

Nev. AG wants judge to dismiss fire lawsuits

By Scott Sonner, AP

Nevada's chief legal adviser wants a judge to dismiss all but a narrow piece of a series of lawsuits accusing state forestry officials of mishandling a prescribed burn that turned into a raging wildfire and destroyed 23 homes along the edge of the Sierra.

The homeowners say they suffered more than \$80 million in damages in the fall blaze. They contend the government illegally took over their property and left it "valueless and virtually unusable."

Officials with the Division of Forestry "breached their duty by negligently, carelessly and recklessly failing to operate, manage and supervise the prescribed burn," according to each of five lawsuits filed in the past two months by a total of 38 plaintiffs.

Nevada Attorney General Adam Laxalt and his deputy attorneys said in a motion this week that the homeowners may be entitled to some compensation for unintentional damage. But they argue the state judge should dismiss all claims related to property rights or the "takings" clause of the Fifth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution.

Read the whole story

Ski world shakeup involves Squaw's parent firm

By Kathryn Reed

Financially troubled resort owner Intrawest has finally been bought. It's been a slow demise for the Colorado-based firm that was once the largest ski resort operator in the world.

KSL Capital Partners, the parent company of Squaw Valley and Alpine Meadows ski resorts, along with Aspen Skiing Company – both Colorado-based firms – are purchasing Intrawest for approximately \$1.5 billion. The deal is expected to close in the third quarter of this year, with KSL and Aspen forming a new company to oversee the Intrawest holdings.

Stratton Mountain in Vermont, Mont Tremblant in Quebec and Steamboat in Colorado are the more well-known resorts owned by Intrawest.

"Intrawest is a collection of remarkable properties in exceptional locations. Each has its own unique story and its own unique sense of place," KSL CEO Eric Resnick said in a statement. "We are committed to honoring the deep traditions of each resort, while working with Intrawest's talented management team and employees to continue to serve both their guests and local communities."

With **Vail Resorts** in February announcing its purchase of Stowe in Vermont, this latest deal shows the competitive nature of the industry and the need for diversification.

Andy Wirth, CEO of Squaw, has worked for Steamboat and Intrawest, so he is taking over known entities.

These companies have a history with one another. In January 2010, Squaw Valley Ski Corp. bought **Squaw Valley Village** from

Intrawest. In 1986, Intrawest acquired Blackcomb Mountain from a division of Aspen Skiing Company. In 2012, **KSL bought** Intrawest's share of Whistler-Blackcomb. (Last year Vail Resort bought **Whistler**.)

Intrawest in 2016 completed the sale of its timeshare business to Diamond Resorts International for \$85 million. Diamond Resorts owns Lake Tahoe Vacation Resort in South Lake Tahoe.

Distraction cited as pedestrian deaths spike

By Associated Press

WASHINGTON – Pedestrian deaths are climbing faster than motorist fatalities, reaching nearly 6,000 deaths last year – the highest total in more than two decades, according to an analysis of preliminary state data.

Increased driving due to an improved economy, lower gas prices and more walking for exercise and environmental factors are some of the likely reasons behind the estimated 11 percent spike in pedestrian fatalities in 2016. The figures were prepared for the Governors Highway Safety Association, which represents state highway safety offices.

But researchers say they think the biggest factor may be more drivers and walkers distracted by cellphones and other electronic devices, although that's hard to confirm.

Read the whole story

Rising home prices in California concern economists

By Mark Glover, Sacramento Bee

Housing affordability – or more precisely, the increasing lack of it – in California has prompted growing concern among economists and segments of the residential real estate industry.

Sung Won Sohn, a professor of economics at California State University, Channel Islands, said last week that “the average person, especially in the Bay Area and Southern California, is essentially priced out of the market. The only way they can buy a home is with a high-paying job or their parents helping them out.”

Experts say rising home costs in California are the result of a stronger economy, high employment levels, relatively strong buyer demand, and most significant, low inventory of homes for sale.

According to the most recent monthly report by Irvine-based real estate market tracker CoreLogic, the median price of a resale house in Sacramento County in February was \$310,500, up about 11 percent from February 2016. In surrounding counties, prices were significantly higher: \$400,000 in El Dorado County (up 8.4 percent year-over-year) and \$425,000 in Placer (up 3.7 percent). Median sales prices of new homes in February ranged from \$410,750 in Sacramento County to \$493,000 in Placer County to \$540,750 in El Dorado County.

[Read the whole story](#)

EDC sheriff adamantly opposed to sanctuary status

By Peter Fimrite, San Francisco Chronicle

Leaning back in his chair, his gold sheriff's badge glinting in a shaft of light, John D'Agostini thought for a second about what he would do if Sacramento legislators imposed San Francisco-style sanctuary laws to protect people living across the state illegally.

His dilemma is part of the complex immigration debate in California, where a bill passed last week by the state Senate would restrict cooperation with U.S. immigration agents everywhere, including not only liberal strongholds but bastions of conservatism like El Dorado County.

To D'Agostini, the proposed law, SB54, is tantamount to coddling criminals, and that doesn't wash in the historic Gold Rush towns and foothill hamlets he serves. He said he would simply refuse to go along.

Read the whole story

'Buying' the votes for a gas-tax hike

By Jim Miller, Christopher Cadelago and Taryn Luna, Sacramento Bee

California drivers will begin paying 12 cents per gallon more in gas taxes later this year, the first of several tax and fee hikes contained in this week's road-funding bill that eventually will cost the average motorist about \$120 a year.

It wasn't the sort of vote any politician likes to cast. So the measure's success on Thursday relied on a collection of eleventh-hour sweeteners offered by Gov. Jerry Brown and Democratic legislative leaders to reach the necessary two-thirds super-majority.

Now that the dust has settled, it's clear they doled out nearly \$1 billion in district-specific transportation projects, with a popular commuter train system linking the valley and Bay Area headed to new locales. It also appears architects could get legal indemnity in construction lawsuits, and four Riverside County cities could see a budget boost.

Read the whole story

Hwy. 28 road-trail work expected to begin in April

Final design of the next phase of Highway 28 improvements goes before the Nevada Transportation board on April 10. If approved, and weather permitting, NDOT and Granite Construction could begin work on phase 2 as early as next week.

Granite Construction will work from both ends of the project, Sand Harbor and Incline Village, to try to limit the impact on traffic flow and public access.

The focus, this summer, will be completing the main structural work along the first three miles of the Tahoe East Shore trail, which is part of the greater Stateline-to-Stateline trail. The crew on the Incline Village side will begin building retaining walls and stabilizing soil-nailed walls to take the shared-use path up the hillside and around Rocky Point subdivision. At the same time, the second crew will start from the Sand Harbor boat ramp at Lake Tahoe Nevada State Park. They will also be building soil-nailed walls as well as bridge foundations along the shoreline. Some of the bridge decks will be set in the fall.

Most of this summer's work will be done Sunday night through Friday at noon, when the Memorial Point parking area will also be closed for construction staging. Expect daytime traffic control similar to last season with 20-30 minute delays. There will also be some night work with lane closures for water quality improvements, which include curb, gutter and drainage facilities.

Along with the water quality improvements, NDOT is coordinating digging a trench and adding conduit for future fiber optic and information technology uses from Incline Village to the Washoe County line. The next section, from the Carson line to Highway 50, will be included with the future shared-use path project.

Mandates go against local control for Nev. schools

By Meghin Delaney, Las Vegas Review-Journal

If lawmakers had their way, every Nevada school would teach

financial literacy, diversity studies and the benefits of organ donations. High school would start at 9:30am, and every student would have free access to dual credit courses.

Elementary schools would have daily recess. Staff would be trained on gender expression, and cameras would be placed in special education classrooms.

If only it were that easy.

About two dozen bills introduced this legislative session mandate certain programs that schools may have to adopt and implement. The proposals come from both parties and both houses. Generally, the bills have earned widespread support – few people argue against schools giving kids recess or having a library.

Money constraints are always a concern, but the issue boils down to whether lawmakers or school boards should mandate school policies. Districts want to maintain local control, but lawmakers want to be responsive to their constituents.

Missing woman's body found in Upper Truckee River

The body of a Sacramento woman who had been missing since April 3 was found Sunday in the Upper Truckee River north of Motel 6 in South Lake Tahoe.



Pamela
Suwinsky

Pamela Suwinsky, 62, left the motel last Monday afternoon on foot without her dog, purse, cell phone or car. She had her ID and credit cards with her.

El Dorado County sheriff's dive team members found her in the river on the afternoon of April 9.

The cause of death is still pending.

On Friday detectives with the South Lake Tahoe Police Department had ruled her disappearance suspicious.

It was her ex-husband who reported her missing, saying she had hit her head in a fall the day before.

At this time no arrests have been made, not has it been determined that foul play was involved.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Weather impacts home sales in Tahoe-Truckee

The wicked winter is being blamed for the decline in home sales for the first quarter of 2017 in the Lake Tahoe-Truckee

area.

The overall sales volume dipped 7 percent from a year ago. The drop was mainly affected by a 13 percent decrease in the sale of homes priced less than \$1 million, according to statistics from Chase International. The median home price remained steady with a 2 percent increase to \$529,000.

Homes sold for more than \$1 million were down 5 percent and overall units sold were down 6 percent. Incline Village saw the biggest decreases with a 52 percent fall in volume and 24 percent decline in units sold. Homes sold for more than \$1 million were down 23 percent. The median price of a home in Incline Village fell 8 percent to \$870,000.

Tahoe City saw a 28 percent jump in volume sold, primarily from a 14 percent rise in the median home price (\$611,000). The South Shore experienced a 67 percent increase in homes sold for more than \$1 million and the median home price was up 4 percent to \$412,000. The East Shore also saw an uptick in homes sold for more than \$1 million (25 percent), while homes selling for less than \$1 million dropped 31 percent. The median price of a home on the East Shore rose 26 percent to \$965,000.

Sales were down across the board in Truckee, with record-breaking snowfall and severe winter storms hampering buyers' searches. Volume and units sold were both down, 29 and 18 percent, respectively, while median home price rose 7 percent to \$709,000.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report