Study casts doubts on value of mammograms

By Gina Kolata, New York Times

One of the largest and most meticulous studies of mammography ever done, involving 90,000 women and lasting a quarter-century, has added powerful new doubts about the value of the screening test for women of any age.

It found that the death rates from breast cancer and from all causes were the same in women who got mammograms and those who did not. And the screening had harms: One in five cancers found with mammography and treated was not a threat to the woman's health and did not need treatment such as chemotherapy, surgery or radiation.

The study, published last week in the British Medical Journal, is one of the few rigorous evaluations of mammograms conducted in the modern era of more effective breast cancer treatments. It randomly assigned Canadian women to have regular mammograms and breast exams by trained nurses or to have breast exams alone.

Read the whole story

Warming Arctic may be causing jet stream changes

By Scott Neuman, NPR

Mark Twain once said: "If you don't like the weather in New

England now, just wait a few minutes.”

He was making an unknowing reference to the jet stream, which drives the weather over North America and Europe like a high-altitude conveyor belt. But increasingly, the jet stream is taking a more circuitous route over the northern latitudes, meaning weather systems hang around longer than they used to. And, a warming Arctic is probably to blame, says Jennifer Francis, a professor at Rutger’s University Institute of Marine and Coastal Sciences.

Francis – who says it’s too early to know if the well-established Arctic warming is caused by man or some natural phenomenon – was speaking during a session on Arctic change at the annual meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science in Chicago on Saturday.

The wayward jet stream could account for the persistently severe winter weather this year in the U.S. and Britain, as well as California’s long drought.

Read the whole story

Challenge cycling event looking for riders

The Alta Alpina Cycling Club is looking for riders for the annual Challenge on June 28.

This event allows cyclists to explore the Eastern Sierra near Lake Tahoe, beneath snow-capped mountains, on smooth scenic roads running alongside rushing rivers.

The ride spans Douglas County and Alpine County.

Cyclists may ride as little or as far as they want; up to 200 miles. Options range from the relatively flat foothills to “the world’s toughest double century” with more than 20,000 feet of climbing.

The event is limited to 499 riders.

For details and to register, go online.

Rugged tablet worthy of the outdoors

By Berne Broudy, Outside

Your iPad doesn’t mix well with the outdoors. Even if you keep it away from water and grit, you still have to contend with the lack of internet and electricity in the backcountry.

That’s where Earl comes in. This new backcountry survival Android tablet works where your smartphone or iPad would fail. The rugged tablet can forecast the weather, determine your location, elevation, and let you communicate with folks back home.

About the size of an iPad mini, Earl is one tough gadget. It’s waterproof, dustproof, shockproof, and it will work in temperatures from 32 degrees to 122 degrees Fahrenheit. You can submerge it in three feet of water for up to 30 minutes with no ill effects.

Read the whole story

Bill would put warning label on sugary drinks

By Patrick McGreevy, Los Angeles Times

SACRAMENTO – Citing studies linking soda to obesity, a state lawmaker and medical experts proposed a first-in-the-nation bill Thursday that sugary drinks sold in California carry health warning labels similar to those on cigarette packs.

They want warning labels on the fronts of all cans and bottles of soda and juice drinks that have sugar added and 75 or more calories per 12 ounces.

The label would read: "STATE OF CALIFORNIA SAFETY WARNING: Drinking beverages with added sugar(s) contributes to obesity, diabetes, and tooth decay."

Read the whole story

Yosemite bike, rafting rental bans eliminated

By Paul Rogers, San Jose Mercury News

In a major reversal, Yosemite National Park officials have dropped controversial plans to ban a wide variety of

recreational activities in Yosemite Valley, including ending bike and raft rentals and tearing out swimming pools at the Yosemite Lodge and famed Ahwahnee Hotel.

The decision came after a yearlong battle in which more than 30,000 people commented on the park's plans to curtail recreation as part of a broader effort to restore natural conditions along the valley's Merced River. Many said the proposal went too far and penalized families who enjoy visiting the park – an opinion echoed by several members of Congress.

The saga – which featured 14 years of legal battles – highlighted the near-impossible mission of the National Park Service: providing public recreation while preserving spectacular landscapes.

Read the whole story

Lake Forest boat ramp to be overhauled

Tahoe City Public Utility District is going to rehab the Lake Forest boat ramp.

The plan is to remove the existing concrete boat ramp, dredge the boat ramp fairway, construct a precast concrete boat ramp and cast-in-place concrete drive, and install sheet pile.

TCPUD is in the process of soliciting bids for the project. The deadline to submit a bid is March 4 at 2pm.

Engineers expect the project to cost $554,222.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Water quality fine will restore areas of Truckee



Erosion causes excessive flow in Middle Martis Creek. Restoration would eliminate these peak flows and restore the headcuts. Photo/Brian Hastings/Balance Hydrologics

By Kathryn Reed

More than $700,000 from stormwater violation fines is going to be spent on three projects in the Truckee area.

Five years after a settlement agreement was reached with Lahontan Regional Water Quality Board and East West Partners,

the parent company of Northstar Mountain Properties, the remaining money is going to be put to use.

At the time the $2.75 million penalty was the largest rendered by Lahontan. The fines were for 11 projects that encompassed 325 acres, including work at the Village at Northstar, employee housing and trailside townhomes. Work at the Ritz-Carlton was also part of the fine, though some documents call it Highlands Resort Hotel.

East West later filed bankruptcy, which then lessened the fine by about $1 million.

The Lahontan board in April 2011 allocated the money in part to the Northstar Fire District. That money has been spent. Another portion was for restoration at the Waddle Ranch.

“It didn’t make sense to spend the rest of the money on that site when there are other areas in the watershed that are actively impacting water quality,” Eric Taxer, engineer with Lahontan, told *Lake Tahoe News*.

That is why the Lahontan board at its meeting last week revisited how best to spend the fine.

Also at the Feb. 12 meeting the board changed the supplemental environmental projects (SEP) protocols. This will give the board more of a say in what goes on instead of being left with a yes/no vote when negotiations are completed.

Spending the Northstar Mountain Properties fine will be the first test of the changes to SEP rules. Board members Amy Horne and Peter Pumphrey helped staff with the SEP revisions.

“The overall concept is transparency so the public has a say in the process,” Taxer said. “Projects were developed through a public input process that consisted of local stakeholders up there.”

The projects approved on Wednesday are restoration at

Elizabethtown Meadow, Dry Creek and Middle Martis Creek Wetlands. Those three will use the remainder in the account, or $704,000.

Truckee River Watershed Council will be the lead agency to get the work done.

At Elizabethtown, roads will be decommissioned and drainage will be reconnected, along with meadow restoration. The design should be finished in March, with CEQA documents done in June. Construction should be done by October. This project will cost $79,500.

At Dry Creek there are logging issues that go back to the late 1800s. Taxer told the board that in places the meadow has turned into sagebrush. With stream and meadow restoration, the goal is to return it to its pre-logging conditions.

The $224,500 project will be completed in October 2015.

At Middle Martis Creek the channel will be realigned, old fill will be removed and wetlands replaced. Issues arose in this area when the creek was realigned and confined to go under Highway 267.

This project costs $400,000. It will be done by the end of this construction season. Revegetation will occur in 2015.

Tahoe Tails – Adoptable pets in South Lake Tahoe



Diana

Diana is a well-mannered 6-ear-old Lab-Rottweiler mix who lived with her very caring owner until he died.

She i s a sweet, calm, affectionate girl who is house trained and crate trained. She walks nicely on her leash and loves to play with friendly dogs. Diana weighs 50 pounds.

Diana is spayed, microchipped, tested for heartworm, and vaccinated. She is at the El Dorado County Animal Services shelter in Meyers, along with many other dogs and cats who are waiting for their new homes.

Go online or the Tahoe animal shelter’s Facebook page to see photos and descriptions of all pets at the shelter.

Call (530) 573.7925 for directions, hours, and other information on adopting a pet.

For spay-neuter assistance for South Tahoe residents, go online.

– Karen Kuentz

Editorial: Politics won’t solve California’s drought

Publisher’s note: ***This editorial is from the Feb. 3, 2014, Los Angeles Times.***

As California’s drought continues, and more than a dozen rural communities ponder what to do when their drinking water runs out sometime in March, it would be nice if the state’s Republican politicians brought some straightforward plans for relief to the table. But what many of them are bringing instead is a tired political tactic barely, and laughably, disguised as a remedy for the lack of rainfall.

The “man-made California drought” is the term House Republicans use to describe the state’s current dry condition, as if it were somehow the hand of humankind, environmentalists or, even worse, Democrats that has stopped the snowfall over the Sierra and kept the dams that store water for fields, orchards and homes from being replenished. Funny, isn’t it, that folks who question man’s ability to affect the global climate are so quick to assign human causes to the drought?

Read the whole story