

# Lahontan-PG&E sign agreement to clean up toxic SoCal water

By Katie Lucia, Daily Press

HINKLEY – The regional water board signed a \$3.6 million agreement with Pacific Gas & Electric on Wednesday night, dedicating half of that money to build a new water filtration system at the Hinkley School.

The settlement was concerning PG&E's violation of their cleanup order requiring them to contain the rapidly growing plume of water that's contaminated by chromium 6, a cancer-causing metal, said Lauri Kemper, assistant executive officer of the Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board.

PG&E pushed to have as much of that settlement money given to the community as possible, according to company spokesman Jeff Smith. They decided on a water system for the school after community members voiced concerns about the facility's quality of water. Currently PG&E supplies bottled water to the school to address those concerns.

"It's good to see the school got (that money) so they can put a new water system up there and take care of the kids," said Hinkley resident Jim Dodd, who serves on the community advisory committee. "It's just nice to see something getting done."

Barstow Unified School District Interim Superintendent Jeff Malan said the district was excited about the news and looked forward to working with PG&E and the water board.

**Read the whole story**

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# 1 killed, 2 injured in explosion at Bridgeport training center

By Tony Perry, Los Angeles Times

One person was killed and two were severely burned in an explosion Friday night at a family housing complex for Marines stationed at the Mountain Warfare Training Center at Bridgeport in the Eastern Sierra.

Thirty-eight families had to be evacuated as the blast and fire ripped through the Lincoln Military Housing Neighborhood about 8:45pm, damaging seven homes.

The explosion was apparently caused by a propane leak, Marine officials said Saturday. Names of the dead and injured were not released.

The 111-unit housing complex is in Coleville, a Mono County community about 30 miles from the Bridgeport training facility.

East Fork Fire & Paramedic District crews were sent to Highway 395 base.

**Read the whole story**

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# East Coast casino to put 'term limits' on employees

By Emma Jacobs, NPR

A new casino set to open in Atlantic City, N.J., has announced it will set term limits for its front-line staff. When employees' terms run out, they'll have to go through the hiring process again. The casino says the policy will keep its service fresh. Others say the company is taking advantage of a tough job market.

From bellhops to dealers, employees of the new casino – called Revel – will be hired for terms from four to six years. After that, they have to reapply for their jobs and compete against other candidates.

Revel declined to make anyone available for an interview. In a written statement, the company asserts that its employment policy will help it “attract the most highly professional people who are inspired by a highly competitive work environment.”

But it's an unusual way to go. Many who work in employment law or advocacy say they've never heard of anything like this before.

“What they've done here is set up a system that puts their good performers through a gauntlet of having to compete with people who have no record of performance,” says Alice Ballard, a prominent employment attorney who works out of Philadelphia.

Ballard says anyone can be fired from his or her job. But she thinks the casino's policy is more problematic.

“Why would you take your good performers and put them through that competitive process,” she asks, “if you aren't trying to

get rid of a good performer for some other reason?"

Ballard thinks that "other reason" is probably age. To her, this reapplication process looks like a low-profile way for the casino to regularly weed out older employees.

**Read the whole story**

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# **Executive hangar at LT Airport ready for big aircraft**

**By Kathryn Reed**

Lake Tahoe Airport's new hangar in relation to the old one is like comparing a penthouse to an ordinary hotel room.

That's how Michael Golden of Mountain West Aviation described the executive hangar that is on the north end of the property. While he wouldn't disclose the exact cost of the building, it was several hundred thousand dollars.

Having such a facility in South Lake Tahoe means airplane owners who have bigger planes and want them stored out of the elements will be able to do so in Tahoe. In the past, passengers were dropped off and the flight crew would go to Reno to store the plane until called upon to pick up the people.



The executive hangar at Lake Tahoe Airport allows larger planes to be covered.

Photo/Provided

“There are customers during celebrity golf who want their plane in a hangar, but this is more for the itinerant traveler who doesn’t want their plane out in the elements. Ice and snow do not mix well with plane travel,” Golden told *Lake Tahoe News*.

Summer sun and planes is not a good combo either. That’s why it’s expected the hangar is likely to be used year-round.

Size of planes would dictate how many the space could hold. It could fit one big executive jet, or a mix of turbo props – it all depends.

“We would prefer someone to rent it out year-round, but we also know there is a market for people who want their plane in a hangar while visiting,” Golden said. “And if it’s successful, we’ll build another one.”

The airport has other hangars that are owned by the city. If looking to the right of the runway from the deck of the terminal, those are the smaller, city hangars. Golden’s executive hangar is to the left, past his office.

When Golden took over the fixed base operations in December 2007, part of the lease agreement was to eventually build the

hangar. What was there before was so poorly designed that the door opened in the back so a plane could never access it. Instead, it was rented out for storage. An adjacent building had been used for weapons training for South Lake Tahoe police officers.

Both those buildings are gone. The footprint is not identical, but the coverage is the same. Most of the scrap from the old building was recycled.

The new facility has high-intensity, low-voltage throughout. Each wall panel has solid foam as insulation between the metal and outside. The five heaters hanging from the ceiling act as thermal deicing units. Any water coming off the plane goes into a floor drain where there is a water-oil separator.

The whole point is the planes will be more than protected from Mother Nature. The warmth will keep all the parts in working order.

While Mountain West has a deicer, it's expensive to use. But it is a tool Golden envisions will be useful if commercial service resumes.

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## **LTCC                      receives                      6-year accreditation**

Lake Tahoe Community College's accreditation has been reaffirmed for another six years by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges.

The accrediting commission was in South Lake Tahoe last

October to evaluate the two-year school.

LTCC has until Oct. 15 to demonstrate that it has addressed the commission's five recommendations. The recommendations include: continuing LTCC's current planning effort using the Educational Master Plan to drive the technology, facility and human resources plans; adding more quantitative measurements to the college's documents to help with assessment of how well the college is meeting its objectives; building on the work done in course student learning outcomes and accelerate the SLO assessment processes for programs and institution outcomes to meet the fall 2012 accreditation requirements; consistently and formally evaluate all of the college's core systems and processes, including governance, budgeting, communication, planning, and decision-making; and analyze staffing in the administration area and make sure the president's job does not include one-third of the vice president of Business responsibility.

The commission is also concerned about the loss of income resulting from the end of the Good Neighbor Policy between California and Nevada. The commission wants LTCC to provide information on the effect of this policy change.

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## **South Tahoe finance director taking job in Douglas County**

**By Kathryn Reed**

South Lake Tahoe Finance Director Christine Vuletich is leaving in two weeks to take a job in Douglas County.

She was hired in September 2004 by then City Manager Dave Jinkens to replace the retiring Bruce Budman. She is leaving to be assistant county manager/chief financial officer for Douglas County.

Vuletich, 52, told *Lake Tahoe News* she is looking forward to the challenges ahead of her with having more responsibility.

"It's been a great experience working for the city of South Lake Tahoe. We've been through a lot of challenging times," Vuletich said. "I've had wonderful people to work with. There are very talented people here, but I'm ready for new challenges."



Christine  
Vuletich

Her last day in South Lake is Feb. 17. Her first day in Douglas County is Feb. 27. Normally people at this level give their boss at least 30 days notice. Not in this case.

Vuletich's relationship with her bosses has been tenuous at times. This council and previous city councils have had difficulty in getting straight answers from her regarding finances. The same has been true for *Lake Tahoe News*.

At the council meeting earlier this week regarding redevelopment she wasn't even the one to address the council regarding all of the financing involved in the decisions being made.

As assistant county manager, her job will be even greater and

more diverse than it is in South Tahoe.

Vuletich started in South Lake Tahoe with a salary of \$69,000 a year. She is leaving with the pay between \$117,240.03 and \$142,512.24. The 2011-12 budget is not on the city's website, so *Lake Tahoe News* could not find her actual salary. She will be making \$109,000 in Douglas County. All staff there took a 5 percent cut in pay for this fiscal year which began July 1, so it's possible that could be reinstated in the summer. Negotiations with Douglas County bargaining units are just beginning and managers usually get the same increase or cut as the case may be.

Douglas County Manager Steve Mokrohisky told *Lake Tahoe News*, "(Vuletich) is dynamic. She will be a great fit for Douglas County."

Vuletich was one of five finalists for the job. Mokrohisky said everyone in South Tahoe spoke highly of her. However, he said no current or former councilmembers were interviewed.

Douglas County has been without an assistant county manager since July when Mokrohisky took over for Michael Brown who moved to Oregon. And it has not had a finance director in more than a year. With two unsuccessful national searches for a finance director, Mokrohisky decided a different approach was needed. Combining the positions into one also saves the county \$120,000 a year.

Vuletich will be responsible for Douglas County's 2011-12 \$120 million budget. South Lake Tahoe's budget this fiscal year is \$94.7 million. Taking a job in Minden means Vuletich's commute will only be 10 minutes.

City Manager Tony O'Rourke is evaluating his options. Next week he expects to name an interim finance director. After 60 to 90 days a decision will be made as to whether that person is right for the job or if a search beyond the confines of city staff should be conducted. O'Rourke told *Lake Tahoe News*

it's also possible the department could be reorganized.

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# **GOP candidates rally faithful in Nevada**

**By Sean Whaley, Nevada News Bureau**

RENO – From a cheering crowd of several hundred at a brief but energetic Mitt Romney rally to a more subdued event for Rick Santorum hosted by the Republican Jewish Coalition to another well-attended rally for Ron Paul, it was a trifecta of presidential candidates in Reno ahead of the Saturday GOP caucus.

Romney got the balling rolling at the Grove, with an estimated 800 supporters packed inside and standing outside the event center in south Reno. Romney spoke briefly to those standing outside before giving a short but enthusiastic speech to those crowded inside.

Santorum spoke to about 250 people attending an event at the Atlantis hosted by the Republican Jewish Coalition. He focused much of his time on the threat from Iran both to Israel and the world.

Paul's rally at the Grand Sierra Resort attracted more than 1,000 enthusiastic supporters. Paul touched on a number of concerns, including his desire to see the repeal of the

Patriot Act, saying American civil liberties have been eroded since 9-11.

All three candidates are vying for support in the first in the West caucus, a binding vote that will ultimately produce delegates to the Republican National Convention. The fourth contender, Newt Gingrich, spoke in Reno on Wednesday.

Hearing all three candidates speak displayed distinct differences on such issues as foreign policy. Romney called for a stronger military, one so strong that it would neutralize the country's enemies. Santorum focused on the need to deal with Iran and its development of nuclear weapons. Paul said the U.S. foreign policy of intervention around the world has been a failure.

### **Romney focuses on Obama**

Romney spent the first few minutes of his 18-minute speech criticizing President Obama's failure to restore the economy, acting like the front-runner he is in Nevada's First in the West caucus. He did not mention any of the other GOP contenders in his remarks.

The rest of the speech was more to rally the troops to turn out at the caucus to lock in a victory and ensure continued momentum in his quest to win the Republican nomination.

Romney, expected to win the Nevada caucus based on poll results, went on the attack on Obama for the high unemployment rate, reduced median income and high rate of foreclosures.

"And the people in this country are really suffering, in part because of the extraordinary failures of this president," he said. "This presidency has not worked. And these are not just numbers and statistics. These are real people."

Romney also focused on his leadership abilities, saying Obama has not been a leader.

"And this president we elected to lead, he chose to follow, and now it is time for him to get out of the way," he said.

Romney cited his successful business experience, his work in bringing the Olympics to Salt Lake City, and his successes as governor of Massachusetts even while having to deal with a majority of Democrats.

"This election is not just about replacing a president," he said. "This is also an election about setting a course for America. Because this president and the people with him have a very different view about where America should go than I have, and I believe that you have.

"First of all, he would take us towards a greater and greater level of debt," Romney said. "He is willing to spend a trillion dollars more a year than we take in, every year."

Obama is taking the country down the same path to economic disaster as Greece, Italy and Spain, he said.

Romney said he will cut the federal budget's share of the economy from 25 percent to 20 percent and restore fiscal sanity.

He also criticized Obama for his energy policy's reliance on alternative energy, and his foreign policy, calling his actions regarding Afghanistan naive.

### **Santorum talks about the threat from Iran**

Santorum earned a lot of applause for his comments regarding the relationship between the U.S. and Israel. He too focused on the need to defeat Obama, citing the president's reluctance to impose sanctions against Iran for its development of a nuclear weapon.

"This is the quintessential threat not just to Israel, but is the quintessential threat to the world," he said. "We need a president who will step forward and define the enemy as to who

they are.”

Obama’s approach has been one of appeasement, Santorum said.

“We need to stand firm, define the enemy, and do what we did with the Soviet Union,” he said. “Stand up and define evil as the evil they are.”

### **Paul talks about civil liberties and personal responsibility**

Paul took his message of less government and more personal responsibility to an enthusiastic crowd of supporters.

He said of Nevada: “This is a great state because guess what, there are a lot of people here who really like freedom.

“In the last hundred years I would say we’ve gone in the wrong directions, we’ve gradually have had our freedoms eroded,” Paul said. “We’ve adopted a foreign policy, really, more recently in the last several decades, of a policy that has given us nothing but grief.

“And that is a policy of military intervention in other countries for not very many good reasons at all,” he said. “And I think we need to change our foreign policy and bring our troops home.”

Paul said the country would be stronger with less intervention around the world.

“This idea that the more money you spend in militarism the safer we’ll be is a failed policy; it is a myth,” he said.

Paul also said Congress should abolish the Transportation Safety Administration, created after the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks.

The effect of this intense round of Nevada appearances by the four remaining GOP candidates should become clear late Saturday.

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# Brown negotiating tribal gaming deals as they fill his campaign fund

By David Siders, Sacramento Bee

Gov. Jerry Brown is raising hundreds of thousands of dollars for his tax campaign from California Indian tribes at the same time many tribes are seeking to renegotiate lucrative gambling compacts with him.

The Democratic governor, who proposes increasing the state sales tax and income taxes on California's highest earners, is considered more accommodating of tribal interests than his predecessor, Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger, and his administration is in compact talks "on various levels" with 15 to 20 tribes, Brown's tribal negotiator, Jacob Appelsmith, said Tuesday.

Any compacts Brown signs could significantly affect a gambling industry that generates more than \$7 billion annually and millions of dollars in payments to the state.

More than nine months ahead of the November tax election, a handful of tribes have contributed more than \$300,000 to Brown's tax campaign, a quarter of the \$1.2 million Brown on Tuesday reported raising in 2011.

Tribes donated \$925,000 to Brown's gubernatorial effort in 2010, and they contributed more than \$200,000 last year to two charter schools he started in Oakland.

Brown spokeswoman Elizabeth Ashford said there is "no

connection between any sort of donations and decision-making on this issue or others.”

**Read the whole story**

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# **Rove spends day in Reno touting future GOP success**

**By Sean Whaley, Nevada News Bureau**

RENO – Former Sparks resident and George W. Bush presidential adviser Karl Rove predicted Thursday that both houses of Congress will go Republican in the November general election, but said the presidential election is up in the air even with President Obama’s low approval ratings.

Rove, speaking at the Reno-Sparks Chamber of Commerce event Directions 2012, predicted the Senate will see Republican control with a minimum of 52 seats, but possibly as many as 54.

Republicans could lose a handful of House seats but will maintain control, he said.

No president has won re-election with poll numbers as low as Obama has now, but he is a tough competitor with \$1 billion to spend, Rove said.

“It’s going to be difficult,” he said, predicting that the U.S. will see “the nastiest, ugliest general election campaign we’ve seen in our lifetime.”

The Obama campaign team will put the Republican candidate on trial and prosecute tough and hard, and with \$1 billion in the

bank, as often as they can, Rove said.

Winning 51 Senate seats is important if Republicans win the White House as well, because it will mean the immediate repeal of the federal health care law, he said. The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act passed in the Senate using a process called reconciliation, which requires only 51 votes to reverse, Rove said.

In his comments to several hundred attendees at the event, Rove noted that the federal Health Care Law is the only major piece of social legislation since polling began in the 1930s that is less popular after it was passed.

“Why?” Rove asked. “Because every single promise made about it is turning out not to be true.”

He declined to pick a winner of the Republican presidential nomination, although he said, “(Mitt) Romney looks like he could be the guy.”

“You have a big role to play in that,” Rove said of Nevada GOP voters.

Nevada’s Republican presidential caucus, the first in the West, is Saturday. The four remaining contenders for the nomination are visiting Nevada to make their case with GOP voters. Romney is the favorite to win.

Rove, who lived in Sparks from age 9 to 15, served as senior adviser to Bush from 2000-07 and deputy chief of staff from 2004-07. Now he writes a weekly op-ed for the *Wall Street Journal*.

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# Study: 3 Tahoe area counties expected to see job growth

By Anne Knowles

Three counties near or surrounding Lake Tahoe should see faster job growth in the coming decade compared to the state as a whole, and more quickly than in the nearby Sacramento region, according to a recently released report.



Alpine, El Dorado and Placer counties – the Golden Sierra region – should see about 18,000 new jobs by 2015 and nearly 32,000 by 2020, according to the report by the Center for Strategic Economic Research in Sacramento.

That's a growth rate of 11.1 percent between 2010-15 and 19.6 percent between 2010-20, compared to 10 percent and 13.6 percent in the state overall, and 7.2 percent and 12 percent in Sacramento, for the same time periods.

Many of those jobs will come in the health care sector, which posted gains in the area even during the recession, and a rebound in construction, which lost more than 7,600 jobs between 2005-10 in the three counties.

Some of the upswing in construction, the report says, will come from retooling for green technology, which may require skilled workers like carpenters and electricians to retrain. In addition, new jobs will be available in green technology-specific occupations such as solar photovoltaic installers and technicians, and solar designers and engineers, as well as sales representatives for such products. The counties are home to about a quarter of the region's clean energy technology firms, including SMA America and Solar Power Inc., and close to 16 percent of the jobs, according to the report.

The report projects 7,254 new health care jobs in the Golden Sierra by 2020, 5,046 in accommodations and food services, 4,693 in construction, 2,816 in government and more than 1,000 each in retail, finance and insurance, and professional, scientific and technical services. The projected job losses, both less than 100 jobs, are in two job sectors: agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting; and mining.

About a dozen job sectors will post double-digit job growth, according to the report. Twenty occupations, including bookkeepers, cooks, registered nurses and retail salespersons, will account for 42 percent of the new jobs.

Job growth may be faster in the area, but it comes on the heels of higher job losses in the last half decade. Between 2005 and 2010, about 16,000 jobs were lost in El Dorado, Placer and Alpine counties, for a decline of 9 percent, compared to a drop of 7 percent and 5 percent in the Sacramento region and the state as a whole, respectively.

Most of the job losses in the Golden Sierra region were in construction (7,625), professional, scientific and technical services (2,494) and retail (2,194). The only gains in that time period were agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting (22), utilities (13), health care and social assistance (3,233) and other activities including government (1,328).

In 2010, nearly 32,000 Golden Sierra residents were unemployed for close to 12 percent unemployment, compared to about 5 percent unemployment in 2005, the report says. But after adding underemployed and discouraged workers no longer looking for work the real unemployment was 81 percent higher.

Nearly half, or 48 percent, of the workforce leaves the area for work and only about 74 percent of those are replaced by workers commuting from elsewhere. From 2004-09, 40 percent of workers in the area were categorized as high wage earners earning more than \$3,333 a month, 32 percent were considered

moderate wage workers making between \$1,251 and \$3,333 a month and 28 were low wage earners making less than \$1,251 monthly.

The report, Golden Sierra Area Labor Market Analysis, was commissioned by the Golden Sierra Workforce Investment Board in Auburn.