

Musician reflects on how S. Tahoe shaped her



Nikki G credits her Tahoe roots for her music success.
Photo/Callie Giovanna

By Jen Marchain

Henry David Thoreau said, “Go confidently in the direction of your dreams. Live the life you’ve always imagined” – a simple sentiment so often difficult to achieve in such a consumable world of distraction and strife. But for South Lake Tahoe native Nikki Grant, she is keeping it real and all in perspective.

A rare soul, Nikki G (as she is known) is an artist and powerhouse percussionist, performing in front of thousands of people in acts like Street Drum Corps, Katy Perry, 30 Seconds To Mars, Family Force Five and many more. She’s charged toward

her dreams with wild abandon, successfully connecting her creative ideas to its intended target while all the while never losing sight on the foundation that got her there in the first place – her spirit of family and home.

Tell me about your first memory of playing music?

Nikki G: On the long stretch of California driving from Northern California to Southern California, my family would fill the eight-hour journey with car songs and show tunes. I had a part specifically designed for the young age of 1, 2, 3 and 4. I remembered by the age of 4 being excitably anxious as my family sang a capella harmonizing to songs like “Winter Wonderland” and waiting patiently to add my musical contribution.

As I entered the world of ensembles I remember my first elementary school concert, specifically the moment when the band director announced me as the youngest member. I was so small that when I was introduced I had to lift my mallet high above from behind the concert bass drum in order to be recognized.

Q: How influential was music in your family?

A: I was born straight into a musical family starting with the matriarchs, being my grandparents. Their children who would soon have children and then great-grandchildren made the musical family ignite. Even most of those married in were musicians; there was never a dull moment at family reunions. Some refer to my family as the new age, “Partridge Family.”

Q: What was it like growing up in Lake Tahoe?

A: The beauty that surrounds those who are born and raised in Lake Tahoe is immeasurable and somewhat distracting. In any upbringing it's only a matter of time before you start to discover there's an outside world. The enrichment that Tahoe provides from the education system, the outdoor education and the closeness of the community is part of the fuel that gave me, a small town girl, the courage to set out and capture the dream.

First and foremost my musical family gave me my foundation in music and in life but the Lake Tahoe Unified School District arts program further fostered my hopes and dreams. The music program gave the essential environment needed to not only prepare me for my future career but truly gave me an outlet that fostered my life's dream. Not only did my family and friends support my musical likings but so did my band directors as did my peers. I was very fortunate to be known in my community as, "The Little Drummer Girl."

I cannot emphasize enough on the importance of arts in the community of South Lake Tahoe. I know for a fact my life could have been drastically different and I can guarantee many of my musical/art program peers would feel the same. There are a handful of us out in the world making our musical dreams come true and I hope there are many generations after us that can state the same affirmation.

Q: Who were your earliest mentors?

A: My earliest and most important mentors were my family members, offering a vast variety of everything from classical pianists, musical directors, band directors, percussionists to DCI Drum/Bugle Corps.

My mother and father took great care to foster and nurture my musical journey, teaching me the foundations of music while doubling on piano and percussion. I was very fortunate to have the best of two worlds, my mother being a classical pianist and my father being a musical director/vocalist. I was not only able to receive a high education in music, but I had many outlets to express my art through recitals, festivals, musicals, and much more. In fact, my first experience on the road, at the age of seven, touring was with my parents performing in the musical "Godspell".

As I branched out beyond my family, I was very fortunate to be able to work with many phenomenal musicians and instructors. Some of which were band directors JJ Clause, Linda Kurek and

drum instructor Eric Hellberg who still provide richness in the arts to the community of South Lake Tahoe. I also had the rare opportunity to work under the direction of one of the greatest mentors of my musical life, Brian Farnon, who worked with many of the musical greats such as Spike Jones.

Every person, and many more, plays an important role in the community of South Lake Tahoe. They have all supplied generations with the vast knowledge of the arts that ended up to be the start of many musicians' careers, including my own. With my mother and father reaching into their fourth decade of commitment to the community and many more who have dedicated with them and before them, South Lake Tahoe is a resource that will become a great example of the benefits of the arts not only in the education system but for all communities.

Q: What influences or inspirations (or experiences) did you gain in your childhood that pushed you forward in your career?

A: I can remember the very moment and the very place that I realized my dream. It was in the third grade on the playground at Tahoe Valley Elementary School, atop the metal igloo after school staring at the clear blue sky saying to myself, "I want to be a musician. I want to play in a band with all of my friends and help people feel happy." Even though the definition was childlike and I didn't have any knowledge of what that dream truly contained, my heart was set on sharing the healing powers I received daily from music with as many people as my lifetime would permit.

Q: What barriers have you faced in your career?

A: Coming from a small town I was able to have a lot of hands on experience through the arts, especially since Lake Tahoe was a hub for outside touring acts. I was surrounded by musicians two or three times my age, which became a very welcoming and fostering environment. Even though I was very blessed with an incredibly supportive family and community, nothing could have truly prepared me for the outside world. I had to merely experience stepping out of the safety bubble,

called home, for myself.

I not only faced the change in culture, the realities of the industry, but the nature in which it stood, which wasn't always a good nature.

Unfortunately the dream that shined so bright was being darkened by challenges I couldn't have foreseen. As time went by, traveling city to city, I couldn't have pre-determined the capacity of struggles, heartache and turmoil I was about to experience.

Every artist has a story, even when the media and the magic of Hollywood make someone seem like an overnight success, it's usually not true. If you take the time to find the real story, you'll see much more than the overnight magic; everyone has a story. I was on the road, making my story and having the highest highs and the lowest lows. I was adjusting being away from home, family and friends, which is still a hardship, but it's because of the support of all of those aspects that I wasn't beaten down by the, sometimes scary, outside world.

Even though the majority of the time I was faced with being the only female drummer, having to pass up amazing opportunities due to not being male, knowing no one, learning how to become street smart, facing fears daily, and feeling very overwhelmed; I truly believe my absolute love for music, the unwavering commitment of my supporters and my hometown brought me to where I am today, which is full of accomplished dreams. All of us have barriers in many different ways whether it's an internal or external factor. But I truly believe that each of us has some passion, a desire, something that pulls at our heartstrings and we only have one life to embrace the dream. Tomorrow is never promised, so live your dream today.

Q: Your album "heART" seems profoundly tethered to your soul. As an artist, how do you prepare yourself to create something so personal and why is it important for you to share it

broadly through art?

A: "heART" came about at a time of artistic struggle. I'd been experiencing a lull in my creative spark and I was coming to an age of realizing I had nothing to call my own. I wanted to tap into a part of musical soul, which had been left untouched. So I did what I thought was most beneficial, I took a summer off and went home.

Every time I would go home it would bring back so many memories from my past, especially since my parents left my childhood bedroom exactly the same. Going home for the summer not only put me in a supportive environment, but making my old room into a studio to compose was the best environment to feel safe enough to face my musical fears. Writing for any artist based on the naked truth within your soul is scary, especially when you have no idea what will come about. I had no clue; in fact I had trouble with the process for quite some time.

I'd worked so long in different groups, living in the Hollywood scene that I had somewhat been molded into what every different gig required and not allowed to flourish being just, me. At first I thought I'd write the next top hit or pop/rock song, well those were so forced that it made the process of composing got more frustrating. It wasn't until I reached out to my parents that I started to truly tap into tethering my soul.

I remember my mom saying, "You can't force yourself against what's innately in you, if you just let the music naturally flow it will be perfect because you'll be expressing the honest truth inside your heart." My dad would sit down and make lyrics up, purposefully write a humorous song just to get me out of the boxed mindset and to instill one of the most important aspects of creating, which is the enjoyment of the process.

Without being home, without my parent's guidance and my musical journey up until that point, "heART" wouldn't have

existed. It was proof that all good things take time; you can't rush the real deal.

I put myself in a safe zone, surrounded by those who could help me thrive whether musically or spiritually and from there on out I made myself one promise; to be myself, to hold no bounds, and to let my heart be heard.

Q: You've had a lot of success with the Street Drum Corp project. What other things are you working on these days?

A: I've had the pleasure of working with Street Drum Corps for the past eight years; it's been quite an adventure.

I never thought I'd be touring the world, playing for thousands, let alone being on television doing what I had been doing with close friends at South Tahoe High starting at the young age of 15. I created a Trash Can Trio at South Tahoe High and we quickly became the feature at rallies, games, concert and events. We also occasionally got in trouble for making loud music is how I would choose to describe our sound of metal trash cans, poles, fences, etc., around campus. I could have never foreseen making a living off of what was construed as ruckus, chaos, but all in the same, music.

In the music world I'm defined as an independent artist or freelance artist, which allows me to work in many different projects. I've played with many acts in and around the Los Angeles basin, have worked in the studio recording everything from albums to soundtracks, and have even had the privilege of composing and performing on the big screen for an internationally released commercial for the Starz Channel. All in all, I believe an artist's life never stands still and as time progresses so will my projects. The artist never stops; it's a blessing and a curse.

Q: What is the overall message you hope to convey in your music and your style of playing?

A: I have a deep passion for music, no matter what genre or

what type of music I perform. My goal is to break the barrier we sometimes place between audience and performer because to me it's not about the show, it's about the story, it's how the music makes you feel and the communication that has more power than you may realize, the power to unite. The message I've always tried to convey is the message of unity. Music is innate in each of us and I've experience and see the healing powers of music throughout my whole life.

Even as I stared up at the sky at Tahoe Valley Elementary School, with stars in my eyes, I could have never imagined all the dreams within a dream that have come true. I've learned that although you may have a dream, your perseverance and hard work will lead you toward the unimaginable. It happened to me it can most definitely happen to you. I feel very fortunate and proud to be from South Lake Tahoe and to be able to affirm that my dreams have come true, a dream that at one point seemed impossible. Coming from a small town one might think the possibilities are limited, but I hope that my life can be proof that no matter where you're from life is limitless.

SLT rejiggers debt; spending on infrastructure

By Kathryn Reed

Money was the dominant theme during this week's South Lake Tahoe City Council meeting – mostly how to cut expenses.

With the reduction of some long-term debt, the city will then have money to invest in infrastructure.

And an added source of revenue is changing the pricing at the

city owned parking garage at Heavenly Village.

City Manager Nancy Kerry and staff have been scrutinizing the budget to come up with significant cost savings in relation to some of the unfunded liability that is on the books.

Staff estimates saving \$264,000 a year by paying off the CalPERS side fund with pension obligation bonds. This will add up to a savings of \$3.3 million once the bill is all paid.

This side fund is a portion of public safety's unfunded CalPERS liability. As of Sept. 30, 2013, that figure was more than \$11.6 million. Issuing bonds would pay off that debt, while incurring a smaller overall debt because of lower interest rates.

The council unanimously agreed to do this.

The same five then acted as board members to the Successor Agency, which handles things regarding properties that the defunct-Redevelopment Agency oversaw.

Some of the bonds pertaining to Lake Tahoe Resort Hotel (former Embassy Suites), Ski Run Village and Heavenly Village will be refinanced. A lower interest rate will reduce the payments on the more than \$135 million of debt.

When it comes to the parking garage, the \$3.75 per hour rate is not changing, but there may be more opportunities for validation from various businesses.

Before the meeting it cost businesses \$1.50 to buy an hour's worth of validation from the city. That has been cut to \$1. The consumer is likely to receive a free hour from participating businesses. The cinema, though, retains its sweetheart deal of paying 35 cents per validation. However, the number of free hours for the public went from four to three.

The goal is with more businesses opting into the program,

patrons might find more incentive to stay in the village longer and ultimately spend more money. Signs saying which businesses validate will likely be erected in the garage. It is up to each business to decide if a purchase is necessary to get a validation stamp.

Annual passes will resume. They will be \$600. Monthly passes are \$125, while it costs \$400 for a ski season pass.

Staff is looking at renting the top part of the garage for special events. This already happens on New Year's Eve. It's also possible there will be advertising for local shops on the back of parking tickets.

By the end of the fiscal year – Sept. 30 – projections are for a surplus of \$500,000 in the general fund. That money is going into infrastructure. The plan is to improve recreation facilities, which ideally will have locals and tourists taking out more cash to play in South Lake Tahoe. That additional revenue would then pay for things like more streets being upgraded.

Money is being set aside to build a bike park at Bijou Community Park, for planning Regan Beach improvements, planning for upgrades to the Recreation Center and planning for completion of the 56-acre site – which is across Highway 50 from Lakeview Commons.

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In other action:

- The council on a 3-2 vote upheld its decision to delay further implementation of the plastic bag ban to October 2015. Brooke Laine and Angela Swanson were in the minority.
- Ben Fish with TAMBA, the mountain bike group, said plans for the bike park at Bijou Community Park were resubmitted to staff last week.

Tahoe Queen not damaged, may sail in a week

By Kathryn Reed

The Tahoe Queen is structurally capable of operating, but because it does not have updated U.S. Coast Guard mandated paperwork in place it is sitting idle at Ski Run Marina in South Lake Tahoe.

The Coast Guard on Aug. 6 inspected the vessel to see if had been damaged. It wasn't. The sightseeing paddle-wheeler ran aground Aug. 4 off Regan Beach with 257 passengers on board.

All were safely evacuated, mostly via small law enforcement boats.

The certificate of documentation is what's delaying the boat from operating. This is similar to registering any watercraft with the state. The difference for the Queen is that because of its tonnage it is required to have the federal certification.

Coast Guard Lt. Theo Vaughan did not know how long the Queen has been out of compliance.

The Queen cannot carry passengers without the valid documents. Vaughan estimated the paperwork should be completed within a week.

"The vessel will be allowed to operate. The only thing pending is the administrative issue," Vaughan told *Lake Tahoe News*.

The full investigation of what caused the Queen to launch itself onto the sandbar is ongoing. Vaughan said it could be

two months before it is finished. The report must be signed off by folks at headquarters in Washington, D.C.

“The low level of the lake is definitely a contributing factor,” Vaughan said.

As for what might happen to the captain or any other crewmember remains to be seen.

“We will look at the report and see if any changes need to be made based on recommendations,” Dave Freirich, spokesman for Aramark – parent company of the Queen, told *Lake Tahoe News*.

Record year for bear cubs at LTWC



Cinder is expected to have a full recovery after being

rescued from a wildfire in Washington. Photos/LTWC

Lake Tahoe Wildlife Care is rehabbing a record number of bears this summer –11.

The latest bear was brought in Aug. 6 by California Department of Fish and Wildlife.

“This one is – they are fairly certain – the third cub of the two that we already received from the Paradise area,” Tom Millham with LTWC said.

The 11 cubs came from and/or are nicknamed:

Tahoe – from the Humboldt Redwoods State Park

Meyers – from Meyers

Conway (2) – from Conway Summit near Mono Lake

Bieber (2) – from Bieber on Highway 299 between Redding and Alturas

Paradise (now 3) – from Paradise

Brockway – from Brockway Summit

Cinder – from Washington state, burned in a fire in Methow, Wash.



Cinder's paws were burned in a fire.

Cinder came to the center via airplane in the last week. Its paws were burned in a wildland fire. Veterinarian Kevin

Willitts used Furazone to help them heal.

Lake Tahoe Wildlife Care is a nonprofit that has existed for more than 30 years on the South Shore. It is the only facility in California that rehabilitates injured or orphaned cubs. Most of the animals are returned to the wild.

The center hopes to move into a new, larger facility next year off Al Tahoe Boulevard. Currently, animals are cared for in cages in the Millhams' backyard.

For more info about LTWC, go online.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Lahontan letters mandate Tahoe Keys Marina owners, employee comply with permit

By Kathryn Reed

Owners of the Tahoe Keys Marina and the general manager received certified letters this week from the Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board putting them on notice that ongoing violations must end.

“The purpose of requiring the technical report from them is to get information from them relating to when the violations will

be corrected and get information on why certain issues took a little longer than what may be considered normal to correct," Eric Taxer with Lahontan told *Lake Tahoe News*.

The offenders have until Sept. 2 to respond to Lahontan in writing.

Letters were sent to Donna and Robert Krilich, Robert Krilich Jr., Jean Merkelbach and Robert Spinnato. The latter is the general manager whom Lahontan has been dealing with. None of them was available for comment.

Some of the issues relate to the July 22 inspection by Lahontan. But state inspectors were back out at the site July 28 only to find things had not been fixed or more issues had come up.

"Typically what we see is dischargers will fix things as expeditiously and practically as they can in a timely manner," Taxer said.

The Tahoe Keys is not typical.

One thing Taxer observed was spilled anti-freeze on rocks that had not been cleaned up in the last 11 days. When he pointed this out to Spinnato, Spinnato ordered an employee to deal with it immediately.



Mulch has been placed by the CTC on the dirt, while the marina has added rock next to the parking lot driveway.

Photo/LTN

One of the new issues for Lahontan is the illegal grading of vegetation, which is compounded by being so close to Lake Tahoe.

Representatives of the California Tahoe Conservancy were at the marina when Taxer and another Lahontan employee arrived July 28. CTC owns the land. They have placed mulch on the 11,000-square-foot and fiber rolled wattles to act as berms to prevent runoff from reaching the lake. They will be billing the marina for this expense.

The creation of the illegal, unpermitted, unauthorized dirt parking lot on state property is part of Lahontan's latest report on the marina. This agency will be monitoring what goes on at the site.

CTC spokeswoman Victoria Ortiz told *Lake Tahoe News*, "We're still in talks about exactly how it will proceed, but we did receive a letter from TKM indicating their intention to rectify the situation as soon as possible. The fence will be replaced and the property that was graded will be revegetated at their expense in conformance with Conservancy and TRPA requirements."

Julie Regan, spokeswoman with Tahoe Regional Planning Agency, told *LTN*, "We are still working through our process internally but should have an indication as to whether to pursue a monetary violation within a week. The first priority was to get an approved site restoration plan, which we now have."

A California Highway Patrol officer was out inspecting the site and taking pictures this week, since it is state property. No one from the local CHP office returned calls.

South Lake Tahoe police officers have submitted a report to the El Dorado County District Attorneys Office for possible prosecution in regards to violating the city's grading

ordinance.

It would be up to the Lahontan board of directors if fines were to be levied against the marina's owners. They could face a penalty of \$10,000 per day for violating Lahontan's permit. The sewage pump would fall under that category.

The marina on Aug. 5 said the sewage pump is operational. It was not operating July 28 during Lahontan's last inspection.

The law is every marina on the California side must provide a working pump every day for vessels to extract their sewage.

Officials with the South Lake Tahoe marina also face a potential civil liability of \$1,000 per day for failing to provide the technical report that is due in early September.

Old-Tahoe torn down for car parts store



The old garage came down
Aug. 6 Photo/Dave Kurtzman

By Bill Kingman

A South Lake Tahoe icon was razed today.



The old Springmeyer garage.

Photo/Bill Kingman

The landmark Highway 50 frontage from Izzy's Burger Spa up to Lake Tahoe Glass is owned by Marjorie Johnson Springmeyer of Tahoe's pioneer Johnson family.



The old cabin is being relocated. Photo/Dave Kurtzman

The brick-and-frame building was taken down Aug. 6. It will be replaced by an Auto Zone store.

Longtime local Dave Wakeman remembers that the late-Melvin

“Buzz” Springmeyer, a World War II fighter pilot, operated his garage and International trucks dealership there from the late 1940s into the 1970s.

Springmeyer and bride, Marjorie, lived in the quaint cottage directly behind it. It was cut in two, but put back together and hauled off-site.

At the right end of the garage was Springmeyer’s service station with two gasoline pumps. This was before Highway 50 was widened in 1957.

More recently, the vacant area between the garage and today’s Lake Tahoe Glass became a self-service Fill-’em Fast gas station operated in the 1970s by Boyett & Son.

A former local business, Harrison Radiator Works, had no building but instead operated on wheels. It regularly parked between Buzz’s garage and the little cottage in back.

Low-flow fixtures costing water customers

By Katherine Shaver, Washington Post

Federally mandated low-flow toilets, shower heads and faucets are taking a financial toll on the nation’s water utilities, leaving customers to make up the shortfall with higher water rates and new fees that have left many paying more for less.

Utility officials say they understand that charging more for water because demand has dropped might seem to violate a basic premise of Economics 101. But utilities that generally charge by the number of gallons used are beginning to feel the

financial pinch of 20 years of environmentally friendly fixtures and appliances, as older bathrooms and kitchens have been remodeled, utility experts say.

Federal laws aimed at conserving water limit toilets that once needed up to seven gallons per flush to 1.6 gallons. Shower heads that spewed up to eight gallons per minute are being replaced with sprays of about 2.5 gallons.

Read the whole story

S. Lake Tahoe gives up on commercial air service

By Kathryn Reed

Lake Tahoe Airport will not have commercial service – at least for the indefinite future.

That was the unanimous decision of the South Lake Tahoe City Council on Aug. 5.

Michael Hotaling, the consultant putting the airport master plan together, essentially gave the council an ultimatum – commercial or general aviation airport? This is so his people can be more focused in their approach as they put together the document.

South Lake Tahoe has not had commercial air service since 2000.



Planes of all sizes use Lake Tahoe Airport. Photo/LTN file

Hotaling made a case for how difficult it would be for this airport to attract commercial service again. The industry isn't what it was. Airlines have been consolidated. They are all about having planes at least 85 percent full because it isn't until they are at 75 percent capacity that they make a profit.

He pointed out that an airport like Mammoth could attract commercial service because of a \$2 million annual subsidy, as well as Los Angeles International Airport being several hours away.

Lake Tahoe is an hour from the Reno airport. And as Pat Ronan, owner of Lakeshore Lodge and Spa, said, when Interstate 580 in Nevada extends farther into Carson City, it will cut another 10 minutes off the drive between Reno and South Lake Tahoe. Driving less than hour is a psychological threshold, he implied.

Three people spoke at Tuesday's council meeting in regards to the airport. All favor the focus being on general aviation.

But this does not mean big planes won't fly into the airport. The airport still has FAA clearance for large planes like a 737 to land. It could also mean a Gulf Stream V landing.

Planes of significant size are a regular sight during the American Century Championship golf tournament.

And these days it's not unusual for people to have fractional ownership of sizeable aircraft. And the GA designation does not stop commuter flights.

Keeping the 139 certificate from the FAA will allow flexibility for the airport. While it costs the city \$75,000 a year to comply with the 139 regulations, it potentially pays for itself because there are pilots who won't land without that designation. And with it, it could be easier for the airport to contemplate commercial service in the future.

But Hotaling explained how the narrowness of the runways could present a future conundrum if the city were to try to attract commercial service. There isn't the width needed per FAA standards. And to create it would potentially be an environmental nightmare.

An issue raised at many meetings about the airport is whether it is a financial burden or benefit. Hotaling recommended the city do an economic study to find the answer. The council agreed to do just that.

In other action:

- Several people spoke about the inadequacies of the city when it comes to enforcing various codes. Vacation rentals were the primary target of angst. It was agreed that at a future meeting the enforcement aspect of vacation rentals would be addressed.
 - On Aug. 12 at 5:30pm city staff and recreation commissioners will be at Regan Beach gathering input from people about what they would like to see improved at the beachfront.
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Nevada proposes 'Right to Try' drug law

By Sean Whaley, Las Vegas Review-Journal

CARSON CITY – A state lawmaker says Nevadans facing terminal illness should have every opportunity to try experimental treatments and drugs in an effort to prolong their lives for themselves and their families.

To that end, Assemblyman James Ohrenschall, D-Las Vegas, has asked for a bill to establish a “Right to Try” law in Nevada, making it easier for those threatened with a life-ending illness to seek potential remedies that have not received final approval from the Federal Drug Administration.

If successful, Nevada would join several other states adopting such legislation, including Colorado in May and Missouri last month. A right to try law is on the November ballot in Arizona.

Ohrenschall said he was asked to request the bill by a constituent. He is basing his measure on model legislation crafted by the Arizona-based Goldwater Institute, a template that has been used by other states as well.

The right to try law would enable terminally ill patients under the care of their doctors and cooperating drug companies to receive potentially life-saving medications that have been deemed safe by the FDA but are still years away from being approved for market.

Read the whole story

Congress on recess without addressing fire funding

By Cliff Weathers, AlterNet

Congress is heading home for summer vacation, failing to act on emergency funding to combat the wildfires that are raging in the West.

President Obama had requested \$615 million in emergency funding to help the U.S. Forest Service and Interior Department pay for firefighting efforts, and the Democratic-controlled Senate proposed a \$2.7 billion spending bill to deal with the wildfires and the influx of unaccompanied minors along the Southwest border. But Senate Republicans used a procedural objection to block its consideration. The House did not introduce a bill to combat wildfires.

Although Congress returns next month, the fire season in some states will have passed its peak.

Ironically, without emergency funding from Congress, the Forest Service and Interior Department will need to transfer money from elsewhere in their budgets, including funds earmarked to remove flammable vegetation from forests, projects that help prevent such fires from raging in the first place.

The two federal agencies have budgeted over \$1 billion for firefighting this year – five times more than 20 years ago – but that may not be enough.

Wildfires are currently raging through the Pacific Northwest and California, in regions that have been affected by unseasonably warm temperatures and drought. The long-range forecast in the region calls for above-average temperatures through October, which can translate into fuels that are much

drier than usual.

Fires continue to rage in Oregon, and communities in the southwestern part of the state are being asked to evacuate their homes, as fire spreads along the border with California. Some 5,300 acres in the Cascade-Siskiyou National Monument have been scorched and the town of Ashland, just to its east, is threatened by the fire. Meanwhile, lightning has sparked two new large wildfires in the state.

About 780 square miles of land is currently burning in Oregon, and a continued heat wave, along with forecasted lightning storms, are expected to bring more fires to the region.

Fires in central Washington, which have raged since early July, are threatening the state's famous orchards at the time apple harvest begins.

Read the whole story