

Calif. may look at groundwater regulations

By Paul Rogers, San Jose Mercury News

For nearly 50 years, California has passed sweeping environmental laws that limit private property for the common good – from the nation's toughest automobile pollution standards to curbs on clear-cutting forests to rules requiring that developers keep beaches open to the public.

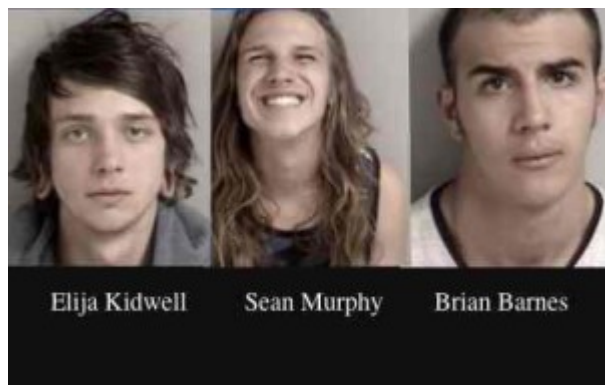
However, when it comes to preserving one of the state's most critical and politically divisive resources – billions of gallons of groundwater that are vital to farms and cities – California lawmakers and voters have done almost nothing.

Now, driven by the historic drought and new pressure from Gov. Jerry Brown, the chances of reform appear better than ever.

Decades of intense pumping have dropped water tables dangerously low in places such as the San Joaquin Valley and Paso Robles. Scientific studies show that the ground is sinking in some places and that aquifers are at risk of running dry.

[Read the whole story](#)

3 men arrested in rash of vehicle thefts



Three people are in custody after allegedly going on a spree to steal vehicles in South Lake Tahoe.

In the 16-hour period between 7pm March 31 and 11am April 1 three vehicles were stolen and several unlocked cars within the city had property stolen from the interiors. In each auto theft case, the vehicle had been left unlocked with the keys inside. Only one of the three stolen vehicles has been recovered.

Three 18-year-olds from Placerville were arrested – Elija Kidwell, Sean Murphy and Brian Barnes – on felony charges of auto theft, possession of stolen property and conspiracy as it relates to at least one of these three auto thefts and to some of the thefts of property from inside unlocked and unattended vehicles.

Officers said the thefts began Monday evening when a white 1991 Jeep Cherokee was stolen from a residence on Bowers Avenue. This vehicle has not been located. At about 10:40 the same night, less than a mile away, a 1991 Subaru Outback was stolen from the parking lot of Inn by the Lake.

On Tuesday about 9am a victim discovered at least three men stealing items out of his unlocked vehicle in front of his house on Lodi Avenue. When he went to investigate the suspects fled in the stolen Subaru Outback. The Subaru abandoned in the parking lot of the Nickelodeon Motel.

The suspects were located at the Grocery Outlet store; where

at least one other victim had already discovered a theft from their unlocked vehicle in the parking lot.

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*

Missing backcountry snowboarder found alive

By Cathy Locke, Sacramento Bee

A snowboarder who went missing Monday night during a snowstorm near Castle Peak was alive and well Tuesday after walking his way out of the backcountry, according to Nevada County Sheriff's Department officials.

Abraham Finkelstein, 25, a Bay Area resident, was backcountry snowboarding with his father on Monday in the Castle Peak area across Interstate 80 from Boreal Mountain Resort.

The pair started hiking up a hill toward Peter Grubb Hut when a storm moved in and the father and son were separated due to cold and snowy conditions, according to the Nevada County Sheriff's Department. The father was able to make it down to the family vehicle around 5pm Monday, but his son did not show up.

Read the whole story

SLT pledges to enforce outdoor display rules

By Kathryn Reed

Crappy outdoor displays are like pornography – you know it when you see it.

No true definition could be given of what a good or bad outdoor display is. That was essentially the conclusion of a workshop and online survey that South Lake Tahoe officials put together, as well as the consensus of council members on April 1.

At the workshop and online people were shown a variety of pictures – not from South Lake Tahoe – of outdoor displays. People leaned toward liking smaller, neater displays. However, larger displays of produce, tires and outdoor gear received positive feedback, too.



Anderson's bike rentals has a special use permit for its display of two-wheelers.

Photo/LTN file

But parameters must be drawn so there is a level playing field and the decision-making is less subjective. Plus, this allows officials to enforce the rules.

Solidifying outdoor display policy was one of the main items on Tuesday's South Lake Tahoe City Council meeting. However, as much as this has been a controversial issue in the past, only one member of the public was in the audience when this item was discussed.

As Hilary Roverud, director of development services, said, it's about balancing the needs of businesses trying to attract customers and the overall aesthetics of the city so people will want to come back and not think the town is junky.

"The majority of displays you see today are not consistent with city and TRPA code," Roverud told the council.

TRPA doesn't do any enforcement, while the city is sporadic with its enforcement.

The city is getting away from a tattletale type of enforcement and moving toward a more proactive approach. If code enforcement officers see a violation, they have the power to issue a warning immediately. If the infraction continues beyond two weeks, a citation may be issued.

The council unanimously adopted staff's four recommendations:

- Continue to allow short-term, temporary outdoor displays through a temporary activity permit;
- Continue to allow 16-square-feet of adornments at entrances as long as they don't interfere with pedestrian accessibility;
- Work with the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency to add types of recreational items allowed in larger displays;
- Make code enforcement a priority.

Roverud and Mayor Hal Cole, who is on the TRPA board, plan to meet with officials from the bi-state regulatory agency about the displays. TRPA rules don't allow for standup paddleboards

under the outdoor amusement category for displays. Bikes, skates and mopeds are allowed.

In other action:

- The council wants to revisit when sandwich board signs are allowed.
 - The May 6 meeting was canceled because there will be renovations to council chambers to accommodate upgrades to the audio-visual room.
 - Police Chief Brian Uhler will be looking at possibly creating motorcycle parking in select areas.
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Storms great for skiers, only a drop in the bucket for California drought relief

By Kathryn Reed

While skiers flocked to enjoy the 16 inches of fresh snow that fell overnight at Sierra-at-Tahoe, state water officials could only shake their heads.

These late storms are good, but nowhere good enough to pull California out of what is now a three-year drought. What these storms are good for is salvaging a mediocre ski season, helping replenish the groundwater tables and warding off what is still bound to be an early fire season. The moisture also means this won't go down as the driest year in the state's history, but it could still be in the top five.

Statewide, the snowpack is 32 percent of normal. At the base of Sierra it's slightly worse at 29 percent. That reading April 1 near Echo Summit showed a snow depth of 33.7 inches and water content at 8.1 inches.



Caltrans was out March 31 laying down a solution on Highway 50 before the storm arrived. Photo/LTN

What is alarming is that Tuesday's measurement is considered the most significant of the year because the bulk of the snow for the season should have fallen. From here forward it should be more about melting than accumulating.

Gov. Jerry Brown called a state of emergency earlier this year. Many cities are rationing water. Reservoirs look like it's mid-summer or worse.

"We're already seeing farmland fallowed and cities scrambling for water supplies," Mark Cowin, director of the Department of Water Resources, said in a statement. "We can hope that conditions improve, but time is running out and conservation is the only tool we have against nature's whim."

It's the snowpack in the Sierra that feeds the reservoirs downstream. They in turn provide a significant portion of the states' drinking and irrigation water.

Lake Oroville in Butte County is at 49 percent capacity, when

normally this time of year it is at 64 percent. Shasta Lake north of Redding is at 48 percent of capacity and should be at 60 percent.

Growing number of Calif. kids not vaccinated

By Phillip Reese, Sacramento Bee

More than 16,000 California children entered kindergarten this school year without vaccinations because of their parents' personal beliefs, up 15 percent from the prior year and more than double the number from six years ago, according to figures from the California Department of Public Health.

The numbers were released as California battles an outbreak of measles – a disease mostly eradicated in California following decades of mass vaccination – involving almost 50 people. Medical experts say waning vaccination rates are one cause of the outbreak.

Many of those personally opposed to vaccinations contend they do more harm than good. The Canary Party, a prominent group that advocates letting parents choose whether to vaccinate their children, states on its website that “dozens of published research papers show that YES, vaccines and autism are linked.”

Read the whole story

Horizon to be resurrected as Park Tahoe

By Kathryn Reed

The Horizon is officially gone. The doors were shuttered Monday. Signs were taken down last week.

Now begins more than \$40 million in renovations that is expected to transform the Stateline property into a viable business.

Brothers Jon and David Park hope their renamed Park Tahoe Casino Resort will reopen in the summer.

This isn't the first time there has been a Park Tahoe on the South Shore. What is now MontBleu was Park Tahoe when it first opened in the late 1970s. Within a month Tahoe Douglas firefighters closed it down. It wasn't long before it reopened as Caesars Tahoe.

The new Park Tahoe is across the street, but still involves the same Park family. In a family split of assets last year the brothers now have control of the dilapidated former Horizon.

Rooms will be remodeled, restaurants and bars upgraded and added, and the gaming area revamped.

Outside improvements include changes to the façade and making a more friendly area for pedestrians.

Food and drinks will be available outside near fire pits. The pool will be redesigned to have a resort feel, along with cabanas.

Warner Hospitality out of Las Vegas will be managing the property. It is going to be recreated in a Hard Rock theme.

There is a Hard Rock Café at Harveys, however the cafes and casinos are separate companies. The rewards programs for each are not compatible and they do not work together. The café is a concessionaire of the casino.

South Shore fireworks shows to continue

By Kathryn Reed

It's settled – there will be fireworks on the South Shore of Lake Tahoe this summer.

After a daylong session of hashing out their differences Monday, both sides agreed to a variety of concessions that will allow for the Lake Tahoe Visitors Authority to remain in the fireworks business and for the Truxlers, who brought the lawsuit, to possibly not have to deal with debris on their beach in the future.

“We are thrilled. We never wanted the fireworks show to go away,” Joan Truxler told *Lake Tahoe News*. “I feel that we have gotten a wonderful amount of awareness to what Joe and I ever wanted, which was to keep the health of Lake Tahoe.”

The Truxlers last year brought a lawsuit against LTVA and Pyro Spectacular after debris kept washing up on Pinewild Beach in Marla Bay. The suit sought penalties through the Clean Water Act that could have topped \$70 million.

Last week at an emergency meeting the LTVA board voted that if a resolution could not be found this week, it would cancel the fireworks shows as well as get out the events business

altogether.

Now that won't happen.

The shows will go on.

"The parties are pleased that a settlement to dismiss the lawsuit was reached that will allow the Fourth of July and Labor Day shows to continue with increased local agency oversight of the post-show cleanup of fireworks debris and a hot line for residents to contact if they see fireworks debris from the shows that needs to be cleaned up," Carol Chaplin, head of LTVA, said in a statement.

Tahoe Douglas Fire Protection District will be the lead permitting agency. This also means the barge where the fireworks are shot off from will be moved into Nevada. It has been inching that way through the years.

"Something we have been working on since the last Fourth of July with [Tahoe Regional Planning Agency] and LTVA is to develop a best management for fireworks," Eric Guevin, Tahoe Douglas fire marshal, told *Lake Tahoe News*. "We have come up with a plan and will include that as part of the permit process and we can enforce it under fire safety laws. A component of it is cleanup."

Tahoe Douglas will use its personal watercraft to assist with cleanup. Without a propeller on the devices, they can get closer to rocks to get any material that escaped the immediate discharge area.

The fire agency has long been involved in fireworks permitting, including shows at Edgewood Tahoe, Glenbrook and private parties.

Piper: 'Attract businesses that have higher paying jobs'



Teresa Piper

Publisher's note: *Lake Tahoe News asked the six El Dorado County 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 they were received by LTN. One candidate chose not to answer the questions.*

Name: Teresa Piper

Age: 51

Occupation: Customer service and accounting

Education: Majored in business and accounting, Los Rios Community College campuses

What elected, civic, nonprofit boards or groups are or have you been affiliated with and in what capacity?: President/recreation director for Gold Ridge Forest Homeowners Association; treasurer for El Dorado Nordic Ski Patrol; president of the El Dorado County Republican Woman Federated; and member of Golden State United Food and Commercial Workers 8.

Traffic is horrible on Fridays and Sundays throughout the

county. Will you commit to not voting for any big subdivisions unless there is a plan to widen Highway 50? Why or why not?:

U.S. Highway 50 is maintained by Caltrans. This is not in the El Dorado County supervisors' control to commit to widening Highway 50 or any modification for that matter. Since the community of Placerville supported the current configuration of Highway 50's realignment versus a cut and cover option, the bottlenecks at the three traffic signals are unavoidable. The 20-year plan to correct the seasonal bottleneck in the Camino area needs to be implemented not just for traffic flow but to save lives. The special interests that have been in the way need to be exposed and let this plan progress. I believe we are still the only county that provides a fee per unit at development for traffic mitigation. As a county supervisor, I would vote on any development and project that has been approved by the Planning and Development Department, passed by the Planning Commission, and has met all requirements and complies with the General Plan.

What is your opinion on a proposed November initiative to control growth?: I am personally in favor of the petitions that are designed to keep our zoning in alignment with the land use designations of the county's General Plan and protect the county's resources, fix community regional lines.

What are your thoughts of making Lake Tahoe its own county?: Lake Tahoe struggles to maintain itself as a city let alone trying to take on the unincorporated areas and eliminate the support services from the county.

What entities would you not take money from?: I would not accept money from any entity or individual that expects something in return.

What would you do to boost the economy?: Attract businesses to relocate here that have higher paying jobs. We don't need fast food or any more minimum wage. We need more businesses like an Internet based business or a Blue Shield Campus. There are

companies looking to relocate out of the Bay Area and Silicon Valley due to extremely high overhead and housing costs.

What is the No. 1 issue facing District 5 and how do you propose to resolve it?: The biggest issue for the whole county is the economy, with it being most evident in District 5 since this district relies so heavily on the tourist dollar. When the economy shrinks, the entertainment dollar becomes the least significant in the family budget. We need District 5 to begin supporting itself on the local economy, (as I stated in answer 10) with better paying jobs. Then there would be more residents to build the tax base, and our tourism dollars can become a bonus in good times.

Supervisors meet only once a year in Lake Tahoe. Do you believe this is fair representation? Why or why not?: I would work hard to have the BOS meet in Lake Tahoe two or three times during the good weather months. Right now, most Tahoe residents have no way to participate in BOS meetings, planning meetings, etc. Lake Tahoe has become marginalized.

Would you have voted for Red Hawk to be built and to divert Caltrans funds for interchanges? Those decisions are still negatively affecting the South Shore. Is there anything you would do to change the status quo?: Lake Tahoe casino traffic was failing badly at Lake Tahoe before Red Hawk was built. Online gambling has to be a big part of that. People don't even have to leave home to gamble. Las Vegas has managed fairly well with a bad economy by strongly emphasizing family activities and resorts. Look at the big Embassy Suites complex right below Harrah's. They are packed all the time due to family-friendly food and activities.

Would you support having more tax dollars from the county coming to the South Shore? Currently, more dollars leave the basin than come back.: As long as there is a gambling area, you will have a lot of transient and low wage workers who take more from the infrastructure than they contribute. Sports of

various kinds could be pushed really hard, especially in the Meyers area – cross country skiing, X-Treme sports, ice skating, indoor training facilities and things like Squaw Valley only on a smaller scale. Attract families and sportsmen who have money to spend on more pricey sports. How about more charity golf tournaments and sports challenges? Initially, more dollars would have to come from other parts of the county, but I think with proper marketing the return on investment would be reasonably quick.

The county and city of South Lake Tahoe have a long history of not getting along. How would you propose to improve the relationship?: Communication is always the key to any relationships success.

What is your vision for Meyers and how will you make it a reality?: Make Meyers the center of very varied sporting opportunities. Push it as a destination in itself. It doesn't seem to have much of an identity outside the area and needs some good marketing as a "getaway" that isn't too expensive for the sports-minded family. Meyers could also be the center of small manufacturing businesses that are related to sports. Craftsmen employees would be at a wage level where they could afford nice housing and not be an even bigger draw on services. What Meyers doesn't need is to pay \$20,000 in consulting fees.

Why should someone vote for you over someone else?: I am the candidate with a plan and passion to implement the plan. I will not just be the third vote. I have a home in Tahoe as well as Pollock Pines and I am deeply invested in both communities.

How do you expect to work with the current board, in particular with Supervisor Ray Nutting since you have accused him of threatening you?: I will work with the whole board in a respectful and professional manner.

What do you do for fun?: I participate and enjoy all of the outdoor activities that my district offers.

Tell us something about yourself that people might not know: In 2008, I worked with the local committee in Pollock Pines where residents and business owners defeated the proposed homeless shelter. We didn't defeat the shelter just because it was going to be in our backyard. The grant proposal, which I read, benefited the landowner and did nothing to solve the county's homeless problem. After five years, the landowner could evict the shelter and benefit from the millions of dollars in improvements with no pay back. This is one example of getting involved and working to better my community. I am committed to making District 5 be all that it can be.

Snowboarder missing in backcountry near Castle Peak

By KCRA-TV

Rescue crews are searching for a 25-year-old snowboarder who was riding in the backcountry Monday afternoon when he vanished.

The man might have gotten disoriented in the snowstorm, officials said.

Search teams are looking for the snowboarder in the Castle Peak area, across Interstate 80 from Boreal Mountain Resort, according to the Nevada County Sheriff's Department.

Read the whole story