California not mailing tax booklets

By Mark Glover, Sacramento Bee

As more Californians file their taxes electronically, the state Franchise Tax Board said last week that it will no longer directly mail tax booklets to households.



The move will result in a cost savings of “at least $1 million,” the FTB said.

The state’s action comes on the heels of a similar announcement last month from the Internal Revenue Service, which said individual and business taxpayers will no longer receive paper federal income tax packages in the mail.

Like the state, the IRS attributed the change to an increase in e-filing, the availability of free filing options and the need to cut costs.

Read the whole story

Tahoe harpist releases 2 CDs

South Lake Tahoe harpist Anne Roos has released two CDs.

The collections contain music Roos arranged and performed over the past decades. These recordings include the most requested

songs, plus, some songs that may be new to listeners.

“Velvet: Timeless Standards on the Solo Harp” has melodies dating to the days of old movies, Broadway musicals, and television shows, from the early 20th century to the early 1970s.

“Blue Jeans: Modern Pop on the Solo Harp” includes classic rock, heavy metal, R&B, country, and even a bit of new age music.

These recordings are available on amazon.com, CDBaby.com, and retail stores. Roos’ CDs are sold at Borders in Carson City. In December, they will also be available for purchase from Roos’ website.

South Tahoe initiates slew of New Year’s Eve activities

An inaugural family-friendly New Year’s Eve celebration in the Heavenly Village will ring in the New Year starting at 2pm with a rail jam near the gondola, followed by a slate of activities from 6–9pm. Events include a snowboard simulator; ice sled motion simulator; adventure films; Reno funk band Jelly Bread; ice skating; and roaming performers.

The evening climaxes at 9pm (midnight East Coast time) when an illuminated gondola car is “dropped” from the top of Heavenly’s East Peak, and a fireworks show will end the night as the grand finale.

South Lake Tahoe is offering a $5 flat fee to park in the Heavenly Village garage from 3-10:30pm Dec. 31.

Snippets about Lake Tahoe



• Do you have tickets for the various Festival of Trees and Lights events? For a complete schedule, to purchase tickets or for more information, go online or call (530) 543.5909.

• Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger has reappointed Amy Horne, 56, of Truckee to the Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board, where she has served as a member since 2006. Jack Clarke, 68, of Apple Valley also is back on the board. He's been a member since 1996. Peter Pumphrey, 64, of Bishop is a new member to the board.

• Tahoe Truckee Unified School District board member Kristy Olk will resign effective Dec. 8. If you are interested in serving, call (530) 582.2500.

• Harrah's Entertainment Inc., the world's largest casino company, has changed its name to Caesars Entertainment Corp.

• North Lake Tahoe Fire Protection Chief Mike Brown for the second year in a row refused a hike in his salary.

Freezing would signal a

warming trend in Lake Tahoe

By Kathryn Reed

If things keep going like this, those who talk about the winter of 1952 may have competition when it comes to bragging. That winter, the onslaught of snow that brought the white stuff to the second story of homes and businesses in Lake Tahoe didn't start until Jan. 11.

As the calendar flips to a new page tomorrow, with it goes a November for the record books.

The overnight low for Nov. 28 was minus 8 degrees in South Lake Tahoe. It broke the record of minus 6 degrees set in 1975. Records were also set that night in Tahoe City, Truckee, Portola, Markleeville, Bridgeport and Mammoth.



Icicles don't have a chance to melt with highs in the 30s. Photos/Kathryn Reed

When it comes to snow totals, more records. Daggett Pass (aka the top of Kingsbury Grade at 7,334 feet) in Stateline recorded 57 inches of snow for November. November 1989 had 22 inches – now the second snowiest November on record, though totals have only been kept at that location since the winter

of 1988-89.

The National Weather Service in Reno just started keeping snow totals for South Lake Tahoe last winter. More than 50 inches have been recorded this month at Lake Tahoe Airport.

Tahoe City has come in with 70.5 inches this November and still had 32 inches at the dam on Monday.

“It’s definitely in the top 5 to 10 percent of snowiest Novembers ever,” Dawn Fishler, meteorologist with the Weather Service in Reno, said of the region. “We just got in a good pattern.”

What’s next?

How this section of the Sierra Nevada sits the weather phenomena known as La Nina and El Nino don’t mean a lot. This is because the region is on the cusp of those systems. So, while the Bay Area is projected to have a dry, cold winter because of La Nina, the same cannot be predicted for Lake Tahoe.

Only four times in recorded history for this area has a La Nina followed a strong El Nino, according to Fishler. Two were dry, two were extremely wet – so history is not helping foretell the future of this winter.

To complicate matters for forecasters “the models have been all over the place,” Fishler said.

The three main long-range models are run four times a day.

“Those are changing every single run,” Fishler said. That’s not normal.

It points to how four days ago the storm forecast for midweek looked strong, but by Monday the chance of snow for Wednesday had dwindled to 20 to 30 percent.

Those models are pointing to a wet weekend with snow down to 5,000 feet. But Fishler said with the lack of confidence in the models she wasn't about to commit to that forecast this many days in advance.

Temperatures should be rising, even though it was only supposed to be about 4 degrees as people woke up in the basin this morning. The overnight lows should warm up to be in the 20s, with daytime highs in the 40s for the week. By the weekend it's back to the teens overnight and highs in the 30s.

Water content is of importance with snowfall because that's what fills the reservoirs downstream. In Tahoe City every 11 inches of snow produced 1 inch of liquid; it was a 16:1 ratio in South Lake Tahoe and 20:1 at Daggett Summit.

What it all means

For most ski resorts, this is the earliest opening since 2004-05 when runs were open in October.

"It's radically awesome," is how Kirstin Cattell of Sierra-at-Tahoe described the conditions. "I was in the trees all week. You don't usually get in the trees opening weekend. You have to use your brain. That lump is probably a rock."

She described the snow as "light and dry."

So much snow has dumped at Sierra that gates one and two of Huckleberry Canyon are open.

On the North Shore, Alpine was reporting this as the second snowiest November in the resort's history – and that was before Mother Nature unleashed more snow Saturday.

Mt. Rose is reporting the shallowest base of Tahoe area resorts – 31 to 55 inches.

Still to open are Tahoe Donner Downhill and Homewood Mountain Resort – Dec. 10; Diamond Peak – Dec. 16; and Granlibakken

(ski hill) – Dec. 17.

Sierra Avalanche Center is issuing a moderate warning for conditions as of Nov. 29.

Andy Chapman with the North Lake Tahoe Resort Association said this was the strongest Thanksgiving weekend in the last decade, maybe the last 15 years, in terms of visitors.

“We haven’t had this type of product available in quite some time,” Chapman said of the snow. “To me and many I talked to it was almost like the Christmas period, it was that busy.”

The North Shore is hoping to ride the tourism momentum that started last winter. The January-March 2010 hotel tax dollars collected in Placer County were the second highest for that quarter since the county has charged the fee.

Chapman believes it’s the ability to attract the drive-up market from the Bay Area and Sacramento as well as the short fly market that is boding well for businesses.

The South Shore also noticed the phone starting to ring as the snow started to fly. With Heavenly being on wind hold several days, it was fortuitous that Kirkwood and Sierra fired up their lifts to give people in the South Lake area options for riding.

Carol Chaplin, executive director of Lake Tahoe Visitors Authority, said she is hearing a buzz among skiers who are excited to be able to ski Heavenly, Sierra and Northstar this season with certain season passes because Vail Resorts bought the Truckee resort last month.

Besides ski resorts, lodging, restaurants and roads being busy with the early snowfall – the cold is keeping employees with heating businesses working around the clock.

Nixon’s on the South Shore and Clark Plumbing, which operates around the lake, barely had time to chat with *Lake Tahoe News*

because customers kept calling. Frozen pipes and dirty furnaces are making life miserable for some people.

TJ Stewart of Clark said, “Keep the heat on to override the outside temperature.” He suggested 55 to 60 degrees as the low on a thermostat.

Another tip is to open cabinet doors when leaving for several days so heat in the house reaches the pipes.

Basic winter tips

• Shovel around the gas meter and don’t let snow pile up.

• Have plenty of flashlights – with working batteries.

• Stock up on canned goods before a storm just in case that semi doesn’t make it to the grocery store with a fresh supply.

• Keep a good supply of candles on hand.

• Don’t use propane or camping stoves indoors.

• Four-wheel drive does not mean being able to stop as though the conditions were clear and dry.

• Don’t go in the backcountry alone. Carry avalanche rescue equipment.

• Check your windshield wiper fluid.

• Carry a blanket, water, food, extra clothes, and a shovel – especially crossing a summit.

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Northstar expects benefits from being a Vail property

By Jim Sloan, Sacramento Bee

When Northstar-at-Tahoe ski area opened in 1972, it was nicknamed “Flatstar” and derided for its lack of black diamond terrain.



Northstar has opened more terrain through the years. Photo/Kathryn Reed

Over the years, the resort has opened up steeper terrain, and its dated-looking base village has been remodeled with cobblestone plazas, trendy shops, expensive condos, restaurants and a 9,000-square-foot skating rink surrounded by fireplaces and lounging areas. Last year, Northstar developers unveiled a $300 million Ritz Carlton perched at midmountain.

Try as it might, though, Northstar never acquired the luster of some of those magnificent Colorado resorts like Breckenridge and Beaver Creek, with their European-style villages and $3 million slopeside condos. Last year, Northstar recorded 700,000 skier visits; Breckenridge, 1.6 million.

But with the arrival of Vail Resorts Inc., which acquired Northstar from Booth Creek Resort Properties Inc. for $63 million on Oct. 25, some say Northstar is poised to vault into the upper echelon of modern ski resort destinations. Vail's other holdings – Vail, Breckenridge, Beaver Creek and Keystone in Colorado and Heavenly on Tahoe's south shore – aren't just popular among skiers, they're legendary.

"Vail Resorts is simply the best-run resort management company in the country," said Charles Goeldner, a retired professor at the University of Colorado, Boulder, and an expert on ski area economics. "They know how to bring people to their resorts and get them to spend money. This formula is what they will bring to Northstar."

Read the whole story

Dangberg Ranch holiday exhibit

Nevada State Parks invites the public to Dangberg Home Ranch Historic Park for "Home Ranch for the Holidays," a special exhibit of historic toys, games and Christmas decorations from the 1860s through the 1940s.

Highlights of the exhibit include an aluminum Christmas tree complete with a color wheel, the family's Christmas stockings hung on the mantel, and other Dangberg family holiday decorations.

The exhibit also includes board and card games from the 1870s and 1880s that were played with by Fred Dangberg Jr., and his siblings, as well as numerous toys enjoyed by Fred's five

children and grandson from the 1910s through the 1940s. These include a fully furnished, homemade dollhouse, a small wood-burning cook stove, a child’s drop-front desk and a miniature tea cart. A variety of dolls, handmade doll clothing and doll accessories will be shown. The creative side of children’s play will be explored with a display of puzzles, building toys, paint sets, crayons and coloring books dating from 1900 to 1945.

The exhibit is Dec. 3-5 from noon to 4pm.

The park is located at 1450 Highway 88, one-half mile south of the Carson Valley Swim Center. A map and further information may be found at parks.nv.gov/hr.htm or by calling (775) 783.9417.

The cost is $3 for adults and free for children under 13.

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'Race To Nowhere' at Truckee High

Due to continued public demand, a third screening of the hard-hitting education documentary "Race To Nowhere" is scheduled for Dec. 15 at the Truckee High School theatre from 6:30-9pm.

Sponsored by Sierra Nevada College, Lake Tahoe in partnership with Parents for Public Schools of Truckee-North Tahoe and the Tahoe Truckee Unified School District, this film has already drawn local educators, administrators, parents, and college students from around the Lake Tahoe Basin together for important discussions about the current state of the American school system. Members of SNC's Department of Teacher Education, Excellence in Education, and the Tahoe Truckee Education Association will facilitate a panel discussion

immediately following the film.

“Race to Nowhere” focuses on the saturation point many students, teachers, and parents have reached in the high-stakes, high pressure culture of the current educational system. It highlights the mounting pressures and stresses children experience – from elementary school through high school – in an effort to gain admission to top colleges.

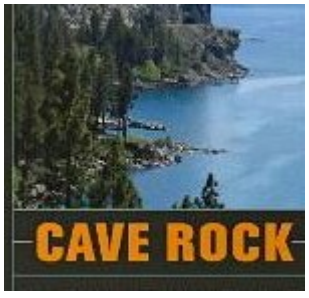
The film is rated PG-13 and runs 1 hour, 25 minutes.

For more information on the event, contact Katrina Midgley at (775) 831.1314, ext. 7517, kmidgley@sierranevada.edu, or Leisa Peterson at (530) 448.1558, ntt.parentadvocacy@yahoo.com.

Book unravels the Washoe-climber connection to Cave Rock

By Susan Skorupa, Reno Gazette-Journal

A precedent-setting court case concerning a Lake Tahoe landmark so intrigued author Michael Makley that he teamed up with his historian son Matthew to write about it.



The result, “Cave Rock: Climbers, Courts, and a Washoe Indian Sacred Place,” (University of Nevada Press, $24.95 paperback) examines the court cases involved in the Washoe tribe’s successful attempt to ban rock climbing at the South Shore site. It explains the vigorous arguments presented by the tribe, which considers the site a sacred and powerful place, and by the climbers, who had their

own attachments to Cave Rock, ranging from a challenging place to climb to a place of spiritual serenity.

After two decades of debate and legal decisions, the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals upheld a lower court ruling to ban rock climbing and other invasive activity at Cave Rock in 2007, based on its cultural, rather than religious, importance to the tribe. It was an outcome seldom experienced by American Indians in court.

“I grew up at Lake Tahoe, and Matty was born there,” Michael Makley said. “I have friends on both sides of the issue.”

Read the whole story