NV Energy profits rise

By Eli Segall, Las Vegas Sun

Despite a dip in revenue, NV Energy nearly doubled its first-quarter profit this year.

The Las Vegas-based power company said Friday it earned $21.5 million in net income, or 9 cents per share, for the three months ending March 31.

That compares to $12.2 million of profit, or 5 cents per share, during the same period last year.

The utility, which serves 90 percent of Nevada’s population, said it had $584.2 million of operating revenue last quarter, down from $611.4 million a year ago.

However, it slashed its energy efficiency program costs by $9.6 million and lowered its maintenance costs by $7.6 million. These and other factors helped boost its first-quarter profits.

Festival teaches about native Tahoe species

The U.S. Forest Service Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit will host the third annual Native Species Festival on June 9.

This free family event is from 10am-4pm at the Taylor Creek Visitor Center, located three miles north of South Lake Tahoe on Highway 89.

This festival is a great way to spend the day outdoors and learn about the native species of the Lake Tahoe Basin. Attend walks led by field professionals and local students to learn about native Tahoe yellow cress, the invasive Eurasian water milfoil, the basin's native Lahontan cutthroat trout and the invasive American bullfrog.

Live music will be provided by the local band Fugitive Dust.

The festival will offer 14 educational booths from various public and nonprofit agencies, featuring topics like the American black bear, native bats, the American beaver, and Tahoe yellow cress. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will return this year with the popular large fish tank, which holds native Lahontan Cutthroat Trout, and the giant inflatable fish.

For more information, contact Jean Norman at (530) 543.2694.

Travelers expect free, fast Wi-Fi

By Susan Stellin, New York Times

Travelers hitting the road with their mobile electronic devices have three questions about staying connected away from home: will there be Wi-Fi, how much will it cost and how well will it work?

Increasingly, it is that last question that matters most.

Hotels, airports and airlines are struggling to keep up with customers streaming movies on their tablets and hosting online meetings on their laptops, with varying degrees of success.

While hoteliers and airport authorities have been fighting the bandwidth battle for years, airlines are still installing Wi-Fi on many aircraft and are already confronting challenges.

Travelers who want Wi-Fi in the air cannot always tell if a plane will have Internet service when they book their tickets. Prices for service are still evolving, and the quality of the connection does not come close to matching what most people are used to on the ground.

“No matter what the system is, none of them right now are showing the ability to keep up with passenger demand,” said Mary Kirby, editor in chief of Airline Passenger Experience magazine. “I’ve heard complaints about every single system.”

Acknowledging the technical hurdles involved in delivering Internet service to a plane traveling 500 miles an hour, Kirby said airlines and their connectivity partners needed to better manage passenger expectations.

“It’s time for the industry to say, ‘Here’s reasonably what you can expect, and it’s not an at-home experience,’” she said. “A passenger should expect to be able to use social media and check email. But you’re not going to be able to send emails with really big files, and you’re not going to be able to stream video.”

A new website, Routehappy.com, is helping travelers find out if a flight has Wi-Fi — information many airlines do not reveal until after a ticket is booked. Routehappy lets travelers search for flights on a particular route, like New York to San Francisco, then sort the results based on various “happiness factors,” including whether the flight offers Wi-Fi.

For a weekday in mid-April, Routehappy calculated that 24 percent of domestic flights offered Wi-Fi, 56 percent did not and 20 percent might. John Walton, Routehappy’s director of data, says the “maybe” category reflects the fact that

airlines are busy installing this technology, so it is not always possible to determine weeks in advance if a flight will have it or how well it will work.

“You never know how many other people are going to be using Wi-Fi at the same time,” Walton said.

Airlines and Wi-Fi providers say typical demand is 5 to 10 percent of passengers, but use is often higher on longer flights. On Virgin America, which offers Wi-Fi on all its planes, 20 percent of passengers typically log on, said Abby Lunardini, a company spokeswoman, and more than a third use Wi-Fi on transcontinental routes.

Most carriers use an air-to-ground system provided by Gogo, which relies on a network of ground-based cellular towers to communicate with aircraft flying across the United States. Gogo’s system can deliver Internet speeds of 3.1 to 9.8 megabits per second, usually much slower than a typical home connection.

Looking to address these speed limitations, Gogo and other Wi-Fi providers are moving toward satellite-based systems capable of delivering faster Internet service. Satellite systems also work over the ocean, enabling carriers to offer Wi-Fi on international flights.

American Airlines has international Wi-Fi on its Boeing 777-300ER aircraft, which fly between Dallas or New York and London, and between New York and São Paulo, Brazil. United Airlines also offers Wi-Fi service on some international flights but does not specify which routes.

Delta is considered a leader on the Wi-Fi front in the United States, providing Internet service on more than 800 aircraft, including many regional jets. American has about 450 Wi-Fi-equipped planes, Southwest Airlines more than 400 and United 50. JetBlue plans to introduce a satellite-based Internet service this year, promising faster speeds than its

competitors offer — and at least basic Wi-Fi free.

The cost of in-flight Wi-Fi is still all over the map, as carriers figure out what customers are willing to pay. Southwest has taken a simple approach, charging $8 for a daylong Wi-Fi pass; other airlines charge fees based on the length of the flight, the connection time and the device. It can cost just $2 to connect with a smartphone for 30 minutes, or $4.95 to $21.95 a flight for a laptop.

But some fliers simply will not pay to log on.

“What we’re seeing is a reluctance to pay,” said Ms. Kirby of Airline Passenger Experience magazine, “which is quite fascinating because these systems cost a lot of money on aircraft.”

Airports and hotels are confronting a similar situation. Of the 10 busiest airports in the United States, those in Los Angeles, Dallas/Fort Worth, Denver, San Francisco, Las Vegas, Phoenix and Charlotte, N.C., offer at least some free Wi-Fi service.

But the trade-off can be overloaded networks that frustrate passengers, which is why Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport — the busiest in the United States — is upgrading its infrastructure before switching to free Wi-Fi this year.

“Our system wasn’t built to accommodate the number of customers we expect to have with the free Wi-Fi,” said Myrna White, a spokeswoman for the airport, which dropped its Wi-Fi fee to $4.95 a day last fall.

Recognizing the challenge airports and other public locations face, the Federal Communications Commission is working to increase the amount of unlicensed spectrum available for Wi-Fi, which is how passengers at a busy terminal connect to the airport’s broadband service.

“What we have proposed is to provide more space on the airwaves to accommodate the growth of Wi-Fi,” said Julius P. Knapp, chief of the F.C.C.’s office of engineering and technology. “That translates to faster data speeds and reduced congestion.”

Free Wi-Fi, at least for basic Internet service, is also becoming the norm at hotels, particularly at less expensive ones. According to the American Hotel and Lodging Association, 23 percent of hotels in the United States charge for in-room Internet access. This week, the hospitality site HotelChatter.com released its annual Wi-Fi report, finding that two-thirds of hotels offered free Internet access, at least in the lobby. Luxury hotels are still more likely to charge than midrange or budget hotels.

Mark G. Johnson, HotelChatter’s founder, said guests’ top complaints were hotels that charged a separate Internet fee for each device, like a tablet and a laptop, and those that offered inadequate support when the network was having problems.

“What I’m hearing more is that people at the front desk almost throw their hands in the air,” Johnson said. “They may give you back your money, but they can’t help you.”

Some travelers bring their own backup Wi-Fi, in case the hotel’s Internet service is spotty.

David J. Danto, a consultant with Dimension Data, says he travels with a portable MiFi hot spot from Sprint, which he uses if a hotel’s Wi-Fi service is slow. Although he says he does not mind paying for Wi-Fi if it works well, he has little patience for hotels that blame network outages on high demand.

“If everybody flushes the toilet at the same time, you wouldn’t want the building to come down,” Danto said. “I’m not sure why they wouldn’t design the Internet service the same way.”

Fundraiser benefits Boys & Girls Club

Spirit of Spring on May 14 benefits the Boys & Girls Club of Lake Tahoe.

The 7-9:30pm event at Edgewood Tahoe is $40/person.

The event is sponsored by Edgewood and Southern Wine and Spirits, with 100 percent of the proceeds going directly to the Boys & Girls Club and the 900 youths its serves. Tickets may be purchased by phoning (530) 542.0838.

McClintock shares his beliefs with the people

By Kathryn Reed

TRUCKEE – Federal spending, government regulations, banking, the economy, carbon emissions, immigration and the Auburn Dam dominated the discussion Thursday night between Rep. Tom McClintock and his constituents.

At times it was a bit argumentative between the congressman and those in attendance, as well as between attendees – but nothing like what is heard on talk radio.

McClintock, R-Granite Bay, was at the Truckee Tahoe Airport on May 2 for a town hall meeting. He represents Truckee and the

California side of the Lake Tahoe Basin in Congress.

As chair of the House Water and Power Subcommittee, McClintock has some pull in getting the Auburn Dam project through; despite many thinking the issue was dead in the water. It's a project that has been discussed since the late 1960s, was started, but has been on hold for decades because of seismic and political reasons.



Rep. Tom McClintock, R-Granite Bay, talks May 2 to constituents in Truckee. Photo/Kathryn Reed

One woman got in a bit of back-and-forth debate with the congressman about the benefits of the dam. She believes the value of today's natural resources need to be weighed before a vast area is flooded to create what would be Lake Auburn.

McClintock believes the state needs another area to store water, that it would provide recreation and flood control.

The constituent said the money would be more wisely used to develop better irrigation for farmers who want to use Northern California's water.

When it comes to the greater disconnect in Washington, McClintock said, "The government is divided because the people are divided." He said the people need to resolve their differences and then lawmakers will follow their lead.

He is fine with sequestration, especially because it is getting people to the table to talk.

“At this moment in time it is the only tool we have to get the federal budget back to solvency,” McClintock told the nearly 50 people in the room.

But he is not usually for across the board cuts that are equal in nature.

“That’s the lazy man’s way to budget cutting,” he said. McClintock said that way of thinking doesn’t allow for thoughtful analysis of whether something should be funded more or less. He doesn’t want all things to be treated equally because their importance is not of equal value.

McClintock wants changes in Medicare and Social Security, saying the former will be bankrupt in nine years and the latter 10 years later.

One person responded, “I’m entitled to that. I paid into that.”

The congressman said with people living longer, people taking out more than they paid in and the ratio of those contributing compared to those withdrawing diminishing, the two funds are not going to have money for everyone who is paying in today.

When it comes to banks, McClintock believes people should know what their banks are doing – saying that if you have your eggs in one basket, you better keep an eye on that basket. The audience was a bit taken aback, wondering how they were supposed to know what big banks were doing with their money after it was deposited.

“I think the bailout was one of the worse, (most) corrupt mistakes ever made,” McClintock said.

But he is for personal accountability.

While he sympathizes with people who came to this country illegally as children, he doesn’t have an answer for what to do with them.

He believes in the path that exists to become a U.S. citizen, but does not want to allow those who are in the country illegally to have the right to become a citizen.

“If we are going to support illegal immigration, then there is no point to have legal immigration,” McClintock said.

He got in a bit of debate with a woman who said the system is not working for her. She has hired people from other countries with advanced degrees, but when their visa ran out the person had to leave. She believes the workforce is not educated enough to fill all the jobs on U.S. soil and that immigration laws need to change.

McClintock said if the recent gun control law that failed in the Senate had made it to the House, he would have voted against it.

“We are taking increasingly Draconian steps to disarm the law abiding population. That is not going to end well,” McClintock said.

Letter: Austin’s House thankful for support

To the community,

Employees from three local Starbucks stores recently made their mark in our community by doing the annual spring yard cleanup at Austin’s House. Friendly partners from Starbucks

stores located in Minden, Gardnerville, and North Carson Crossing participated in this community service event for the fifth straight year.

Starbucks has been a great supporter of Austin's House, with donations and volunteer work. Starbucks employees also served the refreshments and helped with set up and tear down for the "Goldilocks on Trial" play to benefit Austin's House.

There was also another landscape improvement. An autumn purple white ash tree was donated anonymously to shade the front of Austin's House. David Ruf, owner of Greenhouse Garden Center, donated the labor and equipment for planting the tree.

Austin's House is the only emergency children's shelter in rural Northern Nevada. Austin's House provides services and care for up to 10 children from infants to age 18. The children are placed at Austin's House after being removed from their homes due to abuse or neglect. Austin's House provides the basic living necessities including proper nutrition, hygiene, rest, nurturing, recreation, companionship, life skills training and education. The facility depends on continued generous support from the community to keep the doors open.

Conrad Buedel, Austin House

Volunteer to test Tahoe water on Snapshot Day

The 13th annual Water Quality Snapshot Day is May 11 from 9am to noon throughout Lake Tahoe and the Upper Truckee River area.

Volunteers are needed to conduct near shore water quality sampling and habitat assessments. The event is a citizen-based environmental effort designed to take a “snapshot,” at one moment in time, of the water quality throughout the Lake Tahoe and Truckee River watershed. Water quality monitoring will take place from the tributaries flowing into Lake Tahoe all the way to the waters of Pyramid Lake.

It is sponsored by the Tahoe Resource Conservation District, League to Save Lake Tahoe, Nevada Division of Environmental Protection, UCCooperative Extension, Tahoe Regional Planning Agency, Incline Village General Improvement District, Tahoe Water Suppliers Association, UC Davis and the Truckee River Watershed Council.

Lake Tahoe and Truckee community volunteers will meet at central locations for an overview briefing about water quality measurements.

South Lake Tahoe volunteers meet at Lake Tahoe Community College. North Lake Tahoe volunteers meet at Patton Landing (Waterman Landing) on Highway 28 in Carnelian Bay.Truckee-area volunteers meet at the Truckee River Watershed Council office, 10418 Donner Pass Road.

Volunteer teams, led by trained group leaders, will then fan out to take samples and measurements at various locations at the same time on the same day. The teams will field-test streams for dissolved oxygen, total dissolve solids, pH and temperature; collect water samples for laboratory analysis of nutrients, sediment and bacteria; and conduct visual habitat assessments of the sites.

To sign up as a volunteer or team leader, you can register online at www.snapshotday.org or call the local SSD coordinator:

• Mary Kay Wagner (Truckee River-Nevada portion) – (775) 687.9454

• Andy Otto (Truckee River – California portion) – (530) 550.8760

• Emily Mathews (South Shore Lake Tahoe) – (530) 541.5388

• Rebecca Williams (North Shore Lake Tahoe) – (775) 832.1284.

Rep. McClintock talks in Truckee

Rep. Tom McClintock, R-Granite Bay, talks on a range of issues during a May 2 town hall meeting in Truckee. He represents the California side of Lake Tahoe in the House.

USFS creates app for National Forests

Now there’s a lighter and more convenient way to view National Forest maps.

All U.S. Forest Service visitor maps and quad maps covering portions of California are available for purchase through the

Avenza PDF maps application. This app is free and available for most Apple products through the iTunes store. The Avenza website has a beta version of the app for Android devices.

Once the app is installed:

• Purchase and download professionally created maps from the thousands of maps in the Avenza Map Store.

• View your location using the integrated GPS (iPad 3G/LTE or iPhone 3GS or higher model required), even without a wireless connection or cell phone signal

• Plot placemarks, add notes, enter attribute data and add photos as attributes

• Search for places and points of interest on any map (online connection required)

• Export placemarks to share with colleagues, friends, or for future use

• Measure distances and areas.

El Dorado County looking for grand jury members

El Dorado County is going to try to field a grand jury for 2013-14 after this year’s had to be disbanded because so many jurors walked out.

Applicants must be Untied States citizens, at least 18 years of age, have resided in the county for at least one year at the time of the swearing-in date, and cannot hold an elected

office.

Jurors serve for a period of one year commencing July 1.

The El Dorado Civil Grand Jury is an investigatory body created for the protection of society and the enforcement of the law. It is an arm of the court and a representative of the public.

Meetings are compensated at the maximum rate of $15 per day of meeting; mileage is compensated at the rate payable to employees of El Dorado County for each mile actually and necessarily traveled for purposes of said sessions or committee work. No other compensation is provided.

Qualified citizens who have an interest in this unique type of service may pick up an application from Suzanne M. Thurman, Executive Administrative Assistant for the Superior Court, at 2850 Fairlane Court, Suite 110 (Building C), Placerville or call (530) 621.7414. May 17 is the deadline for submitting an application.