

WCSO enforcement snares speeders, cell phone users

Statistics from the Washoe County Sheriff's Office's recent Joining Forces click it or ticket traffic safety campaign indicate that drivers are buckling up, but many are speeding and driving while distracted by their cell phones.

Of the 360 citations issued during this three-week campaign, five were for seat belt violation. However, 151 citations were issued for speeding and 93 for cellphone use.

Deputies initiated 275 traffic stops during enforcement period. Although a driver may be stopped for one violation, several other violations may be observed during the subsequent investigation making it possible that a driver may be issued citations for numerous violations.

The total number of violations cited and warnings issued by the sheriff's office during this event was 360:

- 151 speeding violations
- 93 cellphone use
- 5 seat belt violations
- 2 fugitive arrests
- 1 running a red light
- 1 child seat violation
- 24 motor vehicle registration violations
- 28 failure to show proof of insurance
- 20 driver's license related violations
- 6 equipment violations
- 2 other citations
- 27 warnings.

Man accused of pimping out woman in SLT

A 32-year-old Reno man remains in custody this morning on pimping and other charges.

Bail for Francisco Nieves has been set at \$345,000.

He was arrested in South Lake Tahoe on Dec. 19 after the 23-year-old victim reported the crime to Carson City sheriff's deputies. She told investigators the incident occurred at a South Lake Tahoe motel.

Officers are looking for more victims. If anyone has more information, they should contact the South Lake Tahoe Police Department at 530.542.6100.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

CTC staff trying to control makeup of board

By Kathryn Reed

Two board members of the California Tahoe Conservancy have refused to resign even though they have been asked to do so.

And now the state agency's attorney is backpedaling when it

comes to what exactly he wants them to do. Tom Davis and Sue Novasel, who represent South Lake Tahoe and El Dorado County, respectively, on the CTC board aren't going quietly.

"They recommended that I immediately resign. I have not resigned," Novasel told *Lake Tahoe News*.

Earlier this month she received a phone call from Executive Director Patrick Wright and a staff attorney telling her she suddenly had a conflict by being on the board and an elected official.

Davis received the same news, only in person the week before the December board meeting.

"We had some strong words. I was pissed off," Davis told *Lake Tahoe News*.

Now the Conservancy is changing its message, at least with the media. On Dec. 19 staff attorney Mike Steeves told *LTN*, "The AG's Office is not requesting any action nor is this agency. We are not asking for board members to resign or for board members to be removed."

He said he has no written correspondence from the Attorney General's Office. Neither the city nor the county have anything in writing from the AG either.

When *Lake Tahoe News* contacted the AG's Office, the response was, "We represent the Conservancy so you should reach out to them directly." When told the CTC said to contact the AG, the AG folks replied, "The Conservancy is our client, and we'll continue to direct inquiries their way."

Another player in all of this is the state Natural Resources Agency. While CTC is an independent board, it operates under this larger state organization.

The CTC was created in 1984. In that time the makeup of the board has included: one member appointed by the South Lake

Tahoe City Council, one member appointed by the El Dorado County Board of Supervisors, one member appointed by the Placer County Board of Supervisors, the secretary of the Resources Agency or his or her designee, one member appointed from the general public by the Senate Committee on Rules, one member appointed from the general public by the Speaker of the Assembly, and the director of Finance or the director's designee. The U.S. Forest Service member does not have a vote. Most of these 30-plus years the three local jurisdictions have had an elected councilmember or supervisor on the CTC board.

Today, Placer has Larry Sevison, who is not an elected official. However, Sevison has been a Placer County supervisor and was instrumental in the creation of the Conservancy.

"I don't think I'm in a position that I can comment right now because there is so much in transition. I would be happy to let you know when we get clear definition of where we are headed. Right now there is no clear direction," Sevison told *Lake Tahoe News*. "Obviously there is so much disagreement going on between the city and the Conservancy and the county and the Conservancy."

That last statement by the CTC board chairman is what is rankling elected and staff officials within South Lake Tahoe and El Dorado County. They believe the potential ousting of Davis is retribution by Wright et al because the city has been critical of the CTC and the executive director in particular. Novasel is essentially collateral damage.

"It is certainly interesting that when the executive director is called into question as to his activities for which the board should or can hold him accountable, there is then a question if those very board members can sit as board members," South Lake Tahoe City Attorney Tom Watson told *Lake Tahoe News*.

The city and Conservancy's rift started with the potential

development project involving the **Knights Inn**. The Conservancy was going to provide funding for the land acquisition and subsequent water quality project. Then they backed out when the commodities became an issue. It is through the acquisition and then selling of commodities as well as the Asset Lands Management Program that the Conservancy continues to stay solvent because it is no longer receiving large sums of cash from the state.

Wright has been behind this change in the direction of the CTC, which helps to ensure this Nevada resident has gainful employment by the taxpayers of California.

Councilman Davis has been a recent vocal critic of Wright. This fall he asked for the board to do a performance review of the executive director. He was last evaluated in 2013.

At the board meeting this month there was much discussion about Wright's future eval. The board only meets quarterly and because Wright won't be at the March meeting the review won't take place until June. (Novasel was not at this meeting because of a family emergency.)

"There was a movement to silence me and they dug deep," Davis said.

The depth he refers to is the Conservancy coming up with this potential conflict after 30 years. It was CTC staff who contacted the AG.

"Two precipitating events led to the Office of the Attorney General reviewing potential conflict of interest issues for California Tahoe Conservancy board members. First, at the Conservancy's September board meeting, a board member (Novasel) raised concerns regarding potential conflicts associated with voting on a Prop. 1 grant award to that board member's jurisdiction," Nancy Vogel, spokeswoman with the Natural Resources Agency, told *Lake Tahoe News*. "Second, the Conservancy was made aware in October that the city of South

Tahoe may sue the Conservancy over the City's Prop. 1 grant application for the Bijou Park Creek Watershed and SEZ Restoration Project. The Conservancy coordinated with the Office of the Attorney General on issues associated with any future board meeting closed sessions regarding this potential litigation and whether the appointed city of South Lake Tahoe board member (Davis) should attend these closed sessions.

"Based on these events, attorneys from the Office of the Attorney General conveyed information to the Conservancy regarding the applicability of conflict of interest laws to the Conservancy board members, and this information was passed on to individual board members."

It is not unusual for elected officials to have conflicts of interest and then have to recuse themselves from specific agenda items. Davis didn't stay for the CTC closed session item involving the city.

According to Vogel, "The Conservancy has not recommended any specific remedy to the individual board members, nor is the Conservancy contemplating any action to remove individual board members. Furthermore, the Conservancy is reviewing legislative options to remedy these potential conflicts."

No one from any state agency has been able to explain why state lawmakers need to become involved and why recusal is not sufficient to avoid conflicts.

The city and county are operating as though their elected reps may be banished from the board because that is what the Conservancy has told them is the course of action it plans to take.

"We don't agree with their position and we do believe the best person to represent the CTC is the supervisorial board member," El Dorado County CAO Don Ashton told *Lake Tahoe News*.

The city and county both make appointments to various boards,

including the CTC, in January. Both intend to have closed session discussions about the CTC.

The city already knows who it would put on the board if an elected official can't be on it – former Councilman Hal Cole.

“I would be willing to,” Cole told *Lake Tahoe News*. “I think there should be a bigger challenge to the overall idea. To have a board dealing with the public's money not have any elected officials does not seem healthy.”

Watson with the city thinks it would be interesting if the county had one of its attorneys on the CTC board.

“Maybe legal counsel reviewing procedures under which the CTC is acting might be appropriate,” Watson said.

From guns to sex crimes, new laws affect Calif.

By Jeremy B. White, Sacramento Bee

Every Fall, Gov. Jerry Brown's time is consumed by what could best be described as legislative triage.

He sifts through the hundreds of bills sent to his desk and decides which ones will become law. This year, the Legislature sent Brown 1,059 pieces of legislation, 898 of which the governor deemed worthy of his signature. He vetoed 159 and let two become law without signing them.

On Jan. 1 we'll start seeing the results. What follows is a list of the laws taking effect Jan. 1.

Read the whole story

Truckee PD recruits new chief from within

Truckee is about to have a new police chief.

Capt. Rob Leftwich is being promoted. Adam Gill, who has been chief for five years, is leaving next month to take the helm of Novato Police Department.



Rob Leftwich

Leftwich has worked side-by-side with McGill. Captain is the second highest ranking office in this department.

Leftwich has a bachelor of arts degree in communications and public relations from the University of the Pacific. He has 21 years of experience in law enforcement, including six years with Truckee. The last five have been as captain. Leftwich is a past member of the board of directors for Tahoe SAFE Alliance and was a member of the Truckee Tahoe Airport Community Advisory Team.

In his off time, Leftwich is either snowboarding, paddleboarding, riding his motorcycle, flyfishing or camping with his family.

Burning Man made \$37 million in 2015

By Jenny Kane, Reno Gazette-Journal

The Burning Man Project is more than a million bucks closer to taking over the world with its art and principles.

The San Francisco-based arts nonprofit, known best for its elaborate, 70,000-person annual arts-centric gathering in Northern Nevada's Black Rock Desert, has released last year's tax documents, revealing that the organization pulled in \$36.9 million and spent \$35.8 million in 2015.

While the organization that touts its 10 principles – such as radical inclusion, radical self-expression and gifting – may be making more than ever, it also is spending more than ever. The organization's total revenue climbed year-over-year by 14 percent while total spending increased by 19 percent, according to 2015 tax documents.

Read the whole story

How will legalized pot affect the gaming industry?

By Richard N. Velotta, Las Vegas Review-Journal

Depending on which side of Question 2 you sat, you're either embracing Jan. 1 or dreading its arrival.

How we treat the arrival of recreational marijuana is going to be the subject of continuing debate through 2017 as leaders sort out all the regulatory details of public policy. And it's not a debate restricted to Nevada. Other states that generate tourism and gaming revenue are fielding the same types of questions.

The Nevada Gaming Control Board and Gaming Commission got the ball rolling with a pair of public hearings last month and it was clear from those sessions that there will be some interesting twists and turns on the horizon.

The line in the sand drawn by gaming regulators is based on federal law. The control board and the commission say that because the federal government views marijuana use as illegal, so do state gaming regulators.

Read the whole story

On-site medics integral to SnowGlobe's survival

By Kathryn Reed

"We would not be able to have SnowGlobe if Rock Med was not here."

Those are the words of South Lake Tahoe Fire Chief Jeff Meston. For a department his size, when there are four patients it is considered a multi-casualty incident.

If everyone who was treated at the three-day music festival went via ambulance to Barton Memorial Hospital, it would overload that facility and cripple the ambulance service.

These are reasons why the volunteer medical team is so important to South Lake Tahoe's annual music festival, which returns next week.

"There are more medical calls at SnowGlobe than we would have in several days in the city," Meston told *Lake Tahoe News*. "They have had 30 people OD or some emergency situation at any time."

Alcohol and harder drugs are the primary reasons people seek medical care.



Rock Medicine has been at every SnowGlobe concert in South Lake Tahoe. Photo Copyright 2016 Carolyn E. Wright

Even though the medical facility is onsite, every year concert-goers end up in the emergency room at Barton.

“For the last several years, the Barton Emergency Department has seen between five and 15 patients from SnowGlobe per day. Most patients seen in the Emergency Department come for adverse effects from alcohol intoxication and use of illegal substances. Approximately half of the intoxicated patients seen were under the age of 21,” Lance Orr, medical director for Barton’s ER, told *Lake Tahoe News*. “Patients under the influence require more monitoring and attention from emergency

staff and physicians. Occasionally we see patients originating from SnowGlobe who have sustained a minor traumatic injury. Such injuries are more common when the conditions are icy.”

The concept of Rock Medicine was started in 1972 by legendary music promoter Bill Graham. Upon his request the Haight Ashbury Free Clinic in San Francisco provided medical care in a tent to Grateful Dead and Led Zeppelin concert-goers.

George “Skip” Gay was a doctor at the clinic at the time. In 1973, he founded Rock Medicine. The organization now provides medical care at concerts throughout Northern California, as well as being the primary caregivers for Levi Stadium – home of the San Francisco 49er football team.

Rock Med declined to be interviewed for this story.

Chad Donnelly, the promoter for SnowGlobe, said of Rock Med, “They do an incredible job of looking after attendees.”

Even so, sometimes concert-goers need to be taken to the hospital.

“If someone using Rock Med services needs additional medical attention, Rock Med’s medical staff sends patients by ambulance to the Barton Emergency Department. When Rock Med closes their medical facility for the day, patients not ready for discharge from medical care are directed to the Barton Emergency Department,” Orr said.

Rock Med brings a small army of doctors, nurses and other support staff who are able to perform an array of medical procedures.

“They have more people on duty at SnowGlobe than we have firefighters and police officers in the city,” Meston said.

See where wealth is concentrated in California

By Phillip Reese, Sacramento Bee

Like much of America, California's wealth is concentrated among a small group of high-income earners. The state has 16 million households, and just 61,000 of them – 0.4 percent – together account for one-fifth of the state's income, according to the latest tax return figures from the Franchise Tax Board.

About 9 of every 10,000 households in Sacramento County reported earnings of at least \$1 million on 2014 returns, roughly one-fourth the statewide rate.

Placer, El Dorado and Yolo counties had rates two to three times as high, but still fell short of the statewide average.

Read the whole story

Stormier times likely for Calif. water users

By Ellen Knickmeyer, AP

The first winter storm of 2017 to drop welcome rain over the rivers, pumps, pipes and canals that move California's water

north to south likely will open a new era of tension over how much water goes to fish or farms under a new U.S law.

Legislation signed Friday by President Obama dictates that the federal portion of California's heavily engineered water systems gives agricultural districts and other human users the biggest possible share of the most fought-over resource in a state with a six-year drought.

Water experts and conservationists expect that new mandate to conflict with state and federal laws and court orders meant to ensure enough water stays in Northern California's Sacramento and San Joaquin rivers and delta for endangered native fish.

Dueling interpretations over what the new law means for water deliveries could foster tensions between the state and the incoming Trump administration and worsen the water wars among farmers, fishing industries and conservation interests.

"There's going to be fighting, and it is going to commence almost immediately," said Peter Moyle, a professor emeritus of biology at UC Davis.

Moyle has spent much of his career tracing the decline of the minute fish called the Delta smelt and dozens of other native species since operations at California's giant state and federal water projects started more than a half-century ago.

Paul Wenger, president of the California Farm Bureau Federation, is one of many, including farming groups and agricultural water districts with considerable political strength, that welcome the water bill.

As heavy winter rains ease the drought, "this bill is going to help us catch some of this water and move it down south," Wenger said.

And if the state's fishing groups and conservationists try to stop that, "shame on the environmentalists," he said.

“Lawsuits haven’t helped the fish.”

Law bringing some changes

The law includes new directions on how hard to run giant water pumps during the winter storms that bring much of California’s rain for the year.

Typically, the storms trigger recommendations from wildlife officials to ease up on pumping. That is meant to help keep the nearly extinct Delta smelt and waning native salmon on course as the fish take advantage of the storms to move up or downstream.

When Donald Trump visited California’s Central Valley during the presidential campaign, he cited complaints from water districts and farmers that easing pumping after heavy rains wastes storm water that could be captured for the heavily agricultural region.

Environmental groups say allowing winter rains to flow to the Pacific Ocean is essential to the health of the West Coast’s largest estuary, the San Francisco Bay.

Among other changes, the new law is expected to require biologists to show more hard data on endangered fish in real time when they ask for a reduction in pumping. Moyle, the Delta smelt expert, believes that’s possible because of “smelt cams” and other monitoring systems already in place.

Jay Lund, longtime water policy expert at the UC Davis, expects the law to provide up to an additional half-million acre-feet of water for human users.

That’s roughly equal to enough water to supply a half-million homes for a year and would be worth several hundreds of millions of dollars to agricultural interests in drought years. Both fish and farms received less water during the worst of California’s drought.

Fish advocates were expected to go to court if the law takes away water from native species under the state and federal Endangered Species Acts and related court orders, said Doug Obegi with the Natural Resources Defense Council.

Groups fighting restrictions

Some agricultural interests hope to challenge the U.S. Endangered Species Act itself, loosening or doing away with its restrictions on pumping in California.

More pumping for farms and less water in the two rivers would be bad news not just for smelt but for other California fish listed as endangered, from salmon to sturgeon to steelhead, Moyle said.

All of that could bring the Trump administration and its supporters in Congress into conflict with California over the state's protections for threatened wildlife.

"Duelling legislation between Congress and the state Legislature, and parallel legal battles in state and federal courts, and everyone's paying attention to that instead of paying attention to making the system run better – that's my worry," Lund said.