Opinion: Feds exploit fire tragedy to promote logging

By Chad Hanson, Sierra

In the wake of the October 2017 fires in Northern California, which resulted in the loss of so many lives and homes, people affected by the tragedy are grieving and bewildered. Many people are searching for answers about what caused the fires, and a way forward to prevent similar loss of life and property.

It's frustrating, then, to watch Republican leaders in Congress and the Trump administration politicizing the recent tragedy as they push for a sweeping elimination of environmental laws on our national forests and other federal public lands to increase logging and backcountry fire suppression under the guise of community protection. On Nov. 1, the House voted 232-188 to allow for more "salvage logging" and other forms of tree-cutting on federal properties. According to the Associated Press, House Speaker Paul Ryan said the bill was needed to protect the nation's federal forests "from the kind of devastation that California experienced."

Wrong. Even a cursory examination of the science of forest ecology reveals that this plan would not only destroy vast acreages of public forests, but would also put communities at even greater risk.

Read the whole story

AG hints at crackdown on recreational pot

By Kate Irby and Emily Cadei, Sacramento Bee

Attorney General Jeff Sessions hinted Wednesday that the Justice Department may take a tougher stance on recreational marijuana in the near future, a change in policy that would have a significant impact on the five states plus the District of Columbia that already allow the drug to be used for more than medicinal purposes.

California is scheduled to join that group on Jan. 1.

Sessions and other DOJ officials previously indicated they would continue the policy laid out by the department under former President Barack Obama, which in essence allows state officials leeway in how they deal with the drug as long as they meet certain standards, like keeping cannabis out of the hands of minors, keeping it from crossing into states where it isn’t legal and preventing drugged driving.

Read the whole story

Gaming win surges on South Shore

Stateline casinos bucked the statewide trend in October, with gaming revenue up more than 16 percent to $2.29 million compared to a year ago.

Statewide the numbers released Nov. 30 by the Nevada Gaming

Control Board were flat, with a 0.27 percent gain.Las Vegas numbers were down. Officials are attributing this to the massacre at the concert which has curtailed tourist traffic a bit.— *Lake Tahoe News staff report*

International visitors to U.S. down 4 percent

By Beth J. Harpaz, AP

The number of international visitors arriving in the United States declined nearly 4 percent in the first six months of this year compared with the same period in 2016, according to data released Wednesday from the U.S. Department of Commerce National Travel and Tourism Office in Washington.

Many sectors of the travel industry have been warning that President Trump’s anti-foreigner rhetoric and immigration policies would lead to a drop in tourism here.

Fewer visitors came from nearly every region of the world, with declines in arrivals from Western Europe, Eastern Europe, Asia, the Middle East, Africa, South America, Central America and the Caribbean.

Read the whole story

Backpacking guide tackles emotional, financial challenges

By Benjamin Spillman, Reno Gazette-Journal

When the snow flies in the mountains many hikers and backpackers retreat to their laptops and smartphones to dream up bigger and better adventures for next year.

Hikers hunting a truly epic adventure on the Pacific Crest, Appalachian or any other long trail need more than fancy gear and the right hashtag to succeed. They need to plan for the financial and emotional challenges of an adventure, such as paying the bills and maintaining healthy relationships with family and friends while away on the trail.

It’s those less glamorous aspects of adventure that Elizabeth Thomas tackles in her book, “Long Trails: Mastering the Art of the Thru Hike.”

Read the whole story

Free movies at SLT’s Y in December

For the entire month of December, Sierra-at-Tahoe rings in the holiday season with family-friendly Christmas movies coupled with ski/snowboard premieres, charity fundraisers, and live artists.

Sierra-at-Tahoe, FNCTN and Lake Tahoe AleworX will provide the community an opportunity to enjoy free big-screen movie screenings under the stars, while huddled around fire pits and supporting a great cause.

Event snapshot:

Dec. 3, 5pm: “The Polar Express,” beneficiary – Lake Tahoe Boys & Girls Club

Dec. 9, 5pm: “Elf” and “This is Home,” a Faction ski movie

Dec. 16, 5pm: “Supervention 2,” cause – Sierra Avalanche Dogs

Dec. 23, 5pm: “The Grinch” and “Passenger,” benefits Lake Tahoe Boys & Girls Club.

Snippets about Lake Tahoe

· Sierra Avalanche Center is having a fundraiser Dec. 1 at 6pm at the restaurant at Lake Tahoe Airport.

· Azul Latin Kitchen in the Heavenly Village is having an enchilada fundraiser for Tahoe Youth & Family Services on Dec. 12, 5-9pm. Cost is $10.

· Northstar plans to open Dec. 1.

· There will be a fundraiser Dec. 5, 6-9pm at South Lake Brewing Company for Jared Marquez who was in a serious climbing accident on Nov. 10. All proceeds will go toward his medical expenses. Marquez is the owner/roaster of Refuge Coffee.

· The video BrandUSA shot of Lake Tahoe is being used in China and Taiwan to promote Lake Tahoe to international

visitors. Here is the **video** of Lake Tahoe for China. Here is the landing page for **China**. This is the landing page for **Taiwan**.

Barton Hospice to remember those who have died

Light Up a Life, Barton Health Hospice's annual celebration of the memory of loved ones lost will be Dec. 13, 6-7:30pm in the North Room at Edgewood Tahoe.

Hospice staff will share readings and a remembrance message, and attendees will have the opportunity to reflect and acknowledge those who have passed. The event will culminate with the lighting of a tree decorated with photo ornaments honoring hospice patients lost this year.

Community members who are unable to attend but would like to share an honoree may provide their loved one's name to Barton Home Health and Hospice prior to the event, and staff will read out loud that person's name.

For more information or to share an honoree, call 530.543.5581 or email tbruess@bartonhealth.org.

Power outage in Angora burn

area

A primary wire belonging to Liberty Utilities is down at Highway 50 and the Angora Creek area of the South Shore.

Crews on site making repairs, with restoration expected by 2:30pm.

Customers are reporting no or partial power. The areas affected include Dixie Mountain Road, Pyramid Court, Pyramid Circle, Mt. Shasta Circle and Snow Mountain.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Ex-Heavenly employee sentenced to 15 years



Stephan DeGraffenreid

A former children's ski instructor at Heavenly Mountain Resort is going to prison for 15 years.

Stephan DeGraffenreid, 26, of Gardnerville was sentenced Nov. 29. In September he pleaded guilty to one count of sexual exploitation of a minor and two counts of attempted sexual

exploitation.

Upon release he must be supervised for life. DeGraffenreid faced a maximum of 45 years in prison.

According to court documents, DeGraffenreid had pictures of naked girls on his phone that he had downloaded. Photographs he personally took were of toddlers in a bathroom at a daycare center.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report