

Lawsuits challenge California's drought plan

By Dale Kasler and Phillip Reese, Sacramento Bee

A group of water districts sued California regulators Friday over the state's order prohibiting holders of some of the oldest water rights from pumping water out of rivers and streams.

The lawsuit, filed in Stanislaus Superior Court, challenges the State Water Resources Control Board's decision last week to ban diversions by 114 different rights holders in the Sacramento and San Joaquin river watersheds.

The affected groups are senior water rights holders. That means they've held the right to divert water since before 1914, when California established its rights system. Last week's decision by the water board marked the first time since the drought of 1977 that any senior rights have been curtailed.

Read the whole story

Dixie to run this summer, Queen to sit idle

By Kathryn Reed

Aramark will continue to only have one paddle-wheeler plying the waters of Lake Tahoe for the unforeseeable future.

This is because the company's permit with the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency does not allow both boats to operate out of Zephyr Cove. Normally the Tahoe Queen is docked at Ski Run Marina, but it has been running out of the Nevada marina because the lake is too low at the California site for it to reach the dock. The other reason the Queen has been operating from Zephyr Cove is the M.S. Dixie II is undergoing a seven-figure remodel.

"The permit allows Aramark to operate the Dixie out of Zephyr Cove and the Tahoe Queen out of Ski Run Marina. Because the Dixie is not operating and getting her engines rebuilt/replaced, and because the Tahoe Queen is unable to operate out of Ski Run Marina because of low water levels, TRPA has authorized Aramark to operate the Tahoe Queen out of Zephyr Cove until the Dixie is operating again," Tom Lotshaw with TRPA told *Lake Tahoe News*.

The exception to both being operational out of Zephyr will be Labor Day weekend for the annual race between the two paddle-wheelers.



The interior of the M.S. Dixie on June 15 shows much work still needs to be done.
Photos/Kathryn Reed

It is Aramark's responsibility to dredge the Ski Run channel – not the marina owner. Aramark has not sought a permit to do so. The last time it was dredged was 24 years ago.

“We have to dredge in order for us to go back there. At this point in the season it is not doable,” Joao Rodrigues, who oversees Aramark’s water and marine operations at Lake Tahoe, told *Lake Tahoe News*. “They would have to block off the whole channel to do dredging.”

Rodrigues said the dredging might occur in the fall.

Aramark is shooting for the Dixie to be back in operation by July 1. The plan is for three cruises seven days a week instead of the normal two. The idea is this will help compensate for the Queen being idle. The Dixie can hold 500 people.

The major part of the renovation is the engines, which were the original ones – and 21 years old.

Rodrigues said today it would be impossible to build a paddle-wheeler like the Queen or Dixie at Tahoe because of TRPA regulations. He said refurbishing the boat is costing about what it did to build it in 1994.



The M.S. Dixie has new engines.

The engines are the latest model – tier four – to meet all of the Environmental Protection Agency regulations. The work is being done with the boat in the water at Zephyr.

Skipperliner out of Wisconsin, which built the original

engines, has manufactured the new ones.

Last week the vessel looked very much like a construction site. Crews were cutting pipes. The interior was total chaos.

The inside and outside will be receiving a fresh coat of paint. New carpet will be laid.

“The carpets are a different patter. The walls are a different color. It brightens up the rom,” Rodrigues said.

Rodrigues said renovating the two bars might not make the July 1 deadline.

‘Sixth mass extinction’ may wipe out 75% of animal species

By Alan Neuhauser, U.S. News and World Report

From rhinos to tigers to elephants, three out of four “familiar” animal species – those commonly thought of and well understood by human beings – will be extinguished within three human lifetimes, a new study finds, confirming that Earth is in the midst of what’s become known as the “sixth mass extinction” driven by runaway development, shrinking animal habitats and climate change.

“Scientists never like to say anything for sure, but this is close as we’re ever going to get to saying, ‘We’re certain that this is a huge problem,’” says study coauthor Anthony

Barnosky, a paleontologist at UC Berkeley, calling the problem “quite dire.”

The hundreds of species eliminated in the past century alone would otherwise have lasted at least another 800 to 10,000 years, the study found. Coral reefs “are in danger of annihilation” as soon as 2070, Barnosky says, potentially erasing a quarter of the ocean’s species.

Read the whole story

Court: Signs are a matter of free speech

By Hans von Spakovsky, Daily Signal

In a unanimous decision, the Supreme Court struck down a town’s sign ordinance as an unconstitutional, content-based regulation of speech. This ruling for free speech means the government can’t pick and choose what speech deserves more protection based on the content of the speech.

Like most other towns in America, Gilbert, Ariz., regulates when, where and how signs may be displayed around town. Temporary non-commercial signs are classified by their content, and each category has its own set of regulations.

Real estate signs, for example, may be up to 80 square feet, and political signs may be up to 32 square feet; political signs may be displayed for four and a half months before an election, including in the public right of way; and homeowners’ association event signs may be displayed for 30 days.

Read the whole story

Ritz-Carlton redefines dining at the counter



Mirrors provide a multi-dimensional view of the kitchen at Manzanita at the Ritz-Carlton Lake Tahoe. Photo Copyright 2015 Carolyn E. Wright

By Kathryn Reed

TRUCKEE – Knives go so fast it's a wonder no one is injured. Flames shoot up. Pans are occupying nearly every burner, yet nothing is being neglected. A quick squeeze and flick of the wrist creates an artist-like design.

It's controlled chaos in the kitchen at Manzanita.

A small army of sous chefs is assisting Chef Chris Watkins who is in charge of the restaurant on this particular Friday.

This is no ordinary counter we are dining at. The wood and rock make for a seamless transition from the outdoors. It's more elegant than rustic. This is the Ritz, after all. But the splendor of Tahoe is not far away. To our right are windows that look out to the Martis Valley, while there is a more expansive view to our left of the hotel's patio and Northstar's ski slopes.



Chef Chris Watkins discusses the meal
with Bob Keller. Photo Copyright 2015
Carolyn E. Wright

In front of us is the show. With mirrors on the ceiling we are able to better see some of the precision workmanship of the men and women dressed in classic chef apparel. Not only are they preparing our six-course meals, but the restaurant is full of regular diners.

Manzanita Chef's Tasting Counter is a bit of a misnomer. At least the word "tasting" is – assuming one was to define it as a sample or bite-size. While most of the portions of the six-course dinner were not over the top, they were ample and appropriate to the point that we might have turned down a

seventh course.

With that said, each morsel kept getting better. If we weren't full, we would not have wanted the experience to end.



The foie gras comes with foie mousse stuffed cherries and warm brioche. Photo Copyright 2015 Carolyn E. Wright

Watkins has been at Manzanita for less than a year, having spent the last 10 years in San Francisco at restaurants like Campton Place and Aqua. He quickly had to show his versatility with what he was going to serve me because my personalized menu had fish on it – something I don't eat. He didn't seem fazed by the sudden change in plans.

Bob, Carolyn and I were presented with our own menus that outlined the six courses. For the most part theirs was the same except for the omission of soy for Carolyn. Mine was vegetarian.



The smoked trout set the bar high for the remainder of the courses. Photo Copyright 2015 Carolyn E. Wright

A smoked trout rillettes with trout skin chicharone started the evening. Bob and Carolyn raved about the skin, adding that the flavors kept bursting in their mouths. I could say the same about the roasted beet salad with house made ricotta and honey rosemary vinaigrette.

Watkins explained that the foie gras is essentially deconstructed and put back together, which makes it taste less gamey. Bob, who is a big fan of foie gras, raved about this incarnation of the delicacy.

The seared scallops with summer succotash was Carolyn's favorite course of the night. They were perfectly cooked and the flavor of the vegetables outstanding.



Wine steward Travis Masten introduces guests to an array of wines. Photo Copyright 2015 Carolyn E. Wright

Bob had a harder time picking a favorite, saying each course brought something new and another culinary surprise.

Being a fan of mushrooms, the fifth course – herb gnocchi with fava beans peas, morels, mushroom consume and shaved pecorino – was hands down my favorite. My meat eating dinner mates had lamb in their dish. I know I was given more morels than they were. I was in heaven. The only disappointment was seeing the bottom of the bowl.

We had the option to buy a bottle of wine or pay for six

tastings. We chose the latter, which was fun because wine steward Travis Masten introduced us to varietals and wineries we were not familiar with – such as Pedro Ximenez's Mayu from Chile.



A different libation for each course. Photo Copyright 2015 Carolyn E. Wright

This is the first summer the Ritz-Carlton at Lake Tahoe has offered the Chef's Tasting Counter. The counter accommodates six people. The intimate interaction with the chef and wine steward made for an even more enjoyable experience compared to most foodie events that involve a room full of guests.

Catering to small parties is exactly what the Ritz was aiming to do when staff came up with the idea.



Chefs Chris Watkins, left, and Nick Leandro prepare one of the six courses. Photo Copyright 2015 Carolyn E. Wright

“We recognized an opportunity to enhance and further activate this existing counter space in the restaurant. With dining trends becoming more casual, not all diners are interested in a formal, sit-down pairing menu, but these same guests still want to enjoy a unique culinary experience and personal interaction with the culinarians,” Robin Penning with the Ritz told *Lake Tahoe News*.

Also making these dinners special is that the chef creates a meal for that evening for those at the counter that isn't

being served elsewhere on property.

When it was all over, Carolyn said, "This is the best food I've had in a really long time."



Dessert – rum baba – poached peaches, apricot yoghurt sauce, marcona almond cookie crumbs and plum sorbet.
Photo Copyright 2015 Carolyn E. Wright

Notes:

- For reservations, call 530.562.3121. They must be made 48 hours in advance.
- Tasting Counter dinners are Fridays and Saturdays.
- Dinners start at \$95, with alcohol separate.

- Each dinner is six courses.
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Man arrested after standoff at Tahoe Keys Marina



Law enforcement surround the suspect Saturday afternoon at the Tahoe Keys Marina. Photo/Kathryn Reed

Updated June 21 6:03pm

From a SLTPD press release today:

[Cory] Pearson attempted to drive over a berm, but became high centered. The Armored Rescue Vehicle pinned Pearson's vehicle against the rock. Pearson attempted to flee on foot and turned toward officers, concealing his hands in his waistband. A less lethal shotgun bean bag round was deployed, striking Pearson,

causing him to fall to the ground. Officers approached Pearson with a K9 unit. Pearson continued to refuse officers commands, so the K9 unit was deployed and Pearson was ultimately apprehended without further incident.

A black replica, semi-automatic pistol was located in Pearson's waistband, where he was concealing his hands. Pearson was transported to Barton Hospital for medical treatment as a result of the bean bag and K9 deployment. Pearson was booked into EDSO jail by deputies for driving a stolen vehicle, felony evading, possession of an altered or imitation firearm, resisting an officer with violence or threats of violence, wearing a mask during the commission of a crime and driving on a suspended license.

Updated June 20 7:14pm:

Cory Pearson, 35, of Sacramento is the man who was arrested. Exact charges have not been released.

Update 5:19pm:

What started as an El Dorado County sheriff's deputy checking on a vehicle pulled to the side of Highway 50 in Meyers ended with one suspect in custody more than four hours later.

El Dorado County sheriff's Sgt. Paul Hadjes told *Lake Tahoe News* the subject was wearing a bandana over his face and told the deputy he had taken some bad drugs. While the deputy was calling for back up, the suspect took off.

A slow speed chase Saturday afternoon led everyone through South Lake Tahoe to where the Tahoe Keys Property Owners Association office is. The suspect was able to maneuver around all the cop cars and went down Venice Drive to the Tahoe Keys Marina. At this point he was trapped.

South Lake Tahoe police, California Highway Patrol and U.S.

Forest Service provided additional resources.

The suspect, whose name has not been released, moved the stolen white sedan several times around the parking lot before parking it to the right of the launch ramp.

South Lake Tahoe Sgt. Travis Cabral told *LTN* the vehicle had earlier been stolen from Lakeland Village.

The suspect was eventually taken into custody after bean bags were fired at the vehicle.

The suspect had a fake firearm that looked like a real weapon, according to authorities.

Cabral told *LTN* the CHP helicopter was used to give more eyes on the scene in case there were other people lurking in bushes or who might have been in the vehicle and tried to escape.

Update 4:25pm:

One person has been taken into custody after officers shot out the back window with bean bags.

The suspect was taken to Barton Memorial Hospital with injuries from the bean bags.

The suspect had a replicated handgun, according to authorities.

Update 4:12pm

The restaurant patrons were allowed to leave at 4:07pm under sheriff's deputy escort.

Most had a story to tell.

Jim and Tauni Pace of Boise recalled being abruptly interrupted from their patio lunch when the chopper told them to quickly go inside and lock the doors.

"We didn't know what the heck was going on," she said.

Terry Scales of South Lake Tahoe wondered the same thing.

"I've never seen anything like this," the 39-year resident said. "I've never been on lockdown. This is usually a fun time— you come here for a rum runner."

Update 3:33pm:

A small army of law enforcement with assault rifles is aimed at a white sedan parked to the right side of the launch ramp at Tahoe Keys Marina.

A California Highway Patrol helicopter has been circling above more than 20 patrons at the Fresh Ketch who are stuck inside the restaurant because law enforcement has placed it on lock down. The vehicle is occupied by a South Lake Tahoe man, according to restaurant patrons.

South Lake Tahoe Police Chief Brian Uhler told *Lake Tahoe News* the man is reportedly armed.

The driver has moved the vehicle multiple times. It was first parked in one of the stalls outside the Fresh Ketch. The driver has since moved it closer to the launch ramp. Law enforcement is not letting people down Venice Drive.

There are reportedly people at the beach at Cove East who are not allowed to walk back on the path.

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A man who claims he is armed has forced the evacuation of the Tahoe Keys Marina in South Lake Tahoe.

El Dorado County sheriff's deputies chased the man to the marina in their vehicles. What initiated the pursuit is unknown. Deputies were not available.

"He will not surrender and he has indicated he is armed,"

South Lake Tahoe Police Chief Brian Uhler told *Lake Tahoe News*.

The immediate area was cordoned off just before 2pm June 20.

Negotiators and tactical teams have been called in.

No one at the Fresh Ketch restaurant was answering the phone.

– Kathryn Reed and Susan Wood

Regan Beach's future in state of flux

By Kathryn Reed

Abandon the park; make it bigger and better. Those are the extreme viewpoints of what to do with South Lake Tahoe's Regan Beach.

About 40 people gathered this week at the city's recreation department to discuss how to generate revenue to offset operations and maintenance costs, what to do to improve the environment, look at how to distinguish the park from other facilities in the area, and what do about dogs.

South Lake Tahoe is on a quest to develop a plan for this park that has not had much attention in the five decades since it was built. The retaining wall is crumbling, the building where food is prepped has a leaky roof and dogs don't stay in their designated area.



South Lake Tahoe residents express what they want Regan Beach to look like in the future. Photo/Kathryn Reed

Later this summer a refined proposal is expected to be completed under the guidance of the Parks and Recreation Commission. It is likely to be presented to the City Council in September.

City Manager Nancy Kerry told *Lake Tahoe News* what she hopes to see is three levels of ideas – things that must get done to address accessibility, safety and maintenance issues; medium level ideas that include wants more than needs; and then possibilities if funding were not an issue.

While the 2015-16 budget will be approved about the same time the council hears what is proposed for Regan Beach, that doesn't mean the area will miss out on the next fiscal cycle. The budget is often adjusted midyear and work could be incorporated into the 2016 capital improvement plan schedule.

People at the five tables were all over the place when it came to ideas for the park. **Some of the ideas were:**

- Demolish the food building and start over.
- Have food service available year-round.
- Have a building big enough to be used as a reception for weddings and other meetings.
- Create a designated sledding hill.

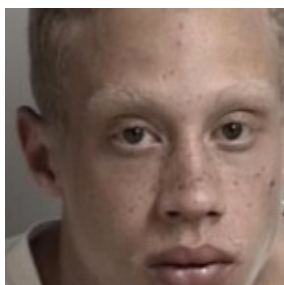
- Build a pier.
- Have food trucks.
- Remove much of the grass.
- Decrease the amenities so they are in line with money available for maintenance.
- Balance the facilities at the park to not impact the neighborhood.
- Remove many of the trees; plant shade trees.
- Ban dogs.
- Restrict dogs to a small area.
- Rebuild the bulkhead.
- Remove the bulkhead so there is more beach.
- Have a ramp to launch human powered watercraft.
- Create more access to the water.
- Rent beach chairs and water toys.
- Add bike racks.
- Take out most of the parking to create a bike-in, walk-in park; leaving a few spots for people with disabilities.
- Get rid of chipped tires.
- Install bear boxes.
- Build a staircase from the bulkhead to the water.
- Get rid of non-native vegetation.
- Add recycling stations.

There will be more public meetings this summer for people to give input as the ideas are refined. An online survey is another way to give feedback.

Family pursuing lawsuit against SLTPD

By Van Tieu, KRNV-TV

There are new allegations in the officer involved shooting at the Tahoe Hacienda Inn in South Lake Tahoe earlier this week that left a 22-year-old man dead.



Kris Jackson

An attorney for Kris Jackson's family is pursuing wrongful death and violation of civil rights actions against the officer who shot him.

Alan Laskin, says the officer should be criminally charged for acting out of protocol and killing Jackson. He says, according to Jackson's girlfriend, who was there, she never heard any type of warning from the officers to stop, like "put your hands up" before Jackson was shot.

[Read the whole story](#)

NASA data shows global groundwater depletion

By Renee Lewis, Aljazeera America

In over half of the world's largest aquifers, water is being drawn faster than it is being replenished, while some of those wellsprings may be much smaller than previously assumed, according to two studies released on Tuesday.

As climate change and population growth increasingly stress the world's water supplies, understanding how much groundwater exists and at what rates it can be sustainably drawn is critical, said scientists behind the studies.

"Until improved storage estimates exist to determine a system's full capacity to buffer against renewable groundwater stress, continued pressure on aquifer systems could lead to irreversible depletion that seriously threaten the sustainability of groundwater dependent regions," said a UC Irvine report titled "Uncertainty in Global Groundwater Storage."

[Read the whole story](#)

House Democrats float new

Calif. water bill

By Michael Doyle, McClatchy Washington Bureau

WASHINGTON — California water bills continue to fill the Capitol Hill hopper, and now one comes with a new twist.

It's crowd-sourcing drought solutions, in a long-shot bid to break a congressional stalemate.

On Wednesday, House Democrats from Northern California who have complained about being shut out of drought negotiations took matters into their own hands. They unveiled a sprawling proposal and, in a pointed gesture, opened it for public suggestions before it's formally introduced.

"This is what a good serious congressional response to the drought looks like," Rep. Jared Huffman, D-Calif., said in an interview, stressing a need to "do no harm" and to avoid reigniting "the water wars."

Read the whole story