

Threat of wildfires growing in Nevada

By Daniel Rothberg, Las Vegas Sun

A changing climate could increase the risk of large wildfires in states across the West, including Nevada, which has seen relatively mild wildfire activity in the past. That's according to a report from nonprofit organization Climate Central, which expects Nevada will add 20 days of annual high wildfire potential by 2050, the fifth-largest increase among the 11 Western states included in the study.

Rising temperatures, increasingly parched landscapes and changes to the snowpack are contributing to the regional trend, argues the wildfire report released last month. The study, which pulled from U.S. Forest Service records and climate-change models, said fires in the West had increased in frequency and size since the 1970s. The overall season is now 105 days longer than it was then.

Nevada has relatively few large fires compared with California or Arizona, but it's poised for an increase in potential for wildfire and associated risks, the study says.

[Read the whole story](#)

Cal Neva files for bankruptcy

Owners of the Cal Neva Lodge had visions of returning the Crystal Bay hotel-casino to its glory days. That's not going

to happen any time soon.

With more than \$27 million in debt, owner Criswell Radovan filed for bankruptcy in June.

The St. Helena-based investment firm bought the property in April 2013. They closed it the following September for what was supposed to be a \$49 million remodel. The plan was to reopen in December 2014 to commemorate what would have been Frank Sinatra's 99th birthday.

That clearly didn't happen. The date was then pushed back a year – and that, too, didn't happen. Work on the site stopped in December. And now the future is even more uncertain for the 10-story, 191-room property that crosses the California-Nevada state line.

Sinatra once owned the property, which first opened in 1926. At that time the Rat Pack were regulars there, as were Marilyn Monroe and members of the Kennedy clan.

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*

Group wants Nevada pension data

By Associated Press

A conservative think tank wants a judge to force Nevada's Public Employees' Retirement System to release details about retiree payouts.

The Nevada Policy Research Institute filed a petition in Carson City court this week requesting the move. The group

says the agency changed its record-keeping to hide information that's supposed to be public.

Officials from the system declined comment. No court date has been set for the group's petition.

NPRI maintains a website called Transparent Nevada that shows salary and benefit information for public employees.

The organization says it found PERS no longer lists its data by the retiree's name, but by a Social Security number that's confidential and not releasable. NPRI says PERS won't put the information in a more usable format, and is circumventing Nevada's public records law.

EDC elected schools chief job subject of probe

By Kathryn Reed

Why El Dorado County has an elected superintendent of schools was the subject of a grand jury investigation this past year.

In the recently released report, the grand jury recommends: "The El Dorado County board of education should thoroughly examine the pros and cons of retaining an elected superintendent of schools and issue a report to the Board of Supervisors of their findings and recommendation."

Taking the issue to the voters would be the next step, according to the grand jury.

The investigation was initiated after then-Superintendent Jeremy Meyers was arrested on driving under the influence

charges twice in 2015. He later resigned, though has **since been hired** to be a principal in a district in the county.

The California Constitution mandates each county have a superintendent of schools. Five districts have appointed leaders, while 53 – one being El Dorado County – elect the superintendent. This person is essentially a bridge between individual districts and the state. County offices of education also oversee federal programs like Head Start.

El Dorado County has a history of when a vacancy has been created, the board of education appoints a superintendent and then that person is elected in his or her own right. The grand jury could not find a contested election in the last 35 years.

“There has been a demonstrable lack of interest by anyone in this county to step forward and challenge an incumbent. We can only speculate as to the reasons,” the report says. “A candidate must reside in this county, possess at least a master’s degree in an area of relevant study and have a valid California administrative credential. Further, this individual must be willing to finance a campaign and go through the rigors of an election challenging an incumbent.”

Vicki Barber had the job from 1994-June 2013. She took over for Ken Lowry after he quit mid-term. Hers would be the only name on the ballot every four years.

Barber then quit one year before her last term was up.

Taking her place was Meyers, who previously had been the assistant superintendent of schools. He was elected in 2014 with no problem since he ran unopposed.

The grand jury pointed out how the board of education has little control over the superintendent because it is an elected position. The current board could not fire Meyers for his DUIs. Had he been an appointed superintendent, the board could have removed him. Options were a settlement agreement or

recall. The former occurred because the later could have cost the district \$300,000 for a special election.

The jurors tried to ascertain the advantages of an elected superintendent over an appointed one.

“There is scant evidence and fewer studies to provide guidance on this issue,” the report states.

Some of the findings include:

· Perceived benefits of having an elected superintendent:

- o The public may feel it has more control over the schools.
- o An elected superintendent may be more responsive to the citizen's needs.
- o Lower turnover.
- o Elected superintendents must reside within the county.
- o Generally, an elected official has considerably more independence and may not experience as much pressure from the unions, Legislature and hiring board.

· Perceived disadvantages of having an elected superintendent:

- o There is no performance review, goal setting or direction from an elected executive board.
- o Limits candidate pool to only those residing in EDC.
- o Qualified candidates may be dissuaded to pursue this position because of the need to launch and fund an election campaign.
- o Anyone with the required credentials may run for office. They may not be the most knowledgeable or have the highest

skills. A less qualified candidate may prevail on name recognition or popularity.

- o As witnessed in our county, outright removal from office can only be done via recall with substantial public cost.

- Perceived benefits of having an appointed superintendent:

- o Board of Education would be allowed to recruit qualified candidates from all over the country.

- o Potential increase in administrative efficiency.

- o Having a professional rather than political superintendent.

- o The ability to discipline and/or remove a failing superintendent.

- Perceived disadvantages of having an appointed superintendent:

- o Higher turnover

- o Expense to COE for recruitment.

The Board of Supervisors has until Sept. 22 to respond to the grad jury report.

Bay Area woman drowns near Kyburz

A San Francisco woman died Saturday in a rafting accident on the South Fork of the American River in the Kyburz area.

Elaine Yi Mau, 32, was found submerged in a section of heavy rapids at 4:45pm July 9, about 35 minutes after she was reported missing, according to authorities. She had been on an inner tube with several people out of the China Flat Campground area.

The incident is under investigation by the El Dorado County Sheriff's Office. At this time it has not been determined if the victim was wearing a life jacket.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

New clues sought in '82 deaths of casino workers

By Cathy Locke, Sacramento Bee

The El Dorado County District Attorney's Office is seeking new information in the 1982 deaths of two Stateline casino employees whose bodies were found in the south fork of the American River several months after they disappeared from their home.

Julie Schossow and Marilyn Putt were close friends and both worked as blackjack dealers at Harrah's Lake Tahoe where they were closely associated with other casino employees, according to a District Attorney's Office news release. They were together when they disappeared from their home around midnight Jan. 12 or the early hours of Jan. 13, 1982.

Investigators believe both were kidnapped and held captive for approximately three months somewhere between South Lake Tahoe and Placerville.

Read the whole story

Pot backers hope Calif. vote pressures Congress to ease laws

By Sean Cockerham, McClatchy News Service

When Lynette Davies, co-operator of the Canna Care medical marijuana dispensary in Sacramento, pays her California taxes she needs to haul a bag with \$20,000 in cash to the state tax office.

“That’s really unsafe for me, and it’s unsafe for my employees to have this cash in the store,” said Davies, whose business is legal under state law as a result of California’s 1996 vote on the use of medical marijuana. “All because the banks that want to bank with us can’t.”

Marijuana advocates are counting on Californians to vote to legalize recreational weed this fall, bringing pressure on Congress to end anti-pot policies that include federal obstruction of banks doing business with the industry. California is nearly six times larger than any other state that has legalized pot for recreational use, and its potential cannabis market has been estimated at nearly \$7 billion.

Read the whole story

Million dollar-plus homes selling well at Tahoe

High-end houses in the Lake Tahoe Basin have been the best sellers the first half of this year.

Strong sales in Incline Village are the main reason for the 30 percent surge from 2015 in sales of houses valued at more than \$1 million, according to Chase International.

The units sold was up 12 percent in the first six months of 2016 compared to the same period a year ago. The average price of a home is \$779,128, while the median is \$525,000, a 1 and 2 percent rise, respectively.

Incline Village and South Shore saw the bulk of the movement, with South Shore seeing a 22 percent increase in units sold.

The average price of a home in South Lake Tahoe is \$499,877 and the median is \$414,000; up 9 and 7 percent, respectively.

Sales volume in Incline was up 34 percent and units sold up 26 percent. The average price of a home in Incline is \$1.37 million (a 6 percent increase) and the median is \$995,000 (up 17 percent).

Tahoe City saw declines in units sold (12 percent), with median home price rising 2 percent to \$570,000.

Truckee saw huge increases across the board, with a 68 percent increase in volume sold, primarily due to a 158 percent rise in homes selling for more than \$1 million. The average price of a home in Truckee is \$1.05 million (up 31 percent) and the median price is \$629,500 (up 15 percent).

Burning Man challenges BLM's \$2.8M bill

By Jenny Kane, Reno Gazette-Journal

The Burning Man organization is challenging a \$2.8 million bill from the U.S. Bureau of Land Management after last year's 70,000-person arts festival in the Black Rock Desert, according to a federal appeal filed by the San Francisco-based arts nonprofit.

The arts organization submitted a 1,000-page appeal in April that accuses the BLM of trying to cover up budget shortfalls and financial missteps with an annual permit that Burning Man says has consistently been overpriced since 2012. The invoice for last year's permit was about \$2.8 million, which Burning Man organizers have started paying off in installments.

The appeal comes a year after BLM officials retracted a request for a \$1.2 million VIP compound reserved for higher-ups at Burning Man. The compound was just the tip of the iceberg, according to Burning Man organizers, who are appealing everything from \$940,000 in law enforcement costs to a more than \$1,000 bill for the shipping of an unknown item from Reno to Gerlach.

Read the whole story

NV Energy expects Ariz. plant to bring needed power

By Daniel Rothberg, Las Vegas Sun

As part of a pending sale with electricity generator Calpine, NV Energy plans to acquire an Arizona natural gas plant for \$75.6 million and invest about \$21 million in the facility.

The price was disclosed in a filing that NV Energy made with the Public Utilities Commission. The filing outlines forecasts for NV Energy's Northern Nevada operations, which are conducted through its subsidiary, Sierra Pacific Power Co.

The filing was posted on the commission's website Thursday and contains the utility's proposed plan for meeting energy demands in the coming years.

[Read the whole story](#)