Improvement in predicting drought-busting atmospheric rivers

By Matt Weiser, Water Deeply

Atmospheric rivers are vital to western water supplies, yet until very recently they were poorly understood: difficult to predict and measure, and very hard for scientists to estimate where they would make landfall.

These are often erroneously called “pineapple express” storms, a term that applies to only a subset of atmospheric river events that originate near Hawaii. Most atmospheric river storms begin in the more distant tropical ocean and develop into a narrow band of strong winds that funnel huge quantities of moisture toward the West Coast of the United States. These storms are so wet that just a handful can account for half of California’s total winter precipitation.

New research in the last few years has uncovered some of the mystery behind atmospheric river storms, helping to predict storm timing and intensity. Now a new study by scientists at Colorado State University in Fort Collins has revealed a way to predict atmospheric river storms as much as five weeks in advance.

Read the whole story

Low-cost medicinal pot threatened by legalization

By Brad Branan, Sacramento Bee

The Wo/Men's Alliance for Medical Marijuana survived a raid by federal agents and other existential threats while providing free and low-cost cannabis to seriously ill patients. In operation for the past three decades, the Santa Cruz-based collective is the oldest example of a compassionate care" program in the nation.

Now, the program and others like it could be forced to close due to an unlikely reason: legalization.

Under state regulations that went into effect Jan. 1, compassionate care programs must collect taxes on the market value of cannabis that they give to patients. Many of these programs say they cannot afford the taxes nor the cost of state and local permits required to obtain cannabis from legal growers.

Read the whole story

Court ruling halts massive Truckee development

By Jane Braxton Little, Sacramento Bee

A Placer County Superior Court judge has at least temporarily stopped a controversial development north of Lake Tahoe that would have allowed 760 new homes in a high-severity fire area.

Judge Michael W. Jones ruled that Placer County failed to adequately address emergency evacuations in the area, especially in light of its high risk for fire. The decision was a partial victory for three environmental groups who sought to overturn the county's 2016 environmental impact review of Martis Valley West, a 7,428-acre project straddling Highway 267 five miles southeast of Truckee.

The largely forested land, owned by Sierra Pacific Industries, abuts the northern edge of the Tahoe Basin and takes in a section of the Tahoe Rim Trail. The project is designed to include more than six acres of retail stores, restaurants, offices and sports equipment rentals as well as townhouses, cabins, condominiums and up to 500 single-family homes on over 1,000 acres.

Read the whole story

U.S. giving away the $30B medical marijuana industry

By Josh Dean, Bloomberg

Lyle Craker is an unlikely advocate for any political cause, let alone one as touchy as marijuana law, and that's precisely why Rick Doblin sought him out almost two decades ago. Craker, Doblin likes to say, is the perfect flag bearer for the cause of medical marijuana production—not remotely controversial and thus the ideal partner in a long and frustrating effort to loosen the Drug Enforcement Administration's chokehold on cannabis research.

There are no counterculture skeletons in Craker's closet; only

dirty boots and botany books. He’s never smoked pot in his life, nor has he tasted liquor.

“I have Coca-Cola every once in a while,” says the quiet, white-haired Craker, from a rolling chair in his basement office at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, where he’s served as a professor in the Stockbridge School of Agriculture since 1967, specializing in medicinal and aromatic plants. He and his students do things such as subject basil plants to high temperatures to study the effects of climate change on what plant people call the constituents, or active elements.

Read the whole story

Resorts reacting to an increase of uphill visitors

By Jack Foersterling, Powder

According to SnowSports Industries America (SIA), human-powered snowsports, which includes backcountry skiing and touring, is becoming one of the fastest growing sectors of the winter sports industry. Studies from SIA have shown that nearly 7 million skiers and snowboarders explored the backcountry in 2016-17, a 15 percent increase from the previous season, and sales of backcountry ski equipment see a similar increase year over year.

But a lot of skiers aren’t just using their gear in the backcountry—as access to better and lighter touring equipment has become available, many resorts across the U.S. are also seeing a significant uptick in visitors opting to skip the

lift line and skin up the hill themselves.

Read the whole story

LTUSD slow to create safe school environment



Hundreds of South Tahoe High Students rally for safe schools on March 14. Photo/Julie Threewit

By Kathryn Reed

Teachers are now human shields, ready to take a bullet for a student. And students – little kids, not just teenagers – no longer feel safe at school, a place that not so long ago was a

sanctuary of sorts.

During the recent Tahoe Valley Elementary School lockdown teacher Jody Dayberry peeked into the hallway. She saw the fear in the first-graders' eyes, and the tears rolling down. One 6-year-old asked if someone had a gun and told her teacher she didn't want to die.

This is what it's like today to be a student – and a teacher – in the United States. A certain innocence has been lost.

Dayberry relayed this exchange to the school board members at their meeting this week. Fortunately, that event was a false alarm, but for the kids it was still a scary time.

"We as educators can't stay silent," Dayberry said. "We can't idly sit by and hope the odds are on our side. We must make plans. We must have procedures."

She lobbied for training in how to talk to students and getting help with identifying at-risk students.

Talk about safety measures is cheap until someone dies.

Talk is what Lake Tahoe Unified School District is good at. There was even more talk on March 13, with board members wanting to talk even more before they pull the proverbial trigger to actually do something.

Safety in this South Shore district has been talked about for at least a decade. School shootings seem to spur the discussion. So it was in **summer 2013**. At that time the board said yes to cameras and other measures.

The cameras, well, they still aren't all in. The wiring isn't even in place for many. The district has more than 80 cameras and wants to triple that number.

Safety was an issue in **2010 as well**. A gate at Viking Way was talked about, but never came to fruition. Cameras were also

part of the discussion then.

What the board decided to do on Tuesday was allow staff to come up with plans, and to have community meetings to gather input from the public, students and staff. In other words, more talk and no action.

The latest impetus to do more was prompted by last month's deadly school shooting in Florida.

Shelby Lyon, South Tahoe High School's rep on the board, articulated her peers' opinions, saying they don't want a fence – that now is the time to build bridges, not fences. She presented the district with a petition signed by students regarding their stance against a fence.

STHS teacher Eric Beavers said, "Fences are not going to bring our community together. I think we put up fences and gates because we don't know what else to do."

District staff admitted fencing in STHS would be a difficult endeavor. This is the most difficult school to secure because of all the buildings, therefore points of entry.

Staff is contemplating reinforcing windows so they wouldn't be easy to shoot through, having entrances more secure so it would be near impossible to get to where students are assembled, and installing cameras in hallways so an intruder would be tracked more easily. These measures could be for all schools. There was also talk of installing panic buttons in classrooms and/or front offices that would link to law enforcement. Having more modes of communication was broached.

"We are also recommending a school resource officer at the middle school. We need it for cannabis, and safety and security," Superintendent Jim Tarwater said.

He said that person can carry the gun, but does not want teachers to be armed.

Tarwater also wants a social worker for K-3.

Creating a threat assessment management team is another idea. Members would include law enforcement, probation, mental health and others. After all, even when someone is expelled from school, they are still in the community and can be a threat.

Tahoe bears breaking into homes with people inside

By Ryan Sabalow and Ed Fletcher, Sacramento Bee

It was October, and most of the vacation homes on this part of Lake Tahoe were empty. Bob Chaplin, 82, was living alone on a quiet street.

And he was getting nervous.

Bears had been breaking into his neighbors' houses. Shuttered windows and locked doors did little to slow them down on their quest for whatever food remained in pantries or refrigerators. In the mornings, Chaplin wandered the streets and found evidence of the bears' burglaries — broken glass, ruined furniture and homes strewn with bear feces and urine.

Read the whole story

Program promoting Nevada products falling short

By Jason Hidalgo, Reno Gazette-Journal

Four years ago, Nevada launched a marketing program to promote local farmers, manufacturers, producers and restaurants and their products.

The program's mantra is "Food and agriculture products made and grown in Nevada." Fast forward to 2018, however, and the Buy Nevada is facing challenges as it struggles to keep its program up to date amid a lack of resources.

Timed to tap into increased interest among consumers for healthier food options and supporting operations that are closer to home, the Buy Nevada program – which is overseen by the Nevada Department of Agriculture – was designed to give the state's businesses a helping hand while giving consumers confidence that they were supporting local or homegrown companies.

Read the whole story

Edgewood drives Soroptimist out of golf tourney

By Kathryn Reed

Edgewood Companies this week proved it has abandoned its roots as a family cattle company that grew into an integral component of the South Shore community and is now just another

corporate entity that looks more at the bottom line than the front line.

The company officially severed a 28-year relationship with Soroptimist International of South Lake Tahoe because it wants a bigger share of the food and beverage take at the American Century Championship golf tournament.

SISLT has been affiliated with the celebrity golf tournament since the inaugural event in 1990. In that time the nonprofit service club went from operating one food tent to four. In 2017, the organization put in more than 2,500 volunteer hours at the golf tournament.

The time and hours involved keeps growing because the tournament is growing. With a record crowd of nearly 50,000, it means that there are that many more people who want to eat and drink.

Back when the tournament started Edgewood Companies was known as Park Cattle Co. **In 2013**, the Park family split its assets. Those who retained the rights to Edgewood Tahoe Golf Course brought in professional managers and the family presence was lost.

There was another management shakeup late last year with the departure of longtime General Manager Bobby King and Patrick Rhamey, who oversaw the real estate sector. Corinna Osborne, who had been director of hotel operations for Edgewood, is now the general manager.

She is who has been corresponding with Soroptimist representatives. She did not return *Lake Tahoe News'* phone calls.

Osborne asked club members to meet with her and John McLaughlin, Edgewood Tahoe president/CEO, in early February.

"We got the feeling at the meeting they had no idea what we

do," SISLT President Pam Barrett told *Lake Tahoe News.* "The new management doesn't seem to respect our efforts of the past to continue the relationship."

That was the lone in-person meeting. Discussions have been by email since then.

The prior general manager at Edgewood had a hands off approach with Soroptimist. According to Barrett, the club had no problem with the relationship. They met with Edgewood folks before the tournament, knew the hours to staff the food booths, turned in the money each night to Edgewood, and returned the next day – the next year.

Edgewood supplied the food. It started with hot dogs, and last year included salads, sandwiches and burritos, wine, beer and non-alcoholic drinks.

For their efforts, SISLT received a portion of the proceeds. Usually is was just less than half of the take. Last year the group received about $50,000.

The club and Edgewood split the cost of the equipment. Every year SISLT has paid to store these items, which it only uses at the golf tournament.

Osborne wrote to SISLT members, "As far as supplies and equipment that you have purchased, stored, etc… Edgewood has no record of such a scenario."

Barrett said since then the club has been told it can keep the stuff.

Edgewood offered to pay the club the equivalent of $10/hour for each person who worked this coming year. Club members would be doing so alongside Edgewood employees and possibly other nonprofit volunteers. (Nevada's minimum wage is $8.25/hour, California's is $11/hour.) This would amount to less than half of what the group made last year.

“That’s a pretty measly offer,” Barrett said. “They call what we get a donation. We don’t think of it as a donation because we worked for it.”

Lake Tahoe News was provided a statement through Weidinger Public Relations from Edgewood.

“Reflective of our long held tradition of community involvement, we are looking to benefit Tahoe-based organizations in an impactful and immediate way,” CEO McLaughlin said. “In reviewing tournament food and beverage procedures the executive committee agreed the previous arrangement with Soroptimists [stet] required a more transparent process to guarantee funds are distributed annually and invested in a manner that benefits our community immediately. To that end, we’re talking to other local organizations about their involvement. Soroptimists [stet] have done a wonderful job over the years, we sincerely appreciate their involvement and hope the monies raised through their efforts with the event have helped many.”

Because there was no actual direct dialogue between *LTN* and Edgewood, clarifying questions could not be asked.

In response to McLaughlin’s statement, Barrett said, “I don’t exactly see how he can say the donations are not transparent. I think his problem is that he doesn’t think Edgewood got enough credit in the media. He says the money was a donation from Edgewood. We say we worked for that money. The reason there was not a lot of publicity is that Bobby King never asked us for any publicity.”

Barrett said Edgewood starting this year wanted to dictate how the club disbursed its money from the golf tournament. The group said no way.

Soroptimist groups worldwide are about enhancing the lives of women and children. That is reflected locally with how grants funds are allocated.

What Edgewood's issue is with how SISLT used its money is unknown.

Going forward the company wants to involve more nonprofits, at least at the tournament.

Osborne said to SISLT, "The tents will not be designated to any organization. These will be designated as 'Edgewood Charitable' tents. This is currently in development. Once we have selected the charities, we will have appropriate signage and messaging representing the organizations."

Edgewood as the host of the golf tournament has control over all the food and beverage operations.

It's hard to know who Edgewood will partner with since it has cut ties with other groups.

The other South Shore Soroptimist group – Soroptimist International of Tahoe Sierra – had become a partner in its sister club's service at the golf tournament.

In SITS's weekly email sent March 15 the comment in respect to the Edgewood news was, "They seem to be putting profits over the people of this community."

Edgewood has told Live Violence Free it cannot have its annual gala there this year. The Lake Tahoe Boys & Girls Club is also not welcome back to Edgewood for its fundraiser.

Calif., Trump clash over

raising Shasta Dam

By Evan Halper and Sarah D. Wire, Los Angeles Times

The Trump administration is pushing forward with a colossal public works project in Northern California — heightening the towering Shasta Dam the equivalent of nearly two stories.

The problem is that California is dead-set against the plan, and state law prohibits the 602-foot New Deal-era structure from getting any taller.

But in these times of unprecedented tension between Washington and California, the state's objection to this $1.3-billion project near the Sacramento River is hardly proving a deterrent. The Trump administration is pursuing the project with gusto, even as it seeks to make deep cuts in popular conservation programs aimed at California's water shortages.

Read the whole story