

Truckee Donner PUD doing its part to conserve water

Truckee Donner Public Utility District has taken action to implement state water reduction regulations. Compliance is mandatory and there are provisions for penalties and fines.

The key impacts to Truckee Donner PUD customers from the SWRCB's 2015 emergency drought regulations currently include:

Restriction on irrigation with potable water of ornamental landscapes and turf to every other day. This applies to all Truckee Donner PUD potable water customers.

Violators throughout California can face a fine of up to \$500 for each day in which a violation occurs, against:

- Runoff when irrigating with potable water;
- Using hoses with no shutoff nozzles to wash cars;
- Using potable water to wash sidewalks and driveways;
- Using potable water in decorative water features that do not recirculate the water;
- Using outdoor irrigation during and 48 hours following measurable precipitation;
- Restaurants and other food service establishments can only serve water to customers upon request;
- Hotels and motels must provide guests with the option of not having towels and linens laundered daily.

"It is important to note that, although the Truckee region is in a drought, Truckee Donner PUD is not experiencing a water supply shortage," said Michael Holley, Truckee Donner PUD general manager, said in a statement. "That being said, long-term drought will impact us all and we must all comply with the mandatory state emergency drought regulations and do our part to conserve."

To help with enforcement of drought regulations, the Truckee Donner PUD has established a formal procedure to receive complaints regarding observations of noncompliant incidents. Staff will investigate complaints and take action where appropriate. Complaints must be in writing and can be filed online, then click on drought link.

The Truckee Donner PUD conservation department is available to help customers save water through their water-efficient toilet rebate/exchange, customer leak-repair rebate, free handouts of low-flow plumbing fixtures and hose-spray nozzles, as well as conservation garden concepts. There are many opportunities to save water, money and live more comfortably. For additional information, call 530.582.3931.

Lack of pediatric care forces families to leave Nev.

By Siobhan McAndrew, Reno Gazette-Journal

Nate Christy's medical journey started in Reno with a routine appendectomy on Jan. 13.

What has followed for Nate, 9, were six more surgeries, having to be revived seven times when his heart stopped and three blood transfusions.

And now recovery involves a road out of town.

Nate and many other children in Nevada leave the state in search of better care, specialists, second opinions and established medical communities with teams of doctors that collaborate.

Some leave for things that are considered a given in cities the sizes of Reno and Las Vegas, including to see dermatologists, rehabilitation and treatment for adolescent arthritis. Some leave looking for second opinions and answers.

“Children in our state are at a high risk because there aren’t enough pediatricians and specialists,” said Barbara Atkinson, planning dean of the University of Nevada, Las Vegas Medical School.

Creating a better Nevada system of public medical education is the top priority of the Nevada Board of Regents, the governing body over the state’s public colleges.

Read the whole story

Report: Drought won’t hurt Calif. economy

By Chris Megerian, Los Angeles Times

California’s drought has threatened farmers, ski resorts and golf courses, but it’s unlikely to do much damage to the state’s overall economy or budget, according to a new report.

“We currently do not expect the drought to have a significant effect,” said the report, released Tuesday by the nonpartisan Legislative Analyst’s Office, which provides budget advice to state lawmakers.

The minor impact is explained by the lopsided relationship between water use for farming and agriculture’s overall contribution to the state economy.

Farmers consume four times as much water as California's cities and towns, and they produce a huge portion of the country's crops.

But they contribute only 2 percent to the state's gross domestic product, according to the seven-paragraph report.

Read the whole story

Conservation group opposes Squaw-Alpine gondola

By Hugo Martin, Los Angeles Times

A conservation group has vowed to stop a gondola lift planned to connect two Lake Tahoe-area ski resorts, complaining that it would cut through a federally preserved wilderness.

Sierra Watch, a nonprofit group based in Nevada City, Calif., said a gondola lift connecting the Squaw Valley and Alpine Meadows ski resorts would slice through the federally protected Granite Chief Wilderness Area.

"That kind of development would be a nonstarter for us," said Tom Mooers, executive director of Sierra Watch.

But the ski resort operators dispute the claim that the gondola will cut through wilderness area.

Read the whole story

Caesars wants more time to file bankruptcy plan

By Associated Press

The bankrupt operating division of casino empire Caesars Entertainment Corp. wants more time to file its reorganization plan to get out from under some \$18 billion in debt.

Caesars Entertainment Operating Co. lawyers filed a motion this week asking a bankruptcy judge in Chicago to allow the company six more months to file its own plan exclusively.

Caesars is the parent company of Harrah's Lake Tahoe and Harveys in Stateline.

The company has until May 15 but asked for the extension pointing out the case's complexity involving 173 business entities, dueling creditor groups, legal challenges and a pending investigation from the court-appointed examiner looking into the company's past transactions.

Caesars Entertainment Operating Co. wants until Nov. 15 to file giving creditors until January 2016 to weigh in. Judge A. Benjamin Goldgar is scheduled to consider Caesars' request on April 29.

California's biggest water users are secret

By Katharine Mieszkowski and Lance Williams, *Reveal*

In the midst of a historic drought, Californians have no way of knowing who's guzzling the most water.

That's not an accident. It's by design, thanks to an obscure 1997 measure that weakened one of the state's chief open government laws, the California Public Records Act.

For the source of this legislation, look no further than Silicon Valley, where the city of Palo Alto decided it needed to do more to protect the privacy of the tech elite.

"Palo Alto, even then, was home to a number of very high-profile tech-related residents," said Ariel Calonne, who was the city attorney at the time. "We had fairly extensive databases that covered a lot of sensitive information for a lot of noteworthy people, and that became a concern for our utility managers."

In the name of privacy and security, the city of Palo Alto backed legislation sponsored by Byron Sher, the local state senator. (Sher is now on the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency Governing Board.) It allowed utilities to keep secret their customers' "utility usage data" – that is, how much water and power they were using.

Other supporters included the California Municipal Utilities Association and the League of California Cities.

At the time, the Public Records Act required agencies that operated utilities to make customers' bills public upon request. During a 1991 drought, the press exposed California water wasters by relying on data from water utilities. The *Los Angeles Times* found that the top 100 water users in San Diego gulped down 3,000 gallons or more a day, while the average household used 349 gallons.

Atop the list of the biggest users: The *San Diego Union-Tribune's* publisher, Helen Copley, who pumped an average of 10,203 gallons a day on her 9.5-acre La Jolla estate, which

was tended by 10 full-time gardeners. Dozens of those top water users complained that publicizing their water use would expose them to security concerns or ridicule, the L.A. Times reported.

In lobbying to change the law, proponents of the Sher measure noted that utility bills include ratepayers' home addresses. They argued that it was dangerous to make that information public, citing the 1989 shooting of actress Rebecca Schaeffer, who was killed by a stalker who got her address from Department of Motor Vehicles records. The Legislature restricted access after that.

State agencies routinely redact personal information in releasing public records to address security concerns. But proponents of the measure also argued that because private utilities like PG&E did not have to release utility usage data, public ones shouldn't have to either.

Once it was introduced, there was no stopping the measure, recalled Tom Newton, executive director of the California Newspaper Publishers Association.

The publishers and other open records advocates "made a political assessment that we couldn't kill it," said Newton, who was the organization's general counsel at the time. Instead, he said, they worked to amend the measure to maintain open access to the bills of public officials who set utility rates.

"We did our best" to temper the law's effects, he said. A spokeswoman for the League of California Cities says it has no position on the law today.

During California's current drought, the law has been used to shield the water bills of big users like golf courses from public scrutiny.

Last year, the nonprofit First Amendment Coalition sued to get

water usage data for major business customers of the Coachella Valley Water District in the Palm Springs area, where golf courses are prodigious water users. Peter Scheer, the coalition's executive director, argued that the 1997 law was intended to protect the privacy only of people, not corporations.

Earlier this month, a judge ruled that corporate water bills also should remain secret, saying that while businesses don't have the same privacy rights as people, the law nevertheless applies to all customers.

Under present law, there are a few exceptions that allow for some limited public scrutiny of water bills. Last year, The Center for Investigative Reporting used the public-official exemption to reveal the water use of officials who weren't living up to their own calls for conservation. Many water agencies redacted the home addresses of the officials but provided copies of their bills.

The law also allows the agencies to disclose customers' water use if they have violated "utility usage policies." As water agencies restrict use in response to Gov. Jerry Brown's recently announced mandatory water cuts, scofflaws could find themselves in the public eye.

But only if the agencies feel like sharing that information.

Pollock Pines woman accused of hitting ex-boyfriend with

car

By Cathy Locke, Sacramento Bee

A Pollock Pines woman is in El Dorado County jail, accused of hitting her ex-boyfriend with her car.

Terrie Crampton, 45, was booked on suspicion of assault with a deadly weapon, felony domestic violence and felony hit and run. Also included was an enhancement for having prior felony convictions, according to an El Dorado County Sheriff's Office news release.

Read the whole story

Teen use of e-cigarettes continues to soar

By Karen Kaplan and Eryn Brown, Los Angeles Times

The use of electronic cigarettes by high school students tripled from 2013 to 2014 – a surprising boom that threatens to wipe out hard-won gains in the fight against teen smoking, a new government report says.

The percentage of American high school students who smoked traditional cigarettes on a regular basis dropped from 15.8 percent in 2011 to 9.2 percent in 2014, according to a study by a team from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

But that drop has been more than offset by increases in e-cigarette use, which increased from 1.5 percent of high school students in 2011 to 13.4 percent in 2014, the study says.

Read the whole story

Wildfire burning in Carson Valley

Updated 5:15pm:

A wildfire has burned nearly 4 acres in the Carson Valley.

Forward progression has been stopped, according to officials.

It started about 4pm April 17 north of Stephanie Lane in Minden. The fire quickly spread to the dry sagebrush along Highway 395, closing the northbound travel lane from Minden to Carson City. The traffic has been diverted down Genoa Lane for all northbound travel. No estimate has been given when the road will reopen.

It is unknown what caused the fire.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Nev. eyes \$9.5M for tech job training

By Riley Snyder, AP

There's a small issue with large technology companies like Tesla and Switch expanding to Nevada – the state doesn't have nearly enough qualified and trained workers to meet the expected demand.

The shortage has led Nevada lawmakers to consider bills that would allocate nearly \$10 million toward high-tech workforce development at state community colleges.

Supporters say the measures would provide badly needed grant funding to help meet the need of emerging industries in the state.

Sen. Joyce Woodhouse introduced three bills this week to the Senate Finance Committee that would fund science, technology, engineering and math programs. She said the proposals would help prepare the state for Tesla and other major businesses. The committee took no action on the bills.

SB496 would allow Nevada community colleges to apply for up to \$6 million in grants to help fund curriculum that corresponds to emerging industries. The bill would also allow funds to be used for equipment or facilities.

No one testified against the bills, though Sen. Pete Goicoechea raised concerns that the majority of funds would go toward southern Nevada schools and skip over community colleges in rural Nevada.

SB493 would allocate \$3.5 million to a matching grant program for colleges, nonprofit groups and private businesses to support industry programs.

Mike Willden, chief of staff for Gov. Brian Sandoval, said the governor's budget already includes \$3 million for such workforce grants and contains funds for a staffer to oversee the program. Woodhouse said she was open to combining the two proposals.

SB236 would require a state council devoted to promoting the new jobs to meet more often and hold events to recognize high-achieving students.