

Burning Man's revenues, salaries revealed

By Jenny Kane, Reno Gazette-Journal

For the first time ever, Burners can see what kind of money Burning Man rakes in each year.

Although Burning Man – a San Francisco nonprofit that hosts a more than 70,000-person annual arts gathering in the Black Rock Desert – pulled in about \$32.4 million in 2014, it spent more than \$30 million the same year, according to its 2014 tax documents.

The \$2.4 million difference – which would be considered profit were Burning Man a for-profit company – must be reinvested into the organization's programs supporting the arts-focused mission of the organization, per federal policy.

Read the whole story

TSA to provide pre-check for Reno holiday travelers

By Marcella Corona, Reno Gazette-Journal

Holiday travelers can keep their shoes on, their coats on and their belts on when flying from Reno starting on Monday.

The Transportation Security Administration is set to offer a temporary location where travelers can enroll in the TSA Pre-Check program at the Reno-Tahoe International Airport,

officials said Friday in a news release.

TSA officials had announced earlier this month that the existing pre-check at Fingerprinting Express would no longer process applicants after Friday.

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2015 may set record for worst fire season



The Washington Fire in June threatened the town of Markleeville. Photo Copyright 2015 Carolyn E. Wright

By Darryl Fears, Washington Post

The nation is closing in on its worst wildfire season in

recorded history, with nearly 9.8 million acres already burned – the equivalent of Massachusetts, Connecticut, Rhode Island and part of New Hampshire going up in flames.

Two large fires and more than 160 smaller ones remain active, and more fires are expected to be reported before the month ends. Together, they're likely to push the 2015 total past the record 9.87 million acres burned in 2006.

The extent of scorched earth reflects a warming trend that has made the United States considerably drier, scientists and fire experts say, with less mountain snowpack particularly in Alaska and the southwest.

Read the whole story

Calif. lawmakers ask if fantasy betting is skill or chance

By Juliet Williams, AP

SACRAMENTO – Purveyors of daily fantasy sports gaming made their pitch for minimal regulations for the fast-growing industry before a panel of California lawmakers on Wednesday, arguing that the online sports match ups are a harmless outlet for fans and purely based on skill, not chance.

“These are games of skill, skill that rewards knowledge of sports,” said Griffin Finan, an attorney for DraftKings, one of the nation’s two largest operators, along with FanDuel. Griffin said that unlike gambling, the games rely on entry fees rather than wagers, and customers are not pitted against

the company in the competition.

Whether the games rely upon skill or chance is key to the next regulatory steps. If they are based upon skill, lawmakers can impose regulations – from requiring transparency in their operations, imposing licensing and fees or taxing their business. If they are determined to be games of chance, lawmakers cannot intervene, but it's unclear if the leagues could continue operating.

Critics argue that the games in which participants “draft” players and win money based on the athletes’ performances in the real world are illegal online gambling that should either be shut down or heavily regulated.

Assemblyman Marc Levine, D-San Rafael, asked the representatives how they can say anyone in a jersey on the couch can win, if it's a game based on skill. “How do you justify the marketing? Unless you are pretty sophisticated, you are going to lose your money,” Levine asked.

Peter Schoenke, president of RotoWire.com, which syndicates the fantasy content to online companies such as NFL.com, said players can improve as they learn more and play more. Winning requires “judgment-making skills similar to a coach or a general manager,” he said.

California lawmakers are the latest to wade into the issue, which sprang to public attention after an onslaught of advertising at the start of the NFL season last September. As many as 20 states are expected to consider regulations next year.

Nevada regulators declared the bets illegal gambling and ordered the sites out of the state unless they acquire gambling licenses. New York's attorney general this week ordered DraftKings and FanDuel to stop operating, but the companies won a temporary reprieve allowing them to continue operating through January.

The companies have also become a major source of revenue for professional sports teams, setting up comfortable lounges for players inside arenas and helping marketers connect with millennial fans, who want “second-screen content,” said Peter Thuresson, vice president of the LA Clippers.

Assemblyman Adam Gray, D-Merced, who led Wednesday’s hearing, has proposed legislation that would require league operators to be licensed by the state Department of Justice.

Representatives said they are eager to work with lawmakers – to a point. Martha Coakley, the former attorney general of Massachusetts, testified on behalf of DraftKings. She said the company supports regulations to address “compulsive behavior,” prevent underage players and transparency about fees.

When asked in an interview if the companies should be required to pay taxes, she said the companies already pay business taxes in the states where they are based, and everyone who wins more than \$600 receives a 1099 IRS tax form.

“So what would be the rationale to say, ‘We the state of California want, you know, a chunk of this?’ she said. “We are a business, we’re going to play by business rules, we do what other businesses do.”

Hyatt in Incline to be upgraded

By Howard Stutz, Las Vegas Review-Journal

Full House Resorts and an affiliate of Hyatt Resorts said Thursday they will invest a combined \$5 million to upgrade the

Grand Lodge Casino at Hyatt Regency Lake Tahoe.

Las Vegas-based Full House, which operates the casino through a management agreement, will invest \$1.5 million in new gaming equipment at the Incline Village property. Also, the company's lease to manage the Grand Lodge was extended to 2023.

Read the whole story

CTC on track to restore Upper Truckee Marsh



This lagoon at the Tahoe Keys will be filled in when the Upper Truckee Marsh is restored. Photo/Kathryn Reed

By Kathryn Reed

It's possible kayakers using the Upper Truckee River may one day not be able to reach Lake Tahoe. And the landowners are OK

with that.

The California Tahoe Conservancy board on Dec. 18 certified the environmental documents for the Upper Truckee River and Marsh restoration project and approved the preferred alternative. Tom Davis, South Lake Tahoe's rep, was absent.

The soonest any change will come is in 2018. That's dependent on state approvals and financing for what will be a multi-million dollar project.

Most of the work on this 600-acre swath of land in the middle of South Lake Tahoe will take place on the west side near Cove East. While boardwalks and other amenities had initially been planned for the Al Tahoe side, residents convinced the Conservancy that adding more people to this area would be detrimental for the marsh and the neighborhood.

This marsh is the most sensitive wetlands in the basin.

A big change will be how the river actually flows.

"We are letting the river go and see what happens. We want to see if the old braided channels reappear," CTC Executive Director Patrick Wright told *Lake Tahoe News*.

Stu Roll with the Conservancy, said, "This is cutting edge for stream restoration."

Most river projects in the basin have been massive undertakings to reroute channels, shore up banks and fill in old channels. This is more like a holistic approach to restoration. And, yet, it is still designed to restore the river to its natural meander before the Tahoe Keys was developed more than 50 years ago. At that time various fingers of the river reached the lake instead of one distinct outlet like there is today.

Conservancy staff realizes it may mean kayakers and others who float down the river will not end up at the lake or near an

easy take-out location. Wright said a future project not associated with the restoration is being talked about that would provide a spot for non-motorized watercraft to easily get off the river.

Another major change will be getting rid of the lagoon that jets off from the channel that leads from the Tahoe Keys Marina to the lake. Much of the time this is stagnant water.

The path will be altered with this latest project, but it will still form a loop that takes walkers and cyclists out to the lake.

The Conservancy acquired the 22-acre Cove East parcel at the end of Venice Drive in a settlement agreement stemming from the Tahoe Keys development. In 2002, a \$10.5 million restoration project was completed that brought back the wetlands that run between the walking path at the end of Venice and the river.

Cleanup from NorCal fires estimated at \$243 mil.

By Juliet Williams, AP

Cleaning up from two destructive Northern California wildfires this fall will cost at least \$243 million, far exceeding the cost for other recent blazes, state officials estimated Friday as they transferred more money from the state's rainy day fund to help pay for it.

"The devastation caused by these fires is extraordinary," Department of Finance Director Michael Cohen said in a letter

Friday to lawmakers. "Debris removal must continue expeditiously to enable community rebuilding and economic recovery."

The letter was to notify the state Legislature that the administration is shifting another \$83 million from the state's rainy day fund to help pay for the cleanup and that officials anticipate another \$105 million will be needed in January.

The fire sites in Calaveras, Lake and Butte counties were declared a federal disaster, so state officials expect a large portion of the cleanup costs could be reimbursed by the federal government.

Finance officials estimated in November that cleanup costs would top \$100 million.

But Cohen said in the letter that the cleanup is unprecedented in its magnitude and complexity. For example, the state's share of costs for cleanup from a wildfire in the city of Weed in 2014 was \$7.4 million, and cleanup from the 2007 Angora Fire at Lake Tahoe cost the state \$7.3 million.

Cohen cited three factors for higher than expected costs from this fall's fires: more debris than officials anticipated, lot sizes that are larger than expected, and increasing requests from landowners to help with cleanup.

Officials with the California Department of Insurance do not yet have an overall estimate of damages from the two fires.

Army colonel joins LTBMU as No. 2 in command

Joel Suenkel has been hired as deputy forest supervisor for the Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit.

The position had been vacant since February when Jeff Marsolais, who had the job, became supervisor of LTBMU.

Most recently Suenkel was a colonel in the U.S. Army serving in Germany. He is an expert in strategic planning, process improvement as well as organizational, program and operations management.

Suenkel graduated from the University of Wisconsin as a distinguished military graduate and earned a master's degree in organizational behavior from the University of Phoenix.

During his career with the military, Suenkel was deployed to numerous countries including South Korea, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Afghanistan, Japan, and Iraq. He was awarded numerous medals including the Bronze Star.

Climate experts say West Coast will see wet winter

By Kurtis Alexander, San Francisco Chronicle

The stormy weather expected to dampen California for the next several days – which holds promise of a wet and even white

Christmas some places – is just the beginning of what promises to be a soggy winter ahead, federal climate experts said Thursday.

This week's monthly report by the U.S. Climate Prediction Center remained bullish in its long-term outlook for precipitation along much of the West Coast, mostly due to the moist atmospheric conditions associated with El Niño.

Lake Tahoe and the northern Sierra, where the bulk of California's water comes from, stands a 40 percent chance of getting significantly wetter weather. The Bay Area is pegged for a 50 percent chance of significantly wetter-than-average weather in January, February and March – defined as within the top one-third of the rainiest seasons on record.

Read the whole story

Nov. extends global record warm streak

By Malcoolm Ritter, AP

Last month was the globe's warmest November on record, the seventh consecutive month to reach a new high.

A climate update Thursday from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration also noted a record-warm average temperature for January through November as a whole. NOAA scientist Jake Crouch said it's "virtually certain" that 2015 will be the warmest year globally since record-keeping began in 1880.

The agency also said it's been the warmest autumn on record

for the continental U.S., with an average temperature of 56.8 F (13.8 C) for September through November.

Crouch said the warmth has come from climate change, a strong El Nino and some other short-term influences.

The forecast through March calls for an easing of drought in California and Nevada.