Nevada monuments expected to avoid major cuts

By Debra J. Saunders and Henry Brean, Las Vegas Review-Journal

Two national monuments in Nevada have been spared from dramatic downsizing, but Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke confirmed this week that he wants to see some land carved from Gold Butte in northeastern Clark County.

Zinke is recommending what he characterized as a minor adjustment to the northern boundary of the 297,000-acre monument to exclude five springs held by the Virgin Valley Water District as a future water source for Mesquite.

But when and how that change might be made remains unclear.

Read the whole story

Safety of Incline area VHRs called into question

By Kim Burrows, KRNV-TV

Lake Tahoe is a popular place to rent a house on a short-term basis to hit the ski slopes in the winter and play on the beach in the summer.

But the North Lake Tahoe Fire Protection District is worried about the safety in some houses. The danger has already cost a teen his life.

People can choose from thousands of rental homes around the

lake. Online websites advertise that the homes can sleep 16, 18 and 20 people. But fire officials say it’s not always safe.

Read the whole story

Snippets about Lake Tahoe

· West Shore Cafe’s annual tree lighting is Dec. 15. Dinner will be served from 5-8pm, with the evening including live music, caroling by the Tahoe Truckee School of Music, tree lighting on the pier, and holiday ornament making for kids. Guests who bring a new, unwrapped toy valued at $25 will receive 10 percent off their check.

· Evan’s restaurant in South Lake Tahoe has just joined the elite ranks of the “DiRoNA” (Distinguished Restaurants of North America) recognized establishments. It is the only restaurant in the Tahoe-Truckee area to earn this recognition.

· The U.S. Forest Service Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit is looking for volunteers from January through March to assist with Winter Trek and Ski with a Ranger conservation education programs at Heavenly Mountain Resort. For more information, contact Reanna Suela at rsuela@fs.fed.us for Winter Trek, or Jaclyn Tain at jtain@fs.fed.us for Ski with a Ranger.

· A segment of Truckee’s Trout Creek Trail will be closed Dec. 8-12, 7am-5pm to repair damage from last winter.

· Charles Schwab is opening a branch on Donner Pass Road in Truckee.

Survey: Rural lifestyle critical to EDC residents

Maintaining a rural lifestyle is the most important thing to El Dorado County residents who took a recent survey.

The county was seeking input on needs and priorities for economic development.

In one question people had to pick the following as being most important: rural lifestyle (320 votes), high level county services (306), keeping sales tax low (87) or not sure (36).

Other questions/answers:

Which three of the following aspects of economic development are most important to you, if any?

· Good schools – 444

· Recreational options – 396

· Job opportunities – 340

· Affordable housing – 307

· Restaurant options – 206

· Retail shopping options – 149

· Easy parking – 82

· Other: – 77

· Tourist attractions – 54.

Which of the following things, if any, do you think are

strengths of El Dorado County?

· Recreational options – 565

· Good schools – 358

· Tourist attractions – 345

· Restaurant options – 146

· Easy parking – 122

· Affordable housing – 75

· Other: – 62

· Retail shopping options – 59

· Job opportunities – 34.

Keeping in mind that about 24 percent of every property tax dollar goes to the county, what best describes your view on having additional housing development in El Dorado County to support improvements in the areas we just asked about? Do you strongly disapprove, disapprove, neutral, approve, strongly approve?

· Approve –23.3 percent

· Strongly disapprove – 20.6 percent

· Neutral – 19.7 percent

· Disapprove – 19.5 percent

· Strongly approve – 12.4 percent

· Not sure – 4.4 percent.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Zephyr library launching weekend game days

The Zephyr Cove Library will be hosting a game day on the third Saturday of every month.

Play a variety of board and card games provided by the library, or bring your own collection of tabletop games to challenge other participants.

The first game day will be Dec. 16. The meeting room will be set up with tables and available from 9am-5pm.

This is sponsored by the Friends of the Douglas County Public Library.

The Zephyr Cove Library is located at 233 Warrior Way.

Court: Groundwater pumping fees are not taxes

By Carolyn Whetzel, Bloomberg

A decision by California's highest court could give a boost to local water agencies grappling with how to implement the state's landmark groundwater management law.

The California Supreme Court ruled that the charges Ventura must pay to a local water district for groundwater

conservation activities aren’t taxes or fees that require approval by property owners or voters.

Because the United Water Conservation District’s charges aren’t for property-related services, they don’t require approval either by property owners or two-thirds of area voters, the court said, affirming a 2015 lower court ruling.

Read the whole story

It’s not only trees – wildfires imperil water too

By Emily Benson, High Country News

The Fourmile Canyon Fire, sparked by a backyard burn west of Boulder, Colo., in 2010, caused $220 million in damage and destroyed 168 homes. It also scorched nearly a quarter of a watershed that supplies water to the nearby community of Pine Brook Hills. The problems didn’t end there: Long after the blaze was put out, intense rainstorms periodically washed sediment and other particles downstream, disrupting water treatment and forcing the local water district to stop pulling water from Fourmile Creek, leaving it reliant upon water already collected in its reservoir.

“The water coming down Fourmile Creek would get so dirty that we simply would shut down moving any water (from the creek),” for days or even weeks, says district manager Robert de Haas. “If we hadn’t built the reservoir” – in 2006 – “we’d have been in big trouble.”

Now, research suggests that such water-quality problems might

become more frequent across the West. Climate change is already causing a surge in wildfire activity. As a result, scientists expect to see a rise in erosion in most of the region’s watersheds in the coming decades. Sediment and ash running off burned hillsides into streams can clog reservoirs, smother fish and disrupt municipal water supplies.

Read the whole story

Liberty Utilities promoting solar to customers

Liberty Utilities will host a free solar for homeowners and small businesses workshop on Dec. 19 in South Lake Tahoe.

Officials will provide information on solar energy as well as the company’s solar incentive program.

It will be from 6:30-7:30pm in the library on Rufus Allen Boulevard.

Utility representatives will be available to discuss various aspects of installing and using solar energy for residential and small business facilities. Anyone may attend, but only Liberty Utilities customers are eligible to apply for the program, which provides cash incentives to offset the cost of installing solar panels. Schools within Liberty’s service territory are also eligible.

Wise one step closer to defending Olympic gold

By Peggy Shinn, Team USA

COPPER MOUNTAIN, Colo. – Reno's David Wise would like to win another Olympic gold medal at the Olympic Winter Games PyeongChang 2018. And the 27-year-old freeskier is finally one step closer.

"It's a boost of confidence, it's a pressure ease, it's everything," Wise said with a big smile. "The weight's off my shoulders now."

He nailed his first run at the Toyota U.S. Grand Prix, sailing high above Copper's sunny superpipe and linking a series of double corks. He scored an un-toppable 92.80 and made a statement to the eight other men in the final, including Torin Yater-Wallace, who won the first Olympic qualifier last February as well as the PyeongChang test event, and reigning world champion and X Games gold medalist Aaron Blunck, who also competed in the 2014 Sochi Games.

The U.S. Grand Prix at Copper is serving as the second 2018 U.S. Olympic qualifier for freeski halfpipe. Up to three skiers who earn two top-three finishes in the five qualifiers will qualify for the PyeongChang Games.

Read the whole story

Communitywide approach to disaster preparedness

By Kathryn Reed

When home is on the other side of a wall of fire that is headed your direction the choices can seem bleak.

This was what several people encountered during the South Shore's 2007 Angora Fire. They were working at Camp Richardson on that Tuesday in June when the fire jumped Highway 89.

The marina fired up the Sky King, an 18-passenger boat it uses as a water taxi, and ferried employees and guests to the Tahoe Keys Marina – out of harm's way.

This is what it means to be prepared and not have to rely on others to be rescued.

With catastrophic disasters becoming more common, South Lake Tahoe officials aren't waiting for the next Angora – or worse – to occur here. City Manager Nancy Kerry on Dec. 8 convened dozens of leaders to talk about having a communitywide approach to disaster preparedness and not just a government response.

"I want to be as efficient and coordinated as we can be," Kerry told *Lake Tahoe News*. She said collaboration hasn't always been a strong suit here, with people operating in silos.

An immediate outcome is South Tahoe Public Utility District is going to hold off on purchasing new communication's equipment to see what direction the city decides to go in next year. This is ideally so they would be compatible with one another.



South Lake Tahoe Fire Chief Jeff Meston talks Dec. 8 about the catastrophic threats to the region. Photo/Kathryn Reed

Fire Chief Jeff Meston lamented how inadequate communications systems are within the city as well as between key players in California and Nevada. While cell phones can work, they are limiting at times because service here can be sketchy. And without cell towers that can survive a fire, that line of communication can be eliminated.

Last winter the city opened its emergency operations center more than once because of the dangerous weather. Gaps in knowledge, information and communications were revealed. Internally changes have been made.

Friday was about working on external changes. At the meeting were reps from private business, religious organizations, lodging, California Tahoe Conservancy, Lake Tahoe Unified School District, Tahoe Transportation District, Tahoe Regional Planning Agency, Lake Tahoe Visitors Authority, STPUD, El Dorado County, and Barton Health.

The city is hoping to create written partnerships with many of these people. It could be as simple as Camp Richardson

pledging boats when needed or a hotel offering lodging for evacuees.

“We are always willing to help out with any of our vessels when we can for public needs,” Bob Hassett, who owns Camp Rich Marina, told *Lake Tahoe News.*

Having the written agreements helps with federal reimbursements. It also prevents price gauging in the moment.

Meston listed sobering statistics about how much public safety personnel exists throughout the South Shore. That’s why he says it’s imperative residents be prepared to fend for themselves for 72 hours in a disaster because it could take that long for help to arrive.

More disturbing is that help from outside the area may not arrive – at least not in a timely manner. Meston pointed out how during this fall’s Wine Country fires 305 fire engines were requested and only 130 responded in the first 12 hours. Resources eventually came from as far away as Australia.

In 2012 there were 134 unfilled mutual aid requests. In 2017 there have been 6,000.

There are more situations, resources are stretched thin and local areas worry more about needing to protect their own. Then there is the fact the disasters are more horrific – think the current conflagration in Southern California.

Meston said there have been 15 catastrophes this year that each has exceeded $1 billion in destruction.

“The common denominator is climate change. That’s not going to change anytime soon,” Meston said. “Hurricanes and wildfires are the most catastrophic. Climate change has really changed our business.”

Fire season, especially in California, is now year round.

While fire is one of the biggest threats to the Tahoe basin, it’s not the only one. A seiche, or lake tsunami, is a very real possibility if any one of the earthquake faults moves in a significant manner. The lake water would act like a bath tub, sloshing back and forth in a deadly manner.

Terrorism is possible. In August 2001, Earth Liberation Front claimed responsibility for trying to bring down the Heavenly gondola by tying logs to the cable.

While the presentation was sobering, the goal was hopeful – prepare now as a community so the impact is less and the healing can begin that much sooner.