

Tracking Sierra snow via instruments on planes

By Alexandra Witze, Air & Space

To know California's true water content in the mountains help is coming in the form of a King Air A90. Scientists have loaded the airplane with instruments to study California's snowpack in unprecedented detail.

Each spring, they fly back and forth over the mountain ranges, measuring where the snow lies and how deep it is. That information helps water managers plan for exactly how much snowmelt to expect rushing downstream each spring—and, in turn, how to divvy up those scarce gallons among the people who need it the most. The airplane can't make more snow fall from the sky, but it can help officials make smarter decisions about how to use what's already there.

The idea for the mission arose in the late 2000s, before the current drought really took hold of California. Thomas Painter, a snow hydrologist who was then at the University of Utah, attended a colleague's talk about using an airplane with a laser to measure tropical forest loss. Scientists aboard that airplane shot lasers down to the ground and measured how quickly the pulses returned, and the results made a three-dimensional picture of the landscape. Returning to the same spot time after time enabled them to study how quickly loggers were stripping trees away.

Not long after the talk, NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory in Pasadena, California, recruited Painter to study water resources and climate science, and he thought back to how that laser technique might be used to study snow levels. He called Frank Gehrke, chief of snow surveys for the California Department of Water Resources in Sacramento, and asked if he

wanted to know more about imaging the state's snowpack from the air. In 2012, the Airborne Snow Observatory took off on its first mountain pass.

Read the whole story

Historical cooking demo at Genoa park

Park rangers at Mormon Station State Historic Park in Genoa will be hosting a Thanksgiving Dutch oven cooking demonstration on Nov. 19.

This is an opportunity to learn the basics of Dutch oven cooking and how the pioneers used the same cast iron techniques to cook meals in the 1850s. Park staff will serve samples until the food runs out.

The free event is from 1-3pm on the lawn in front of the museum.

For more information, call 775.782.2590.

Consortium to address West Shore forest health

The Lake Tahoe West Restoration Partnership's inaugural meeting is Nov. 30 from 10am-3pm at the 89 Bar Conference Room

in the North Lodge at Homewood Mountain Resort.

The goal of Lake Tahoe West, a new interagency initiative of the California Tahoe Conservancy, U.S. Forest Service Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit, California State Parks, Tahoe Regional Planning Agency, Tahoe Fire and Fuels Team, and National Forest Foundation, is to restore the resiliency of forests and watersheds on the West Shore.

This first meeting will focus on learning about each other's backgrounds and interests, reviewing the initial findings from a stakeholder assessment, reviewing a draft charter and proposed project boundary, and reviewing the initiative's overall timeline. Stakeholders represent a range of interests in the west shore's forests and watersheds, including air quality, biomass, business, tourism and resorts, conservation, cultural resources, fire protection, forest products and contracting, homeowners and private landowners, land management, public utilities, recreation, regulation, transportation and access, and water resources.

RSVP by Nov. 24, 2016, is requested (not required) to help ensure sufficient seating and copies of materials. Lunch is not provided.

For more information, go **online**.

If Raiders move, bets likely to remain at sports books

By Richard N. Velotta, Las Vegas Review-Journal

The chairman of the Nevada Gaming Commission says Raiders

games aren't likely to come off the state's betting boards if the NFL franchise moves from Oakland to Las Vegas – even if the league asks for a wagering prohibition on the team.

If the Oakland Raiders take up residence in Las Vegas, the team or the National Football League could request to have games removed from wagering in the state's sports books.

The state's Regulation 22 provides the means for games to be taken off the board, but Tony Alamo, chairman of the Nevada Gaming Commission, doesn't see that ever happening.

Read the whole story

SLT embarks on path to find consensus on VHRs



Several dozen people on Nov. 16 weigh in on vacation home rentals in South Lake Tahoe.
Photo/LTN

By Kathryn Reed

Sifting through assumptions and reality. That is the goal of a consulting team hired by the city of South Lake Tahoe to work on the vacation home rental quagmire.

More than 70 people attended a meeting Wednesday night aimed at getting the public's opinions about these rentals that are usually found in residential neighborhoods.

Reps from Michael Baker International have been in town for a few days gathering data. They are tasked with coming up with ideas of how the city can go forward with VHRs (or not) in order to appease people and the city's budget.

These whole house rentals pay transient occupancy tax, which is one of the city's main revenue sources.

But plenty of people are less worried about the city's coffers and more worried about their quality of life.

People at the Nov. 16 meeting spoke about how these extra people in town are impacting the condition of city streets, some questioned if everyone is paying TOT, and many are concerned with lack of enforcement.

Restricting the number of VHRs was an idea, while others recognize hotels aren't where people want to stay.

Some said VHRs are already regulated, noting these owners face more scrutiny than those renting to full-time residents.

Others fear the value of their home is lessened with neighboring VHRS.

Three stations were set up in the senior center where people could write comments as well vote via a sticker on what they like-dislike about VHRs, as well as cast a vote related to their perceptions about current conditions.

Most people agreed VHRs are a good source of revenue for the city and the homeowner, that they contribute to jobs, and expand lodging opportunities for tourists. They also don't believe there has been an increase in commercial enterprises in neighborhoods.

It was a pretty even split on agreeing-disagreeing about whether VHRs put a strain on public services and if they degrade neighborhoods.

The consultants will compare the trends and perceptions of the public against the factual data. The results of the study are likely to be released in the spring, at which time the City Council will address the findings. There will be more time for public comment before then. Taking this **survey** is another way to have a voice about VHRs.

Opinion: California counties need governance reform

By Dan Walters, Sacramento Bee



Dan Walters

State Sen. Bob Hertzberg puts it succinctly, albeit accurately: “58 counties in California are accidents of

history.”

Hertzberg, a Los Angeles Democrat, uttered his comment last month during a pithy, if sparsely attended, legislative hearing into the shortcomings of county governments.

As California’s population expanded in the late 19th century, it was divided, and redivided into 58 counties, then the state’s fundamental local governments.

Read the whole story

Identity of deceased pedestrian released

Officials have released the name of the pedestrian how was struck and killed in South Lake Tahoe on Nov. 4.

Daniel Curry, 58, of Carson City was crossing Highway 50 outside of a crosswalk near the Marriott when a taxi hit him.

The driver has not been charged.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

KMS buyer given more time by school board

The Douglas County School District board on Nov. 15 agreed to give the potential buyer of Kingsbury Middle School more time to sort through the regulatory process.

Patrick Taylor in July entered into an agreement with Douglas County School District to purchase the 22-plus acre site with 36,000-square-feet of space for \$3.25 million, which included paying half the utilities – \$25,000 – for a year.

At the **October meeting** the board extended the due diligence period by one month. Now it will expire in April.

“The buyer has been in contact with the county and TPRA, and believes if the traffic changes need to go back before either board, it will take that long,” DCSD Superintendent Teri White told *Lake Tahoe News*.

Taylor has proposed putting affordable housing in at the Stateline site. However, the vehicle miles traveled is an issue and that is what is being worked out with the agencies.

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*

Study: Human actions influence fire in Sierra

By Science Magazine

While climate contributes strongly to fire activity in the Sierra Nevada Mountains, human activity, starting well before European contact, has also played an important part in the severity, frequency and sheer numbers of forest fires occurring in the area, according to researchers.

“Initially, we did work to see if we could develop long-lead forecasts for fire in the area – six to 18 months in the future – using climate patterns such as El Nino,” said Alan Taylor, professor of geography at Penn State. “This would be a

significant help because we could place resources in the west if forecasts indicated it would be dry and the southeast would be wet. However, the climate relationships with fire did not consistently track.”

Taylor, working with Valerie Trouet, associate professor of dendrochronology at the University of Arizona, merged a tree-ring-based record of Sierra Nevada fire history with a 20th century record based on annual area burned to create a record of fires spanning 415 years, from 1600 to 2015. While year-to-year fire variability was influenced by climate throughout that time, they found that large decadal-scale shifts in the Sierra Nevada fire regime were related to changes in human activity.

Read the whole story

EDC vote count changes, winners don't

El Dorado County elections officials released updated numbers this afternoon.

The late ballots are mostly the result of people walking their forms in on Election Day and provisional ballots. The actual results are certified 28 days after the election.

Here are the current numbers as of Nov. 16:

▪ South Lake Tahoe City Council

Brooke Laine 2,424; Jason Collin 1,888; Tami Wallace 1,778; JoAnn Conner 1,319; Ted Long 1,225; Danny McLaughlin 730; John Shearer 716; Trey Riddle 306; Bob Topel 272; Patrick Jarrett

▪ **Lake Tahoe Community College, Area 4**

Nancy Dalton 1,162; Dave Hamilton 904

▪ **Lake Tahoe Unified School District, Area 1**

Larry Reilly, 959, Annie Davidson 819

▪ **Lake Tahoe Unified School District, Area 3**

Bonnie Turnbull 1,129; Mike Doyle 991

▪ **South Tahoe Public Utility District**

Randy Vogelgesan 5,147; Kelly Sheehan 3,992; Nick Exline 2,938; Kirk David 2,560

▪ **Lake Valley Fire Protection District**

Leona Allen 2,282; John Rice 2,102; Bob Bettencourt 1,748; Tony Sears 1,360

▪ **Measure P (needs two-thirds)**

Yes 68.8 percent; No 31.2 percent

▪ **Measure U (needs simple majority)**

No 56.68 percent; Yes 43.32 percent

▪ **Measure T (needs simple majority)**

Yes 60.21 percent; No 39.79 percent.