

Carson City fire 500+ acres, 30 % contained

The Voltaire Fire burning in Carson City remains at 504 acres and 30 percent contained.

Crews are continuing aggressive work on containment lines on June 14. People are advised to continue to avoid Voltaire Canyon Road.

The fire started earlier this week when two campers were burning poop in a hole, according to officials.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

SLT bike rodeo – part fun, part educational

The Kiwanis Club of Tahoe Sierra is partnering with the South Lake Tahoe Police Department, El Dorado County Sheriff's Office, California Highway Patrol and TRPA to put on a Bike and Safety Rodeo in the front parking lot of South Tahoe Middle School on June 23 from 11am-2pm.

The purpose of the rodeo is to promote bicycle safety. Young riders will be moving through an agility course learning basic safety skills and the importance of being seen by motorists.

Bike inspections will be performed by Watta Bike and Sierra Ski & Cycle Works.

Each child will receive a free helmet while supplies last.

CHP will provide free car seat safety inspections. Kiwanis will give parents an opportunity to have your child's digital fingerprints taken for identification purposes. All fingerprints are given to parents to store, prints are not retained by Kiwanis or law enforcement.

Beer, bingo and burritos benefits animal group

Beer, bingo and burritos at South Lake Brewing on June 19 will benefit Animal Coalition of Tahoe.

Bring your friendly dog on a leash and get \$2 off your first pint.

The event is from 6-9pm at 1920 Lake Tahoe Blvd, just west of the Y in South Lake Tahoe. Money goes to ACT's spay-neuter program

Verde Mexican Rotisserie will be serving up their food.

Bingo cards are \$10 for two, \$15 for three, \$20 for five.

Looking into Trump's impact on tourism in U.S.

By Bing Pan, The Conversation

Are fewer people visiting the U.S. now that Trump is

president?

Some have blamed the Trump administration for a sharp downturn in international tourist arrivals in 2017, as measured last September. A more recent revision of the numbers suggests that might not be accurate.

So what's driving the latest trends in U.S. tourism – and what does that mean for the nation's image on the global stage?

I am a researcher who studies tourism. Many factors impact the volumes of travel between countries, including travelers' income levels, exchange rates, diplomatic relations and hospitality infrastructure. Even the release of a movie can affect the volume of tourists.

Many elements played a part in the lackluster performance of the U.S. international tourism industry in the past two years. Ample evidence shows that the Trump administration contributed to this. It's hard to quantify the exact amount, but it's likely less significant than many people think.

Inbound tourism is flat

Inbound tourism is very important to the economy of the U.S., as it brings in international visitors and foreign currency. In 2016, visitors to the U.S. generated \$245 billion in travel spending. That counted as one-third of U.S. service exports, making tourism number one among that category.

However, in 2016, the number of international tourists to the U.S. dropped by more than 2 percent, while international tourism spending remained almost flat. This is in sharp contrast to a 4 percent increase worldwide in international arrivals in 2016.

Data for 2017 are less clear. Numbers on the U.S. are still being revised by the National Travel and Tourism Office. The United Nations World Tourism Organization reported that

international tourism arrivals worldwide in 2017 were up 7 percent. I believe the U.S. is unlikely to match this pace, even with revised numbers.

The causes of the flat performance deserve a little more in-depth investigation.

First, as a mature tourist destination, it's very hard for the U.S. to generate 5 to 7 percent of increase annually. The U.S. is a long-haul destination for China, South Korea and Europe. In terms of tourism worldwide, residents from those areas generated the most growth last year. Those citizens are more likely to travel to nearby destinations.

Second, among all the factors affecting travel between nations, exchange rates might be the one of most important, since they determine visitors' spending power. Canada is the largest inbound nation for the U.S. In 2016, 19.3 million Canadians visited – a quarter of total international visitors. The value of its currency has been dropping compared to U.S. dollars in recent years.

Trump administration's impact

Has the new administration played a role in tourism numbers?

Strictly speaking, to investigate the effect of one factor on international arrivals, you would have to conduct a controlled experiment. For example, you could tell half of the world's population, randomly, that Trump is our president and the other half it was Hillary Clinton, then measure the different amounts of visitors from those populations. Of course, that's not possible.

However, many data points hint at the Trump administration's impact on tourism. International visitation from certain countries is declining. There were already 3 percent fewer visitors from the Middle East to the U.S. in 2016.

What's more, data on airline reservations tell a similar story. Olivier Jager, the CEO of ForwardKeys, a company that specializes in air reservation data, has been tracking changes since President Trump took office. In a March 2017 report, air bookings from seven Muslim countries in the Trump administration's travel ban decreased 80 percent from last year.

An updated news release shows strong recovery in the Americas, but bookings from the long-haul market remain flat, lagging behind an uptick trend globally.

Finally, international sentiment toward new U.S. policy is now mostly negative. The Pew Research Center found the overall image of the U.S. suffered a sharp decline since Trump took office.

There's also some anecdotal evidence. For example, in the responses to a Facebook post by The New York Times, many Europeans said they would avoid trips to the U.S. due to the Trump administration. Recently, one of our own colleagues, Mark Harvitz of the University of Waterloo, declined to travel to the U.S. to accept an award due to a self-imposed travel ban to the U.S.

However, there are exceptions: Chinese visitors are actually more likely to visit the U.S. under the Trump administration.

In conclusion, the Trump part of "Trump slump" might be true, but international tourism to the U.S. can hardly be described as a slump. It would be more accurate to say that the U.S. is lagging behind other nations. We cannot put all the blame on the Trump administration.

The U.S. has a strong reputation as an international destination, due to its wonderful naturally endowed resources and its cultural influence around the world. However, perhaps it's time for the tourism industry to beef up its marketing muscle, in order to mitigate the negative political climate

and to boost continuing growth.

Bing Pan is an associate professor of tourism management, Pennsylvania State University.

Letter: More needs to be done to protect Tahoe

To the community,

On June 13, scientists with the UC Davis Tahoe Environmental Research Center released their report on Lake Tahoe's average water clarity for 2017. Their finding of an average of 59.7 feet depth of clarity is the lowest since they began taking measurements in the 1960s.

The record-level low for Lake Tahoe's clarity is alarming news. That said, it's not surprising, considering how much the Lake has been warming in recent years. Tahoe has also been experiencing more frequent extreme weather conditions, which may be the new normal at Lake Tahoe as our climate changes.

Global warming is expected to make extreme weather fluctuations more common at Tahoe. Also, in the past four years, Lake Tahoe's water has been warming at 10 times its historic trend.

It's more important than ever that we continue the efforts to protect the national treasure that is Lake Tahoe. It's critical that Tahoe continue to get public funding to restore the ecological functions of the Tahoe basin's wetlands, meadows and forests that strengthen the Lake's resiliency. Sources of pollution, particularly fine sediment pollution

from the Tahoe basin's roads and urban areas, must continue to be addressed.

Lake Tahoe can't protect itself. There's a role for everyone in this. Now is the time for people who love Tahoe to get involved, no matter where they live. As Tahoe's oldest and largest environmental watchdog, we're in it for the long haul.

Through advocating for the protections Tahoe needs, educating and engaging the public about how they can protect the lake, and by collaborating to find solutions to these challenges, we will Keep Tahoe Blue.

Jesse Patterson, deputy director League to Save Lake Tahoe

Lake Tahoe Airport issues subject of meeting

The South Lake Tahoe Planning Commission, acting in its capacity as the South Lake Tahoe Airport Land Use Commission, will be discussing an update to the Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan for Lake Tahoe Airport on June 21 at 3pm.

The draft ALUCP is **online**. ALUCPs are land use documents that provide for the orderly operation of airports and surrounding areas while safeguarding the welfare of people who live in the airport vicinity and the general public.

The commission meets at the airport.

Calif. wants federal money for water projects

By Laura Tsutsui, Politico

California is one step closer to getting a cut of \$2.5 billion over the next decade for its water needs now that the House has passed a bill aimed at funding water research and infrastructure projects.

The drought-stricken state has positioned itself as independent of the federal government – most notably, the Trump administration – on issues ranging from immigration to health care coverage. However, it still turns to federal lawmakers when it needs a financial boost for an issue as central to the state as water.

The Water Resources Development Act, which passed the House last week by a vote of 408-2, identified more than 40 projects nationwide to fund with federal cash. The Senate is expected to pass its own version this summer.

Read the whole story

Delays expected Hwy. 89 on North Shore

Motorists can expect traffic delays on Highway 89 between Truckee and Tahoe City as Caltrans repaints the edge lines in both directions of the highway.

Striping operations are scheduled for June 14 from 7am-7pm.

Rolling lane closures will be used.

Motorists are cautioned to slow down when they see the flashing amber lights of the attenuator truck following the striping equipment to provide additional safety for the equipment operator. The striping of the lane deliniations on the Highway 89 roundabouts near Interstate 80 is also scheduled for Friday.

Dramatic decline in Tahoe's clarity – 9.5 feet

By Kathryn Reed

Despite \$2 billion being spent on environmental improvement projects in the Lake Tahoe Basin over the course of more than a decade with the primary goal to improve the clarity of the lake, Mother Nature is foiling those plans.

UC Davis Tahoe Environmental Research Center on June 13 released the annual lake clarity report for 2017, which shows a decline of 9.5 feet to 59.7 feet from a year ago. The previous lowest level was 64.1 feet recorded in 1997.

Scientists are blaming the decline on the confluence of weather extremes – the drought and then the winter deluge.

“We are not shocked by it. I think everyone was expecting a low clarity year based on the drought conditions we had followed by what really is one of the wettest winters on record,” Tom Lotshaw, spokesman for the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency, told *Lake Tahoe News*.

Still, the trend of the last few years is declining clarity.

It dropped 3.9 feet in 2016 and 4.8 feet in 2015. In other words, the clarity of Lake Tahoe has dropped more than 18 feet in three years.

“If you look at the bigger picture we know that these clarity numbers can vary wildly from season-to-season and year-to-year. That is why the total maximum daily load looks at five years. That five-year average even after this low year is still at 70 feet,” Lotshaw said. “The longer term declines we were seeing for 20 to 30 years has been stabilized.”

Clarity is measured by taking various readings with a Secchi disk, which looks like a white dinner plate. It is put over the side of a boat and with the naked eye someone looks to see how far down they can clearly see it.

Numbers are usually the worst in summer and then improve in the fall and into winter. In 2017 the fall readings continued to decline. Then the winter rains just flushed a tremendous amount of sediment into the lake. Usually runoff is not a concern until spring.

“This report serves as a stark reminder about the importance of conservation and restoration efforts. Without that progress, the lake would already have been lost. We must continue investing in those efforts if we’re going to save Lake Tahoe,” Sen. Dianne Feinstein, D-Calif., said in a statement.

California Natural Resources Secretary John Laird and Nevada Director of Conservation and Natural Resources Bradley Cowell issued the following joint statement: “While annual clarity declines are not unusual, the record decline experienced last year warrants an in-depth review to further understand the causes and impacts, and to help ensure the 2017 decrease is an anomaly, and not a trend. After 20 years of significant investment to protect the clarity of Lake Tahoe, we take this development seriously. As the natural resources leads for our

states, we are asking the science community to take a fresh look at factors affecting lake clarity and recommend actions to continue our success in protecting the ecological health of Lake Tahoe in a time of changing climate.”

While officials talk about climate change being a serious issue in the basin, no answers have been forthcoming. Weather extremes are predicted to become the norm, not be an anomaly. The lake is warming, which presents other issues. A warmer lake keeps the fine sediment particles closer to the surface which in turn diminishes clarity.

A bright spot though is that Geoff Schladlaw, director of TERC, said numbers collected so far in 2018 are encouraging, calling them “more in line with the long-term trend.”

UC Davis researchers are hoping an autonomous underwater vehicle and an underwater robotic glider that are new tools in its arsenal will help provide data that can provide answers and solutions to ongoing and growing concerns at Tahoe.

Even so, most of the money, time and scientific studies have been spent on worrying about lake clarity in the middle of Tahoe. Those who frequent the beaches worry more about the muck and the discoloration – it being more brown than clear – by the shore. But that’s a whole different issue called the near shore, which until the last handful of years wasn’t even on officials’ radar.

Snippets about Lake Tahoe

• Raley’s, Bel-Air and Nob Hill stores are offering discounted tickets to the 29th annual American Century Championship, the celebrity golf tournament at Edgewood Tahoe

Golf Course on July 10-15.

- July 28 is the second annual Bikes & Brews Festival at Kirkwood.
- Troopers from the Nevada Highway Patrol, as well as other employees for the Department of Public Safety, will be volunteering their time to raise money for Special Olympics of Nevada and California on June 14 at Hard Rock Hotel in Stateline from 11am-3pm and 5-9pm.
- El Dorado County leaders and community agencies who serve older adults are invited to attend Reframing Aging in El Dorado, an interactive training event on June 29 from 9am-4pm at the Cameron Park Community Services District located at 2502 Country Club Drive in Cameron Park.
- Douglas County Sheriff's Office is issuing each deputy nasal Narcan or Naloxone. Each deputy may administer it to anyone suffering from suspected or accidental opioid overdoses.