

#DroughtShaming is on the rise

By Associated Press

Pssst. Ready to water that beautiful lush lawn of yours? The one that's the envy of the entire neighborhood.

You'd better wait until after midnight. Preferably on a cloudy, new-moon night during a power outage when it's so dark even night-vision goggles won't give away your position. Otherwise, you could wind up the star of the latest drought-shaming video posted on YouTube or Twitter.

"Yeah, I put your address out there. The world is watching a lot more," says Tony Corcoran, one of several people who spend their spare time these days canvassing the tony communities of Beverly Hills, West Hollywood and elsewhere, looking for people wasting water during the worst California drought in recent memory.

Corcoran alone estimates he's put up on YouTube more than 100 videos of water-wasters, complete with their addresses.

Others tweet out addresses and photos of water scofflaws, using hashtags such as #DroughtShaming. Still others are snapping smartphone photos of them and sending them directly to authorities.

Not everyone is happy about it.

One woman, quickly tiring of Corcoran's lecture on conservation while she watered her plants, turned her hose on him.

In Beverly Hills, where he was showing a reporter and photographer water running down the street in front of a mansion, the angry resident called police. Two patrol cars

quickly responded, but the officers took no action.

In Hollywood, Sam Bakman, who manages a condominium complex, said his building was recently shamed wrongly by somebody on Twitter over a broken sprinkler head that was quickly repaired. He showed a reporter the city-issued restrictions on watering and pointed out his sprinkler timers fall well within the guidelines.

“If they thought we were doing something wrong, why not come knock on my door?” he asked.

Corcoran, a restaurant group administrator who kept his New York attitude when he came to laid-back Los Angeles awhile ago, is unrepentant.

“The whole point is to get people to change, not to shame,” he said.

With California in the fourth year of a drought with no end in sight, the governor has ordered everyone to use 25 percent less water, and drought shamers say the easiest way to accomplish that is to quit watering your yard. Or at least be careful about it and not let water spill into the street.

“I was a passenger in a car driving by, and first I noticed water down the street. And when we drove up, I saw the broken sprinkler head,” said Patricia Perez of Eagle Rock who quickly tweeted out a picture of the mess. She also emailed it to the local water agency.

“When you’re trying to do your best personally, and you’re trying to conserve water, it’s very irritating,” she said of one of the reasons behind drought shaming.

Dan Estes, a Los Angeles real estate broker, has gone so far as to build his own free app, DroughtShame, that records the time and place where people see waste.

Unlike some other drought shamers, he doesn’t believe in

getting in people's faces or outing them to the world. Instead, people who use his app send the information and a photograph to him, and he forwards it to the appropriate water agency.

"I drought shamed the preschool next to my apartment," Estes said. "Timer was off on their sprinklers. Those things were on for five hours, and the sidewalk was a river. I was non-confrontational, but at the same time, public."

Twenty minutes after he reported it, Estes said, the sprinklers were shut off.

Homebuyer down payments more affordable

By Nick Ramsey, Columbus Business First

It's getting easier to afford to buy a home.

Down payments on home purchases across the nation are getting smaller again after years of increases following the burst of the housing bubble, according to a new report from RealtyTrac.

According to the real estate analytics site, the average down payment in the first quarter represented 14.8 percent of the purchase price, compared with 15.5 percent early in 2014.

"The dangers of interest-only, negative-amortization, and low, low credit score loans are not a part of today's low down payment programs," Craig King, COO at Chase International brokerage, covering the Lake Tahoe and Reno housing markets,

said in the RealtyTrac release. “Without those types of high-risk components, low down payment loans are a sound strategy.”

Read the whole story

Science seeks to unlock marijuana's secrets

By Hampton Sides, National Geographic

There's nothing new about cannabis, of course. It's been around humankind pretty much forever.

In Siberia charred seeds have been found inside burial mounds dating back to 3000 B.C. The Chinese were using cannabis as a medicine thousands of years ago. Marijuana is deeply American too—as American as George Washington, who grew hemp at Mount Vernon. For most of the country's history, cannabis was legal, commonly found in tinctures and extracts.

Then came Reefer Madness. Marijuana, the Assassin of Youth. The Killer Weed. The Gateway Drug. For nearly 70 years the plant went into hiding, and medical research largely stopped. In 1970 the federal government made it even harder to study marijuana, classifying it as a Schedule I drug—a dangerous substance with no valid medical purpose and a high potential for abuse, in the same category as heroin. In America most people expanding knowledge about cannabis were by definition criminals.

But now, as more and more people are turning to the drug to treat ailments, the science of cannabis is experiencing a rebirth. We're finding surprises, and possibly miracles,

concealed inside this once forbidden plant. Although marijuana is still classified as a Schedule I drug, Vivek Murthy, the U.S. surgeon general, recently expressed interest in what science will learn about marijuana, noting that preliminary data show that “for certain medical conditions and symptoms” it can be “helpful.”

Read the whole story

Douglas County projects uptick in revenues

By Anne Knowles

MINDEN – Douglas County is back in balance.

Three years ago, the Nevada county had a \$3 million structural budget deficit that was projected out for several years. Since then, the county has moved to priority-based budgeting and made a few other changes, such as contracting out some services to Carson City and Storey and Lyon counties, that cut costs.

Now revenues are growing again. In 2016, its general fund revenue, consisting mainly of money from property taxes and the state’s consolidated tax, is projected to grow 2.4 percent, in line with a 2.4 percent uptick in expenses, made up primarily of personnel and services, and supplies.

For fiscal year 2015-16, the county has about 500 full-time positions and a budget of \$136 million.

“In January, the board (of commissioners) held a workshop to update our goals and they added organization sustainability,”

Jim Nichols, county manager, told about 100 people gathered June 11 in the ballroom of the Carson Valley Inn to get an update on the county's financial health. "That includes retention and recruitment of staff."

Other good news included increases in home sales and home prices and a slight but welcome jump in property assessed values.

Assessed values are expected to increase 1.7 percent in 2016, to about \$2.6 billion, after a precipitous decline of 29 percent between 2010 and 2014.

"Twenty-nine percent is significant," said Christine Vuletich, assistant county manager and chief financial officer. "I know everyone knows that."

Nichols said the county still faces some challenges, including investments in infrastructure, particularly the county's 171 miles of paved roads that for years have had a backlog of needed maintenance.

Nichols said he was also concerned that big business projects in the Reno area, specifically Tesla Motors' battery plant and the Switch data center, which are expected to create about 52,000 jobs both directly and indirectly, could drain the local workforce.

Nichols also pointed to some achievements from the past year, including the opening of the 83,000-square-foot community and senior center, upgrades to the Zephyr Cove water facility, completion of the Elks Point Road to Round Hills Pine Beach stretch of the Stateline-to-Stateline bike trail and the adoption by the county commissioners of the Tahoe Douglas Area Plan, which goes next to the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency for approval.

Nichols praised private investment that is helping to revitalize the area, including Lake Tahoe Hard Rock Lake, Epic

Discovery at Heavenly Mountain Resort, and Sharkey's.

The county's presentation concluded with its second annual Spotlight Awards honoring area businesses. The awards, in seven industry categories, went to Minden Meat & Grill, Minden; Ace Hardware, Gardnerville; Zephyr Photonics, Zephyr Cove and Minden; Heavenly Mountain Resort, Stateline; Park Heritage, owner of the recently opened Overland Restaurant & Pub in Gardnerville; Carson Valley Golf Course, Gardnerville; and Design Workshop, Stateline.

The county also recognized six employees for exemplary service: Marcie Schurke, finance; Anita Macgillivray, human resources; Ron Roman, public works; Don Gerard, public safety and maintenance; Kathy Munson, library services; and Melissa Blosser, public information.

13 states to share \$10 mil. to cut wildfire risks

By Keith Ridler, AP

BOISE, Idaho – Interior Secretary Sally Jewell has announced \$10 million for land restoration projects in 13 states in a strategy to reduce catastrophic wildfires.

Jewell said June 12 that making land more resilient to fire is essential for vulnerable species and for healthy rangelands, forests and watersheds.

Eight of the states are in the West, with projects in conifer forests and sagebrush rangelands, where wildfires have been especially destructive in the last decade. Sagebrush is also

habitat for sage grouse, an imperiled bird under consideration for federal protections.

Georgia, Florida, Virginia and North and South Carolina also are receiving money to help restore longleaf pine forests, home to the endangered red-cockaded woodpecker.

The projects are part of a new Interior Department program uniting federal agencies, tribes, states and groups to create fire-resilient landscapes.

With Sandoval opting against Senate run, how will GOP's power structure change?



Gov. Brian Sandoval does not want Sen. Harry Reid's job.
Photo/LTN file

By Kyle Roerink, Las Vegas Sun

When Gov. Brian Sandoval revealed recently he would forgo a run for Senate, the announcement ended a year of speculation about his political future but triggered a new round of

conjecture.

The subject this time around: What's next for the Nevada GOP's power structure?

U.S. Rep Joe Heck and state Sen. Michael Roberson are now the GOP front-runners looking to make high-profile ladder climbs this election season. The two are still publicly quiet about their plans, but Nevada political observers are abuzz about the futures of the two Southern Nevada lawmakers.

As for Sandoval, saying no to the Senate may open other doors. So what are the potential paths for the state's top Republicans?

Read the whole story

Calif. to restrict water use by farmers

By Jennifer Medina, New York Times

LOS ANGELES – Farmers with rights to California water dating back to the Gold Rush will face sharp cutbacks, the first reduction in their water use since 1977, state officials announced Friday. State officials announced that rights dating to 1903 would be restricted, but said such restrictions will grow as the summer months go on, with the state facing a prolonged drought that shows few signs of easing.

“Demand in our key rivers systems are outstripping supply,” said Caren Trgovcich, the State Water Resources Control Board's chief deputy director. “Other cuts may be imminent.”

The cut impacts nearly 300 water right holders in the San Joaquin and Sacramento watersheds and delta whose claim to water came after 1903. State officials said that further curtailments are being considered weekly.

Read the whole story

Calif. AG challenges ruling against tiered water rates

By Matt Stevens, Los Angeles Times

The California Attorney General's Office has asked the state Supreme Court to depublish a controversial ruling that it argues will impede the state's ability to encourage conservation by charging people higher rates when they use excessive amounts of water.

In a seven-page letter filed late last week, the AG, arguing for the State Water Resources Control Board, said an April decision by the 4th District Court of Appeal contains "unnecessary and overbroad language" that could hamper the state's efforts to fight water waste amid the ongoing drought.

In a lawsuit challenging a tiered water-rate structure once used in the city of San Juan Capistrano, the appellate court found that the system was unconstitutional because it charged more for water than it cost the city to provide the service.

At least two-thirds of California water agencies use some type of tiered-rate structure, which officials say has been an effective tool for encouraging customers to use less water. The remaining agencies use a flat-rate structure based on the

units of water consumed.

Read the whole story

Kerr estate gives back to Barton Health

When Dan Kerr passed away last June he left behind a legacy with the Barton Health Auxiliary. Now he has left a new mark.



Dan Kerr

From his estate, he donated \$219,097.92, divided equally between Barton Auxiliary and Barton Foundation.

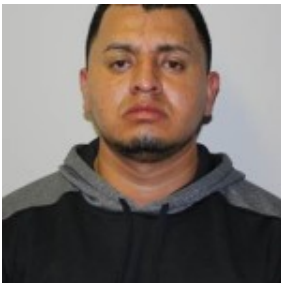
“Dan was a big part of the Barton Auxiliary family,” Joyce DeWitt, Barton Auxiliary president, said in a press release. “It means so much to see him leave behind such a generous gift to Barton, where he already gave so much of his heart and his time.”

The money will be used to fund health programs and services that benefit the community.

Kerr coordinated the monthly Barton Auxiliary blood drives, donated more than 26 gallons of blood, and served as Auxiliary president for six terms.

Arrest made in S. Tahoe assault case

A maintenance worker at a South Lake Tahoe hotel was arrested less than 24 hours after a woman reported being physically and sexually assaulted. Manuel Ramos-Munoz, 30, of South Lake Tahoe on June 11 at 10pm turned himself into police officers.



Manuel Ramos-Munoz

He was booked into jail on felony charges of kidnapping for the purpose of committing a sexual assault, assault with the intent to commit rape, forcible oral copulation, penetration by foreign object, assault with a deadly weapon, uttering terrorist threats, and battery causing great bodily injury.

The South Lake Tahoe woman who is in her 20s who was assaulted is recovering from her injuries.

Ramos-Munoz has been a maintenance worker and resident at the Big Pines Mountain House of Tahoe for four years. This is the same motel from which the victim had been abducted at knifepoint about 2am Thursday while socializing with friends.

Detectives contacted Ramos-Munoz later Thursday. Officers said he agreed to voluntarily come to the police department for

questioning. Officers said Munoz confessed to forcing the victim away from the motel to a secluded area where he cut her clothes off with his knife, to sexually assaulting her, and to several other relevant details about which only a suspect would be aware.

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*