

Biomass plants make pitch for dead trees

By Marc Benjamin, Fresno Bee

Trees are dying in the Sierra at modern-day unprecedented rates, posing elevated fire danger and creating health, water and air quality concerns, but a possible solution to rid the forest of dead and dying trees is getting short shrift, officials say.

California's biomass industry is set up regionally to turn agricultural waste into electricity while eliminating open burning. But many local biomass plants have closed or are closing soon because it costs less to produce electricity with solar and wind, which get subsidies that are not available to biomass.

There are plans to build smaller biomass plants in the Sierra to address tree mortality, but critics say they won't accommodate dead tree disposal needs.

Environmentalists say biomass plants pollute the air.

Electricity generated by biomass is costlier than other options such as solar and wind, a concern to state and public utilities commission officials who are responsible to ratepayers, said Julee Malinowski Ball, executive director of the California Biomass Energy Alliance.

Read the whole story

State GOP chief says Nevada's capital in Vegas

By Mark Robison, Reno Gazette-Journal

Nevada's capital is Las Vegas?

That's what Nevada GOP chairman Michael McDonald said during today's roll call at the Republican National Convention where each state tells how many delegates it gives to the candidates.

He probably meant to say "the entertainment capital Las Vegas." Instead, he said, "From the great shores of Lake Tahoe to the most entertaining capital city, Las Vegas, Nevada, this time what's said in Las Vegas will not stay in Las Vegas."

[Read the whole story](#)

SnowGlobe guaranteed in SLT through 2018

By Kathryn Reed

Preserving the new field is more important to South Lake Tahoe officials than a long-term contract with the promoter of SnowGlobe.

The five City Council members agreed to extend the three-day music festival contract through 2018. The prior deal went through this year. (The event is Dec. 29-31.) The promoter wanted a 10-year deal.



SnowGlobe promoter Chad Donnelly did not get everything he wanted from South Lake Tahoe. Photo/LTN

The electeds are worried what the impact will be of 15,000 people on the field for three consecutive days. The city is in the process of constructing a new ball field near the community field off Al Tahoe Boulevard. Grass will be planted next spring. So, for this year all that will be impacted is dirt.

Even though there has always been a clause in the contract about the need for Chad Donnelly – the promoter of SnowGlobe – to repair any damage, in the past the festival has been on artificial turf.

Donnelly also wanted the council to pony up more money to keep the festival in town. Lake Tahoe Visitors Authority already gives \$50,000 annually to SnowGlobe.

Donnelly spewed numbers at the council without any supporting evidence. He said it costs upward of \$4 million to stage the event, that gross revenues from ticket sales is about \$3.5 million, that he has invested at least \$14 million in the last four years, and the economic impact to the South Shore has been between \$17 million and \$22 million.

While he said he plans to have an independent economic analysis done, no time line was presented to do so.

He wanted more money from the city – cash – and for the city to help more with the cost of transportation and garbage pick up. On a 3-2 vote (Councilmembers JoAnn Conner and Hal Cole were in the minority), the council agreed to give Donnelly \$30,000 in cash in 2017, \$35,000 in 2018 and to split the garbage-transportation expenses as long as the city does not spend more than \$50,000 total.

Donnelly said he will be back at a future date to discuss bringing more events to the ball field, saying they might not all be music.

Meeks Bay Marina closed; in trouble with state

By Kathryn Reed

The feds, state, a sovereign nation and a private business will meet again today in an attempt to find a resolution that would allow the Meeks Bay Marina to reopen.

It has been closed all season – and might not open in 2017 – because of stormwater violations.

Lahontan Regional Water Control Board in 2014 and 2015 issued citations to the U.S. Forest Service – the landowner; to the Washoe Tribe – which has a 20-year contract that expires in three years to run all of the operations; and to Action Water Sports owner Bob Hassett, as marina operator.

The four entities are engaged in confidential settlement

negotiations that could take the rest of the year to resolve. Talks started about six weeks ago.

Eric Taxer, an engineer with the water board who did the inspections, said two years ago the parking lot was unpaved and remained so last year when he revisited the West Shore property. The feds and tribe knew long before Taxer showed up that a dirt lot was a major no-no.

“The response to the inspection and notice of violation was they did install some BMPs to temporarily control erosion. And they were going to submit a plan on how to address the entire site. That was going to be a multiyear plan,” Taxer told *Lake Tahoe News*.

But that plan never came to fruition.



Meeks Bay has 120 slips, but no one can launch this season.
Photo/LTN file

One of the fixes was to essentially dig a trench across the boat ramp. While it helps with BMPs, it makes it difficult for

a boat to be launched.

“Around Memorial Day we came to the conclusion between the tribe and ourselves that there weren’t any quick fixes economically to keep us out of jeopardy with Lahontan,” Mike LeFevre, planning staff officer with Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit, told *Lake Tahoe News*. “We didn’t want to invest a lot of money and have it fail, so the tribe with Forest Service support decided to close the resort this season.”

The lodging and dining facilities at Meeks Bay are open; only the marina is off-limits.

No one from the tribe responded to inquiries from *Lake Tahoe News*.

“We certainly don’t believe BMPs in the parking lot are our responsibility,” Hassett told *Lake Tahoe News*.

Even so, his company as operator of the marina has been cited by Lahontan.

Lahontan spent 2014 and 2015 inspecting all of the marinas on the California side of the basin. (As a California agency it has no jurisdiction in Nevada.) This was in preparation for the marina permit that was issued in June, which brought all of the operators onto the same level playing field. The annual permit fee charged by Lahontan is \$1,282 per marina. Each marina has a Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan.

The goal is to keep as much sediment as possible from reaching Lake Tahoe in order to preserve the clarity of the water. Various best management practices can help accomplish this goal. Marina operators are also supposed to test the water multiple times each year and keep detailed records.

Lahontan said it found nitrogen, phosphorus, turbidity and iron at levels higher in the lake than are allowed per the

permit regulations. Meeks Bay was failing on multiple levels, according to Lahontan.

Taxer stressed that the state agency did not want to shut down the business, but had the main objective of keeping pollutants from the lake.

“It’s not a highly polluted situation, but there is runoff ... clarity issues,” LeFevre with the Forest Service said. He said Highway 89 and Caltrans’ lack of treatment for water on its road complicates matters at the resort.

The goal of the negotiations is to determine what course of action will be taken to remedy the violations, determine who is responsible for the work and what penalties might be assessed to whom. The water board has the authority to impose an administrative civil liability of up to \$10,000 for each day in which each violation of the Marina General Permit occurs.

Depending when and what the resolution is will dictate if the marina opens next summer.

Ballot filling up for South Tahoe voters

By Kathryn Reed

South Lake Tahoe City Council members on Tuesday made it official – there will be two tax issues and a question about the loop road on the Nov. 8 ballot.

Money collected from raising the hotel tax by 2 percentage points would be dedicated toward recreation upgrades.

The one-quarter sales tax hike would go to the General Fund. However, a secondary advisory question gives voters the opportunity to state their preference for where the money should go – to roads, housing or city facilities.

Councilwoman JoAnn Conner unsuccessfully lobbied for the choices to have a little more substance to them so voters would have a better understanding of what their choices mean. Councilman Austin Sass said the information in the voter pamphlet could provide the detail.

No matter what the voters pick, the council can do what it wants.

The other matter decided July 19 was to put the ballot measure regarding the loop road on the ballot. It was either that or adopt the petitioners' language as an ordinance. It was too late in the process to conduct a feasibility study; the third option per state law.

While some people at the meeting wanted to talk about the **lawsuit** filed last week by local resident Jason Collin to stop the loop road ballot measure, they were shutdown because it was not on the agenda and therefore could not legally be discussed.

Loop road opponents want voters to decide whether the council should be able to take action on the project without constituents first voting on a preferred alignment. Collin believes the measure is not valid as written and that it prevents the council from being able to do its job.

"I think the court will agree that the loop road ballot initiative should be stopped in its tracks because it is unconstitutionally vague, it potentially strips the council of its legal authority, and if allowed to stand, it steals attention, time and money away from the critical issues confronting our community," Collin told *Lake Tahoe News*. "For the sake of the future of our community, I hope the court will

act swiftly to eliminate this calculated move to deceive the voters. I felt compelled to step forward and challenge what I believe is an intentionally misleading and fundamentally flawed political effort that is trying to trick voters into believing something that simply isn't true."

Collin owns rental property on Pioneer Trail at Shepherds Drive. He said the only impact the loop road might bring to his holdings is the potential for more traffic.

"I have no financial interest in the outcome of this suit," Collin told *LTN*.

Cyclist goes down, driver being sought

Truckee police officers are looking for the driver of a vehicle who cut in front of a bicyclist, causing him to crash and sustain injuries.

The incident occurred July 19 at 2:20pm on Highway 89 at the Henness Road roundabout near the Henness Flats Apartments. The bicyclist was riding through the roundabout when a vehicle pulled in front of him. The bike rider hit the curb while trying to avoid the vehicle.

The cyclist was wearing a helmet. He was taken to Tahoe Forest Hospital with non-life threatening injuries.

Officers are looking for other witnesses to interview in a quest to track down the driver who left the scene.

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*

3 accused of stealing 1,100 Heavenly ski passes



Angelo Bozin



Tim
Jacobsen



Mark Graham

Three men, including one from South Lake Tahoe, are accused of stealing more than \$100,000 worth of lift tickets from Heavenly Mountain Resort.

Angelo Bozin, 25, of South Lake Tahoe, Tim Jacobsen, 21, of Minden, and Mark Graham, 20, of Gardnerville face felony embezzlement, theft, possession of stolen property and

conspiracy charges.

Heavenly on March 10 reported 1,100 ski pass vouchers were missing from lodges on the Nevada side. The ski passes are valued at \$120 each, with a total possible value of \$116,520. The stolen vouchers were being redeemed at Kirkwood, Heavenly and Northstar – all resorts owned by Vail Resorts.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Wildland fires near state line contained

Two 1-acre fires in South Lake Tahoe have been contained, though crews at 6pm Tuesday were still working to fully extinguish them.

The first started about 3pm July 19 near Montreal Road on U.S. Forest Service property. This area is notorious for homeless camps. However, officials have not released the cause of the blaze.

A spot fire started about one-quarter mile away in Van Sickle Bi-state Park.

It has been windy all day, adding to the threat the fire could rapidly spread.

A smaller spot fire was reported at 5:30pm, according to Lisa Herron with the Forest Service.

At one point two helicopters were helping douse the flames. Crews from the USFS, South Lake Tahoe, Lake Valley, Tahoe Douglas and CalFire were at the scene.

Herron said personnel have started to be released, signaling the situation is under control.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Western water provisions would affect Calif.

By Michael Doyle, McClatchy News Service

California has a stake in a sprawling public lands package moving through the Senate, including controversial water provisions that don't even name the state.

The package includes expanding one national historic site honoring famed conservationist John Muir and designating a new historic site at the former Tule Lake camp that housed Japanese-Americans during World War II. Both proposals easily won approval Wednesday from a Senate panel.

A Western water bill inevitably is proving far trickier, squeaking through the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee on a 12-10 vote and facing an uncertain future.

Read the whole story

McClintock gives pitch for

Trump

By Martin Wisckol, Orange County Register

California's delegates to the GOP convention are all loyal Trump supporters. But if any needed a refresher on how to give a sales pitch for a controversial candidate they might not always agree with, Rep. Tom McClintock, R-Garden Valley, offered a deft approach at Monday's delegation breakfast.

"There's only one candidate I've agreed with 100 percent," said McClintock, a conservative favorite who is regularly ranked in the top echelon by anti-tax and small government groups. "And that's me."

McClintock came as close as you can come to calling Donald Trump the next Ronald Reagan without actually mentioning Trump's name in the same breath.

"It's been that long since I've been this excited about a nominee."

Read the whole story