More opioid prescriptions than people in some Calif. counties

By Jim Miller, Sacramento Bee

Trinity County is the state's fourth-smallest, and ended last year with an estimated population of 13,628 people.

Its residents also filled prescriptions for oxycodone, hydrocodone and other opioids 18,439 times, the highest per capita rate in California.

The problem also has a decidedly geographic dimension in California. Besides Trinity, other counties with more prescriptions than people include Lake, Shasta, Tuolumne and Del Norte counties. In the Sacramento region, El Dorado, Placer and Sacramento counties had prescription rates above the statewide average, with Yolo County slightly below the state average.

Read the whole story

How oceans impact Western reservoirs and rivers

By Emily Benson, High Country News

As Houston cleans up after Hurricane Harvey and Hurricane Irma barrels through the Caribbean and Florida, this year's Atlantic hurricane season offers a stark reminder of the power

of oceans over weather. But ocean influences aren't limited to the Atlantic. Last winter, rain and snow drenched California, much of it the result of "atmospheric rivers," storms that channeled water from the Pacific straight to the Sierra and across the West. Torrents of rain flooded cities and damaged dams, but also helped end five years of drought in the Golden State.

In a region that relies heavily on snowmelt to supply homes and irrigate fields, Western water managers need to know how much precipitation they can expect in the coming years. While scientists understand the broad strokes of how wet and dry periods are driven by energy traveling through the atmosphere, new research is refining that understanding – something that may ultimately help officials trying to fill the reservoirs and rivers of the West.

The world's oceans and its atmosphere are tightly connected. Because of that link, and global forces like wind and ocean currents that shuttle energy through the atmosphere, far-flung ocean conditions can influence weather.

Read the whole story

Olson attorney wants off bankruptcy case

The attorneys representing former South Lake Tahoe resident Patty Olson in her drawn out bankruptcy proceedings want to stop representing her.

Darby Law Practices have filed the paperwork to withdraw as legal counsel. That request is scheduled to be heard next

month. According to court documents, Olson has retained another attorney.

Court documents say, “DLP seeks to withdraw as counsel of record to Mrs. Olson because she has insisted on taking and has taken actions contrary to the advice of counsel. Additionally, continued representation of Mrs. Olson is a financial burden on DLP. DLP has performed substantial legal services for Mrs. Olson for which it has not been compensated.”

The firm has represented her since January 2016.

Olson’s commercial property in the Bijou center where Tahoe Wellness Cooperative operates is tied up in the bankruptcy case. She has appealed the bankruptcy court’s ruling that it cannot hear the case based on her tenant who operates a business not recognized by the federal government as being legal.

The court had stayed the foreclosure process for now.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Judge allows Little Valley Fire lawsuits to proceed

By Jason Hidalgo, Reno Gazette-Journal

A District Court judge denied a motion by the state to dismiss legal action brought against it for the Little Valley Fire.

Washoe County District Court Judge Scott Freeman ruled this week to allow the lawsuits against the state of Nevada to

proceed.

The Little Valley Fire was caused by a prescribed burn done by the Nevada Division of Forestry that went out of control in the early morning hours of Oct. 17, 2016. The burn was done on Whittell Forest land owned by UNR. By the time the fire was brought under control five days later, it had burned through 2,291 acres, destroying 23 homes and 17 outbuildings, which included some historic structures. A *Reno Gazette-Journal* analysis estimated that property damage from the fire could exceed $80 million.

Read the whole story

DCSD to have regular late start dates

Students in Douglas County will start some days 90 minutes later than the other days.

The purpose is to give teachers more time to strategize about what they are doing regarding student achievement.

“The late start days are instrumental in providing teachers and administrators time to look at data they have on student performance and collaborate together on how to improve the great things we already are able to provide for our students,” Douglas County School District said in a press release.

For Whittell High and Zephyr Cove Elementary schools the late starts will be the second Wednesday of each month. Exceptions include no late start day in November, and it moving to the third Wednesday in January.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Meyers Area Plan on track for winter adoption

By Kathryn Reed

After two years of silence, El Dorado County has released the final draft of the Meyers Area Plan. This is the fourth version.

It was almost like all sides needed a cooling off period.

Years of raucous meetings did more to divide than to unite the community.

What most could agree on was the mission statement that was developed: “Meyers is an ideally situated, spacious, historic, and walkable mountain community that values sustainability, health, wellbeing and the natural environment. Uniquely concentrated with year-round outdoor sport and recreational opportunities, the Meyers mountain culture is the hallmark of our thriving local-based economy boasting a diverse commercial and retail environment, welcoming visitors and providing residents with an extraordinary place to live, work and play.”

The area plan was created with the goal of embracing that sentiment, while at the same time adhering to a lot of government regulations.

The public has a month to comment on the notice of intent to adopt a mitigated negative declaration of environmental impact. There is one public hearing on the notice. However, the area plan itself will have five public hearings – two via

El Dorado County and three for the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency. Feb. 22 is the tentative date for the TRPA Governing Board to vote on the plan.

This area plan builds on the 1993 community plan. That plan, while it was supposed to be updated every five years, never was.

“I thought the Meyers Community Plan was well thought out and I think the area plan is, too,” Supervisor Sue Novasel told *Lake Tahoe News.* “It will be interesting when we go through public comment to see if people have concerns with it.”

Novasel will not be able to vote on the plan because of having property in the area.

“At a glance, it looks like the proposed land use and zoning does not match what the majority of the community input asked for during previous iterations,” Jennifer Quashnick, a Meyers resident who has been vocal throughout the process, told *Lake Tahoe News.*

Brendan Ferry with the county said the substantive changes since the public last viewed the area plan have more to do with TRPA passing its transit plan, as well as changes to state and federal law.

The 42-foot maximum height for new construction was retained from previous versions. TRPA would have allowed 65 feet.

“We changed the sign standards extensively,” Ferry told *Lake Tahoe News.* “There will be a more uniform setback to make the corridor more visually appealing.”

In the new plan 348 acres are considered conservation land, while 137 acres are designated recreation. Historic trees remain protected.

Condensing the plan to three distinct regions would allow for a hotel to be built; which was not possible under the

community plan. Density regulations would limit it to 30 units per acre.

TRPA rules, the right-of-way from Caltrans and the limited size and number of parcels in Meyers might never make that type of business a reality, though.

The extensive right-of-way that Caltrans has remains. Rejiggering that debacle would come outside the scope of the area plan.

Even without the area plan being a done deal, the county is going forward to make the roads in Meyers better. On the Sept. 12 Board of Supervisors agenda is an agreement with Caltrans for “a multimodal complete streets strategy.” A roundabout at highways 50 and 89 is in the works.

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Notes:

· Comments are due Oct. 6. Send them to: El Dorado County, 924 B Emerald Bay Road, South Lake Tahoe, CA 96150 Attn: Brendan Ferry.

· The public hearing on the notice will be Sept. 27 before the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency’s Regional Plan Implementation Committee. The meeting will be at the North Tahoe Event Center in Kings Beach.

· The document is available **online**.

Douglas County manager's contract extended

On a 3-2 vote on Sept. 7, Douglas County Manager Larry Werner's contract was extended to Dec. 31, 2019.

Commissioners Larry Walsh and Dave Nelson were the dissenters. Walsh wanted the term to go through Dec. 31, 2018. Nelson wants to hire a permanent county manager.

Werner has been at the helm of the county since February 2016 when Jim Nichols and the commissioners parted company. Werner's stint was originally supposed to be an interim appointment and never expected be what is now semi-permanent.

The county does have an out, as does Werner. Both may end the contract with 30 days notice.

The contract adjustment did not come with a salary increase. Werner makes $14,333 a month ($171,966/year).

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

West had snowy winter, so why the fiery summer?

By Dan Elliott, AP

Acrid yellow smoke clogs the skies of major Western U.S. cities, a human-caused fire in the Columbia River Gorge rains ash on Portland, Oregon, and a century-old backcountry chalet burns to the ground in Montana's Glacier National Park.

Wildfires are chewing across dried-out Western forests and grassland, putting 2017 on track to be among the worst fire seasons in a decade.

A snowy winter across much of the West raised hopes that 2017 wouldn’t be a dried-out, fire-prone year, but a hot, dry summer spoiled that.

Read the whole story

EDC man indicted in suspected drug death of teen

By Sam Stanton, Sacramento Bee

Five years after a 15-year-old El Dorado High School student died from ingesting a hallucinogenic drug, a Camino man has been indicted by a federal grand jury on charges of possessing and distributing a counterfeit version of LSD that caused the death.

Elijah Lee Richter faces the federal charges in the September 2012 death of Alejandro Nunez Avila, who was found unresponsive at a Pollock Pines home and later died at Marshall Hospital.

Read the whole story

Water use ticks up again across California

By Aaron Mendelson, KPCC

This year, urban water use has settled into a pattern: Californians are consuming more water than in 2015 and 2016, when mandatory measures were in place to cut down on use during a five-year drought.

At the same time, water use has remained below the levels reported in 2013 and 2014, cheering water regulators who hope to make conservation a habit.

July 2017 numbers were released Wednesday by the State Water Resources Control Board, and they fit this pattern for the fifth month running.

Read the whole story