

El Niño growing into monster

By Mike Moffitt, San Francisco Chronicle

New computer models suggest that the current El Niño formation brewing in the Pacific could become the strongest in recorded history.

The broad swath of warmer-than-usual seawater is spreading and deepening. The two largest concentrations are off the coast of Peru, where water is 4 degrees Centigrade warmer than usual, and just west of Vancouver and Seattle – 3 degrees warmer.

If this El Niño continues to grow, it could surpass the modern record-setting 1997-98 El Niño event, which inundated the Bay Area and the rest of California for months, causing flooding, mudslides and subsidences, and heavy snowfalls in the Sierra.

Read the whole story

Seasonal fire crew moves into permanent quarters

Tahoe Douglas Fire Department's Zephyr Crew finally has permanent quarters.

Gone are the temporary modular structures the more than 30 firefighters have used for years.

"This will help the department because we were spending a lot of funds. It didn't have full sewer so we had to pump that and the weather would damage the temporary buildings," Eric Guevin with Tahoe Douglas fire told *Lake Tahoe News*. "It will be a

cost-savings to the taxpayers because they will be permanent buildings.”

A shop is equipped with the tools so the seasonal firefighters can maintain their vehicles.

The new office is at 205 Kingsbury Grade in Stateline. It used to be a communications building.

While the crew doesn't spend the night, equipment and other items will be there all the time. A crew boss and others will use it year-round as an office.

“Their primary objective is fighting fires,” Guevin said of the Zephyr Crew. “Secondary, is fuels reduction throughout the Tahoe Douglas district.”

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Stateline casino revenue skyrockets

While the state gaming totals for Nevada declined, the Stateline casinos showed a substantial gain in June compared to 2014.

Throughout Nevada the revenue was down 8.37 percent to \$830.9 million. On the South Shore the win was up 44 percent, or \$17.6 million.

The Gaming Control Board released the figures today.

The state was dragged down by the Las Vegas Strip casinos where revenue was off 16.31 percent compared to a year ago.

Hot weather to test firefighters in NorCal

By Bill Lindelof, Sacramento Bee

Firefighters will be battling the weather as well as flames and smoke for the next four days in wild fires that sprouted up last week and continue to burn.

Even in the Sierra, where the Lowell Fire in Nevada County, and the Kyburz Fire, are still being suppressed by legions of helmeted firefighters in heavy, flame resistant jackets, temperatures are expected to be around 100 degrees.

The Lowell Fire in Nevada County has destroyed 1,700 acres and is 25 percent contained. The fire, which began Saturday west of Alta and forced evacuations. The high temperature today in Grass Valley is expected to be 95 degrees.

[Read the whole story](#)

Ex-supervisor wants back pay from EDC

Ron Briggs v. El Dorado County



By Kathryn Reed

Former El Dorado County Supervisor Ron Briggs believes he is owed nearly \$93,000 in back wages.

The claim he filed against the county has been rejected. He expects the formal lawsuit to be processed in the coming months.

Briggs served on the board for eight years, having left in January when the incoming electeds were seated.

He claims that starting in 2000 the Board of Supervisors adopted four resolutions tying the supervisors' rate of pay to what the unions and other electeds received. It wasn't until 2013 that Briggs said he became aware of this.

However, there is an ordinance on the books that says supervisors set their own wages, that it must be heard twice in public – as is the norm for all ordinances.

Supervisors receive about \$76,000 a year, plus benefits. Briggs contends had the raises occurred, he would have been making – as would the current board – closer to \$93,000 annually.

"Ron Briggs was paid the same as every other county supervisor and in accordance with the rules and direction established by the Board of Supervisors before Ron took office," Joe Harn,

county auditor-controller, told *Lake Tahoe News*. "Ron never complained to my office about his salary while he was in office for eight years."

The county has hired outside legal counsel to deal with the threat of litigation. Through May, about \$12,000 has been spent. That number could skyrocket if a prolonged court case ensues.

"Ron's threatened litigation against the county is another waste of the public's money," Harn said.

State law allows Briggs to seek three year's worth of wages. That is how the \$92,346.84 was derived.

"To tell the county counsel and CAO I need a pay increase ... it was uncomfortable. I waited until I got out," Briggs told *Lake Tahoe News*.

Briggs said in 2013 he was in favor of reducing how other electeds were paid. So much so that he and other supes cut the pay of the sheriff, auditor and others.

(However, none of the supervisors broached the subject of reducing their own pay.)

In November 2014, after the election, supervisors voted 3-2 to restore the pay. Briggs and Supervisor Shiva Frentzen were it the minority. The majority believed the electeds should make more than the subordinates. Without restoring the pay, this would not have been the case.

Briggs said, "It's an out of hand pay system the county has for its electeds. The reason why salaries and benefits keep rising and rising is because we keep firing all our department heads. Every time you raise department heads' pay it affects the entire organizational chart. Every time an elected gets a pay raise, then the second and third (in charge) wants a raise and it gets out of control."

The potential litigation, he said, is his way to make the point that the pay structure as it relates to elected officials in the county needs revamping.

Vacation rental water leak allowed to flow



It took more than a week for South Tahoe PUD to shut the water off at a vacation rental in El Dorado County that had a leak. Photo/Provided

By Kathryn Reed

All weekend water ran from a South Shore vacation home rental into the gutter and down a storm drain – with the knowledge of the rental agency and water company.

South Tahoe PUD crews determined the leak at the Muskwaki Drive house in the unincorporated area of El Dorado County was on the customer's side of the meter – meaning it's the owner's responsibility to fix it, not the district's.

"Why we didn't turn the water off to the vacation rental is what we understood from the rental company is they couldn't relocate the tenants," Richard Solbrig, general manager of STPUD, told *Lake Tahoe News*. "We would be putting people out of town if we insisted on turning the water off. Based on the leak it wasn't going to affect our conservation target."

Solbrig described the leak as minor, not causing erosion issues, and not posing a health and safety concern.

When asked if a full-time resident would be allowed to let a leak go all weekend, Solbrig paused.

"It's a judgment call," he said.

The person would likely get a written warning for wasting water and might be allowed to wait until Monday to fix the problem to avoid the cost of a plumber on a weekend. STPUD has no written policy about when non-serious leaks merit the water being shut off.

However, the case in the county wasn't just about this weekend.

A neighbor said on July 19 he called the leak into the Tahoe Keys Resort – the rental agency. He said South Tahoe PUD crews came out various times during the week.

"So it has soaked through the slope, draining into the gutter and also has gone under the gutter and street and is coming up in the street in a crack," the neighbor, who didn't want to be

identified, told *Lake Tahoe News*.

As of 5:20pm July 27, the neighbor said, "It looks like it has the last several afternoons, where the water in the street dries, but the water continues to flow in the gutter."

Tahoe Keys Resort said no one was available to talk about the issue and would not take a message for a manager to call back.

Solbrig said the water was turned off July 27 by his employees. STPUD will be in the loop about when the leak is fixed because at some point the water company will be asked to restore service.

Brown wants to keep oil in the ground

By David R. Baker, San Francisco Chronicle

Even the greenest, most eco-friendly politicians rarely utter the words Gov. Jerry Brown spoke at the Vatican's climate change symposium last week.

To prevent the worst effects of global warming, one-third of the world's known oil reserves must remain in the ground, Brown told the gathering of government officials from around the world. The same goes for 50 percent of natural gas reserves and 90 percent of coal.

"Now that is a revolution," Brown said. "That is going to take a call to arms."

It's an idea widely embraced among environmentalists and climate scientists.

Suspected car thief behind bars

Truckee police officers arrested a man early this morning who is believed to have stolen multiple vehicles.

A sergeant noticed a suspicious vehicle about 1am July 27 that appeared to be casing businesses on Donner Pass Road. As the officer followed the vehicle out of the parking lot the driver sped onto Donner Pass Road and then Pioneer Trail and Comstock Court, where he was detained.

Officers said Dustin Ball, 26, claimed to be looking for a place to stay, but could not explain his driving behavior.

Ball was not the owner of the vehicle. It had been stolen from the Truckee area, but had not been reported to the police. Ball was also in possession of a switchblade knife and several unopened pieces of mail that did not belong to him, officers said.

While checking the area where the first vehicle was stolen from, officers located another stolen vehicle from the Oakland area. In it were several items that connected Ball to that vehicle. There were also several pieces of mail from the Reno area.

Ball was booked into jail on two counts of motor vehicle theft, possession of stolen property and possession of a switchblade knife

Nevada drone bill takes effect Oct. 1

By Daniel Rothberg, Las Vegas Sun

The real-world applications for drones are nearly limitless: Police could use them for search operations; businesses could use them for delivery or marketing.

But unmanned aerial vehicles have critics, too, who worry the technology could undermine civil liberties. Are you protected if a drone peeps through your window? Or if a neighbor flies a drone over your yard?

With such concerns in mind, a number of state legislatures have passed drone-specific laws to protect privacy. Nevada, which hopes a drone test site designation could be an economic booster, is one of them.

Read the whole story

UNLV researchers open new front in HIV battle

By May Ortega, Las Vegas Review-Journal

A collection of biological codes sits in a library at UNLV.

Much of the focus is learning how the codes can help cells fight off HIV. Researchers hope this work can be used to develop drugs much faster.

A library of biological codes sits inside the Schiller Laboratory of Applied Informatics in UNLV's Juanita Greer White Life Sciences building.

Like any special collection, this is a place where research takes place.

And like any scientist looking for a discovery, UNLV students and teachers want their work to be known.

Read the whole story