

Implementing recreational pot rules won't tax Nev. budget

By Sean Whaley, Las Vegas Review-Journal

CARSON CITY – Neither state regulators nor a lawmaker who pushed through Nevada's medical marijuana program in 2013 expect funding to be an issue as the state now moves into the realm of recreational pot sales.

While at least one other state is trying to figure out where to obtain startup funding for recreational marijuana sales, state Sen. Tick Segerblom, D-Las Vegas, said implementing it in Nevada won't cause financial problems for the state budget.

Nevada has money in its medical marijuana program that could be used for any upfront costs for recreational marijuana, such as licensing and inspections of the new dispensaries, he said.

Read the whole story

4-wheeler gets stuck in meadow by Angora



A driver got caught four-wheeling in a Tahoe meadow on Dec. 11. Photos/LTN

A recent transplant to the Lake Tahoe Basin learned the hard way where not to go four-wheeling.

The driver, whose name has not been released, got his Chevy Blazer stuck Dec. 11 in the meadow by Angora on the South Shore.

With all the rain the area has received in the last week, it's like a bog there. The SUV had mud up to its axle.

The U.S. Forest Service cited the man for driving off a designated route. Heather Noel with the USFS said what he was deliberate.

The preliminary assessment is that there was not extensive damage done to the meadow, but the USFS will be looking at the area further.

“Driving or riding off designated routes on national forests can cause unacceptable resource damage to include vegetation and wildlife habitat destruction, soil erosion, and degraded streams,” Noel told *Lake Tahoe News*. “By utilizing roads and trails designed for use through forests and grasslands, our natural resource communities are less likely to be stressed by recreational use.”

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*

Northstar ski instructor dies at resort

A ski instructor at Northstar died at the resort on Sunday.

Dennis Baltimore, 35, of Kings Beach and co-workers were going down Village Run, which gets people back to the base, when a snowboarder lost control after hitting ice. Baltimore veered to his left, went through some trees and landed in a creek.

The snowboarder called 911.

Ski patrol and Northstar firefighters responded Dec. 11, but were unable to revive Baltimore. He was pronounced dead at the scene just after noon.

“Northstar California Resort, Northstar Ski Patrol and the entire Vail Resorts family extend our deepest sympathy and support to our employee’s family and friends; we are all devastated by the loss of this member of our team,” said Nadia Guerriero, Northstar’s vice president and general manager, said in a statement.

According to Placer County sheriff’s Sgt. Dave Hunt, the

snowboarder is not likely to face charges.

“You are supposed to ski in control. You can be skiing in control, and hit ice which causes you to go out of control,” Hunt told *Lake Tahoe News*.

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*

Tahoe trip part of reason Stanford band silenced

By Jenna Lyons, San Francisco Chronicle

Stanford University marching band has played its last tune for the rest of the school year.

University leadership temporarily suspended all activities of the ensemble on and off campus from Friday through spring 2017, citing “constant and repeated violations of policy” suggesting a “systemic cultural problem.”

A Dec. 1 review from the panel found that the band broke alcohol rules at gatherings and used band funds to rent a cabin at Lake Tahoe, violating the travel ban, according to a letter to band leadership from Greg Boardman, vice provost for student affairs.

Read the whole story

Wet start to season puts dent in Calif. drought

By Ellen Garrison, Sacramento Bee

October was wet, November dry. And December? The soft but steady rains this weekend were enough to push the Sacramento region to 155 percent of normal precipitation for the season.

And there's more to come. After a break between storms, wet weather is expected to return Tuesday, according to the National Weather Service. The wet system should linger over the region through Thursday, dropping 2 to three 3 of rain in Sacramento and 5 to 8 inches of rain and snow in the Sierra.

So what does that mean for California's drought, now entering a sixth year? While Northern California has seen a wet start to winter, the situation is more complicated across the state. Central and Southern California continue to experience unusually dry conditions. And even in the north state, it's not clear how the rest of the rainy season will shape up.

Still, the early-season rains are making a dent. A year ago, the U.S. Drought Monitor listed all four counties in the Sacramento region as being in "exceptional drought," the worst classification. This year, the drought monitor's weekly report shows conditions in Sacramento and Yolo counties have been upgraded two categories to "severe drought," while El Dorado County is another step up in "moderate drought," and parts of Placer are listed as just "abnormally dry" – the least severe category.

Read the whole story

Letter: Homeless coalition thankful for help

To the community,

Tahoe Coalition for the Homeless would like to thank Harrah's & Harveys Lake Tahoe for their support. In November, Harrah's and Harveys employees collected supplies for the South Lake Tahoe Warm Room. This donation will help provide overnight refuge from the elements to individuals and families experiencing homelessness in the winter months.

The Warm Room will open at 7pm on Dec. 15 and plans to remain open through early April.

In addition to warm beds and light food and beverages, TCH provides access to social workers and resource referrals to assist our neighbors without housing with some of the challenges that they face.

Tahoe Coalition for the Homeless is looking for groups to run supply drives and for 2016-17 winter season. We can be contacted at tahoewarmroom@gmail.com or 775.573.0822. Donations are welcomed to aid in funding. Checks can be made payable to Tahoe Coalition for the Homeless and mailed to PO Box 13514, South Lake Tahoe, CA 96151 or online at tahoehomeless.org.

Sincerely,

Marissa Muscat, executive director

Historic Rainbow Lodge drying out

By Sara Zendehtnam, Fox 40

SODA SPRINGS – In the 40 degree weather, the cool breeze of fans work to dry out the Rainbow Lodge basement in Soda Springs.

The pressure of South Yuba River's heavy floodwaters Saturday was too much for the lodge's stone foundation. Water seeped its way through the basement. Parts were under five inches of water.

"I wasn't scared, it was more 'oh my goodness, what area we going to do now?'" said general manager Randy Kure.

Read the whole story

Anderson atop podium at Dew Tour

Jamie Anderson, who has been competing in Dew Tours for nine years, won the competition this weekend in Colorado.

With consistent snowstorms bringing more than 31 inches of snow to Breckenridge over the last seven days, the competition was altered accordingly throughout the weekend to ensure it was the safest and best for riders and fans. After several attempts for the female snowboarders to compete in the jump section for the slopestyle title, it was finally decided Sunday to determine a winner based on the jib section results

from Saturday.

No stranger to the podium, Anderson reclaimed her Dew Tour slopestyle title Dec. 11. Her winning jib run from Saturday consisted of a cab tail switch-up to back tail, frontside 270 on the down rail, 50-50 off the pole jam to slide across the Toyota cage with a stalefish off, and a tailside to fakie on the flat to down kink rail, scoring her a 91.33.

“It’s been an epic weekend,” said Anderson. “I’m just so happy. Unfortunately, we didn’t get to jump, but I don’t think I’ve ever won a rail jam, so I’m pretty stoked. I’m loving the new setup. It’s sweet.”

Runner ups behind Anderson were 16-year-old Hailey Langland (USA), with her score of 86 and last year’s second place winner, Spencer O’Brien (Canada), with a best score of 80.

Tahoe Tails – Adoptable Pets in South Lake Tahoe



Blackie

Blackie is a 5-year-old Chihuahua who is sharing a kennel with 8-year-old Iggy, also a Chihuahua mix.

Both boys are very sweet, wagging their tails and begging with their eyes for you to let them climb into your lap. Even though the shelter is usually noisy and inspires most dogs to bark, these boys are both very quiet. They are tiny dogs (6 to 8 pounds) who get along well, but they do not need to be adopted together. All adoption fees are sponsored this December.

Blackie and Iggy are neutered, microchipped, tested for heart worm, and vaccinated. They are at the El Dorado County Animal Services shelter in Meyers, along with many other dogs and cats who are waiting for their new homes. Go to the Tahoe animal shelter's Facebook page to see photos and descriptions of all pets at the shelter.

Call 530.573.7925 for directions, hours, and other information on adopting a pet.

For spay-neuter assistance for South Tahoe residents, go **online**.

– Karen Kuentz

Kirkwood Mountain Resort, state water board reach settlement in contamination case



A slope at the parking lot of Kirkwood's cross country ski area is covered with asphalt grindings that were blown there during snow removal operations. Photo/Provided

By Susan Wood

Vail Resorts' Alpine-Amador county ski resort known for its deep snow got out of deep trouble with the state water board this ski season by reaching a tentative settlement to clean up the parking areas adjoining Kirkwood Creek and wetlands. The environmental agency had found asphalt grindings were

contaminating sensitive zones.

Upon a tip, the Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board found Kirkwood Mountain Resort staff spread the petroleum-based grindings measuring between 2- and 4-inches in diameter in the Timber Creek, Nordic Center and Red Cliffs areas. Specifically, the resort used the gravelly mixture in the parking lots at chairs 7 and 9 (TC Express and Funny Bunny, respectively) and the Red Cliffs Day Lodge, as well as in nearby maintenance yards.

In October, Vail was facing a \$4.44 million fine in civil liabilities for a violation of the Federal Clean Water Act and the California Water Code. The practices and subsequent legal wrangling date back to the 2014-15 season.

The California Department of Fish and Wildlife described one of the wetlands and creek areas as “a black snow field.” The agency informed *Lake Tahoe News* that the asphalt-laced snow removal resulted in no fish kill in the creek.

The two parties reached a preliminary agreement a few weeks ago after the board staff made a Nov. 9 site visit and determined the ski area was implementing best management practices in its restoration efforts.



This area has been cleaned-up and is ready for restoration. Kirkwood is proposing to use this area for snow storage. The water board and CDFW staff have concerns based on its proximity to the meadow. Photo/Provided

Roughly 700 cubic yards of debris were collected in the off-season restoration, which equates to 70 loads in a standard dump truck, water board Assistant Executive Officer Andrew Altevogt reported.

“They’ve done as much as they can do this year,” Altevogt told *LTN* on a conference call with the water board’s environmental project manager Wendy Wyels. His main concern lies in the surface and ground water quality. The duo has been compiling reams of documents related to the contaminants pulled from the California Department of Transportation’s resurfacing piles from Highway 88.

“We know (Kirkwood has) taken asphalt grindings for multiple years in the cross country areas,” Wyels added.

The site visit produced an additional finding of asphalt grindings discharged into the creek near Chair 1 "Snowkirk" and "evidence of erosion was observed in the drainage between the lower Red Cliffs parking lot on the east side of Kirkwood Meadows Drive," a report written by water resource control engineer Mike Fischer stated. "Board staff recommended that the drainage be stabilized."

Overall though, the clean-up work plan appears headed in the right direction.

One example: a barrier made of concrete bin blocks was installed on the north end of the parking lot to block access and snow storage in the area closest to the meadow.

Vail brought in San Francisco-based Kennedy/Jenks Consultants to oversee the cleanup operation. It noted Kirkwood staff performed removal of the grindings by hand in the meadow – a mitigation that took hours to complete.

A full assessment of the ongoing efforts will be made next spring because the ski season bore down on work crews this year.



In August the meadow at Kirkwood was still covered with soil. Photo/Provided

For one, crews will need to return to the maintenance yard across from the Timber Creek beginners area identified as Site 4C.

The work seems hardly over, but the snow removal practices of the past appear to be.

Further mitigation calls for Kirkwood staff to identify adequate alternative snow storage areas and procedures. In a memo addressed to the board and obtained by *LTN*, Kirkwood stated it plans to remove snow “at least 35 feet from wetlands and naturally functioning riparian vegetation areas,” and measures will be made during snow removal “to prevent asphalt grindings and other sediment from entering surface waterways and groundwater.”

The Vail-hired consultant piled on further concessions made or those needing to be made. Beyond the physical work, staff

training on how to handle snow removal near wetlands is expected to be implemented.

The work as planned will continue into 2017.

"Since the drainage culvert at Site 4C appears to be a relic from past drainage configurations, the culvert system is essentially plugged, and given the time constraints leading up to the impending winter season, Vail Resorts does not intend to disturb the existing drainage structure at Site 4C and will cover the drainage system to restore grade in the area. Backfill material will be sourced from the stockpiles of material removed from Sites 1 through 4. The removal process has generated stockpiles comprised of a mixture of varying degrees of asphalt and soil materials. Stockpile material largely comprised of soil, with only a small proportion of asphalt grindings will be used to backfill the culvert at Site 4C," Kennedy/Jenks supervising engineer Rick Teczon wrote in an email to involved parties.

The legal issue serves as a black eye of sorts for a ski resort giant that prides itself on eco-friendly business practices.

Part of the water quality report indicated Kirkwood used the asphalt grindings for traction in its parking lots.

But when asked why the ski area used petroleum-based materials there, Kirkwood spokesman Coop Cooper told *Lake Tahoe News*, "Grindings are a commonly used material for dust mitigation."

When asked for a further explanation, he did not respond to *LTN*.

Kirkwood would also not respond to questions about the settlement.

Cooper did explain what measures the ski resort was making to alleviate future contamination.

“Since receiving notice of this issue on May 6, 2016, we have worked closely with the Central Valley Regional Water Quality Board and other agencies to implement immediate remediation actions that we believe have contained any environment concerns,” he shared in an email. “It’s important to note that the samplings the agencies asked us to conduct did not demonstrate any impact on groundwater.”

Cooper added that Kirkwood – which ushered in new General Manager Doug Pierini last summer – and its parent company “take seriously our role in responsibly stewarding the environment and the public land in which we are entrusted.”