Scientists studying why some Tahoe clouds produce moisture

By Bettina Boxall, Los Angeles Times

A Gulfstream turboprop sits on the McClellan Airport runway under gray, gloomy skies. Kim Prather has waited two weeks for this day.

“I can’t believe there are finally clouds,” she says gratefully as she and her research team check and calibrate several million dollars’ worth of equipment stacked in the plane’s cabin.



Looking for answers in Tahoe's clouds. Photo/LTN file

After the plane takes off, it slices through a 9,000-foot-thick layer of storm clouds, zigzagging up the western slope of the Sierra Nevada to probe the mysteries of California’s rain and snow.

Onboard, a special instrument that Prather invented and named “Shirley” will blow apart atmospheric particles with a laser and map their chemical composition, all in real time. Other devices will count and measure millions of cloud droplets, record water content and analyze gases.

On the ground, in the Tahoe National Forest, another array of equipment will simultaneously sample Sierra air masses.

Prather's team is trying to figure out why some clouds give up their moisture and others don't as they roll across the mountain ranges that provide much of the state with water.

They wonder: Is urban pollution reducing precipitation in Northern California's high country? Is Gobi Desert dust blown thousands of miles across the Pacific Ocean boosting the Sierra snowfall? Will atmospheric rivers – the moisture-laden bands in the sky that drenched the state in December and March – dump even more rain with global warming?

Read the whole story

Meeting to address Tahoe disability issues

Updated: May 31, 5:05pm.

Session No. 2 of a newly formed work group committed to the development of community-based services for people with disabilities around Lake Tahoe will be June 27 from 1-3pm.

Through the efforts of this group the goal is the needs that exist for opportunities and options for this population can be met by coming together creatively through sharing ideas and resources.

In session No. 1 people identified some of the things community has and identified some of the things it needs.

In the upcoming session the following issues will be

addressed:

1) Within existing services, how do they currently work together/with families?

2) What ideas do we have to generate new inter-agency partnerships?

The meeting is at Lake Tahoe Christian Fellowship, multipurpose room, 3580 Blackwood Road, South Lake Tahoe.

RSVP to Nancy Libby at (530) 577.3221.

S. Tahoe going after sign violators; Placer County eases rules

By Kathryn Reed

While South Lake Tahoe officials are cracking down on vehicles driving around with signs in the back of pickups advertising charity events and churches that use sandwich boards, Placer County is relaxing its sign ordinance.

Bob Albertazzi, community police officer for South Tahoe, said because the sandwich board sign was not secure in the back of the truck, it was considered an illegal sign. The sign was advertising Rotary's annual raffle ticket for a car giveaway. This is one of the service club's main fund-raisers – with most of the money then going back to the community.



South Tahoe is cracking down on signs, but has used sandwich boards for its own garage. Photo/LTN

“The sandwich board was in the back of the pickup. That was an illegal sign because it was a sandwich board. If they try to drive that pickup, it would have flown out and it is not considered part of the vehicle,” Albertazzi explained.

But on the other end of the lake, Placer County Board of Supervisors agreed this month to relax county ordinances relating to the placement of signs for businesses as a way to stimulate the economy. The idea is if people can better see a business, the business will get more customers.

The change in Placer County is not expected to be permanent.

“Sign restrictions remain to address sign issues that affect health and safety, such as conflicts with vehicle traffic and sight distance, and aesthetic issues, such as overuse of portable and bright signs, and clutter,” according to Placer County officials.

In South Tahoe, Albertazzi admitted to having been lax in his enforcement of churches using sandwich boards on the weekends to direct people to services. He now intends to crackdown on them as well.

In addition to sandwich boards, banners and flags are also not allowed in South Tahoe.

Most of the rules regarding signs in the Lake Tahoe Basin originated with the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency. Chapter 26 of the Regional Plan talks about the TRPA sign regulations.

Barbera Festival pits California vs. Italy

Wine lovers will converge at Cooper Ranch in Plymouth for the first Barbera Festival June 11 from 11am-4pm.

This outdoor wine and food festival will host more than 80 wineries from the Sierra foothills, Paso Robles, Napa, Sonoma, Mendocino, Lake County, the Santa Cruz Mountains, Ventura County, Lodi and the Bay Area. Approximately 1,500 people are expected to attend, with seven top area restaurants and caterers providing the best in cuisine.

In a partnership with a wine tasting event in Nizza Monferatto, Italy. on May 14, three California winemakers (Paul Cattrone, Nick Buttitta, and Gordon Binz) presented the Barbera wines of five California wineries (Paul D Cattrone Wines, Rosa d'Oro Vineyards, Cooper Vineyards, Muscardini Cellars and Boeger Winery). The event, called #barbera2, also featured the wines of five Italian producers (Cascina Garitina, Cascina Gilli, Iuli, Vigneti Massa and Varaldo Rino). The Italian wineries will be shipping their Barberas, not yet distributed in California, to the Barbera Festival. In a new twist on the wine festival theme, in addition to the many California wines, festival attendees will now be able to taste Italian wines as well.

Barbera originated in the Piemonte region of northern Italy. In California, about 7,000 acres of Barbera are planted. Today, nearly 200 California wineries produce Barbera.

Barbera is known for its generous acid structure. There are differing styles of Barbera ranging from brighter versions with flavors of tart cherry, raspberry, and spice, to riper styles with flavors of black cherry, blueberry, blackberry, and vanilla.

Tickets are $30/person in advance. For more information about the event, to purchase tickets, a list of participating wineries, map and directions, along with local lodging and tasting tips, click to the official website.

Lecture about the importance of play

The KidZone Museum, a nonprofit organization nationally recognized for its exemplary children museum efforts, partners with Squaw Valley Institute to offer a lively, fun and informative presentation by Stuart Brown on the importance of play in an individual’s life.

The presentation, which includes a Q&A, is June 5 at 4:30pm at the Resort at Squaw Creek. The cost is $10. Tickets may be purchased online.

Brown will discuss topics such as what triggers an adult or child’s emotional engagement with the world, holds our attention and helps to craft each person’s unique human brain. He’ll also explore the growing data on the relationship of play to an individual’s performance, emotional regulation and

overall well-being. Attendees will learn what highlights the evolution, neurobiology and characteristics of play behaviors and their embedment in the survival circuitry of the brain. The consequences of play deprivation will also be discussed.

Brown is director of the National Institute for Play and author of “PLAY: How It Shapes the Brain, Opens the Imagination, and Invigorates the Soul”.

For additional information about Brown’s presentation, contact Carol Meagher at director@kidzonemuseum.org or (530) 320.5613.

National Trails Day focuses on Van Sickle Park

Join the Tahoe Rim Trail Association for American Hiking Society’s 19th annual National Trails Day event on June 4.

Celebrate the start of the trail season by volunteering to build trail or by learning more about Leave No Trace principles. The event begins at Van Sickle Bi-State Park off Lake Parkway in South Lake Tahoe.

To participate, register online or contact Max at (775) 298.0239 or trails@tahoerimtrail.org.

Volunteer trail work: 9am–4pm, Van Sickle Park

Enjoy free coffee donated by Seattle’s Best, then help the TRTA build trail for the first time this season. Volunteers of all skill levels and physical abilities are welcome and encouraged to participate – no prior experience necessary.

Volunteers will receive free lunch sponsored by REI. The event

will conclude at 4pm with a volunteer party at Explore Tahoe, including free food and drink. This event opens the third trail-building season of a multiyear project, which will connect the Tahoe Rim Trail with Van Sickle State Park, reroute the TRT off paved roads, and provide stunning views of Lake Tahoe to more people. Volunteers must wear long-sleeved shirts, long pants, boots, and work gloves; bring sunscreen, bug spray, water and a backpack. The Tahoe Rim Trail Association will provide hard hats, trail building tools and crew leaders.

Leave No Trace Activities: 10am-noon, Explore Tahoe

Learn about the seven Leave No Trace principles in a fun, interactive format. The hands-on activities in this program are appropriate for all ages from kindergarten through high school and adults. Leave No Trace principles are relevant for everyone – hiking, biking, camping, backpacking, climbing, skiing, or even just walking through the local park. Activities will take place at Explore Tahoe, 4114 Lake Tahoe Blvd., South Lake Tahoe.

Opinion: Best chances for staying out of an ER

By Warren Withers

There may be no better place on Earth than Lake Tahoe – especially in the summer. As proof, more than 1.5 million visitors make their way to the South Shore of Lake Tahoe each year, and locals by the thousands take advantage of the superb surroundings.

Most who enjoy Tahoe return home with only good memories. However, a few find that they need urgent medical services during their visit. The following advice will help you avoid the most common ailments seen in the emergency department, so you can stay safe and have fun this summer.



Warren Withers

Avoid slips and falls. Slips and falls while boating, camping and hiking are common. Taking extra care when entering and exiting boats from the dock can help you avoid many dockside injuries. Get an extra hand from a friend, especially if it’s been a while since you’ve been on a boat.

Protect your feet. As harmless as it may seem, going barefoot at a campground is risky. We see many happy campers become less so after they step on pine cones or other sharp objects while not wearing shoes.

Protect your ankles. Wearing shoes or boots with proper support can help you avoid ankle sprains when you venture out on the trail.

Protect your skin. Sunburns can ruin your vacation. People forget that at high altitudes (the lake is at about 6,225 feet), sunburns happen much more quickly than at sea level. Proper application of sunscreen: use of broad-rimmed hats and moderating time spent directly in the sun will keep your skin healthy and reduce your risk for skin cancer.

Stay safe in the water. What would Tahoe be without water

sports? To stay safe in the water, wear a U.S. Coast Guard-approved life vest. It’s a simple thing and if you’re going to be out on any sort of watercraft, it could save your life. And it’s the law. Swimming is fun and the water is refreshing, but extended exposure to Tahoe’s cold water can result in hypothermia, which makes swimming difficult. If you are taking up a new sport, like kayaking or paddle boarding, take a lesson. You’ll be far safer if you understand the basics of the sport.

Consider the altitude. The beauty and grandeur of Tahoe is spectacular, but if you have a medical condition, especially one that involves your lungs or heart, discuss your trip with your doctor before you visit. Be sure to mention the altitude level. With proper preparation, most people can enjoy a trip to Tahoe.

Beware of reptiles, arthropods and animals. Rattlesnakes and scorpions are very rare in the Tahoe basin, but do exist on the slopes and valleys outside of the basin. Black bears are generally placid animals that mind their own business unless provoked. Food must be carefully stored when backpacking and at campsites – use the provided bear boxes – as bears will wander into busy campgrounds in search of food.

Consume alcohol in moderation. Boating while intoxicated is dangerous and illegal, as is operating any vehicle – even bicycles – while under the influence. Consume alcohol in moderation, especially at high altitudes, and do not drink and drive.

Enjoy Tahoe – we wish you happy memories and experiences. If you find yourself in need of medical care, know that Barton Memorial Hospital, with our board-certified staff, 24/7 emergency department and Barton Urgent Care will provide you and your family excellent care.

Warren Withers is co-director and head physician of the Barton

Memorial Hospital Emergency Department.

Farmers’ market season set to begin in Lake Tahoe

By Kathryn Reed

Mother Nature is playing havoc with produce growers.

Despite the unseasonably cool weather and continuous rain, farmers’ market season is here.

The two South Shore markets start operation the first week of June. The Ski Run Boulevard market between Birch and Larch streets will run every Friday starting June 3 from 9am-2pm. The El Dorado County Certified Farmers Market Association will be back at the American Legion Hall parking lot on Highway 50 on Tuesdays starting June 7, from 8am-1pm.



Javier Toscano will be at the Tuesday farmers' market in South Lake Tahoe starting in June.

Photo/LTN file

“I think people are removed from nature,” said Alex Mellon, who coordinates the Ski Run market. He said people ask why tomatoes aren’t at the market in June when they are in the grocery store. A definite disconnect exists between some people understanding where their food comes from.

The same goes with some people expecting produce to look perfect like it does in a grocery store. Naturally, it just doesn’t happen that way. Despite some imperfections to fruit and veggies at area farmers’ markets, it’s still good quality.

Another thing is most of the produce was picked the morning it is sold at a market – making it the freshest possible unless one were to grow it themselves.

Both South Shore markets rely heavily on El Dorado County farmers to supply the fruits and vegetables that are sold each week. Some farmers, though, come from the Central Valley. This is a good thing because it has been warmer there.

“Cherries are slow, but we have a grower from Stockton. Those look really good,” said Jim Coalwell, who runs the Tuesday market in South Lake Tahoe. “Our local ones are borderline because we need warm weather for the sweetness.”

Expect lettuces, cherries, peaches, nectarines, red onions and garlic to be some of the items available at the first markets.

El Dorado County’s initial peach harvest looks iffy because of the moisture that keeps coming.

“It’s going to be a sketchy peach season for sure. It will be good later on,” said Coalwell, who runs the Red Shack in Placerville with wife Lois.

Curly leaf is hurting the trees.

“The leaves curl up and dry up and fall off. If new leaves

have not started, there is no protection for little fruit to develop," Coalwell explained.

He's lined up a grower from Fresno to bring peaches the first part of the season, with the hope El Dorado County's trees will recover for later in the summer.

The Ski Run market is run in conjunction with Sacred Path Farms in Coloma. The idea last year when the market first opened in August was to operate in the late afternoon or evening, but some businesses on Ski Run made sure that did not happen. This is why it has the hours it does.

Both South Shore markets will have art booths and food vendors beyond produce.

New to the Tuesday market will be Sugar Lily Bakery from El Dorado.

Coalwell has his fingers crossed the South Shore will be able to keep supporting the market.

"The market is still doing good, but not like it was a few years a go. I don't think a lot of those people are there any more," Coalwell said.

He's right. Plus, unemployment in South Lake Tahoe is close to 17 percent, so the number of those being able to afford any farmers' market is dwindling.

As with all farmers' markets, what is available is based on what the farmers have grown and what season it is. Don't expect corn and tomatoes for a bit.

Other farmers' markets:

• Foothill Farmer's Market, which is scheduled lakeside at Tahoe City's Commons Beach, started May 26. It is every Thursday from 8am-noon until Oct. 13.

• The market opens in Kings Beach on June 14.

• Farm fresh fruits, vegetables, arts and entertainment are available every Saturday June 11-Sept. 17 at the 3rd and Curry Street Farmers Market in Carson City. The market runs from 8:30am to 1:30pm.

• Mills Park in Carson City hosts a farmers market every Wednesday at the pavilion from 3-7pm.

• Wednesday from June 1-Sept. 14 8am-1pm at Lampe Park, 1325 Waterloo Lane, Gardnerville.

Caltrans working on Hwy. 49 in Placerville

Caltrans is alerting motorists to expect delays due to nighttime paving operations scheduled on Highway 49 to Highway193 in Placerville.

Beginning May 31 between the hours of 7pm and 6am the following morning, work will begin on a $676,600 maintenance project to grind and replace asphalt concrete surfacing at various locations from Pleasant Valley Road to the top of Sacramento Hill, and grinding and replacing asphalt concrete surfacing the full width of roadway from Sacramento Hill to Highway 193.

Most of the traffic-interferring work will take place at night.

Motorists can expect delays of up to 20 minutes. Completion is expected in early summer.

Nevada bill to withdraw from TRPA moves to Assembly

As expected, the Nevada bill that would drastically alter the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency structure has moved from the Senate to the Assembly.

SB271 would allow Nevada to back out of the bi-state Compact. However, California and Congress would have some say in how things go forward.

“We are appalled by today’s action by the Nevada Senate,” Rochelle Nason, executive director of the League to Save Lake Tahoe, said in a statement. “This bill is a cynical ploy by real estate agents and developers upset that the courts are requiring the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency to have a plan in place that achieves and maintains environmental objectives before they can build more piers, hotels, condos, subdivisions and timeshares not allowed under existing plans.”

A date has not been set for when the Assembly will hear the bill.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report