Scariest earthquake may be yet to come – in California

By Simon Winchester, Newsweek

All of those broken bones in northern Japan, all of those broken lives and those broken homes prompt us to remember what in calmer times we are invariably minded to forget: the most stern and chilling of mantras, which holds, quite simply, that mankind inhabits this earth subject to geological consent—which can be withdrawn at any time.

For hundreds, maybe for thousands of people, this consent was withdrawn with shocking suddenness—all geological events are sudden, and all are unexpected if not necessarily entirely unanticipated—at 2:46 on this past clear, cool spring Friday afternoon. One moment all were going about their quotidian business—in offices, on trains, in rice fields, in stores, in schools, in warehouses, in shrines—and then the ground began to shake. At first, the shock was merely a much stronger and longer version of the temblors to which most Japanese are well accustomed. There came a stunned silence, as there always does. But then, the difference: a few minutes later a low rumble from the east, and in a horrifying replay of the Indian Ocean tragedy of just some six years before, the imagery of which is still hauntingly in all the world's mind, the coastal waters off the northern Honshu vanished, sucked mysteriously out to sea.

The rumbling continued, people then began to spy a ragged white line on the horizon, and, with unimaginable ferocity, the line became visible as a wall of waves sweeping back inshore at immense speed and at great height. Just seconds later and these Pacific Ocean waters hit the Japanese seawalls, surmounted them with careless ease, and began to claw across the land beyond in what would become a

dispassionate and detached orgy of utter destruction.

We all now know, and have for 50 years, that geography is the ultimate reason behind the disaster. Japan is at the junction of a web of tectonic-plate boundaries that make it more peculiarly vulnerable to ground-shaking episodes than almost anywhere else—and it is a measure of Japanese engineering ingenuity, of social cohesion, of the ready acceptance of authority and the imposition of necessary discipline that allows so many to survive these all-too-frequent displays of tectonic power.

But geography is not the only factor in this particular and acutely dreadful event. Topography played an especially tragic role in the story, too—for it is an axiom known to all those who dwell by high-tsunami-risk coastlines that when the sea sucks back, you run: you run inland and, if at all possible, you run uphill. But in this corner of northeast Japan, with its wide plains of rice meadows and ideal factory sites and conveniently flat airport locations, there may well be a great deal of inland—but there is almost no uphill.

Read the whole story

---

3 Truckee residents die in S. California plane crash

Publisher's note: ***It has been confirmed the three people who died in the plane crash were Truckee airport board trustee Katie Morrison and her children – 6-year-old Wyatt and 5-year-old Hannah. Services will be March 24 in the afternoon at the Martis Camp Family Barn in Truckee.***

By Salvador Hernandez, Orange County Register

BARSTOW – A woman and two children were killed in a fiery plane crash on Sunday near a San Bernardino County airport, authorities said.

The single-engine Cessna 210 departed from John Wayne Airport and was headed to Henderson Executive Airport in Las Vegas when it crashed, said Ian Gregor, a Federal Aviation Administration spokesman.

Investigators with the Federal Aviation Administration and the National Transportation Safety Board investigate the wreckage of a Cessna 210 that crashed Sunday. A woman and her two children were killed in the crash. The plane took off from John Wayne airport and crashed near the Barstow-Dagget Airport.

The woman is believed to be Katie Morrison, a Truckee resident who is licensed as a private pilot. Officials have not identified who was aboard the plane. Her husband, Jim Morrison, confirmed his wife and two children, Wyatt and Hanna, were killed in the crash, according to Fox 40 News in Sacramento.

Coroner officials have not yet positively identified the bodies of those aboard the plane; they were described as a woman, a male child and a female child.

“The coroner’s office is having to conduct extensive scientific means to identify the bodies,” said Arden Wiltshire, a San Bernardino Sheriff’s Department spokeswoman.

Read the whole story

South Tahoe creating community fiscal committee

By Kathryn Reed

South Lake Tahoe wants the public's help when it comes to money matters.

The City Council this month agreed to create a Fiscal Sustainability Committee. Councilmembers Claire Fortier and Bruce Grego were not at the March 15 meeting.

"In these economic and fiscally challenging times many local governments are seeking to increase public engagement in fiscal matters," the staff report says. "This approach not only benefits local government by better utilizing the expertise of its citizens, and increasing the diversity of ideas, but also improves the overall transparency in areas such as budgeting and financial management."

The goal is six or eight people from the community will be appointed to the committee at the April 19 meeting.

In the past the council has had a budget committee made up of the mayor and mayor pro tem. That committee will be blended into the larger community committee. Hal Cole and Claire Fortier will represent the council.

City Manager Tony O'Rourke and Finance Director Christine Vuletich will represent city staff.

Councilman Tom Davis said this would be a good bridge. He mentioned Alice Jones, who works for the Tahoe Keys Property Owners Association and ran for council last fall, as a

potential committee member. (TKPOA is a separate entity from the rental agency Davis is affiliated with.)

No criteria have been set for applicants. Nor do they have to reside in the city. The council will make the appointments, with a majority of three councilmembers having to approve each person.

Meetings will be subject to California's open meeting laws, so they will all be open to the public. The plan is the committee would meet at least eight times a year. Issues likely to be addressed include: operating budget development, capital improvement program budget development, long-term financial planning, investment management, debt issuance, pension and health plans, enterprise funds, revenue enhancement and diversification, financial reporting and independent audits, and internal controls.

Applications for the committee may be obtained at city offices at the Lake Tahoe Airport or by calling (530) 542.6004. The deadline to apply is April 12 at 5pm.

Zephyr Cove district plans to replace leaky water pipes

Zephyr Water Utility District plans to replace water lines this summer that at times leak 50 percent of the water being pumped.

The district provides drinking water to the Zephyr Cove area.

The proposed project would replace pipes on Lakeview Drive and Lakeview Court. The project also would include replacement of

the ozone generators at the treatment plan. One of the two generators doesn’t work. Both are 14 years old, with replacement parts not available. That is why officials are proposing to replace both generators.

The district plans to use $1 million from Drinking Water State Revolving Fund Assistance.

That agency is taking comments on the project. Contact Adele Basham at (775) 687.9488 or abasham@ndep.nv.gov.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

TRPA attorney stepping down

After two years as general counsel for the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency, Nicole Rinke is leaving.

Her last day is April 8. This will get her through the board meeting this week that involves the Boulder Bay project in Crystal Bay.

Rinke became the top attorney of the bi-state regulatory agency in spring 2009 after Joanne Marchetta was elevated from that position to executive director. Rinke started as TRPA associate counsel in 2007.

Rinke did not return a phone call or email. It is not known what she will do next.

Governing Board Chairwoman Norma Santiago did not return calls either.

With the numerous lawsuits filed against TRPA, it is a highly demanding job.

The search for her replacement is expected to take six months. In the interim, the agency's two associate attorneys and one paralegal will run the department.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Prosperity Center designed to create economic paradise

By Kathryn Reed

"Oh, think twice. It's just another day for you and me in paradise. Just think about it."



Is the Lake Tahoe Basin really paradise?

• Latest unemployment figure for South Lake Tahoe is 17.4 percent

• 7,000 jobs in gaming have been lost since 1990

• The basin lost 15 percent of its population from 2000 to 2008

• 80 percent of the basin's Latino population lives at the poverty level

• Hotel room occupancy was at 23 percent in 2008-09

• 17.7 percent of the residents in South Lake Tahoe lived

below the poverty line in 2008

• In 12 years the South Shore K-12 enrollment declined 35 percent

• 26.4 percent of children under 18 live below the poverty line.

On the flip side, based on 2007 statistics, the Lake Tahoe Basin generated $4.7 billion in revenues.

Lake Tahoe's built environment does not match its natural beauty. Infrastructure is decaying or non-existent. Jobs are dwindling. The middle class barely has a heartbeat.

To combat the issues identified above and to bring a sense of place to the basin, the Prosperity Center is scheduled to open May 1. Offices will be on the North and South shores, with the idea the space will be donated for the greater good.

The Lake Tahoe Basin Prosperity Plan has been in the works for a couple years, with the government bodies around the lake, chambers of commerce, education, health care providers, tourism interests and others forming the plan that is designed to be an economic blueprint for the entire basin, including Truckee.

Michael Ward, project manager for the LTBPP, has been working for free as facilitator. He's been making presentations around the lake, with the latest before the South Tahoe Public Utility District board last week.

He showed a video, mostly in black and white, which was a bit chilling. As the song "Another Day in Paradise" played, images of despair throughout the basin were shown – boarded up businesses, for rent signs, people living in squalor, slides with sobering statistics.

Then the last image was in color – a panoramic view of Lake Tahoe. It was taken from a distance, as though to obscure the

reality when one looks closer, beyond the lake and the trees.

“I think we can help broker opportunities,” Ward told *Lake Tahoe News* after the meeting. The goal is to have a homegrown economy based on what is working and not importing industry that doesn’t exist.

During the research phase it was discovered that two-thirds of the basin’s economy is from three areas – tourism and visitor services, environmental innovation, and health and wellness. Those sectors will be the focus of the Prosperity Center.

A reason to take a regional approach is grant dollars are more readily doled out to larger groups working on a common goal than to individual entities doing so. Plus, this should mean entities in the basin would not be competing against each other for the same dollars.

Ironically, the South Tahoe PUD knows all about a regional approach when it comes to federal dollars. The district joined forces with other water districts in the basin a few years ago, which has paid dividends.

Other reasons for the regional approach are the problems are similar as are the interests.

To date the five counties and one city that make up the Lake Tahoe Basin have put in a total of $125,000 into the project. This money is for matching funds for Economic Development Administration grants, some of which have already been secured.

The Prosperity Center, though expected to open in six weeks, cannot do so until its nonprofit status is secure. In the interim, the Parasol Foundation in Incline Village is acting as conduit for grants in the center’s name.

A board of directors, though not named yet, is likely to be large and made up of representatives from many of the entities

that worked on the plan. It could be comprised of a couple dozen people.

Ward said the idea to have it be a comprehensive board.

From there, advisory committees will be formed to get down to the nitty gritty.

“We have five or six initiatives we think will be game changers,” Ward said.

Bringing broadband to the basin is one goal. The idea is current residents and businesses will benefit from it, but it will also attract others to the area. Creating a regional sports commission is another immediate goal.

Ward did not want to elaborate too much until the center is a reality so as not to get into a legal quagmire.

More information about the Lake Tahoe Basin Prosperity Plan is on the group’s website.

El Dorado County keeps making cuts; deficit remains

By Kathryn Reed

El Dorado County continues to struggle to create a balanced budget for the 2011-12 fiscal year that begins July 1.



The Board of Supervisors at the weekly meetings seem to have an item related to the budget on most agendas. The shortfall is at about $10.2 million, of which $7 million was predicted. Cuts last fall brought the number down to $7 million.

“The numbers are still swirling” is how one county employee put it.

Like most entities in California, without a state budget it’s hard to definitively go forward. Plus, property tax dollars keep declining which affects revenue projections.

Predictions are no department will be spared. Further personnel and program cuts are likely to bridge the fiscal divide.

Changes have been ongoing. A recent one saw the shift of Mike Applegarth as full-time analyst in the Chief Administrative Office to a full-time air pollution control officer and part-time CAO analyst.

“We also have an analyst assigned as acting IT director and another that continues to manage county purchasing,” Applegarth said.

The economic developer’s position has been eliminated

One area to receive a boost in funding this month was the Film Commission – by $10,000.

Truckee authorities investigating fire, apparent suicide

At about 8:38 this morning, Truckee police responded with Truckee Fire Protection District personnel to a structure fire on Lemon Court in Truckee.

Upon the arrival, firefighters found the residence fully engulfed in flames.

They also discovered an adult male in a vehicle parked in the driveway to the residence. Emergency medical personnel determined the male was deceased from an apparent self-inflicted gunshot wound.

The identity of the male has not been confirmed.

It is believed, however, that he lived in the house that burned.

The cause of the fire is still under investigation.

The circumstances surrounding the death are being investigated by Truckee police.

Lighting changes earn Truckee school district rebate check

A partnership with the Truckee Donner Public Utility District paid big dividends for the Tahoe Truckee Unified School

District, as the district received $18,736 from the TDPUD at its regular board meeting this week.

The rebate was part of the TDPUD's Commercial Lighting Rebate Program and the school district's investment in high-efficiency lighting will save money for years to come.

The school district worked with the TDPUD and contractors in 2010 to define the most cost-effective projects using energy-saving fluorescent and LED lighting. The TDPUD then contributed one-third of the project cost via rebate.

Participating schools included Truckee High, Truckee Elementary and Alder Creek Middle School.

The lighting projects will save the schools an estimated $10,000 per year and offer an approximately five-year simple payback.

The TDPUD has helped local businesses and agencies invest in cost-effective lighting projects by providing more than $80,000 in rebates in the last two years. The lighting program is one of several energy and water savings programs the TDPUD offers its commercial and business customers.

Memorial event for Emily Clothier at Heavenly

A memorial is planned for March 20 at 1:30pm in honor of Emily Clothier, who died three years ago at Heavenly Mountain Resort.



The gathering will be at the tree on the run that this season was named after the South Lake Tahoe youth.

The Far West Slalom Championships (named after Emily) will be at Heavenly on World Cup Run, April 3-4.