

King Fire containment expected Sunday

The King Fire burning east of Pollock Pines is 98 percent contained, having burned 97,718 acres mostly in the Eldorado National Forest. Full containment is now expected Oct. 5.

Most of the work by the more than 2,000 people on the fire is mop up and repair.

Today firefighters will continue suppression tactics in the Rubicon River Valley on the southwest flank of the fire, working toward full containment of the fire. Extreme, steep terrain is slowing containment in that area.

With warm, dry weather forecast for the next few days, residents may see some smoke from smoldering heavy fuels in the interior of the fire area. Firefighters will patrol and extinguish any remaining isolated hot spots near the fire perimeter.

The man suspected of starting the blaze Sept. 13 is scheduled to be in court later this month.

Eleven people have been injured fighting the fire, 12 homes destroyed and 68 outbuildings.

– *Read the whole story*

CalFire lobbies for more than minimum wage

By Jon Ortiz, Sacramento Bee

While state firefighters have battled the epic King Fire west of Lake Tahoe, their union has been struggling with a political question: What can they expect financially in the future from Gov. Jerry Brown?

CalFire is in the midst of voting on an agreement with Brown to amend the union's current contract. The deal gives most members a 4 percent raise Jan. 1. Meanwhile, some of the lowest-paid firefighters are receiving a 12.5 percent salary hike.

The smaller increase is in line with Brown's policy that no union would get an across-the-board pay raise larger than the one he negotiated last year with the mammoth SEIU Local 1000. The larger percentage raise was prompted by – get this – the latest increase in California's minimum wage.

Employees in the Firefighter I classification earned as little as \$8 per hour, a dollar less than the state minimum wage that went into effect July 1. The 12.5 percent increase fixes that for now, and the contract amendment under consideration grants another 12.5 percent raise next year, ahead of the state's hourly minimum going to \$10 in 2016. Some fast-food workers earn more.

Read the whole story

Tahoe woman accused of

robbing marijuana grow

By Stephanie Hull, KRCR-TV

KESWICK – Shasta County Deputies arrested five people after they allegedly tried to rob a marijuana grow Thursday afternoon.

Those arrested were Adam Wert, 34, of Redding; Angela Wert, 33, of Lake Tahoe; Nora Hunter, 32, of Redding; Sean Vallodon, 43, of Redding; and George Howard, 51, of Redding.

Deputies received a call around 3:30 p.m. that shots were fired at a marijuana grow on Iron Mountain Road, near Matheson Road. One victim called police and told them about a confrontation with the armed suspects, and said he was going to arm himself.

When deputies arrived, the victims reported five people had driven away in three vehicles.

Read the whole story

King Fire acreage grows, perimeter holds

The King Fire, which is still not completely under control east of Pollock Pines, has blackened 97,718 acres of forest. The increase in acreage is from burning inside the perimeter.

Firefighters have completed a line on two of the last three large areas of active fire near the fire's perimeter. Today firefighters will focus on the last remaining hot spot near

the perimeter west of Loon Lake.

The fire is 95 percent contained.

Less than 2,500 people are extinguishing the remaining fire or repairing areas that were damaged. Eighteen miles of hand and dozer lines, and 19 miles of roads used for fire suppression activities have been repaired. Much of this repair work in the northern part of the fire area has been completed.

Since the reported arson started Sept. 13, 12 houses were destroyed, 68 outbuildings, and 11 people have been injured.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Calif. probes near-death escape of 12 firefighters

By Steve Gorman, Reuters

LOS ANGELES – California forestry officials have opened an inquiry into a life-threatening ordeal faced by 12 firefighters who were nearly engulfed by flames in the Sierra Nevada last month before a helicopter pilot flew to the scene and led them to safety.

The team had already crawled into foil-lined personal fire shelters – a survival measure of last resort – before they were spotted by the pilot as columns of fire raced up a canyon at them, igniting whole trees along the way.

The incident, which came close to becoming the deadliest California firefighting tragedy in nearly five decades and recalled the loss of 19 firemen in Arizona last year, unfolded

on the third day of the King Fire.

Cal Fire, swiftly began a “near miss review” of the Sept. 15 incident, but the story was not widely reported at first.

Read the whole story

Murderer tied to Tahoe dies in prison

By Associated Press

LAS VEGAS – A Nevada inmate serving two life sentences in the 1989 killing of a California real estate agent has died in prison.

Nevada Department of Corrections officials say 67-year-old John Colwell died of a chronic medical condition Oct. 1 in High Desert State Prison.

Clark County coroner’s officials were called, and an autopsy was planned.

Colwell was convicted of kidnapping 52-year-old Modesto real estate agent Dorothy Greene while she showed a vacant house, then shooting her in the head and dumping her body in Lake Tahoe.

Authorities said he was arrested after withdrawing money from Greene’s account at an ATM.

He was convicted in Douglas County of first-degree murder, kidnapping and robbery, and has been in the prison system since 1991.

Calif. ends 1 of driest-ever water years

By AP

SACRAMENTO – California officials are urging residents and businesses to keep conserving water as the state ends another extremely dry “water year” with no guarantee the coming year will be any wetter.

The 2014 water year that ended Tuesday was one of the driest on record, with the state getting less than 60 percent of the average precipitation, according to the state Department of Water Resources. The 2015 water year began Wednesday.

The state’s major reservoirs collectively held only 57 percent of average water storage on Sept. 1, officials said.

Department Director Mark Cowin said “day-to-day conservation – wise, sparing use of water – is essential as we face the possibility of a fourth dry winter,” which is typically California’s rainy season.

Water officials say recent storms, while encouraging, haven’t eased the state’s water woes and forecasters can’t predict if California will get enough major storms to end the record drought.

Earlier this year, Gov. Jerry Brown declared a statewide drought emergency and called on residents to reduce water usage. The state and federal government have drastically reduced water deliveries to Central Valley farms, and the state water board approved fines of up to \$500 for wasting water.

In September, the governor signed legislation that would for the first time regulate groundwater in California, prompted by concerns that increased pumping is depleting aquifers and causing land to sink.

Curtzwiler: 'El Dorado County has lost its focus'

Publisher's note: *Lake Tahoe News asked the two El Dorado County District 5 supervisor candidates a series of questions. All are the same except for one that is specific to each candidate. The responses are being run in the order LTN received them.*



Name: Kenny Curtzwiler

Profession/work experience: Room service waiter at Sahara Tahoe – two years / Bartender-Carlos Murphy's –19 years / Bartender Chevy's – one- year / Bartender Tudor Pub – three years / Nevada Army National Guard – 20.5 years (I held the ranks of E-1, E-2, E-3, E-5, E-6–0-1, 0-2, 0-3, and retired an 0-4-Major.) I own Skibumfamily Inc and dba K & K Services. Pam and I named our business K & K from the initials of myself Kenny and my son Kaleb (Tree Service, Roofing and Construction Clean Up Company) Lake Tahoe Custom Cycles (Motorcycle Repair Shop) Tahoe Skibum, South Lake Tahoe Skibum and Lake Tahoe

Skibum (Retail clothing and writer of the Skibum articles in *Lake Tahoe Entertainer* and *Tahoe Mountain News*).

Age: 58

What organizations, committees or groups are you or have you been involved with?: It would be much easier to ask which ones I haven't been involved in as I am involved with them all. Specifically the major ones are Christmas Cheer, the Children's Memorial Tree, American Legion and Boys and Girls Club. I do not belong to any one group with the exception of the American Legion. I feel in this way I can give freely to everyone without breaking any affiliation feelings. My company and family have donated to almost every function this community has had for the last 33 years. I am also a registered non partisan and am not affiliated in any way to a political party, in this way I can vote for what is best for our community and not a certain group whether it be political or special group.

Why are you running for supervisor?: My son asked me to make a difference here in a letter he wrote.

Why should people vote for you over the other candidate?: I honestly feel that I have prepared for this position since I first moved to Tahoe by getting involved with the community and lifestyle this area has to offer. I would also like to hold the agencies and elected officials (yes, that will include myself) accountable for their actions, decisions and commitment to our community, which now includes our friends in Pollock Pines.

What do you think is the most pressing issue facing El Dorado County and how will you deal with it?: El Dorado County has lost its focus when it comes to the community and the community needs. It is the responsibility of the government to take care of police, fire and community infrastructure like our roads and facilities. Too often they have gotten lost in

the eye candy and smoke and mirrors of certain interest groups whose only focus is to promote themselves first and the community second.

The 56-acre project, which includes Lakeview Commons and the campground on the other side of Highway 50, is owned by the county and maintained by the city. The county has not invested a dime and does not contribute to the maintenance and operations. Would you ask the county to help with paying some of the bills or would you advocate for deeding the land to the city? Why or why not?: I do not know if the county has invested anything. I would have to check on that and get back with you. To the best of my understanding the county is no different than a landlord, they lease the facility to the city and it is the city's responsibility for T I & M. There are several hundred examples of a landlord not doing anything to their property as long as the rent is paid up here in our community. They see no reason to invest in our community as most of them do not live here, the county is no different, outta sight outta mind. Rather than sell it to the city we need to work together to improve our community, if the county is not willing to work with us then perhaps we should look into transferring stewardship of the site to our community and the people that actually live here.

The city and county are putting together a recreation master plan, but the Board of Supervisors has never voted on whether it would fund the implementation of the plan. Would you dedicate funds to promote the investment of recreation?: See above answer where I talk about out of area landlords. The word Landlords used to be reversed where there were Lords of the Land until the land became a part of the community. As far as investment goes, yes. Obviously, I will take care of our community first.

Being on the board requires working with four others. Give readers an example of how you work well others in difficult situations with differing opinions: My experience in the

military required me to work with everyone above and below my pay grade on a daily basis. Contrary to belief the military is not a democracy yet we were required to work as one. The biggest asset I have is that I do not belong to a political party, special interest group or community organization. I belong to this community and will and have always kept that first and foremost in everything I have done in the 37 years I have lived here. I have had a working relationship with just about everyone in this town through my writings as the Skibum to my business as a contractor and specifically due to all the years as a bartender. I am able to walk into the offices of our officials and work out any differences we may have. We don't always agree but that is what I am here to work out and move on for the betterment of our community. I do not always get what I want but neither does the other side but we do come to a compromise.

What is working in the county and what isn't; and how would you go about changing what isn't working?: What isn't working is the communication between the BOS and the community. It is our, the community's, job to get involved with what is happening but it is imperative that the BOS share with the community what is going on. For too long these agendas have been pushed through for the consultants and their employers as to what we need without full disclosure and communication with all those affected. We need a representative that is willing to ask the question "Really?". Our elected officials need to remember who they work for.

Would you consider replacing the current CAO? Why or why not?: I do not have enough information to comment on this question.

The grand jury labeled the county dysfunctional. What is your opinion of that assessment?: No more dysfunctional than our own City Council. I would agree with the statement based on the fact that I have served on the civil grand jury for a year a few years back and am somewhat familiar with the inner workings. The grand jury is made up of volunteers, community

members who want to make a difference yet they have no teeth. Every grand jury report has been ignored and if you read all of them they are almost always the same theme. Our elected officials need to read the grand jury report standing next to a mirror to see what they are talking about.

Agriculture is a huge economic driver for the county. What are your ideas in regards to the drought to ensure farmers and ranchers have enough water?: I do not have enough knowledge or interaction with farmers and agriculture to answer this question.

The Sand Fire this summer proved El Dorado County was lacking in emergency response coordination efforts. What improvements would you propose?: I will use our Lake Valley Fire Department as an example. We must be proactive and not always reactive. I attended an El Dorado County meeting [in August] where all the fire district chiefs and committees were there. The biggest theme was they are all asking for money and their fair share of tax dollars and what do we need to improve their services. LV has been proactive in seeking grant funds for defensible space and wood shake replacement. I am a Tree Service and Roofing contractor and I can tell you that when they implemented these programs we have done about a thousand jobs for defensible space and the protection of our community. Proactive not reactive. LV is now asking for a new "tax" for more defensible space programs. This money will stay in our community to help our community. I applaud our Lake Valley Fire Department for being proactive and taking care of the community. The problem with the Sand fire was the same problem with the Angora Fire. Too many agency chiefs egos were bruised because all the outside agencies wanted to be in charge when they should have had less egos involved and let one local agency take charge. We needed to be able to cross jurisdictions and power structures without worrying about stepping on another agency's perceived power ego.

How would you improve relations with the city of South Lake

Tahoe?: Are you asking what I would do as a person or are you asking as the county? Since the question is stated as "you" I will answer that way. I will be no different in what I have done in the past, present or future. I will still just walk in or call for a talk with our officials. I will still communicate with them only this time we can actually move forward on critical issues not just the issues in my articles.

On Lake Tahoe News you commented how you are proud to collect unemployment in the winter when your business closes down. Ethically, how do you justify this?: Below is the actual wording of what I said. I had Ms. Reed look it up for me as I asked her to show me where I said I was proud.

Jealous Jeff? Yes I do collect unemployment on your dime and enjoy every powder day and have absolutely no regrets or ashamed of what I do. Thanks for your opinion.

My company is a corporation and I am an employee of the company. I receive a paycheck and pay into EDD.

Tell the voters something about yourself that they may not know: Someone asked Pam, my lovely wife of 33 years, if she or I was afraid of someone saying something about us that might not be flattering. Her response, "Are you kidding? This guy puts his whole life story out every month in the Mountain News, there is nothing anyone does not know about us." There is probably one thing though, both Pam and I were adopted.

King Fire burning in interior, not spreading

The King Fire is at 94 percent containment.

Crews on Oct. 1 spent time suppressing isolated heat sources south of the Rubicon River on the west flank, but the acreage burned remains at 97,099. Full containment is expected Oct. 4.

Helicopters were on scene to stop further spread. The heat and dry weather is causing the interior to continue to burn. Crews are working to make sure roads are safe for the public. There are about 2,500 people still on the fire.

The Rubicon Jeep Trail, Wrights Lake, Desolation Wilderness and the east side of Ice House Road are open to the public.

The following recreation areas and roads remain closed to the public: lands west of Ice House Road, including Union Valley Reservoir; Stumpy Meadows, the Hell Hole Reservoir area, Sand Mountain Blvd, Peavine Road, and Eleven Pines Road.

– Read the whole story

Wynn: Gambling not key to casinos' success



Harveys has found success with its outdoor concert series. Photo/LTN file

By J.D. Morris, Las Vegas Sun

Nongaming revenue isn't just crucial to the success of casino-resorts now – in fact, it's always been “the story,” Las Vegas mogul Steve Wynn said in a speech this week.

Wynn delivered a keynote address to a packed crowd at the first full day of the Global Gaming Expo, or G2E, at the Sands Expo. Much of his remarks focused on revenue sources aside from gambling, an area to which the casino industry has shifted attention in recent years as many patrons have done the same.

Wynn stressed that bankrolling a successful resort on nongaming dollars – from hotel rooms, restaurants, shops and entertainment – is nothing new. He gave a history lesson of sorts, beginning with his tenure at the Golden Nugget decades ago.

Wynn brought up the fact that most Americans now live in a state where they can easily access a casino, meaning that a resort's gambling opportunities can't be the only thing attracting customers.

Read the whole story