Caltrans removing unsafe trees from highways

Caltrans is identifying and marking dead and dying trees that could impact the safety of the traveling public along state highways. The effort is part of an on-going need to address over 102 million dead trees that have died due to drought and bark beetle infestation since 2010.

Caltrans is marking potentially hazardous trees along the roadway with orange paint and is seeking permission from private property owners to remove marked trees from their property. Tree removal is provided at no cost because dead and dying trees near highways are potentially hazardous to the public.

In October 2015, Gov. Jerry Brown recognized the magnitude of tree mortality and declared a state of emergency.

Caltrans has been working with partners like PG&E, county public works, CalFire and the U.S. Forest Service to coordinate tree removal. Task force members have removed or felled more than 640,000 dead trees in high hazard areas. Caltrans has removed 107,000 hazardous trees near California highways and is expecting to remove 54,000 more by summer 2018.

Counties most-affected are: Amador, Calaveras, El Dorado, Fresno, Kern, Madera, Mariposa, Placer, Tulare, and Tuolumne.

Trees in the Lake Tahoe Basin have already been marked at locations along highways 28, 50, 89 and 267. Removal work will begin after Labor Day.

Who are these people moving to N. Nevada?

By Kim Burrows, KRNV-TV

Shane Roskie just moved to Reno from Parker, Colo., to be closer to his girlfriend. The two quickly realized that the housing market was tight.

He purchased a new home in Double Diamond with his girlfriend because he couldn’t find one in an already established neighborhood.

“There’s not much available so we decided to go with a new house,” Roskie said.

He’s one of many people who are quickly realizing that there’s a shortage of homes in the Reno/Sparks area. And the ones on the market are expensive, and the prices keep going up. So who’s buying these homes and where are they from?

Read the whole story

Climate change, forest fires focus of Tahoe summit



TRPA chief Joanne Marchetta talks to about 300 people about the challenges and successes of protecting Lake Tahoe's environment on Aug. 22 at the annual summit. Photo/Kathryn Reed

By Kathryn Reed

CAMP RICHARDSON – On the same day when climate change and what that means for potential wildland fires dominated the conversation, the reality of the threat came to fruition hours later as firefighters fought multiple blazes from lightning strikes.

Speaker after speaker on Tuesday dwelled on the health of local forests and that more needs to be done to quash the threat of fire. Then that afternoon between 1:51pm and 6:41pm the Sierra Front Interagency Dispatch Center recorded 12 wildland fires caused by lightning.

Yes, lightning happens in this region in the summer. But there is no arguing the climate is changing. Scientists have the

data to back it up.

Joanne Marchetta, executive director of the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency, pointed out how the warming air and water temperatures are impacting the ecosystem in the basin, that drought takes a toll. Climate change is not unique to Tahoe, it's a global crisis, she said.

Aug. 22 marked the annual Lake Tahoe Environmental Summit. With Lake Tahoe's pristine waters as the backdrop at Valhalla, it was hard not to want to buy into what the lawmakers had to sell. The message – the fight to protect the basin on land and water is a struggle, but one that is worth the effort.



California Sens. Dianne Feinstein and Kamala Harris are committed to protecting Lake Tahoe. Photo/Kathryn Reed

Partially it was a new slate of characters on the podium with

the retirements of Sens. Harry Reid and Barbara Boxer. Taking their place were Sens. Catherine Cortez Maesto, D-Nev., and Kamala Harris, D-Calif. Sen. Dianne Feinstein, D-Calif., hosted the event which is now in its 21st year. Joining them were Nevada Republican Gov. Brian Sandoval, Rep. Tom McClintock, R-Calif., Sen. Dean Heller, R-Nev., and Rep. John Garamendi, D-Calif. Bruce Babbitt, secretary of the Interior under President Bill Clinton and the former governor of Arizona, gave the keynote address.

Heller pointed out that at the start of the day more than 1 million acres had already burned in Nevada this year. That number increased in the 24 hours since he spoke because most of those lightning strikes were in his state.

He is an advocate for more funding for Alert Tahoe, which puts cameras in locations to detect wildfires.

“I won’t be satisfied until there is a camera covering every inch of this (basin),” Heller said.

Cortez Maesto said, “We need to appreciate climate change and why fires are happening. The threat is only increasing, especially under this administration.”

Harris said it’s important to realize that it’s not a choice to help the environment or help the economy; that decisions can be made to enhance both. She also promised to be at all future summits, something her predecessor did not believe was important.



Gov. Brian Sandoval said Lake Tahoe is his favorite place. Photo/Kathryn Reed

Lake Tahoe has long had bipartisan congressional support from both states. They all have stories about what the area means to them on a personal level. This makes the basin special, showing that cooperation can work.

Another component of Tahoe being able to infuse $2 billion into environmental projects since the first Lake Tahoe Restoration Act was approved in 2000 is that local government and private individuals/companies have also stepped up to do their part. (The act was reauthorized last year, but the $415 million over seven years has not been appropriated.)

Babbitt said this is what makes Tahoe unique, that much of what has taken place to improve lake clarity and forest health has been at the ground level and not dictated from those in Washington, Sacramento or Carson City.

While McClintock is not a believer is human-caused climate

change, citing how the climate has been changing since the last ice age, he is a huge proponent for being able to make the forest healthier faster.

“The management tools are now in place and we need to use them with the urgency that our forest systems demand and hope that it is not too late,” McClintock said.

On summit day it was announced the Tahoe-Central Sierra Initiative was created as yet another layer to protect Lake Tahoe and the central Sierra from impacts from large, damaging wildfires and unprecedented tree die-off.

Members are Sierra Nevada Conservancy, California Tahoe Conservancy, U.S. Forest Service, Nature Conservancy, National Forest Foundation, University of California, Natural Reserve System-Sagehen Creek Field Station, and California Forestry Association.

The number of dead trees in the Lake Tahoe Basin has more than doubled from 35,000 to 72,000 in the last year.

CalFire has pledged $5 million to the Sierra Nevada Conservancy to implement high-priority forest health projects within the TCSI area.

The other financial commitment at the event was the Environmental Protection Agency disclosing it was giving $197,250 to the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency to assess and restore wetlands in the Lake Tahoe Basin.

California colleges full of

hungry students

By Emily DeRuy, Bay Area News Group

That old line about getting college students to attend events on campus by offering free pizza is no joke for some young people these days.

In a first-of-its-kind study that looks into the issue of hunger on college campuses nationwide, 13 percent of households with students at community colleges and 11 percent with students at four-year colleges worried about having enough money to buy food in 2015.

It’s a problem that some schools say has become more prevalent in recent years.

Read the whole story

Truckee officers recover bikes worth $125,000+

Four brothers from San Francisco have been arrested on theft charges. They are accused of stealing high-end mountain bikes from various locations in Truckee, Tahoe City, Squaw Valley, and Carson City.

Surveillance images caught the suspects committing the thefts, but no specific identifiable information could be established. Investigators were able to determine the make and model of an associated vehicle, however, no license plate could be identified.

On Aug. 19 at approximately 10pm, a Truckee police officer was patrolling a location that had previous thefts, when he located the possible suspect vehicle. Officers detained Jesus Gallardo, 25, Sergio Gallardo, 23, Martin Gallardo, 27, and Juan Carlos Gallardo, 29.

All four were charged with multiple counts of grand theft, criminal conspiracy, and possession of stolen property.

Truckee police detectives served search warrants for the suspects' vehicles and a residence in San Francisco. Investigators recovered approximately $70,000 worth of mountain bikes, road bikes, and related components. The dollar value of all the items taken from Truckee/Tahoe region is estimated to be in excess of $125,000.
The Truckee Police Department is currently inventorying each of these items in an attempt to locate the lawful owners.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Fallen Leaf Lake joins ambulance consortium

A fifth board member is coming to the CalTahoe Joint Powers Authority board – a rep from Fallen Leaf Lake Fire Department.

The JPA operates the ambulance service on the South Shore. It has been functioning as a four-member board with two people from South Lake Tahoe and two from Lake Valley. This has not been a productive way to do business.

The board agreed to have Fallen Leaf join the ranks. Fallen Leaf's interest is to have better ambulance response time,

according to Chief Gary Gerren. Membership means an ambulance will be at the station at the west end of the lake on a seasonal basis.

The JPA will supply the ambulance, Fallen Leaf will provide the paramedics. Fallen Leaf is not paying into the JPA.

North Tahoe Fire Protection District joined the JPA in fall 2016, but that was short lived. That department folded into Meeks Bay a couple years ago, so it's boundaries are from the West Shore to Kings Beach. Meeks Bay had been a member in the past as well.

Barton Health is still in talks to be a member of the JPA.

As new agencies come on board, it's possible the representation from South Tahoe and Lake Valley could change, too.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Carson City fire at 100 acres, 25% containment



A hillside in Carson City is on fire after being struck by lightning Aug. 22. Photo/Ceci Chourre'

By Siobhan McAndrew and Marcella Corona, Reno Gazette-Journal

The Voltaire Canyon Fire was burning an estimated 100 acres and was 25 percent contained.

Voluntary evacuations were still in place for the Carson Indian Colony, said Erica Hupp, of the Humboldt Toiyabe National Forest.

"There was one house that was in immediate danger, but crews were able to protect the house with a fire retardant drop," she said.

Read the whole story

In solar scuffle, big utilities meet their match

By Elizabeth Shogren, High Country News

Near the end of 2005, Louise Helton had one of those life-changing moments that usually only happen in Hollywood movies. Friends had invited her to join Nevada movers and shakers in an ostentatiously decorated Las Vegas casino ballroom to hear former President Bill Clinton speak. He challenged the audience to diversify the state's economy, and to do so in a very specific way. Adopting a Southern drawl, Helton recalls the words that inspired her: "And he said, 'If I were y'all, y'all would be the Saudi Arabia of solar.'"

Clinton's pitch made sense to the 51-year-old Helton. With its abundant sunshine, Nevada was well positioned to become a clean energy leader. Besides, the state lacks its own coal or natural gas reserves, so it has to import those conventional fuels, thus benefiting other states' economies instead of its own. "There is no better or cheaper resource than the sun that is shining down on the sunniest place in the West," Helton says.

Clinton's words percolated away inside Helton for a few years. Then, in 2008, she took the leap. Using savings from the two decades she spent working with at-risk kids, she opened her own company, 1 Sun Solar Electric. She kept costs down by melding it with her life partner's successful tile and stone company, and in 2009, they started attaching solar panels to roofs in Las Vegas. Her timing was unfortunate; the recession hit Las Vegas especially hard and the impacts lingered, but Helton was able to keep her small crew working and her business in the black. By the time Nevada's economy bounced back in 2014, the cost of solar panels had plummeted. Helton's company was ready to ride the wave. "We were making a very good living and supporting a crew of folks who were able to support their families," she recalls.

Read the whole story

Nevada Gaming Commission to hash over weed and casinos

By Thomas Moore, Las Vegas Sun

Nevada’s legalization of recreational marijuana has made life easier for users but more difficult for gaming companies, something the Nevada Gaming Commission hopes to address in a special meeting on Thursday.

Legalized weed presents a number of problems for the gaming industry: Using and selling pot is still a violation of federal law, and Nevada’s regulators don’t want gaming companies to be associated with something that is technically illegal.

State gaming laws and regulations specifically prohibit behavior by gaming licensees that would discredit the industry. Violating a federal law, Nevada’s gaming regulators have said, could do exactly that.

Read the whole story

Rangers recover body of Heavenly patroller

By Mike Carter, Seattle Times



Dmitri
Pajitnov

The body of Heavenly Mountain Resort ski patroller Dmitri Pajitnov, who went missing on Mount Rainier last month after he fell through a snow bridge, has been found at the bottom of a waterfall, the park said.

Mount Rainier National Park initially published a news release right after the 30-year-old Washington man went missing on July 3. He had fallen into a hole above Pebble Creek while descending on skis from Camp Muir, the park said.

Since then, the park has conducted over 22 ground and air searches of the area.

Read the whole story