Growing trend to turn wastewater into drinking water

By Chloe Stepney, Christian Science Monitor

This summer, Texas' drought of the century is an uncomfortable reminder that often there just isn't enough water to go around. But the 40 consecutive days of triple-digit temperatures and minuscule rainfall may also be boosting the case for a new freshwater source being developed in Big Spring, Texas, and surrounding cities.

With a waste-water-to-drinking-water treatment plant now under construction, Big Spring will soon join the growing list of cities that use recycled sewage water for drinking water – a practice that the squeamish call "toilet to tap."

The trend is expanding as climbing temperatures and dry weather across the West force environmentalists, politicians, and citizens to find newer, better solutions to freshwater resources.

"It's really a natural and cost-effective [solution] when you don't have another resource available," says David Sedlak, professor of civil and environmental engineering and codirector of the Berkeley Water Center at the University of California, Berkeley. "We have to recognize that as the population of the country continues to move out into the West and as climate change continually reduces the water supply, these issues are going to become more and more important."

The $13 million Big Spring Water Reclamation Plant, due to open early next year, will pump 2 million gallons of water each day to Big Spring and three nearby cities – Stanton, Midland, and Odessa – using the waste water produced by area

residents.

“The neat thing about it is that we’ll be able to use 100 percent of the water, 100 percent of the time,” says John Grant, general manager of Colorado River Municipal Water District, which serves Big Spring.

Mr. Grant, who began looking into alternative water supplies nearly 12 years ago, says public feedback runs the gamut from “There’s no way I’m going to drink this” to “Why haven’t y’all done this sooner?”

Water reuse plants are not new, and municipalities in states from California to Florida have them.

Read the whole story

Annual classic car show in Kings Beach

The 4th annual John Reichert Memorial Classic Car Show will be Sept. 10 from 1-3:30pm at the Kings Beach State Recreation Area.

This event is free and open to the public; both spectators and those who wish to show their cars. This event is organized and presented by the Kiwanis Club of North Lake Tahoe and sponsored by Taneva Auto Parts.

John Reichert was a member of the North Tahoe Public Utility District Recreation and Parks Commission who passed away in 2008 and was involved in the development of the Friends of the Park Fund. This fund goes to support capital projects in the North Tahoe Regional Park. A BBQ benefiting the North Tahoe

Public Utility District Friends of the Park Fund will also take place during the show.

Anyone wishing to show their car should contact Dave Shelton at (530) 583.3787 or tahoed@gmail.com.

Classes about crime-free housing complexes

Crime Free Multi-Housing Program is offering two free training classes with the support of the South Lake Tahoe Police Department and Douglas County Sheriff's Office.

Classes are Sept. 12 from 8am–5 pm at the Douglas County Judicial and Law Enforcement Building, 1625 8th St., Minden and Oct. 11 from 8am–5pm at the Lake Tahoe South Shore Chamber of Commerce, 169 Highway 50, Stateline.

Since the local program started in October 2011, more than 60 entities have been certified.

Classes are open to all local multi-family housing, manufactured housing, vacation rental owners, managers, and property management companies. This is law enforcement based crime prevention solution.

Seating is limited and registration required by emailing laketahoecrimefreeprograms@msn.com or calling (775) 790.6694.

Lecture on history of atomic testing in Nevada

Saturday Mornings, the award-winning morning discussion and lecture series collaboration of Sierra Nevada College and Incline Village Parks & Recreation Senior Programs, continue this fall.

College faculty and other knowledgeable locals present bite-size offerings of intellectually stimulating material to pique people’s interest and challenge their sensibilities.

An optional continental breakfast will be provided for $3.

Ann Ronald is an emerita professor at UNR. She has published nine books and countless articles about sense of place in fiction and literary nonfiction and was inducted into the Nevada Writers Hall of Fame in 2006. As part of Nevada Reads she will be presenting her latest work Friendly Fallout 1953 exploring the history of atomic testing in Nevada’s desert and the impact on the people who participated and the civilian “downwinders.”

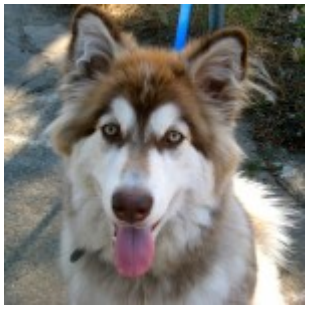
She speaks Sept. 16 from 10am-noon at Sierra Nevada College, Prim Library, Room 213, 999 Tahoe Blvd., Incline Village.

The event is free.

For details, contact Debi Noonan at (775) 831.1314, ext. 7420, dnoonan@sierranevada.edu.

Tahoe Tails – Adoptable Pets in South Lake Tahoe

Lise is a young, pretty Alaskan Malamute who is going to be a fairly large adult. She is very affectionate with people and loves to play with other dogs. She has lots of energy and needs lots of exercise.



She’s a big, goofy girl who needs to learn more manners, but she’s smart and will learn quickly.

Lise is spayed, microchipped, and vaccinated. She is at the El Dorado County Animal Services shelter in Meyers, along with many other dogs and cats who are waiting for their new homes.

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

Book publisher to speak at S. Tahoe library

Meyers publisher and editor, Kim Wyatt, will be speaking about her press, Bona Fide Books, as well as workshops and special

events she will be hosting.



Wyatt will speak at the South Lake Tahoe Branch Library Sept. 14 at 6:30pm. The library is at 1000 Rufus Allen Blvd., South Lake Tahoe.

For additional information, call (530) 573.3185.

Facts and figures about education in the United States

Another school year means many things.

Back-to-school shopping meant $7.4 billion being spent at clothing stores in August. 2010. Only in November and December were sales significantly higher. Similarly, sales at bookstores in August 2010 totaled $2.2 billion, an amount approached in 2010 only by sales in January, according to the U.S. Census Bureau.

The number of children and adults enrolled in school throughout the country in October 2009 – from nursery school to college – was 77 million. They comprised 27 percent of the entire population age 3 and older.

Seventy-four percent of children ages 3-6 were enrolled in kindergarten all day as of October 2009.

The projected number of students to be enrolled in U.S.

elementary through high schools this fall is 55.5 million. About 11 percent of them will be in private schools.

Of all those enrolled, 43 percent belonged to a minority population as of October 2009.

Eighty percent of students ages 12 to 17 were academically on-track in 2006, up 8 percentage points from 1998. The odds of being on-track were 48 percent higher for these students if they were in a gifted class and 34 percent higher if they had never been suspended or expelled from school.

In 2009, there were 11.2 million school age children (ages 5 to 17) who spoke a language other than English at home; 8 million of these children spoke Spanish at home.

The average number of children participating each month in the National School Lunch Program in 2009 was 31.1 million.

In 2009, there were 7.2 million teachers in the United States. Almost 3 million taught at the elementary and middle school level. The remainder included those teaching at the postsecondary, secondary, preschool, kindergarten levels, special education and other teachers or instructors.

Average annual salary of public school teachers in California as of the 2007-2008 school year – the highest of any state – was $65,800. Teachers in South Dakota received the lowest pay – $36,700. The national average was $52,800. High school principals earned $99,365 annually in 2008-09.

Energy program helps Nevada

homeowners see green

By Ben Miller, Reno Gazette-Journal

Homeowners in the Reno area have begun to retrofit their houses for energy efficiency through a Nevada State Office of Energy rebate program.

The program, which is called the Nevada Home Energy Fitness Campaign, offers rebates of $1,000 for homeowners who have improved their energy efficiency by at least 20 percent, said David Gibson, community services director for Envirolution, the nonprofit coordinating the rebates.

The Nevada State Office of Energy (NSOE) received a $5 million grant for the Nevada Home Energy Fitness Campaign. The goal is to retrofit at least 5 percent, or 50,000, of all single-family homes in Nevada by 2021.

Once upgrades have been made, participants will receive a second assessment to ensure the 20 percent energy efficiency upgrades have been achieved, and then will receive a $1,000 rebate on their initial investment of at least $2,000.

About a dozen homeowners have taken advantage of the program so far, Gibson said.

“If you’re cutting your energy usage by 20 percent, you’re cutting your energy bill by 20 percent or more,” Gibson said. “The savings can really add up.”

Read the whole story

Opinion: Paddlers have a role in keeping lakes clean

By Ted Thayer and Kimberly Boyd

Paddlers at Lake Tahoe, Fallen Leaf, and Echo Lakes get to enjoy the peace and solitude of skimming over some of the world's clearest water while being surrounded by awe-inspiring mountain scenery. There is a spirit of rugged individualism that kayakers, canoeists and paddle boarders can share in as an experience at Tahoe. Little equipment is needed to enjoy a trip on the lake, and there are many secluded coves to explore and low-key spots from which to effortlessly launch.



However, when it comes to aquatic invasive species and their march between many western lakes and waterways, paddle craft are part of the risk. The risk is not only to native species and systems, but also to the pure, carefree experience that paddlers seek. Now there is something every paddler can do to help protect our pristine waters and to further reduce the threat of aquatic invasive species to Lake Tahoe as well as between Tahoe and neighboring lakes.

Tahoe Keepers is a stewardship initiative and a free training program designed to help non-motorized watercraft operators guard against aquatic invasive species by self-inspecting and decontaminating their boats and gear after each use. Non-native species, such as zebra and quagga mussels, and the New Zealand mudsnail could irreparably damage the Lake Tahoe watershed and their transport is illegal. These invasive species are spread through the transport of water and debris that can collect in cockpits and hatches, cling to outer hulls, rudders, and paddles, and even hide out on your gear long after an outing.

The Tahoe Keepers initiative is voluntary and free. Since 2007, efforts to prevent an introduction of new invasive species to the Lake Tahoe Basin have focused on the high risk from motorized watercraft and trailers. The mandatory inspection program for motorized boats is one of the most comprehensive in the nation and is a leading example of what communities can do to manage the threat posed by aquatic invasive species. The Tahoe Keepers program has the potential to be just as successful.

As part of the stewardship initiative, paddlers learn how to be a Tahoe Keeper online. The website offers instructions on how to properly Clean, Drain, and Dry watercraft and gear after each use, and properly dispose of any plants or debris away from lakes and streams. Taking these few minutes before and after paddling will help protect the Tahoe basin, your gear, and your freedom to launch at undeveloped sites.

You will also learn how to help isolate and control aquatic invasive species already present within the Tahoe Basin. Currently, there is no Eurasian watermilfoil, curly leaf pondweed, or Asian clams in Fallen Leaf Lake, Echo Lake, and Spooner Lake and unaware paddlers can inadvertently transport harmful invasive species to any other body of water if they don’t take the proper precautions.

Paddlers who successfully complete the 10-minute online training program will become members of the Tahoe Keepers stewardship community, and will receive “Proof of Training” credentials. Again, the self-inspection training program for kayaks, canoes, and paddle boards is free and voluntary in 2011 thanks to funding from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Widespread participation in this program can help to protect recreational opportunities and privileges in the Lake Tahoe Basin. Aquatic invasive species inspectors will be providing education and may request to inspect your watercraft. Identifying yourself with Tahoe Keeper credentials will help to demonstrate that your watercraft is not high

risk.

Free kayak, canoe, paddle board, and non-motorized watercraft inspections and decontaminations are available at each roadside watercraft inspection station located at Meyers, Spooner Summit, Homewood Mountain, Northstar-at-Tahoe, and Alpine Meadows.

We encourage and challenge every kayaker, canoeist, and paddle boarder who cares for our Tahoe Basin lakes to spread the word to other paddlers about the Clean, Drain, and Dry method and to join the Tahoe Keepers stewardship community.

Ted Thayer is Aquatic Invasive Species Program coordinator for TRPA and Kimberly Boyd is Invasive Species Program manager for Tahoe RCD.

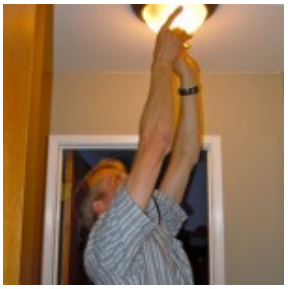
Free energy audit provides tips for saving money

By Kathryn Reed

I need to use less energy. Well, I don't, but our house should be using less.

That was the conclusion by Sten Seemann after he performed an energy audit last week.

"You do pretty good in the summer, but in the winter you almost use twice as much energy. We are going to see why," he said.



Sten Seemann checks to see the type of bulbs in this fixture. Photos/Kathryn Reed

Seemann through his company Sierra Energy and Water Conservation is a subcontractor for Liberty Energy. The utility, which took over Nevada Energy's California customers this year, does the energy audits for free.

Armed with our past bills supplied by Liberty Energy he was able to see how our electricity usage changed from month to month over a few years.

February was higher this year than last. I'm thinking we had company and the outside temps dropped. I don't really know.

Part of the summer-winter difference is lifestyle – more lights on for longer in the winter, the furnace hums, increase in TV watching, more people visiting, more cooking (oven especially).

But the big energy culprit, according to Seemann, is the hot tub being set at 102 degrees all the time – or hotter in winter. He suggested putting in a timer to reduce the temp overnight when no one is in it. I have a call into Hot Springs Spas who we got it from to see if this is possible and what the cost would be.

When it comes to hot tubs in the winter it takes more energy

to heat them because the outside air is so dang cold in South Lake Tahoe.

Another biggie is to get more insulation. Looking in the attic – Seemann did this, I've never done it – was not good. We have about R-12 insulation. Code is R-38. Such are the hazards of a house built in 1965 and knowing we've added zero insulation in the eight years we've lived in it.

Seemann recommended getting quotes from Gale Insulation and Meeks for insulation. In an email he sent the night of the audit he said to do so before November.

That's one of the nice things about the audit, Seemann follows it up with an email with the suggestions he said verbally and then some additional comments.

Even though the audit is painless and takes an hour or so, the problem is remembering all the information that is dispensed. That is why the follow-up email is nice to receive.



Window and door insulation inspections are part of the energy audit by Sten Seemann.

Education is a big component of what Seemann does. Nothing he suggests has to be done. No "energy police" are going to come

see if you took him up on his recommendations.

“Liberty Energy is obligated by the regulator, California Public Utility Commission, to offer energy efficiency programs so that customers can choose to exercise options to lower the commodity costs on their electric utility bills,” Bob Dodds, president of Liberty Energy, told *Lake Tahoe News*. “This does result in less money in the company’s pocket but that is offset by the lower amounts of electricity the company needs to purchase for distribution. In the long term, lower electricity use by customers reduces the need for continuing investment in facilities for the generation, transmission and distribution of electricity which ultimately lowers impacts on rates and the environment.”

Most of our light bulbs were CFLs, so we were ahead of the curve on that. I hesitated when Seemann wanted to put a CFL in the fixture over the kitchen table. We had done so a couple times with each one burning out rapidly. The older CFLs burned out faster if turned off and on a lot. I relented, but I kept the energy-hog old one just in case.

Seemann’s philosophy is that it’s better to throw out an old working bulb than to throw away money. In other words, don’t wait until the energy-inefficient bulbs die before replacing them.

Seemann also put in a low-flow showerhead. I had the most consternation about this change. I have a thing for hot showers with good pressure. I’ll write in the dark on my laptop battery without using electricity before I give up my daily hot, hot, hot shower.

So far, so good with the showerhead.

And on top of that, the bulbs and showerhead were free.

While Liberty Energy doesn’t supply our water, the energy audit touches on water and gas usage, too.

To schedule a free energy audit through Liberty Energy, call 800.782.2506. They are running a bit behind on appointments. It was in June at the North Lake Tahoe Chamber of Commerce Business Expo that I learned about the audits. It took two months to get a call – so be patient.