

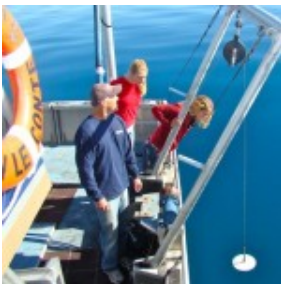
Lake Tahoe's famed clarity getting substantially murkier

By Katherine E. Hill

Lake Tahoe's world-renowned water clarity dropped 3.7 feet in 2010 from 68.1 feet to 64.4 feet, the second-lowest clarity level ever recorded.

The drop in clarity is the result of climate change and increased algae growth, according to the UC Davis Tahoe Environmental Research Center in the annual State of the Lake Report released Friday.

Lake Tahoe's famed clarity can increase or decrease based on any number of factors such as fine particles, algae growth, sediment runoff, snowmelt and others. Researchers say the decrease between 2009 and 2010 in clarity is the result of climate change that may have allowed for the growth of a tiny, free-floating algae named *Cyclotella*. These tiny algae, which proliferate in warmer temperatures, have grown significantly in recent years.



The Secchi disc is lowered into Lake Tahoe for one of several readings.

Photos/TERC

“This year, in particular, these single-cell algae were concentrated very close to the surface, strongly scattering light and thereby impacting lake clarity,” said John Reuter, associate director of TERC in a release about the decline in clarity.

The State of the Lake report also calls for continued joint efforts by California and Nevada to manage the health of Lake Tahoe. The Nevada Legislature passed a bill in June to pull out of the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency Compact by 2015 unless the Regional Plan is amended.

“While land use activities, resource management activities and policy can be controlled to conform to geopolitical boundaries, the waters of Lake Tahoe are not constrained by these human boundaries,” the report states. “What happens in the waters of Lake Tahoe is a direct reflection of activities in both states. If a concrete example of why Lake Tahoe needs to be managed jointly by the two states is needed, then this is one.”

Optimism despite decline

The clarity report also reports a trend in increased clarity during the winter months, with decreased clarity occurring during the warmer, summer months. Researchers stated in the report that improvements in winter clarity measurements may be due to recent efforts to reduce urban stormwater flows, but that those gains are being lost in the summer, which sees higher than normal temperatures due to climate change.

“There is every reason to believe that if it were not for the decades of watershed management, development policy and water quality restoration projects, the lake’s transparency would be worse than it is today,” Geoffrey Schladow, TERC’s director, said in the release.

Despite the drop in clarity, researchers remain positive about the overall health of the lake. The lake clarity chart shows

the measurement through the years.

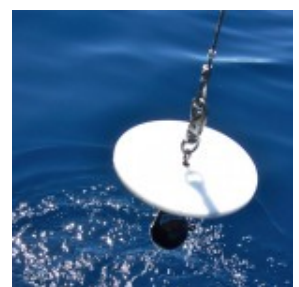
“Taken alone, that decline in clarity is unusual, but it is within the range of normal fluctuations,” Schladow said.

For the first time, researchers also have gleaned a bigger picture of Lake Tahoe’s clarity using remote sensing to record data from around the lake. Most notable in the remote sensing findings is that clarity on the East Shore is lower than the West Shore for most of the year, according to the report. As well, clarity generally improves 1 mile off the shoreline than at points closer to the shore.

How clarity is defined

Lake clarity is measured by several scientific means, but it has been continuously measured since 1968 using a Secchi disc, a 10-inch white disc that is lowered into Lake Tahoe throughout the year to come up with a yearly average. The Secchi measurements are the longest continuous measure of Lake Tahoe’s water clarity.

The Secchi disc was developed in 1865 for use by ships to measure the depths of harbors, but has been used in modern times to measure the clarity of water.



The Secchi disc is the main means to measuring lake clarity.

The Secchi disc measurements are taken by researchers every 10 days at solar noon at the same two locations – off the Tahoe City shelf and off Homewood toward the middle of the lake, according to Heather Segale, TERC's Education and Outreach director.

The disc is lowered from the boat by a metered wheel and the researcher marks the point on the wheel at which the disc disappears from view, Segale explained, and then marks the point at which the disc reappears as it is raised. The distance between these two points is averaged for the day's reading.

Since the researchers rely on their eyesight to mark the points at which the disc disappears and reappears, they are required to have their eyesight checked regularly, cannot wear sunglasses, and measurements are performed only during smooth waters, according to Segale. The annual clarity measurement is an average of about 20 to 25 measurements; about 10 are thrown out due to anomalies such as inclement weather, wind and other factors.

While the Secchi disc measurements represent the longest study of the lake's clarity, researchers also rely on other measurements to gauge clarity. Researchers use several high-tech instruments mounted on a Seabird profiler: a transmissometer that measures how much light of a certain wavelength is received over a fix path; an optical backscatter sensor that measures how much light from a LED is scattered backward by particles; a photosynthetically active radiation sensor that measures solar radiation; and a turbidimeter that measures the cloudiness of water.

In addition to the annual clarity report, the State of the Lake report also addresses efforts to control aquatic invasive species, such as the Asian clam that were first reported in Lake Tahoe in 2002. The report also addresses the impact of climate change on precipitation, changes in the lake's water

temperature and effect of lake warming on circulation.

To view the report, go online.

Dropout rate in California on the decline

Publisher's note: *In Lake Tahoe Unified School District, South Tahoe High reports 13 dropouts for a rate of 1.1 percent; Mt. Tallac High had 18 drop out for a 18.8 percent rate. In the Tahoe-Truckee Joint Unified District, Tahoe Truckee High lost six students for a rate of 0.8 percent; North Tahoe High had two drop out for a rate of 0.6 percent; and Sierra High lost one student for a rate of 2 percent.*

By Phillip Reese and Melody Gutierrez, Sacramento Bee

The high school dropout rate fell sharply in Sacramento and across California during the 2010 school year, as roughly two-thirds of the state's school districts showed improvement, according to state data released Thursday.

Despite the one-year decline, education leaders say too many students are dropping out of high school, especially among blacks and Latinos.

This year report is billed as the most accurate picture of student graduation rates because they were tracked for four years by the state's California Longitudinal Pupil Achievement Data System, or CALPADS.

In previous years, school district officials expressed skepticism over the four-year dropout rates, which were calculated using assumptions because the system had yet to

collect four years of data.

In releasing the data Thursday, state Superintendent of Public Instruction Tom Torlakson said the conversation about dropout rates now can move from how they were calculated to how to lower statewide figures.

Read the whole story

Positive earnings report for Liberty Energy's parent firm

Liberty Energy's parent company Algonquin Power & Utilities Corp. today announced financial results for the second quarter ended June 30, 2011, with results showing increased revenue, earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation, and amortization and earnings compared to the previous year.

For the second quarter of 2011, revenue was \$66.8 million as compared to \$42 million in the second quarter of 2010.

Liberty Energy provides electricity to the California side of the Lake Tahoe Basin as well as to Alpine County.

Officials said the increase in revenue over 2010 is primarily the result of a subsidiary of Liberty Utilities Co. acquiring a California-based electricity distribution utility and related generation assets at the beginning of 2011, increases at the end of 2010 due to the results of rate case approvals for revenue increases in Liberty Utilities water distribution and wastewater treatment business, and the Energy-from-Waste facility being operational as compared to the same time last year when it was undergoing repairs.

Alleged kidnapping of 93-year-old woman ends in S. Lake Tahoe

By Kimball Bennion, Great Falls Tribune

A South Dakota man accused of kidnapping his elderly mother from an assisted-living facility in Great Falls, Mont., was arrested, along with his daughter, Wednesday while trying to secure legal guardianship of his mother in South Lake Tahoe, police announced Thursday.

Great Falls Police had been searching for James Wainscoat, 70, since Saturday, when he allegedly drove away with his mother from Renaissance Senior Care at 2000 16th Ave. S. Police classified the action as kidnapping because Wainscoat did not have power of attorney for his 93-year-old mother, Troy Wainscoat, who police say has Alzheimer's disease. One of James Wainscoat's siblings and that sibling's mother-in-law are the only ones who can legally make decisions for Troy Wainscoat.

Court documents state that James Wainscoat showed up at the facility with three of his children, including 18-year-old Ishayah Wainscoat. James Wainscoat told facility workers that he had gifts for his mother, which included a cake that read "Bon Voyage Grandma Troy."

According to a charging affidavit, workers told them that they didn't know anyone by the name of Troy Wainscoat, and Ishayah

Wainscoat responded by saying: “You can’t keep me from my grandma, I need to see her.”

James Wainscoat allegedly pushed a worker out of his way and led his mother out the door, even though facility personnel said he couldn’t take her. James Wainscoat and Ishayah Wainscoat drove away, allegedly leaving Troy Wainscoat’s walker in the parking lot.

Read the whole story

Zephyr Cove doesn’t have fuel for private boaters

By Kathryn Reed

Boaters beware – don’t expect Zephyr Cove Resort to be able to fill your tank.

The fuel leak discovered earlier this summer at the South Shore marina is making fueling difficult even for the resort’s fleet.

“Right now, the fuel is being used to fill our fleet of recreational watercraft. If we are unable to accommodate private boaters, we will direct them to one of the other marinas,” David Freireich, spokesman for Aramark, told *Lake Tahoe News*.



The Dixie is having to fuel up at Lakeside Marina, but still leaves from Zephyr Cove.

Photo/LTN file

Boaters are telling *Lake Tahoe News* they are being turned away. This can be a bit precarious for boaters with the fuel needle near empty.

Aramark is the concessionaire on the U.S. Forest Service owned property.

This is where the M.S. Dixie II is docked. While the paddle-wheeler is still operating, the fueling schedule has changed. Now the vessel is going to Lakeside Marina to fill up on thousands of gallons of diesel.

The leak was discovered during the replacement of fuel pumps to two tanks that are a part of the underground storage tank system.

“A smaller, temporary fuel storage system has been installed at Zephyr Cove, until a permanent solution is finalized,” Freireich said. “We apologize for any inconvenience and are working with the Forest Service and NDEP (Nevada Department of Environmental Protection) to finalize plans for a new storage system, so that we can resume normal fueling services as soon as possible.

The financial impact of the leak to the resort is unknown. There has been no evidence of drinking water being impacted. Soil samples continue to be taken, with cleanup under way.

Route, fare changes planned for BlueGo

BlueGo bus routes and fares are likely to be tweaked by the Tahoe Transportation District board of trustees at their meeting this morning.

The changes, if approved, would go into effect after Labor Day. One of the big changes is stopping the significant subsidy to the on-call service for the general public. The rate is going to be about triple what it was – to be \$10 a ride.

Tokens for the South Shore-based bus system are being eliminated. This will save money in the long run.

Another piece to the streamlining is making the routes in Carson Valley and Carson City function better.

The board meets this morning at 9:30 at Sierra Nevada College in Incline Village.

– Kathryn Reed

Tahoe Fund aims to be conduit to bring cash to basin

By Katherine E. Hill

The nonprofit Tahoe Fund will announce funding for its first basin project at a fundraising dinner on Lake Tahoe's West Shore next week. The Tahoe Fund, formed about a year ago, plans to raise much-needed funds for projects in the Lake Tahoe Basin identified by TRPA's environmental improvement program that would otherwise go unfunded.

The Tahoe Fund's kick-off dinner at West Shore Café will feature guests of honor Sen. Dianne Feinstein, D-Calif., and her husband Rick Blum, one of the original contributors who sparked the formation of the fund, said board chairwoman Cindy Gustafson, who is general manager of the Tahoe City Public Utility District.

The idea behind the Tahoe Fund was to look at the basin as a whole and identify projects that need funding and then work to raise those funds, Gustafson said.



Tahoe Fund is designed to bring money to the basin for environmental and recreation projects.

Photo/LTN file

“There’s the Tahoe Rim Trail Association fund raising for the Tahoe Rim Trail, and there’s SWEPP (Sierra Water Education Partnerships) raising funds for education projects in schools, but there’s not one doing a broader spectrum for the TRPA’s EIP,” Gustafson said.

The EIP, or environmental improvement program, was formed following the 1997 Presidential Forum that brought a renewed commitment to preserving Lake Tahoe’s ecosystem. EIP projects target watersheds, forestation, air quality, transportation, recreation and much more through a \$2.45 billion plan to protect Lake Tahoe, but much of the projects lack the funding to make them a reality. The Tahoe Fund’s goal is become that funding partner, Gustafson says.

“We thought a nonprofit focused on those sort of projects would resonate with donors, with locals, and with foundations that would fund a nonprofit, but not a government agency,” she said. “We could be the intermediary to donate to large projects.”

Projects targeted by the Tahoe Fund will come from three areas: conservation, recreation and environmental education/stewardship, which could translate to projects like bike trails, interpretive programs, lakeside parks and restoration work. The fund will not perform any of the work on the projects, rather it will raise funds to pay for the projects through private donations, grant writing and other fundraising methods.

“People want to fund something that they can see and touch and feel,” Gustafson said about the types of projects the Fund will target.

The board was already identified a laundry list of projects in its Project Portfolio that lack the necessary funding. The

portfolio, which can be found online, includes basinwide projects such as restoration work in Glenbrook; boat parking and accessibility work at Sand Harbor; Lake Tahoe bike projects around the lake; an ADA-accessible path and fishing platform at Spooner Lake; interpretive signage; a Tahoe Atlas that will be a collection of scientific information; Upper Truckee River and Incline Creek restoration; Tahoe Rim Trail projects; and much more.

The first projects identified for initial funding will be announced at the Aug. 15 \$300-per-plate dinner.

Gustafson credits the idea behind the Tahoe Fund to Patrick Wright, executive director of the California Tahoe Conservancy and a board member of the fund. His idea was to form a “sister nonprofit group” to a government agency, in this case the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency, to fund projects in the basin. The Tahoe Fund is modeled after similar nonprofits like The Yosemite Fund.

“When I first arrived in the basin about five years ago, it struck me that the Conservancy didn’t have a nonprofit partner,” Wright said, citing similar nonprofit partnerships with Yosemite and Golden Gate national parks. “I said let’s see if we can pull something together in the basin.

“The Tahoe Fund can focus on a broad range of conservation and recreation projects,” Wright said. “There’s been a tremendous interest and people are attracted to on-the-ground projects. We’re going to focus on projects that are ready to go, that are visible and that have support ... projects that people can use and enjoy.”

Years of discussions about a way to see basinwide projects funded led to a meeting about a year ago that became the kick off for the Tahoe Fund with a significant contribution from Blum, and a challenge from Feinstein to “provide her with the private part to partner with the federal agency to fund these

projects,” Gustafson said.

The first year has been focused on logistics, Gustafson said, with the naming of the board, which includes many high-profile Tahoe residents and second homeowners, business people and conservationists, along with significant fundraising and identifying projects for the fund’s initial funding cycling.

The 17-member board of directors includes many high-profile board members, but Gustafson stresses that it draws from a broad spectrum of the community.

“The board has both private individuals, private business people, as well as public officials, conservationist and environmentalists ... we’re trying to balance the board,” she said. The board also includes second homeowners and people with public policy background.

Among the board members are Allen Biaggi, the immediate past chair of the TRPA Governing Board; Art Chapman, president of JMA Ventures, which owns Alpine and Homewood ski areas; Jim Boyd, who serves on the California Energy Commission; Blaise Carrig, co-president of Vail Resorts, which owns Heavenly and Northstar-at-Tahoe; entrepreneurs Dan Eaton and Roger Wittenberg; Jim Lawrence, administrator of the Nevada Division of State Lands; Andy Wirth, CEO of Squaw Valley; and environmentalists Cory Ritchie and Trish Ronald, among others.

The fund has been in a major fundraising drive since May, Gustafson said, and the board hopes to close its Founders’ Circle campaign by the end of the year. And, with donations from board members and a grant from the California Tahoe Conservancy, the Fund should have operating expenses for the next two to four years, which will then allow them to focus on funding projects in the basin. The Tahoe Fund currently has a few part-time staff members and hopes to eventually add full-time staff, but the goal is to keep overhead low, Gustafson said.

Lake Tahoe Summit

The Tahoe Fund also is the organizing sponsor the 15th Annual Tahoe Summit on Aug. 16 hosted by Feinstein at Homewood Mountain Resort from 9 to 11:30am. California Gov. Jerry Brown and Nevada Gov. Brian Sandoval are expected to attend this year's summit; the first time governors from both states have attended since 1997. Along with Feinstein, speakers will likely include Sens. Harry Reid, D-Nev., and Dean Heller, R-Nev., as well as other federal, state and local officials.

The theme of this year's Tahoe Summit is "Stewardship and Sustainability in Challenging Fiscal Times." Family oriented activities including a youth art contest and interactive displays will take place at the summit. The summit is free to attend and is open to the public.

7,000 acres near Truckee off-limits to developers

By Jane Braxton Little, Sacramento Bee

TRUCKEE – Conservationist groups and Sierra Pacific Industries have reached a first-of-its-kind agreement that protects wet meadows and wildlife habitat in the headwaters of the Little Truckee River.

A conservation easement on 7,085 acres near Jackson Meadows Reservoir in Sierra County will permanently limit development along Henness Pass Road while allowing recreation and selective logging in the mixed conifer forest.

The deal announced last month is the first conservation

transaction negotiated with Sierra Pacific, an Anderson-based timber company and the state's largest private land holder.

Truckee Donner Land Trust worked with the Trust for Public Land, a national conservation organization, to set the terms of the agreement and raise \$3.25 million to purchase the development rights from Sierra Pacific, said Perry Norris, executive director of the land trust based in Truckee.

Read the whole story

South Tahoe murder suspect released from jail

The South Lake Tahoe man accused of murdering his roommate has been released from jail.

A spokeswoman for the El Dorado County District Attorney's Office told *Lake Tahoe News* her office is waiting for the police department to finalize reports before they would contemplate issuing a criminal complaint.

Because of this, Brad Macewan is currently a free man. He had been kept in jail as long as legally possibly on a probation issue, according to a police spokesman.

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*

Nevada may expand audio-visual use in courtroom

By Sean Whaley, Nevada News Bureau

CARSON CITY – The Nevada Supreme Court could soon open the doors of Nevada courtrooms wider by allowing witnesses and others to appear at civil and criminal trials through audio-visual links rather than in person.

The court already allows attorneys, litigants, and witnesses to appear in certain routine court hearings by telephonic link, but the proposal to allow trial testimony through a video link would be a major step beyond that.

“With the technology available today, it is very feasible for witnesses and litigants to appear in trials and other court hearings through video links,” Chief Justice Michael Douglas said. “Use of such technology would greatly expand access to justice, particularly for residents in rural Nevada, where a limited number of attorneys practice law and access to expert witnesses is difficult.

“Through the use of audiovisual technology, judges, juries, defendants, and litigants would have the ability to interact with the person at the other end of the video link just as if they were in the courtroom,” he said. “The Supreme Court and many other governmental entities already use video links to take comments in administrative matters or hold meetings. Using today’s technology for courtroom trials and hearings is simply the next logical step.”

Under the proposed rules, adequate video equipment would have to be available in both the courtroom and the location where the witness or other individual would be appearing. If a video appearance was deemed to be inappropriate or not feasible, a judge could order a personal appearance.

A public hearing on the proposed rules contained in ADKT 424 is scheduled for Sept. 8 at 3:30pm in the Supreme Court's Carson City courtroom. The hearing will be videoconferenced to the Supreme Court courtroom at the Regional Justice Center in Las Vegas. Individuals wishing to comment may do so from either location.

The new rules, proposed by Justice Mark Gibbons, are intended "to improve access to the courts and reduce litigation costs."

The proposed rules would establish a policy favoring audiovisual appearances and direct the trial courts to "permit parties, to the extent feasible, to appear by simultaneous audiovisual transmission equipment at appropriate proceedings."

Appearances by video would not be allowed at juvenile or appellate proceedings.

The decision by the Supreme Court to explore the possibility of remote appearances was prompted, in part, because of the vast distances between communities and the additional costs rural residents must incur for attorneys and expert witnesses.

Lawyers who practice in courthouses throughout the state have frequently complained about the costs and time demands of traveling to other counties for court hearings. Many times lawyers have not taken cases because clients cannot pay for all the travel and time involved for the numerous court appearances that many cases require.

The complaints come most frequently from attorneys who work in Reno or Las Vegas and wish to practice at the other end of the state. The result is that in some cases clients do not get the attorneys they want.

In rural counties, where few attorneys practice, litigants are often left to fend for themselves because they cannot afford the travel costs for an out-of-county lawyer.

On March 1, 2009, a Nevada Supreme Court rule resolved much of the problem by allowing attorneys and others to appear for routine matters in civil cases via conference telephone or other electronic device, such as a videoconference link.

That rule also opened the door for attorneys in urban areas to fulfill their pro bono duty by assisting financially strapped rural residents at no cost through telephonic links.

But the telephonic appearance rule did not allow attorneys to appear in court for trials or other lengthy matters. Douglas said the proposed audiovisual rule would make such long distance pro bono work possible.