

Tahoe Queen's future remains unknown

While the charred Tahoe Queen sits at Zephyr Cove Marina, its future remains in limbo.

"We'll make a decision only after we've fully assessed the damage and considered all of our options," David Freireich with Aramark told *Lake Tahoe News*. Aramark owns the paddle-wheeler. It's possible the boat will not be able to be salvaged.

A fire swept through the historic tourist boat on Aug. 16 while crews were on board remodeling the vessel.

The U.S. Coast Guard and National Transportation Safety Board are investigating the blaze. The Coast Guard on Aug. 24 told *Lake Tahoe News* the cause has still not been determined. Details of the agency's investigation won't be released until a final report is issued.

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*

Tahoe-Truckee online bike map available

The Lake Tahoe Bicycle Coalition is unveiling a new, interactive, **online** map for bicycling around the Tahoe and Truckee region.

It provides bike route directions, elevation profiles and location information for amenity and safety concerns, while at

the same time offering an opportunity for community input.

Visitors and residents can use the bike mapping tool, accessible via computer or mobile device, to plan bike trips based on destination and routing preferences (bike lanes/paths versus direct options). The map also allows users to contribute crowd-sourced information to improve biking in Tahoe. Users can report unsafe conditions or collisions and incidents. They can request bike parking at popular gathering spots that lack good bike racks. Users can also share the location of construction sites that might be difficult to bike around.

Map users have the option to view the location of local bike shops, bike rack parking, construction sites and specific bike path classifications. Additionally, the community input feature welcomes feedback on how to improve the map and bike infrastructure around Tahoe.

The Bike Coalition will continue to offer free copies of the paper Lake Tahoe Bikeways map, which is available at bike shops, visitors authorities and participating organizations in the Tahoe region.

Reasons to subscribe to Lake Tahoe News

Lorraine Segala of Stateline is going to Squaw Valley next month to meet guitarist Kenny Neal and then see him perform.

As a subscriber and loyal reader of *Lake Tahoe News*, she had the opportunity to win this honor.

Lake Tahoe News subscribers help us to provide news seven days week. As a subscriber you get to post an unlimited number of comments on the news site, you receive breaking news alerts and are in the running for deals like meet-and-greets with musicians.

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Fantasy sports proposal meets opposition in Nev.

By Richard N. Velotta, Las Vegas Review-Journal

Regulators and gaming industry leaders say they'd welcome daily fantasy sports operations in Nevada, but not under the framework offered in proposed legislation unveiled by Fan Duel and Draft Kings, the nation's largest fantasy providers.

Representatives of the 12-member Nevada Gaming Policy Committee, meeting in Las Vegas on Tuesday, said there would be minimal benefit to the state under a proposal outlined by public policy attorney Scott Ward of the Orrick, Herrington & Sutcliffe law firm of Washington, which is assisting Fan Duel and Draft Kings.

Committee members urged Ward to meet with regulators and industry leaders – and to do it quickly, since the committee has only one more meeting before it is scheduled to make recommendations to the Nevada Legislature on possible bill drafts for daily fantasy sports and e-gaming.

Read the whole story

Outdated restrooms being replaced by NTPUD

North Tahoe Public Utility District is going forward with new restrooms at North Tahoe Regional Park.

It will cost \$140,634 for two pre-fabricated restrooms. The completed buildings are expected to be delivered in October.

Grants from Placer County Parks Dedication Fees and internal NTPUD recreation funds are paying for the facilities.

They will replace the existing new restrooms that are more than 30 years old and do not meet current code or Americans with Disabilities Act requirements.

SLT-Conner settlement agreement released

By Kathryn Reed

The 11 main items in the settlement agreement between South Lake Tahoe and City Councilwoman JoAnn Conner essentially return certain policies to what they were prior to the brouhaha that became public last year and then document long-standing protocols.

Six employees brought harassment and bullying allegations against Conner. But Conner is not their boss, so the typical employee-employer rules didn't apply. City Manager Nancy Kerry in trying to protect those employees who work for her took action to stop Conner from being able to interact with them and all employees. This happened a year ago.

Kerry, who has levied bullying accusations against Conner, could sue the councilwoman. Conner is Kerry's boss. But Conner would likely enjoin the city and therefore Kerry would essentially be suing the city, with the taxpayers picking up the bill. At this time Kerry has chosen not to do so, but there is nothing in the agreement that would prevent her from doing so in the future.

After Kerry disabled Conner's card key to city offices and instituted a policy that Conner must only communicate with her or the city attorney, the remaining four councilmembers censured Conner last fall. This is essentially a slap on the wrist saying they don't like her behavior.

When it came time for committee assignments Conner's council colleagues voted to keep her off almost all of them.

Conner soon sued the city and named Kerry in the court filings. Part of what she wanted a judge to rule on was the censure. El Dorado County Superior Court Judge Steve Bailey said no way, the council has a right to make such a decision.

Conner initially said her constitutional rights were jeopardized. This allegation is not addressed in the agreement. (The agreement came out of a mediation session in June.)

Eventually all of the councilmembers turned in their card keys, so there has been equality for months even though this item is in the settlement.

Also in the agreement is how the mayor runs the meeting.

That's been the case for 51 years.

The agreement says Conner can go to pre-agenda meetings. That has always been the case, but for the last year she has chosen not to.

How committee assignments are handled is spelled out in the agreement. Again, this has been the policy for years and is nothing new.

Also not new is how agenda packets are distributed.

The big thing Conner got is to be treated like all the other councilmembers.

In the agreement she is now able to email staff directly. For the last year her emails from her personal and city accounts were routed through the city manager. As with all councilmembers, she now must copy the city manager on the emails.

The major win for the city is Conner agreed to dismiss the lawsuit with prejudice. This means Conner cannot sue the city again on the same grounds.

While Conner signed the eight-page document on Aug. 18, and Mayor Wendy David and Kerry did so Aug. 16, it was not released until Aug. 24.

Part of the agreement is that none of the parties in the suit may talk about it to anyone, nor may they comment about it on social media or blogs. The exclusion did not include commenting on news sites, just that they can't talk directly to a reporter.

Here is a copy of the settlement.

All of this cost Conner about \$30,000. It took nearly \$100,000 out of the General Fund for the city to defend itself. Conner usually bills herself a defender of the "little people" –

that's her phrase, and she has been fiscally conservative until this case.

Snippets about Lake Tahoe

- Oktoberfest at Camp Rich is Oct. 1-2, 10am-5pm.
 - The Vital Statistics Office of the El Dorado County Health and Human Services Agency has been recognized by the state for its efficiency in service.
 - Here is the Sierra roadwork schedule for the week from Caltrans.
 - Team Tahoe, a nonprofit encouraging eco-tourism, has produced two videos promoting bicycling in the South Lake Tahoe area. Here is the **30-second video** and this is the **3-minute video**.
 - The Alzheimer's Association is putting on a family caregiver support program on Oct. 10. This training will address the 10 signs of Alzheimer's disease. Participants will learn what is involved in getting a diagnosis, risk associated with Alzheimer's and the benefits of early detection. The free event is from 1-3pm at Lake Tahoe Resort Hotel in South Lake Tahoe.
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Kirkwood faces fine in wetlands contamination

By Drew Bollea, CBS-13

The largest mountain resort company in the country is in violation of the Federal Clean Water Act, according to a California state agency. Now, Kirkwood Mountain Resort staff is in the process of cleaning up a mess made over the winter.

According to public documents from the Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board, Kirkwood Ski Resort, which is owned by Colorado-based Vail Resorts, is being investigated for contaminating sensitive wetlands and the Kirkwood Creek.

The investigation began in late April after an anonymous complaint made its way to the Central Valley Water Quality Control Board. Investigators surveyed the area and found that over the winter, large piles of asphalt grindings had been dumped onto multiple parking lots at the Kirkwood resort. A common practice to provide traction when the snow piles up.

For 49 days, the Water Board says crews removed snow from parking lots with plows and blowers, thus spreading the asphalt material into places it shouldn't be.

Read the whole story

Opinion: EDC trying to curb

DUI problem

By Vern Pierson

Although El Dorado County is relatively small, at 181,737 people according to the latest census number, we have a very large number of people that come to our county as visitors and tourists. During summer, and quite drastically in the winter, we have an influx of tourists to South Lake Tahoe for the ski resorts, New Year's Eve events, and multiple casinos just over the state line.



Vern Pierson

Our county also has seasonal visitors to the El Dorado County wine country, gold country historic sites, and to the Apple Hill region. And, daily, we have many out of county residents who come from out of the area to work, play, and to go to the popular Red Hawk Casino.

Sadly, El Dorado County ranks fifth worst in the state for lethal drunken driving incidents involving drivers between the ages of 21 and 34. Even more shocking, El Dorado County ranks third worst in the state for drunken driving incidents involving drivers under the age of 21.

In 2012, the El Dorado County District Attorney's Office applied for and received funding from the Office of Traffic Safety (OTS) to help pay for a vertically assigned deputy district attorney and district attorney investigator. This OTS grant allows these two positions to be involved in a more

integrated way with the street level enforcement and investigation side of DUI investigations. This ensures more efficient investigations and stronger cases for prosecution.

The goal of this unit, and of the El Dorado County District Attorney's Office, is to hold DUI violators responsible for their actions with aggressive investigations and prosecutions, while also protecting victims' rights and keeping our community a safe place to live, work and visit. This specialized unit is dedicated to the investigation and prosecution of felony DUI cases, including cases involving vehicular manslaughter and DUI homicides.

Having the same prosecutors and investigators working on these cases from the investigative stages through the court process to jury trial is the best way to ensure the swift and thorough pursuit of justice.

Prevention of drunken driving requires a two pronged call to action – effective law enforcement investigation and prosecution and public involvement and awareness of the problem. Remember, if you see something, say something.

Vern Pierson is district attorney in El Dorado County.

Drought costing Calif. farmers \$600M this year

By Associated Press

California's drought is costing farmers an estimated \$603 million this year, although the impact is far less than a year ago, according to a study released by UC Davis.

The latest annual survey by UC Davis researchers shows that the reasonably rainy winter has eased the effects of the drought, even though considerable shortages persist in crucial areas of the San Joaquin Valley.

“The drought continues for California’s agriculture in 2016, but with much less severe and widespread impacts than in the two previous drought years, 2014 and 2015,” the researchers wrote.

Researchers said farmers have fallowed 78,780 acres this year because of water shortages. That compares with an estimated 500,000 acres last year. The idled acreage has cost farmers \$247 million in crop revenue. It also deprived the rural economy of an estimated 1,815 farm jobs that otherwise would have been created, the study said.

Farmers also have had to spend an additional \$303 million pumping groundwater to make up for the diminished supplies of water from the Central Valley Project and State Water Project, the study said. With indirect costs thrown in, the researchers estimated the total economic impact at \$603 million.

That’s still a sharp contrast from last year, when UC Davis said the drought took a \$2.7 billion bite out of the farm economy.

Farming has come under scrutiny during the drought because of its intensive water use. Agriculture consumes 80 percent of the state’s “developed” water – that is, water not dedicated to the environment. When the environment is factored in, farming’s share is estimated at about 40 percent.

Despite the hardships of the drought, farm revenue in California actually has increased. That’s due in part to high commodity prices and farmers’ decisions to draw heavily on groundwater to limit fallowing. Farmers generated \$54 billion in revenue in 2014, the last year for which statistics were available. That was a 5 percent increase over 2013.

Farm employment jumped by 7 percent last year, an addition of 30,000 jobs, despite relatively heavy fallowing. A major reason for the increased employment: Farmers have been switching to more labor-intensive crops, such as almonds and pistachios.

Farm groups, however, have said the drought has taken its toll because growers have had to spend more money for their water, cutting into profits.