Low Sierra snow seen as piece of alarming climate picture

By Kurtis Alexander, San Francisco Chronicle

A fifth year of disappointing snow in the Sierra is part of a much larger predicament of record-low snow across the Northern Hemisphere, a setback that scientists identified Wednesday as another reminder of the alarming pace of human-caused global warming.

A panel of climate experts organized by SEARCH, or the Study of Environmental Arctic Change, met in Washington, D.C., to draw attention to the historic melt-off of snow and ice during the first six months of 2016 – and the resulting problems.

“We lost the snow earlier than anytime on record, and it wasn’t just in one part of the snow-covered universe,” said Dave Robinson, New Jersey state climatologist at Rutgers University, noting that as much as 30 percent of the land in the Northern Hemisphere is typically white. “This is the lowest spring snow extent on record.”

Read the whole story

J.T. proves how sweet of a musician he is



James Taylor on July 13 proves why he he has been a musical icon for decades. Photo/Kathryn Reed

By Susan Wood

STATELINE – It was as if Tahoe found a friend this summer with long-time Grammy award-winning singer, guitarist, songwriter James Taylor, who showered the crowd at the Harveys outdoor concert Wednesday night with his love of music.

Aside from a triple encore capped off by one overzealous fan barely crawling on stage to hug him, Taylor – who has spent more than half a century making music – chatted often July 13 with the concertgoers who he referred to as "an outstanding audience."

"Fire and Rain," "Don't Let Me Be Lonely," "Walking Man," "Mexico," "Your Smiling Face," "Sweet Baby James " – J.T., as he's often referred to, cranked out hit after hit as promised when he held up a board of the agenda on "some type of roofing material" before the 20 minute "intermission." He told the

enthusiastic attendees up clapping, yelling and dancing he didn't understand the need for the break as he simply would stand behind the curtain and wait while looking at his watch. But that might have been the one white lie of the evening.

Instead, Taylor came down from the stage to autograph items for the throng of fans who swarmed him like a bee target. Two who got lucky enough to wedge into the small crowd at the stage both told Lake Tahoe News, they were "still shaking" from the encounter.

"This is my eighth concert of his," Renee Rylander said, beaming from ear to ear. The Los Gatos resident who at 69 is one year older than Taylor got the singer to sign her album.

"I'm a huge fan. I've been with him from the beginning," Terry Richardson said, while holding up her autographed J.T. hat. The Murphys resident saw Taylor in 1969 at the Mariposa Folk Festival where Taylor performed with the likes of Joan Baez, Bob Dylan and Joanie Mitchell.

Taylor is known for his big-time collaborations, including meeting his manager Peter Asher when he moved to London in the late 1960s as Asher took a job at Beatles label Apple Records. He would later work with Paul McCartney and George Harrison of the landmark band. Harrison's classic "Something" was inspired by "Something in the Way She Moves," a sentimental ballad by Taylor, who at the time was the only non-British artist on the label.

One of the most well-known collaborations Taylor cultivated was with longtime friend Carole King, who wrote "You've Got a Friend" —- a massive hit that earned Taylor his first of five Grammies in 1972 for Best Pop Vocal Performance in the Male category. King won for Song of the Year. The "Mud Slide Slim and the Blue Horizon" album it was produced on sold 2.5 million copies.

King, who is undergoing a career resurgence of her own with a

Broadway hit “Beautiful” that chronicles her life and tenure as a songwriter, worked alongside Taylor in their early days of performing at the Troubadour nightclub in Los Angeles.

Taylor also performed the Drifters hit “Up on the Roof,” which King wrote, to a swaying, almost-entranced audience.

With “You’ve Got a Friend,” a resounding “awe” was heard from the crowd when Taylor launched the sentimental tune, which ideally fit with the nostalgic, friendly atmosphere and picture-perfect warm Lake Tahoe summer night.

“It’s beautiful here,” the multi-dimensional folk-jazz-rock-pop-blues artist said. Taylor would often close his eyes and shake his head to feel the music, as if never tiring of what might appear to be hundreds if not thousands of performances of each song.

With the help of a high-powered ensemble of singers and musicians behind him, Taylor as a gentle soul delivered a take-me-back-in-time collection of songs meant to inspire and cherish.

The North Carolina native gave a heartfelt rendition of “Carolina in My Mind,” which signified how homesick he was in England when the door was opening to a huge music career with timeless pieces through the years.

Taylor understood what the audience wanted to do – to be transported through those decades with the songs that forced them to reflect back on their own lives, and Taylor largely obliged often chatting it up with the crowd in a very personable way.

“I know you didn’t come here for any god damn new music. But the new ones just sound like the old ones,” Taylor said as the audience laughed. He pledged the new music such as the touching third encore “You and I Again” about love and aging would be performed quickly like the act of ripping away a

Band-Aid.

Taylor's music explains a lot about his life – and that of his fans.

Before launching "Country Road," he insisted that through the years it's been "nature as my church" and poked fun at his self-proclaimed "country-hippie bulls–." With a beauty backdrop of Lake Tahoe, the audience bellowed and applauded at the notion of living for the power of nature and beautiful views. He grew up in the rural part of North Carolina.

But Taylor's been around. He also performed "Angels of Fenway," providing a sentimental explanation of the story that inspired the song about the Boston Red Sox baseball team. After enduring the curse of the MLB team trading the legendary Babe Ruth, the Red Sox would undergo an 86-year drought before winning another World Series. When they came from the brink to win it in 2004, the curse was lifted. The song was written about a Boston Globe photo showing a note on a tombstone of a grandmother who never gave up hope her beloved Sox would do it again. The note read "Congratulations Grandma. We finally did it."

Incidentally, Taylor performed the "Star Spangled Banner" at Game 2 of the monumental World Series.

The melodic music of the singer-songwriter – who often just relied on his acoustic guitar to carry his tunes to the masses – is designed to soothe the savage beast of a cynical, violent, troubling world.

At one point, Taylor relied on the harmonic melody of his back up band to belt out a tribute to Martin Luther King Jr. He was also joined by an accentuating performance by back-up singer Arnold McCuller for "Shower the People."

A class act, Taylor would periodically introduce the 10 other performers backing him up and giving individual credit when

due. There was Luis Conte of Cuba, who played the bongos as if running a reggae band. Joining McCuller on vocals was Andrea Zonn – who provided beautiful accompaniments on violin – as well as Kate Markowitz coming off the success of her “Map of the World” album. Steve Gadd played drums like a “big rock” percussionist, while Walt Fowler offered up the jazzy feel with his trumpet.

Taylor also singled out bluesy saxophone player Lou Marini, who came from the original “Saturday Night Live” band. On his teal-colored electric guitar he called “pretty,” Taylor joined him and the rest of the ensemble in the high-energy nightclub-rocking tune “Steamroller Blues.”

With every turn and every tune, the audience seemed impressed with what they were witnessing.

The crowd even played a part in the second encore.

“I hope Tahoe can sing,” Taylor belted out to urge the thousands in attendance to help him take on “How Sweet It Is,” a song he performed with ex-wife singer Carly Simon.

The Harveys Outdoor Summer Concert Series continues with rock duo Sting and Peter Gabriel tonight; country great Tim McGraw on July 23; former Eagles lead man Don Henley on July 24; country singer Keith Urban on July 27 and 29; ex-Commodores lead man Lionel Ritchie on Aug. 13; rock band Steve Miller on Aug. 18; red rocker Sammy Hagar on Aug. 26; and soul-pop singer Stevie Wonder on Sept. 2.

Nev. drought ‘waned’ over past 3 months

By Mark Robison, Reno Gazette-Journal

“The big news is that drought has waned over the last three months.”

That’s the opening sentence of the quarterly report put out July 13 by the Nevada State Climate Office.

Above normal winter and spring precipitation was given as the main reason.

Read the whole story

Nev. settles with EPA over polluted Spooner Summit runoff

By Sean Whaley, Las Vegas Review-Journal

CARSON CITY – Nevada officials on Tuesday approved a $120,000 settlement with the Environmental Protection Agency over violations relating to polluted stormwater runoff from state Transportation Department-run facilities.

The consent decree, approved by the Board of Examiners, which includes Gov. Brian Sandoval, acknowledges past stormwater management violations and formalizes a plan to prevent future occurrences.

Sandoval said Nevada could have been fined millions of dollars for the violations, which involved transportation department facilities in Reno and at Spooner Summit.

Read the whole story

Hard Rock withholding cash from contractors

By Kathryn Reed

Contractors who remodeled the hotel rooms at Hard Rock Lake Tahoe are owed $1.7 million, but have been told they'll be lucky to see 50 cents on the dollar.

Now that Paragon Gaming out of Las Vegas is in control of the Stateline property, a game of wait-and-see has changed to hardball.

"We were waiting, sitting by being patient, believing that it would work itself out and we'd get paid," Chris Kersey, chief operating officer with CVC Hospitality, told *Lake Tahoe News*. His Florida-based firm was the general contractor doing the 540-room renovation. "We had to file liens and a lawsuit, and there are 20 subcontractors under us who have done the same."

CVC had a "pay when paid" contract with subs, meaning they get paid the day after CVC gets a check.

With Paragon essentially buying Neva One, the parent company of the Hard Rock, and the state Gaming Board giving them a waiver to not have to pay the debts off, the companies who did the work are left empty handed.

In the 18 months since the project has been finished, the general contractor has lost his license to do business in Nevada because he didn’t pay his subcontractors. Subs have had to foreclose on their homes and there is at least one divorce linked to the financial quagmire.

“It’s a bad situation for everyone. Some are smaller crews. They all kept working for three months to finish the job and didn’t get paid. We thought everyone was good for their word,” Kersey said.

Brothers Jon and David Park out of the Carson Valley own Neva One. They spent $60 million to renovate what was the dilapidated Horizon. They ran into trouble early on, and soon after the hotel-casino opened in January 2015 firms that did the remodel filed lawsuits and employees were leaving.

The lawsuits involving the **contractors who did the lobby and casino work** settled earlier this summer when Paragon came on board. It has not been disclosed if they were paid in full.



This bear and message are what great guests in their room at the Hard Rock. Photo/Denise Haerr

Paragon CEO Scott Menke did not return a phone call, and the

Park brothers still are not talking to *Lake Tahoe News.*

Kersey told *LTN* that two weeks ago he spoke to Paragon officials who said they could accept between 50 and 70 cents on the dollar or go to court. Kersey wants to keep fighting as long as he can afford to.

“I told paragon to keep our money and pay the subs 100 percent,” Kersey said. “They said no, everyone is going to take a hair cut.”

While a lien on the property is one route, it doesn’t do any good until the property is sold. Odds are that won’t happen any time soon.

The $1.7 million doesn’t include interest or the nearly $40,000 in attorney fees that Kersey’s firm has racked up. Plus, CVC is contending with lawsuits filed by subs.

“David Park said the agreement with Paragon was to satisfy all the liens. That is not what they are doing,” Kersey said. “That property is just making millions on the backs of people who are not getting paid. They are completely booked.”

California’s fight over water persists

By Michael Doyle, McClatchy News Service

California Republicans are spreading out their bets in their annual effort to steer more water to the state’s farmers.

In the absence of negotiations, such tactics matter most right now.

Framed by a hearing Tuesday, the GOP-controlled House of Representatives will vote this week on whether to retain farmer-friendly California water provisions in an Interior Department funding bill for the fiscal year that begins in October. Whether this vehicle succeeds where others have failed will probably be known only after the November elections.

“We’ve got to start working together to help our farmers, and our fish,” said the canal authority’s general manager, Jeffrey P. Sutton, adding that “in this California drought, everyone has suffered.”

Read the whole story

Pew study proves LTN is the place to advertise

Alternatives for where to place advertising dollars seem to grow every day. The one constant is that those choices are digital.

Lake Tahoe News is also a constant, having been the only daily news source for the Lake Tahoe Basin since September 2009. Our readership numbers continue to grow inside and outside the basin. With readers in nearly 3,000 cities and 100 countries, it proves *Lake Tahoe News* is the news source for visitors and second homeowners – not just locals.

The Pew Research Center recently released data from two nationwide surveys that said nearly 60 percent of people

reading news do so online, while only 26 percent read print publications. Online readership keeps growing, while print keeps dropping.

It makes sense to spend your limited advertising dollars where the readers are – online.

Here are other stats from the Pew study to prove local online advertising is the way to reach current and future customers:

• 81 percent of adults get at least some of their news from websites, mobile apps or social networking services.

• 7 in 10 adults follow national and local news "somewhat or very closely."

• 72 percent of people get news via mobile devices, compared to 54 percent in 2013.

• 7 in 10 people age 18-29 prefer mobile devices for news.

It's time to stop worrying about where to advertise and advertise with *Lake Tahoe News*, Tahoe's only source for daily news. Email us at info@LakeTahoeNews.net with "Want to Advertise" in the subject line and we'll start the process of driving more customers to your business.

– Lake Tahoe News staff

EDC supes OK $60 million sheriff's facility

By Kathryn Reed

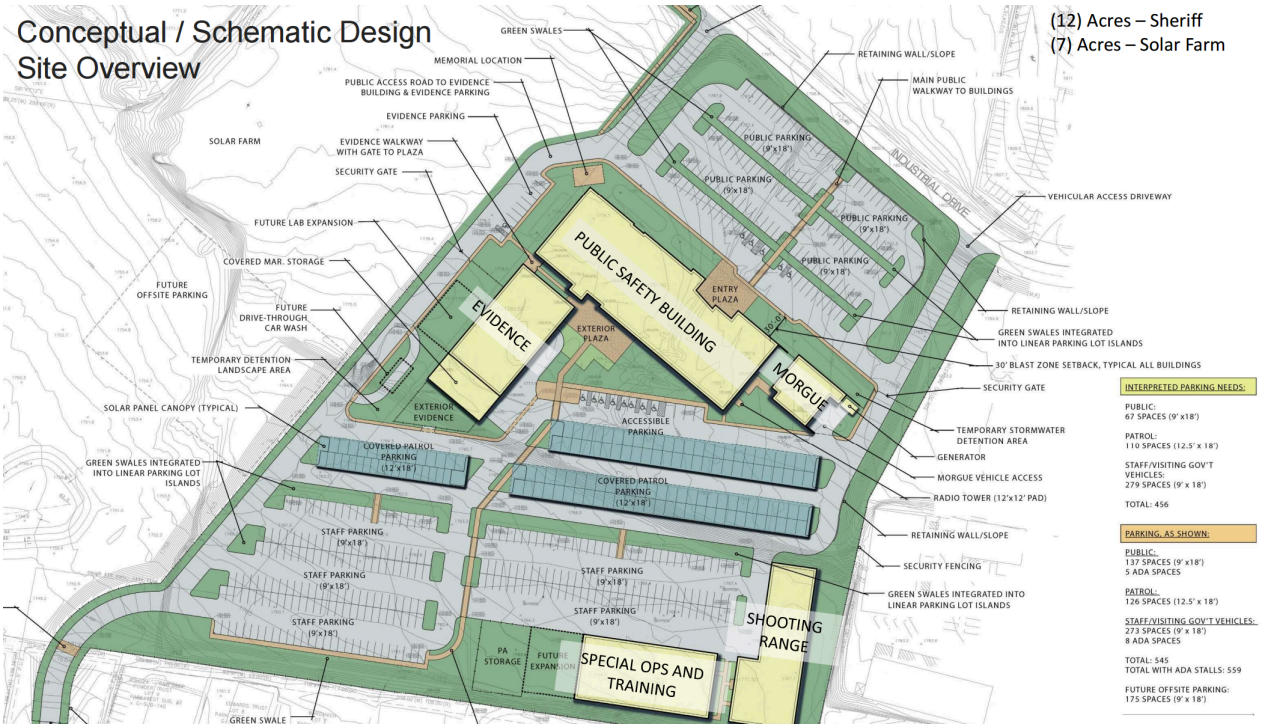
By March 2019 it's possible the El Dorado County Sheriff's

Department will be operating at one facility instead of the current 13 on the West Slope.

A multi-million dollar public safety facility has been talked about for years as the current buildings kept losing their usefulness and the cost of out-sourcing some operations continued to escalate. The Board of Supervisors at a special meeting on July 11 pulled the trigger to go forward with the project.

“This project will finally bring all the functions of the sheriff’s office to one location, enabling us to provide the best level of public safety to the people we serve and eliminate costly lease payments and create efficiencies in communication and crime solving,” Sheriff John D’Agostini told *Lake Tahoe News.*

The board was presented with multiple projects. In the end the most expensive – $60 million – was chosen. This provides the department with essentially everything it wanted.



In three years El Dorado County Sheriff’s Department’s operations should be on one campus in Placerville.

A 30.7-acre parcel off Missouri Flat and Industrial roads in Placerville had already been acquired, with the main use for the sheriff's department. Five buildings on 12 acres will be for law enforcement. Another 7 acres may become a solar farm. Development has not yet been planned for the remaining acreage.

To pay for the facility, the county is going after a loan from the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Supervisors on July 26 will be asked to approve the final application. If the 40-year loan can be locked in by Sept. 30, the interest rate will be 2.75 percent, according to Shawne Corley, assistant chief administrative officer.

A criterion to qualify for this loan is to show five years' of future balanced budgets. When former CAO Larry Combs this spring released the budget it neither had the sheriff's department project in it nor future balanced budgets.

Supervisors at the June 28 meeting gave direction to current CAO Don Ashton to re-do Combs' work. This means staff will be coming back to the electeds with ideas for how to fund the annual $2.6 million loan payments for the public safety facility.

"First we'll work on efficiency and not necessarily just cut things," Corley told *Lake Tahoe News.*

She said it's too soon to know what the cost containment plan will look like. The final county budget for the 2016-17 fiscal year is due in September.

The staff report from Monday's meeting said, "Regardless of which construction option is chosen, there will be a significant impact on the budget, requiring difficult service level decisions beginning this year."

Corley said with her and Ashton being new to their jobs, they are apt to see things in the budget that others might not have

– places that can be tightened or cut made without being a drastic sacrifice.

“I understand this is the biggest thing the county has ever taken on and the huge responsibility the Board of Supervisors has in regards to the overall county budget,” D’Agostini said. “This project is absolutely essential in providing the most important service to our communities and the county as a whole, that of public safety that the Board of Supervisors placed in the county’s strategic plan as the top priority. This project will never cost less than it does today. Not tomorrow, next week, next month or next year.”

The new operation will allow the county to conduct forensic autopsies on site instead of going to Sacramento. The gun range will also be part of the new campus. A training facility will also be incorporated. In all, 99,000-square-feet of space will be developed.

“The sheriff has need for extensive storage,” Russ Fackrell, county facilities manager, told *Lake Tahoe News.* “They have to keep evidence sometimes for more than 50 years. If the convicted person is in jail for life, they have to maintain that evidence for the whole time they are incarcerated.”

Land will also be used to store vehicles – from patrol cars, to boats, to command centers.

The main building being used today is slated to be demolished. In its place will be a juvenile detention center. The board has approved the project that comes with a price tag of nearly $12 million. Most of that – $9.6 million – will come from a state grant.

Many of the other facilities are leased, so that will be a savings.

Office space in the government complex now used by law enforcement will be taken over by other county entities.

These new buildings are expected to last 50 or more years.

Calif. property tax revenues to increase by $3B

By Dan Walters, Sacramento Bee

A strong surge in real estate transactions, new commercial and residential construction and rising housing prices should generate a $3-plus billion increase in property tax revenues for schools and local governments during the current fiscal year.

Local property tax assessors closed their books on June 30 and are reporting valuation gains ranging as high as 9 percent in San Francisco, which has the state's hottest property market.

Just one major county, Kern, has reported a loss of taxable property values and it's unique in that a major portion of its taxable property is underground, in the form of oil and has reserves.

Read the whole story

Brown looks to extend

climate-change programs

By Ellen Knickmeyer and Juliet Williams, AP

SACRAMENTO — Gov. Jerry Brown has launched a campaign to extend some of the most ambitious climate-change programs in the country and ensure his environmental legacy when he leaves office in two years.

The centerpiece of the push is a cap-and-trade program that aims to reduce the use of fossil fuels by forcing manufacturers and other companies to meet tougher emissions limits or pay up to exceed them. The program has been one of the most-watched efforts in the world aimed at the climate-changing fuels.

The four-year-old program, however, is only authorized to operate until 2020 and faces a litany of challenges, including a lawsuit questioning its legality, poor sales of credits, and lukewarm support among Democratic legislators to extend it.

On Tuesday, the California Air Resources Board will release a proposed blueprint for continuing the cap-and-trade program until 2030, with a vote expected next year.

Supporters credit the strategy — born under previous Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger, a Republican, and stemming from other climate change programs initiated under Brown — with helping to cut California's overall output of emissions by 1.5 percent in its first two years, despite the massive energy demands of the state's thriving economy.

With Brown set to leave office in 2018, a state appeals court is considering a challenge from the California Chamber of Commerce contending the pollution-credit program is an illegal tax, not a fee.

Environmental groups say the lawsuit and overall uncertainty

about the survival of the program are undermining the market for pollution credits. A May auction saw companies buy only one-tenth of the available credits, leaving the state billions of dollars short in projected revenue from the sales.

Meanwhile, groups representing oil interests confirmed last week that they are in direct talks with the Brown administration over cap-and-trade.

California oil companies have long sought to alter or repeal the state's low-carbon fuel standard. By 2020, those companies would be required to reduce the carbon content of gasoline and other fuels by 10 percent, a significant jump from the current 2 percent.

Any deal-making on climate change would reflect a pragmatic approach to the oil industry by Brown, who took office encouraging immediate boosts in oil and gas drilling to spur California's economy, even as he promoted incentives that would reduce long-term reliance on fossil fuels.

"What you're seeing now is an all-hands-on-deck effort to formulate the most responsible way forward." said Derek Walker, an associate vice president of the Environmental Defense Fund. "They're talking to the oil industry, talking to environmental groups, to organized labor – they're talking to everybody."

Brown has leveraged his position as governor to help draw attention to the battle against climate change. He has set non-binding mandates for increased use of solar, wind and other renewable energy sources in California in the decades to come while signing accords and global support statements aimed at easing climate change.

At home, though, Brown has encountered trouble from moderate Democrats in the state Assembly who last year blocked his plan to slash statewide petroleum use in half within 15 years.

The same lawmakers refused to endorse legislation by Sen. Fran Pavley, D-Agoura Hills, seeking to dramatically cut greenhouse gas emissions through 2050. Pavley was forced to scale back her proposal that now would extend only to 2030. She has since compromised even further, agreeing last month to merge parts of her plan with legislation mandating that revenues from such programs be spent in low-income communities affected by pollution.

Winning legislative support could be key for Brown in ensuring the survival of the cap-and-trade program, said Jessica Levinson, a political science professor at Loyola Law School.

“His ability to solidify cap and trade is a big part of being able to say to other governors, to other countries, ‘We’re doing something big and specific and real and it works,“’ Levinson said.

Should the program succumb to legal challenges, market weakness or legislative ambivalence: “Jerry Brown’s fingerprints will be on whatever we ultimately decide to do,” Levinson said.