Forecasters backing away from La Niña predictions

By Kurtis Alexander, San Francisco Chronicle

The “Godzilla” El Niño is gone. But its sibling climate pattern, La Niña, which typically emerges in the aftermath with a cooling effect on the globe and potentially drier weather in California, has yet to show.

Federal forecasters said Thursday that La Niña is still likely to develop, though its probability and potential strength are both down. Those calculations may ease some fears about another dry winter for California, but they mostly leave climate experts with little agreement on whether the state’s drought picture will improve.

The downgrade comes not only because of slower-than-expected ocean cooling, but a failure of west-moving trade winds to pick up. The winds help bring more cold water to the surface of the tropics and are necessary for sustaining a potential La Niña

Read the whole story

Wedding business a big deal in Tahoe

By Ally Gravina, Moonshine Ink

As the economy improves, weddings are quickly becoming more significant in Tahoe’s economy than in the past.

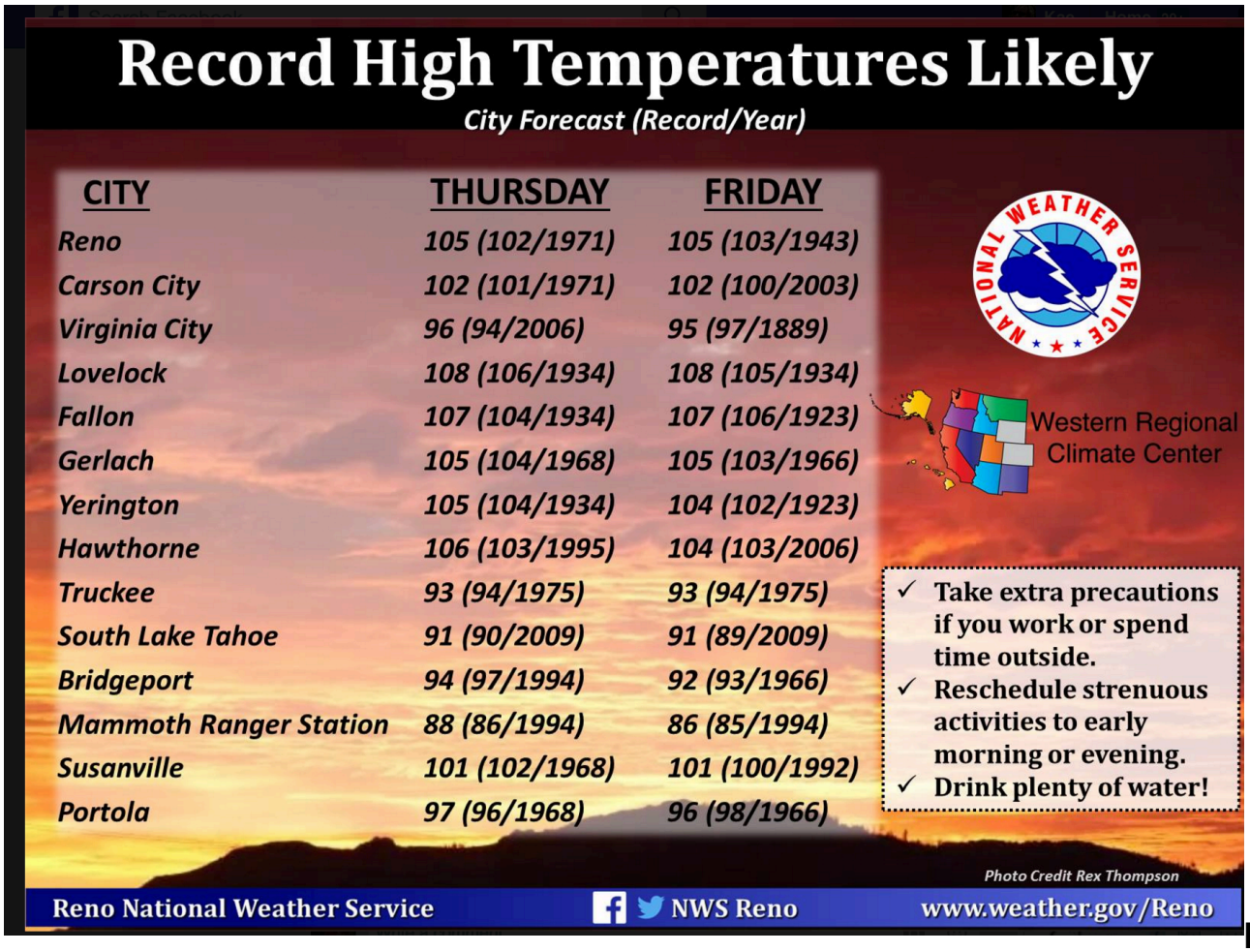
Placer, Nevada, and Washoe counties were host to 11,935 weddings in 2015, according to the Wedding Report, which has been making a splash in the business community since the report was published in 2016. Together they generated over $380 million in sales for the year, with Washoe County alone making up almost $289 million, the report says. This is almost 20 percent higher than sales in 2009, and mirrors trends nationwide.

In 2015 there were 2.17 million weddings in the United States generating $58 billion in sales, according to the report, an increase from $46 billion in 2009.

The booming industry stimulates revenue in two ways: it employs vendors who provide many things a couple may need, including photographers, planners, venue owners, caterers, baked goods, and officiators; and it attracts traveling wedding guests, who spend money on hotels, restaurants, shops, and recreational activities.

Read the whole story

Record high heat likely to continue in Tahoe



By Kathryn Reed

Start stripping; it's just going to get hotter.

South Lake Tahoe hit a record high on Wednesday, and the forecast from the National Weather Service in Reno is more records will be broken today and Friday.

Ninety-one is the magic number for all three days. Apparently it was hot in 1990, too, because that is when the previous records for July 27-28-29 were set. That year on July 27 it was 90, July 28 – 90, and July 29 – 89.

Carson City and Reno will have triple digits, and are also likely to break records.

Truckee, which has records dating much farther back than South Lake, had a ways to go on Wednesday to beat the record of 99 that was set in 1975. The high yesterday was 93.

Truckee has a better chance of breaking a record the next two days, with the forecast being for 93 degrees and the record 94 for July 28-29.

Tahoe City only reached the mid-80s on July 27.

“There’s a really strong high pressure system,” Shane Snyder, meteorologist with the NWS in Reno, said of why it’s so hot. “It will drop off significantly by Saturday.”

For the weekend the South Shore will be in the 80s.

The good thing is that there is relief from the heat in the evenings, with most nights dipping into the 40s.

Normally the basin sees afternoon thunderstorms this time of year. Moisture has been absent, but that could change soon.

Snyder told *Lake Tahoe News* storms might build on the eastern side of the lake and in the Carson Range on Friday and Saturday. The danger is the accompanying lightning could start fires, especially since there is so much dry terrain.

“Due to the very hot and dry conditions, thunderstorms are more likely to produce strong outflow winds and dry lightning leading to an increased risk of new fire starts,” the Weather Service said. “Unfortunately, any rainfall that occurs with these storms will be limited to very small areas and will offer little help to the region, which has not seen much precipitation since May.”

Calif. household mosquito

could amplify Zika virus spread

By Sammy Caiola, Sacramento Bee

A mosquito that’s common in California has become the latest identified carrier of the Zika virus, potentially multiplying the population of vectors capable of spreading the disease.

Until last week, researchers believed the virus could only be spread by two types of aedes mosquito much rarer in California and the U.S. But new research by a UC Davis ecologist and a top Brazilian science institution pins the southern variety of the culex mosquito – known as the southern house mosquito – as a potential vector of the disease, which can only be transmitted when a mosquito bites an infected person and then bites someone else.

Walter Leal, a chemical ecologist at UC Davis and a collaborator on the research, helped make the finding while testing mosquitoes in the northeastern Brazilian city of Recife. Zika, an often symptomless illness, has been blamed for a neurological defect called microcephaly in hundreds of babies around the world and has reached epidemic levels in Brazil.

Read the whole story

Nev. has one of highest

proportions of female lawmakers

By Michelle Rindels, AP

Nevada is among the states with the greatest proportion of female lawmakers, although women are still underrepresented in the Legislature and in many of the highest elected offices.

Women accounted for one-third of the 63 members in the Legislature last session. That ties the state for fifth place in terms of female representation, according to an analysis by the Associated Press of data collected by the National Conference of State Legislatures.

Colorado leads the pack with 42 percent female legislators, while Vermont, Arizona and Washington come next and Minnesota ties with Nevada's 33 percent. Utah and a handful of Southern states have 15 percent or less female representation, and Wyoming is at the bottom with 13 percent.

Women in Nevada politics point to a variety of reasons the state has a relatively high proportion of female lawmakers. Republican state Sen. Patricia Farley said legislative leaders who recruited her to run in 2014 agreed to work with her schedule as a single mom of two school-age girls, keeping her evenings mostly clear and ensuring meetings ended in time for her to pick up her children from school in the afternoon.

"Running for office isn't necessarily set up for a mom, and much less a single mom," said Farley, who represents a Las Vegas-area district. "There was a lot of effort to help support me running for office."

But she said diversifying the Legislature and bringing more women and mothers into the process is a worthy goal.

“It makes a difference in the tone and tenor of legislation,” she said. “When we bring our gifts forward, maybe we reduce unintended consequences.”

Erin Bilbray, who founded the Emerge Nevada organization that trains women to run for office, said the relatively high number of women in the Legislature may have to do with working conditions that women might accept more readily than men. Lawmakers meet in regular session for four months every two years, and are paid less than $9,000 in salary, plus a per diem allowance, for that service.

“There’s a correlation between how little we pay our legislators and how many women are in the Legislature,” Bilbray said.

In local government, women hold some prominent posts. Carolyn Goodman is mayor of Las Vegas, while Hillary Schieve is mayor of Reno.

But a gender gap persists in other offices. Three of the four Nevadans in the U.S. House of Representatives are men, and the state’s only had three women representatives in its history.

The first was seven-term Republican Rep. Barbara Vucanovich, who took office in 1983, while the other two were seven-term Democratic Rep. Shelley Berkley and current 1st Congressional District Rep. Dina Titus, a Democrat.

Nevada is one of 23 states that has never elected a woman as governor. It’s also one of 22 states that has never had a female senator, although Democratic Senate candidate Catherine Cortez Masto could change that.

Bilbray said external and internal obstacles perpetuate the gender gap.

“You have to ask a woman, on average, eight times before they run for office,” said Bilbray, who ran in Nevada’s 3rd

Congressional District in 2014 but lost to Rep. Joe Heck. “They tend to think they’re not qualified.”

Schieve said she tries to plant the idea of public service early, telling young girls she meets that they look like a future mayor.

“I look at it as part of my position to do that,” she said. “To show, ‘Look, if I can do it, anyone can do it.'”

Farley said women still feel they have to compete with men, working 14 hours a day and never taking time off, to be taken seriously in their careers. She said women need to stand up for their family obligations to change the culture in politics.

“What women need to do is say this job of raising my kids is just as important, if not more important,” she said. “More and more people need to believe they can ask for it and get it.”

Fire prevention critical when living in a forest

By Kathryn Reed

An ember should be able to hit a house, drop and not start a spot fire. That’s called defensible space.

John Pickett, forester with Tahoe Douglas Fire Protection District, talked recently about all things fire and what homeowners can do to make their home less combustible.

Five feet from the structure is the most critical. Pickett said there have been too many times when firefighters have

needed to use a chain saw to cut the deck from the house. When it comes to the 5-foot space, it includes that distance from the deck. In the fire world the deck is a structure.

Pine needles under a wood step are an accelerant. While they may be a pain to dislodge, the alternative could be destructive, even deadly.

Homeowners in the basin are discovering that without defensible space they are unable to get insurance.

Pickett said 350 dwellings in his district in Nevada were dropped from State Farm. The fire department worked with the homeowners and insurance company to get 300 of them to retain their coverage.

He said Hartford is no longer writing policies in Tahoe Douglas and that USSA is studying the area.

A woman at the talk sponsored by the South Lake Tahoe Friends of the Library said she was unable to get AAA. However, a AAA rep in Carson City told *Lake Tahoe News* the company has an aggressive fire line underwriting restriction, but policies are still being written throughout the South Shore.

AAA was one of the better companies during Angora.

It was nine years ago this summer those 254 houses on the outskirts of South Lake Tahoe went up in flames in the Angora Fire. Six weeks later five houses were lost on the West Shore in the Washoe Fire when a gas barbecue was left on.



While all fire cannot be prevented, there are steps that can be taken to make individual properties less combustible. Photo/LTN file

Most wildland fires are human caused – as were these two. Angora was from an illegal campfire at Seneca Pond that wasn't fully extinguished.

Besides residents needing to do their part, fire agencies in the basin are doing theirs, too. Part of this includes working with locals by doing inspections. Tahoe Douglas inspects every house on a four-year rotation. While they can't go on the property without permission, a lot can be seen from the road. The goal isn't to issue fines – though, that's possible – but instead to get people to comply.

Fire departments throughout the Lake Tahoe Basin will do a defensible space inspections for residents for free. It's all about creating a fire adapted community. More information is available **online**.

In Tahoe Douglas the Zephyr Fire Crew is responsible for keeping the forest healthy through controlled burns and thinning the forest.

"It is not a haphazard sport. We take the time to do it

right," Pickett said after he showed a video of the crew starting a prescribed fire.

These weren't slash piles, but instead underbrush that was deliberately set on fire. It's a low intensity fire that consumes the ground fuels. Like a surgeon the marks left behind are deliberate and well thought out.

Forest aficionados search for Nev.'s champion trees

By Henry Brean, Las Vegas Review-Journal

The Nevada Division of Forestry has a big surprise for those who think of the Silver State as a treeless wasteland.

Nevada is actually home to a long list of impressive trees, including two champion specimens, both just outside Las Vegas, that rank as the largest of their kind in the nation.

For the past 24 years, the state forestry division has maintained something called the Nevada Big Tree Register to track the largest and most impressive trees. The list was last updated in 2015 and now contains more than 300 different species.

The tallest tree in Nevada is a 159-foot-tall Jeffrey pine in Douglas County. The largest circumference tree is the state champion Great Basin bristlecone on Mount Charleston, with a trunk measuring 12 feet in diameter.

Read the whole story

Is hyperconnectivity enhancing or hurting ski experience?

By Megan Michelson, Powder

Imagine a world where drones fly overhead while you rip a steep line through powder-stuffed trees. A tiny camera inside the drone captures footage of you, making even the average skier look like a breakthrough performer in a TGR flick. Magically, within a day or so, a polished, edited video appears in your inbox, primed to score a gazillion likes on Facebook.

That is the world Jason Soll envisioned. And it becomes reality this winter with the launch of Soll's Silicon Valley tech start-up, Cape Productions. While dozens of ski resorts are in the midst of writing policies that ban the use of personal drones, others are finding ways to incorporate them. This winter, skiers at resorts like Squaw Valley, and Fernie, British Columbia, can hire Cape's team of drone pilots and professional editors to produce an aerial video of their day on snow. For under $200, you'll get a two-minute edit within 48 hours. It's the SharpShooter of the future.

Soll, 25, grew up in Ohio, and thanks to Warren Miller movies and a snow-covered mound in Pennsylvania, he became a skier. As a youngster, he took trips to Utah with his family, where he developed a love for soft snow and the Stein Eriksen buffet at Deer Valley. After college, he worked as a product design consultant at Google X, ground zero for gadgets built to make radical change. As a graduate student at Stanford's Business

School, he came up with the idea for Cape, named because it transforms Clark Kents into goggle-clad Supermen.

“I knew of all these drone products in development, but I wasn’t excited about having to deal with the hardware,” says Soll. “Then I realized we could deploy the technology as a service, not a product. That would also solve the other challenges of video production, like editing and distribution. Those skiers with GoPros and selfie sticks, they want to capture the moment, but many just wind up with raw data on their hard drive. Our big idea was eliminate the hard work and let people capture the moment without any distraction.”

Read the whole story

Don Henley could have taken it to the limit

By Susan Wood

STATELINE – In some respects, diehard Eagles fans might have wanted to quickly get to the end of Sunday night’s Don Henley concert at Harveys.

As one of the lead singers and songwriters for the iconic band from the 1970s and ’80s, Henley’s musical history was rocked last January when his counterpart, Glenn Frey, died.

It took getting to the end of the show during the highly-anticipated encore to hear an appreciation of his fellow artist and bandmate.

“For Glenn,” Henley said quietly before busting into “Desperado,” a touching ballad Frey and Henley wrote together

about an outlaw surrendering to love.

Flannel shirt-clad Henley was an artist of fewer words and less flash than most performers who have graced the stage for the casino's summer outdoor concert series. Big "no" signs were on both sides of the stage announcing the prohibition of photos and video, and fans were threatened with being tossed out of the venue if their cameras/phones came out again.



Don Henley is almost a regular on the Harveys stage. Photo/LTN

Henley was always known more for his behind-the-scenes songwriting and environmental activism than a crowd-pleasing, Hollywood style anyway – unlike Frey, who also became an actor (hint: "Miami Vice.")

The duo, with the help of guitarists Joe Walsh, Timothy B. Schmidt and Don Felder, wrote some of the biggest chart toppers of our time including "Hotel California" and "Life in the Fast Lane" – which the Eagles performed on the same stage two years ago. This time, Henley delivered the blockbusters

with the help of a vastly talented 15-person ensemble that almost drowned out his obviously aging, weakened voice once known for beautiful harmonies.

Albeit a bit awkward in lovelorn duets with him, his three young, female backup singers stole the show at times – especially Lara Johnston's torchy rendition of "I Don't Want to Hear It Anymore."

During the major hits of the Eagles, Henley could have held the microphone out the whole time, as many fans knew the words.

The singer-guitarist, who usually plays the drums, but not this evening, took to the stage a half-hour late with the Eagles' harmonic "Seven Bridges Road." Then he launched into his solo career with "Dirty Laundry" about the nasty side of the news business.

Many in the crowd yelled the lyrics –"Get the widow on the set," as if live with a broadcast news editor.

Then, Henley continued with the edgy atmosphere.

"Look, all the rich people are late," he said, pointing down to the empty seats up front. Stretches of vacant rows could be seen throughout the concert.

But to the enthusiastic, seemingly older fans there, the idea of Henley promising a two-hour performance to go through four decades of music brought out a cheer.

"It's hard to cram the history of civilization in six minutes," Henley admitted to the audience after the stirring rendition of a song about the Native Americans' plight.

In between an assortment of old Eagles tunes such as that heavy synthesized "The Last Resort," "One of these Nights" and "Witchy Woman," Henley dusted off a few from his solo career.

Hits like “Sunset Grill,” “Boys of Summer” and the appropriate-to-the-election-season “End of the Innocence,” accompanied a “Tears For Fears” rock hit “Everybody Wants to Rule the World”. To that, the crowd erupted into cheers and danced.

Henley also sprinkled a few songs from his latest release called – “Cass County.” His first solo album in 15 years was inspired by experiences in the small Texas town that he grew up in. The collection bears a strong resemblance to old country crooner tunes, complete with some high-powered duets.

He teamed up with Rolling Stones leading man Mick Jagger and country star Miranda Lambert on “Bramble Rose” and performed it that night. He also sang “That Old Flame,” a tune he performed with more a peer, country singer Martina McBride on the album.

Henley even provided a hint of his existence growing up in a small town with “Train In the Distance,” a coming of age tune any young lad wanting to escape to a better life could relate to. Henley performed that duet with country singer Lucinda Williams on the album.

The Harveys Outdoor Summer Concert Series continues with electrifying country artist Keith Urban on Wednesday and Friday nights; former lead man for the Commodores Lionel Ritchie on Aug. 13; pop group Steve Miller Band on Aug. 18; red rocker Sammy Hagar on Aug. 26; and soul artist Stevie Wonder on Sept. 2.

It’s not a housing bubble, it’s just expensive

By Patrick Clark, Bloomberg

Home prices have hit record highs in some major U.S. metropolitan areas, and house-flippers are behaving like it’s 2005: It’s no wonder people are chattering about another housing bubble.

But residential real estate isn’t in a speculative bubble, industry observers contend. Instead, a low inventory of available homes is driving prices higher—prices, however, will eventually recede as buyers throw up their hands, or as more new homes come on line. The structural issues that led to the housing collapse last decade aren’t present.

“The havoc during the last cycle was the result of building too many homes and of speculation fueled by loose credit,” said Jonathan Smoke, chief economist at Realtor.com. “That’s the exact opposite of what we have today.”

Read the whole story