

Truckee burglary suspect in custody

On Aug. 7, 2008, the Glenshire General Store in Truckee was burglarized overnight by a suspect who used a distinct method of operation to gain access to the property.

On Jan. 2, 2010, the Glenshire Store was burglarized again, and the suspect's methods were identical to the 2008 burglary. Detectives focused their attention on Adam McGregor, who was a suspect in the 2008 burglary. McGregor had been in prison for the past year for other burglaries in Northern California, and was released in late December.

In late January, McGregor was arrested in Butte County for attempted burglary and is in custody awaiting trial.

On Feb. 22, Truckee police officers received notice from Department of Justice that the evidence collected from the 2008 burglary had been analyzed and led back to McGregor.

Through the Nevada County District Attorney's Office, a felony arrest warrant was issued for McGregor, who is currently serving time in Butte County.

This investigation is continuing as McGregor has been linked to dozens of other burglaries in Northern Nevada and Northern California involving several other agencies and jurisdictions.

Centuries-long Sierra dry

spell focus of study

By Mark Grossi, Fresno Bee

Scientists have found evidence in Sequoia National Park of a centuries-long dry spell – and clues about how the Sierra Nevada could be changing.

The researchers studied tree rings on dead giant sequoias, the largest trees on Earth. They found that during a warm, dry period between A.D. 800 and 1300, fires were more frequent, suggesting more fires may be ahead for a Sierra facing similar conditions today.



No water under
the Tahoe Keys
Pier in
November 2009.
Photo/Kathryn
Reed

Their findings have been published in the most recent edition of the journal "Fire Ecology," said Thomas W. Swetnam, lead researcher and director of the Tree Ring Laboratory at the University of Arizona in Tucson.

Information about how sequoias responded to the 500-year warm spell is important because scientists predict climate change may subject the forest to a similar environment again, Swetnam said.

Read the whole story

Mother Nature's March madness

By Kathryn Reed

Snow is continuing to fall this morning in the Lake Tahoe Basin. A winter weather advisory is in effect until 1pm today. A half inch has fallen between 6:30-7am on the South Shore.

"We won't see warm weather return for a little while," Brian O'Hara, meteorologist with the National Weather Service in Reno, told *Lake Tahoe News* this morning.

He said it could be a couple weeks before Tahoe starts to see spring again.



Hot tubs are going to be needed after all the shoveling.

Photo/Kathryn Reed

On the South Shore at lake level about 9 inches have fallen in the last 24 hours. Reno recorded a trace.

Higher elevations – this includes the ski resorts – are reporting more than a foot of the white stuff. This means winter ski conditions have returned and the stop-and-go ice-slush that was on the slopes last weekend had been covered up.

Winds won't be a problem like they were on Tuesday. Just after midnight, though, some gusts of 40mph were being reported.

Chain controls are up around most roads leading into and out of the basin. On Tuesday Kingsbury Grade was like an ice rink with bumper cars as vehicles kept spinning out and running into each other. Highway 89 around Emerald Bay is closed this morning because of avalanche danger.

Assemblyman Ted Gaines reported seeing an SUV flipped over on Highway 50 on his way to Tahoe Tuesday afternoon.

The Sierra Avalanche Center's rating is "considerable" – meaning expert evaluation skills are needed.

For those flying out of Reno-Tahoe International Airport, call ahead because flights were delayed on Tuesday.

Unsettled weather will be here for the next several days. Another system will move through the Lake Tahoe area, bringing a chance of showers on Thursday and Friday. A high pressure will build a little before the following storm comes Sunday night.

Bundle up because the high today is expected to be 33 degrees, 36 on Thursday and in the low 40s for Easter weekend.

Gaines predicts worst is not over for California

By Kathryn Reed

Even though Ted Gaines considers himself an optimist, he painted a bleak picture when it comes to state government.

“Because of regulations, taxation issues and demographics there are a lot of state programs that are costly,” the Republican assemblyman from Roseville said. “We need to do a lot of work to get from point A to point B to restore the luster of California.”

Gaines drove to South Lake Tahoe on Tuesday afternoon in a blizzard to speak with more than two dozen constituents assembled at Lake Tahoe Community College. Nearly three hours after his talk started he was on his way back to Sacramento.



Assemblyman
Ted Gaines
answers
questions
Tuesday at
LTCC.
Photo/Kathryn
Reed

He plans to introduce a bill modeled after one adopted by British Columbia, Canada, which was able to reduce the number

of laws on the books by 43 percent in two years. In BC, they also had to take away a bill for every new one.

Gaines connected with many in the audience when he talked about having six children, four of whom are in college. He touched on owning an insurance business for 27 years, and understanding the pains of the economy and stranglehold of state and federal regulations.

He said he is looking at ways the state can help businesses and entrepreneurs, whether it's through more laws or backing away.

South Lake Tahoe Councilman Hal Cole asked about the proposed tax on independent contractors.

Gaines said nothing has been brought to the committee level, but ideas are percolating.

"I would be vigilant and keep an eye on it," Gaines told Cole.

El Dorado County sheriff's Lt. Les Lovell asked about the pending legislation to protect snow removal dollars.

Gaines said he is worried the state will take more dollars from cities to balance the \$21 billion deficit. His bill would protect snow removal funds. The bill has yet to reach the first committee meeting.

Mayor Kathay Lovell asked how cities would fare in upcoming state budget talks.

"I think there will be pressure at all levels. I think you will see a reduction in services," Gaines said.

From there Gaines delved into his opinions about the state prison system – don't let inmates out early, don't give them Cadillac medical care plans.

The assemblyman all but said he doesn't like Proposition 98,

which guarantees a set amount of funding for education. Instead, he would like to give districts block grants for them to spend how they want.

"We are constantly micromanaging," Gaines said of government.

However, to Leanne Wagoner's question about what is going to be done about the continued cuts to domestic violence programs, he told the executive director of South Lake Tahoe Women's Center, "I will fight that fight to keep women's center in the state open."

He also suggested Wagoner engage first lady Maria Shriver in her cause.

"She has a lot of power," Gaines said.

One person brought up the issue of the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency not being held accountable to the public because the Governing Board is not elected directly by the people.

Gaines said he has had his issues with boards like TRPA for the same reason. But he also said he sees hope in the direction Executive Director Joanne Marchetta is taking the bi-state regulatory agency. He does not favor reducing funding for TPRA.

Cole, who is also on TRPA's board, said it's best if TRPA can give more control to local jurisdictions when it comes to things like sign ordinances and land use.

Gaines told John Adamski he would look into the local resident's concern about what he perceives as a stalemate between the U.S. Forest Service and Lahontan Water Quality Board when it comes to forest fuels reduction.

Local resident Ken Weitzman asked if the state is going to weigh-in on the city's redevelopment proposal that will be before the City Council on April 6. Gaines said redevelopment areas are a local issue and he didn't give a direct answer on

the property tax issue at the state level.

Gaines said with the approval of Proposition 11, which mandates redistricting be by a public commission and not in a backroom by lawmakers, "it should make district seats more competitive." This will be done this year.

"I think more will get done in the Legislature," Gaines said of eliminating gerrymandering.

Gaines admitted he doesn't trust state government and that local jurisdictions should learn to fend for themselves.

"There are tremendous stresses everywhere in services provided by government. It will affect the poor more," Gaines said. "Communities are better when they create their own revenues base. If you create a stable tax base, the better you are going to be."

Management shake-up at Indian casino leading to Tahoe

By Dale Kasler, Sacramento Bee

Thunder Valley Casino named a new general manager today, completing a management shuffle that began more than a year ago.

C.J. Graham, currently the Lincoln casino's assistant general manager and vice president of table games, will become general manager in June, shortly before Thunder Valley completes its hotel.

[Read the whole story](#)

Forest Service chief warns of more severe wildfires

By Jeff DeLong, Reno Gazette-Journal

A combination of forest restoration projects, creation of communities that can survive fire and aggressive fire fighting will be needed as wildfire danger increases across the country, the chief of the U.S. Forest Service said Tuesday.

Wildfires are getting larger and burning more fiercely, Tom Tidwell told a Reno conference of wildfire experts.

Warming climate and increasing development near forested terrain will result in increasingly dangerous fire behavior, Tidwell, chief of the Forest Service since June 2009, said.

[Read the whole story](#)

Barton layoffs hit management level

By Kathryn Reed



Barton Memorial Hospital is continuing to layoff employees in an attempt to remain solvent.

The nonprofit medical center in South Lake Tahoe let six mid-level managers go on Friday. It was a mix of clinical and nonclinical staff.

However, none of the upper management has lost their jobs in any of the layoffs, nor have they taken a pay cut. According to 2008 IRS documents, the most recent available, CEO John William's annual salary was \$524,907. This does not include benefits.

Five employees make \$100,000-plus a year; four make \$200,000-plus; and CFO Dick Derby is the second highest paid employee at \$341,288.

It's possible more layoffs will be forthcoming this year if employees do not take earlier retirement packages. Full- and part-time workers are being offered incentives to retire early.

The hospital has not set a target for the number of people it wants to see retire early.

The cost-savings from the current round of layoffs was not available. Nor does the hospital have a figure for the amount it needs to reduce the bottom line by with the early retirements.

In March 2009, Barton laid off 43 employees.

"It's strictly an effort on Barton's part to cut labor costs. We are continuing to see a decrease in tourism and increase in unemployment," Barton spokeswoman Denise Sloan said.

With fewer people on the slopes, it means fewer gurneys wheeled into Barton's emergency room. Snow sports injuries are a big part of Barton's revenue stream in the winter.

“And Barton is seeing a decline in the reimbursement rate from government programs such as MediCal and Medicare,” Sloan said.

People are also continuing to skip elective surgeries, especially as deductibles rise. This means less income for the hospital.

Tahoe embraces food service products made from plants

By Kathryn Reed

Just as businesses were getting accustomed to recycling and using recycled products, compostable is a word and practice that is being thrown at them.

C&M Food Distributors in Reno is helping Lake Tahoe businesses make the switch.

“We show small businesses they can do what big businesses do. It can be done and it can be profitable, too, for everybody,” Tee Branch of C&M said of using compostable products.



Compostable
products from
C&M Foods that
Embassy Suites

Lake Tahoe
uses.
Photo/Provided

Branch, who lives in the South Lake Tahoe, is the sales rep handling the entire basin and Truckee for C&M.

They have 37 items to choose from and the list keeps growing. Toilet paper and facial tissue are the two most popular items. Branch said this is because every business needs them and the cost is comparable to other brands.

All of C&M's compostable products are from plant material.

Branch said C&M has stayed away from products made from corn and sugar because of how they are traded on the commodity market and therefore subject to price fluctuations.

It used to be that Sacramento tomato processing plants burned their natural waste to get rid of it. Now it's turned into plates, cups, flatware and other items that businesses can use.

Traditional paper products are made from petroleum. When the consumer is done with the plate or flatware it ends up in their trash and eventually hauled to a landfill.

Using the items made of plant matter or other compostable products means it will be turned into a soil amendment. It's part of the cradle-to-gravel movement where what happens at the end of a product's life is just as important as its birth, or how it was manufactured. Composting is also part of the zero waste movement – meaning nothing ends up in the garbage. It is either recycled or composted.

Kirkwood Mountain Resort and Embassy Suites South Lake Tahoe are two of Branch's biggest buyers of the compostable products.

"We use their cups, a lot of their paper goods and their food trays," said Kelly Groover, food and beverage administrative manager at Kirkwood. "I think it's very important now to people. To a lot of homeowners out here it's important to them."

That's the other thing businesses are finding; their customers are asking what they are doing to be green.

The ski resort separates its compostable products into a dumpster that ACES Waste Services picks up.

C&M has a mix of small and large customers in the Lake Tahoe area. Some of the other businesses using compostable products are Granlibakken, McP's Pub, Driftwood Café, Fresh Ketch, Lakeside Inn and Casino, and Stateline Brewery.

Branch said he talking to many other businesses, including the school districts and Barton Memorial Hospital.

"C&M Foods is the cheapest. As we get more businesses on board is will lower all of our costs," said David Hansen with Embassy Suites.

His hotel has been using the products for more than a year. With breakfast served each morning and a cocktail hour in the evening, plenty of plates, cups, napkins and other food service products are used each day.

Having worked in kitchens most of his life, Branch understands the cost issues as well as the need to educate workers about composting. He said the only item that hasn't successfully been developed is a coffee lid from plant matter. Coffee cups are OK. The problem is the lid then needs to go in one bin and the cup in another.

The other thing C&M boasts about is 98 percent of its compostable products are made in the United States. This then reduces the carbon footprint even more. However, no one in the

States is making compostable plates or to-go containers.

Publisher's note: *On March 31 read Lake Tahoe News to find out what Full Circle Compost is all about.*

Nevada may charge drivers for miles traveled

By Jeff DeLong, Reno Gazette-Journal

Every time Luiz Garcia fills up his car in Washoe County, he pays nearly 60 cents per gallon in taxes.

That's money the Sparks resident contributes toward state and local projects to repave cracked and aging streets, widen freeways, build bridges.

It isn't enough.

By 2016, Nevada could be up to \$6 billion short of the money required for its transportation needs. The state isn't alone. According to a 2008 estimate, the country was \$140 billion short in highway funding, with the problem growing as gasoline taxes increasingly fail to cover mounting demand for money.

Read the whole story

Sierra Conservancy promoting sustainable development

By Ashley Archibald, Union Democrat

The Sierra Nevada Conservancy is proposing a broad-based policy aimed at promoting sustainable development and bringing jobs to the Sierra Nevada.

The policy, called the Sustainable Sierra Nevada Initiative, outlines general goals including protecting water, creating jobs, reducing pollutants emitted by catastrophic fires, providing habitats for threatened and endangered species and maximizing carbon entrapment by area forests.

To do so, it proposes coordination between federal, state and local agencies to identify policies and investment opportunities for public and private resources for both water quality and the use of sustainable wood products and biomass energy.

Read the whole story