# Drought costing Calif. farmers billions of dollars

**By Elizabeth Campbell and Megan Durisin, Bloomberg**

Near the confluence of the Merced and San Joaquin rivers, the heart of the California farm belt, Bob Kelley watches the driest year ever erode water supplies and prospects for the dairy business his family began in 1910.

The amount of water available for the 2,800 acres of corn and alfalfa Kelley grows to feed more than 6,500 cows may drop as much as two-thirds, so fewer crops will be planted and some animals will be sold to avoid the expense of buying grain, he said by telephone from Newman, about 83 miles southeast of San Francisco.

“It would impact us for not just 2014, but all of 2015,” said Kelley, 60, who runs a local water district that will cut output by at least half. “I’m anticipating a very difficult time, and I’m probably the best off of anybody I know.”

The drought in California, the top U.S. agricultural producer at $44.7 billion, is depriving the state of water needed to produce everything from milk, beef and wine to some of the nation’s largest fruit and vegetable crops, including avocados, strawberries and almonds. Lost revenue in 2014 from farming and related businesses such as trucking and processing could reach $5 billion, according to estimates by the 300-member California Farm Water Coalition, an industry group.

**Read the whole story**

# Stateline gaming revenues tank as state numbers rise

Despite the lackluster performance of Stateline casinos in December, overall Nevada gaming numbers are up.

The state Gaming Control Board on Friday said December casino winnings were 9.6 percent more than they were in 2012. Revenues were $1.034 billion, while a year ago the take was $943 million.

Stateline numbers dropped 25 percent year-over-year to $16 million.

*– Lake Tahoe News staff report*

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# Homewood dispute settled; project to start in 2015

**By Dale Kasler, Sacramento Bee**

Developers and environmentalists said Thursday they have settled a lawsuit that blocked a major redevelopment of Homewood Mountain Resort.

The settlement means the project, which will cost $400 million to $500 million, will break ground in spring 2015, said Art Chapman of JMA Ventures, the owner of Homewood.

The settlement came a year after a federal judge in Sacramento halted the Homewood project from going forward, saying the environmental impact statement needed revision. Under the

settlement, the project will be scaled back somewhat. Under the settlement, JMA agreed to put certain parcels of land off-limits to development and cancel 13 of the housing units.

While the project was approved by Placer County officials and the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency, it was hit with a lawsuit by the Sierra Club and Friends of the West Shore. U.S District Judge William Shubb halted the project last January, saying there were environmental deficiencies.

**Read the whole story**

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# Opinion: Questioning if snowboarding can be saved

**By Marc Peruzzi, Outside**

I was a state college kid the first and only time I rode a snowboard. This was in the 1980s and snowboarding was still illegal at New Hampshire's ski resorts. A classmate from New York City named after Dylan Thomas (and who called everybody he didn't like a chucklehead) brought a board to campus after the winter break. It was a Burton Woody. Skegs on the base. No edges. You just strapped your Sorels in and went.

But it didn't hook me. It's not that I didn't think snowboarding was relevant, I did and I still do. But I was already a passionate skier and never once considered giving it up. Still, I supported my friends in the fight to open resorts to the fledgling sport, hired snowboarders to run nascent board departments in 50-year-old ski shops, helped Olympic

snowboard racers figure out their stance angles and tuning, ran photos and profiles of snowboarders in a magazine about skiing, chased powder with snowboarders, climbed and descended Mount Rainier with snowboarders, and cracked many an après beer with snowboarders.

It sounds like borderline bigotry to say it, but I have "snowboarding friends." In fact, from adulthood on, most of my skiing memories are tied up with snowboarding. Frankly, skiing would be a lot less fun without it. From twin tips and fat skis to better clothing and a more laissez-faire attitude at ski resorts, the advent of snowboarding dramatically altered my once-stale sport. So please trust that I'm not just a hater when I say this: Snowboarding is screwed.

Many a destination resort will admit privately that snowboarding now accounts for less than 15 percent of total revenue. Others have seen snowboard visits cut in half. Sales of snowboarding gear are down dramatically, too, a whopping 29 percent over the past six years. Where did all the snowboarders go? Many are skiing. Others simply quit.

It didn't really have to be like this. The problem isn't so much snowboarding, but the snowboarding industry. The sport was invented by humble folk in the Midwest (by a friend's grandfather) and Vermont (by some older classmates of my wife), but it was adopted by Southern California. Actually it was more of an alien rendition than an adoption. Most snowboarders in places like Maine, Montana, and Colorado have little affiliation with the carefully cultivated image of "action sports." Then there's the ageism. Over 30 years old but still get out and shred? The industry lives in absolute dread of you.

**Read the whole story**

# California towns running out of water

**By Paul Rogers, San Jose Mercury News**

As California's drought deepens, 17 communities across the state are in danger of running out of water within 60 to 120 days, state officials said Tuesday.

In some communities, wells are running dry. In others, reservoirs are nearly empty. Some have long-running problems that predate the drought.

The water systems, all in rural areas, serve from 39 to 11,000 residents. They range from the tiny Lompico County Water District in Santa Cruz County to districts that serve the cities of Healdsburg and Cloverdale in Sonoma County.

And it could get a lot worse.

**Read the whole story**

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# Areas of South Lake Tahoe without electricity

Trees went into a power line on Tahoe Island Drive in South Lake Tahoe twice on Thursday.

About 100 Liberty Utilities customers remained without power

at 9pm after the second incident occurred at about 8:15pm Jan. 30.

Both times the majority of customers were without power for about 30 minutes.

People in the state streets, Tahoe Keys and from Steamers to Fresh Ketch were initially affected Thursday night. So were people in Fallen Leaf Lake, Camp Richardson and Cascade Lakes. Those three areas had been transferred to the same line because of weather related issues so they ended up without power Thursday night.

South Lake Tahoe police officers were dispatched to the street to make sure no one was injured by the live wire.

The storm that settled over the Lake Tahoe Basin for much of Thursday initially brought heavy wet snow that stressed the power lines and brought tree limbs down.

*– Lake Tahoe News staff report*

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# Mud racing governing body adds protection

**By Elliott D. Woods, Outside**

Sam Mansfield and Mark Ballas met in the autumn of 2012 when the two were visiting an investment property near Fort Benning, Georgia. Ballas, a former Army Special Forces soldier-turned-entrepreneur, had recently founded an adventure race called Green Beret Challenge, and Mansfield, a market researcher and consultant, had just started dabbling in mud races after years as an amateur triathlete.

“We started to talk a little bit about ventures we wanted to get involved in in the future, and one that continued to come up was the obstacle course space—what is it in that industry that needs help?” The two quickly hit on the idea of a governing body for the sport, and on Jan. 7, United States Obstacle Course Racing (USOCR) was born.

At present, the company’s public face consists of a website, USOCR.com, that provides the mission statement and invites visitors to join the mailing list. But Mansfield told me USOCR – heavily modeled on USA Triathlon – will begin signing up members as early as Valentine’s Day. As for event sanctioning, he said USOCR will be “certifying and working with endorsement programs this season.” He was not yet able to confirm any events that have agreed to participate in the sanctioning program, which will involve a standardized safety management planning process and on-site inspections by USOCR staff.

Mansfield said the issue of event insurance was one of the early drivers for the development of USOCR. He speculated that current insurers of OCR events will begin pulling out of the industry as they develop a better understanding of the risks. When that happens, one of USOCR’s biggest assets will be a unique set of actuarial data compiled from sanctioned events that will help keep rates attuned to the actual risk and not the perceived risk. As Mansfield said, USOCR’s data will allow the industry to “define our risk instead of having our risk define us.”

**Read the whole story**

# Super Bowl prompts increased NHP patrols

The Nevada Department of Public Safety, Office of Traffic Safety is urging Nevadans to not drink and drive on Super Bowl Sunday.

Now through Feb. 9 more than 20 law enforcement agencies are participating in Joining Forces to target impaired drivers.

Impaired driving messages are delivered year-round, yet when the Super Bowl celebrations begin, law enforcement officials increase their vigilance.

Zero Fatalities offers these tips to keep the community safe:

• Before going out, plan a safe and sober way to return to your home.

• Designate a sober driver, not a driver who agrees to drink less.

• Reserve a hotel room.

• If you see a drunken driver, contact local police by calling *NHP or 911.

• If people you know are about to drive impaired, take their keys and help get them a ride with a sober driver.

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# ‘Man of La Mancha’ auditions

# at LTCC

Lake Tahoe Community College is having auditions for the Tony Award-winning musical “Man of La Mancha” on Feb. 3 at 7pm in the Duke Theatre.

Callbacks will be Feb. 8 at 12:30pm.

For its production, LTCC will be casting men and women of various ages and types. All of the roles are open, except for the role of Don Quixote. Actors are required to sing. Audition material and information may be found online, as well as at the theater department’s callboard. A short dance audition will follow the vocal audition.

Rehearsals will be held Mondays through Thursdays beginning April 7. Performances are June 13 -22.

For more information, call (530) 541.4660, ext. 240.

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# Snowstorm makes ski resorts happy, but water content in Sierra at 12% of normal

A layer of fresh snow cannot disguise the fact that the snowpack is in dismal shape.

The second snow survey of the season on Jan. 30 revealed the snowpack water content statewide is at 12 percent of normal. This sets a record.



A Caltrans plow maneuvers Jan. 30 around stalled cars on Echo Summit. Photos/Kathryn Reed

Prior to Thursday, the lowest snowpack water content readings for this time of year were 21 percent of average in 1991 and 1963, 22 percent in 1976, 25 percent in 1977 and 35 percent in 2012. Recordkeeping started in 1960.

At the Echo Summit reading near the entrance of Sierra-at-Tahoe the measurements were even worse. The water content is 7 percent of normal, with 12.4 inches of snow containing 1.4 inches of water.

“This winter remains dry, making it very unlikely our record drought will be broken this year,” Mark Cowin, Department of Water Resources director, said in a press release. “Now more than ever, we all need to save every drop we can in our homes and places of work.”

While water officials found nothing to celebrate on Thursday, ski resorts were thrilled. With the initial white stuff being heavy and wet, it will make for a good base. What has fallen since the predawn snowfall has been lighter – giving skiers something to be joyful about.



Power and cable lines are sagging in South Lake Tahoe.

The conditions, though, are ripe for avalanches to occur. The Sierra Avalanche Center issued a “high” level threat. This comes after weeks of it being at “low”.

Some ski resorts were waiting for the snow to settle before allowing riders everywhere.

Roads have been a mess. Late-morning spin outs on Echo Summit had the road closed temporarily. The commute into Carson City felt like driving over a washboard.

Power lines are sagging from the weight of the wet snow, but Liberty Utilities is reporting no problems as of 1pm.

Some tree limbs have also fallen because of the added weight.

*– Lake Tahoe News staff report*