Unlocking the West’s weather maker

By Matt Weiser, Water Deeply

One thing the drought has brought to wider attention is the role of so-called atmospheric rivers in the state’s weather and water supply.

An atmospheric river is a narrow band of high-speed wind that sweeps across the Pacific Ocean, often dragging vast amounts of tropical moisture with it. Sometimes dubbed a “horizontal hurricane,” just a handful of these storms can bring California half of its annual rainfall every year. Indeed, an absence of very wet atmospheric rivers over the past few years is one reason California has experienced such a severe drought.

Atmospheric rivers are also responsible for the state’s worst flooding events.

Their influence on water supply and flood risk depends largely on where they make landfall, and for how long. But until recently, very little research has been devoted to understanding atmospheric rivers. These storms can lash around like an uncontrolled fire hose, and the mechanisms responsible for that behavior have been poorly understood.

Read the whole story

Vail Resorts ends Park City trademark quest

By Daphne Chen, Deseret News

PARK CITY — Vail Resorts announced Saturday that it is dropping its controversial application to trademark the name "Park City."

Bill Rock, Park City Mountain Resort's chief operating officer, said the dispute had "clearly become a distraction that is pulling our collective focus away from the important work that lies ahead for our city on critical issues, such as affordable housing, parking and transit among others.

"As such, we have decided to withdraw our trademark application in an effort to move beyond this concern," Rock said in a prepared statement.

The resort's effort to legally claim the name was met with backlash from the ski town, with government leaders and residents expressing concerns that the resort could use the trademark to force local businesses to change their names.

Read the whole story

Defendant wants $1M in attorneys' fees from SLT

By Kathryn Reed

Both sides in a lawsuit involving the city of South Lake Tahoe

and Tahoe Pines Lodge say they won. Now they each want the other to pay their respective attorneys' fees.

The property owner's attorneys are seeking more than $1 million, citing evidence why the city should essentially be punished for how it handled the case.

"The court should award attorney fees to HF Lenders II, in care of Mr. Cobrae, in the amount of $6,159.87, and to Mr. Cobrae on his own account in the amount of $949,085.28. This substantial attorney fee is merited under the standards articulated, and is in the interest of justice to full incentive attorneys to litigate against the city in future attempts to illegally seize entitlements from other property owners," court documents read.

Darren Cobrae bought the property in December 2014. Between then and when the city filed the lawsuit in February 2015, 41 administrative citations were issued. The city wanted Cobrae to cleanup and fix things, some of which were the result of fire damage, but there was also water damage, mildew, illegal construction, improper doors and some rooms without deadbolts.



Tahoe Pines Lodge has had issues with upkeep and problem guests for years. Photo/LTN

The city had issued a notification of substandard house to Sue

Pebley, the prior owner, because she had run the place into the ground. It was Cobrae's intent to fix the place up – and it has been.

"Since we filed the lawsuit all those items were corrected," City Attorney Tom Watson told *Lake Tahoe News*. "Code enforcement is to apply the laws consistently on all of our properties for the protection of the people who live there."

This property is more for long-term guests instead of tourists.

The city contends it took filing the lawsuit and the attempt to get it into a receivership for the health and safety issues to be fixed.

Cyrus Sanai, lead attorney for Cobrae, told *Lake Tahoe News*, "This is a pretty extraordinary case of abuse of power by the city against a small business man."

Deputy City Attorney Nira Doherty in her opening statements earlier this year before El Dorado County Superior Court Judge Warren Stracener said the evidence a receiver should take over "comes in the declarations of the code enforcement supervisor and building official who stated that no repairs have been made to the property up until the time of the filing of the motion and petition. … The history of this property shows that there has been no attempt to correct any violations of this property until the receivership was filed."

Sanai believes the city did all it could to take over the property, citing how the building inspector was not allowed at one point to go to the hotel.

An email that is part of the court record from building inspector Dave Walker to Cobrae says, "You asked if I could come by and inspect your property at 966 Modesto next week but I have been instructed by legal that request cannot be accommodated."

In his deposition, Walker said it is unusual for anyone in the City Attorney's Office to tell him not to inspect a property.

Eventually, the city dropped the case – saying all the infractions had been corrected. Dropping the suit is why Sanai believes his client won.

"We were willing to let this go because our position was we got what we wanted," Watson said. That is why the city believes it won.

The case allows the winner to seek attorneys' fees. Sanai filed for them first. The enhanced amount is because of the alleged egregious nature of the suit to begin with. Once those documents were filed the city countered, saying it had won and therefore owed $70,000 for its time involved.

A July 28 court date is scheduled before Stracener to decide the attorneys' fees matter.

Calif. may revamp school performance grades

By Joy Resmovits, Los Angeles Times

For the last 15 years, a number between 200 and 1,000 told parents in California how good their child's school was.

Up next: They might have to decipher performance through a series of colored boxes.

California is in the process of redefining its system for rating public schools, in a way that is both transparent for parents and more precise than just using test scores. The

changes come after the number system, called the Academic Performance Index, was suspendedand as the state tries to satisfy the Every Student Succeeds Act, the federal government's replacement of No Child Left Behind.

The latest proposal, presented Wednesday at a meeting of the State Board of Education in Sacramento, is "the California Model," a display of 17 colored boxes that summarizes how a school is doing in such categories as math or career readiness, both in terms of current status and progress over time.

Read the whole story

Researchers on brink of stopping tree-eating beetles

By Abby Hobbs, Deseret News

SALT LAKE CITY — Emerald ash borers are infesting states across the country, and they're on their way to Utah, officials said.

But researchers at BYU study may have found a way to eliminate the problematic pests.

The emerald ash borer was originally discovered in Michigan in 2002 and since has killed more than 50 million ash trees. Since entering Colorado in 2013, threats for the beetles moving to Utah have increased.

BYU researchers looked at beetle visual systems and found that the emerald ash borer and its relatives are unique in that they can detect blue light. The researchers say the findings

could help insect prevention specialists find solutions to slowing the spread of emerald ash borers and even eliminating them altogether.

Read the whole story

Proven leader takes reins of Kirkwood

By Susan Wood

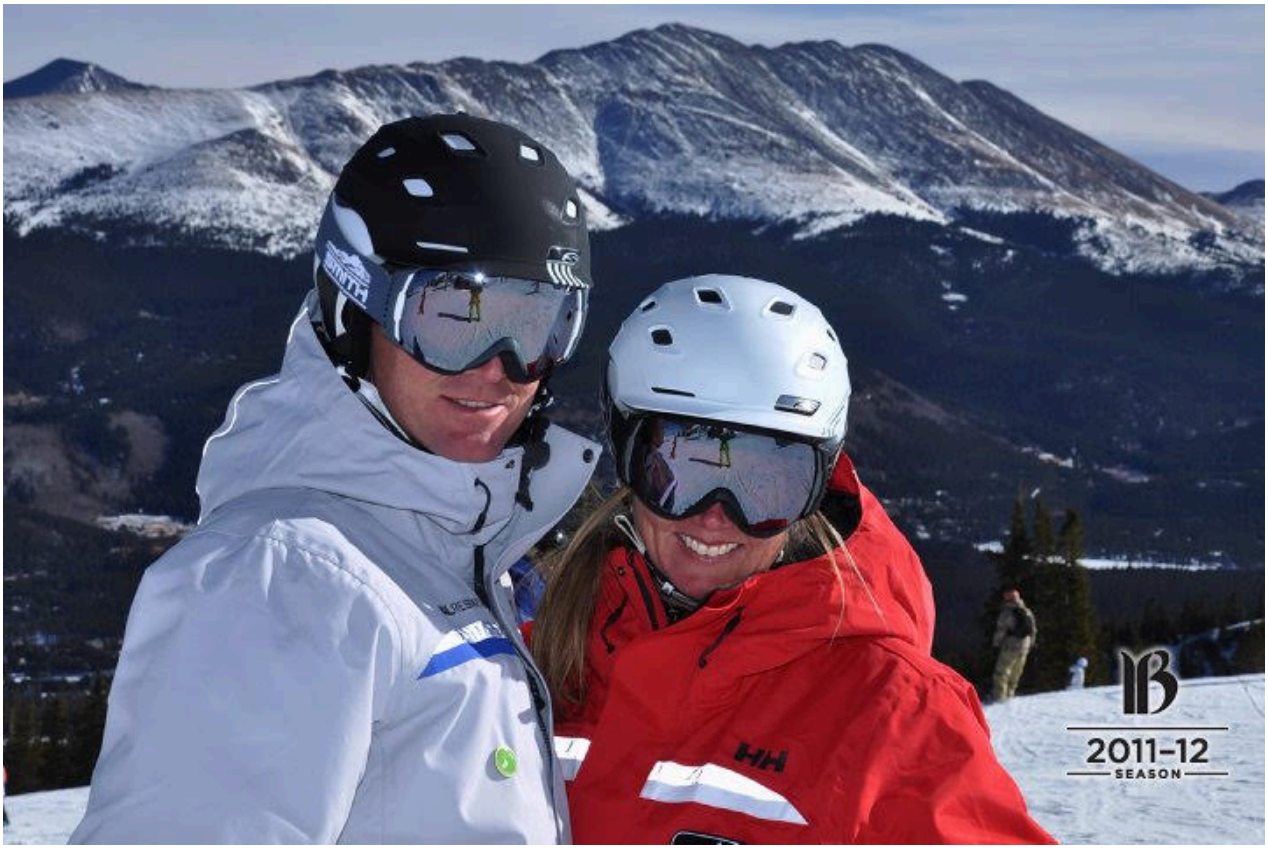
A ski area executive with deep roots in the industry was groomed by Vail to take the helm of the resort known for deep snow.

Doug Pierini returned to the Lake Tahoe region, coming on board Kirkwood Mountain Resort as vice president and general manager this summer. At 46, the former vice president of skier services at Breckenridge Mountain Resort in Colorado has a long history with ski resorts. Both resorts fall under the Vail Resorts' umbrella.

His parents were part-time ski instructors in upstate New York. Skiing the Catskills was a part of everyday life for Pierini (which means knowing how to ski on ice). He raced as a youngster, and after graduating from Rutgers University in New Jersey with a degree in economics, he headed west in search of the perfect turn.

He started in Jackson Hole, Wyo., where for a decade he worked in ski school and management. From there, he's worked stints at Alpine Meadows and Sierra-at-Tahoe, locally. Globally, he's also manned posts in the famed Portillo area of Chile, in

addition to Mt. Buller in Australia. He’s had jobs at Steamboat Mountain Resort in Colorado and Plattekill Mountain in New York.



Doug and Leigh Ann Pierini make skiing a priority for their family. Photo/Provided

In between assignments, Pierini served on the Professional Ski Instructor Association national team, where he developed ski technique and training programs. This means training the trainers. He also maintained the high honor of taking a slot on the National Alpine Team for the United States.

But it was his time at Breck that really showed off his skills in management as vice president of skier services.

One could call Pierini an expert at teaching wannabes the finer skills of skiing. He started instructing in the 1980s. About the only people whom he wouldn’t recommend teaching are his own children, and the same advice holds true for other parents.

Still, when asked where his favorite place to ski of all is, he replied: “With my kids, anywhere they want to be.” Pierini has a 9-year-old son and 10-year-old daughter.

Truly a family man, Pierini is all about nurturing the individual nature and spirit of a person.

The Volkl ski purist (he has owned five pairs) plans to do the same at Kirkwood, which for years has developed a reputation as a lone wolf in the Tahoe-area ski resorts. He said he’s quite familiar with Kirkwood’s unique character and plans to maintain it.

Pierini replaces Casey Blann, who has worked at Kirkwood, Heavenly and Sierra-at-Tahoe.

“Casey’s an amazing guy with a good reputation. I feel honored to follow someone like that,” Pierini told *Lake Tahoe News.*

As for Kirkwood’s pending master plan, he agrees it “needs to be reviewed” but stopped short of implying Kirkwood needs a lot of change.

He wants to tap into Kirkwood stakeholders, community members and employees to get new ideas on how to proceed with the ski resort split between Alpine and Amador counties off Highway 88.

“Right now, we’re going to move forward with what we have,” Pierini said. “There’s nothing glaring Kirkwood needs for now.”

Some have long claimed the resort needs more high-speed chairlifts like Cornice, especially on the backside, but all will come with time. For now, Pierini sits in a pure get-to-know status and has met with numerous people since arriving.

And even his wife, a retired trainer from Keystone ski resort in Colorado, would like to get involved with the community. The family is also big on going out on the sailboat for a

different kind of cruiser run.

Being family oriented carries over into his management style – in an egalitarian way.

“As a manager, I’m very team oriented. I place a lot of importance on having a strong team. It’s not all about me. I give a high standard on the brand and don’t like to settle for something mediocre,” he said of his expectations. “At the same time, I like to empower my team.”

The embracing of the team environment made him a good fit for Vail.

Pierini joined the Broomfield, Colo.-based ski industry giant team in October 2010 and hasn’t looked back.

“I like how responsible they are as a company. There’s so much they do for the environment,” Pierini said, further insisting the principles are part of the company mantra. “And it’s a leader in the industry with a ton of talent.”

Some would argue that Pierini represents that claim.

“He’s been in a key leadership role. Breckenridge is one of the most visited ski resorts in the country, so certainly he has a grasp of the business,” Vail Resorts Senior Advisor Blaise Carrig told *Lake Tahoe News.*

Carrig, who managed Heavenly Mountain Resort before moving up the Vail corporate management ladder until he fully retires in October 2017, is familiar with Pierini’s work. He pointed out his excellent attention to service and operational skills as traits that made Pierini stand out for Vail’s upper management.

“He’ll be great for staff and the community of Kirkwood,” Carrig said.

And the ski instructor known for his detailed training

regimens was trained intensively himself.

Carrig cited how in 2010 Vail owned five resorts. Six years later, that number has more than doubled. The math adds up to the need for more chief operating officers.

And like most things Vail, there's no stone unturned in terms of putting a tried-and-true structure in place to get the best leaders for the jobs.

Pierini went through Vail's internal leadership program and embraced its VRV – Vail Resorts Vision. There are three steps named for scaling a mountain: Camps I, II and III.

"It's a purposeful program. We're very focused on successes – performance management successes with leadership development programs and peer reviews. Then we identify people we think have talent, have performed well and have the ability to take over more duties in the company," Carrig said. "For Kirkwood, Doug rose to the top."

Carrig wasn't alone in his observations.

"Doug brings an impressive diversity of experience to his new role and leadership style that I'm confident will be a great fit at Kirkwood," said Pete Sontag, chief operating officer at Heavenly and regional manager for Vail's three Tahoe area resorts.

Revenue loss impacts water conservation rules

By Ryan Sabalow, Sacramento Bee

It wasn’t just generous spring rains filling north-state reservoirs that had California’s urban water districts pushing back so hard against mandatory water cuts this year.

As water use plummeted because of the statewide conservation orders implemented last summer, many water agencies found themselves struggling to cover operating costs. Less water use has meant lower monthly utility bills, and for most utilities, there has been no correlating decline in basic operating costs, such as payroll, debt obligations and maintenance of pipes and treatment plants.

Water board chair Felicia Marcus acknowledged the revenue issue played a role in the decision to relax the state’s regulations, but said it was not the primary factor.

Read the whole story

JoJo Conroy – 1950-2016



JoJo Conroy

Longtime South Lake Tahoe resident Johanna “JoJo” Conroy died July 9, 2016, after a 3½-year battle with brain cancer. She was 65.

She was born July 24, 1950, and grew up in Alhambra as the youngest of four children.

The summer before her senior year of high school JoJo lived in Tahoe with her sister and brother-in-law. This was the start of a love affair with the area. That following school year is when her love for her future husband, Jay, began to blossom.

The couple moved to South Lake Tahoe in 1973.

For most of the 40-plus years JoJo lived in Tahoe she was involved in helping youth.

When her children were in school she volunteered in their classroom, including being president of the parents club.

In 2007, she joined the board of Tahoe Arts Project. She was also a board member of the South Lake Tahoe Family Resource Center. She spent countless Mondays as a volunteer at Bread & Broth. She taught baptism classes at St. Theresa Catholic Church, and volunteered for the Outreach Program at Our Lady of Tahoe.

JoJo worked in the summers as a banquet waitress at Edgewood Tahoe Golf Course and in the winter managed Rainbow Mountain Ski & Snowboard.

When she wasn’t busy helping others JoJo could be found in her garden, which she tended to until her final days.

She was also a devout San Francisco Giants fan, often going to games in person.

She loved the outdoors and was an avid hiker, biker, skier, and tennis player. JoJo was a member of Zephyr Cove Tennis Club’s 3.5 team that won the national championship in 2010.

She is survived by her husband Jay; daughter Casey (Bobby); son Kyle; sisters Francie and Mary; and brother Robbie.

Services will be July 27 at 10am at St. Theresa Catholic Church, 1041 Lyons Ave., South Lake Tahoe.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to Tahoe Arts Project (PO Box 14281, South Lake Tahoe, CA 96151) or to the Family Resource Center (3501-B Spruce, Ave., South Lake Tahoe, CA 96150).

Tahoe celeb golf tourney not just about the guys

By Susan Wood

The American Century Championship at Edgewood Tahoe Golf Course could be called a quasi battle of the sexes this year.

That’s because the women golfers are coming out in full force this year when the premier golf tournament is in play July 19-24.

Three big guns in the world of golf will be on hand to compete.

Heather LeMaster, the 2013 Women’s World Long Drive champion, will make her first appearance in a big way by trying to establish a Guinness Book of World Records mark for the longest drive by a woman at an elevation above 6,200 feet.

Blair O’Neal, a former member of the LPGA Symetra Tour and Golf Channel television host, is also taking a shot at the record in her inaugural run.



Lisa Cornwell is returning to the ACC tournament next week. Photo Copyright 2016 Carolyn E. Wright

Lisa Cornwell, who hosts “Golf Central” on Golf Channel, played collegiate golf and hopes to improve in her third attendance at the championship.

It’s one thing to have the U.S. Women’s Open, the premier event for female golfers, return to Northern California after last being held in 1982 in Sacramento and now for the first time in the Bay Area at CordeValle Golf Club in Santa Clara. But it’s quite another to have such a showing for women in a

typically male-sanctioned event as the American Century Championship.

Having such high-profile female competitors following in the footsteps of soccer great Brandi Chastain in addition to Tahoe local and former pro golfer Annika Sorenstam is gaining notice from tournament stakeholders. U.S. women’s soccer team Olympic star Abby Wambach will be the latest soccer phenom to try her hand at driving a ball instead of kicking it.



The American Century Championship celebrity golf tournament will attempt to establish a Women’s Long Drive at Elevation record as part of a competition involving champion long ball artists Heather LeMaster and Blair O’Neal. The competition

will take place July 19 at Edgewood Tahoe Golf Course in advance of the 27th annual American Century Championship. LeMaster's winning drive in the World Long Drive competition in 2013 at Mesquite was 306 yards. The tournament has consulted with the Guinness Book of World Records and there is no category for long drives at an elevation above 6,000 feet. Therefore, the longest drive of the competition will be submitted for consideration to the Guinness Book of World Records in London, with evidence of authenticity.

"The great thing about the American Century Championship is that the field is diverse in many ways and creates interesting dynamics. With a record number of women playing this year, it's surely one of the more diverse player lists we've seen

and will prove to be a source of competitive fun for both players and spectators," Lake Tahoe Visitors Authority Executive Director Carol Chaplin told *Lake Tahoe News.*

That's what Gary Quinn, NBC Sports' vice president of Programming and Owned Properties, is counting on. Quinn has said the network has tried for years to "get as many female celebrities as it can," but the quest has been "a bit challenging."

Persistence pays off. The golf tournament has traditionally tuned in a viewership profile made up of about 65 percent men and 35 percent women. These percentages could change with this year's dynamic.

"It could be one of the most entertaining golf events," Quinn told *Lake Tahoe News.*

When asked how the men who don't play, say up to par, will handle getting beaten by women who play professionally or competitively, Quinn projected the egos should be in check.

"If these guys come out and participate to play in front of 40,000 fans, they've got enough confidence in themselves," he explained.

Ninety competitors in the tournament's 27th year are celebrities in their own professional sport – football, baseball, basketball, hockey or are stars in the world of entertainment.

This year's gender profile just might make the event more exciting to watch – especially when there's a record to beat.

"It'll be interesting to see how far Heather (LeMaster) hits the ball," Quinn said.

With the higher the elevation and thinner the air, the more the ball travels.

“Believe it or not, if my calculations are correct, I can expect to hit a golf ball over 380 yards, possibly over 400 yards. This will not only be my personal best, but so much fun. I’ve always wanted to show the world that girls can go far too. I like to call it #ladylong,” LeMaster told *Lake Tahoe News.*

Beyond being a nine-time world equestrian champion and African safari enthusiast, LeMaster’s golf game is in her blood. Her grandmother played golf with Mildred Ella “Babe” Didrikson Zaharias.



Brandi Chastain in 2015 played with the fans on the 17th hole. This year it will be fellow Olympian Abby Wambach’s turn to

trade a soccer ball for a golf ball. Photo Copyright 2016 Carolyn E. Wright

Aside from the bloodlines, LeMaster will carry a distinct strategy to compete against the men at Edgewood.

“Although long off the tee, I make sure I still have a full shot into the green. This course won’t be playing very long, so I feel that our wedge shots could be landing closer because we can use the full swing, as opposed to (having) to try and finesse the swing to produce the correct distance,” LeMaster told *LTN.*

The pro golfer quickly lightened up though with a quip implying perhaps the women’s advantage lies in “when we walk up onto the tee box our natural beauty and sweetness might distract (the men.)”

Cornwell added to the tongue-in-cheek responses on the subject of women’s golf game advantages by declaring confidence is her competitive edge.

“I am confident that I can beat Charles Barkley and Larry the Cable Guy,” she said of the basketball star and comedian. They are notoriously the cellar dwellers.

The sports stars have varying talents beyond golf, as in the case of Cornwell, who told *LTN* she also sings and plays guitar – but only around people she knows.

She’d like to add getting on a boat on the lake and ziplining in the forest as outdoor activities to take in while visiting Tahoe this month.

“I always say (the championship is) my favorite week of the year for so many reasons,” Cornwell added.

Fun and friendly competition aside, the women golfers added to the list this year expressed the event is also about advancing

the golf world for more female competitors.

“In many ways, golf is still a man’s world, but thankfully, it’s getting better. Augusta (Georgia) now has female members. The LPGA tour is in a very good place. Hopefully, the ladies out on tour will continue to get more and more exposure because they are so incredibly talented,” Cornwell said, adding: “I always tell the men that if they want to get better by watching, watch the ladies. They get more out of their swings than the guys because their tempo is so good.”

Ditto from O’Neal.

“Amateurs often tell me that they learn more from watching professional female golfers than they do from the men. They like watching the smooth tempos,” said O’Neal, who also can claim modeling to her list of talents.

The television host admits it’s a tough balancing act between her public image and golf game, but insists she’s been “fortunate to blend” them.

Hospital to bring addiction recovery, psychiatric care to N. Nev.

By Mike Higdon, Reno Gazette-Journal

The first new behavioral health hospital in almost 30 years will open next year.

Reno Behavioral Healthcare Hospital broke ground near Target in the Meadowood area of Reno. The 80,000 square-foot mental

health hospital and addiction rehabilitation center will operate 120 inpatient beds and outpatient services for children, teens, adults and seniors in Northern Nevada and the California border communities. CEO Steve Shell anticipates it will open late spring 2017.

“There is a shortage of services in general, particular residential services, for substance abuse,” said Cody Phinney, administrator at the Nevada Department of Health and Human Services in the Division of Public and Behavioral Health. “So to have those facilities, and West Hills also has that, is immensely helpful because there’s not enough capacity even if someone can pay out of pocket.”

Read the whole story