

Hard Rock pool closed; leaking 20,000 gals. per day

By Kathryn Reed

Lake Tahoe Hard Rock's pool has been losing 20,000 gallons a day for about a month, but it wasn't until Thursday that hotel-casino authorities notified officials.

"They noticed an increase use in water in the pool in the last 30 days. They concluded it must be a leak," JoAnn Kittrell with the Nevada Division of Environmental Protection told *Lake Tahoe News*.

Officials from her agency were at the property July 24 to begin an investigation that first started with mandating the pool be closed until the problem is resolved. Hotel guests are without a pool-spa for an indefinite period. Chaise lounges and cabanas, though, were still on the deck.



Lake Tahoe Hard Rock's pool is closed until the source of the water is fixed.
Photo/LTN

Kittrell said it is too soon to know if the ground water and

soil have been contaminated with chlorinated water to the point that remediation needs to be done. Whether the owners face a fine will be determined down the road.

The pool holds 200,000 gallons.

Edgewood Water Company supplies the water to Hard Rock. No one from there returned a call.

“They are going to dechlorinate and remove the water safely and legally,” Kittrell said of the next steps.

There was no evidence Friday night that this had begun. The pool was full as was the hot tub. Both have ropes around them and signs saying they are closed.

“They aren’t sure it is actually a leak, that is what they are investigating,” Jen Eastwood, spokeswoman for the Hard Rock, told *Lake Tahoe News*.

The front desk is telling callers there is a chemical imbalance in the pool.

“The pool itself is fine. They believe the issue is with the recycled pumping system – the plumbing that recycles the water that keeps it flowing,” Kittrell said. “They have sonar as a way to figure out where the leak is. They hope to do a minimal amount of excavation to reach it. The important thing is to stop any continued leaking into the soil there.”

When the Hard Rock opened in January summer pool parties were one of the things that were touted to set it apart from other Stateline casinos. The pool was installed when the hotel was first developed in the 1960s when it was known as Sahara Tahoe.

Experts growing optimistic about El Niño

By Haley Branson-Potts and Rong-gong Lin II, Los Angeles Times

It's the middle of the summer, but it felt a bit like winter in the Sierra this week as a storm dumped 4 inches of hail on Interstate 80 around Donner Summit.

There was so much pea-sized ice that the California Highway Patrol on Tuesday halted traffic and called out snowplows – known as the “Sierra Snowfighters” – for help.

“It looked just like snow, a blanket of snow across all the lanes,” said Caltrans snowplower John Wheeler. “It was really weird.”

The hail storm was just the latest strange weather to hit the Sierra Nevada, influenced by the weather-changing phenomenon El Niño. For months, climate scientists have said El Niño is likely to bring more rain to Southern California this winter.

But here's the big question in a state enduring four years of severe drought: How far north will El Niño's influence roam?

The El Niño hitting the mountains of the north is critical because California's vast waterworks rely on rain and snow from the Sierra to supply farms and cities. By contrast, much of the rain that falls in Southern California ends up in the ocean.

Read the whole story

Calif. Supreme Court won't budge on water rates

By Dale Kasler, Sacramento Bee

In a setback to California water regulators' conservation efforts, the state Supreme Court has kept intact a ruling that makes it harder for municipalities to impose tiered pricing to discourage heavy water use.

The state's high court upheld a closely watched ruling involving the Orange County city of San Juan Capistrano, rejecting pleas from California water regulators. Gov. Jerry Brown, who has ordered a 25 percent cutback in urban water use, had said the ruling represents a potential "straitjacket" for regulators.

In April, the 4th District Court of Appeal struck down a water-pricing system used by San Juan Capistrano that charged customers considerably more per-gallon for heavier water use. The court said the structure violated Proposition 218, a 1996 statewide ballot measure that said municipalities can't charge fees that exceed the cost of providing a service.

Read the whole story

Fans embrace Chesney's brand

of country



Kenny Chesney had people on their feet all night July 22. Photo/Taylor Flynn/Tahoe Mountain News

By Susan Wood

STATELINE – Country music great Kenny Chesney rocked a packed house of American kids, their parents and other beach-loving party music enthusiasts Wednesday night at Harveys casino for its outdoor summer concert series.

Along the way, Chesney enlisted some high-profile help on stage. He was joined by red rocker Sammy Hagar and singer Uncle Kracker near the end of the show, keeping an engaged audience on their feet and screaming.

Chesney, who has also played the Lake Tahoe arena in 2009 and acts like he has fun doing so, provided quite a show with signature hits from his 15 albums. The Country Music

Association's Entertainer of the Year for four years transported concert-goers to a beach scene with videos of pearly white sand, tanned bodies and libations like Corona, the Big Revival Tour sponsor, along with other concoctions. While the Americana band Train that played the night before has its own wine and Hagar touts his signature tequila, Chesney promotes his own rum – Blue Chair Bay.

Opening with the song "Reality," the veteran country artist took most in attendance away from that. He played and sang hit after hit after hit as the beach balls flew in the audience and the bras flew on stage. The singer-guitarist added three to his collection on display attached to a pole in front of drummer Sean Paddock.

"Impressive," Chesney quipped at the size of one of them.



Kenney Chesney creates a party atmosphere at Harveys. Photo/Taylor Flynn/Tahoe Mountain News

Chesney, who spent most of the concert smiling and complimenting the Tahoe crowd, was there to impress the "No Shoes Nation," a following that has made the term beach bum upscale and fashionable.

"I like the nature of his songs. It's island music, so it's laid back with no shoes," said Steve Mussell of Sparks, who wore a Chesney concert shirt from the 2009 tour in which he saw the artist at Harveys.

Mussell wasn't alone in his sentiment.

During his second number, "Beer in Mexico," someone up front thrust a sign high that read " $\frac{1}{2}$ Wild Child, $\frac{1}{2}$ American Kid," named after two Chesney songs.

Chesney often acknowledged the crowd's enthusiasm.

"We are so happy and thrilled to see your faces," he bellowed. "We're here for one simple reason – because you guys are here."

Upon wrapping up "Til It's Gone," a woman yelled: "How about that?"

Then, he launched into yet another hit "Summertime," while occasionally pushing out his tongue from those pearly white teeth.

Most in the audience joined him in song.



Sammy Hagar and Kenny Chesney turn the

show into pure rock for a few songs.

Photo/Taylor Flynn/Tahoe Mountain News

"You sound amazing," he said. Then, he slowed the hard-driving rock performance a tad for his sultry, sexy mega hit "Somewhere With You."

With one bra flying on stage at that time, Chesney laughed and admitted to forgetting the lyrics.

It all soon returned though as Chesney cranked out the nostalgic "I Go Back" off his first album. The lights came up and everybody sang. The band got the love and fed off of it.

He labeled his next song, the blockbuster tune, "You and Tequila," as one of his favorites and geared it for those who feel addicted to someone.

Chesney and his six-member band – Clayton Mitchell, Kenny Greenberg and John Conley on guitars, Paddock, Wyatt Beard on keyboards and bassist Harmoni Kelley, who took the lead on "Whole Lotta Rosie." This is not your grandmother's country. The rock song rivaed anything Robert Plant pumped out with Led Zeppelin.

And all this was even before Hagar joined the stage. Right before, concert-goers got in the mood dancing through the jumpy new hit "American Kids."

"Any night that I can make music with this guy is a good night," Chesney said. And on came Hagar to the stage with drinks for the duo.

"You'll like these. I call them Sammy's red, white and blue," he said, further admitting to having four or five to make sure "they were all right." He was so relaxed, Hagar kicked off his shoes on stage.

From there, Hagar had the audience roaring with old rock hits

"I'll Fall in Love Again," "Finish What Ya Started," from Van Halen fame and his hard-driving "I Can't Drive 55." The latter represented a perfect song for Tahoe's summer tourism traffic on U.S. Highway 50 from Nevada to the Y. He even changed the lyrics to be more Tahoe specific.

When Chesney and Hagar weren't singing and drinking, they hugged, showing their closeness.

Chesney even told the audience how he rode a horse on the beach to Hagar's beach house in Cabo San Lucas. The woman with Chesney told him: "That man has Sammy Hagar hair," Chesney recalled.

"He thought I was some tourist," Chesney said, laughing.

The male bonding didn't end there.

"You never know who's going to share the stage," Chesney yelled out.

Then, singer Uncle Kracker came to the stage for duets of "Follow Me" and "Drift Away." The crowd almost drowned out the singers.

It was one big party.

"We're not done yet," Chesney said before bringing on more romance with "How Forever Feels."

His encore brought out opening act Chase Rice to the stage for "She Thinks My Tractor's Sexy."

Chesney changed the lyrics to his top song: "she thinks Chase is sexy."

Rice put on an entertaining opening act. He has a history of entertaining being a University of North Carolina linebacker and having a stint on the "Survivor" show.

But it was his boyish charm that got the attention of a woman

up front named Michelle. He brought her on stage and created a song just for her. She was wearing a “I’m gonna ride” T-shirt, so Rice tailored the lyrics to accommodate the display on her chest. Lots of flirting was going on.

“Look, empty hand,” he yelled to the crowd, while holding up her left arm.

Then, Rice – a lyricist initially – involved the whole crowd with the song he wrote: “Cruise” recorded by Florida Georgia Line. Music to the ears, the entire arena filled with singers – the ultimate compliment.

The Harveys Summer Outdoor Concert Series continues with rock singer Jackson Browne on Aug. 7, legendary superstar Elton John the next night, Dierks Bentley on Aug. 23, Sammy Hagar on Sept. 5 and Dave Matthews on Sept. 9.

Legalization of pot in Calif. would be a process

By Joe Garofoli, San Francisco Chronicle

Even if California voters legalize cannabis in 2016, it will take “many years” of patience to figure out how to tax and regulate a multibillion-dollar industry that’s forever been largely underground.

That’s the cautionary conclusion of a thorough examination of what it will take to legalize marijuana in the state, led by Lt. Gov. Gavin Newsom and a panel of academic and law enforcement experts.

“Legalization of marijuana would not be an event that happens

in one election,” they wrote in the 93-page Blue Ribbon Commission on Marijuana Policy report released Wednesday. “Rather, it would be a process that unfolds over many years requiring sustained attention to implementation. That process of legalization and regulation will be dynamic.”

The report offers 58 policy suggestions on the myriad questions raised by legalization – from how and when to tax cannabis to how to determine when users are driving under the influence.

Read the whole story

Lake Tahoe clarity improves with drought

By Kathryn Reed

Drought is proving to be a good thing for the waters of Lake Tahoe, at least when it comes to clarity.

With less sediment reaching the lake mostly because the spring runoff was dismal, lake clarity is the best it has been in a decade. The Secchi disk – which resembles a white dinner plate – could be seen by the naked eye at a depth of 77.8 feet in 2014. The 2013 reading was 70.2 feet.

Those numbers come from averaging 28 readings during the year. Last year the deepest the 10-inch disk could be seen was 93.5 feet on July 7, while the shallowest was 57.4 on Sept. 16.

The data comes from the UC Davis Tahoe Environmental Research Center’s “Tahoe: State of the Lake Report 2015” that was released today.



Scientists have discovered Lake Tahoe's clarity and blueness are not one in the same. Photo/LTN

"While these latest data are very reassuring, they should not be interpreted as victory in our joint restoration efforts," Geoff Schladow, director of TERC, said in a statement. "Complete restoration is still decades away, and some of the greatest challenges still lie ahead of us. We are enduring drier and warmer conditions than we have ever encountered, and the restoration consequences of that are still far from understood."

Climate change is a concern for scientists as they study the health of the lake and try to analyze how various factors affect the ecosystem.

At 29, the winter 2013-14 had the least number of freezing days in the last century; precipitation was 61 percent of the long-term average; snowpack was the lowest in 100 years; the annual-averaged surface temperatures were at an all-time high in 2014 at 53 degrees.

"Other consequences of climate change could also be seen in the rising temperature of the deep waters of the lake. In the last 38 years bottom temperatures have increased by over 1 degree," the report says. "Lake Tahoe did not mix to its full depth in 2014, the third consecutive year in which this has

not happened. Instead, the maximum depth of mixing was only 440 feet, reached in March. The lack of mixing was due to a third year of above average lake stability, driven by the generally warmer weather.”

New in this year’s annual document was a study about what factors make the lake blue. The conclusion is less algal concentration means a bluer Lake Tahoe.

The blue study was a collaboration between UC Davis postdoctoral researcher Shohei Watanabe and the NASA-Jet Propulsion Laboratory and Laval University. A blueness index was created using data from a NASA-JPL research buoy at the lake and hyperspectral radiometers that measure the amount of light leaving the lake at each waveband.

The conclusion was that blueness and clarity measurements went in opposite directions. In other words, when clarity improves, the blueness declines and vice versa.

“This does not mean that clarity should be dismissed,” Watanabe said in a statement. “Rather, it shows that algae concentrations and nutrient input should be managed more closely to truly keep Tahoe blue and clear.”

Evaporation is the main source of water loss. In 2014, 52 inches of water evaporated from the lake. One inch of evaporation is equal to 3.5 billion gallons of water.

It has just been in the last couple years that a concerted effort has been made to study water near the shoreline, aka the near shore. The study found that periphyton, or attached algae, on rocks decreased from 2013 to 2014.

“The two most urbanized sites, Tahoe City and Pineland, were one-half to one-sixth of their values in 2013. This decrease is not believed to be part of a long-term trend, but linked to the low water levels and the reduced nutrient input,” the report says.

TERC is creating a link between near shore water quality and measured meteorology, stream flow and storm water flow to provide a scientific basis for near shore restoration.

Notes:

- Geoff Schladow will give a presentation about the report on July 23 at 6pm at TERC (on the campus of Sierra Nevada College in Incline Village).

Adventurer wants Tahoe canoe speed record



Grant Korgan wants to set a canoe record on Lake Tahoe.
Photo/High Fives Foundation

By Benjamin Spillman, Reno Gazette-Journal

Paddling a canoe around Lake Tahoe would be quite an accomplishment for most people.

Grant Korgan isn't most people. He wants more.

The relentlessly positive Korgan wants to make the trip in fewer than 16 hours, which would be a world record.

The 38-year-old from Incline Village is making the attempt as he continues to recover from a severe spinal cord injury suffered in a snowmobile accident in 2010 that left him paralyzed from the waist down.

Read the whole story

Train delivers stellar show at Harveys



Train keeps fans on their feet for much of the July 21 concert at Harveys in Stateline. Photos/Kathryn Reed

By Kathryn Reed

STATELINE – Three dynamic men had fans on their feet for nearly four hours Tuesday night as they sang, danced and wowed

the full house at Harveys.

San Francisco's Train headlined the July 21 concert, but it was Matt Nathanson who got the crowd grooving in a way most opening acts aren't able to do. His charismatic stage presence was engaging to the point one has to wonder why he and his band were first instead of the Fray.

Nathanson showed his power as he launched into the peppy "Gold in the Summertime" under what were overcast skies left over from the afternoon thunderstorm. The clouds parted and the sun came out as if on cue.



Matt Nathanson has a captivating stage presence.

Matt Nathanson drummer Konrad Meissner was essentially playing before a home crowd since he was born and raised in Truckee.

Nathanson talked about the relationship people have to music, admitting he wouldn't have survived his childhood without it. He connected with a trio of youngsters who had no inhibitions to dancing to all of his music; at the end he gave them each a guitar pick.

The Fray, which has been around since 2002, is led by

singer/pianist Isaac Slade. But the sounds they produced were nothing compared to Matt Nathanson, nor could Slade's personality come close to Nathanson's.



Pat Monahan of Train sings his way through the aisles at Harveys.

Pat Monahan – front man for Train – proved why this San Francisco-based band is still a favorite with fans after 21 years on the music scene. So many bands just play their music, thinking that is enough. Many crank up the bass or turn the song into something that sounds nothing like the recording – to the point it's ruined or unrecognizable.

Not so with Train. The sounds were rich and the atmosphere was like they were playing a private party for the nearly 7,000 people who were dancing all night.

It was pure entertainment under the stars at Lake Tahoe as they cranked out hit after hit in a 17-set musical showcase that also included three encores. This is a band worth seeing more than once. Train was here in **July 2014**, playing for another appreciative crowd.

In between favorites like "Meet Virginia", "Calling all

Angels” and “Hey, Soul Sister” Monahan interacted with the crowd. He is definitely a showman.

He joined Nathanson and Slade’s leads by getting off the stage and singing through the crowd. The three of them sang the Beatles’ hit “With a Little Help from My Friends”.



Pat Monahan, Matt Nathanson
and Isaac Slade

From the stage Monahan eagerly took selfies with countless fans – taking the picture with their phones. He then sent pictures out on the band’s Twitter account.

Shirts – one that was even signed that night by all the band members as he was wearing it – were thrown to lucky fans.

Monahan showed his softer side just before singing “Marry Me” by giving a shout out to his wife on what was their eighth wedding anniversary. It was the only time a hush fell over the crowd.

The night started with “Just a Memory” off the band’s latest album “Bulletproof Picasso”. Singles from the 2014 “Bulletproof Picasso” have not gotten much airtime. Only “Angel in Blue Jeans” broke into the Billboard Hot 100 list. That didn’t faze fans – they knew the lyrics to most every

song.

In November, Train is expected to release its first holiday album with the working title of “Christmas in Tahoe”. Three original songs will accompany covers.

“There’s a couple of traditional covers on there, but we tried not to do the same stuff everybody else does,” Monahan told *Billboard* magazine. “Like, our favorite song on it is from The Band called ‘Christmas Must Be Tonight,’ so it’s that kind of record where it’s a vibey, make dinner around Christmas time and listen to an alternative kind of Christmas album.”

World breaks temperature record

By Stefan Nicola, BloombergBusiness

Earth warmed to a record in the first half of the year, putting new pressure on nations from the U.S. to China to try to curb climate change at a United Nations summit in Paris this December.

Global land and sea surface temperatures from January through June were 1.53 degrees Fahrenheit above the 20th century average, the highest since recordings started in 1880, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration said in a report. The previous record was in 2010.

Read the whole story

SLT revamps vacation home rental ordinance

By Kathryn Reed

After hours of talk Tuesday by South Lake Tahoe staff and electeds, plus comments from 22 members of the public, the politicians went forward with a new vacation home rental ordinance.

Prior to that, during the temporary arts and crafts show discussion, Councilman Tom Davis said it was important to enforce the rules on the books before making changes. Members of the audience smiled and said “right on”. Enforcement – or the lack of it – has been a recurring theme in the VHR debate.

Davis, though, could not be part of the VHR discussion July 21 because he is part owner of Tahoe Keys rental agency. And therefore he could not be asked to apply the same line of thinking to the VHR issue.

The ordinance becomes the law 30 days after the second reading; so, most likely in early September.

The real estate community and vacation rental agencies believe the new rules will hurt the industry. They claim people are not buying houses in the city limits because it will become more cumbersome and expensive to obtain a VHR permit. Agency reps say the turnover in the VHR market is excessive and with the process more onerous it will send business across the state line or into the county, or even to the North Shore.

Agencies collect more than \$20 million a year in revenue in the city limits off vacation home rentals.

The trickle down effect on ancillary businesses like house cleaning and home repairs could also be affected, according to opponents of the ordinance.

Jim Morris with Lake Tahoe Accommodations has already filed a lawsuit against the city regarding the current ordinance.

For those who support stricter regulations, they said without them it is possible lawsuits will be filed and the issue taken to the voters. They contend neighborhoods are being ruined and that these are businesses that have no right to be in residential areas.

Two-thirds of the vacation rentals in South Lake Tahoe are in residential neighborhoods. Prior to the city's contemplating the ordinance changes there were 1,600 VHR permits. That number is now closer to 2,000.

Many asked the city to enforce the current rules and wait until the city-initiated socio-economic study is done next year before making changes. The council said no to those requests, instead voting 4-0 to adopt the ordinance as presented.

The ordinance changes how occupancy is counted, pools must comply with county rules (spas are not included), people in a 300-foot radius will be notified of pending applications, properties must be inspected, and marketing material must be truthful.

The community development department will be in charge of permits. Today the police department handles them.

In addition to the permit fee that is on the books and ranges from \$150-\$800 based on maximum occupancy, there will be a \$544 fee. If someone wants to challenge a denied permit, it will cost \$3,400 for a hearing before the Planning Commission.

All current VHRs will also have to go through a one-time

building inspection upon renewal of the permit. A checklist will be devised so people will know what will be looked at. However, if inspectors see some other violation, then they legally must note it. The applicant will have the opportunity to correct the issue and continue the process.

In other action:

- A Verizon cell tower is going in at Bijou Golf Course. The city will make \$18,000 per year off of it. The fee could go up based on the consumer price index. There is a possibility of contract extensions for a total contract of 20 years.
- The city is looking at revising the sign permit. It will come back to the council in September. This would dramatically reduce the cost of the permit.
- SnowGlobe, the three-day outdoor music festival at Lake Tahoe Community College, will be allowed to have amplified music until 11pm in the Sierra tent on Dec. 29-30 and until 1am Jan. 1. This is to better disperse the crowd so everyone doesn't leave at once and have to stand in the cold for an inordinate period of time waiting for a bus.