Sensors report water content throughout Calif.

By Olga Kharif, Bloomberg

In February, six students on snowshoes battled as much as 12 feet of snow to penetrate into the heart of the American River basin.

Moving through dense forests and meadows, they mounted 90 iPhone-sized machines, designed to measure everything from soil moisture to temperature and relative humidity, onto 16-foot poles that beam data to researchers like Steven Glaser, a professor at UC Berkeley.

With additional trips this summer, Glaser hopes to create the world's largest sensor network, comprising 7,500 devices that will inform researchers and government agencies for the first time in detail how much water California has in its coffers – critical data for farmers and state planners.

Department of Water Resources customarily tests water content throughout the winter in the Sierra; now sensors can give real-time water info to officials. Photo/LTN file

The network will be among the largest tests of a new kind of sensor: one that feels as well as thinks, while using very little power – a D-cell battery can last years.

Glaser's gadgets come equipped with silicon from Linear Technology Corp. and Cypress Semiconductor Corp. that turns them into mini-computers. They're part of a generation of intelligent sensors whose sales may rise about 10 percent a year to reach $6.9 billion in 2018, according to Transparency Market Research.

Unlike dumb predecessors that gathered data and passed it to a central server to analyze, these devices monitor the information's quality and perform advanced calculations.

"It's smart cities, smart buildings, smart water," said Susan Eustis, president of WinterGreen Research Inc. "It's enabling a world of things. It's going to grow unbelievably fast."

Read the whole story

TTD sets loop road meeting without telling public

South Lake Tahoe City Council members did not find out about a loop road related meeting until Monday – two days before the event.

Lake Tahoe News has never been formally told about it.

And this is a public meeting.

AIM Consulting sent an email to the Citizens Review Committee on Aug. 12 reminding the members of the Aug. 14 6:30pm meeting

at the chamber/LTVA meeting room in Stateline. (Dinner is included, but it's not known if the public gets to eat. And it's not known if this is taxpayer money feeding these committee members.) RSVP to Ciara Zanze by calling (916) 442.1168. She works for the consultant hired by the Tahoe Transportation District.

In response to an elected official's inquiry about why there was the late notice, Alfred Knotts with TTD sent the following group email, "The formal committee members were notified well in advance and the date was selected based on their availability. We have concurrence from a vast majority of the committee members regarding their attendance. I do however concur that limited notification was sent to you and the remaining city council members yesterday in the form of a formal agenda which was developed and sent to comply with the Brown Act and NV Open Meeting Law. The agenda was also posted as required by both of these requirements."

However, the Brown Act in California requires meetings be posted 72 hours in advance. This means the notification sent Aug. 12 did not comply with those regulations and therefore it could be seen as an illegal meeting and that any action or discussion taken would have to be stricken from the official record.

Future meetings are:

- Aug. 28, 6-8pm
- Sept. 11, 6:30-8:30pm
- Sept. 25, 6-8pm.

All meetings will be at Lake Tahoe Visitors Authority, 169 Highway 50 in Stateline. And dinner will be served at each meeting – at least for committee members.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Woman didn’t know roommate was murderer

By CBS-13

A woman and her two children shared a home with a murderer and didn’t realize it until later. Now that killer is accused of striking again.

She describes him as odd, but charming and charismatic. The worst she thought was he could have been a good con man.

Joseph Nissensohn

When cops knocked on Theresa Robertson’s door years later, she thought it was because he passed a few bad checks.

She had no idea, all those years ago, that she spent six weeks with a killer.

“I was short on rent and I needed a roommate.”

She had no way of knowing that just days before Joseph Nissensohn became her roommate in South Lake Tahoe that he murdered a 46-year-old woman in Washington.

Nissensohn is being tried on murder charges in El Dorado

County Superior Court in South Lake Tahoe.

Read the whole story

Northstar to be site of 3-day bike race

A three-day, two-person mountain bike stage race that will involve nearly 150 miles of pedaling is set for Oct. 11-13 at Northstar.

It will include more than 30,000 feet of total elevation gain on some of the resort’s singletrack terrain.

Unlike many established multi-day mountain bike stage races, where riders endure long transfers, nights spent huddled in tents or gymnasiums and force down lackluster meals, the Epic Events formula is to make an elevated experience available to all racers and to structure their events so family members and friends can tag along.

Other features of the Epic Northstar include an option for racers to have their bike professionally washed and tuned between stages, daily massages and the richest prize purse in the country at more than $100,000.

Registration for the Epic Northstar event is open. To help riders better understand the challenge at hand, there will be several weekends of course pre-riding with elite riders.

For more information, contact Mark Riedy at (415) 302.2923 or mark@trueoverdrive.com.

Smoke from American Fire remains an issue

The American Fire grew to 1,750 acres overnight.

It continues to burn in a rugged area near Foresthill in the Tahoe National Forest. However, that town is not threatened.

A smoky sunrise near Auburn on Aug. 13. Photo/CalFire

Heavy smoke from the wildfire is expected to continue to fill the skies of Truckee, Reno and other areas. On Monday, Placer County issued an advisory about the bad air quality.

The fire is moving up and down the North Fork of the Middle Fork of the American River. While the fire is not affecting recreation on the river, people are advised to stay out of the area.

The cause of the fire, which started Aug. 10, is unknown.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Calif. making sure retailers pay taxes

Retailers from Lake Tahoe to the Bay Area, and from the coastal cities of Southern California to Lake Perris, are receiving letters from the California State Board of Equalization notifying them about upcoming visits from Statewide Compliance and Outreach Program teams.

SCOP visits are intended to educate retailers about properly reporting sales and use tax, increase compliance with tax laws, and maintain outreach efforts to assure taxpayers the state's tax system is fair and equal for all Californians.

Regionally, the BOE is mailing letters to business owners in the following ZIP codes: Auburn (95602 and 95604), Colfax (95713), Dutch Flat (95714), Emigrant Gap (95715), Foresthill (95631), Gold Run (95717), Kings Beach (96143), Meadow Vista (95722), Olympic Valley (96146), and Tahoe Vista (96148), and Weimar (95736).

Businesses found to be operating without a seller's permit are provided instructions on how to register with the BOE, as well as information about other necessary licenses. Home-based businesses are not visited.

The BOE has found that nearly 98 percent of the California businesses are operating with the correct permits. However, noncompliance contributes to more than $2 billion in uncollected sales and use taxes that make up part of the state's "tax gap" – the difference between the amount of taxes owed and the amount paid, negatively impacting all state taxpayers.

Private workshops should be fire safe

Take the same precautions in your workshop as you do in your home.

Install smoke detectors and keep a fire extinguisher on hand that’s rated for fires involving wood and cloth, flammable liquids and electrical equipment. Mount the fire extinguisher near an exit and make sure it is ready to use.

Keep oily rags in covered metal containers and make sure flammable liquids are stored safely. Keep the shop clean, paying particular attention to switches, motors, and space heaters.

– Sallie Ross-Filgo, SLTFD

Contractor ready to resume Chateau project

By Kathryn Reed

Before construction resumes at the hole in South Lake Tahoe, some deconstruction is going to occur.

Eight columns out of the nearly 100 that are in the ground need to be taken out because they don't meet current standards to withstand an earthquake. Two changes to California's building codes have occurred since the foundation for the Chateau project was poured a handful of years ago. The columns need to be bigger.

The demolition permit is expected to be issued today by the city to Tahoe Stateline Ventures.

A construction trailer is at the Chateau site, with a bevy of activity likely to begin next week. Photo/Susan Wood

Tahoe Stateline Ventures is the company created by Owens Financial to develop a section of what was to be a $410 million hotel-retail-convention center in the city near the state line and across Highway 50 from Heavenly Village.

On Thursday, TSV will be before the South Tahoe Public Utility District board seeking approval of the contract to construct the water main.

All of the site work for construction of the 14-inch water main is slated to be done this building season.

Once the agreement is signed by STPUD, TSV officials will take that to the city in hopes a building permit is issued on

Friday.

No contract is needed between the city and developer because this is now a completely private endeavor. Before the bankruptcy, when the entire 11-plus-acre site was to be developed, the agreement was the city would issue millions of dollars worth of bonds to pay for the convention center that it would ultimately own. The city was also going to own the open spaces.

Now the city doesn't have ownership to anything regarding this project.

"We've been working with the developers since fall 2012 to determine the best course of action to restart the project and are very pleased that Mr. (Bill) Owens is willing to invest millions to restart the project," City Manager Nancy Kerry told *Lake Tahoe News*.

Construction trailers are on site and preconstruction work – like cleaning up the area – has been occurring. Real construction could begin Monday.

SMC Contracting is the general contractor for what is now an $11 million project on only part of the acreage. SMC was the lead the first time as well.

A temporary sidewalk along Highway 50 will be installed and the foundation for the retail will go in this building season. Work will continue through the winter, with completion – including landscaping – coming about this time next year.

"The expectation is retailers will be able to initiate their tenant improvements in late spring. Then in late summer, early fall they could be open for business," Lew Feldman, attorney for TSV, told *Lake Tahoe News*.

About a half dozen business are expected to move in.

No lease contracts have been signed and Feldman would not

disclose any potential retailers. There is 19,000-square-feet of retail, which does not include the restaurant-night club. (By comparison, Heavenly Village has about 120,000-square-feet of retail.)

The corner of Highway 50 and Stateline Avenue was always intended to be a restaurant. McP's is going to move there; which was also the original plan. The bi-level building will have one story below ground, one above ground. Outdoor seating, fire pits and a kitchen that would be capable of producing real meals are part of the plans.

Opinion: A craft beer with a misguided message

By Deena Shanker, Salon

MillerCoors, the company behind Coors, Miller High Life and Miller 64, wants a little respect for its other, this-one-isn't-like-the-others stepchild, Blue Moon. Perhaps in a nod to Coors' frat-boy consumer base, the company message was summed up perfectly in a recent Bloomberg headline: "Blue Moon tells beer snobs to drink up and show respect." It's the kind of line you can imagine a frat brother telling an inductee, right before shoving a beer bong in his mouth and pouring cans of Coors Light into the funnel at the top.

Back in December 2012, the Brewers Association released new standards for breweries to call themselves makers of "craft" beer. They had to be "small," making no more than 6 million barrels of beer per year; "independent," meaning that no more

than 25 percent of the company is owned by a non-craft beverage industry members; and they had to make beer that qualifies as “traditional,” meaning that it relies on malted barley and not what brewers consider filler ingredients, like corn and rice.

This definition did not suit MillerCoors, whose CEO Tom Long wrote an Op-Ed on CNN in response. “Based on our size,” he wrote, “that definition excluded us, even though we brew some of the most popular craft beers in the marketplace.” Except that they don’t, because Blue Moon is, by definition, not a craft beer – not just because of MillerCoors’ size (it sells 67 billion barrels of beer, compared to the largest craft brewer, Sam Adams, which sells about 2.7 million per year), but also because its so-called craft brand is not independent, as the definition requires. It’s owned by MillerCoors. Ipso facto, not a craft beer.

Read the whole story

1,200 acres burn in rugged area near Foresthill

Updated 8:10pm

The American Fire is estimated to have burned 1,200 acres.

Firefighters reported a moderate rate of spread Monday and are making progress building direct containment lines.

Suppression efforts are focused mainly on the Deadwood Ridge and Last Chance sides of the fire. While firefighters are working to protect cultural resources from the fire and from

suppression impacts, firefighter and public safety are the first priorities.

—

The American Fire burning in the Tahoe National Forest has charred nearly 1,000 acres. Heavy smoke is making it difficult to obtain precise numbers.

The fire has crossed the North Fork of the Middle Fork of the American River and is burning toward the Last Chance area. Firefighters reported a moderate rate of spread with short uphill runs Sunday, and more of the same is expected today.

Smokejumpers are being used to reach the remote area.

The town of Foresthill is not in danger and there are no evacuations ordered.

Smoke is sitting in Truckee and Reno.

The cause of the fire that started in the late afternoon of Aug. 10 is still under investigation.

— Lake Tahoe News staff report