

BPA-free plastic doesn't mean it's safe

By Mariah Blake, Mother Jones

Each night at dinnertime, a familiar ritual played out in Michael Green's home: He'd slide a stainless steel sippy cup across the table to his 2-year-old daughter, Juliette, and she'd howl for the pink plastic one. Often, Green gave in. But he had a nagging feeling. As an environmental-health advocate, he had fought to rid sippy cups and baby bottles of the common plastic additive bisphenol A (BPA), which mimics the hormone estrogen and has been linked to a long list of serious health problems. Juliette's sippy cup was made from a new generation of BPA-free plastics, but Green, who runs the Oakland-based Center for Environmental Health, had come across research suggesting some of these contained synthetic estrogens, too.

He pondered these findings as the center prepared for its anniversary celebration in October 2011. That evening, Green, a slight man with scruffy blond hair and pale-blue eyes, took the stage and set Juliette's sippy cups on the podium. He recounted their nightly standoffs.

"When she wins ... every time I worry about what are the health impacts of the chemicals leaching out of that sippy cup," he said, before listing some of the problems linked to those chemicals—cancer, diabetes, obesity. To help solve the riddle, he said, his organization planned to test BPA-free sippy cups for estrogenlike chemicals.

The center shipped Juliette's plastic cup, along with 17 others purchased from Target, Walmart, and Babies R Us, to CertiChem, a lab in Austin, Texas. More than a quarter — including Juliette's — came back positive for estrogenic activity. These results mirrored the lab's findings in its

broader National Institutes of Health-funded research on BPA-free plastics.

Read the whole story

LTCC board concerned about SnowGlobe field

Before the Lake Tahoe Community College board of trustees agrees to allow SnowGlobe to return for a year or even three, worries about the field need to be put to rest.

The board at its meeting this week talked about the possibility of having the music festival return. With the college having a men and women's soccer programs starting in the fall, the need to keep the field playable has taken on a greater urgency.

College President Kindred Murillo and South Lake Tahoe City Manager Nancy Kerry will be meeting next week to talk about the field. Then a presentation will be made to the college board at either the March 25 or April 8 meeting. The board would likely take action at the next meeting following the presentation.

The City Council earlier this month agreed to a three-year deal for the three-day music festival to return in late December. It has been at the community ball field for the last three years.

"There have been so many things said about the impact of SnowGlobe on our field. (The board) really wants to be clear," Murillo told *Lake Tahoe News*. "The most recent articles and

comments from the city are that snowload is what wears the field down faster and SnowGlobe doesn't have that big of an impact."

The board also wants to make sure the city has money in the bank to replace the field when that is needed in the next few years.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Advocates pitch legalized pot to Congress

By Holly Yeager, Washington Post

The delegation from the National Cannabis Industry Association made a point of dressing well for its day on Capitol Hill, sporting mostly dark suits, lots of ties and plenty of the group's signature lapel pins, which feature a sun rising over vibrant fields of marijuana.

Marijuana advocates have come to lobby Washington before, often to argue for more lenient treatment under federal law. But on Thursday, buoyed by a flurry of state decisions that have expanded the legal use of marijuana, the cannabis crowd came less as social activists than as entrepreneurs, asking Congress to remove some of the obstacles that stand in the way of their fledgling businesses.

They met with staff members to ask for changes to the tax code, which prohibits the businesses from taking standard deductions for expenses. And they huddled in congressional offices to make the case for other changes that would

encourage banks to work with legal cannabis businesses.

Read the whole story

Douglas County primary ballot solidified

The lineup is set for the June 10 Douglas County primary, with Friday being the deadline to file.

Many of the races are not contested, including the District 4 commissioner seat held by Nancy McDermid.

Steven Thaler is the lone candidate for the District 2 commissioner seat. Lee Bonner currently has that seat.

One of the biggest races is for sheriff, where incumbent Ron Pierini faces two challengers for the first time in years. David Brady and Michael Gyll want his badge.

There will be a change on the Douglas County School District board because Sharla Hales is not running again. Robbe Lehmann is the lone person to run for that seat. Also unchallenged are incumbents Tom Moore and Ross Chichester.

Other uncontested races include:

- Assessor – Doug Sonnemann
- Clerk-treasurer – Ted Thran
- Constable East Fork Township – Paul Gilbert
- District attorney – Mark Jackson

- Public administrator – Claudette Springmeyer
- Recorder – Karen Ellison
- 9th Judicial District Department 1 – Nathan Young
- 9th Judicial District Department 2 – Michael Gibbons
- Town of Genoa – Greg Pace
- Logan Greek GID – David Moore.

Contested races include:

- Town of Gardnerville – Cassandra Jones, Ken Miller, Annette Philips, Linda Slater
- Town of Minden – Matt Bernard, Charles Condrón, Roxanne Stangle
- Cave Rock Estates GID – Don Blackard, Colin Dawson, Marge Hauge, Grant Thompson
- East Fork Swimming Pool District – Dave Ellison, Thomas Ingham, Michael McCormick, Greg Taylor
- Gardnerville Ranchos GID – Jeff James, Shari James, Brad Newlon, Leann Teter
- Indian Hills GID – Bill Eisele, Brian Patrick, Denise Pierini
- Kingsbury GID – Ooli Haskings, Bill Kirschner, Dan Norman, Craig Schorr, Darya Vogt
- Lakeridge GID – Suzanne Boyer, Andy Huckbody, Mel Laub, John Terry
- Marla Bay GID – Donna Hawksford, Carol McQuirk, John McQuirk
- Minden-Gardnerville Sanitation District – Mark Dudley, Mike King, Raymond Wilson

- Mosquito Abatement District – Rex Clearly, Kelly Nalder, Steve Walker
- Round Hill GID – Charles Fagen, Keith Fertala, Steve Seibel
- Skyland GID – Richard Boudreau, Barbara Klein, Connie Robertson
- Tahoe-Douglas Fire Protection District – Bill Kirschner, Kevin Kjer, Darya Vogt
- Tahoe-Douglas Sewer District – Mike Riley, Grant Thompson
- Topaz Ranch Estates GID – Mark Bradshaw, Ole Chave, Wendy Francis, Philip Miller, Steven Nielsen
- Zephyr Cove GID – Richard Johnson, Gary Richert, Patrick Riley
- Zephyr Heights GID – Ronald Brandow, Diane Imbach, Russell Irwin, Rondi Lambeth.

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*

Report: Taxes, fees needed to close Calif. water funding gap

By Jeremy B. White, Sacramento Bee

California will need to find billions of dollars annually to improve its water system, according to a Public Policy Institute of California report.

Lawmakers are currently debating several water bond proposals for the 2014 ballot, but the report cautions that the state cannot rely on uncertain bond money to improve water management. It advocates a “broader mix of funding sources” that includes new taxes and fees.

“Although this is a fixable problem,” the report says, “it will not happen without a bold, concerted effort on the part of California’s state and local leaders, who must convince California’s residents to support the necessary changes with their votes and their pocketbooks.”

Read the whole story

Phone records reveal more than you think

By Patricia Yollin, KQED-TV

In November, two computer science graduate students at Stanford University began a study of phone metadata privacy. They figured that this kind of information could be extremely sensitive, but they didn’t expect to find much evidence one way or the other.

They were wrong.

The two grad students identified the participants’ contacts by matching phone numbers against Yelp and Google Place directories to see who was receiving calls. The participants contacted 33,688 unique numbers. Of those, 18 percent – or 6,107 – were identified.

The computer scientists analyzed individual calls to numbers

that could be deemed sensitive – anything a person might not want to be public, such as political or religious affiliation, health status, gun ownership or finances. They created 11 sensitive categories in the study, and then they analyzed patterns of calls.

Read the whole story

AG backs reduced sentence for some drug offenders

By Scott Neuman, NPR

Attorney General Eric Holder is backing a proposal to shorten sentences for nonviolent drug dealers in an effort reduce federal spending on prisons.

Holder appeared before the United States Sentencing Commission on Thursday to announce his support of the panel's recommendations to trim federal guidelines for sentencing of drug traffickers to 51 months from 62 months.

"This overreliance on incarceration is not just financially unsustainable, it comes with human and moral costs that are impossible to calculate," Holder said, adding that the harshest penalties should be reserved for "dangerous and violent drug traffickers."

Read the whole story

Nevada ranchers taking on NDOW

By Will Stone, NPR

When the Nevada Department of Wildlife gave its comments on sage grouse, Ron Torell says the agency threw the livestock industry under the bus.

“We had to get their attention somehow. This did it.”

Torell is president of the Nevada Cattlemen’s Association and says NDOW’s stance on sage grouse could spell the demise for family ranches across the state. That includes the department’s support of a Bureau of Land Management plan for dealing with the possible listing of the bird as endangered. He says they handpick data and ignore the reality on the ground.

[Read the whole story](#)

Californians relying less on personal vehicles

Californians are walking, biking, or using public transportation twice as much as they did in 2000.

Nearly 23 percent of household trips were taken by walking, biking, and public transportation. In 2000, that share was

only 11 percent, according to the California Household Travel Survey.

“Based on this research, we can make good decisions about transportation that will improve mobility, air quality, and travel choices for all Californians and make our state a better place to live and work,” Caltrans Director Malcolm Dougherty said in a statement.

The 2012 study provides a snapshot of the travel behavior of approximately 109,000 people from more than 42,000 households in 58 California counties. This included parents driving to work or kids biking to school.

The average number of trips for a household was 9.2, while the average number of trips per person was 3.6.

Last year, legislation was approved creating California’s \$129 million Active Transportation Program, which distributes funding for human-powered transportation projects and programs to increase the proportion of trips accomplished by biking and walking.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Overhaul of Kingsbury Grade likely to create traffic nightmare throughout the summer

By Kathryn Reed

Construction this summer on Kingsbury Grade is going to require patience from drivers, businesses and residents. Expect the roadway to be torn up until just before July 4, 2015.

If the weather holds, the work could begin before May 1.

This stretch of road that connects Lake Tahoe to the Carson Valley has been worked on since 2009. That was a water quality project, while this is more about the road surface and making other improvements.

“Ultimately, the contractor did not complete all of the contracted work. The current project will construct improvements to realize the final goals and objectives of the earlier project as well as reconstruct the roadway pavement and make safety improvements,” Meg Ragonese, with the Nevada Department of Transportation, told *Lake Tahoe News*.



The sun is setting on Kingsbury Grade being an easy commute. Photo/Kathryn Reed

Last year NDOT told *LTN* this project would cost \$7.5 million. Now the price tag is \$14,877,619. Bonds, state funds and federal dollars are financing it. Q&D Construction out of Reno is the contractor.

“The goal is to take the opportunity to incorporate as many

needed road enhancements as possible into this project. The project team conducted detailed analysis of the pavement design and constructability and identified issues that were not anticipated in the initial scope of this project," Ragonese said.

Additions from the original plans include:

- Subsurface water mitigation of natural springs located directly beneath the pavement at three locations along Kingsbury Grade.
- Improving poor sight distance at Tramway Drive. A left turn lane and advance warning flashing lights will be placed at Tramway alerting drivers that there is vehicle movement at this intersection.
- Luminaries will be placed at the existing crosswalks to enhance pedestrian visibility.
- Sidewalk and ramps will be improved to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act.

At the end drivers will be left with what will essentially be a brand new road that will be constructed to a depth of 13 inches. This should last 20 years. However, it's possible that repaving could be needed in 10 to 15 years. That is largely dependent on the weather. The freeze-thaw cycle at Tahoe is extremely detrimental to roads.

Here is the current work schedule:

- May: Roadway reconstruction from Pine Ridge to Katherine and drainage improvements from Pine Ridge to Buchanan.

Work will be around the clock Monday-Saturday.

Kingsbury Grade will be closed to through traffic near the summit, just east of Tramway Drive. Residences and businesses located on Kingsbury Grade between the closure and Highway 50

will only be accessible by Highway 50 at Tahoe.

- June-August: Roadway reconstruction from Highway 50 to Pine Ridge and drainage improvements from Buchanan to the summit.

Work will be nights only Monday-Friday.

One lane will be closed from Pine Ridge Drive to Highway 50 every day, every hour. This will still leave one lane of traffic open in each direction with no flagger controls.

Flagger controls with one-way alternating traffic only during night shifts.

Road will be open with one lane in each direction for days, weekends, and holidays.

- September-October: Roadway reconstruction from Katherine to Buchanan and drainage improvements from Pine Ridge to Buchanan.

Work will be 24 hours per day, Monday-Saturday.

- Following the Labor Day holiday: Kingsbury Grade will be closed to through traffic near the summit, just east of Tramway Drive. Residences and businesses located on Kingsbury Grade between the closure and Highway 50 will only be accessible by Highway 50.

- May 2015: Roadway reconstruction from Buchanan to the Summit. Work will be 24 hours per day Monday-Saturday. One lane will be closed with flagger controls during this period.

"The amount of traffic will dictate how long the delays will be. The anticipated maximum delays before Memorial Day and after Labor Day are 30 minutes," Ragonese said. "The anticipated delays during the nighttime work between Memorial Day and Labor Day are 30 minutes. During the day between Memorial Day and Labor Day, there will be one lane of traffic open in each direction with no flagger controls."

NDOT says between 9,000 and 14,000 vehicles a day on average pass through the intersection of Highway 50 and Kingsbury Grade. This compares to the 4,300 vehicles on the Grade at Foothill Road. At Daggett Summit the average is 10,000 vehicles a day.

People will have access to businesses and residences the entire time. It just might take a while to get anywhere, though.

Ridge Tahoe officials did not return multiple calls, so it's not known what they plan to do for their guests. The Ridge is at the very top of Kingsbury Grade. South Lake Tahoe and Douglas County officials said they are working with NDOT and others to help alleviate problems.

"The intersection of U.S. 50 and Kingsbury Grade will be monitored and flaggers will be utilized throughout the project to better handle and direct traffic. If backups on U.S. 50 persist, the group will reconvene and work together until a solution is found," Ragonese said.

NDOT is recommending people use Highway 50 – Spooner Summit – as an alternative to Kingsbury Grade.

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Notes:

- Go online to sign up for email updates on the project.
- March 19 is the first Kingsbury Grade Pavement Reconstruction Project public information meeting. It's at the Ridge Tahoe, 400 Ridge Club Drive, Stateline. March 20 there is a meeting at Douglas High School, 1670 Highway 88, Minden. Both meetings will provide the same information and will be in an open format from 4-7pm. A project presentation will be given at 5:30pm.
- Comments may be made until April 4 to info@dot.state.nv.us.

- Lake Tahoe South Shore Chamber of Commerce is taking a survey to collect information on how many people would utilize a commuter bus if available.