State water managers juggle flooding v. storage concerns

By Matt Weiser, Sacramento Bee

In a state often torn between flood and drought, spring is a reprieve. Winter storms are done, and a thirsty summer seems a distant worry.

Not so this year. The calendar may say spring, but the clouds disagree. Stubborn storms promise ample water supplies, but they bring a real threat of flooding to the state for the first time in five years.

For California's water managers, it is a perilous time.

This spring is especially vexing because the state's reservoirs are full, the snowpack is mountainous at 146 percent of average, and yet more storms loom, including another expected today.

That means a delicate juggling act, and a little guesswork, to serve two masters: flood control and water storage.

Water managers must let out just enough water at just the right time. The aim is to make room for the next storm without taxing levees downstream, and without wasting water that might be needed for lawns and crops this summer.

Read the whole story

Ski report: It keeps dumping



So much snow mixed with wind is causing problems at some resorts with getting all lifts operating, while some resorts are not opening today.

Here is the ski report from Curtis Fong, the Guy from Tahoe.

Schools closed, snow not stopping in Tahoe

A long winter means a long school year for students in the Lake Tahoe Basin.

Today schools in Lake Tahoe Unified and Tahoe Truckee Unified are closed. Friday was already a planned day off for schools at the lake in Douglas County School District. Washoe County schools will be on a two-hour delay this morning and winter bus stops will be activated. School in Incline is closed. Classes at UNR before 9am are canceled.



One day it might be

barbecue
season in Lake
Tahoe.
Photo/LTN

A winter storm warning remains in effect today until 11am. The National Weather Service in Reno has issued a winter weather advisory from 8pm Friday to 5pm Saturday.

More than a foot of snow fell in South Lake Tahoe is less than 24 hours, with the stuff still coming down lightly as of 6:30am.

The Weather Service is calling for 4-8 inches today above 7,000 feet and 4 inches below that elevation. Overnight and Saturday totals could reach 10-18 inches above 7,000 feet and 5-10 inches closer to lake level.

The Sierra Avalanche Center is calling the threat of an avalanche high. Alpine Meadows is closed today.

Interstate 80 is not expected to open until noon.

A bright spot in the forecast is on the radar for Tuesday – when the high in South Tahoe is expected to be 42 degrees, with party sunny skies.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Quest to find best Bloody Mary ends at Peanut Bar

By Kathryn Reed

Sometimes I hate to stop doing research for a story. Maybe there will have to be sequels to this story.

Friends and I were in search of the best Bloody Mary in the Lake Tahoe Basin. Well, we didn't get that far. Most of the research was done on the South Shore. My apologies to the other regions that were not tapped into as well as they could have been.

Years ago you could not have paid me to drink a Bloody Mary. I grew up not liking tomato juice. Vodka was never one of my favorite alcohols.



Sarah Moss is working on selling her Bloody Mary mix. Photo/Kathryn Reed

Somewhere along the way my taste buds evolved. I love Bloody Mary's. But this little taste test proved they vary in taste.

My sister, Pam, and I started a tradition where we would have a Bloody Mary together at the airport whenever we flew together. I like to carry on that tradition with whoever my flying companion is. Sue and I always have one at the Reno airport.

Sue and I have decided the best one we've had during this taste test trial is at Turn 3, also known as the Peanut Bar,

in South Lake Tahoe.

Sarah Moss, who bought the bar 13 years ago at age 21, doesn't remember how the recipe came about. But what she did know is that she wanted each Bloody Mary at her bar to be consistently good. That's why she makes up batches of the stuff by the gallon.

She won't divulge what goes in the mix or just how much celery salt, or steak sauce or horse radish is involved.

"Soon, hopefully, you'll be able to buy it," Moss revealed on our repeat visit last weekend to make sure this was our No. 1 choice. "I'm trying to package it. They will be testing acidic levels next week."

Moss is working with a company in Auburn.

It will be made with all natural ingredients. She'd like to sell the BM mix locally and in stores like Whole Foods.

Not only are the Bloody Mary's fantastic – the price will have you ordering more than one. With a beer back they are $5.25. On Sundays the price drops to $3.50 – which also includes the beer back.

The bar is in the Kings Trading Post next to Overland Meat on Highway 50.

Across town in the Heavenly Village is another tasty, well-priced ($4.95) BM. Brenda, Sue and I all recommend the Driftwood Cafe.



Driftwood Cafe's Bloody Mary's are pretty. Photo/Brenda Knox

“Asked for spicy and it was,” Brenda said. She also found this to be one of the better-looking BMs she sampled. It was also her favorite.

Sue and I rated the BMs at Blue Angel Café on Ski Run Boulevard ($5) a hair better than Driftwood.

At the Log Cabin in Kings Beach, the $6 BM is a wonderful complement to breakfast.

The Beacon at Camp Rich used to be where I would go for a BM all the time. But the last few times the $8 Burnt Betty – the spicy BM that is 50 cents more than the regular one – has only been average.

Pam found the one at the Beacon a bit nasty, with her guess being they put olive juice in the mix. She doesn’t do olives at all.

Though I’m usually a beer drinker on the slopes, I changed that up a bit this season in my quest to sample a Bloody Mary or two on the slopes.

The one that nearly had me crawling down the slopes was at Summit at Northstar.

My notes read, “Oh my, the double is deadly, especially with only a banana in my system.”

I read the description on the board about the double Bloody Mary, but mistakenly thought I would have to specifically order it. I thought if I just ordered a Bloody Mary, I would

get a single. Wrong. I was a bit loopy as I stood in line waiting to order food to absorb this $14.88 concoction. Good, but way too much alcohol for me.

My friend Brenda had the $11.75 BM at Heavenly's Tamarack Lodge. She was complimentary of the concoction, especially that the Worcestershire was added and not just a pre-mix. She also liked the salt around the rim.

The worst BM that Sue, Brenda and I had was at the Tiki Bar at Sierra-at-Tahoe. Flavor was horrible, more ice than liquid, cup was small. And they cost more than $10 each.

We were super disappointed because Sue and I love the ones at West Bowl at Sierra. Not only are they worth ordering, but at $8.50 they are less than the ones at the main lodge.

I tend to like my BMs spicy, but the bartender at Alpine said I would be happy without any extras. The $8 concoction was spicy enough, but I rated it a "fair." Sue liked it better than I did, but was not wowed.

Now the $7.50 BM at Mt. Rose's Winter's Creek Lodge is one I will order again. It was super spicy. At that time, Sue was leaning toward it being the best one yet.

STHS students get a taste for Hollywood jobs

By Kathryn Reed

When the $13 million Theater Arts and Design Academy opens in August it will be like a Hollywood studio.

Just how much like one students got to find out this month as they toured the real deal in Southern California. Five students and four adults ventured south to learn how what they will do in the classroom will translate to the real world.



Principal Ivone Larson takes a photo of students by old film cameras. Photo/Provided

Although retired teacher Doug Sprague started making this trip 24 years ago, the significance now is South Tahoe High School will begin offering more specialized classes that have applicable skills to post-graduation jobs.

The career tech path is part of the California Arts Media and Entertainment sector. The building is part of the $64.5 million voter approved bond.

Some of the professionals the group met were South Tahoe High grads. Casey Adams works in the stunt field, while Matt Lucas does promos for Warner Brothers.

Scott Ramirez, IT guru at the high school, was one of the adults on the trip. He will be an integral player in keeping everything running.

“By taking our tech person we gain experience in how to translate this to the classroom,” explained Principal Ivone

Larson. “It gave us ideas for great lessons for the kids.”

The structure of the TADA building will be finished in two months, with the fun components put in place over the summer and ready for when school starts in August.

Classes like video editing, digital media arts, Garage Band, and website creation will be offered among others.

A collaborative approach is being taken so one student may be working on sound editing, while another is doing promotional work, someone else is directing, and others are getting things ready for the stage or campus television.

“South Tahoe High is where arts and academics take center stage,” is how Larson is billing it.

Opinion: Nevada can’t afford to abandon TRPA

Publisher’s note: ***This editorial is from the March 24, 2011, Reno Gazette-Journal.***

Let’s be clear: Regardless of what happens to Senate Bill 271 in the Nevada Legislature, the state will not be able to walk away from the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency pact.

That’s because the compact that created the TRPA, signed in 1969 by Gov. Paul Laxalt of Nevada and Gov. Ronald Reagan of California, both Republicans, is not simply an agreement between two states. It is also an agreement with the federal government, which determined that the lake is of special national interest and has provided much of the money used for projects needed to protect the lake from the man-made and

natural contamination that has reduced its famous clarity.

An attempt by Nevada to withdraw from the compact is sure to be met with opposition in Congress. If the bill is adopted, Nevada will quickly find itself in the federal court fighting legal actions that it is unlikely to win.

It’s a gamble that the state simply cannot afford.

Read the whole story

Basic homeowner’s insurance doesn’t cover flooding

By Claudia Buck, Sacramento Bee

The frightening images of Japan’s tsunami wiping out homes, roads and entire cities are vivid reminders that a natural disaster can strike at any time.

And whether it’s an earthquake, a wildfire or flooding, being covered against severe damage to your home or business is essential.

Across the United States, flooding is the No. 1 natural disaster, according to the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

And given the region’s swollen rivers and the promise of heavy runoff this spring from melting snow, now’s a good time to assess how well you’re protected against flooding.

A basic homeowner’s or business insurance policy will cover damage caused by storms, such as a leaky roof, fallen tree

limbs or broken pipes.

But a homeowner’s policy typically does not cover damage due to flooding, or what’s known as “rising water.”

Flooding – such as a levee break, a river overflowing its banks or water from springtime snow melt – is generally defined as a temporary inundation of normally dry land. For that type of coverage, you need a separate flood policy, which is provided by the federal government’s National Flood Insurance Program and purchased through a local insurance agent.

“The distinction is that homeowner’s insurance covers water falling from the sky; flood insurance covers water rising from the ground,” said Tully Lehman, spokesman for the nonprofit Insurance Information Network of California.

Read the whole story

S. Tahoe event to raise money for animals hurt in Japan

A fundraiser for the animals affected by the Japanese earthquake and tsunami will be April 3 from 11am-5pm.

The event is at Tahoe Best Friends – 2179 Ruth Ave., South Lake Tahoe.

Bring your dog and your family for portraits and fun.

A $40 donation includes a 10-minute portrait session and an 8×10 print.

All profits will go to the Japanese Earthquake Animal Rescue and Support Group.

For more information, contact jaime@rosestreetstudio.com or (530) 544.3518.

Reservations are recommended.

Washoe County headed toward regional fire protection

By Susan Voyles, Reno Gazette-Journal

Washoe County commissioners on Tuesday gave its official blessings for its members on the joint fire advisory to work with Reno officials on regionalizing fire services.

Commissioners also want to invite officials for Sparks, the North Lake Tahoe Fire Protection District, the Reno-Tahoe Airport Authority and neighboring fire departments covering north Lyon County and Carson City to participate in the talks.

Reno and Washoe County officials have until June 30 to notify each other of any plans to disband a 11-year-old contract in which Reno staffs the county's six Truckee Meadows fire district stations. The county also oversees the Sierra fire district.

Sierra Fire Chief Michael Greene has proposed switching to three-man crews to keep its three stations open and avoid paying overtime of upwards of $800,000 this year for a fourth firefighter when one reports sick.

Read the whole story

Upper Truckee Marsh to temporarily ban dogs

By Kathryn Reed

“No dogs allowed” signs will soon be erected at the entrances of the Upper Truckee Marsh.

With 10 years of data recorded since the California Tahoe Conservancy bought the South Shore property for $10 million, the conclusion is wildlife and their habitat are not being protected.

This is because dogs are running off-leash. Only about 70 percent of people walking in the area leash their dogs, according to Dana Dapolito, CTC associate environmental planner.



Upper Truckee Marsh will be dog-free for three months starting May 1. Photo/LTN May 2010

Because this site was acquired to enhance habitat, degrading

it does not meet the standards for which it was purchased.

The closure of the 311-acre marsh/meadow to dogs will be from May 1 to July 31. This map details the area. People will still be able to access the area.

“This is not routine. It’s a reflection of the extraordinary value of this habitat,” CTC Deputy Director Ray Lacey told *Lake Tahoe News*. “We saw birds chased downed and eaten. It’s a little dangerous when you are in the business of resource protection and you let it go too far.”

The decision to ban dogs was first reported by *Lake Tahoe News* in July 2010 after the board made the decision.

Letters will be mailed next week to residents bordering the marsh in South Lake Tahoe to let them know about the closure and the reasoning behind it. CTC staff knows the three-month dog ban will not be popular. But they also said it may not be permanent.

Dapolito said, “If after the closure we see a significant increase in the leashes, we could bring to the board a recommendation during breeding season to allow dogs on leash.”

The time period of the ban is because this is when the birds are breeding. Dogs roaming free – which is never legally allowed – are not only attacking birds, but are also disturbing nesting areas. On top of that, some of the migratory birds going from one end of the earth to the other may not make it to their final destination if their energies are used up in Tahoe flying away from canines, CTC officials said.

This is not just any marsh. It is home to animals and plants not found elsewhere in Tahoe.

“It is the singular and most unique habitat in the Lake Tahoe Basin. That is why we singled this out of our 5,000 other

properties," Lacey explained.

The willow flycatcher – a songbird – was put on the federal endangered species list in 1997.

"Habitat destruction and degradation plus overgrazing by livestock are the major causes of population decline," according to the Audubon Society.

This area of Tahoe was once grazed. It is a meadow once the water leaves via Trout Creek into Lake Tahoe.

The yellow warbler and yellow-headed blackbird are on the state list of endangered species.

Asked what would happen if dogs were left to do as they please, CTC wildlife biologist Adam Lewandowski said, "Some species would adjust, but this is unique habitat. (Others) are rare or threatened because they are not adaptive and have specific habitat area. So this is one of the only areas where they can survive."

Although the Conservancy is more worried about protecting the animals and their habitat, two plants in this area are also of concern. This acreage has the largest growth of Tahoe yellow cress and is home to the rare American mannagrass.

The Conservancy has enlisted the help of El Dorado County Animal Control and Sheriff's Office to police the area. They will be enforcing South Lake Tahoe city ordinance 18A-11J.

The first offense will be a warning and removal of the animal from the property. The second and subsequent offenses will involve money, though the CTC staff didn't know how much.

An alternative for people wanting to walk their dogs in a natural environment during the ban is across the meadow at Cove East – another CTC property.