

Nutting: Disclosure problems an 'honest mistake'

By Brad Branan, Sacramento Bee

El Dorado County Supervisor Ray Nutting testified Tuesday that his failure to report state income on economic disclosure reports was an honest mistake and that he never tried to mislead anyone.

The four-term county supervisor appeared by turns confused and emotional as he spent almost all day on the witness stand fielding questions from his attorney in the turn-of-the-century courthouse in Old Placerville.

Nutting faces charges stemming from state fire grants he received for clearing brush from his ranch. Prosecutors allege that he failed to describe that income on his political disclosure forms. They also say his board votes to fund two local fire districts were a conflict of interest and that he illegally borrowed money from county employees to post bail when he was arrested last year.

El Dorado County District Attorney Vern Pierson has called Nutting a "hypocrite" for criticizing government as a fiscally conservative politician while accepting government grants as a citizen.

Nutting, in turn, has accused Pierson and other elected officials of prosecuting him for political reasons.

Read the whole story

Big money, many actors, little oversight of Calif. water

By Tim Reid, Reuters

In the middle of one of the worst droughts in California's history, no one knows exactly how many agencies supply the state with water.

While state regulators supervise three companies that provide gas and electricity for most of California, drinking water is delivered through a vast network of agencies which collectively do billions of dollars of business, setting rates and handing out contracts with scant oversight.

There are so many agencies, in fact, that the California Department of Water Resource, which is responsible for managing and protecting the state's water, concedes that it does not even know the exact number.

"We think the total number is about 3,000 but there is no definitive resting place for those numbers," a department spokesman said.

Some state officials and water experts are calling for change, arguing that the process of providing water should be as clear as the product, especially in the middle of a drought. As one of the nation's agricultural leaders and a trendsetter in environmental regulation, California's actions could be felt beyond its borders.

Wes Strickland, an attorney who specializes in water law, says

most of these water agencies do a good job. Cities and towns like controlling their own resources, and most of the agencies are elected, assuring a level of accountability.

Read the whole story

Missing Amador County man's vehicle found at Pyramid Lake

By Cathy Locke, Sacramento Bee

A car belonging to a missing Amador County man has been found stuck in a creek bed in Nevada.



Warren Alford
Hagyard

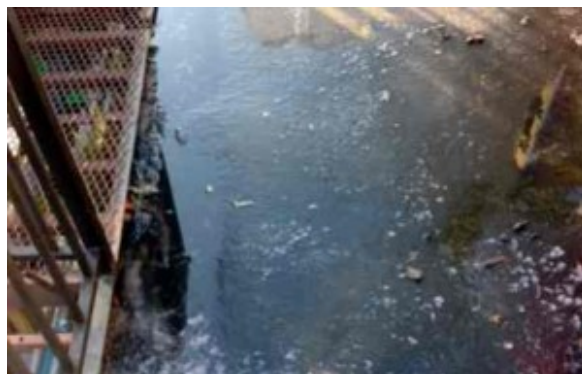
The Washoe County Sheriff's Office has activated its search and rescue team in an effort to locate 79-year-old Warren Alford Hagyard of Pioneer, who has been missing since April 21.

The Amador County Sheriff's Office was contacted May 5 by an individual who had been four-wheeling in the area of Pyramid Lake near Nixon on Saturday. The caller reported that while on a very rough dirt trail about 10 miles from the trail head, he located a blue Honda Civic in a creek bed and said the vehicle

appeared to be stuck on rocks. No one was in the Honda. The windows were rolled down and the car keys were on the seat, according to a sheriff's office news release.

Read the whole story

Fecal matter detected in water near Fresh Ketch



Sewage last weekend went from the Fresh Ketch into Lake Tahoe. Photo/Provided

By Kathryn Reed

Elevated levels of fecal coliform bacteria were found in the water where sewage flowed from the Fresh Ketch restaurant into Lake Tahoe for at least a 24-hour period that ended Saturday night.

Lahontan Regional Water Control Board today released results from water samples taken May 5. The highest measurement was 54 colony forming units (cfu) per 100 milliliters.

Lahontan's standards are 20 cfu per 100 ml and not more than 10 percent of all samples collected in a 30-day period to exceed 40 cfu/100 ml.

Sampling done in July at the marina showed fecal coliform bacteria levels below 20 cfu/100 ml.

Here are the May 5 results from testing at Tahoe Keys Marina	
Site	Colonies/100 ml
6 feet lake-ward of discharge point	29
6 feet lake-ward of discharge point – duplicate	19
6 feet lake-ward of discharge point – average	24
10 feet north of discharge point	22
40 feet north of discharge point	13
100 feet north of discharge point	12
350 feet north of discharge point	54
Lahontan Laboratory Technician: Lisa M. Petrusa	

More testing will be done this afternoon.

The risk of someone becoming ill is slightly elevated, according to Lauri Kemper with Lahontan.

She told *Lake Tahoe News* if people fishing or kayaking in the area get water on themselves that soap and fresh water is enough to wash away any contaminants.

The spill started May 2 when an overflow box behind the South Lake Tahoe restaurant failed. Sewage covered a back walkway

near where the outdoor dining has expanded and then made its way into Lake Tahoe.

An employee at Tahoe Keys Marina said General Manager Robert Spinnato would never speak to *Lake Tahoe News*.

However, just moments after that a marina employee posted this comment on the two previous *LTN* stories regarding the spill, "The spillage was factual [stet] sabotage from a former Key [stet] Marina tenant who has just recently been evicted. Because of his eviction he purposefully stuffed plastic bags down the drain, forcing the pipes to malfunction."

The truth of that statement is likely to come out later as the agencies continue their investigation. No matter what, the marina and restaurant, which are owned by the same people, allowed the sewage to spill into Lake Tahoe for at least 24 hours.

"We are trying to ascertain all the facts and are working with environmental health on corrective action," Kemper told *Lake Tahoe News*.

Besides Lahontan and El Dorado County Environmental Health Department, the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency has also been involved.

"TRPA would want to see that some precautions are taken to avoid an incident like this in the future. In the case of the Tahoe Keys Marina, there is discussion of possibly a lock being added to the pipe," Jeff Cowen, spokesman for the bi-state regulatory agency, told *Lake Tahoe News*.

TRPA violation processes and fines are generally only used when it is the lead agency on a discharge or other matter.

Climate change assessment paints stark picture of potential damage



Barren ground at last week's snow survey near Echo Summit. Photo/LTN

By Neela Banerjee and Kathleen Hennessey, Los Angeles Times

The warming of Earth, with human consumption of fossil fuels as the main cause, will have severe consequences for every region of the United States, according to the Third National Climate Assessment released Tuesday morning by the Obama administration.

Mandated by Congress and published every four years, the report is a science-based resource that is meant to inform public policy and private sector decisions.

The report concludes that extreme weather events influenced by climate change have grown more frequent and intense, including heat waves, drought and severe precipitation. "These and other aspects of climate change are disrupting people's lives and damaging some sectors of our economy," the report said.

Most Americans believe that climate change is happening or will happen in their lifetimes, according to a March Gallup poll. But only one in three sees it as “serious threat” to their way of life, the poll reported.

Read the whole story

Douglas County classified staff to receive 3% raise; teachers going to arbitration

By Kathryn Reed

Contracts with seven of the eight bargaining units within Douglas County School District should be complete after today's special meeting.

The board is meeting at 4:30pm May 6 in Minden to approve a two-year contract with the Douglas County Support Staff Organization. It calls for a 3 percent raise retroactive to July 1. Salaries would remain at that level for the 2014-15 school year.

Completed contracts:

- Bus drivers – 2½ percent raise.
- Classified supervisors – 2½ percent raise.
- Cabinet level administrators – 2½ percent raise.
- Confidential secretaries – 7 percent raise.
- Superintendent – did not seek raise.

- Administrators at the site level – five-year contract that goes through 2016. No salary increase. Four more paid days were added to the contract. Pay could be increased based on performance, which is mandated by the Legislature.

The teachers are the last to settle. And that may not happen until the start of next school year because an arbitrator will settle the dispute between teachers and the district. Arbitration is set for June 16, 17, 18, 23 and 24. It could be a month after that before a decision is made.

Salary is the main sticking point. But it has not been made public how far apart the two sides are.

The district offered fact finding where an independent third party would go over numbers and help resolve the dispute. The district also proposed mediation. The Douglas County Professional Education Association chose to go straight to arbitration from impasse.

Brian Rippet, president of DCPEA, did not respond to questions.

Teachers have not had a raise for more than four years. However, those who have qualified still receive their step and ladder increases. These are automatic bumps in pay based on years of service and education levels.

Superintendent Lisa Noonan told *Lake Tahoe News* she is not allowed to talk specifics about the negotiations.

She said Assistant Superintendent Rich Alexander, CFO Holly Luna and often a principal are the district's representatives at the bargaining table.

In other news:

- The district is not issuing any pink slips this year; mostly because enrollment is stable. There is expected to be at least one teacher retirement at the lake.

- *U.S. News & World Report* ranked Whittell High School as No. 810 for best high school in the U.S. , and No. 2 in the state.
 - Noonan does not anticipate additional personnel resources being brought in at Whittell, despite the seventh- and eighth-grade test scores being lackluster and the principal's request for more help. She questions whether the four-day school day is appropriate for this age group.
 - The board is having another special meeting May 9 at 3pm at Carson Valley Middle School regarding the strategic plan.
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U.S. exporting water to Asia via crops

By Christi Turner, High Country News

Severe drought plagues California, the Colorado River is perilously low, and yet billions of gallons of water are being “virtually exported” via one of the West’s thirstiest crops: alfalfa.

Robert Glennon, author of “Unquenchable: America’s Water Crisis and What to Do About It”, estimates about 50 billion gallons of Western water – enough to supply 500,000 families annually – were sent to China via alfalfa in 2012. China isn’t the world’s biggest hay buyer – land-poor Japan leads, followed by the United Arab Emirates – but its hunger is rapidly growing.

Water also leaves in the form of food exports such as rice, wheat or almonds, but alfalfa stands out as a low-value forage crop, Glennon says. China’s consumption of milk and meat is

skyrocketing, and it can't feed 42 million cattle on its own.

Read the whole story

Chimney fire quickly extinguished

A chimney fire on Highlands Drive on the South Shore was quickly doused by Lake Valley firefighters on Monday afternoon.

The call came in at 4:19pm from a person driving by who saw smoke.

One person was at home. There were no injuries.

An ember landed on the shake roof and did some damage to the roof, but the house is habitable.

A Lake Valley firefighter told *Lake Tahoe News* there was no spark arrester on the chimney and that the roof will likely need to be replaced.

Several units responded to the May 5 fire to ward off the potential spread of the fire. Firefighters are on heightened alert – especially on such a windy day.

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*

Keys' sewage line holds; bacteria samples taken

By Kathryn Reed

Health, water and environmental officials were at the Tahoe Keys Marina today inspecting repairs to the sewage line that failed over the weekend, allowing waste to flow into Lake Tahoe.

Several samples of the water were taken to test for bacteria. Lahontan Regional Water Control Board expects to have those results on Tuesday.

"We took several samples in and around the fuel pump. We did go across the channel by the condo docks to get background samples," Lauri Kemper with Lahontan told *Lake Tahoe News*.

Results will dictate what further action Lahontan would take. It could include the need for more testing in the localized area or expanding the testing area, as well as fines. Lahontan may issue fines up to \$10,000 per day for sewage flowing into Lake Tahoe or \$10/gallon.

Bryan Vyverberg, with El Dorado County Environment Health Department, said the California Office of Emergency Service's report says up to 15 gallons of sewage spilled from Friday to Saturday night from an overflow tank behind the Fresh Ketch restaurant. It ran onto the walkway near where people eat outside behind the restaurant and then into Lake Tahoe.

Officials from his office were out there today with Lahontan and the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency to ensure the plumbing fixes that were made May 3 were holding.

Vyverberg said he still needs to speak with the harbormaster to figure out how the plumbing at the building works.

"We need to verify it is not going to continue," Vyverberg told *Lake Tahoe News*.

Kemper said marina General Manager Robert Spinnato told Lahontan officials May 5 that flushed plastic bags caused the backup. Kemper is waiting for the plumber's report to see what they found.

Steve Sweet, senior environmental specialist with Tahoe Regional Planning Agency, was also at the marina today. He was not available for comment.

Zephyr Cove man who died parking car identified

Updated May 5 1:25pm:

The driver of the vehicle that plunged down an embankment has been identified as Jeffrey Alan Davis, 55, of Zephyr Cove.

The cause of death is blunt force trauma due to a motor vehicle incident.

The incident is still under investigation as to what caused the vehicle to travel through the back of the garage on May 2.

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A resident of Zephyr Heights died Friday morning in a freak accident.

The resident was backing into their garage on Lookout Road when the vehicle went through the back wall. The vehicle

plummeted approximately 80 feet down an embankment before coming to rest against a tree. The driver was pronounced dead at the scene.

The driver's name is being withheld pending notification of next to kin.

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*