

Stateline casinos rake in the cash

Stateline's gaming numbers for August were the bright spot for the state, with the win being 32.64 percent higher than a year ago at \$28.4 million.

The Nevada Gaming Control Board on Sept. 26 released the numbers that show statewide the take was down 3.66 percent to \$920.2 million.

This was the first statewide drop since February. Officials say high-end baccarat contributed to the decline.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Forecast: Less snow for skiers, less water for Calif.

By Kitty Felde, KPCC

Attention skiers: climate change means fewer trips to Tahoe this century. That's the word from a first-time study by the Department of the Interior. Less snow also means additional challenges for storing water during drier months.

According to the DOI's Sacramento and San Joaquin Basins Climate Impact Assessment, the average temperature in California's Central Valley is predicted to rise by about 3 degrees Fahrenheit by mid-century and possibly more than 5

degrees by the end of the century. It may not sound like much, but it means more rain and less snow in the Sierra.

That snow provides more than recreation for skiers. It's like a bank account for future water withdrawals. Deputy Interior Secretary Michael Connor says we've historically relied on the natural snowpack to melt slowly, providing steady runoff that would provide water for cities and farms into mid-to-late summer. Less snow means less water during California's hotter, drier months.

Read the whole story

King Fire 55% contained, flooding a threat



A sign thanking firefighters is on both sides of the main overpass across Highway 50 in Placerville. Photo/LTN

Updated 6:14pm:

While the rain is welcome, it could also pose flooding risks to burned areas from the King Fire.

El Dorado County officials say they have contingency plans in place to deal with flooding issues. As of this time, there

have been no reports from the field of flooding, mudslides, or debris flows in the fire area.

The National Weather Service in Sacramento has issued a flash flood warning for the area until 6:15pm. The area that burned the hottest is of most concern, including the south and middle forks of the American river and the Rubicon River basin.

Firefighters are gaining on the wildfire burning east of Pollock Pines, with it now being 55 percent contained and 95,347 acres burned.

The system that came through Sept. 25 brought between 0.06 and 0.09 inches of rain to the Eldorado National Forest, where the bulk of the fire has burned. It is also burning in the Tahoe National Forest in Placer County.

With the fire moving out of populated areas, the threat to structures is down to 289 and the number of people still evacuated is at 694. Mandatory evacuations for Quintette and Volcanoville have been changed to voluntary.

People returning to their homes are finding a burned landscape and 12 of their neighbors without homes. Another 57 structures have been lost in the fire that allegedly was started by an arsonist on Sept. 13.

More than 8,000 firefighters are working the fire. Six people have been injured.

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*

Desolation fire at 30 acres and holding

Updated 5:45pm:

Thirty acres of terrain above Cascade Lake have burned, and the fire is holding despite the afternoon winds.

The fire is burning in the Snow Lake area of the Desolation Wilderness near Emerald Bay. It started in the late afternoon Sept. 24. The cause of the fire is under investigation, but has been determined to be human-caused, according to the U.S. Forest Service. No further details are being released.

While USFS spokeswoman Cheva Gabor would not say this fire was started by an illegal campfire, she told *Lake Tahoe News*, "We've had an ongoing problem with illegal campfires in the Desolation Wilderness and Snow Lake is known to our wilderness rangers as a spot where local residents hike in on a user-created trail and have campfires."



Smoke from the Snow Lake fire is visible on the South Shore. Photo/USFS

No structures are threatened at this time.

Lake Valley and CalFire crews were at the Spring Creek tract and Cascade properties Thursday morning in the event the fire spread. By the afternoon the precipitation had reduced that risk. Patrols will now be intermittent.

The U.S. Forest Service has closed Bayview, Eagle Falls, Tallac, Glen Alpine and Stanford Camp trailheads, Bayview Campground, Inspiration Point and the Taylor Creek Sno-Park. California State Parks has temporarily closed vehicle access to the Vikingsholm parking lot in the event it is needed for fire suppression equipment.

Caltrans and the California Highway Patrol have closed turnouts in the Highway 89 corridor from Spring Creek to the Vikingsholm parking lot to keep the highway traffic flowing to enable fire apparatus and crews ready access to the area. The fire is visible from Highway 89.

This wildfire is not related to the King Fire burning west of Lake Tahoe.

With the King Fire still burning, the Forest Service is asking people to remember that fire restrictions are still in place in the Lake Tahoe Basin and to abide by those restrictions. Fire restrictions mean that no open fires or campfires are allowed outside of campgrounds with an onsite host. Campfires are never allowed in the Desolation Wilderness, only portable stoves are allowed with a valid campfire permit.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Parents get schooled in social media dangers

By Kathryn Reed

How well do you know your friends?

That was the overriding question this week as FBI Special Agent Scott Schofield spent two days at South Tahoe Middle School talking to students, faculty and parents about the dangers lurking on the Internet.

It's not just Facebook that is a problem. In fact, that is less worrisome these days for kids because they are tuning out as more of their parents are logging in. It's Instagram, which Facebook owns, SnapChat, the app Kick and gaming consoles that are attracting younger people. (Gaming consoles allow for chatting and interactions with strangers.) Then there's always the next unknown social media platform that is on the horizon to be worried about.

Schofield said the basic questions to ask are:

- What information am I giving away about myself and others?
- Who am I giving it to?
- Is that a good idea?

Adults should be asking the same questions, he said. Schofield is with the Child Exploitation Task Force out of the Sacramento office, of which South Lake Tahoe is a part.

He pointed out there are 138 million fake Facebook accounts. He has one where he is a teenage girl. He's never "friended" someone, but has 200 friends. They have sought him out because of things he's posted as his alter ego.

Schofield then proved how easy it is to get tons of personal information about people and then use it to become their “friend”, stalk them or steal their identity. The worst cases are when people meet a “friend” in person and it either ends in abuse or a fatality.

And while SnapChat’s claim to fame is not to record photos or videos, nothing is ever truly deleted. Plus, if someone takes a screenshot, well, it’s in the universe presumably forever.

This can backfire when it comes time to apply for college or a job. Google searches are the norm these days. What is posted at age 13 can be a black mark at 18.

“I learned I have a whole lot to learn and I can’t afford not to,” Sylvia Kaufman told *Lake Tahoe News* after the Sept. 24 meeting that was targeted to parents.

She has one child who is a freshman at South Tahoe High School and an adult daughter who has a child of her own. Now she is worried about all the information on Facebook about her grandchild.

Kaufman said it’s important to be vigilant even when her son says she doesn’t trust him. Her response is that she doesn’t trust everyone else on the Internet.

The parent presentation Wednesday evening, which drew more than 100 people, followed the daytime talk by Schofield to educators. That was a bit more graphic in nature.

On Thursday, the sixth-, seventh- and eighth-graders heard much of the same, but a greater emphasis was put on cyber bullying. That was barely touched on with the parents. But it is of great concern to Willie Shamas because his son, who is 13 and 160 pounds, is getting harassed by kids because of his size.

“I bet none of them could say what the golden rule is,” Shamas

told *Lake Tahoe News*. "I'm trying to teach our son respect."

Respect was something Schofield touched on, especially when it comes to sexting. Boys, he said, need to respect girls more and stop asking for explicit pictures. And girls need to respect themselves enough not to provide them. It is illegal to try to obtain what would be deemed pornographic pictures of someone who is younger than 18 – even by someone in the same age group. Naked photos fall under pornography, especially for those under age.

STMS Principal Beth Delacour is trying to bring programs to her school that will show students and parents the dangers that lurk outside the walls of her campus, but can still penetrate them. Students have access to the Internet in classrooms. And while there are firewalls, she is sure some students could penetrate them. Phones are not allowed during school hours. If students are caught with one, it is confiscated and a parent must come retrieve it. She estimates 70 percent of her students have a cell phone.

"We don't have bad kids, just kids who are learning and making mistakes," Delacour said. Schofield and others are trying to limit the damage of those mistakes.

Delacour told *Lake Tahoe News* the problem this year has been more with parents. They just don't believe their child has done what they are being accused of. That in part is why not only are the students getting in on the education, but parents are, too.

Nev. Supreme Court justices running unopposed

By Ana Ley, Las Vegas Sun

Two Supreme Court justices will show up on election ballots across Nevada this fall.

Justices Mark Gibbons and Mary “Kris” Pickering are running unopposed and are virtually guaranteed of winning another six-year term. (Gibbons and Pickering declined to be interviewed for this story.)

Here’s what you should know about these elected positions.

When lawyers appeal rulings from county District Courts, the cases go to the Supreme Court, the state’s highest judiciary.

A panel of seven Supreme Court justices hears a wide range of cases, from death-penalty appeals to driver’s license revocations. Justices serve six-year terms that are stacked to avoid rapid turnover on the bench.

In some states, justices are appointed. But Nevadans want the right to choose. In 2010, voters turned down a ballot measure that would have moved the state to a hybrid appointment-election system.

Read the whole story

Wind issues keep Tahoe

Douglas crews busy



A tree fell Sept. 25 across Elks Point Road in Round Hill. Photo/Provided

Tahoe Douglas fire crews are busy on three events that don't involve fire.

A tree is partially blocking travel on Highway 50. It fell near Warrior Way in Zephyr Cove. Another tree also fell Thursday morning on Elks Club Drive. It is blocking access to Nevada Beach.

Eric Guevin, spokesman for the department, told *Lake Tahoe News* each tree is about 60-feet tall, with a 2-foot diameter at the base. Neither caused any damage.

Winds have been gusty much of this morning. The National Weather Service in Reno has issued a lake wind advisory for Lake Tahoe until 8 tonight. Winds are out of the southwest at 10-20 mph, with gusts up to 35 mph. Waves could be 2- to 4-feet high.

The winds dislodged a pontoon boat from a mooring on the West Shore. Tahoe Douglas fire's boat patrol was en route about 11:30am Sept. 25 to secure it. No one was on board.

Romsos: ‘Fuel operations with renewable energy sources’

Publisher’s note: *Lake Tahoe News asked the two candidates running for District 2 of the South Tahoe Public Utility District board the same questions. The answers are running in the order received by LTN.*



Name: Jeffrey “Shane” Romsos

Profession/work experience: I’m currently a research scientist for Spatial Informatics Group – an environmental think tank specializing in landscape analysis to inform good natural resource policy and management. I was formerly the science, monitoring, and evaluation program manager for Tahoe Regional Planning Agency (total 12 years), and wildlife program manager, and on the Forest Plan Revision Team for U.S. Forest Service – Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit (total 5.5 years).

I hold a bachelor of science in wildlife, and master’s of science in natural resources from Humboldt State University.

Age: 47

What organizations, committees or groups are you or have you been involved with?: Professionally, I was involved the 2012 TRPA Regional Plan update, the 2001, 2006 and 2011 Environmental Threshold Evaluations, the 2000 Lake Tahoe Watershed Assessment, Pathway Planning process, and served as the U.S. Forest Service's alternate representative on the TRPA Advisory Planning Commission. As a volunteer, I've participated in Bijou School Beautification Committee workdays and St. Theresa School fund raising events, and other community events, such as Forest Stewardship days. I'm a 2014 graduate of the South Tahoe Chamber of Commerce's Leadership Lake Tahoe program. I participated in the Lake Tahoe Community College Vision 2020 Forum. I've recently committed to participating on the South Tahoe Economic Development Task Force.

Why are you running for the South Tahoe PUD board?: Personally, I want to be a more active participant in our community. As a STPUD board director, I'd like to explore where and how the district can do more to support prosperity and quality of life in South Lake Tahoe. I'd like to change the district motto from "Silently Serving South Lake Tahoe" to "Doing More to Serve the South Lake Tahoe Community."

Why should people vote for you over the other candidate?: I'll bring new energy and fresh ideas to the board. I'm committed to representing the perspectives of the various district customers and continuing the delivery of affordable, cost-effective and high quality water and wastewater services. I believe the district has tremendous opportunities to utilize its many diverse resources and talented staff for the benefit of our community – I will be a resource for making positive changes.

What do you think is the most pressing issue facing the district and how will you deal with it?: The district has and

always will have a wide range of recurrent issues related to water, wastewater, fire hydrant flows, metering, acquisition of private water utilities, and water reclamation systems – all of these recurring issues are addressed in various management plans and are already the focal-point of the district board and staff. A greater challenge to the board and district's management is to control costs so those costs are not passed on to the customer. To control costs, the district needs to make sure it is spending money on the right projects at the right time. I believe there are many important projects but they do not all need to be done immediately and proper asset management can effectively prolong the life of critical infrastructure, and decrease real costs over time. Also, the district should do more to make its operations more energy efficient and to fuel operations with renewable energy sources. This move would also reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The district could also save customers money by increasing the utilization of existing staff or using local contractors and consultants to do needed work instead of contracting with more expensive off-the-hill consultants that are not necessarily in tune with our community, local regulations, issues and ways of doing business. Spending district money locally will help fuel our local economy. Additionally, I think the District can do more to create and genuinely embrace partnerships with local, regional, state and federal agencies – leveraging resources would reduce costs.

Would you consider merging administrative services with the city of South Lake Tahoe so there would be a reduction in cost to ratepayers? Why or why not?: I think there are a number of jurisdictional boundary, political and legal issues that need to be worked out before a merger could take place. Instead, I believe a more cost-effective solution is for the city and district to enter into and embrace a partnership to get things done. For example, the city and district could share and combine resources. In the winter, the city struggles to keep up with snow removal for example. This is typically when the

district is not as busy due to a decline in construction activities – perhaps staff could be shared. The district has heavy duty vacuum trucks (and other heavy equipment) which often sit idle and could be used to assist the city in cleaning out stormwater treatment facilities – in doing so, the district would be protecting drinking water and Lake Tahoe. The district similarly employs people with technical knowledge of pumping systems – the city could benefit from this know-how for its maintenance and operation of other stormwater facilities (e.g., the Bijou stormwater treatment facility). The district could also do more to support community facilities – many utility districts provide play areas and recreational facilities for their customers (e.g., IVGID and North Tahoe Public Utility District). Why couldn't the district provide play areas for our kids on their lands in South Tahoe or otherwise creatively support the upkeep of existing community recreation amenities? In doing so, the district would be given notoriety for providing our local and visiting customers recreation opportunities that are important to supporting our quality of life and attractiveness as a resort destination.

The district is seen by some as a cog in the wheel for economic development. Recent examples are charging \$50,000 to add a small bathroom to a business and \$500,000 for a Laundromat to move. What are your opinions about the district's fees?: I believe there is an opportunity to review the current hook-up fees in order to better facilitate projects that are needed to improve our community. We need new responsible development which provides for stormwater treatment and other projects which protect the lake – our community needs affordable housing, and to redevelop antiquated and outdated development. It seems reasonable to me that the district take an active role in helping developers and businesses further transform our community into a place we can be proud of by reducing certain fees or finding alternative financing mechanisms associated with water and

sewer hook-ups. Connection fees have been an impediment to community improvement projects including new and improved business developments, residential construction, low-income housing, improvements along Highway 50, greenways, linear parks, Lakeview Commons, and others. Similarly, I believe the district should take the opportunity to review and potentially revise the rate structure for residential units now that metering is being implemented. The current rate schedule is based on the size of pipe entering the property, and with metering, this no longer seems equitable or reasonable to the typical ratepayer. I believe your rates should primarily be based on the water you use, not the size of the pipe at the property line.

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: Having worked at TRPA and the U.S. Forest Service on planning matters for greater than 16 years combined, I've frequently dealt with divergent views. In my experience, it's important to be a good listener and genuinely attempt to understand different viewpoints. And from my perspective, it's also important that each board member apply due diligence in researching issues before coming to any concrete conclusions. From there, I believe common ground can be found to move forward on issues and decisions.

What needs fixing at the district and how would you go about fixing it?: From my perspective, it seems like the district is somewhat fixated on finding ways to be exempted from state and federal policies and regulations designed to improve efficiency, conserve water, or otherwise benefit the environment. That is, it appears the district prefers to do things like they always have. It costs consumers money to hire lawyers and lobbyists to fight such policies and regulations. Rather, I'd like to see the district adopt a more progressive, forward-thinking philosophy and get out in front of such policies and regulations. For example, California has adopted

ambitious greenhouse gas reduction targets that right now do not affect the district's operation, but eventually will. Let's invest in doing those things to make the district a model of sustainability now, instead of spending customers' money on lawyers and lobbyists to fight good policy.

How many board meetings in the last year have you attended?: I have reviewed dozens of board meetings in the past year via the website and attended a handful of meetings in person. I have also toured the district wastewater operations twice.

Do you know what a special district is and how familiar are you with the governance of a special district?: Special districts are a form of local government created to meet a specific need such as providing water and wastewater services. Special districts are accountable to the customers who use their services. The state of California provides oversight over special district operations, and special districts are required to follow state laws pertaining to public meetings, debt management, environmental compliance, record keeping and elections, and must submit annual financial report to the state controller. Professionally, I've worked with STPUD in a planning and regulatory role on various projects, such as the wastewater export line over Luther Pass.

With a constrained budget, how would you prioritize projects involving the delivery of potable water, the collection and treatment of wastewater, and the export and reuse of treated wastewater?: The district maintains five- and an ongoing 10-year priority capital improvement program (CIP) lists and a less specific 20-year CIP list for develops a longer term budget forecast. So in many ways, priorities have been set and are based on established criteria related to age and condition of infrastructure and needs associated with improving fire hydrant flows. As discussed above, I would look at how these projects are prioritized and make sure we are spending money at the right time and in the right place, and develop strategic partnerships with other agencies to maximize the

return on our investment in personnel, equipment, technology, and resources. As a board member, I'd like to prioritize moving the district toward implementing more energy-efficient technologies and retrofitting operations with renewable energy systems to save customers money and to reduce the district's greenhouse gas emissions. There are alternative revenue sources, such as state and federal grants and potentially carbon offsets that could help pay for such upgrades. Today the district spends about a million dollars per year on non-renewable energy to pump wastewater to Alpine County – wouldn't it be great if we could reduce that bill by half through the utilization of renewable energy sources? I'd also like additional focus on the operations of lands in Alpine County. I believe there is incredible opportunity to better utilize recycled wastewater and district owned land to create wetland habitat for wildlife (and natural areas for people) and still provide water to ranchers that are dependent on those waters. Funds to support such a project could come from creating a habitat mitigation bank as well as from selling carbon offsets and charging for the use of recycled water (which is currently given to ranchers at no cost).

In order to reduce water and sewer rates would you be a proponent of a reduced level of service by the district? Why or why not?: According to district financial reports, the district's water and sewer rates are the lowest in the Lake Tahoe basin and track well with the consumer price index. I would not support a reduced level of service in order to reduce rates. The Lake Tahoe environment is too fragile to be frugal – the system needs to be appropriately monitored and maintained to ensure no harm is done to our drinking water and our Lake. The quality of our environment is critical to maintaining our quality of life and economic prosperity.

The district has been criticized for providing a higher compensation package than other entities in Lake Tahoe. Do you believe this package is justified? Why or why not? If not,

what is fair and what will you do to change things?: I believe our community needs more opportunities similar to those provided by the district – good paying jobs attract and retain talented people, and ultimately contribute to a prosperous south shore economy. The district assumes a significant amount of responsibility to manage these systems, to ensure they reliably deliver high quality water and treat wastewater, and do no harm to Lake Tahoe's fragile environment. The district's compensation package is justified considering the high level of skill needed to operate and maintain the complex water and wastewater systems at South Tahoe. As a director, I would support the continued development and promotion of staff, recognizing the value of institutional history. I'd support district wage policies that are based on an individual's skill sets, level of responsibilities and performance, and be against policies that automatically allow for wage increases. The district does pay its employees well and we must demand very high performance in return. As a director, I would set the bar high, and help provide the energy, ideas, contacts, and resources to get it done.

As a board member how would you represent all district customers and not just the small percentage of people who comment or complain to you?: Through my experience in regional planning, research and monitoring, I have a keen familiarity with local issues and people's concerns. I appreciate the diverse nature of our town, the needs of stay-at-home and working parents, their children, people trying to find good work and good homes, the challenges of the contractor, realtor, and other small business owners, young seasonal workers to retirees. I am an involved member of the community and know a diverse group of people through my work, volunteer efforts and family life. I will use the relationships I've created professionally and personally here at South Tahoe to actively ask people how the district is doing and note their responses. Additionally, I believe the district should conduct regular customer satisfaction surveys which include the

opinions of businesses to get a broader sense of how the district is doing. This input should be used to improve the district's services. I also believe the district has a responsibility to more effectively communicate their decisions and activities in order to inspire better public participation at Board meetings and support from customers. I'd support moving the time of board meeting's to later in the day when it is more convenient for customers to participate.

Tell the voters something about yourself that they may not know: I moved to South Lake Tahoe with my family in 1972, and attended Meyers Elementary School. I lived here off and on through middle school, and I permanently settled here in 1997 after finishing my graduate program. I'm married with two children. In my free time, I enjoy spending time with my family and friends, woodworking, playing hockey, and the many recreational opportunities that South Tahoe has to offer. I am fully dedicated to our community and to help it become a better place to raise a family, earn a good living, start and run a profitable business, and enjoy the great outdoors.

5th firefighter hurt in King Fire



Updated 8:35pm:

One of the more than 7,000 firefighters working the King Fire had to be airlifted out of the area on Sept. 24.

KXTV is reporting the inmate firefighter was taken to Sutter Roseville Medical Center with unknown injuries after being hit by a tree limb while working the fire line. This is the fifth person injured in the massive fire burning east of Pollock Pines.

There has been no reported change to the acreage or containment numbers. They stand at 92,960 acres and 38 percent.

People in Swansboro have been allowed to return home.

A system is moving into the region on Thursday which could bring moisture. It will also bring cooler temps and higher humidity – good firefighting conditions.

Squaw Valley has canceled the Sept. 27 Oktoberfest because of the air quality.

Athletes participating in the Sept. 28 Tahoe Bike Classic have voted to stick with that date and gamble that the smoke will not be an issue. A final decision will be made that morning.

Thousands of structures are still at risk. To date, 12 houses have been lost in what is currently the largest wildfire burning in California. The fire was started Sept. 13 by an alleged arsonist. It has been burning east of Pollock Pines in the Eldorado and Tahoe national forests.

On Sept. 23 pilot Gary Dahlen was honored by the U.S. Forest Service for his quick actions to rescue a hand crew and dozer operator that were overrun by fire last week. Dahlen flew to a lower level to direct the hand crew and dozer operator down a road. He and another helicopter pilot landed in an open space and whisked the firefighters to safety.

Otter Creek Elementary School will remain closed until evacuations of the immediate areas are lifted; those students continue to attend classes at Georgetown School.

The Tahoe National Forest has established a call center (530.587.9096) from 7am-7pm at the Truckee Ranger District Office to provide residents of Truckee and Lake Tahoe Basin with information.

There is no fire threat to these areas. Smoke will continue to be a concern, with the impacted areas dependent on wind direction.

The King Fire area closure in effect for the Eldorado National Forest has been revised to remove the statement, "Owners of lessees of land in the area are exempt of this prohibition to the extent necessary to gain access to their land."

Popular sites included in the closure include: the west side of Desolation Wilderness on the Eldorado National Forest, the Crystal Basin area, including areas accessed by Ice House Road, the Wrights Lake area, Hell Hole area, Stumpy Meadows and Dru Barner campground.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Parched Calif. expected to miss out on fall rains

By Veronica Rocha, Los Angeles Times

Northern and Central California typically receive 30 percent to 40 percent of their precipitation over the next three months, but this year, forecasters say the upper two-thirds of the state can expect to miss out on much of that badly needed moisture.

The lack of significant rain will mean little relief for thousands of firefighters battling a series of destructive wildfires in Northern California, although a weather system is expected to bring some showers to the region later this week.

And even if an El Niño weather pattern does develop later this year, it is only expected to deliver below-median rainfall for Northern California, according to U.S. Seasonal Drought Outlook from the National Weather Service's Climate Prediction Center.

Read the whole story