

Calif. launches push to accelerate drought innovation

By Geoffrey Mohan, Los Angeles Times

The Brown administration's effort to speed innovation to address the state's endemic droughts was launched to little fanfare Tuesday.

No specific funding or timeline was included in the program posted to the California Energy Commission's website. A spokesman for the commission said it would begin this summer and is likely to follow well-established channels for research and development grants, which can take several months to a year to pass through the process.

Among the programs Brown seeks to accelerate are desalination powered by alternative energy, on-site water reuse, and various software and equipment approaches to economizing water use in agriculture.

Read the whole story

More transportation dollars possible for Tahoe

A bill in the California Legislature that would give Lake Tahoe more transportation money received unanimous bipartisan support in the Senate Committee on Transportation and Housing.

Senate Bill 231 is sponsored by state Sen. Ted Gaines, R-El Dorado Hills.

“Although the permanent population in Lake Tahoe has been in decline, the region still remains a top vacation destination, welcoming hundreds of thousands of visitors a day during peak season,” Gaines said in a statement. “It is critical to Tahoe’s regional economy that we meet the transportation needs of both visitors and residents in this most picturesque part of our state.”

Tahoe currently is allocated funds based on the number of full time residents. This bill would allow agencies to tap the Low Carbon and Transit Operations and the Affordable Housing and Sustainable Communities programs, as well as receive a larger allocation of State Transit Assistance funding based on a new, designated population basis for the California portion of the Tahoe basin.

The bill now moves to the Senate Committee on Appropriations.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Stricter greenhouse gas emission targets in Calif.

By Chris Megerian and Michael Finnegan, Los Angeles Times

Gov. Jerry Brown accelerated California’s effort to slash greenhouse gas emissions Wednesday, burnishing the state’s reputation as a pacesetter in the battle against climate change.

In an executive order, Brown said the state must cut the pollutants to 40 percent below 1990 levels by the year 2030, more than a decade after he leaves office.

That is an interim target, intended to help California lower emissions to 80 percent below 1990 levels by the year 2050, a goal set by Brown's predecessor, Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger.

Read the whole story

5-year sentence in DUI conviction

A Bay Area man with multiple DUI convictions is going to prison for five years.

Michael Charles Ramirez of Concord was sentenced April 27 by El Dorado County Superior Court Judge Kenneth Melikian after a jury had found him guilty of two counts of felony driving under the influence and driving with a suspended license.

When Ramirez was stopped by a sheriff's deputy on June 1, 2014, on Highway 50 on the West Slope he had a blood alcohol level of 0.11 percent. The legal limit is 0.08.

Ramirez had four prior driving under the influence convictions and has served two prison terms.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Chateau project given go-

ahead for next phase

By Kathryn Reed

While concern remains about the adequate number of parking spots and the safety for pedestrians crossing Highway 50, the South Lake Tahoe Planning Commission on Thursday unanimously approved changes to the next phase of the Chateau project.

A special meeting was required April 30 to answer questions from a meeting earlier this month.

The approval will allow Tahoe Stateline Ventures (TSV) to proceed with the 32-unit condo project. This full ownership lodging facility will give owners the opportunity to put their units into a rental pool.

Also part of the next phase are amenities for the lodging property, like a pool; 19,477-square-feet of retail; upgrades to the streetscape; and public fire pits.

This next phase encompasses 3.4 acres and should break ground this summer.

The project requires 6,307 square feet of commercial floor area from South Lake Tahoe. The City Council already approved that allocation, but it must come back to that board for the commodity to be assigned to this project. That is likely to occur May 19.

TSV is a subsidiary of Owens Financial. This is the lending institution that acquired all of the parcels on the 11.4-acre site near the state line after the project went bankrupt under Randy Lane of Lake Tahoe Development Company.

"They are trying to sell it to a real developer," Lew Feldman, attorney for the TSV, told the commissioners.

It is unusual for a bank to become a developer. The thinking

was if the project that was first approved in 2007 made progress from being more than concrete and rebar that it would be more enticing to prospective developers.

TSV has permits with the city and TRPA, with the former having been revised a couple times.

TSV is working under the 2007 permit from the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency that lists Lake Tahoe Development Company and the now defunct South Lake Tahoe Redevelopment Agency as the permittees. While people keep saying the permit goes with the landowner, nowhere in the permit does it state that. The permit says, "[The permittee] also understands that if the property is sold, [permittee] remains liable for the permit conditions until or unless the new owner acknowledges the transfer of the permit and notifies TRPA in writing of such acceptance."

TRPA has not received anything in writing from TSV, though TRPA and Feldman said something would be forthcoming.

In the interim, it is not known what kind of liability the city may still have if someone were to be injured at the site or other legal issues arose because City Attorney Tom Watson refused to return *Lake Tahoe News'* phone calls.

The overpass for Highway 50 linking the Chateau to Heavenly Village that was in the 2007 plans was eliminated with a recent revision. Commissioners on Thursday discussed whether this next phase should trigger TSV having to put in upgrades to pedestrian crossings along the highway.

A traffic study has shown no pedestrian accidents since the improvements were made to Friday Avenue. Jan McCarthy, who owns the nearby Stardust Lodge, said her guests do not have difficulty crossing the highway.

It was decided that in Phase A, which includes the bulk of the lodging, that the property owner will have to pay his share

for improvements.

While there are not enough parking spots for all of the potential users at the site – especially and maybe only if a convention center type entity were built – the commissioners spent the most amount of time on that issue. It's an issue that was brought up when the project was first approved. At that time using casino lots was the answer.

The commissioners acquiesced; realizing at least with the next phase there should be ample on-site parking.

No one has a crystal ball to know if a convention center will ever be built. When the Redevelopment Agency was part of the project it was going to invest \$55 million in what was to be a 40,000-square-foot community facility. That money is off the table since Gov. Jerry Brown dissolved redevelopment agencies.

In order to substantially change the project, the developer at that time would likely have to go through the environmental process again. That takes years and costs six figures. What the build out at the site will look like will in large part be determined by what the market dictates.

Calif. tribal gaming market regains momentum

By Howard Stutz, Las Vegas Review Journal

Eight years ago, California's Indian casino market was approaching \$8 billion in annual gaming revenue. By comparison, Nevada casinos in 2007 brought in a single-year record \$12.8 billion, of which \$6.8 billion came from the

Strip.

The recession knocked the California casino market down a few notches, as it did in Nevada.

But the Golden State's tribal gaming industry is firing up again.

California's 69 Indian casinos produced slightly less than \$7 billion in gaming revenue in 2013 – \$6.994 billion to be exact – according to the recently released Indian Gaming Industry Report for Casino City, authored by California economist Alan Meister.

The state's casinos accounted for a fourth of the nation's \$28.3 billion in total Indian gaming revenue in 2013.

[Read the whole story](#)

Rabid skunk found in El Dorado County

The third rabid skunk of the year has been found in El Dorado County. This time it was in Pleasant Valley.

An animal services officer was called April 24 by someone observing a skunk showing signs of rabies. Test results came back positive for rabies. The rabid skunk was found on Pleasant Valley Road near Grindstone Road and White Rose Lane.

There are no reports of human or pet contact with the rabid skunk.

A rabid skunk was found on Feb. 10 in Placerville and one

on Feb. 27 in El Dorado. Animal Services is not aware of any human contact with the skunks. In 2014, 14 rabid skunks were found in various locations throughout El Dorado County.

“It is critical that pet owners keep their pets current on their rabies vaccinations and report all animal bites and possible rabies exposures,” Henry Brzezinski, chief of animal services, said in a statement. “Rabies is spread through the bite and saliva of an infected animal. Without a vaccination and prompt bite reporting, pets can acquire rabies and pass it on to people and pets. Left untreated, rabies is almost always fatal.”

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*

2 dogs die in S. Lake Tahoe house fire

An early morning fire displaced two South Lake Tahoe women.

Smoke was billowing from the single-family residence on Stockton Avenue when firefighters arrived about 3am April 30.

One woman was outside, uninjured, while the other was not home at the time. Two dogs died in the fire.

“The living room had some significant damage. Everything else had mild to moderate smoke damage,” fire Capt. Jon Anderson told *Lake Tahoe News*. The house is not livable, he added.

The cause of the fire is under investigation.

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*

Protecting the lake, benefiting the community



The Upper Truckee Marsh, as seen in the 1950s, would have have been developed today. Photos/League to Save Lake Tahoe

Publisher's note: *This is one in a series of stories Lake Tahoe News will be running leading up to the 50th anniversary of South Lake Tahoe on Nov. 30.*

By Darcie Goodman Collins



As the city of South Lake Tahoe turns 50 this year, I have been contemplating the League to Save Lake Tahoe's relationship with the city. As many people are aware, we have not always had the strongest partnership.

To understand the legacy between the city and the League, we should consider the environmental challenges we inherited as our organizations grew during the 1960s. Unbridled development without any urban planning had already begun to impact the lake. The Tahoe Keys had destroyed hundreds of acres of valuable wetland. The region lacked any long-term vision. By the 1990s, however, the idea of redevelopment gave hope for revitalization on the South Shore. The League, the city and other interested parties ironed out a plan for Tahoe's first redevelopment project, the Heavenly Village. The League worked to get as many old motels torn down as possible, and sought to gain as much wetland and shoreline restoration as possible from the project. The Heavenly Village now serves as a model for redevelopment around the lake.

Finding a redevelopment model to help Tahoe's communities revitalize while also benefitting the lake is a bright spot from the past 50 years. In reflecting on my three-year tenure as the League's executive director, I also found many positive points.

For example, the Tourist Core Area Plan passed in 2013 with relatively little controversy. We supported it after the city addressed our concerns on new zoning identified in the draft plan. Also in 2013, we were thrilled when the city passed a landmark plastic bag ban, the first community at the lake to

do so. The ban will substantially reduce the amount of plastic waste in our streams and lake. And this past year, the League was very pleased to see the commercial service option dropped from the Airport Master Plan process. This will help keep airport noise in check, to the benefit of wildlife and community members, as well as eliminate any need to expand the airport's footprint. The city is also making step-by-step progress toward achieving pollution-reduction targets set by the TMDL, an EPA program to reduce sediment flowing into the lake.

These encouraging examples remind us that we can protect the lake while also benefitting the community.

Next up, the League will be keeping a close watch on the Tahoe Valley Area Plan and the Loop Road project to ensure they maximize benefits for the lake. The League supports the Tahoe Valley Area Plan, which will be brought forward for adoption within the next few months, for its open space and environmental benefits.



In the 1960s when the Tahoe Keys was built environmental concerns were not a major concern for most people.

The second phase of the TMDL will be more challenging, and the city will have to identify several new water quality improvement projects to meet pollution reduction requirements. We are also encouraging the city to improve public transportation and winter road sanding operations, a huge source of sediment flowing into the lake. As the city moves forward with more redevelopment, we're hoping to see the city create targets for coverage reduction and restoration on sensitive lands. We are committed to productive dialogue with city staff and policy makers to identify solutions to these current challenges.

The League's purpose has always been to act as a strong watchdog for the lake. However, we can't Keep Tahoe Blue without community involvement. I was born and raised in South Lake Tahoe and care deeply about its future. Since coming on board, I've built a robust community engagement program

because I believe the more residents gain hands-on experience tackling the lake's environmental challenges, the more they'll understand what solutions are needed and stand up for them.

For example, in addition to our two new volunteer programs, Eyes on the Lake and Pipe Keepers, which call on community members to help with scientific monitoring, we are now partnering with Lake Tahoe Unified School District to develop a Tahoe-based environmental curriculum. Students will use the lake itself as a laboratory to study geography, biology, public policy and other subjects.

The environmental movement is evolving, and finding more productive ways of achieving results. We are encouraged that the city is also growing and responding more to the concerns of its citizens.

Environmental progress is slow without true partnerships. With the League, the city and the community working together, we can achieve so much, for much less money and in a quicker, more efficient way. We wish the city a very happy 50th anniversary and look forward to collaborating to improve our environment and benefit our community.

Darcie Goodman Collins is a native of South Lake Tahoe and serves as executive director for the League to Save Lake Tahoe.

17 cited in South Shore

contractor sting

Seventeen people on the South Shore are accused of violating state construction laws.

The Contractors State License Board in California and Nevada State Contractors Board conducted a simultaneous sting operation April 27.

Seventeen individuals received citations for illegal contracting. Five unlicensed contractors were cited at a home near Pioneer Trail, while 12 were found at a Stateline condominium, including one contractor who has a California license, and two who had a suspended California contractor license.

At each sting location, investigators for the state agencies posed as homeowners seeking bids for construction improvements.

Investigators said they developed leads from Craigslist and local bulletin board ads. They contacted the suspected illegal contractors and asked for bids on exterior painting, paver installation, demolition, and decking in South Lake Tahoe, while bids were taken for interior painting at the Stateline condo.

The five California suspects submitted bids that exceeded \$500, the legal limit for any project's combined material and labor costs before a contractor license is required in California. Each suspect was issued a notice to appear in El Dorado County Superior Court on misdemeanor charges. The top bid was \$3,000 to replace a deck.

At the Nevada site, the high bid was \$4,800 to paint the interior of the two-story condo. Nevada's cost threshold for needing a contractor license is \$1,000. Electricians, HVAC, and plumbing contractors must be licensed in Nevada,

regardless of the project's cost.

The California suspects were cited for contracting without a license and three face an additional charge of illegal advertising. One man was allegedly using a relative's contractor license.

Names of those cited in Nevada have not been released.

SUSPECT'S NAME CITY OF RESIDENCE	LICENSE CLASSIFICATION	ALLEGED VIOLATIONS
Jesus Javier Garcia-Campos <i>Sparks</i>	C-33 – Painting and Decorating	Contracting without a license, Illegal advertising
John Donaldson Ure <i>South Lake Tahoe</i>	C-6 – Cabinet, Millwork and Finish Carpentry	Contracting without a license, Illegal advertising
Randy Craig Burton <i>South Lake Tahoe</i>	C-6 – Cabinet, Millwork and Finish Carpentry	Contracting without a license
Victor Buz Devoll <i>Dayton</i>	C-33 – Painting and Decorating	Contracting without a license, Illegal advertising, Displaying a license not issued to him
Michael Evan Bell <i>South Lake Tahoe</i>	C-33 – Painting and Decorating	Contracting without a license

– Lake Tahoe News staff report