Water – should private companies control it?

By Jeneen Interlandi, Newsweek

Sitka, Alaska, is home to one of the world's most spectacular lakes. Nestled into a U-shaped valley of dense forests and majestic peaks, and fed by snowpack and glaciers, the reservoir, named Blue Lake for its deep blue hues, holds trillions of gallons of water so pure it requires no treatment. The city's tiny population—fewer than 10,000 people spread across 5,000 square miles—makes this an embarrassment of riches. Every year, as countries around the world struggle to meet the water needs of their citizens, 6.2 billion gallons of Sitka's reserves go unused. That could soon change. In a few months, if all goes according to plan, 80 million gallons of Blue Lake water will be siphoned into the kind of tankers normally reserved for oil—and shipped to a bulk bottling facility near Mumbai. From there it will be dispersed among several drought-plagued cities throughout the Middle East. The project is the brainchild of two American companies. One, True Alaska Bottling, has purchased the rights to transfer 3 billion gallons of water a year from Sitka's bountiful reserves. The other, S2C Global, is building the water-processing facility in India. If the companies succeed, they will have brought what Sitka hopes will be a $90 million industry to their city, not to mention a solution to one of the world's most pressing climate conundrums. They will also have turned life's most essential molecule into a global commodity.

Read the whole story

South Tahoe offers deals at parking garage to entice drivers

By Kathryn Reed

The city-owned parking garage at Heavenly Village has a series of specials going on. One expires in November and the other is a winter special.

Lake Tahoe News just learned about them at a recent parking meeting – and had to ask the city to send the information even though the city contracts with a company to run the garage that has a public information officer on staff.

The South Lake Tahoe parking garage loses close to $60,000 a year. The City Council at the time this redevelopment area was built agreed to own the garage. It has several years left to pay back millions of dollars in bond debt.

The South Tahoe Joint Powers Parking Authority (STJPPA) oversees the garage near Stateline. The board that runs the STJPPA is really the City Council, just like the Redevelopment Agency board is the five City Council members. It is commonly referred to as the Parking Authority.

Standard Parking and High Sierra Patrol have contracts with the Parking Authority. The city in the 2010-11 budget is paying Standard Parking $193,000 to manage the garage. High Sierra Patrol this fiscal year is being paid $104,342 to manage on street parking and the Village Center eight hours a day, seven days a week.

According to Gene Palazzo, who heads the Redevelopment-Housing Department which includes parking, no general fund and no redevelopment money is being used for parking – just money

from the Parking Authority.

Opinion: A political-economic perfect storm

By Robert Reich

It’s a perfect storm. And I’m not talking about the dangers facing Democrats. I’m talking about the dangers facing our democracy.

First, income in America is now more concentrated in fewer hands than it has been in 80 years. Almost a quarter of total income generated in the United States is going to the top 1 percent of Americans.

The top one-tenth of 1 percent of Americans now earn as much as the bottom 120 million of us.

Who are these people? With the exception of a few entrepreneurs like Bill Gates, they’re top executives of big corporations and Wall Street, hedge-fund managers and private equity managers. They include the Koch brothers, whose wealth increased by billions last year and who are funding Tea Party candidates across the nation.

Which gets us to the second part of the perfect storm. A relative few Americans are buying our democracy as never before. And they’re doing it completely in secret.

Robert Reich, former U.S. secretary of labor, is professor of public policy at the University of California at Berkeley and

the author of the new book "Aftershock: The Next Economy and America's Future." He blogs.
Read the whole story

BLM set to roundup horses near Carson River

By Karren Rhodes, Dayton Courier

DAYTON – The federal Bureau of Land Management is making plans to gather approximately 118 wild horses from the area the agency calls the Pine Nut Horse Management Area, which includes all of the horses southeast of the Carson River in the Dayton area.

Alan Bittner, BLM staff member in charge of the wild horse roundup said, the agency plans to treat approximately 45 of the mares captured from the horse management area and treat them with a 22-month contraceptive. All of the wild horses gathered from the Pine Nut area will be returned to their range.

The roundup is to take begin by the middle of November and last about one week, the BLM reports.

Read the whole story

S. Tahoe park touted for dogs, but people like it too

By Kathryn Reed

It’s hard to know if the dog park in South Lake Tahoe is for the four-legged members of the family to socialize or if it’s really for the adults to get out and meet new people.

A lot of both often take place every day at the 2-year-old dog park.



Abbey and AJ play at the Bijou Dog Park in South Tahoe. Photos/Kathryn Reed

Some stay close to mom or dad, others play a game of chase, some want to be petted by unfamiliar hands, others tromp off on their own to check out the new scenery.

Although the area is divided into little and big dog sections, it’s up to the owners to decide which area to go into.

In the case of Phiona, she prefers the big dog area despite being a small brown Boston terrier.

“She thinks she is a big dog,” her dad Ted Rann said. “She

lives with big dogs.”

The unique spelling of the 3-year-old’s name is because her parents are Phillies fans. Hopefully, Phiona won’t be teased at the dog park.

For John Andrews and Jessica Pederson they like the socialization aspect of the dog park for their terrier mix, Abbey, who is less than a year old.

“It teaches her manners,” Andrews said.

Devin Morales knows the effort that went into building the dog park because he was employed by the Parks and Recreation Department at the time. Now he brings 10-month-old Jax, a coonhound, to the park at least once a week.

Morales hasn’t witnessed one bad incident at the park.

What he likes is the dogs can run off leash without running off. The entire area is fenced. Coming in from the parking lot is a small holding area of sorts so no dogs on either side of the park can get out.

Benches are on both sides of the park. People who lost a furry friend donated most. People are sitting, chatting about their dogs – who prefers the cold, who likes to catch some rays, and so on.

Fire hydrants add a comical, though well used attraction. Water is available, though the faucets are shutdown this time of year. People have left bottled water for the animals.

Many of the dogs dashing around on the woodchips (the small dog area has some grass) are a mix of breeds. A Whippet is by himself in the small dog area. Running up and down the fence line, the bigger dogs next door try to keep up with this slick creature.

Alex Steel, who brings his black golden retriever to the park

three or four times a week said he may be the only one there at first, but within 10 minutes the park is howling. It’s as though people drive by on Al Tahoe Boulevard see someone else at the park and decide to venture in.

Everyone on this particular Friday using the dog park is friendly – as are the dogs. People are quick to clean up after their dog. A lesson people walking along Al Tahoe Boulevard should learn.

The canine facility at Bijou Community Park opened Aug. 18, 2008. The nearly 1-acre site cost $35,000 to build. It’s one thing the three outgoing members of the City Council started and finished.

Details:

Open year-round, dawn to dusk

Closed Mondays from 8-11am for cleaning

No cost

No treats inside the park

Dogs must be 6 months old

(530) 542.6056

Website

Directions:

From Stateline, go about 3 miles into California

Turn left on Al Tahoe Boulevard at Denny’s

Bijou Park is on the left, about a mile up

Circle around the parking area to reach the dog park.

ngg_shortcode_0_placeholder (Click on photos to enlarge.)

Opinion: TRPA, Kubby and the U.S. Constitution

To the publisher,

As the new owners of the Coyote Grill located in Round Hill Square in Zephyr Cove, we received earlier in the year, a citation from the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency for the display of two 24X24 inch signs that serve to attract citizens to the nature of my business which is not permitted under Chapter 26 of the TRPA Code of Ordinances.

Additionally, other tenants were also cited for signage violations even as “selective signage enforcement” is well known. Even more egregiously and specifically, a tenant was cited for creating a “soil disturbance.”

To quote Thomas Paine, “Putting aside everything that might excite laughter by its absurdity, or detestation by its profaneness,” let us confine ourselves merely to an examination of the current usefulness of the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency.

Since its inception in 1969, considered necessary from the “impact of tourism, ranching, and logging on the Lake Tahoe environment,” according to the TRPA Compact, the bias of the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency has been to subordinate commerce and private property in much the same way as that of a national park.

And to paraphrase the classical liberal economist, Ludwig Von Mises, when bureaucracy goes beyond the task of maintaining an environment in which the social cooperation of the marketplace can proceed in peace, it becomes inimical to human welfare. It

obtains its revenues and finances through taxation – fiscal force.

Since that is so, Mises writes, bureaucrats cannot be given discretion in the manner of profit- oriented managers. Rather, they must be "bound to comply with detailed rules and regulations," whether a government is accountable to a despot or to the people.

In the aftermath of the Armageddon of Angora, an *Associated Press* article wrapped the disaster with a bow for those whose property went up in flames: "The fire, some say, was a disastrous side-effect of Tahoe Regional Planning Agency's sometimes single-minded approach to preserving the lake's legendary clarity. Its strict policies include fining homeowners thousands of dollars for cutting down trees from their own properties."

Perhaps taking management of trees out of their purview is a reasonable approach to more comprehensive reform. TRPA was, after all, chartered to preserve and improve the clarity of the lake and its indifference and contempt of nature itself is irrefutable here. As is the authoritarianism of an agency of state that forbids me from communicating with fellow citizens of my service-based business.

And so the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency, the creature of Republicans Ronald Reagan and Paul Laxalt again and again rears its repulsively ugly, authoritarian head upon where and when private capital and initiative can attract commerce and protect private property.

As Libertarians, I did not meet Steve Kubby when I sought California's 60th Assembly seat in 1998 as he campaigned for governor from Lake Tahoe's North Shore. But as co-author of Proposition 215, he had successfully navigated through an entrenched enemy's fortified prohibition bureacracy and the evisceration of a tyranny had begun.

The time in nigh to assert the Founding Father's original intent of the Supremacy Clause of the Constitution, affording the states and their citizen's, prerogatives now denied by the Federal Leviathan.

Man up, Congressmen Dean Heller and Tom McClintock and help Steve Kubby and those of us in the Tahoe basin triumph over the tyranny of the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency.

Ut instituimus pergamus. (Let us continue as we have begun.)

Leland Faegre, president Milky Way Incorporated dba Coyote Grill

---

Temblor felt in South Lake Tahoe

Updated Oct. 30, 2010, 10:32pm.

A 4.6 earthquake struck 13 miles east-southeast of Markleeville on Saturday at 6:02pm.

The South Lake Tahoe Police Department reported two calls from the Tahoe Island area.

According to the U.S. Geological Service, one person in Rancho Cordova (149 miles from the epicenter) felt the shaking.

"First, I thought there was noise and then the next thing I was jolted," said Cleo Reed, who is in Tahoe visiting from Paradise. Having experienced many quakes during her 30-plus years in the Bay Area, she was close with calling this a 5.0 quake.

Earthquakes have a habit of happening during the World Series when the Giants play – and apparently it doesn't matter if they are at home.

Another quake in the same area hit at 6:57pm, registering 3.0. A 1.7 shaker was reported at 8:07pm Oct. 30.

– Kathryn Reed

Preservation groups save historic Amador County railroad

By Matt Weiser, Sacramento Bee

The historic Amador Central Railroad, recently threatened with bulldozing, will remain open to recreational train travel following a sale to preservation groups.

Sierra Pacific Industries, a privately held logging company, agreed to sell the railroad to the Amador County Historical Society and the nonprofit Recreational Railroad Coalition, said Larry Bowler, the coalition's president.

The sale price, said Sierra Pacific spokesman Mark Pawlicki, was $1. This includes the tracks, the land they sit on, and all related railroad equipment. It does not include any railroad vehicles. The deal closed Oct. 16.

"We could have chosen to sell the right of way and scrap the metal from the rails," said Pawlicki. "But we didn't think that was an appropriate use for an historical entity like the rail line."

Read the whole story

DRI climatologist recognized for his work

The California Department of Water Resources presented its Climate Science Services and Remote Sensing Science Services Awards at this month’s Climate Change and Water Adaptation Symposium in Long Beach.

The award recipients are:

► Kelly Redmond, deputy director and regional climatologist, Western Regional Climate Center, Desert Research Institute, UNR.

In his role at the Western Regional Climate Center, Redmond has contributed advice, data, analysis, publications, and presentations to help support DWR climate change and variability efforts.

► Stephanie Granger, National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) Jet Propulsion Laboratory.

► Forrest Melton, NASA Ames Research Center & California State University Monterey Bay.

The purpose of the awards is to recognize ongoing assistance provided by researchers who have been working closely with DWR on planning for climate variability and change, and on potential remote sensing applications that could assist in monitoring impacts associated with climate change.

Opinion: Swanson is a team player

To the community,

As the parents of six children, business owners and long-time residents of South Lake Tahoe, we support Angela Swanson for City Council. She understands our community and will represent us wisely. She wants to make Tahoe better for families and sees them as the key to building the next generation.

We respect her abilities to make state and federal government work for our community. She is a leader, a communicator and a team player. We need all those qualities on our City Council.

Please join us in voting for Angela Swanson.

Michael and Madonna Doyle, South Lake Tahoe