California feeling after shocks of market turmoil

By Dale Kasler, Sacramento Bee

Wall Street's scary losing streak could put a dent in California's fragile economic recovery.

In some ways, it already has.

The huge downturn in the stock market, punctuated by Monday's near-record fall, is costing the state's public pension funds billions of dollars. It's putting a strain on tax revenues – and could throw the just-passed state budget out of whack.

The aftershocks are being felt on the street level, too. Some real estate purchases are being postponed or canceled. Financiers are wondering if they'll be able to fund promising new tech companies.

Even businesses that are expanding are doing a double-take of sorts as they try to fathom Monday's 634.76-point drop in the Dow Jones average, the worst sell-off in nearly three years. Monday was the first day of trading after Standard & Poor's downgraded the U.S. credit rating.

Read the whole story

Lake Tahoe All-Women Sports

Camp

Lake Tahoe's All-Women Sports Camp is hosting a weekend of mountain biking, road cycling, triathlon training and running for women of all abilities on Aug. 20-21 at Northstar-at-Tahoe.

The weekend will include endurance clinics, group bike rides, group runs, yoga on the beach, and stand-up paddleboard.

The All-Women Sports Camp will be led by mountain biker Marla Streb; professional triathlete Jessi Stensland; and former U.S. cycling team member Julie Young.

For more information, go online or call (530) 563.889.

Snippets about Lake Tahoe



• Smokey the Bear turns 67 today. Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit is having a birthday party today at 2pm at the Taylor Creek Visitor Center on Highway 89.

• Douglas County Mosquito Control District is having an open house at its offices on Airport Road in Minden on Aug. 10 from 4-7pm.

• Tahoe Maritime Museum's Family Day is Aug. 20 from 10am-5pm in Homewood. Admission is $3 for kids with the purchase of adult admission.

• The summer issue of CalStar's "RotorWash" has a story about

the South Tahoe unit helping out with community education and training, including being part of the Drug Store Project during the last school year.

• The U.S. Census reports 9,324 gay households in Nevada – nearly double the number from 2000.

Placer County embarking on consolidating community plans in basin

When it adopted the budget last fiscal year, the Placer County Board of Supervisors directed Planning Services staff to begin the process of updating community plans within the Lake Tahoe Basin.

There are nine County Community/General Plans within the basin. Most are joint planning documents between the county and Tahoe Regional Planning Agency adopted nearly 20 years ago.

TRPA is in the process of updating its Regional Plan, and all Community Plans within the basin must be consistent with that plan's update. Given the age of most of the county's plans, and the need for consistency between the two jurisdictions, the Planning Services Division believed it the appropriate time to update Placer County's nine Lake Tahoe Basin Community/General Plans, which are:

* West Shore General Plan;

* Tahoe City Area General Plan;

* North Tahoe Area General Plan;

* Tahoe City Community Plan;

* Carnelian Bay Community Plan;

* Tahoe Vista Community Plan;

* Kings Beach Community Plan;

* Kings Beach Industrial Community Plan; and

* North Stateline Community Plan.

Placer County is proposing to consolidate its nine plans into one over-arching Tahoe Basin Community Plan with general policy guidance. As part of the Community Plan, four “Plan Areas” have been identified and delineated. The four Plan Areas will have separate, individually tailored zoning-design guidelines, which will be developed with community input.

Those plans include:

* West Shore Plan Area, which runs from the El Dorado County line to the Sunnyside area;

* Tahoe City Plan Area, which includes Tahoe City, Tahoe City Gateway, Lake Forest, and Dollar Hill;

* North Tahoe West Plan Area, including Carnelian Bay and Tahoe Vista; and

* North Tahoe East Plan Area, which covers the Kings Beach and Stateline community.

A significant part of the county’s overall work program for the Community Plan Update will be to conduct public outreach so community members and other interested parties have input on the new planning documents.

Opinion: We are not all going to die from climate change

By Steve Fleischli, Natural Resources Defense Council

The climate is changing. That simple fact really shouldn’t be subject to dispute.

Something else that probably shouldn’t be subject to dispute: We are not all going to die from climate change.

Undoubtedly, some people will die. Those without resources. Those with no place to go. Those without water. Or those with too much water as the seas rise or local floods increase. And there certainly will be misery for many of those that don’t die.

But the simple truth also is that some people will have access to sufficient resources to withstand the changes. Some will be prepared. Some will adapt. Some will move. Some could even flourish in the face of a disproportionate allocation of resources.

So why should you care about climate change? You probably don’t live in Bangladesh or on some tiny island in the Pacific Ocean. You’ve got nothing to worry about, right?

Wrong.

No matter where you live, you will not be immune to climate change. Scientific studies show that nearly every community in the U.S. will be impacted in some way by climate change. As a new report from NRDC highlights, cities like New York, Miami and San Francisco all face serious challenges from sea level rise. Phoenix and communities across the southwest face water

shortages. Places like Chicago and St. Louis face more intense storms and floods.

Read the whole story

Burke Creek, Rabe Meadow plans moving forward

By Anne Knowles

MINDEN – Plans to reroute Burke Creek under Highway 50 are getting under way in the first phase of a long-term project to restore Rabe Meadow.

Douglas County Commissioners last week requested $100,000 from the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency's Stream Environment Zone Fund to design the Burke Creek portion of the project. The request came after the TRPA board approved the money at its July 27 meeting.

The Nevada Tahoe Conservation District, which is overseeing the project, has sent a letter to half a dozen Lake Tahoe Basin environmental consulting firms asking for statements of qualifications, according to Mahmood Azad, principal engineer and fisheries biologist with the conservation district and previously the Douglas County engineer.



Burke Creek in Stateline carries tons of sediment into Lake Tahoe. Photos/Kathryn Reed

The district will choose a firm from among those contacted and try to negotiate a contract in time to seek approval from its board of directors on Aug. 18, said Azad. The district hopes to have the project design completed by year-end and start work in 2012.

“It could go a long, long way to filtering water that comes off (Highway) 50 and go a long way to improve lake clarity,” Azad said.

Currently, Burke Creek, which was relocated when an airport was built in Rabe Meadow in the 1940s, runs over Highway 50, collecting road sediment that ends up in Lake Tahoe.

Azad said the Burke Creek portion of the project is on a fast track, while the overall restoration of Rabe Meadow is on a slow track and could take up to a decade to complete. That will include removing nonnative grasses that were introduced to the meadow when it was used for grazing cattle as well as restoring the many springs that once flowed into the meadow.

“Sagebrush and pine trees are starting to encroach,” Azad said. “Rabe Meadow is a filtration system and it is not functioning correctly.”

The conservation district is now working with the U.S. Forest Service, which owns Rabe Meadow, to secure a $300,000 grant for the restoration project, Azad said. Nevada Department of Transportation is also providing $200,000 in funding. The

$600,000 in funding from the TRPA, NDOT and the USFS will cover the initial design of the project, Azad said. The total cost of the project will not be known until the master plan is completed as part of the design.



Rabe Meadow is part of the long-term restoration plans.

The project could reduce the Burke Creek area's sediment flow into the lake by as much as 85 percent to 95 percent, according to Azad. He added the exact amount is unknown because the project covers what he calls a subwatershed of a larger watershed.

"Wetlands, by their nature, if functioning properly, will take almost all sediment out," Azad said.

The area's restoration will also attract more wetlands avian and the raptors who prey on them as well as becoming a suitable breeding ground for the Lahontan cutthroat trout that are being continually released into the area's waters.

"The biggest positive impacts will be on the fisheries," said Azad.

The Stateline restoration project has been in the works for years, with the TRPA as the lead agency on the project starting in 2007. In 2009, TRPA published a report on Burke Creek restoration, funded with $500,000 in Southern Nevada

Public Land Management Act money. In the last year, Douglas County took over the role of lead agency.

The 4-mile creek runs through several private properties, including Sierra Colina, the single- and multi-residential project, which has been involved in the restoration work from the start. The League to Save Lake Tahoe has stalled the project by filing a lawsuit.

In 2006, the developers undertook their own study, done by Northwest Hydraulic Consultants, to evaluate their parcel but also to give the TRPA, USFS and Douglas County engineering ideas, said Steve Kenninger who, with Gail Jaquish, owns the 18-acre Sierra Colina site.

Kenninger said he's not aware of the details of the conservation district's plans, but that he was fully supportive of the plans laid out in the design drawn up by Winzler & Kelly in the original TRPA study.

"Therefore, we are unaware of the nature or proposed design of the 'new' Burke Creek Restoration Project and are unable to specifically comment on that design, or whether any anticipated changes could conflict with the Sierra Colina project," Kenninger said in an email to *Lake Tahoe News*. "However, we reiterate Sierra Colina's support for a Burke Creek Restoration project being implemented, and Sierra Colina's continued desire to cooperate with the county."

Sierra Colina donated 10.7 acres of its parcel to Douglas County for public recreation and open space, and 2.4 acres of that is the area needed to conduct creek restoration on the property.

The creek also runs through Tahoe Beach Club, a 20-acre site for estate homes and condominiums at the end of Kahle Drive that is still a mobile home park.

"We're doing 2 acres of stream zone restoration ourselves,

hopefully in cooperation with the agencies," said Tom Castaneda, vice president of Tahoe Beach Club. "We've spoken to the Forest Service, although we haven't talked to anyone in six or seven months. But we're very willing to be cooperative."

The restoration work was part of its environmental impact statement filed to gain approval from the TRPA for the development.

Approved three years ago, the Tahoe Beach Club is working to raise financing for the $200 million project from private equity interests who are more prepared to invest in it than are the banks, Castaneda told *Lake Tahoe News*.

Burke Creek also runs through the property where the Nugget Building is located, but owner Chuck Bluth said he was unaware of the project and had not been contacted by anyone about it.

Nevada green businesses look to connect with schools

By Michael Martinez, Reno Gazette-Journal

The Washoe County School District is facing a $50 million budget deficit this year. Will greening the operations of the school district erode that revenue shortfall? Probably not.

But what a handful of projects might do is jump-start the district's mandate to get students prepared for green jobs that the region is eager to develop.

One of the engines to this effort is Envirolution Inc., a company that said it wants to grow green job training and

related community outreach programs, develop leadership academies and K-12 education programs with a focus on STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) and develop green economy professional curricula for those who will teach it.

“Our whole angle is, we look to empower students to pursue green jobs and want to be green business leaders,” said Alex Gamboa, founder/CEO of Envirolution. “So, we educate students about energy efficiency, sustainability and energy auditing as it pertains to any building. That’s what it pertains to: the fundamental basic about conserving energy, whether it be in your home, your small business or your school. On a very fundamental level, all these buildings are very similar: They all use energy in the same way.”

The conduit for schools is called Project Recharge and thus far, Envirolution has worked with Rainshadow Charter School, Hug High School and Dilworth Middle School, which is one of Washoe County’s STEM academies.

Read the whole story

Geothermal cluster growth in N. Nevada

By Jason Hidalgo, Reno Gazette-Journal

When Ormat Technologies Inc. first set up shop in Northern Nevada in 1984, geothermal development activity was about as hot as a lukewarm glass of tap water.

“I think we maybe had one or two more geothermal developers

back then," said Paul Thomsen, Ormat's director of policy and business development. "Today, the number is something like 11 operators and developers in the area. It's the largest concentration in the nation by far."

Incidentally, having a concentration of businesses in one location is the first prerequisite in the formation of the prized business cluster.

Advantages from clusters include faster sector growth due to the easier exchange of information, expertise and talent. Many geothermal companies in the area, for example, count former Ormat employees among their executive ranks and resource teams. Clusters also lead to the creation of a strong support system that includes suppliers, vendors, trade associations and even academia – further accelerating growth.

With international geothermal players such as Ormat and Geothermal Development Associates calling the area home – along with the arrival of aspiring up-and-comers such as Gradient Resources – Northern Nevada is now ground zero for arguably the most dynamic geothermal cluster in the nation. In addition to major developers, Northern Nevada also has a diverse supporting cast that includes equipment manufacturers, material suppliers, surveyors and researchers.

Northern Nevada's geothermal cluster was highlighted by the Geothermal Energy Association's (GEA) selection of Reno as the site for its first ever National Geothermal Summit, which occurs later this month.

Add the University of Nevada, Reno's selection as the host of the first-ever National Geothermal Academy program in the country this summer and Northern Nevada's steamy clout appears even more impressive.

Read the whole story

Big bucks being spent surrounding Calif. online gambling bills

By Laurel Rosenhall, Sacramento Bee

Bills to legalize online gambling hit the state Capitol more than two years ago – and are likely headed for another year of debate.

Lobbyists and political campaigns are benefiting from the protracted discussion, collecting millions of dollars from the card rooms, racetracks and Indian tribes seeking to shape the future of Internet wagering.

The conversation centers on how it should be implemented and which of the competing interests will reap the benefits. That creates even more business for Capitol advocates, as they sort out differences among their clients.

“Any time there’s a major new legislative initiative that is contentious, the details of which have to be worked out, it’s good for the business of lobbyists, political consultants and lawyers,” said Howard Dickstein, a lawyer who represents several Indian tribes, including the one that owns Thunder Valley casino near Lincoln.

“Any issue where there is this much money involved is going to attract advocacy on all sides,” Dickstein said.

Gambling interests have long been big political spenders in California – even more so with the advent of Indian casinos in the 1990s. Moving the business online will require another

political push.

Read the whole story

Scuba diver found at Tahoe ID’d as missing Reno man

The body of a scuba diver who went missing on a dive in Lake Tahoe in 1994 has been identified as Donald Christopher Windecker.

A friend diving with Windecker 17 years ago told authorities at the time they were surfacing when Windecker appeared to have equipment problems.

Windecker’s body was found by other divers last month near Rubicon Point.

Windecker, 44, was a planner for Reno

— Lake Tahoe News staff report