

Lake Valley firefighters working Arizona blaze

Lake Valley Fire Protection District's Angora Peak Crew is in Arizona on the Wallow Fire.

The crew was deployed June 5 and is expected to return this week.

The crew provides fuel reduction services for properties in Lake Valley's jurisdiction when they are not on fires. Their funding comes from grant sources, which will run out at the end of this year.

Services affected by the lack of funding will include fuels reduction, chipping, defensible space inspections and tree marking.

– *Leona Allen, Lake Valley Fire PIO*



Lake Valley
firefighters
work the night
shift in
Arizona.

Photos/Provided



Lake Valley crews are tasked with lighting a back fire.

Incline woman missing; car found on Hwy. 28

Law enforcement is looking for an Incline Village woman who has been missing since Saturday.

Kelly McGinnis, 43, was last seen leaving her home in the 900 block of Galaxy Way on June 18, Washoe County sheriff's spokesman Armando Avina said in a press release. Her vehicle has was found in a parking lot west of the Thunderbird Lodge on Highway 28 near Sand Harbor.



Kelly McGinnis

A K-9 unit is assisting search and rescue teams along trails and shorelines in that area.

McGinnis is about 5-feet-6, 150 pounds, blonde hair and brown eyes.

Anyone with information is asked to call the sheriff's office at (775) 832.9276.

League files suit over South Lake Tahoe's General Plan

By Kathryn Reed

It was a matter of when, not if the League to Save Lake Tahoe would sue South Lake Tahoe over its recently adopted General Plan.



On Friday the League filed a complaint challenging the city's General Plan that was approved in May. At that meeting the League's attorney threatened to sue if the city went through with approving a plan that was inconsistent with the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency's Regional Plan.

"It's not a surprise," City Manager Tony O'Rourke said of the complaint. "I think the council did the right thing. Unfortunately, this is the tactic the League has used historically. We have wanted to sit down with them, and hope we still can, but that process takes longer than filing a lawsuit."

In a statement released today, League Executive Director

Rochelle Nason says, "From a planning perspective, the city is putting the cart before the horse, because it is prematurely trying to adopt a new General Plan before there is a new Regional Plan. This is a clear violation of the TRPA code of ordinances."

Although the city knowingly adopted items that are out of compliance with TPRA, there is essentially an asterisk by each of those items that prohibits such things like increased density from taking place until TRPA adopts its next Regional Plan – which is more than a year away.

"We knew they would probably sue us," O'Rourke told *Lake Tahoe News*. "They say they want to be partners, but then they revert to litigation. Actions speak louder than words."

O'Rourke stands by what the council approved – a document long in the works before he was hired nearly a year ago and the majority of the current council came on board last fall.

No injunction has been ordered by a judge, so the General Plan stands for now. But it is possible the League could ask a judge for the city not to implement certain aspects of the General Plan or all of it until a court rules on the entire case.

The League takes issue with the environmental document associated with the General Plan as well.

"We need plans that reduce traffic and boost restoration efforts," Nason said. "The urbanization proposed by the city will not only diminish the region's draw as a serene and beautiful place for residents and visitors, it also violates regional, state and federal environmental laws. The sensible solution would be for the city to wait until the TRPA adopts a new regional plan."

The General Plan cost the city more than \$775,000 to create. What a lawsuit will cost would be purely speculative at this

point. How long the document will be tied up in court is too early to tell.

“Just because they filed a suit doesn’t mean they are right,” O’Rourke said.

Snow damage in Tahoe creates work for contractors

By Rob Sabo, Northern Nevada Business Weekly

Engineering and construction firms are scrambling to repair the damage to buildings caused by massive accumulation of snow in the Lake Tahoe Basin last winter.

Jared Krupa, principal engineer for K2 Engineering and Structural Design of Reno, has taken on repair work for a half-dozen structures in and around Lake Tahoe that were damaged by the weight of snowfall. In many cases, Krupa says, buildings were three or more decades old and were not built to today’s standards.

However, Paul Laudenschlager, chief executive officer of Alpen Engineering of Truckee, says one of the structures he’s repairing is just three years old. Though it was built properly, its roof was not engineered to withstand the weight of more than a dozen feet of snow, and a section of the roof ripped away from the main house under heavy snow.

Areas of failure, he says, typically include deck ledgers that tear away from buildings, or lower roofs that become detached under the extreme weight of water-laden snow building up over time.

“There have been some failures with code-conforming buildings on Echo Summit,” Laudenschlager says. “Some of the failures were caused by inadequate engineering or construction. Others were caused by the snow situation itself and the failure of the engineer to take into account the actual situation with the building.”

Laudenschlager says some problems arise when engineers fail to consider lateral snow issues, which may exceed seismic and wind requirements. Walls can inadvertently act as a retaining wall for wind-driven snow, and many caved in this winter, particularly on Echo Summit in eastern El Dorado County.

Read the whole story

USFS today begins defending desire to log Angora burn area

Reno Gazette-Journal

Responding for the first time to a lawsuit by conservationists, the U.S. Forest Service says the threat of another major wildfire like the one that destroyed about 250 homes at Lake Tahoe four years ago outweighs any concerns that its plans to log much of what’s left of the burned forest would harm a rare woodpecker or other wildlife.

But environmentalists suing to block the post-fire salvage logging on Tahoe’s south shore say the agency is exaggerating the fire danger and downplaying the anticipated impacts of logging about half of the 3,000 acres that burned in the

Angora fire in June 2007.



Charred
remains of the
Angora burn
area in May
2011, nearly
four years
after the
fire.

Photo/LTN

Lawyers for both sides are scheduled to argue their cases in U.S. District Court in Sacramento today as the opponents try to persuade Judge Garland E. Burrell Jr. to find the logging plan illegal and order the agency to conduct another review of the potential impacts of the project that will cost taxpayers an estimated \$3 million.

The Forest Service said in recent court filings that the lawsuit takes issue with “inconsequential, technical deficiencies” in its environmental assessment and formal determination last July that the logging will cause no significant harm to the black-backed woodpecker or anything else.

The critics’ “sole interest in unlogged post-fire habitat is not paramount to the other public interests in forest restoration and the promotion of the diversity of wildlife,” Justice Department lawyers representing the federal agency wrote in a legal brief filed June 13.

Tahoe City transit center construction to impact roads

After several delays due to inclement weather, there will be a temporary closure of the River Access Road in Tahoe City as part of construction of the Tahoe City Transit Center. The closure will be on June 22 from 7am-6pm.

The closure will affect access to the adjacent Tahoe City Public Utility District parking lot, and will be approximately halfway between Highway 89 and the parking area.

The parking area will be unavailable during the closure, but parking will be available on the shoulder of the River Access Road on the Highway 89 side.

The Transit Center is a \$7.4 million intermodal transportation hub for residents and visitors to Lake Tahoe's west and north shores. Covering about 2.5 acres on a tract of public land west of Highway 89, the center will serve as a hub for Placer County's Tahoe Area Regional Transit buses. The center will be situated adjacent to hiking and bike paths and provide parking for commuters and visitors to utilize buses to get around on the north and west shores of Lake Tahoe as well as improve pedestrian and bicycle mobility in and around Tahoe City.

S. Tahoe officers turn attention to Bijou neighborhood

South Lake Tahoe police officers will deploy officers into the Bijou neighborhood June 23 and June 25 as part of the Residential Neighborhood Traffic Enforcement Program.

The areas of enforcement will be Glenwood Way, Herbert Avenue and Heather Lake Road.

“We have had a strong response from our community in the form of phone calls and emails just over the weekend. I cannot call everyone back, but your message was received,” Sgt. Shannon Laney said in a statement. “We are moving forward with this program and hope that it has a positive impact on our community.”

If you would like your street or neighborhood put on our list, call or email Sgt. Shannon Laney at (530) 542.6104 or slaney@cityofslt.us. Leave your name, number and a description of the problem in as much detail as possible, including times of days the problem is most prevalent.

Grand jury slams El Dorado County Sheriff's Department

By Carlos Alcalá, Sacramento Bee

The El Dorado County Sheriff's Office needs to fix its treatment of women in the department and prevent deputies from

using phony educational degrees to gain pay increases, according to the El Dorado County grand jury's report released Friday.

The grand jury's 2010-11 report focused three of its 12 sections on the Sheriff's Office.



Sheriff John
D'Agostini

A newly elected sheriff, John D'Agostini, took over the department at the beginning of the year.

The report's section on gender bias in the department outlined a female staffing level far below national averages, and a pattern of gender bias complaints that jumped in 2010.

Roughly 5 percent of sworn officers are women, according to the report. It contrasted El Dorado's level to a national average of 12.8 percent in communities of similar sizes.

The department saw 12 gender bias complaints filed in 2010, double the number for 2008 and 2009 combined, the report said.

Read the whole story

5% raise for city attorney on S. Tahoe council agenda

By Kathryn Reed

South Lake Tahoe City Attorney Patrick Enright is scheduled to get a raise Tuesday before the council even evaluates him.

The 5 percent raise, which brings his salary from \$146,740 a year to \$154,077, is on the consent agenda. It's not until after the regular meeting that in closed session the council is scheduled to discuss his annual evaluation. With furloughs, which go away Oct. 1, Enright would make \$133,175 for the next three months.



Pat Enright

He was hired in June 2009 at a rate of \$128,000 a year. At that time he signed a two-year contract. The current salary range for the city attorney position is \$133,092 to \$169,860.

Enright's severance pay would be six months.

The council has set it up so he is on a five-year step like the rest of the employees. (All other city employees get a 5 percent raise based on the step system until they top out at step five.) However, as an at-will employee, the steps are not automatic for Enright. That is why the council must vote on the increase. The proposed increase would bring him to step four.

The council could treat this position like the city manager, which is not on a step basis. Raises are based on whatever the council would want to give that person.

On top of the raise, in the package is a \$400/month car allowance, and extension of his contract through 2013.

The other item before the council is having Enright pay the same percentage into PERS other city employees pay, if they agree to do so in the future. Right now the city pays his 8 percent contribution.

The City Council meets June 21 at 9am at Lake Tahoe Airport. Here is the City Council agenda.

Talks begin to reform TRPA, keep both states involved

Updated June 18, 2011, 9:05am: Gov. Brian Sandoval signed SB271 and vetoed AB578 on June 17.

By Anne Knowles

CARSON CITY – It took until the final, frenetic minutes of the 2011 Nevada legislative session for lawmakers to pass the controversial bill threatening to pull out of the Tahoe Regional Planning Compact, but it may take years to see if the legislation makes a difference.

Senate Bill 271, passed in the Nevada Assembly 15 minutes before the 76th legislative session ended at 1am June 7, seeks first to amend the 41-year-old bi-state Compact before Nevada would make good on its threat to withdraw.



Politics and
state lines
divide Lake
Tahoe in ways
Mother Nature
never
intended.

The legislation calls for an updated Regional Plan that takes into account economic as well as environmental conditions at Lake Tahoe; makes several changes to the voting structure of the Governing Board of the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency to stop what some Nevada lawmakers say is a tyranny of the minority; and requires anyone challenging a project at the lake to prove it violates the Compact, flipping the burden of proof from the TRPA to the petitioner.

It also mandates the creation of a delegation of Nevada lawmakers to negotiate with a similar group of California legislators to amend the Compact.

Nevada could withdraw from the Compact in 2015 if it deems no progress has been made, or will withdraw by 2017, if changes are incomplete. An interim oversight committee could also file a bill draft request next session to kill the possible withdrawal from TRPA if reform efforts are moving ahead or its deemed going it alone is too costly for the state.

The bill is sitting on the desk of Gov. Brian Sandoval, who is expected to sign it. Sandoval has until June 17 to sign or veto all remaining bills or to allow them to become law by doing nothing.

If SB271 becomes law, what's next?

The committee that would be responsible for putting together the negotiating team is in flux. The bill calls for the Legislative Committee for the Review and Oversight of the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency and the Marlette Lake Water System, the interim committee that already oversees the TRPA, to pick the delegation. But another late-passing bill, Assembly Bill 578, would restructure the Legislature's interim committees so the Joint Interim Committee of Government Affairs, consisting of eight members from the existing government affairs committees of both houses, would have oversight.

AB578, however, received only two Republican votes in the Assembly and none in the Senate, giving an indication Sandoval may veto it. The governor's office declined to comment on when or whether the governor would sign or veto any bill.

In any event, Sen. John Lee, R-Las Vegas, a sponsor of SB271, is the chair of the Senate Government Affairs and the existing interim committee that has been looking into the TRPA issue. And whatever interim committee emerges in the next few months, the committee will pick one senator and two members of the Assembly, representing both parties, to begin negotiating with California legislators.

"The committee is up in the air," Lee said, several days after the session ended, saying he would be discussing it in the next few weeks with Sen. Steven Horsford, D-North Las Vegas, the Senate majority floor leader.

Lee told *Lake Tahoe News* he wrote a letter to the governor proposing Leo Drozdoff, director of the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, be the ongoing point man for the legislation. Drozdoff's office said he would not comment on SB271 or its implications until the bill becomes law.

Lee said he hopes a conversation between the two states, and representatives from the federal government, starts at the 14th annual Lake Tahoe Environmental Summit, being hosted this year by Sen. Dianne Feinstein, D-Calif., at Homewood Mountain Resort on Aug. 16. While that is the actual day of the summit, lawmakers and stakeholders in the basin have several behind the scenes meeting before and after the summit.

Neither Feinstein nor Sen. Harry Reid, D-Nev., responded to a request for comment about SB271.

Informal talks have begun

"My office has had discussions with some (legislators') offices in Nevada," said state Sen. Ted Gaines, R-Roseville, a California legislator who in April issued a statement supporting SB271 and what Nevada lawmakers were trying to accomplish.

"I support the simple majority vote" mandated in the bill, said Gaines, which he said is similar to the way city councils and county commissions conduct business.

"I am contemplating my own legislation that would mirror the legislation," he said.

If Gaines were to introduce a bill, it wouldn't be until February 2012 during the next California legislative session. Gaines represents the California side of Lake Tahoe.

"Communications have already been opened," said Joanne Marchetta, executive director of the TRPA. "There are informal discussions happening almost everywhere. I'm very optimistic. This is a very healthy discussion right now and I'm looking forward to participating in it."

But the most important thing the TRPA staff can do, said Marchetta, "is bring forward a reasonably clear and concise update to our Regional Plan."

The update to the Regional Plan, already four years overdue, is on track to be delivered by the end of 2012, Marchetta said.

"You hear talk that there is no Regional Plan," Marchetta said. "We do have a Regional Plan."

She said much of the current plan would remain intact, and the issue now is to narrow the focus for current needs and economic constraints.

The main sticking point is the \$1.5 billion needed for the next 20 years for treatment systems and environmental programs.

"Will it come from Congress, the states or from the private sector?" Marchetta asked. "We've always thought it should be some combination of those sources."

What others have to say

While the Nevada bill calls on the TRPA to produce the Regional Plan, and for state legislators to work together, others involved in the lake hope to have some influence, too.

"Last month the South Lake Tahoe City Council passed its own plan and we hope the TRPA will adopt some of our plan," Councilman Bruce Grego said of the city's General Plan. "I intend to write a letter this week to the oversight committee to see if South Lake Tahoe as well as Douglas County and Carson City can be part the team sent to negotiate with California legislators."

In addition, said Grego, the council is upping the billable hours of its lobbyist and intends to lobby the California Legislature to take up a measure similar to Nevada's SB271.

"Now it's back in California's court," Nancy McDermid, vice chair of the Douglas County Commissioners and TRPA Governing Board member, said. "I don't know if there's anything we can

do here. It's state legislator to state legislator now. Key thing now is to get California to recognize it."

The Douglas County Commission as well as the South Lake Tahoe City Council and the Carson City Board of Supervisors voiced support for SB271.

"As someone active in the TRPA sphere of influence, I hope I can contribute to the solutions at the lake," said Lew Feldman, attorney with Feldman McLaughlin Thiel in Zephyr Cove. He has represented many building projects at the lake, including the recently approved Boulder Bay redevelopment project at the Tahoe Biltmore site in Crystal Bay.

"I would certainly continue to interact with the decision-makers and assist in gathering of information and data. For California to partner in this, it is going take statewide effort," Feldman said.

And, like Marchetta, Feldman is hopeful.

"The original bill was a shot across the bow that was not in the best interest of the basin. As amended, it's an invitation for everyone to roll up their sleeves and get to work on this," Feldman said. "California has a lot more to gain by working with Nevada on this than by blowing them off and going it alone. I can't imagine a responsible California elected official not opening the door and welcoming the Nevada delegation."