Snow and wind blowing in the basin

The National Weather Service in Reno has issued a winter storm warning above 5,000 feet for the 24-hour period starting at noon Friday.

A subtropical moisture plume will be pointed directly at Northern California through the weekend. Expect blowing snow to be a major factor for motorists.

“Snow will slowly change to rain as snow levels rise, with snow confined to areas above 7,000 feet by Saturday afternoon,” the Weather Service said.

Expect 6 to 14 inches above 5,000 feet and west of Highway 395 and 3 to 6 inches east of Highway 395.

Snow levels are expected to lower during the day Sunday and heavy snow may affect the major sierra passes around the Lake Tahoe Basin.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Placer County expands library program

Placer County libraries have expanded their pool of books by participating in Zip Books, a program supported by the California State Library that allows librarians to pull from the “shelves” of Amazon.com when a book requested by the public is not available at their library.

When someone requests a book or audiobook that that the library does not own, the library will try to find and purchase the item from Amazon.com, or third-party book sellers on Amazon.com, and have it shipped directly to the patron's address. Once the book has been read, or heard, it is returned to the local library branch where it becomes available to future patrons as part of the library's permanent collection.

The program allows only one item per Zip Book request. But once the book or audio book is returned to the library, another Zip Book request can be made.

There is no cost to patrons to "check out" a book through Zip Book.

Zip Book requests must be made in person at a Placer County library and participants are asked to return the item to a library staff person rather than using the book drop.

The Zip Books program includes new and used regular or large print books or audiobooks that are available on Amazon.com. Books that cost more than $35 will require approval by the library. Videos and DVDs are not available through the Zip Books program.

Placer County's Zip Books program is funded by the California State Library through a grant from Library Services and Technology Act. The Placer County Library is one of 16 in the state participating in the program.

North Face founder to speak

at Squaw

Kenneth “Hap” Klopp, founder and former CEO of The North Face, will be Squaw Valley Institute’s speaker Feb. 13.

Klopp was president and CEO for 20 years. In addition to being a highly regarded businessman and innovator, Klopp is also the author of “Conquering The North Face: An Adventure In Leadership”

Klopp will be speaking on the spirit of entrepreneurship at the Resort at Squaw Creek.

It is free to students with valid ID and members, $15 for others. Reserve a spot online. Doors open at 6pm.

Calif. has lengthy history of dry periods

By Paul Rogers, San Jose Mercury News

California’s current drought is being billed as the driest period in the state’s recorded rainfall history. But scientists who study the West’s long-term climate patterns say the state has been parched for much longer stretches before that 163-year historical period began.

And they worry that the “megadroughts” typical of California’s earlier history could come again.

Through studies of tree rings, sediment and other natural

evidence, researchers have documented multiple droughts in California that lasted 10 or 20 years in a row during the past 1,000 years – compared to the mere three-year duration of the current dry spell. The two most severe megadroughts make the Dust Bowl of the 1930s look tame: a 240-year-long drought that started in 850 and, 50 years after the conclusion of that one, another that stretched at least 180 years.

Read the whole story

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10 states contemplating online gambling

By Wayne Parry, AP

ATLANTIC CITY, N.J. – At least 10 U.S. states are considering bills to legalize or expand Internet gambling this year, according to a group that tracks gambling-related legislation worldwide.

But the Gambling Compliance survey also finds slim chances for a national law to regulate Internet poker, predicting a major effort by online gambling opponents to block it in Congress.

So far, three states allow Internet gambling: New Jersey, Nevada and Delaware. The report says proposals for new or expanded Internet betting could be considered in California, Colorado, Hawaii, Illinois, Iowa, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Mississippi, New Jersey and Pennsylvania.

“In 2013, 10 states considered legislation that would legalize online casino-style gambling, which was a historic high,” said Chris Krafcik, the group’s research director. “This year is

shaping up to be at least as busy.”

In California, one of the largest potential markets, Indian tribes are trying to agree on how to legalize Internet poker. Tribal leaders from two coalitions met last month and said they made progress but still need more time to work out an accord. The report said a bill is likely to be acted upon before an Aug. 31 deadline.

A bill in Mississippi that would have legalized Internet gambling died Tuesday when the state legislature failed to act on it.

Gambling Compliance also says Nevada may consider expanding online gambling, which is currently limited to poker.

It predicts Delaware, where Internet gambling is off to a slow start, will seek cross-border agreements with other states to expand the pool of bettors, a tactic New Jersey also is considering. A bill awaiting consideration in the New Jersey legislature would create a new class of licensing to permit interstate and foreign bets to be taken by the Atlantic City casinos.

New Jersey’s 15 Internet gambling sites took in nearly $8.4 million between their late November launch and the end of last year. The state will release January revenue figures next week.

The report holds out little hope for a national bill legalizing Internet poker, noting that it is a midterm election year where anything politically risky is unlikely to be enacted. In fact, it said proponents and opponents of Internet gambling are jockeying for position in the U.S. Senate, which is considering a blanket prohibition on Internet gambling.

That is the goal of Las Vegas billionaire Sheldon Adelson, who is funding a campaign to ban online gambling.

On the pro-Internet gambling side, Caesars Entertainment lobbied more heavily last year than any other group to legalize Internet gambling at the federal level, according to the report.

The report also predicted a handful of other states will consider joining Georgia, Illinois and Minnesota in permitting lottery tickets or games to be purchased or played online.

Snippets about Lake Tahoe



• CVS has decided to stop selling cigarettes.

• On Feb. 20, the Outpatient Laboratory on South Avenue will move to 1067 Fourth St., (the former Tahoe Women's Care Building) in South Lake Tahoe.

• Tahoe Rim Trail Association and Cabela's of Reno are presenting an equestrian first aid and nutrition seminar on March 5 at 6pm at Cabela's, 8650 Boomtown Garson Road, Verdi. The topic on March 19 at 6pm is equines on the TRT.

• There will be a meeting Feb. 13 at 5:30pm to discuss the Brickelltown streetscape at council chambers at 10183 Truckee Airport Road, Truckee. For more info, call (530) 582.2938.

• South Lake Tahoe library is starting a bilingual book club. Ages 10-14 will meet at 3pm March 7-May 2. Books will be provided for free.

Working on tax returns makes financial sense

By Jeff Gorton

Nearly 150 million Americans will file federal income tax returns this year and, unfortunately, many will be shelling out much more of their hard-earned money than necessary.

With the ridiculous complexity of our tax code, I can understand how the average person might want to put off doing their homework, but that'll cost you.

When you think about all you do to earn your money, and the lengths we'll go to save a few bucks, it doesn't make sense to not do all we can to prepare for the inevitable – our compulsory contribution to Uncle Sam's bank account.

There is nothing unpatriotic about taking advantage of legal measures to reduce your tax bill. Most Americans, however, don't understand the basics of how to minimize the tax burden, he says.

If you wait until the last minute to do your taxes, you're sure to miss out on savings.

Here are some basic and more advanced tax-saving options.

• Credits: Tax credits are usually subtracted dollar for dollar from the actual tax liability and may be utilized when filing for 2013. They include the Child Tax Credit, which allows up to $1,000 for children younger than 17; the American Opportunity Credit, featuring up to $2,500 in tax savings per eligible student for tuition costs for four years of post-high-school education; and the Energy-Efficient Home

Improvement Tax Credit, which grants qualifying taxpayers 10 percent of the cost of certain energy-efficient building materials – up to a $500 lifetime credit. The Child and Dependent Care Credit, for those who have to pay someone to care for a child younger than 13, or another dependent, offers up to $3,000 for one qualifying individual, or up to $6,000 for two or more qualifying individuals.

• Deductions: Like tax credits, deductions have phase-out limits, so you may want to consult with a professional. Deductions are subtracted from your income before your taxes are calculated, which may reduce the amount of money on which you are taxed and, by extension, your eventual tax liability. Some examples include contributions made to qualifying charitable organizations. And, you may be able to write off out-of-pocket costs incurred while doing work for a charity. Others may include amounts set aside for retirement through a qualified retirement plan, such as an Individual Retirement Account; medical expenses exceeding 10 percent of your adjusted gross income are now deductible – expenses exceeding 7.5 percent are still deductible for those older than age 65; and, potentially, mortgage interest paid on a loan secured for your primary residence.

• Tax-favored investing: This involves tax-exempt investments and tax-deferred investments. Tax-exempt investments, which include such vehicles as municipal bonds and certain money market funds, offer a way to grow your money that's exempt from federal taxes. Municipal bonds are free of federal income tax and may be free of state and local income taxes for investors who live in the area where the bond was issued. Tax-deferred investments, on which taxes are postponed until you withdraw your money, include qualified retirement plans, such as traditional IRAs and employer-sponsored plans, as well as insurance products such as annuities and, sometimes, life insurance.

Jeff Gorton is a certified public accountant and a certified

financial planner specializing in individual tax and retirement planning.

Obama pledges high-speed Internet in schools

By Ovetta Wiggins and David Nakamura, Washington Post

Visiting an innovative Prince George's County middle school where each child has a tablet computer, President Obama spoke Tuesday about his plan to give 20 million more students access to high-speed Internet connections at the nation's schools and libraries.

Obama announced Tuesday that the Federal Communications Commission will dedicate $2 billion and that several private companies – including Apple, Verizon, Sprint and Microsoft – have committed $750 million to help bring some of the technological opportunities provided at Buck Lodge Middle School in Adelphi, Md., to schools across the country. He said he hopes that 99 percent of U.S. students will have high-speed access to the Internet within five years, something his administration has called a "foundation for a transformation in the classroom" that will give teachers the best technology and training along with rich, digital content.

The initiative, known as ConnectEd and originally announced last summer, could have a widespread impact at thousands of schools. White House officials said the Internet speed in 70 percent of the nation's schools is too slow.

Read the whole story

High altitude ski mountaineer to share his story

Alpenglow Sports' fourth installment of 2013-14 Winter Film Series involves world-famous high altitude ski mountaineer and Marmot athlete Adrian Ballinger.

Ballinger's Feb. 20 show at Olympic Village Lodge is part of the Alpenglow Mountain Festival, a two-week celebration of human-powered winter sports.

Ballinger is well known for his professional guiding on Himalayan giants Mt. Everest, Ama Dablam, Lhotse, and Cho Oyu. Additionally, he is one of few Americans to possess a full international IFMGA guiding certificate and his professional resume has taken him on mountain adventures in South America, Europe, and beyond.

Ballinger will share his story "The Global Search for Powder" starting at 7pm.

For more info, call (530) 583.6917.

Classes focus on how to

garden in Nevada

Cooperative Extension has teamed up with Washoe County Regional Parks and Open Space to offer Gardening in Nevada.

The free series of classes is from 6-8pm every Tuesdy through March 25 at Bartley Ranch Regional Park, 6000 Bartley Ranch Road, Reno.

The classes are taught by Cooperative Extension horticulturists and experts, and master gardener volunteers.

Classes include:

Feb.11: Creating Backyard Habitats for Hummingbirds, Butterflies and Other Pollinators – Cooperative Extension Master Gardener Volunteer Pamela Van Hoozer teaches gardeners how to attract beneficial insects to increase crop production and reduce pests.

Feb. 18: Selecting and Growing Garlic in Northern Nevada – Cooperative Extension Master Gardener Volunteer Earstin Whitten explores the best garlic planting times, varieties and growing methods.

Feb. 25: Native Plants in the Garden – Cooperative Extension Horticulturist Specialist Heidi Kratsch presents the benefits of native plants and discusses their growing conditions, care and maintenance.

March 4: Selecting and Caring for Fruit Trees – Certified Arborist and Cooperative Extension Master Gardener Volunteer Michael Janik, who grows more than 100 varieties of fruit trees in northern Nevada, delivers must-know fruit tree selection, planting and maintenance tips.

March 11: Indoor/Outdoor Plants – Cooperative Extension Master Gardener Volunteer Suzanne Adams explores strategies for growing zone 6-9 plants in zone 5, increasing variety in the

landscape.

March 18: Trees and Turf: Creating Healthy Landscapes – Cooperative Extension Master Gardener Program Coordinator Wendy Hanson Mazet discusses how to keep trees and turf healthy and strong in the urban environment, with proper watering, fertilization and care.

March 25: Successful Vegetable Gardening – Cooperative Extension Master Gardener Volunteer Randy Robison reveals the secrets to bountiful, award-winning harvests, including improving soil, rotating crops, using companion planting and gardening in raised beds.

For more information, call (775) 336.0265.