

New sheriff to crack down on Burning Man crime

By Jenny Kane, Reno Gazette-Journal

Burners, beware. There's a new sheriff in Pershing County, and he intends to crack down on crime at this year's event in the Black Rock Desert.

"We don't have the personnel to issue citations to 70,000 naked people on the playa, but we will be upholding the law to the best of our ability," said Jerry Allen, a 39-year-old former deputy who replaced former Pershing County Sheriff Richard Machado in January.

"Burning Man brings nothing to Pershing County except for heartache," Allen said.

Read the whole story

Fire damages Truckee 7-Eleven

The 7-Eleven on Palisades Drive in Truckee is closed after an early morning fire caused damage to the building.

The fire was contained to the convenience store.

The cause of the Aug. 23 fire is under investigation.

All roads in the area are now open.

7-Eleven will be closed until the cleanup is done.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Political differences could peak at Tahoe summit

By Michael Doyle, McClatchy Washington Bureau

The lawmakers convening Monday for a major Lake Tahoe conference confront a Capitol Hill conflict over how best to protect the much-beloved mountain region.

They differ over money, environmental laws, timber harvesting and more. For years, the unresolved differences have sunk efforts to renew the Lake Tahoe Restoration Act, first passed in 2000. Some hope this summit can help members of Congress finally start paddling in the same direction.

"I think the prospects are good," Rep. John Garamendi, D-Walnut Grove, said Friday.

Competing sides will certainly be present at the 19th annual Lake Tahoe Summit at the Round Hill Pines Beach Resort. Governors, senators and congressmen from California and Nevada will attend, along with about 500 others, paying homage to the 191-square mile lake.

The federal legislators share some common ground, underscored by identical language in House and Senate bills that praise Tahoe as "one of the largest, deepest, and clearest fresh-water lakes in the world." The two bills share a name: the Lake Tahoe Restoration Act of 2015.

Both bills are also cast as a follow-up to the original Lake Tahoe Restoration Act, which expired in 2010. That measure authorized \$300 million in federal funds, which supported hundreds of specific Tahoe-related projects.

But in ways large and small, the bipartisan Senate version introduced July 9 and the House version introduced several weeks later by Rep. Tom McClintock, R-Garden Valley, veer dramatically.

The Senate bill covers more territory, costs more money and is in its ambitions closer to the original Lake Tahoe Restoration Act. It authorizes spending \$415 million over 10 years on various Tahoe-related projects.

The House bill is more tightly focused on forest fuel reduction and invasive species, and it's designed to pass muster with congressional conservatives. Added up, it authorizes only about one-fifth the amount of money provided by the Senate bill.

"For the last eight years, Tahoe legislation has been introduced in the Senate and has not moved off the Senate floor," McClintock said when he offered his package. "We have carefully crafted this bill to fit within the budget parameters set by Congress."

McClintock's chairmanship of the House Federal Lands Subcommittee gives him particular sway over Tahoe legislation, the topic of a July 14 hearing. Michael Brown, chief of the North Lake Tahoe Fire Protection District, testified that McClintock's proposal would "significantly help" forest fire prevention efforts.

Meanwhile, Leslie Weldon, deputy chief of the Forest Service, cautioned that "we have concerns with a number of provisions."

The House bill, for instance, would exempt forest fuel reduction projects from National Environmental Policy Act requirements. It would also subject forest management protests within the 150,000-acre Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit to mandatory arbitration, which could not be blocked by a judge's restraining order or preliminary injunction.

“What we’re hoping is that, as we work through the process, the two bills will become more closely aligned,” Julie Regan, external affairs chief for the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency, said Friday.

Garamendi opposes some of the House provisions, which track broader conservative policies concerning public lands, but nonetheless sees the glass as half-full.

“The fact that McClintock is prepared to engage is significant,” Garamendi said. “His bill may be less than optimal, but it’s nonetheless on the right track.”

Still, in a sign of conflict to come, McClintock at the July 14 hearing criticized the “excessive costs” of bills that focus on improving Lake Tahoe’s clarity.

The Senate bill, meanwhile, has at least some wind in its sails by virtue of its strong support by Senate Minority Leader Harry Reid of Nevada, whose retirement next year could make the Lake Tahoe legislation his final legacy. If both House and Senate pass their bills, differences would have to be worked out in a conference that would test everyone’s willpower, flexibility and deal-making prowess.

Carson City teen drowns at Sand Harbor

A Carson High School student died Saturday of an apparent drowning at Sand Harbor.

The name of the 15-year-old is not being released pending

notification of next of kin. The exact cause of death will be determined by an autopsy.

“It was an in the water accident,” Bob Harmon, spokesman for Washoe County Sheriff’s Office, told *Lake Tahoe News*.

The Carson City teen was not on a boat and foul play is not suspected. Harmon did not have any other details.

First responders arrived at the Incline Village beach just before noon Aug. 22 after a call came in of a youth in distress.

He was transported to Renown Medical Center in Reno where he died.

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*

\$5K could be made available to all Nev. students

By Trevon Milliard, Reno Gazette-Journal

Jennifer Evans has three children and they have all attended private school since her oldest started kindergarten nine years ago.

She changed that last week, putting her children in Gardnerville public schools.

The single mother and full-time nurse couldn’t afford to pass up the state’s offer, which is being extended to every Nevada parent: Pull your child from public school after at least 100 school days of enrollment and the state will pay you \$5,000 a

year per student.

Read the whole story

Deal reached in management of Truckee River

By Associated Press

Water officials have finalized a deal regarding the Truckee River after decadeslong disputes over how the waters should be managed.

The *Reno Gazette-Journal* reports Truckee Meadows Water Authority directors have agreed to sell up to 2,750 acre-feet of water rights to the Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribe. The long-pursued Truckee River Operating Agreement could now be implemented by next year.

The agreement was signed by the tribe, federal government , Nevada and California in 2008 but lawsuits have stalled its progress.

The sale of the water rights will allow the dismissal of the remaining lawsuits, including a suit filed in 1973 against the Truckee-Carson Irrigation District.

The agreement has been designed to permanently replace an inflexible water system and will allow more storage in upstream reservoirs for use during drought.

Best U.S. home sales since 2007 show market momentum

By Sho Chandra, BloombergBusiness

America's housing market has been heating up this summer.

Purchases of previously owned homes unexpectedly rose in July for a third straight month to reach the highest level since February 2007, figures from the National Association of Realtors showed Thursday. The gain was driven by stronger sales of single-family houses even as the share of first-time buyers shrank.

A limited number of available properties is keeping prices elevated, giving homeowners the financial flexibility to trade up as their housing equity improves. The data and a recent report showing the strongest rate of residential construction since 2007 are consistent with the Federal Reserve's view that the industry is making progress.

Read the whole story

Study sees dying wildlife, bigger fires if drought lasts

By Ellen Knickmeyer, AP

The carcasses of salmon, trout and more than a dozen other newly extinct native species lie in dry streambeds around California.

Exhausted firefighters in the Sierra Nevada battle some of the biggest wildfires they've ever seen. And in Central Valley farm towns, more and more parents hear the squeal of empty pipes when they turn on water taps to cook dinner.

A report by the Public Policy Institute of California nonprofit think-tank paints that distressing picture of California for the next two years if the state's driest four years on record stretches further into the future.

Written by water and watershed experts working at the policy center, at UC Davis, and elsewhere, the report urges California to do more now to deal with what researchers project to be the biggest drought crises of 2016 and 2017 – crashing wildlife populations, raging wildfires and more and more poor rural communities running out of water entirely.

A separate study published Thursday in the journal of the American Geophysical Union warns that climate change is making drought the new normal in California.

By the 2060s, climate models show California in a condition of semi-permanent drought, broken only by short, hard rains, researchers said.

Already, higher temperatures from climate change have made the current drought at least 15 percent worse, they said.

So far, of all the sectors dealing with the current drought, California cities are doing relatively well thanks to the lessons of past droughts, researchers said in the analysis by the Public Policy Institute of California.

Meanwhile, farms have been able to turn to pumping well water to make up for having half as much surface water for irrigation as normal.

With California wildlife, by contrast, "we're really looking at widespread crisis" if the drought continues, Ellen Hanak,

director of the think-tank's water policy center, said in an interview Wednesday.

California's fresh-water habitats and forests, along with their wildlife, have experienced the most severe impacts of the drought so far, the study concluded.

Lack of water means 18 species of native California fish, including most native salmon and steelhead trout, face an immediate threat of going extinct in the wild, the report said.

Greatly reduced water deliveries to bird refuges and rice fields – the flooding of which provides crucial habitat – means there is dangerously little room and food for the 5 million migratory birds that fly through the Central Valley each year and a high risk of deadly disease for the birds, the study said.

For California's environment, officials should be thinking more strategically about how best to use what water is left for wildlife, and preparing "conservation hatcheries" to safeguard native fish species that are on the verge of extinction in the wild, it said.

Hanak also called wildfires a tremendous risk as overgrown forests dry in the drought. Fire and forest agencies already are working to reduce the overgrowth that contributes to making those fires bigger and harder to control, researchers said.

After the environment, rural communities have been hardest-hit by the drought, the study said. As of last month, more than 2,000 domestic wells were reported to have gone dry, mostly in the Central Valley and Sierra Nevada. More than 100 small public-water systems around the state have been cited as needing emergency water supplies.

State and federal efforts to help those communities have been

increasing but remain stop-gap, the study concluded. It urges the state to do more to track areas in need of help and come up with longer-term water supplies to replace wells that have likely gone dry for good.

The study advises against counting on El Nino, a sporadic weather pattern that can bring strong storms, to break the drought. State water officials similarly have tried to temper public hopes for a wet El Nino year.

El Nino is historically associated with wetter winters in California only half the time, and climate change makes that even more uncertain, the state Department of Water Resources has said.

Virginia City saloon owner denied gambling license

By Kimberly Pierceall, AP

A California man who bought two saloon casinos in Virginia City will be forced to sell them after Nevada regulators said he was unfit to be involved in the state's gambling industry.

The Nevada Gaming Commission unanimously denied Vincent Michael Malfitano a license Thursday and barred him from being the casinos' landlord.

The small casinos that employ 25 people aren't expected to be closed immediately, and the commission left open the possibility that Malfitano and his casino manager could come to a short-term arrangement by the agency's next meeting to keep the doors open, allowing Malfitano time to find a buyer.

Casino manager Bruce Dewing, with Dewing Gaming, said they would make every effort to keep the saloons open.

"They're the heart and soul of Virginia City," he told commissioners of the two casinos and its employees, urging them to keep the properties open.

Malfitano said after the hours-long meeting that the commission made the wrong decision. He told commissioners he was dismayed that his integrity was questioned.

"That's difficult to listen to," he said.

He bought the Delta Saloon and Bonanza Saloon in October 2014.

Commission members said it was an issue of character, integrity and honesty as well as Malfitano's business acumen.

Malfitano, a former dentist, owns Cypress Meadows Assisted Living in Antioch.

The commission took issue with Malfitano's omission of several lawsuits against him and a citation when he was handcuffed by police during an argument at his assisted living business with the spouse of a former employee.

Commission members were also concerned with Malfitano's handling of finances in past business dealings and his casino loan.

His attorney argued Malfitano was not a criminal.

Gaming Commission Chair Tony Alamo argued that criminal behavior was not a requirement for denial.

"I don't want you anywhere near gaming," Commissioner John Moran said.

The commission unanimously affirmed an earlier Gaming Control Board recommendation.

“There is a reason why the most grueling and painful process you can go through is to get a gaming license in Nevada,” Commissioner Pat Mulroy said.

Santiago seeks back pay from El Dorado County

By Kathryn Reed

Former El Dorado County Supervisor Norma Santiago believes the county owes her back wages.

She is the second supervisor to demand more money since leaving office. The other was **Ron Briggs**.



Norma Santiago

“I’m not commenting on that,” Santiago told *Lake Tahoe News* before she abruptly hung up the phone.

Santiago was on the board for nine years, coming off in January after being termed out. She never made a formal request in all that time to have her \$76,875 salary increased.

In the email she wrote to then acting CAO Pamela Knorr and County Counsel Robyn Drivon, Santiago said, “Before leaving office, I requested that my wages be evaluated against certain

resolutions adopted by the BOS to make a determination if I was owed back wages. I never formally put this in writing and given all the craziness that was happening, I didn't do much follow up except an occasional inquiry."

Santiago is of the belief she is owed cost of living adjustments and money for not taking time off as a manager.

The county has rejected Santiago and Brigg's claims.

Paula Frantz, senior deputy county counsel, responded to Santiago by writing, " ... none of the claims has merit."

The state Constitution stipulates that the only way boards of supervisors may increase their pay is through an ordinance. This gives the electorate almost two months to potentially overturn that decision. It is irrelevant how many resolutions the local body passes regarding salaries, the Constitution trumps them all.

Santiago did not put a dollar amount in the request stating what she believes she is owed. Briggs believes he is owed more than \$90,000.

The next step, if either chooses to do so, is to file a lawsuit against the county.