

Buffett discusses NV Energy, solar rates and Elon Musk

By Daniel Rothberg, Las Vegas Sun

Since Nevada utility regulators decided to increase bills for rooftop solar customers, Warren Buffett has found his name at the center of the debate over the rates.

Media reports have depicted Buffett – the chairman of Berkshire Hathaway, NV Energy’s parent company – as locked in a battle with SolarCity Chairman and Tesla CEO Elon Musk over the future of the grid. Solar advocates have been critical and politicians have been outspoken about him on the campaign trail.

Meanwhile, the billionaire investor remained largely quiet. But in past days, Buffett has broken the silence, including Monday to CNBC.

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Calif. on course for another drought year



Lake Tahoe is rising. The photo on the left was taken Nov. 9, 2015, and the one on the right on March 1, 2016. Photos/LTN

By Kathryn Reed

Even though the region is going into a wet cycle, that news isn't enough to lift California out of its four-year drought.

While the snow survey at Phillips Station today was the best March reading since 2011, statewide the water content is below average.

At the field adjacent to the road leading to Sierra-at-Tahoe the snow depth on March 1 was 58.3 inches, water content 27.1 inches, which is 105 percent of the long-term average. Statewide the snowpack is 83 percent of average.

Frank Gehrke, who takes the measurements near the top of Echo Summit, said even though conditions are better than a year

ago, what is on the ground is not enough for officials to say the state is out of danger.

Historically, half of the state's annual water comes as rain or snow during December, January and February. The importance of this is that the Sierra snowpack provides the water downstream for about one-third of California.

It will take a "March miracle" like 1991 and 1995 to lift the state out of the drought. The forecast for now at least looks like this month will be wetter than February, but only time will tell if a miracle is brewing.

"We are looking to enter a very active pattern this weekend and into next week," Tony Fuentes, meteorologist with the National Weather Service in Reno, told *Lake Tahoe News*.

It's too soon to forecast what the moisture totals will be, but he said to expect rain at lake level to begin with and then snow. Snow levels will start at about 7,000 feet. The rain is expected to start Thursday night in the basin.

The moisture this winter has caused the lake to rise. The natural rim is at 6,223 feet. As of March 1, Lake Tahoe's level was at 6,222.25 feet.

"That is a huge volume of water to make up that 1 foot," Fuentes said.

On March 22, 2015, the lake was at 6,222.83 feet. When it fell below the rim in October 2014, this was the first time in five years. Other times it was below the rim were 1977-78, 1961-62 and 1930-36. The record low of 6,220.25 feet was set in 1992. (Records have been kept since 1900.)

Comments push Squaw final EIR to spring

Because of the number of comments received on the draft environmental document for the proposed development at Squaw Valley the final EIR has been delayed until sometime this spring.

Legally the final environmental impact report must answer questions that were addressed in the draft. There were more than 350 comments.

The massive project has been controversial since it was first proposed. Commenters brought up things like traffic, safety, and water issues, along with questions about how the development will look.

While the group that wanted to incorporate Olympic Village has given up on that idea, there is a petition going around to "Keep Squaw True".

Over a 25-year span owners of the ski resort want to build 850 lodging units, add 300,000 square feet of commercial area, and build an indoor recreation area.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Study: People who use Airbnb don't go back to hotels

By Riley McDermid, San Francisco Business Times

A survey conducted by Goldman Sachs has found that only 40 percent of consumers polled were likely to return to hotels after using San Francisco-based Airbnb or other “peer-to-peer” services.

That compared to 79 percent of travelers who hadn’t used the service, who said they were likely to prefer formal lodging, Bloomberg reports.

“If people have stayed in peer-to-peer lodging [P2P] in the last five years, the likelihood that they prefer traditional hotels is halved (79 percent vs. 40 percent),” said the survey.

Read the whole story

Supreme Court OKs Calif.’s use of ‘unclaimed’ cash

By David G. Savage, Los Angeles Times

California’s system of seizing and spending “unclaimed” cash from banks, mutual funds and defunct businesses has survived a Supreme Court challenge.

The state says it is now holding \$8 billion in lost assets. And from this fund, it takes about \$450 million a year to add to the state budget.

After considering an appeal for four months, the justices said Monday they would not hear a long-running lawsuit that contends the state does not do enough to notify the rightful owners before seizing their assets.

Read the whole story

Court upholds vehicle restrictions in Tahoe National Forest

By Denny Walsh, Sacramento Bee

A federal appeals court has ruled that the U.S. Forest Service was on solid legal ground when it put more than 90 percent of “user-created” miles off-limits to motorized vehicles in Tahoe National Forest.

The forest service’s 2010 action generated disbelief and anger among off-highway vehicle owners, who sued the service’s umbrella agency, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, as well as the service itself and three of its officials, alleging a variety of procedural defects arising out of an environmental impact analysis underpinning the dramatic mileage reduction.

A broad array of environmental advocacy organizations cheered the development and intervened on the side of the government in the lawsuit, filed in Sacramento federal court in 2012.

Read the whole story

Body of Sugar Bowl instructor recovered



Carson May

The body of Sugar Bowl ski instructor Carson May was found today about one-quarter mile out of bounds in an avalanche-prone area near the original search site.

May had been missing since Jan. 14. Friends last saw him that day skiing in whiteout conditions on the back side of the resort. The 23-year-old from Davis was not working at the time.

Members of the Tahoe Nordic Search and Rescue, and El Dorado County Search and Rescue along with their search dogs, and Sugar Bowl ski patrol made the discovery about 11am Feb. 29.

This had been May's third year working at Sugar Bowl; he had been a season pass holder prior to that.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Gas leak delays ski day at Heavenly

Most of the California side of Heavenly Mountain Resort was shutdown first thing this morning because of a gas leak.

A groomer just after midnight Feb. 29 discovered a broken pipe to a propane tank.

This was in the corral area that is accessed off the gondola where the groomers fuel up.

“We delayed the opening of the lower California lifts this morning due to a gas leak on that part of the mountain. We wanted to take every precaution to ensure the safety of our guests, and after receiving approval from the local fire department, we have resumed normal operations,” Coop Cooper, spokesman for the resort, told *Lake Tahoe News*.

According to Lake Valley fire department, there was no threat to buildings or people.

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*

Body of ZC woman recovered near Emerald Bay



Carolyn
Batchelor

The body of a Zephyr Cove woman who had been missing for nearly two weeks was recovered Feb. 27 from Inspiration Point near Emerald Bay.

According to El Dorado County sheriff's deputies, the death of Carolyn Batchelor, 69, does not appear to be suspicious. However, the cause of death remains under investigation.

Her body was found partially buried under snow. The search area consisted of steep and rugged terrain with 1 to 2 feet of fresh snow from a storm that came in at the time she went missing.

Her vehicle was found in same area off Highway 89 on Feb. 19, two days after she was last seen.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Yosemite National Park not allowed on merchandise

By Kurtis Alexander, San Francisco Chronicle

YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK – The trademark spat that is prompting the National Park Service to change the names of a handful of

treasured sites at Yosemite, including the Ahwahnee Hotel and Curry Village, has taken a startling turn – to the park's gift shops.

Merchandise embossed with the name "Yosemite National Park," from T-shirts to coffee mugs to pens, will be pulled from store shelves this week because of claims by the park's outgoing concessionaire that it owns the name for commercial purposes, according to the park's new operator, Aramark, which is based in Philadelphia.

Aramark officials, who on Tuesday take the reins of Yosemite's many hotels, restaurants and shops from longtime management company Delaware North, plan to begin selling souvenir items with the name "Yosemite" instead of "Yosemite National Park."

Read the whole story