Solar program in jeopardy, including in Nevada

By Erin Kelly, Reno Gazette-Journal

WASHINGTON — The solar power industry is facing a double threat from a Congress that might turn off the flow of federal subsidies and take a pass on mandating renewable energy standards that would increase demand.

The Republican-led House, focused on cutting spending, has targeted federal grant and loan guarantee programs to reduce or eliminate.

One is a U.S. Treasury grant program, set to expire at the end of this year, that solar companies said has kept them alive through the recession. The other is an Energy Department loan guarantee program, part of which would end Oct. 1, that has provided nearly $35 billion in loan guarantees for solar, wind, geothermal and other clean energy projects that have generated more than 68,000 U.S. jobs, according to the department.

Just this year in Nevada, the Energy Department provided a conditional loan guarantee of $737 million for the Crescent Dunes Solar Energy Project in Tonopah, creating about 5,000 jobs in the state, which has the nation's highest jobless rate. A second loan guarantee of nearly $46 million was provided for a solar generation facility to be developed northeast of Las Vegas by Fotowatio Renewable Ventures Inc. The project is expected to create about 250 jobs.

Read the whole story

STHS grad: Peace Corps a constant learning experience

Publisher's note: ***Brooke Wilkinson is one of three 2005 South Tahoe High School graduates who joined the Peace Corps upon college graduation. As it gets close to their return date, each will share with Lake Tahoe News readers their thoughts about the last two years.***

By Brooke Wilkinson

I arrived in Ecuador in June 2009, just two days after my graduation from UC Davis. I was excited, anxious, and overwhelmed, to say the least. Along with 44 other hopeful volunteers, I attended a pre-service training for two months in the Andes Mountains. In this time, I learned about the Ecuadorian culture and worked on my Spanish language skills.

I was sworn in as a Peace Corps Volunteer on Aug. 19, 2009, and the following day I moved to my site on the southern coast of Ecuador. I lived in the community of Libertador Bolivar for eight months, a town of 1,500 people. Then I moved to a community 15 miles north – Ayangue, which has 1,200 habitants. I have been here for a little more than a year.



Brooke Wilkinson holds Jacqueline, one of the

babies she witnessed be born. The mom asked Wilkinson to name her child. She did so after her mom. Photos/Provided

I will be officially ending my service in Ecuador on July 21, and will be back in California that evening. I am highly anticipating seeing my friends and family at the airport. I have many photographs and memories to share, and I cannot wait to hear about the changes that have taken place in their lives since I've been gone.

Was my Peace Corps experience everything I thought it would be?

Not even close. It was more than I could have ever anticipated. My time as a volunteer included by far the most amazing experiences that I've had up until this point in my life. And it also included some of the loneliest and desperate times I ever hope to know.

A Peace Corps saying is that a volunteer's time in site is "the toughest job you'll ever love." I can absolutely attest to the tough part. I had some incredibly difficult times throughout my experience as a volunteer. There were times when no one would attend workshops that I had spent hours organizing, and other times when I went door-to-door to homes in my community in an attempt to find something, anything to keep me occupied. The frustration that came with a lack of involvement from community members, in addition to missing my friends and family back in the States, was more than enough to

make me crack. There were times when the only thing I wanted to do was pack my bags and get on the next flight back to California.

Now, as I look back on these tough times, I am so thankful that I managed to pull through. Ultimately, I have become a more patient, persistent, and dedicated individual, and to feel that I have gained these characteristics at the young age of 23 really humbles me. After spending a significant time away from my friends and family, I appreciate them and their presence in my life even more than I did before I left.

Of course, there were high points to balance out the harder times. The “resume-worthy” description of these experiences would include:

• Working with a local midwife, training pregnant women on the importance of nutrition and proper breast-feeding methods, as well as witnessing the birth of several precious babies (even twins!);

• Writing and receiving a grant for a $6,000 ecotourism project to provide activities that would increase visitors to the community, therefore increasing income levels of the locals;

• Providing one-on-one HIV test counseling to women, men, and adolescents.



Brooke Wilkinson with adolescents

from the community she provided HIV/AIDS education to.

But if I’m being entirely honest, I have to say that the most rewarding times throughout my service include sharing meals with my neighbors, walking to the local corner store and picking out fresh fruits and vegetables, playing with the many, many children that always stopped by to see what the “gringa” was doing that afternoon. The relationships I developed with the people in Ecuador are ones that I will always cherish, and I am certain that when I will return to visit my Ecuadorian friends and family in the years to come, I will be welcomed with open arms.

With my return to the United States comes the dreaded job search. When I left two years ago, I did so with the mindset the economy would be better by the time I returned in 2011, and that as a returned Peace Corps volunteer I would have several job opportunities just waiting for me. Needless to say, this is not the case. I will join the thousands of Americans currently reading through job listings, sending out as many resumes as I can. In the meantime, I plan on taking science prerequisites at a community college so I can apply to nursing school within the next year or two. I’m also looking into training to become a doula.

Crowds flock to Lake Tahoe

beaches to watch fireworks

A pitch-black sky was the ideal backdrop as fireworks lit up the sky on Fourth of July.

Beaches were crowded with thousands of revelers throughout the South Shore enjoying a rather warm night – with temps in the 50s. Lots of families were out; with a good mix of tourists and locals. Those out and about Monday night say the crowds seemed larger than last year.

The 23-minute pyrotechnic display was one minute longer than a year ago. With the Lake Tahoe Visitors Authority paying $6,000 per minute (negotiated down from $10,000 per minute), it's an expensive show to put on.



Thousands enjoy Fourth of July fireworks on the South Shore. Photos/Howie Nave

Many small towns across the United States nixed their shows because they could not afford it.

But the fireworks displays throughout Lake Tahoe are often the reason people flock to the basin this time of year.

The South Shore also has a big display the Sunday of Labor Day weekend.

Even though personal fireworks are illegal throughout the Lake Tahoe Basin, that did not stop some people from lighting up the sky just off Regan Beach after the professionals finished their job. South Lake Tahoe police officers are investigating that incident.

– Kathryn Reed

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Slopestyle skiing, boarding become Olympic sports

The International Olympic committee announced Monday evening that slopestyle skiing and snowboarding would make their Olympic debut at the 2014 Winter Games in Sochi, Russia.

Snowboarding parallel slalom was also added, while the proposed alpine team event was not.

The U.S. Ski and Snowboard Association played a key role in working together with the International Ski Federation on slopestyle, including support in producing the debut World Championship last February at Park City and Deer Valley. The announcement was made following an IOC Executive Board meeting in Durban, South Africa.

“I am so stoked that slopestyle will be included in the next Olympic Games. Slopestyle is such a progressive event and has become much more popular over the last few years. Nothing thrills me more than to see the sport that I love so much

recognized on the world's stage," Jaime Anderson of South Lake Tahoe said in a statement.

Anderson, whose home resort is Sierra-at-Tahoe, could add some more medal to her arsenal now that her sport is part of the Olympics. She has medaled sixed times in the X Games – three of them gold; and in 2010 and 2011 was named the Dew Tour Athlete of the Year.

Bill Marolt, president and CEO of the U.S. Ski and Snowboard Association, said in a statement, "The IOC's decision to add slopestyle to the Olympics recognizes the millions of youth who are already participating in the sport in terrain parks around the world. It will have a very positive impact on the sport including our U.S. Snowboarding and U.S. Freeskiing programs."

Officials had added halfpipe skiing to the 2014 Games at a meeting in April.

"It's gratifying to see the modernism shown by the IOC in bringing in so many new events to better showcase the excitement of skiing and snowboarding as action sports to the world," Marolt said.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Minden 16-year-old to compete for Miss Teen America title

By Robin Leach, Las Vegas Sun

Las Vegas college student Alana Lee, 21, was crowned the new Miss Nevada. Alana will represent The Silver State in the 2012

Miss America Pageant at Planet Hollywood on Jan. 14.

Alana and new Miss Nevada Outstanding Teen, 16-year-old Bailey Gumm of Minden, were presented with their tiaras at the conclusion of weekend competition at the Casablanca Resort in Mesquite. Bailey competes in the Miss Teen America Pageant in Orlando from Aug. 16-18.

It was the first time Alana has competed in the Nevada pageant, aside from winning Miss Clark County. She is majoring in mass communications and broadcast journalism at Dixie State College in St. George, Utah.

Read the whole story

BMX competition in South Lake Tahoe

South Lake Tahoe BMX hosts the Northern California State Championship Qualifier July 10.

This American Bicycle Association sanctioned event begins at 12:30pm, with sign up between 10 and 11:30am.

The cost is $25 per rider. Spectators are free.

The track is at 1100 Lyons Ave.

All ages and abilities may participate. Trophies are awarded to the top 3 riders in each class.

For more information, call (530) 542.9337.

Warmer temperatures threaten N. California vineyards

By Ashlie Rodriguez, Los Angeles Times

In the next 30 years, high-value vineyards in Northern California could shrink by 50 percent because of global warming, according to a new Stanford University study released Thursday.

Applying scenarios from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, scientists used a climate system computer model and found that Napa and Santa Barbara counties could experience very hot days during the growing season, with temperatures reaching 95 Fahrenheit or higher. The number of hot days will be greater, they say, with about 10 more sweltering days than usual.

As a result, the amount of grape-growing land is projected to decline over the next three decades, the authors wrote.

“There will likely be significant localized temperature changes over the next three decades,” said Noah Diffenbaugh, coauthor of the study and a center fellow at the Woods Institute for the Environment at Stanford. “One of our motivations for the study was to identify the potential impact of those changes, and also to identify the opportunities for growers to take action and adapt.”

High-value growers in California may need to take into account warmer weather and integrate climate information into their cultivation and practices, Diffenbaugh said. Two counties that he found would have cooler temperatures, Yamhill County in Oregon and Walla Walla County in Washington, can prepare for

more optimal growing seasons.

“It’s risky for a grower to make decisions that consider climate change, because those decisions could be expensive and the climate may not change exactly as we expect,” Diffenbaugh said. “But there’s also risk in decisions that ignore global warming, because we’re finding that there are likely to be significant localized changes in the near term.”

Read the whole story

Inter-faith picnic in Carson City

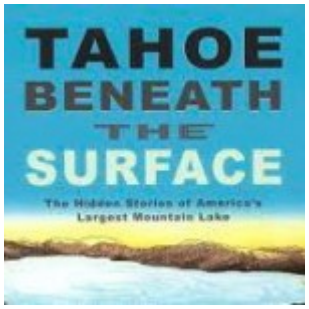
Various faiths are coming together to have a picnic in Carson City.

Christians (various denominations), Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, Jews, Baha’is, and others will share food, music, games, prayers, a “Peace Cake” and more. The idea to find similarities between the diverse traditions.

The second annual Heal the World Interfaith Picnic of Nevada is July 31 from 1-5pm at Mills Park (Pavilions B and C) in Carson City.

Participants, who include clergy as well as congregations, are asked to help the less fortunate by donating food items to Friends in Service Helping. The picnic’s goal is to donate 1,000 food items.

Snippets about Lake Tahoe



• ForeWord Reviews' Book of the Year Awards were recently announced, with "Tahoe Beneath the Surface" by Scott Lankford and co-published in 2010 by Sierra College Press and Heyday Books receiving a bronze medal in the Nature category.

• Tahoe City's Center for Spiritual Living is hosting the Relic Tour, a Tibetan Buddhist sponsored exhibit, July 8-10. More information is online.

• With July being National Parks Month, consider reading "Permanent Vacation" to find out what it's like to live and work in a national park.

• Rabi Evon Yakar is leading the congregation at Temple Bat Yam in South Lake Tahoe.

• Full House Resorts has signed a five-year lease to run the Grand Lodge Casino at the Hyatt Regency in Incline Village.

Growing racism toward Indians concerns tribes

By Valerie Taliman, Indian Country

During his six-year term on the U.S. Civil Rights Commission, Chairman Arlan Melendez of the Reno Sparks Indian Colony saw

more than his share of racism, discrimination and hate crimes against Native Americans.

But even he was surprised by the vicious attacks by skinheads against one of his tribe's families, Johnny and Lisa Bonta, in Fernley in late May.

"We know from hearings in Montana, New Mexico and South Dakota that hate crimes are continuing to happen against Native Americans, mostly in border towns near our reservations," he said, citing a soon-to-be released report developed by the U.S. Civil Rights Commission that compiled testimony in 2009 about hate crimes from hundreds of Americans Indians.

The report follows up on the 2005 Department of Justice report that showed the overall violent crime rate among American Indians and Alaska Natives was 100 per 1,000 persons, meaning that one out of 10 American Indians has been a victim of violence.

The study also found that "American Indians are more likely than people of other races to experience violence at the hands of someone of a different race," with 70 percent of reported violent attacks committed by non-Indians.

"Nevada was always known as the 'Mississippi of the West' for its rampant racism. Up until the late 1950s, Indians had to be off the streets by sundown or face arrest," said Melendez. "Reno was a very racist place, but over the years it's become more diversified as more Hispanic people moved into the area. Sadly, that's not the case in many rural communities where there's still a lot of good 'ole boy attitudes."

Melendez said he was shocked and very concerned about the hate crime committed against tribal members, especially since the victims are now being portrayed as the perpetrators, despite evidence to the contrary.

Read the whole story