

California's drought-to-deluge cycle getting worse



Ski resort infrastructure has been buried this ski season.
Photo Copyright 2017 Carolyn E. Wright

By Rong-Gong Lin II and Paige St. John, Los Angeles Times

California's climate has long been dominated by cycles of intense dry conditions followed by heavy rain and snow.

But never before in recorded history has the state seen such an extreme drought-to-deluge swing.

Experts and state water officials say California is seeing more of these intense weather swings as temperatures warm, which has profound implications for the droughts and floods the state may face in the generations to come.

The extreme cycles of dry and wet weather appear to have been intensifying over the last three decades.

Read the whole story

Aspen-KSL buy Mammoth, 3 other Calif. resorts

By Jason Blevins, Denver Post

The new Aspen Skiing Co.-KSL Capital Partners alliance is buying Mammoth Mountain, June Mountain, Snow Summit and Bear Mountain, giving the nascent partnership more than 6,000 acres of Southern California ski terrain across four resorts that host more than 2 million visits a year. No price was announced, but in 2005 the resort traded hands for \$365 million.

Rusty Gregory, the longtime manager and chief executive of Mammoth Resorts, in a statement called the move “the next logical chapter in the story of Mammoth.”

Dropping a mere two days after Aspen Skiing and Denver private equity firm KSL Capital Partners announced they were partnering on a \$1.5 billion deal for Intrawest Resort Holdings’ six ski areas – including Winter Park and Steamboat – Wednesday’s news is nothing short of a shot across the bow of industry giant Vail Resorts.

Read the whole story

Nev. might extend sex trafficking law to transporters

By Alison Noon, AP

Dumbfounded that Nevada law does not consider people who cart around the perpetrators of sex tourism as sex traffickers themselves, one trafficking survivor asked legislators Tuesday to extend strict penalties to the people who market and connect the illicit industry.

Kimberly Mull told the Senate Judiciary Committee that first she was pulled in to child pornography, and people traded photos of her underground before they began trading her. One person traveled across the country to “meet” her at age 13. She knew of children who were shipped off to sex events, and offenders who traveled to them.

Anyone who knowingly takes people to illegal prostitution rings or to watch child pornography in Nevada could be convicted of sex trafficking under Senate Bill 488.

Read the whole story

Heavenly tree removal could reduce bottlenecks

By Kathryn Reed

Congestion on the slopes at Heavenly Mountain Resort could be lessened in the coming winters via trail widening throughout the mountain – in both states, and inside and outside the basin.

The resort has plans to remove hundreds of trees in a 25.3-acre area for widening, while another 29.6 acres would be part of a ski run hazard reduction area. The exact number of trees will be identified in future environmental documents.

“There are locations on select ski trails across the resort which are not sufficiently wide enough to accommodate the existing use. Based on use levels and patterns particularly in early-season and low-snowpack conditions, these trails are not providing a high-quality experience and cannot be opened on a consistent basis,” the U.S. Forest Service scoping document says. “In addition, there are also locations where boulders, stumps and other obstacles make grooming difficult and require a great deal of electrical energy and water through snowmaking in the early season.”



Widening trails could start in spring 2018 at Heavenly. Photo Copyright 2017 Carolyn E. Wright

The U.S. Forest Service, which owns most of the land the South Shore resort operates on, is seeking comments until April 28 on the scoping document. Later this summer an environmental analysis will be developed, which will give the public another opportunity to weigh in on the plans.

Matt Dickinson, acting planning staff officer for the Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit, said most skiers and riders are not apt to notice the bulk of the likely forthcoming changes.

"Some people will notice it in the pinch-point areas where people stop and they're all jammed together," Dickinson told *Lake Tahoe News*. "People will be able to zip right past and not worry about crashing into someone else."

The changes are part of Heavenly's larger master plan that the

USFS has approved. Each project, though, then needs approval.

The soonest the resort could start on the projects would be spring 2018. All improvements affect winter users of the resort, not summer. The amount of time for completion will be dependent on money and weather. It will likely be a multi-year project.

Kevin Cooper, spokesman for Heavenly, did not respond to questions about the project.

Today, the plan is to remove the trees over the snow. It's possible some trees will be felled before it snows, but the extraction will be with snow on the ground.

Trail Name	Area (acres)
Cascade	3.5
Sam's Dream	2
49er	2.5
Advanced Round-a-bout	3.3
Little Dipper ²	4.9
Upper Stagecoach ²	10.1
Meteor ²	3.3
Total	29.6

Ski run reduction locations

Trail Name	Area (acres)
49er	0.3
Sam's Dream	1.2
Cascade	0.3
Ridge Run	2.9
Upper Powderbowl	1.0
Ridge Way	0.3
Lower \$100 Saddle	0.5
Comet ¹	3.3
Orion's ¹	10.9
Big Dipper ¹	1.2
Lower Olympic Downhill ¹	3.2
Bonanza ¹	0.2
Total	25.3

Ski trail widening

locations

Source: *USFS*

“The snowcats have such a light touch on the ground. They really alleviates those (erosion and compaction) issues,” Dickinson said.

In areas where snowmaking lines will be affected, they will be relocated. It’s possible the resort will upgrade those devices where applicable.

Another component of the project is to make snowmaking more efficient by getting rid of large boulders and downed trees that take several feet of snow to be covered. This is most troublesome in drought-like conditions when Mother Nature is not able to sufficiently cover them, especially in what resort officials and skiers would consider a timely manner.

“The height of these natural features can require up to 5 feet or more of snow coverage before trails can be opened. During low snow years a great deal of energy and water resources is put toward making snow on these trails or else they can’t be opened,” the scoping document says. “Boulders would be capped – blasted with explosives – to a height of 12-18 inches and moved by hand or equipment. Stumps would be ground or cut to a height of less than 6 inches but would remain in place. Large diameter logs would be moved from the ski trail, chipped or used along steeper sections of trail for erosion control.”

Notes:

- Comments are due April 28.
- Email comments to: comments-pacificsouthwest-ltbmu@fs.fed.us.
- More information is available **online**.

Douglas commissioners don't want pot in the county

Douglas County commissioners this month said no to pot shops.

The ordinance prohibits “marijuana establishment uses, including cultivation, testing, product manufacturing, distribution and retail facilities in all Douglas County zoning districts.”

Even though voters in Nevada said yes to recreational marijuana, it is up to each county to set the rules.

Even so, the use of recreational pot in Douglas County will still be allowed, along with growing for personal consumption.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Investors push Whole Foods to consider a sale

By Jeff Daniels, CNBC

Shares of Whole Foods Market jumped nearly 10 percent on Monday after activist investor Jana Partners took a nearly 9 percent stake in the company and suggested it should consider putting itself up for sale.

Jana is attempting to engage with Whole Foods CEO John Mackey,

sources told CNBC, although the firm has yet to speak about its ideas with the grocer's management.

In a regulatory filing Monday, Jana said it believes Whole Foods "shares are undervalued and represent an attractive investment opportunity." The investor group also said it has "substantial experience" in the grocery and food sectors and intends to have discussions with the current board and management about making changes.

Read the whole story

Nothing normal about freakish winter weather

By Brian K Sullivan, Bloomberg

It's not your imagination. The weather has been weird.

So weird, in fact, it's had an almost biblical feel: a February tornado in Massachusetts; record wildfires across the Great Plains and beyond; more snow than ever in the Sierra Nevada; and temperatures whiplashing from balmy to frigid, killing crops and coaxing flowers out of their winter slumber.

While some of the swings may result from chance, scientists agree climate change is adding to weather mayhem and that the world will have to brace for worse. President Trump is also seeking to roll back measures to fight global warming, saying the regulations kill jobs.

Read the whole story

Pedestrian struck, killed by CHP vehicle near Truckee

By Jessica Hice, Sacramento Bee

A bus driver was struck and killed by a California Highway Patrol vehicle while assisting at the scene of a traffic accident near Truckee Saturday night.

A CHP officer arrived at an accident site on eastbound Interstate 80 near Iceland Grade, about 5 miles east of Truckee, where a charter bus was blocking traffic and another vehicle was overturned, CHP said in a statement Sunday.

Read the whole story

Nevada's record-busting snowpack keeps growing

By Benjamin Spillman, Reno Gazette-Journal

The people who measure Sierra Nevada snow are running out of adjectives to quantify 2017's drought-busting totals.

It's forcing them to use more creative descriptions.

At one snow-measuring site in the Desolation Wilderness southwest of Lake Tahoe there's so much snow that if it melted in place there would be 10 feet of water.

“You could drown in that much water,” said Jeff Anderson, a hydrologist for the Natural Resources Conservation Service in Reno. “It is deeper than the deep end of the pool.”

It wasn't the only spot where the snowpack outpaced superlatives to describe it.

Read the whole story

Fire destroys house in Homewood



No one was injured April 10
in this Homewood fire.
Photo/NLTFPD

A fire early Monday morning caused the roof to collapse on a home in Homewood.

The occupant and dog were able to escape without injury.

According to the North Tahoe Fire Protection, the fire was reported about 12:50am April 10 on Sierra Vista Avenue.

“Firefighters arrived to a fully involved structure fire, with energized power lines on the ground. Approximately five

minutes after arrival, the 1,200-square-foot home experienced a partial structural collapse," firefighters said.

The cause of the fire is under investigation.

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*