

Volunteers needed to count bald eagles

Volunteers are needed for the Jan. 10 bald eagle count in Lake Tahoe.

No experience required.

Tahoe Institute for Natural Sciences is the lead agency for the count.

There are 30 observation spots around the lake.

To sign up call (775) 298.0066.

South Shore's first baby of 2014 born Jan. 2



Abraham and Adriana Tapia
with son Joshua.
Photo/Provided

Barton Memorial Hospital's first baby of 2014 is the son of a hospital employee.

Joshua Tapia-Hernandez was born Jan. 2 at 5:24pm. He weighed 6 pounds, 14 ounces and was 18-inches long.

Adriana and Abraham Tapia are well versed in the baby department. They arrived Thursday afternoon and within a few hours Joshua arrived. The couple has three other children – ages 11 months, 14 years and 16 years.

Abraham Tapia works for environmental services at the hospital.

To family received a basket of gifts from local businesses and employees valued at more than \$1,200.

This first baby of the New Year came sooner than the one in 2013 – she didn't arrive until Jan. 4.

Barton is seeing a decline in the number of births. In 2013, 289 babies were born at the hospital. This includes four sets of twins. This compares to two years ago when there were 400 births in 2011.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Police identify man killed on New Year's Day

The pedestrian killed on New Year's Day has been identified as Randy Breeton, 49, of South Lake Tahoe.

Breeton was crossing Highway 50 near the Town and Country Center about 8pm when he was struck by a vehicle driven by Uriel Ortiz, 19, of South Lake Tahoe. Officers said Ortiz was not at fault.

Results of an autopsy are pending to determine if Breeton was intoxicated at the time of the accident.

“Over the past five years, the South Lake Tahoe Police Department had arrested Mr. Breeton for 38 separate occasions of public intoxication to the point he was unable to care for his own safety. Mr. Breeton possessed an open beer can with an inserted straw still inside his jacket at the scene of the collision,” police Lt. Brian Williams said in a press release.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Sierra water content 20% of average

Results of the Jan. 3 manual readings by the Department of Water Resources:

Location	Elevation	Snow Depth	Water Content	% of Long Term Average
Alpha	7,600 feet	7.9 inches	2 inches	15
Phillips Station	6,800 feet	9.3 inches	2.3 inches	20
Lyons Creek	6,700 feet	15.4 inches	3.6 inches	31

By Kathryn Reed

PHILLIPS STATION – While there was snow to be found during the first water content survey of the season Friday, it was minimal.

The readings taken Jan. 3 in the field next to the entrance to Sierra-at-Tahoe along Highway 50 measured 2.3 inches of water content, a snow depth of 9.3 inches for what amounts to 20 percent of average. This makes it the second driest reading on record for this time of year.

Two years ago Gehrke was walking on dirt, while in 2013 there was about six times the amount of snow there is today. But both years turned out to be dry water years, and this is looking like it will be the same.

Phillips Station had its lowest water content reading of 0.1 inch in 2012, in a snow depth of 0.6 inches. On Jan. 2, 2013, at the same location 12.1 inches of water in 48.8 inches of snow were recorded.

Of the 50 years that records have been kept, other dry years include 1987 (0.9 inches of snowpack water content), 1981 (2 inches), 1976 (2.7 inches) and 2000 (3 inches).



Frank Gehrke with the Department of Water Resources on Jan. 3 measures the water content of snow at Phillips Station.
Photo/Kathryn Reed

While Gehrke was taking his readings, Gov. Jerry Brown's Drought Task Force that he created last month was meeting.

“It’s not good news (for reservoirs),” Frank Gehrke with the Department of Water Resources said. “We are really eating into the reservoir storage.”

Sierra snowpack feeds the reservoirs downstream, which in turn provide for about one-third of the drinking and irrigation water for California.

Lake Oroville is at 36 percent of its 3.5 million acre-feet capacity and Shasta Lake is at 37 percent of its 4.5 million acre-feet capacity.

December, January and February are usually the wettest months of the year. December was disappointing and January is balmy. It’s possible today’s record high of 58 for South Lake Tahoe that was set in 2012 could be broken. South Lake broke a record Dec. 31 with a high of 57. The previous record of 54 was set in 2011.

While there is a slight chance of moisture for the Lake Tahoe Basin on Jan. 7, the temps will be warm so it could just be rain.

Meteorologist Zach Tolby with the National Weather Service in Reno told *Lake Tahoe News*, “We are not expecting a lot of precipitation out of it. Then it gets unpredictable after that.”

Besides needing to ration the water coming out of the tap, dry winters affect recreation, the environment and the economy.

Plus, with the ground being dry much of the snowmelt is going into the ground instead of going downstream.

Frozen food trying to revamp its image

By Sarah Nassauer, Wall Street Journal

In winter's depths, family cooks often find themselves facing a produce dilemma: Buy "fresh" produce out of season, which may have spent days or weeks getting to the local supermarket, or begrudgingly turn to the freezer aisle to find a bag of frosty peas, broccoli or blueberries.

Frozen produce is convenient, and often it is nutritionally comparable to fresh produce. But it has an image problem. Often, "there is a perception that if you are using a frozen vegetable you have taken a shortcut and you are not trying to help your family," says Kate Gallagher, research and development manager for Green Giant, a big producer of frozen produce and a unit of General Mills Inc.

Frozen food companies are going on the offensive, aiming to make products that look better, taste better and offer enough convenience to overcome frozen-food phobia.

[Read the whole story](#)

Nev. won't make deadline for pot dispensaries

By AP

State officials say they will miss the Nevada Legislature's April 1 deadline to begin accepting applications from medical

marijuana providers and growers.

Marla McDade Williams of the state Health Division said regulations must be approved before the agency can accept applications.

Williams, who will manage the program for the Health Division, said she doubts the state will license facilities to provide patients with medical marijuana until September or October.

After the division writes the regulations, they must be approved by the state Board of Health and the Legislative Commission. They also must be reviewed by the Legislative Counsel Bureau.

Once the regulations win approval, Williams said, applicants have 30 days to submit paperwork to become a cultivator; manufacturer of marijuana-based products such as edibles; testing lab; or dispensary. The state then has a 90-day period to review applications.

Although Nevada voters approved a constitutional amendment allowing medical marijuana in 2000, patients had no legal way to obtain the drug.

The Legislature earlier this year established a regulated system for dispensing medical marijuana to patients with a state-issued card. The law sets up a taxing, regulatory and distribution system for medicinal pot. The law also authorizes one pot dispensary in each of Nevada's 14 rural counties, with up to 40 allowed in Clark County, 10 in Washoe and two in Carson City.

The Health Division is tasked with adopting regulations and implementing the law that was supposed to take effect April 1.

Williams provided an update during a hearing last week in Carson City to review proposed regulations.

Several lawyers representing potential applicants said it

would be difficult to comply with some of the rules.

The audit requirements are particularly onerous, said Patrick McDonnell of the law firm Rainey & Devine. A rule requiring a full accredited audit every year could cost businesses from \$25,000 to \$50,000, he said.

Learn about hip treatments

Learn about minimally invasive hip treatments, arthroscopy, and anterior hip replacement on Jan. 14.

Robert Rupp with Tahoe Orthopedics Sports Medicine will address hip tendinitis, bursitis, sciatic nerve compression, hip impingement, labrum tear, and hip arthritis.

The free 6-7pm lecture will be at Lake Tahoe Community College, Room A208, South Lake Tahoe.

Northstar plans to expand terrain, lift access

By Kathryn Reed

New lifts, increased terrain and a better experience – those are some of the goals of Northstar.

The Truckee ski resort is in the midst of getting environmental documents for the Northstar Mountain Master Plan

approved. Comments will be taken for another week. The final environmental impact report is expected in the spring, with necessary approvals shortly thereafter.

But what gets built first remains to be seen. Officials said it's too early to say how specific projects will be prioritized.

A gondola is proposed to take people from the lower parking area to the village. Parking and traffic have been major complaints of guests ever since the village was built. The village and additional lodging wiped out a significant amount of parking that was close to the base area.



Northstar's proposed lift
and on-mountain
improvements.

It's likely a lift would start in the village to take riders to the top of Lookout Mountain. Right now that area takes a few lifts before it can be accessed.

Expanding the resort to include Sawtooth Ridge has long been talked about. The proposal calls for 300 acres to be incorporated into the ski boundary.

Northstar is mostly on private land and is outside the Lake Tahoe Basin. This is why the U.S. Forest Service and Tahoe Regional Planning Agency are not involved.

"Our priorities remain in line with the initial goals of the

Northstar Mountain Master Plan, which are to implement a plan consistent with habitat and land use goals defined in the Northstar Habitat Management Plan; and to offer a better balance of beginner, intermediate, and expert terrain in order to improve and extend the vacation experience for the destination guest and day use skier,” Northstar COO Bill Rock told *Lake Tahoe News*. “The primary project objectives contained in the EIR and proposed NMMP (are to) maintain Northstar’s competitiveness as a resort destination by upgrading existing services, amenities, and operations. This includes providing a better balance of skier amenities, improving lift technology, and increasing the variety and mix of recreational activities.”

Northstar’s eventual expansion will require more electric power for new lifts as well as increased snowmaking.

While Liberty Utilities, the electric company for the resort as well as all of Truckee and the California side of the Lake Tahoe Basin, is looking at revamping its lines in Truckee-North Lake Tahoe.

“The proposed NMMP improvements would connect to existing electrical infrastructure and would not require new distribution facilities, upgrades to the Northstar substation or any other off-site improvements,” Rock said.

Liberty and Northstar have told *Lake Tahoe News* that the resort’s plans have nothing to do with the utility company’s wanting to upgrade its system. It’s a matter of being able to keep providing consistent power – a reliability issue that Liberty says needs addressing today under current conditions.

“We expect that building out the additional improvements proposed in the master plan will increase electrical power consumption over existing levels. This is disclosed in the draft EIR and determined to be a less-than-significant impact,” Rock said. “Ski related equipment such as chairlifts

and snowmaking guns are continually being improved in terms of energy efficiency in order to reduce both consumption and operating expenses. Northstar intends to take full advantage of the improvements in these technologies over time in order to realize the benefits they offer. In addition, the California Building Code sets strict limits on the energy efficiency of each new building that is constructed, for example new on-mountain skier service buildings and warming huts.”

Liberty’s feeder tie between Northstar and Truckee is a 14.4 kilo volt line.

“This project again is not driven by Northstar load additions. It is another reliability issue that exists today and is being addressed,” Rock said. “Based on information supplied by Liberty Utilities, the current Northstar substation is at roughly 50 percent of its capacity on a peak winter day.”

Northstar is doing its part to try to conserve energy. Older snowmaking guns have been replaced with energy-efficient models and the underground parking garage was recently upgraded with energy-efficient lighting.

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Notes:

- Comments are being taken until Jan. 13. They may be emailed to cdraecs@placer.ca.gov.
- The draft environmental impact report is online.
- There will be a public hearing about the document Jan. 9 at 10:20am in the Placer County Planning Commission Hearing Room, 3091 County Center Drive, Auburn.

Letter: Liberty Utilities redefines convenience

To the community,

I paid most of my bills online (yesterday), and most companies today make paying online pretty easy, such as Southwest Gas. On the other hand, Liberty Utilities, which has been trying to tell us we need so many new utility lines and are groping for more expenses, charges a \$3.50 convenience fee if you want to pay your bill on their website. They should be ashamed.

We should be charging them a “convenience” fee since they don’t have to manually answer the phone, input data, give a confirmation number, etc., when we give them a payment online.

I am not very impressed with Liberty Utilities. Their outage over the Thanksgiving weekend (Friday) on Sierra Boulevard and for miles around, was an unbelievable inconvenience and blamed on their new underground lines on Sierra Boulevard. How did we know this? Not from any information you could get from their non-info recording for sure – only by tracking down a service truck to see what the story was.

Liberty Utilities: get a grip and start learning how to “engage” with your customers, and start by accepting online payments without gouging your customers for “convenience” – which is all your.

Judi and Terry Allen, South Lake Tahoe

Nevada bear hunt ends with 14 kills

By AP

Nevada's third black bear hunting season is in the books.

The Department of Wildlife says 14 bears were killed by hunters, with the last one killed on Nov. 23.

Of those, four were female and 10 were male.

As many as 20 were allowed to be killed in the season that ran from Sept. 15 through Dec. 31.

The agency this year excluded the Lake Tahoe Basin and areas along popular hiking trails on Mount Rose Summit from the hunt area after complaints from residents.

Wildlife commissioners have said they will review the bear hunt after this season.

During the last three years, 135 bear hunting tags were issued and 39 bears were been killed.