

2 Truckee teens accused of tagging public buildings

Two Truckee teenagers were arrested Oct. 12 on felony vandalism charges.

During the last several months the Truckee Police Department has received multiple reports of graffiti on the walls of numerous businesses along the Highway 89 south of Deerfield Drive, the new mouse hole pedestrian crossing as well as inside Truckee High School. The same 15- and 16-year-old suspects are also accused of spray painting graffiti on the new Trout Creek Hiking Trail and multiple businesses along the Pioneer Trail business district.

The vandalism has caused thousands of dollars in damage.

Officers were also able to identify additional unreported locations the suspects vandalized. A third, lesser involved 15 year old suspect was charged with one count of misdemeanor vandalism tagging.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Gaming industry targets older patrons

By John Rosengren, AARP Bulletin

Beauford Burton had enjoyed the occasional poker game in his youth, but in his 60s the slots hooked him. He and his wife, Sharon, started making the 2 1/2-hour drive every Friday from

their home in Kings Mountain, N.C., to Harrah's Cherokee Casino Resort, where they won occasionally but lost more frequently. In one year, he lost about \$50,000, nearly the equivalent of his annual salary as a manager in a textile company.

They often stayed longer than they'd intended—many times the casino would offer them a free hotel room Saturday night. Burton can't remember ever paying for a room. He had access to an exclusive bar with free drinks and food, preferred seating in the restaurants and suite upgrades in the hotel. Harrah's once flew the couple to its casino in Laughlin, Nev., and covered all their expenses—except, of course, what they gambled.

In the end, Burton knew that all of the freebies weren't really free, and that he had paid for them tenfold with his losses. "I have always known you don't get something for nothing, but I fell for it," he says. "It's the good old devil at work."

Over four years, the slots drained more than \$100,000 from Burton's 401(k). But he kept playing. He cashed in a life insurance policy, took out cash advances on his credit card and gambled away Social Security checks meant to pay utility bills. Finally, in 2008, the gambling habit took his home.

By then, he was playing in a panic, betting up to \$15 to \$20 a spin, chasing his losses and pursuing the one illusory jackpot that he hoped would save him. "As you start to lose, you think, This is a luck thing, my luck is going to change," says Burton, now 73. "But the more you go, the more you lose. It ends up in desperation. I can see how people get so deep that it causes them to take their own lives, because it gets really, really bad."

Of the 101 million visitors to America's casinos in 2014 (the last year for which information was available), nearly half

were age 50 or older, according to data from the gambling industry. In 2014, American casinos reported over \$66 billion in gambling revenue, and much of that profit came from these older gamblers.

A 2011 study published in the Journal of Gambling Studies revealed that many older adults viewed the casino as a place where they can socialize and escape from loneliness or grief.

Read the whole story

Smoke filling basin; arsonist strikes again

Smoke is filling the skies in the basin, Truckee and Reno. Mostly it's from the prescribed fires in the Eldorado National Forest.

Firefighters in the surrounding area have also been working manmade and lightning caused fires.

The South Shore firebug continues to confound fire investigators. A fire on the north side of Lake Tahoe Airport burned about one-quarter of an acre on Oct. 12. The U.S. Forest Service is investigating.

The feds along with CalFire are trying to find the person responsible for starting the rash of fires that first began in late summer. Most have been on state or federal lands. No suspects have been identified.

On Oct. 11 a 50 foot x 50 foot swath of California Tahoe Conservancy land behind Motel 6 in South Lake Tahoe was charred.

The Salt Fire burning on the Amador Ranger District north of Salt Springs Reservoir in the Mokelumne Wilderness was detected Oct. 3. It is at about 20 acres. Lightning started the blaze. It poses little threat to the public, private property or surrounding infrastructure, and is being managed under a confine-contain fire suppression strategy. It is expected to grow up to 50-100 acres over the next few days.

The series of storms that are expected to arrive in the Tahoe area starting Thursday could be a mixed blessing for firefighters. Moisture is good, wind is not.

“With the dry fuels still on the ground we are urging caution with any warming style fires in your yards. The winds will have the potential to push any embers into dry vegetation,” the Truckee Fire Department said in a statement. “Similar wind driven fire events were seen in Reno a few years ago burning numerous structures. There is still a burn ban in effect until significant moisture ends fire season per CalFire.”

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Outside groups influence Nevada Senate race

By William V. Theobald , Reno Gazette-Journal

WASHINGTON – The names on the ballot say the Nevada Senate race is between Republican Rep. Joe Heck and Democrat Catherine Cortez Masto, a former attorney general.

But the ads on TV screens across the state show the contest is in some ways more a battle between the likes of oil and

chemical maker Charles Koch of Wichita, Kan., and media mogul Fred Eychaner of Chicago.

That's because the two businessmen are among a small group of wealthy givers who fund committees that have no connection to the Nevada campaigns but produce ad after ad supporting or attacking the two candidates.

Read the whole story

Study: Megadrought nearly certain this century

By Deborah Sullivan Brennan, San Diego Union Tribune

The West is almost certain to experience a decades-long drought by the end of the century, if greenhouse emissions continue as usual, a new climate study concluded.

The chance that the Southwest will experience a megadrought – a dry period lasting 35 years or more – is between 70 and 99 percent by the end of the century, according to the study, published Wednesday in Science Advances, an online, open access academic journal.

“The kind of events that we were looking for, and the risk we were looking at, would be like extending the current California drought for another 30 years,” said Toby Ault, a climate scientist at Cornell University, who authored the paper with Justin Mankin, Benjamin Cook and Jason Smerdon of Columbia University.

Read the whole story

Strong summer home sales in Tahoe basin

Sales volume around the lake was up 20 percent and the median price of a home increased 12 percent to \$540,000 for the third quarter.

In recent years, Tahoe City and the East Shore have been more susceptible to variances, however both saw increases in volume (6 and 28 percent, respectively) with significant jumps in homes selling for more than \$1 million (20 and 33 percent), according to Chase International. The median price of a home in Tahoe City rose 5 percent to \$580,000, while on the East Shore it rose 6 percent to \$1.18 million.

Homes selling for more than \$1 million had the largest impact on sales, with every region on the lake seeing substantial increases, the largest being on the South Shore (62 percent) and Incline Village (55 percent). The only two stats to see any declines were homes selling less for less than \$1 million in Tahoe City (down 4 percent) and Incline Village (down 1 percent).

South Lake Tahoe saw the largest increase in median and average home prices, up 13 and 14 percent to \$405,000 and \$496,984, respectively. The area is still the least expensive place to buy a home. The highest median home price remains in Incline Village, where the price jumped 11 percent to \$1.039 million.

The median price of a home in Truckee rose 13 percent to

\$624,750. Homes selling for more than \$1 million was up 111 percent while homes selling for less than a million was up 11 percent. Overall volume sold in Truckee was up 61 percent.

Martis Valley West approved; lawsuit possible

Placer County supervisors on Tuesday voted 4-1 to approve the controversial Martis Valley West project.

Supervisor Jennifer Montgomery, where the 760-unit gate community would be built, voted no.

Opponents, of which there are many, have 30 days from Oct. 11 to file a lawsuit to stop the project. Many expect the courts to eventually weigh in regarding the validity of the environmental document as well as state law.

The supervisors initially **voted last month** to approve the project. A few details needed to be worked out, which required the vote today.

County counsel has said the environmental document is sound and is not worried that the Attorney General's Office said otherwise.

Mountainside Partners of Truckee, the developer, and landowner Sierra Pacific Industries have been working on this project for at least 10 years. Build out is expected to take 20 years.

The project has been controversial because it takes undeveloped land in Truckee that borders Lake Tahoe and turns it into a subdivision for second homeowners. The proponents have said they expect 20 percent or less full-time occupancy.

“The Martis Valley West project is a combined conservation and development plan that serves to complete a remarkable vision,” developer Blake Riva said in a statement. “The project relocates future development to an area adjacent to an existing resort, significantly reduces the amount of allowable density, protects highly coveted open space in the heart of Martis Valley and provides outdoor recreation opportunities for the community.”

Tom Mooers with Sierra Watch stated, “Today’s approval was a vote against everything we love about Martis Valley and North Lake Tahoe. It was also illegal, and we’re committed to take action to defend Tahoe’s incredible scenery and the clarity of the lake itself.”

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*

West Slope control burn blowing smoke to Tahoe

Smoke in the Tahoe basin is being blamed on a controlled fire in Eldorado National Forest, according the U.S. Forest Service.

Not only is the smoke visible, but the smell is strong.

The feds plan to continue the burns more days this week. A couple hundred acres are being treated.

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*

More water in reservoirs, but drought persists

By Dale Kasler, Sacramento Bee

California's major reservoirs are holding 69 percent more water than a year ago, the U.S. government announced Friday, but regulators warned that drought conditions continue to plague the state.

In its annual inventory of water in storage, the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation said the six key reservoirs owned by the federal government's Central Valley Project held a combined 4.9 million acre-feet of water as of Oct. 1, the beginning of the "water year" that runs through next September.

That figure compared with 2.9 million acre-feet a year earlier.

However, the reservoirs were still at just 41 percent of capacity.

[Read the whole story](#)

Police cars getting even stealthier

By Reno Gazette-Journal

Just when it seemed like undercover police cars couldn't get any stealthier, along comes this.

After adding red- and blue-emergency lights inside the front visors of unmarked police cars, Ford said Monday it is introducing rear emergency lights that are built into the spoiler.

The system means that in states where officers in unmarked cruisers are allowed to pull over speeders, it may be harder to recognize their vehicles – until those lights go on.

Read the whole story