Below level snowpack better than last year in Nevada

Reno Gazette-Journal

The winter snow pack accumulation is generally better than a year ago but still below average, government officials report.

The National Weather Service and the Natural Resources Conservation Service issued a report Wednesday that detailed the water supply outlook for Nevada and the eastern Sierra.

It says snow pack accumulation got off to a promising start in December but by mid January has fallen below average.

Read the whole story

Changes in men’s GS schedule

By USSA

WENGEN, Switzerland =â€“ The International Ski Federation confirmed Wednesday that the fog-canceled men’s Audi FIS Alpine World Cup giant slalom from Adelboden, Switzerland will be rescheduled for Friday Jan. 29 in Kranjska Gora, Slovenia.

The weekend will now feature back-to-back giant slalom races before closing with slalom, the final World Cup race before the 2010 Olympic Winter Games in Vancouver. The new date will now fall outside the selection period for events being used to select the 2010 Olympic Team.

Despite the reschedule, the giant slalom will not count

towards Olympic qualification and the U.S. Ski Team along with the U.S. Olympic Committee will name the 2010 U.S. Olympic Ski Team on Jan. 25.

Men's World Cup action resumes Jan. 15 with a super combined in Wengen followed by the 80th running of the famed Lauberhorn downhill on Saturday and slalom on Sunday.

Lake Tahoe ski report, Jan. 14



Today is likely to be the calm before the next storm. Here is the ski report from Curtis Fong, the Guy from Tahoe.

Chilly weather good for some state crops

Sacramento Bee

Apparently all this cold weather has done more than just drive us into our kitchens to cook soup and bake bread – it's aiding fruit and nut trees.

Most fruit and nut trees need a certain amount of chill hours – recorded when the temperature drops below 45 degrees – in order to help develop a crop for the next season, according to

the California Farm Bureau Federation.

Read the whole story

Fluctuating enrollment tests school



By Kathryn Reed

ZEPHYR COVE – A transient population is something Whittell High School is learning to deal with.

Principal Sue Shannon addressed the Douglas County school board on Tuesday, saying the transient population went from 14 to 20 percent and she expects it to keep climbing. She believes it has a lot to do with the economy and people coming and going as jobs come and go.

She said the problem is many of these students are credit deficient. Eight students are scheduled to start at the school next week and more than half are lacking the credits they should have.

Bright spots in her presentation included talking about how the accreditation process went well last fall and that 92 percent of the 2009 graduates went on to a two- or four-year college.

Shannon plans to address the board again in March to ask for

modifications to the four-day school week that was instituted this school year.

This is the second year the school has been a 7-12 campus. Shannon believes this is a benefit to the students and had good things to say about the K-6 Zephyr Cove Elementary being down the road.

Some students from ZCES come to WHS for band, gym and math.

Creating a culture at Whittell where students have ownership and accountability is working, Shannon said. This yearâ€™s seniors were freshmen when she came on board.

Since Shannon has been at the school students now must take four years of science. If they donâ€™t want to, the student must present their case with their parent to school officials.

New classes this school year include pre-engineering, applied economics, applied algebra two and expanded science offerings.

Shannon said itâ€™s always a constant struggle for a small school to offer a variety of classes. She said with a third of the teachers not being full time, it allows for more flexibility in the schedule.

Snippets about Lake Tahoe

South Shore radio stations KRLT and KOWL are in need of a general manager. Betsy Millerâ€™s last day was Jan. 6.

Thane McCall is back in real estate with offices opening this month in South Lake Tahoe and Round Hill.

With Wells Fargo now owning Sue Abrams house in the Angora

burn area of El Dorado County, the bank is promising to remove the large sign from the side of the house.

Overheard this week at Ernieâ€™s Coffee Shop in South Lake Tahoe â€“ ice fishing is good at Indian Creek Reservoir near Markleeville.

South Tahoe redevelopment may cost other entities millions

Updated Jan. 16 5:40pm: *The meeting with the city staff and STPUD board has been moved to Feb. 18.*

By Kathryn Reed

To some it might like look like a shell game. Or maybe it's robbing Peter to pay Paul. Or maybe it's all on the up and up.

The problem with projected redevelopment areas is that nothing is guaranteed.

South Lake Tahoe believes it will generate $178 million in tax increment in the 45 years that the latest project area is slated to be on the books.

South Tahoe Public Utility District believes $54 million in property tax dollars are at risk if the plan is approved by the City Council.



The area in blue is the proposed redevelopment area in South Lake Tahoe.

El Dorado County, although it won't put a dollar figure on potential lost revenue, knows it will be hit the hardest if the plan goes through.

Lake Tahoe Unified School District and Lake Tahoe Community College receive property tax money, too, but with how laws are written the state would have to backfill any dollars that are lost. Where the state comes up with that money when it is facing a $20 billion deficit is difficult to pinpoint.

Other agencies to be impacted are the local cemetery district, county Office of Education, county Water Agency, and county Abatement District.

If the redevelopment area is approved, then the property tax these entities receive is frozen instead of going up 2 percent each year. The city's Redevelopment Agency gets that money.

But the city contends in the long run everyone will be better off. This is because if the value of properties goes up in the redevelopment area, property taxes are higher and therefore every entity shares in the growth.

The city is projecting 7 percent growth in the 3,100-acre redevelopment area that covers much of Emerald Bay Road and then goes down Highway 50 to Glenwood Way.

“Because you have more growth you have more property tax paid. Those agencies will get more over time,” said Gene Palazzo, city redevelopment director.

He compared it to putting money in a retirement account, that at first it doesn’t amount to much, but over time the pot grows.

South Tahoe PUD wants to see more concrete numbers. Palazzo and City Manager Dave Jinkens are scheduled to speak to the STPUD board on Jan. 20.

“We don’t want to be seen as obstructionists if the community feels this is good,” STPUD spokesman Dennis Cocking said of the redevelopment plan. “That ($54 million) is all essentially capital improvement dollars. By law it cannot be used for wages. If we lose property tax dollars, it has to be made-up elsewhere.”

The district has limited revenue sources – ratepayers, property taxes, borrowing money or issuing bonds, and state and federal grants.

The district could raise its connection fees, but with so little construction going on, that might not amount to much.

The 127-page draft EIR and all the documents related to the proposed redevelopment area are at www.ctcip.org.

The City Council is expected to take action on all the documents in early March. Meetings will be scheduled before then to gather public input, according to Palazzo. He has spoken to the Lake Tahoe Visitors Authority board and will be at the South Lake Tahoe Lodging Association meeting Thursday at 9:30am at Tahoe Bowl.

Meetings are also scheduled for Feb. 11 at 2 and 6pm at Lake Tahoe Airport.

One of the benefits to redevelopment would be to use some of

the tax increment money on improving the dilapidated Lukins Brothers Water Company. Palazzo, though, said this is not designed to be the sole source to fix the ancient infrastructure of the company whose 953 customers are mostly off Highway 89.

Lukins also services businesses at the Y and doesn't have adequate fire flow.

"We can't get new commercial in there if don't get (Lukins) upgraded," Palazzo said.

Lukins has a franchise agreement with the city that the city hasn't managed well considering it didn't insist the company reinvest money in capital improvements.

Some city residents question having taxpayer dollars pay for upgrades to a private company. People are also questioning if the city is going to such lengths for a private business to cover itself legally so Lukins customers don't sue the city for not protecting them through the franchise agreement.

It's unknown if the city would be held responsible if a catastrophic fire occurred that Lukins water supply could not handle.

El Dorado County Board of Supervisors plans to hear from city staff at the Feb. 2 meeting.

"There's a very strong view among counties in general that redevelopment is not helpful because of the way it works with redevelopment agencies reaching in and grabbing a percentage of property tax," said Mike Applegarth, EDC senior administrative analyst. "I don't think anybody has been able to assess the overall benefits or burdens of redevelopment."

Applegarth said for the current fiscal year the county budgeted zero growth in property tax and said it is likely to go negative. This is because people are reappraising their

property and it’s coming back lower than what they paid, and houses are selling for less than what the previous owner paid.

He isn’t sure if the board will take a position on the city’s proposal.

“Tax increment financing is an obscure way to make infrastructure improvements,” Applegarth said.

Deb Yates, chief financial officer with Lake Tahoe Unified School District, knows how the rules are now that the state will backfill any property tax dollars the district could lose in redevelopment. But those dollars come from the state’s education pool of money, which keeps dwindling.

“We don’t know in these times how the state is going to deal with the current budget. This would certainly add a little bit to the state issues as far as education goes,” Yates said.

Palazzo said the city’s goal is to create a financing tool.

But is it a hammer to clubber other entities in town?

The city will try to answer that question and others in the coming weeks.

Lake Tahoe Collaboration meeting

Lake Tahoe Collaborative, comprised of community advocates and service agencies in the South Lake Tahoe area who vision and work together to provide up-to-date information, services, and resources to families and community members, will meet Feb. 8 at 1pm at the old Al Tahoe School site in South Lake Tahoe.

Meetings are the second Monday of the month.

Lake Tahoe ski report, Jan. 13



Bring out the fat skis – it's a powder day in Lake Tahoe. Here is the ski report from Curtis Fong, the Guy from Tahoe.

STHS preps may move from 4A to 3A

By Chris Gabel, Reno Gazette-Journal

As was stated in (the) Prep Notebook, an NIAA committee's proposal for realignment was to be made public Friday. That proposal, however, went out the state's schools (Tuesday) morning, and the RGJ was able to obtain a copy.

You can find a link to the proposal below (in Word form), but first let me discuss the background behind the proposal and point out a few things within the plan that stuck out to me.

Background

Realignment has long been sought in Nevada, but how to do so has been a very difficult task. With so many competing interests and issues, it is impossible to make everyone happy.

Read the whole story