

NorCal wildfires burning much earlier this summer

By Dale Kasler, Sacramento Bee

You aren't imagining it: California's wildfire season really has started earlier than usual this year.

The state's biggest fires usually don't strike until August or later. This year, California already is besieged with two major fires, and it's the first week of July.

"It has been basically very dry since the beginning of April," said Paul Ullrich, a climatologist at UC Davis. "I wouldn't be surprised if the (fire) season is among the worst on record."

Already this year, CalFire has responded to 2,626 fires. That's about 260 more than at the same time a year ago, said agency spokesman Scott McLean.

Read the whole story

Barton Auxiliary hands out \$16K in scholarships

Eight graduating students from the South Shore and Carson Valley were awarded a combined \$16,000 in scholarships from Barton Memorial Hospital Auxiliary.

The annual scholarship program was open to local high school and community college students focusing their higher education in a medical field.

Barton Auxiliary's 2018 grant cycle included a new Dan Kerr Memorial Scholarship, celebrating the legacy of Auxiliary member and avid volunteer, Dan Kerr. Totaling \$7,000, this new scholarship was awarded to two graduating seniors of Barton Memorial Hospital employees. An additional \$9,000 was divvied between recipients selected on the basis of academic excellence and interest in pursuing a career in a medically related career.

Dan Kerr Scholarship recipients were Abby Burns and Gabriella Fisher of South Tahoe High School. The Barton Auxiliary Scholarships were awarded to Marin Underhill of Lake Tahoe Community College; Shelby Lyon and Bailey Segers of South Tahoe High School; Nicholas Buchholz of Whittell High School; and Simranjit Kaur and Ian Ozolins of Douglas High School.

S. Lake Tahoe slow to make decision on pot tax

By Kathryn Reed

South Lake Tahoe electeds have yet to commit to putting a question on the November ballot asking voters to tax marijuana.

Discussion on the topic filled the bulk of the July 2 City Council meeting. The special meeting was necessary because the city clerk didn't properly do all the paperwork for the topic to be on the agenda at the last regular meeting.

The council is running out of time to make a decision in order for it to be on the Nov. 6 election. A decision is expected at the next regular council meeting, July 17. The council asked

the consultant to bring back more information. Some of this has to do with how tourists were projected to contribute to revenue; some about how business fees would be recovered if development agreements go by the wayside. Also to be determined are the pros/cons of taxing microbusinesses as one entity versus breaking down the components of each. Some on the council also wanted a better handle on what expanding the legalization locally would cost the city, particularly the police, finance and planning departments.

Tim Cromartie with Hdl Companies, the company hired to provide recommendations for a tax initiative, gave an overview on what the various segments of the cannabis sector might garner based on various tax figures. He said the numbers provided would be good for two or three years.

Cromartie said the “pain point” for producers and consumers is at about 30 percent before people will stick with the black market. This gives local municipalities little room because the state of California already assesses about 25 percent in taxes. That’s a combination of excise and sales taxes.

California is already having issues, with cannabis tax revenue only at about half of projections.

It’s also widely acknowledged that there is an oversupply of cannabis in the state, and elsewhere.

Cromartie said cultivation operations should be taxed based on square footage, not on quantity produced. This largely has to do with that method providing a consistent revenue stream and not relying on harvests, which can be variable. Plus, if the market bottoms out, the tax would not be affected if it’s based on the facility’s size.

The consultant’s proposed maximum rates:

- Cultivation, indoor, artificial lighting – \$10/square foot

- Cultivation, indoor, mix lighting – \$7/square foot
- Cultivation, outdoor – \$4/square foot
- Cultivation, nursery – \$2/square foot
- Testing laboratory – 2½ percent gross receipts
- Retailer – 6 percent gross receipts
- Distribution – 3 percent gross receipts
- Manufacturing – 4 percent gross receipts.

The firm suggested initial rates start lower.

Hdl estimates with four businesses the city could conservatively bring in between \$217,000 and \$350,000 a year in taxes; with eight businesses between \$435,000 and \$700,000; and with 12 businesses between \$616,000 and \$996,000.

If voters were to approve a pot tax in November, it would become effective Jan. 1, 2019. It would require a simple majority to pass.

Pot was also one of the discussion items in closed session; specifically the lawsuit regarding Tahoe Wellness Cooperative. No reportable action was taken.

However, a change now for closed sessions is that only people who have business regarding the item are allowed behind closed doors. In the past the city clerk was allowed in these private meetings. This was even though no notes are supposedly kept. The council made this change last month.

Snippets about Lake Tahoe

- The deadline to comment on the Eldorado National Forest Snowmobile Plan is Aug. 6. Information is available **online**.
 - Fire crews from the Tahoe National Forest, CalFire and Truckee Fire were able to get a line around the Boca Fire that started at about 2:30 July 2 near Boca Dam, and hold it at about 2 acres. Helicopter 514 from CalFire was able to drop water on the fire and support the crews on the ground. This fire was likely started by shooters in the shooting range, according to Truckee police officers.
 - Meet people in the community and make new friends with Friend Speed Dating, Adults ages 50 and over are invited to a low-key social event at the Minden Library on July 21 at 11:30am. Attendees will be given a set amount of time to chat with each of the other attendees. The “getting to know you” period will be followed by food and refreshments.
 - El Dorado County supervisors are contemplating increasing the sales tax in the unincorporated area from 7.25 percent to 7.75 percent. The voters would have to approve it. This might raise \$6.5 million and would be designed to offset the dollars lost if the gas tax is rescinded.
 - The Bicycle Advisory Committee of the South Lake Tahoe Recreation Facilities Joint Powers Authority will meet July 11 from 9-11am in the Downstairs Airport Conference Room at Lake Tahoe Airport.
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When local papers close, costs rise for local governments

By Dermot Murphy, Columbia Journalism Review

During the past 15 years, local newspaper circulation numbers dropped by roughly 30 percent, while the number of statehouse reporters covering local government issues dropped by 35 percent. Academic studies suggest that a lack of local media coverage is associated with less informed voters, lower voter turnouts, and less engaged local politicians. My colleagues and I, as finance professors, wondered whether a decline in local journalism would also lead to higher borrowing costs for local governments.

Local governments frequently borrow money to finance public works projects such as schools, hospitals, and roadways. Lenders demand higher interest rates if they think they are lending to a riskier borrower—that is, a borrower who is more likely to default on a loan. We suspected that if local media is not present to keep their government in check, then there would be a greater likelihood of mismanaged public funds and other government inefficiencies. As a result, governments lacking local media coverage would be perceived as riskier borrowers and forced to pay correspondingly higher interest rates on the funds they borrow for public works projects. The costs stemming from higher interest rates would ultimately be borne by local taxpayers.

Read the whole story

ZCTC to host Breakfast at Wimbledon



Breakfast at Wimbledon has green courts – just not grass. Photo/Provided

Winter in summer? It will look like it in July at Zephyr Cove Tennis Club.

That's because the tennis courts will be awash in white as players participate in Breakfast at Wimbledon on July 14, the same weekend the pros play in the finals of the annual all grass tournament.

As is tradition at the All England Club, players in Zephyr Cove will be decked out in all white.

This is a casual-competitive event for anyone to play in. No need to be a member of ZCTC. Players will be paired with a partner that day. The top four teams will win a prize.

Breakfast at Wimbledon begins with breakfast at 9am, followed

by play at 10am.

Cost is \$15 for members, \$20 for non-members, and \$5 for spectators who want to eat. The first 32 paid entrants are guaranteed a spot. The deadline to sign up is noon on July 7. To do so, go **online** or to the pro shop at the courts.

While breakfast is included in the price, participants are asked to bring a dish to share and personal beverages.

Zephyr Cove Tennis Club is on Warrior Way off Highway 50 in Zephyr Cove. The nonprofit Zephyr Cove Tennis Club Foundation is hosting the event.

Vehicle sought in Evans Fire near Mt. Rose



The Evans Fire is burning in rugged terrain near Mt. Rose. Photo Copyright 2018 Carolyn E. Wright

Law enforcement is looking for a vehicle that may be connected to the Evans Fire that is burning near the Mount Rose Wilderness Area.

The fire is at 63 acres and 50 percent containment.

U.S. Forest Service investigators have determined the fire was human caused, but the specific cause is still under investigation. They are looking for a green lifted Jeep Cherokee with a LED light bar on the roof. If anyone has information, they are asked to contact Capt. Don Harris at 775.355.5327 or deharris@fs.fed.us.

The Evans Fire started the morning of July 1 west of Reno on

the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest's Carson Ranger District.

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*

Federal land managers issue fire prevention order in Nev.

By Associated Press

Federal land managers have issued a statewide fire prevention order aimed at reducing the risk of wildfires in Nevada.

The restrictions imposed by the Bureau of Land Management on Saturday prohibit the use of fireworks and certain types of ammunition and targets for shooting.

[Read the whole story](#)

\$5M OK'd for Nev. electric car charging stations

By KTVN-TV

State regulators have approved NV Energy's plans to spend \$295 million on renewable energy in Nevada in the coming year, including \$5 million to build electric car charging stations.

The annual budget the Nevada Public Utilities Commission approved Wednesday also provides grants to help consumers put

solar panels in their homes.

Read the whole story

Victim, suspect in South Tahoe shooting identified

The man who was gunned down Saturday outside of his South Lake Tahoe residence has been identified as Christopher Kitchen, 44.

Detectives determined there was an argument between the victim and the suspect prior to shots being fired.

Roy Figaro, 62, of South Lake Tahoe was in jail on a murder charge without bail. He was taken into custody after a short standoff with police.

The incident started after 5pm on June 30 at the entrance to Tahoe Verde mobile home park on Julie Lane. When police arrived they found Kitchen lying in the road with gunshot wounds. He was transported to Barton Memorial Hospital where he later died.

Anyone with information is asked to call South Lake Tahoe Police Department at 530.542.6100 or Lake Tahoe Secret Witness to remain anonymous at 530.541.6800.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report