase in the sales tax that city voters approved in 2012 and that will expire next year.

Based on current retail sales activity in the city – \$6.4 billion in 2016, the last year for which complete data are available – the half-cent tax now generates about \$32 million

a year, mostly dedicated to police and fire services.

City officials not only want to ask voters to renew that tax, but Mayor Steinberg and other officials may ask them to double it to a full cent, which would raise at least \$66 million a year as taxable sales rise.

Sound familiar? It's very close to the projected increase in the city's annual pension costs, driven primarily by those for police officers and firefighters. By 2024, CalPERS projects, Sacramento will be paying 61 cents into the pension fund for every dollar of police and fire salaries, up from 43 cents in 2018-19. For non-safety "miscellaneous" employees, payments will rise from 19 cents per \$1 of payroll to nearly 28 cents.

Of course, rising pension costs aren't being mentioned as a reason why the city may be asking its voters to pay more taxes.

During his State of the City address in January, Steinberg talked about creating a multibillion-dollar fund to pay for infrastructure, affordable housing, cultural amenities and incentives to attract new business.

"With more capital, we can direct and lead more of the change we want to see," Steinberg said.

He said money for the new city improvement fund would come from a new tax and/or sale of unneeded city property.

Facts, however, are facts.

CalPERS is making ever-increasing demands on Sacramento and other local governments for more money to prop up its trust fund, which has scarcely two-thirds of the money it needs to meet current pension promises.

The city of Sacramento's two CalPERS accounts are similarly short, with the police/fire system just 66.5 percent funded and the one for other employees only slightly better at 70.8

percent, its actuarial statements say.

Renewal of Sacramento's expiring half-cent tax would cover perhaps half of the projected increase in annual pension costs, but crowd out other services the tax now finances. Were voters to double it to a full cent, virtually every new dollar it generated would be needed to pay increased CalPERS demands.

Asking voters to raise taxes for popular services without mentioning rising pension costs has become a common tactic in California's cities.

The League of California Cities has raised the alarm about "unsustainable levels" of pension costs. Isn't it time for the cities themselves to be truthful when they ask voters for new taxes? And isn't Sacramento the right place to begin the truth-telling?

Dan Walters is a columnist at CALmatters.

Shaun White snares gold in epic halfpipe finish

By Angel Rodriguez, Los Angeles Times

Shaun White, who once trained at Northstar, did it again.

White scored a 97.75 in the third run to top Ayumu Horano of Japan who had set the ride to beat in the second run with a score of 95.25.

It was a back and forth duel between White and Horano throughout the afternoon.

Read the whole story

50th annual St. Paddy's Day event tickets on sale

The Rotary Club of Tahoe Douglas is putting on the 50th annual St. Patrick's Day Celebration fundraiser on March 17.

It will from 6-10pm at Harrah's Lake Tahoe.

This year's event will have one-of-a-kind auction items, along with food and libations. It will also include unique entertainment and contests never-before experienced at this event.

Email spdc@tdrotary.com for ticket inquiries.

Every dollar raised goes back into the community.

Dry, hot winter closes ski resorts, stalls wildflower blooms and revives drought fears

By Paige St. John, Rong-gong Lin II and Sarah Parvini, Los Angeles Times

TRUCKEE – In the Sierra Nevada, snowpack levels are running below even the darkest days of the drought, with cross-country ski resorts closed and mountain biking becoming the sport of choice until the snow returns.

In the Bay Area, cities like San Francisco, San Jose and Santa Rosa are experiencing the hottest starts to a year on record.

And Southern California remains in the grip of unprecedented dry and hot conditions, despite a weak storm that moved in Monday.

February is historically a wet month, but not this year. And the long-term forecast offers little hope for relief.

Read the whole story

Liberty providing scholarships to area students

Liberty Utilities is offering academic scholarships for eligible high school and college students within its service territory.

The eight schools participating are South Tahoe High School, Loyalton High School, Douglas High School (students residing in Alpine County only), Coleville High School, North Tahoe High School, Truckee High School and Portola High School, as well as Lake Tahoe Community College.

The seven high school scholarships are \$500 each. High school seniors must have a minimum unweighted GPA of 2.5 and be

accepted to an accredited four-year or two-year university or college or an accredited vocational school. They also must have some community service experience in the community which they reside.

The Lake Tahoe Community College scholarship is \$750. Those students are eligible for the scholarship if they have a current 2.5 gpa or higher, and have completed at least 18 quarter units at LTCC. They must enroll in LTCC's upcoming fall quarter, and have demonstrated leadership through school and/or community service experiences within the community they reside.

Interested students should contact their school's financial aid office or counselor to find out more about the scholarship and to obtain an application. The individual schools have different deadlines, but all scholarships will be awarded starting mid-May through the end of June.

Prescribed fires planned for Tahoe basin

The Tahoe Fire and Fuels Team, which includes local, state and federal agencies, may continue prescribed fire operations this week in some locations around Lake Tahoe, weather and conditions permitting.

Each prescribed fire operation follows a specialized prescribed fire burn plan that considers temperature, humidity, wind, moisture of the vegetation, and conditions for the dispersal of smoke. This information is used to decide when and where to burn.

Smoke from prescribed fire operations is normal and may continue for several days after an ignition depending on the project size and environmental conditions.

Letter: Rotartians give back to Bread & Broth

To the community,

Bread & Broth really appreciates the support the Tahoe Douglas Rotary Club has been giving our Adopt A Day of Nourishment program. The Rotary Club signed up for five Adopt A Days and on Feb. 5 we were sent another great team to volunteer while hosting their fourth AAD in the past seven months. Representing the Rotary Club at the Monday meal dinner were Rotarians Linda Bellotti, Keith Endlich, Bob Fehskens, Greg Felton, Roberta Stillwell and Brian Williams.

Evidently, every one of the Rotarians had a great experience at their sponsorship dinner and they all wanted to share their thoughts. "B&B is so productive for our community and it deserves our support." "What a lovely enjoyable experience!" "You are the heart of our community." "Thank you for allowing us the opportunity to help our community." "Wonderful to help some of our local citizens have a great meal." "Looking forward to coming back soon – fun!"

Bread & Broth has thoroughly enjoyed the participation of all of the Rotarians who have been volunteering at the Rotary's AADs. Providing a hot, nutritious meal every Monday is a labor of love and having the support of so many of the Rotary clubs members is really a wonderful endorsement of the Adopt A Day program and how it not only feeds those in need but feels the

souls of those who volunteer to help ease of the hunger of others.

Carol Gerard, Bread & Broth

Tahoe funding source at risk under Trump plan

By Benjamin Spillman, Reno Gazette-Journal

A Nevada-based program that's generated more than \$300 million to improve Lake Tahoe would take a funding hit under one federal budget proposal.

On Monday the Interior Department published a budget brief that includes a proposal to take \$230 million from the Southern Nevada Public Land Management Act over the next three years.

The act funds conservation and recreation projects around Nevada, including in the Tahoe basin.

Read the whole story

Anti-sexual harassment and bullying workshop

Lake Tahoe South Shore Chamber of Commerce invites HR leaders, business owners, and managers to attend the Level UP Anti-

Sexual Harassment and Bullying workshop on Feb. 21.

It will be from noon to 1:30pm inside the chamber's Stateline conference room.

The cost is \$10 for chamber members and \$20 for others.

Workshop facilitator Laura Moriarty is a seasoned HR executive, nationally known corporate trainer, and frequent presenter of Sierra Human Resources Association workshops. Her organization, Tahoe Training Partners, has provided high quality, intellectually fresh training, executive coaching, 360-feedback, compensation and strategic planning, meeting facilitation, and customized organizational retreats since 2007.