

Recovery slow to come to all Nevadans

By Conor Shine, Las Vegas Sun

Ever look around at the signs of recovery here – the construction and rebound in travel and tourism – and wonder why it doesn't feel like the recession has ended for you?

There's a reason: It hasn't in terms of wages in Nevada.

But the slow increase in most people's pay has meant that thin family budgets are stretched even further, constricting consumer spending, a crucial cog in the region's overall economic recovery. With unemployment still at almost 9 percent in December, a return to normal wage growth likely will take several years, economists say.

With high unemployment and an excess of willing workers, there's little pressure for companies to increase salaries. That likely won't change until the unemployment rate drops to 5 or 6 percent.

As tourism stalled and consumer spending dipped, employees in service-related jobs also took a hit. Wages of hairdressers, fitness trainers, car technicians and others dropped as the public scrimped and saved by forgoing nonessentials.

Read the whole story

Project designed to improve flow at Tallac Site

By Kathryn Reed

Improving the circulation of traffic and pedestrians are major goals of a proposed project at the Tallac Historic Site on the South Shore.

The U.S. Forest Service wants to get rid of the access point at Heritage Way that is across from Fallen Leaf Lake Road and the one at the Valhalla gate. A new entrance point would be created near the Camp Richardson corral.

Within the recreation area a loop road would be constructed to connect to Taylor Creek Visitors Center.



The U.S. Forest Service wants to improve circulation at the Tallac Historic Site.
Photo/LTN file

Improvements would also be made to the trail system. Routes would be created to accommodate walkers and cyclists. They would interconnect so people would not have to return to the main trail along the highway. This does not mean cyclists will necessarily be able ride through the historic site. Currently, bikes must be walked.

These would be Class 1 trails that are 10-feet wide.

"The big picture is we are looking after resource protection by providing for better, more sustainable visitor recreation patterns," Daniel Cressy, landscape architect with the USFS, told *Lake Tahoe News*.

Two action alternatives are included in the environmental assessment that is out for public comment. The second alternative does not include the loop inside connecting the recreation sites.

Included in the proposal are additional parking spaces. The idea is to get vehicles off Highway 89 where they are parked on the dirt. When Caltrans comes through with its water quality project those spaces will be eliminated.

Part of the U.S. Forest Service project is also to improve water quality. Components include infiltration basins, drip line trenches for structures, slope stabilization along the shoreline, and construction of a fence between the Kiva Point beach area and the Taylor Creek Marsh.

Another improvement at Kiva will be restrooms. At times there have been portable toilets at the beach. Cressy said human waste can be an issue out there.

Informational signs are planned for Kiva Point, along with a path from the parking lot to the beach to comply with Americans with Disabilities Act requirements. Some user created trails will be decommissioned.

Cressy said a price tag for the project has not been calculated. Funding for the project would be sought once an alternative is chosen and approved.

—

Notes:

- Comments will be accepted until April 6.
 - The environmental analysis is online.
 - For more info, contact Ashley Sommer at 530.543.2615 or asommer@fs.fed.us.
-

200-mile Tahoe trail run fills up in 1 week

By Heidi Mills, Outdoor

Back when race director Candice Burt first dreamed up a 200-mile trail run around Lake Tahoe, she figured it would take time to build an audience for such an over-the-top concept. Its culmination, the Tahoe 200, will be in early September. At a price tag of \$850, the run gives hopefuls a full 100 hours to complete its rugged course.

Burt needn't have worried about instant success: after the event had been open to applicants for only a week, 187 runners entered the lottery for one of just 75 available spots. And if the U.S. Forest Service renews its permit going forward, Burt thinks she can easily attract 200 racers yearly.

While most Americans probably can't even imagine running 200 miles, a small contingency of runners seems eager to go the distance. In Europe, the 5-year-old Tor des Geants, a 330-kilometer (that's 205 miles, for the metric-averse) point-to-point race in the Italian Alps, fills all 660 slots immediately. If registration for the Tor des Geants and the Tahoe 200 is a reliable indicator, there's an unmet demand for point-to-point 200's.

Read the whole story

Nevada county settles suits on I-80 cash seizures

By Scott Sonner, AP

A rural Nevada county has settled lawsuits with two men who said a sheriff's deputy violated their civil rights when they were stopped for speeding on Interstate 80, searched for drugs and forced to forfeit tens of thousands of dollars even though no drugs were found and no charges filed in either case.

The Humboldt County District Attorney's Office also confirmed in a statement late Friday that it has launched an internal review of the county's "forfeiture program" but that there is no indication there have been any illegal stops or any wrongdoing on the party of Sheriff Ed Kilgore or his deputies.

Tan Nguyen of Newport and Michael Lee of Denver said in lawsuits filed in U.S. District Court in Reno they were stopped last year on Interstate 80 near Winnemucca about 165 miles east of Reno under the pretext of speeding. They said they were subjected to illegal searches and told they wouldn't be released with their vehicles unless they forfeited their cash.

The suits accused the same veteran deputy, Lee Dove, of taking a briefcase full of \$50,000 in cash from Nguyen after stopping him for exceeding the speed limit by 3 mph in September, and seizing \$13,800 and a handgun from Lee during a similar stop in December.

"The case has been settled," Steve Balkenbush, a Reno attorney representing Humboldt County in the case, told the Associated Press on Friday.

The district attorney's office said the settlement involved Nyguen and Lee but did not disclose how much money was involved. Nguyen's lawyer told a Reno television station Friday he received a check for the full \$50,000 seized as well as \$10,000 in attorney fees.

"He wasn't charged with anything. He had no drugs in his car. The pretext for stopping him was he was doing 78 in a 75," John Ohlson told KРНV-TV.

"It's like Jesse James or Black Bart," he told AP in an interview last week.

Lee's Reno lawyer, Jeff Dickerson, did not immediately return a call seeking comment.

The district attorney's statement said both men were stopped legally and that "every asset that was seized pursuant to those stops was lawfully seized." But it acknowledged the resolution of their claims didn't receive priority in the district attorney's office because of staff shortages.

"The cases involved Mr. Nguyen and Mr. Lee raised procedural issues in the District Attorney's Office and those issues are being addressed by a review of every submitted case," the statement said.

It said media reports about the lawsuits had "unfairly criticized" the sheriff's office, which "was acting in accordance with the law as they understood it and was not responsible for any procedural defects following their seizure of the assets."

"One thing is certain, even prior to the completion of the review by the District Attorney's Office, is that the seized

assets were not utilized unlawfully,” the DA’s office said. “Following completion of this review, a full accounting of those assets will be available for review.”

The lawsuits claimed the cash seizures were part of a pattern of stopping drivers for speeding as a pretext for drug busts in violation of the Constitution.

Nguyen was given a written warning for speeding but wasn’t cited. As a condition of release, he signed a “property for safekeeping receipt,” which indicated the money was abandoned or seized and not returnable. But the lawsuit says he did so only because Dove threatened to seize his vehicle unless he “got in his car and drove off and forgot this ever happened.”

The day after Nguyen had his money taken, the sheriff issued a news release with a photograph of Dove pictured with a K-9 and \$50,000 in seized cash “after a traffic stop for speeding.”

“This cash would have been used to purchase illegal drugs and now will benefit Humboldt County with training and equipment. Great job,” the statement said.

Olympic-size party for Sierra’s 3 super stars

By Susan Wood

TWIN BRIDGES – It truly takes a village.

The Olympic dream continued into March at Sierra-at-Tahoe on Saturday when thousands of family, friends and dignitaries hit the street and the ski resort to celebrate the roots and

return home from Sochi of three local Olympic gold medalists.

Jamie Anderson, Maddie Bowman and Hannah Teter, who all hail from Meyers, started their day at South Tahoe High School and made their way in a grand-scale procession through the South Shore on a 1947 fire truck. Anderson's brother, Luke, from Lake Valley Fire was at the helm.

Ribbons, flags and signs were spotted along Highway 50 – with a huge crowd awaiting the parade at the entrance of Sierra-at-Tahoe. The fire truck cranked its horn, people screamed and the three women on top glowed as bright as a blaze. Even a small rock slide that delayed the procession couldn't curb the enthusiasm or the drive to celebrate the special occasion.

"The guys in the front moved the rocks," Teter told *Lake Tahoe News* when asked about the little challenge – proof again of the community support. She proceeded to scamper down the stairs to the newly created plaza where hundreds of cheering fans awaited the athletes.

"This is the most amazing moment of my life," Anderson told the attentive crowd. "This was the day care I had growing up," she said fondly of Sierra. "I grew up outside appreciating nature and the beautiful place we live in."

She thanked Sierra and her family for the opportunities she's had over the years.

Anderson won gold last month in slopestyle with her board on a massive course with one jump named after Russia's highest mountain, Mount Elbrus. Bowman did the same on skis in the halfpipe. Teter placed fourth this time in snowboard halfpipe, but she took home silver in 2010 at Vancouver and gold at the 2006 Games in Turin, Italy.

Anderson and Bowman carry the distinction of being the first gold medalist in the slopestyle snowboard and freestyle halfpipe ski events, respectively. Bowman turned her first-

place run into an emotionally-charged glaring tribute to Canadian skier and friend Sarah Burke, who tragically died in a fall on a training run a few years ago.

Sierra-at-Tahoe General Manager John Rice got some giggles when he mentioned the joy of watching the guys at Sierra try to keep up with Bowman.

Rice winced a little when he considered how high Anderson could fly and “land like a butterfly” on her snowboard. He also mentioned being proud of Teter’s year-after-year accomplishments, including the World Vision charity she uses to help a Kenyan village through proceeds of her line of maple syrup from Vermont, where she grew up.

“The best moment of my life was moving to South Lake Tahoe and riding Sierra,” Teter said of her big move from the East nine years ago. The crowd, which more than adopted her, was hushed by the sentiment.

“I want to live here forever,” she said.

All three women came across humble and grateful, and the fans held on to each word and each moment.

Through heartfelt speeches, high-fives and hugs all around, much of this day was about the power of place. And proven once again was that the people make the place. South Lake Tahoe and beyond showered them with gifts from the business community, resolutions and special passes from the state of California, city acknowledgements and proclamations from El Dorado County.

“Is this on top of the *cha cha* scale or what?” El Dorado County Supervisor Norma Santiago asked the screaming crowd gathered around the stage. “Sierra-at-Tahoe – it’s unbelievable. There’s got to be something in the water.”

Santiago pointed out how fitting that El Dorado translates to “the golden one” and called the county “the most gold-winning

community per capita in the world.” The crowd roared.

South Lake Tahoe Mayor Hal Cole joined the sentiment with admitting he felt he was “watching family members on television” when the women performed their medal-deserving runs.



Jamie Anderson, Maddie Bowman and Hannah Teter celebrate their achievements March 15 with the South Shore. Photo/Kathryn Reed

“I swelled up with pride,” Cole said, choking back tears.

Also on hand with state resolutions, state Sen. Ted Gaines saying he was “so impressed with what the athletes had done and what John (Rice) had done.”

Lake Tahoe Unified School District board member Sue Novasel attributes part of the Sierra athletes’ success to Rice’s “straight A season pass program” in which 300 students have benefited. Bowman, in particular, held a grade point average of 4.3 when she graduated. Anderson has returned the philanthropy by sponsoring economically-challenged students in full gear and time on the slopes.

Bob Roberts, California Ski Industry Association executive director, told the attentive audience he was blown away by the support in Tahoe and compared it to the time he attended Squaw

Valley's 1960 Olympics.

"It had nowhere near the ability to turn out the community love like this one. This is truly amazing," Roberts said before passing out California gold passes with no black-out dates and transferable rights. Bowman's buddies standing feet away yelled for Bowman to pass it to them.

Also reflecting on the past, Lake Tahoe South Shore Chamber of Commerce Executive Director B Gorman noted the last time she was on stage with an Olympian was in 1968 with skier Nancy Greene and felt nostalgic about how the experience inspired her.

"Keep it up kids. It's a great way to spend your life," she said, delivering a special message to the many children in the audience who may be the next set of budding Tahoe Olympians.

Former Sierra-at-Tahoe staffer Megan Waskiewicz felt nostalgic too. She left the ski resort in 2001, but made sure she brought her three children with husband Christian to witness the spectacle.

"It's really making Sierra-at-Tahoe stand up and stand out," she said, adding the importance of Anderson's profile that aired on NBC around the globe during the Olympics. The television clip showed the beauty of the lake and Anderson on a rail with the Sierra logo prominent.

Chloe Waskiewicz made it clear she would like to be an Olympian, too.

The same goes for 11-year-old Annie McCully. Her brother, Levi, 5, welcomed the Olympians with a sign of support almost larger than he is tall.

With its longtime reputation of community activism and cultivating spirit, Sierra-at-Tahoe showed how it successfully nurtured these athletes who at a young age identified it as

their home resort.

"I think I teared up when I saw her first (Olympic) run," Anderson's longtime coach Brady Gunsch said after the ceremony. He coached her for 12 years from age 5 and witnessed her work ethic.

"She's worked for everything she's got," he said.

Longtime Sierra ski instructor Donna Vano teared up as well when she thought about the years she taught Teter and drove Anderson to her events.

Rice, who received numerous accolades, admitted to having goose bumps, chills and tears watching the athletes he's known over the years take to the world stage last month. When he went out to dinner the other night, many locals shared how they either changed diapers, taught or helped the girls stay out of trouble.

That must have been good news to Anderson's dad, Joe.

"I pretty much knew all along," he said of his daughter's spiritual grounding and fighting spirit.

It takes a lot of focus and maturity to work hard and win in that one moment of time, Rice pointed out.

"A true champion has to be the best when the best is called for," Rice quoted his mentor. "This was not an accident. These women have the secret sauce."

He shared specific messages to all three as Olympians, philanthropists, friends and people.

What comes around, goes around.

Rice brought the first celebrated Sierra Olympian Travis Cabral to the stage early on. Cabral proceeded to mention how proud he is of the three women, who exude modesty and love of

community. The hometown boy is now a city police officer serving the community. The cycle of goodness continues.

ngg_shortcode_0_placeholder (Click on photos to enlarge.)

BPA-free plastic doesn't mean it's safe

By Mariah Blake, Mother Jones

Each night at dinnertime, a familiar ritual played out in Michael Green's home: He'd slide a stainless steel sippy cup across the table to his 2-year-old daughter, Juliette, and she'd howl for the pink plastic one. Often, Green gave in. But he had a nagging feeling. As an environmental-health advocate, he had fought to rid sippy cups and baby bottles of the common plastic additive bisphenol A (BPA), which mimics the hormone estrogen and has been linked to a long list of serious health problems. Juliette's sippy cup was made from a new generation of BPA-free plastics, but Green, who runs the Oakland-based Center for Environmental Health, had come across research suggesting some of these contained synthetic estrogens, too.

He pondered these findings as the center prepared for its anniversary celebration in October 2011. That evening, Green, a slight man with scruffy blond hair and pale-blue eyes, took the stage and set Juliette's sippy cups on the podium. He recounted their nightly standoffs.

"When she wins ... every time I worry about what are the health impacts of the chemicals leaching out of that sippy cup," he said, before listing some of the problems linked to those chemicals—cancer, diabetes, obesity. To help solve the riddle,

he said, his organization planned to test BPA-free sippy cups for estrogenlike chemicals.

The center shipped Juliette's plastic cup, along with 17 others purchased from Target, Walmart, and Babies R Us, to CertiChem, a lab in Austin, Texas. More than a quarter – including Juliette's – came back positive for estrogenic activity. These results mirrored the lab's findings in its broader National Institutes of Health-funded research on BPA-free plastics.

Read the whole story

Advocates pitch legalized pot to Congress

By Holly Yeager, Washington Post

The delegation from the National Cannabis Industry Association made a point of dressing well for its day on Capitol Hill, sporting mostly dark suits, lots of ties and plenty of the group's signature lapel pins, which feature a sun rising over vibrant fields of marijuana.

Marijuana advocates have come to lobby Washington before, often to argue for more lenient treatment under federal law. But on Thursday, buoyed by a flurry of state decisions that have expanded the legal use of marijuana, the cannabis crowd came less as social activists than as entrepreneurs, asking Congress to remove some of the obstacles that stand in the way of their fledgling businesses.

They met with staff members to ask for changes to the tax

code, which prohibits the businesses from taking standard deductions for expenses. And they huddled in congressional offices to make the case for other changes that would encourage banks to work with legal cannabis businesses.

Read the whole story

Incline Village segment of Stateline-to-Stateline bike trail whittled down to 2 options

By Kathryn Reed

Riding closer to the lake or being more in the woods. That is what people are being asked to decide when it comes to developing the first three miles of the Incline Village segment of the Stateline-to-Stateline Bikeway.

The environmental documents for the project are in circulation. Two options plus a do nothing alternative are proposed. The Tahoe Transportation District, the lead agency, has not picked a preferred route.

“There is give and take in both based on user experience and environmental and regulatory constraints,” Alfred Knotts, lead planner with TTD, told *Lake Tahoe News*. “Either the mountain or lakeside are both pretty much 100 percent public lands.”



The South Shore demo bike path is meeting expectations of developers. Photo Copyright 2014 Carolyn E. Wright

Easements would still need to be obtained, along with a special use permit from the U.S. Forest Service.

This segment is part of a more than 30-mile bike trail that one day will connect Crystal Bay in the north to Stateline in the south. The Stateline demo project is finished. It goes from Kahle Drive to Round Hill Pines Beach. It has already proved to be a popular trail. Douglas County tallied the users with 10,768 on the trail in July. The peak day was July 4 with 963 people. The total for August was 7,842 users; peak was Aug. 8 at 405.

This summer the Laura Drive connection will be built. Still to come is the path involving Edgewood Tahoe Golf Course. Eventually that will link to the Greenway Trail that will go from Meyers to Stateline.

For now, the focus is getting the paperwork done for the Incline segment and then looking for the funding once the final alignment is determined. It's estimated to cost \$12 million if the lake version is chosen. This is the more expensive alternative.

"It would be separated from the highway and would be depressed," Knotts explained.

It's likely the project would be broken into segments. In part this has to do with money, but also because the building season in Tahoe is so short. Next year is the earliest it could start.

No matter the preferred alternative, the first segment is the same – going from Incline to Tunnel Creek.

The mountain version then goes from Tunnel Creek to Memorial Point then to Sand Harbor.

The lake version would cross Highway 28 at Tunnel Creek, go to Memorial Point and end at Sand Harbor.

A 30-space parking lot is proposed for the area near Tunnel Creek Café.

Studies have shown it's not just Tahoe residents and visitors riding at Lake Tahoe. A substantial number of people from Reno bring their bikes to the basin to ride.

"We've identified recreation is the economic driver of Lake Tahoe. Facilities will help bring that to reality," Knotts said.

Once the comment period closes, the agency will review them, incorporate changes and address issues. By the end of June it's likely the project will have been before the TTD, Tahoe Regional Planning Agency and Federal Highway Administration boards for approval.

As work is being done on these three miles, the section of the larger trail is being discussed. This could come to fruition years sooner than once believed possible. This is because the Incline Village General Improvement District has to do work on an export line. IVGID has expressed interest in working with TTD to have the bike trail go in at the same time.

Notes:

- Comments will be taken until April 11. Send them to Brian Judge, TRPA, P.O. Box 5310, Stateline, NV 89448.
 - Washoe County commissioners will have a public hearing March 25 at 6pm at 1001 E. Ninth St., Bldg. A, Reno.
 - Tahoe Transportation District's board will have a meeting April 11 at 9:30am at Sierra Nevada College, 291 Country Club Drive, Room 141, Incline Village.
 - The project document may be found online.
-

Report: Taxes, fees needed to close Calif. water funding gap

By Jeremy B. White, Sacramento Bee

California will need to find billions of dollars annually to improve its water system, according to a Public Policy Institute of California report.

Lawmakers are currently debating several water bond proposals for the 2014 ballot, but the report cautions that the state cannot rely on uncertain bond money to improve water management. It advocates a "broader mix of funding sources" that includes new taxes and fees.

"Although this is a fixable problem," the report says, "it will not happen without a bold, concerted effort on the part of California's state and local leaders, who must convince

California's residents to support the necessary changes with their votes and their pocketbooks."

Read the whole story

Nevada ranchers taking on NDOW

By Will Stone, NPR

When the Nevada Department of Wildlife gave its comments on sage grouse, Ron Torell says the agency threw the livestock industry under the bus.

"We had to get their attention somehow. This did it."

Torell is president of the Nevada Cattlemen's Association and says NDOW's stance on sage grouse could spell the demise for family ranches across the state. That includes the department's support of a Bureau of Land Management plan for dealing with the possible listing of the bird as endangered. He says they handpick data and ignore the reality on the ground.

Read the whole story