

2 wildland fires burning on West Slope of El Dorado County

Updated Dec. 22 9:35pm: Both fires have been extinguished.

By Kathryn Reed

Two fires are burning this morning in the Eldorado National Forest. The smaller of the two is near Kyburz and is visible as people drive along Highway 50. The other is in the Georgetown Ranger District near Nevada Point Ridge.

Winds knocked down power lines, igniting the fire in the American River Canyon, according to Frank Mosbacher, spokesman for the U.S. Forest Service.

“This is the time of year when wind would have an influence on fire, but fuels are moist and temperatures are low,” Mosbacher told *Lake Tahoe News* at 10:15am Dec. 22. “There are a lot of things working in the favor of firefighters. We don’t anticipate it getting much bigger.”

The fire had burned a little more than a quarter-acre, staying on the ground, and was not expected to get much bigger before firefighters put it out. A delay in dousing all the flames was because crews had to wait for PG&E to cut power to the fallen lines.

The California Highway Patrol evacuated one resident in the area before firefighters arrived. He has since been allowed to return.

Firefighters were also working a 9-acre blaze on the West Slope near Nevada Point Ridge.

Youth loved being on slopes; chairlift fall remains under investigation

By Peter Hecht, Sacramento Bee

He was 7 years old and loved to ski, a child described as simply "happy out on the slopes."

Now members of the Sugar Bowl Ski Team are being comforted by grief counselors and are offering their own condolences and support to the family of John Henderson, who was a second-grader at North Davis Elementary School.

The boy, a member of the ski team, fell Sunday from a chairlift he was riding with two of his teammates. He died two days later, after surgery at Renown Medical Center in Reno, according to officials of the resort and its ski team. What caused the boy to fall from the lift, in what ski industry officials described as an exceptionally rare accident, remained under investigation Wednesday.

His death brought heartbreak to the 400-member Sugar Bowl Ski Team, which offers programs for youths 5 to 18.

"We're a close community, and we're devastated for John and his family," said Bill Hudson, the ski team's executive director. "We're really just focusing on what we can do as a community to support them at this time."

John Henderson was in his second year with the ski team. The

boy was an avid mountain enthusiast, whom Hudson described as “an excellent skier” who could “ski any run on the mountain.”

“I’m not sure how many years he had skied, but he was quite proficient,” Hudson said.

The boy was the son of Mark Henderson, associate dean of the medical school at UC Davis, and Helen Chew, leader of the UC Davis Cancer Center clinical breast cancer program.

Read the whole story

State parks workers want governor to remove their boss

By Matt Weiser, Sacramento Bee

The managers who operate California’s state parks say they have lost faith in their leader, and are urging Gov. Jerry Brown to appoint a replacement.

Ruth Coleman, director of the Department of Parks and Recreation, was appointed by former Gov. Gray Davis in 2002. It has been rumored for weeks that Brown is considering a new appointment for the post. Evan Westrup, a spokesman for the governor, declined to say Monday whether a new appointment is in the works.



Ruth Coleman
was in Tahoe
in October for
the Washoe
Meadow State
Park hearing.
Photo/LTN

In a Dec. 14 letter to the governor, the State Parks Peace Officer Management Association shared a recent poll of its approximately 125 members. The poll found that 93 percent want a new director. About 56 percent of the members participated in the poll.

“Director Coleman is an honorable person, but she has been largely absent in making sense of the new economic realities,” the letter said. “We understand that there is some discussion within the administration regarding the director’s appointment process. Consequently, we wanted you to know our position.”

Read the whole story

Rogich: Nevada would be better with January caucus

By Sean Whaley, Nevada News Bureau

CARSON CITY – Long-time Republican political operative Sig Rogich disagrees with comments from former Gov. Bob List that Nevada is better off with a Feb. 4 GOP presidential caucus rather than the January date that had been proposed initially.

“Why in the world would you want to step back, and we’re not going to be rewarded for such a thing, all things being equal,” Rogich said in an interview on the Nevada NewsMakers television program this week. “I just don’t think that it makes any sense to be that far back when you have an opportunity to be up in play.”

Rogich was responding to a question from host Sam Shad about List’s remarks in an interview on the show last week when he said Nevada is better off with the Feb. 4 GOP caucus.

List, a Nevada State Republican Party national committeeman, said the primary contest won’t be over before Feb. 4, making Nevada a key battleground for Republican candidates.

Nevada was embroiled in a controversy earlier this year over when to hold its caucus because of Florida’s decision to move up its primary date. Nevada Republican Party officials ultimately agreed to the Feb. 4 date for the “First in the West” GOP caucus.

During the NewsMakers interview, Rogich predicted Romney will win Nevada’s caucus. He won handily here in 2008.

But he also said the Romney campaign has failed to clearly define the former Massachusetts governor.

“And I think that’s their big problem in this campaign,” Rogich said. “He’s articulate, eloquent, certainly a good looking guy, he’s got a great accomplished history of a lot of things. But if you ask the average person what do you think about Mitt Romney and what he stands for, you’d probably get mixed reviews. People just don’t know where to categorize him.”

Rogich, who worked with Newt Gingrich during his time at the White House, said the candidate is on message and has momentum, but he has the ability to “create chaos from order.”

But Rogich predicted Gingrich will win in Iowa, is tightening up the race in New Hampshire and will win in South Carolina.

Rogich also said he still believes President Obama is the favorite to win, if the election were today.

“All things being equal, if you count the electoral map, he may win very narrowly,” Rogich said. “But if he carries some of those states that he is likely to carry, at this juncture today, then I still think he is still a favorite to win.”

Is Nevada still the national leader in gaming regulation?

By Richard N. Velotta, Las Vegas Sun

By the end of this week, Nevada is expected to be the first state in the nation to have regulations in place for Internet poker play.

It's historic. It's indicative of the state's leadership role in the gaming industry.

And some say it will be a big step toward bringing new technology companies to the state.

Of course, it would be much more meaningful if online poker play weren't against the law in the United States. Federal law enforcement officers haven't been picking on players who participate in online card games. But they have clamped down

on banks that handle the financial transactions and operators of poker websites.

Nevada and other states are gearing up to regulate it only if and when federal lawmakers approve legislation removing those barriers.

In the weeks leading up to consideration of the new regulations, Nevada has received lots of attention for its leadership role. A recent Internet gambling conference in Las Vegas referred to Nevada as “the gold standard of gaming regulation.”

But is it?

Since Nevada legalized casino gambling in 1931, 21 states have followed suit, with most of them joining the club between 1989 and 2008. Not only is Nevada the oldest commercial casino jurisdiction in the country – New Jersey, at No. 2, first legalized gaming operations in 1976 – it’s also the largest by far, with 256 casinos and gross gaming revenue of \$10.4 billion in the 2010 fiscal year.

Read the whole story

Special courts give veterans a second chance

By Foon Rhee, Sacramento Bee

Amos Lee Gregory Jr. didn’t get help for post-traumatic stress from his time aboard Navy attack submarines. He got by – until the day he snapped.

He was headed to prison – until he found a court just for military veterans. There, he finally received treatment and counseling, and also awakened an interest in art that is now his career.

Wednesday marked a big milestone – after 18 months in Santa Clara County’s veterans court, he “graduated.”

He tried to act nonchalant about it, but when the judge declared that Gregory had completed all his requirements and wiped his record clean, his fist pump gave away how much it means.

“Everything,” he told me. “The court saved my life.”

Veterans courts have been steadily expanding across California. Now, they’re coming to the Sacramento region; judges and advocates in El Dorado County plan to start one on Jan. 1. The state Department of Veterans Affairs hopes 20 are established by July – just as thousands of soldiers come home to California from Iraq and Afghanistan.

Read the whole story

Youth dies from injuries after falling from chairlift

By Reno Gazette-Journal

SODA SPRINGS – A 7-year-old boy has died after falling about 60 feet from a chair lift at the Sugar Bowl ski resort west of Lake Tahoe.

Resort spokesman John Monson says the boy, a member of the Sugar Bowl Ski Team, died Tuesday due to injuries sustained in the fall. He was practicing with the team when he fell Sunday from the Mount Lincoln lift.

The boy was taken to Renown Medical Center in Reno, where he had surgery to relieve pressure in his skull from a head injury.

Read the whole story

California, Nevada two of the worst states for homeless children

By Marisol Bello, USA Today

One in 45 children in the United States – 1.6 million children – were living on the street, in homeless shelters or motels, or doubled up with other families last year, according to the National Center on Family Homelessness.

The numbers represent a 33 percent increase from 2007, when there were 1.2 million homeless children, according to a report the center is releasing Tuesday.

“This is an absurdly high number,” says Ellen Bassuk, president of the center. “What we have new in 2010 is the effects of a man-made disaster caused by the economic recession. ... We are seeing extreme budget cuts, foreclosures and a lack of affordable housing.”

The report paints a bleaker picture than one by the Department

of Housing and Urban Development, which nonetheless reported a 28 percent increase in homeless families, from 131,000 in 2007 to 168,000 in 2010.

Dennis Culhane, a University of Pennsylvania professor of social policy, says HUD's numbers are much smaller because they count only families living on the street or in emergency shelters.

"It is a narrower standard of homelessness," he says. However, Culhane says, "the bottom line is we've shown an increase in the percentage of homeless families."

The study, a state-by-state report card, looks at four years' worth of Education Department data. It assesses how homeless children fare based on factors including the state's wages, poverty and foreclosure rates, cost of housing and its programs for homeless families.

The states where homeless children fare the best are Vermont, Minnesota, Nebraska, North Dakota and Maine.

It finds the worst states for homeless children are Southern states where poverty is high, including Alabama, Mississippi and Arkansas, and states decimated by foreclosures and job losses, such as Arizona, California and Nevada.

Read the whole story

S. Lake Tahoe man arrested on pot charges in Nebraska

By North Platte Bulletin

In another weekend drug bust on Interstate 80, an Arizona man was stopped Dec. 16 for speeding and ended up in jail after a Nebraska State Patrol trooper reportedly found 99 pounds of marijuana in the trunk of his car.

Just before 8pm Dec. 16, a trooper stopped an eastbound 2008 Chevy Malibu for speeding on I-80 near Alda, in Hall County, NSP spokeswoman Deb Collins said. An NSP dog sensed the odor of marijuana at the rear. The trooper searched and found a wrapped bale of marijuana in the trunk.

The driver, William R. Reid, 75, of Mesa, Ariz. was lodged in the Hall County Jail, charged with possession of marijuana with intent to deliver.

Four days earlier, state troopers seized nearly 80 pounds of pot, including 20 pounds from a car near Paxton after the driver was stopped for speeding.

Slightly less than 20 pounds of marijuana and 1.02 ounces of hashish were located in luggage in the cargo area, Collins said.

The driver Chris R. Loeffler, 30, of Auburn and a passenger Dean J. Meyer, 31, of South Lake Tahoe were taken to the Keith County Jail on Dec. 12, charged with possession of marijuana with intent to deliver.

[Read the whole story](#)

4 DUI arrests in South Tahoe

in 3 days

The winter holiday anti-DUI crackdown resulted in a significant number of DUI arrests overnight from routine traffic enforcement and special Avoid the 6 DUI deployments in South Lake Tahoe.

From 12:01am Dec. 16 through Dec. 18, South Lake Tahoe police officers arrested four individuals on charges of driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs. In 2010, five DUI arrests occurred during the same weekend.

On Friday, one driver was arrested after crashing his Toyota truck into the back of a Stateline hotel. Sunday night, two drivers were arrested from one traffic stop. While working a DUI patrol, Officers observed a blue Toyota SUV pull into the driveway of Ski Run Liquor, stopping in the middle of the driveway. They observed Wendy Ebanks, 36, of Longview exit the driver's seat and get in the passenger seat. They then observed Anthony Mancini, 36, of Logan, Utah, drive away.

When stopped, both were reportedly intoxicated.

On Dec. 23, a DUI checkpoint will be conducted in South Lake Tahoe. Extra patrols will continue through the weekend.