

Drought could lead to record wildfire season

By Mark Koba, CNBC

Three years of severe drought have made plenty of misery for California and other Western states. Now to make matters worse, the extremely dry conditions are creating the potential for a devastating fire season.

“All the pieces are in place for a really bad season of wildfires,” said Malcolm North, a research ecologist with the U.S. Forest Service. “We’re likely to set a record for fires this year.”

The drought has hit hard in states like Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Texas and especially California, where the snowpack in the Sierra Nevada is at 12 percent of the annual average. Snowpack in the Cascades in Washington and Oregon is also below normal.

That has dried out the trees, shrubs and grasses that end up fueling the fires.

[Read the whole story](#)

Placerville officials crack down on illegal camps

By Cathy Locke, Sacramento Bee

In what Placerville police characterized as an outreach

operation, officers accompanied by mental health and community resource representatives removed 14 illegal camps throughout the city.

The Wednesday morning operation focused on known areas of illegal camping and resulted in the removal of camps along Broadway, Placerville Drive, Ray Lawyer Drive and along the El Dorado Trail from Mosquito Road to Schnell School, according to a Police Department news release.

After weeks of extra patrols during which officers advised illegal campers of the need to comply with state and local laws, police and city crews partnered with mental health representatives and members of the Community Resource Center, and returned to the areas frequented by campers. The purpose of the operation, officials said, was to remove illegal camps and to connect those individuals in crisis and wanting help with available services.

Read the whole story

CHP, NHP unable to stop speeding vehicle

Saturday at 8:42am Nevada Highway Patrol troopers were called to stop a vehicle driving at a high speeds from Mono County.

After a routine traffic stop Feb. 22, Mono County officers were interviewing the driver outside his 2013 Hyundai Sonata, with California plates 6VRP791. Passenger Geoffry Guess, 26, from Idaho got into the driver's seat and sped off. Guess entered Nevada going more than 100 mph. Attempts to stop the vehicle were unsuccessful.

The vehicle was last seen northbound on Interstate 580 north of Bowers Mansion.

Guess is known to resist police officers and is considered to be armed and dangerous.

Anyone who may have seen this vehicle, or who has information, should call (775) 687.0400.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Nev. slot players able to use prepaid cards

By Richard N. Velotta, Las Vegas Sun

Gamblers will soon be able to use prepaid access cards to play slot machines in Nevada, a technological advancement that has some critics concerned that easier access to cash in a casino would broaden problem gambling.

The Nevada Gaming Commission on Thursday approved amendments to two regulations that would allow the use of prepaid access instruments in conjunction with approved wagering accounts.

The amendments take effect immediately, and technical standards will be published soon to guide companies. The amended regulations enable state Gaming Control Board Chairman A.G. Burnett to administratively approve the use of equipment.

Read the whole story

No easy fix for Calif. teacher pension crisis

By Chris Megerian, Los Angeles Times

WEST SACRAMENTO – When the glass-sheathed headquarters of the California teachers' pension fund opened five years ago, it was supposed to help anchor developments along the blighted riverfront on the capital's outskirts.

But as Jack Ehnes, the fund's chief executive, looked out from a top-floor conference room on a recent afternoon, he could see patches of empty land where nothing had been built.

Construction plans, he said, took a huge blow from the recession.

The same could be said of the California State Teachers' Retirement System, or CalSTRS, which Ehnes has run for more than a decade. Today, the pension fund is one of the biggest financial problems in a state with more than its share of money woes.

[Read the whole story](#)

S. Tahoe library measure on

June 3 ballot

Measure L on the June 3 ballot will ask voters on the California side of the South Shore if they want to continue funding the local county library.

There is already an assessment on property taxes. This would continue the \$20 annual fee for another 12 years starting in 2015-16 so there is no interruption in services. An inflation adjustment not to exceed 3 percent is also part of the measure.

The money the county supplies to the library does not cover all of its costs.

On top of this tax the Friends of the Library is a nonprofit that raises money to put on special programs at the South Lake Tahoe facility.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

\$687 mil. drought relief proposal for Calif.

By Laurel Rosenhall, Sacramento Bee

Gov. Jerry Brown and legislative leaders on Wednesday unveiled a proposal to spend roughly \$687 million to alleviate the impacts of California's drought, including efforts to clean and recycle water, improve conservation, capture rain, and give emergency food and housing assistance to farmworkers who will be out of work because their fields are fallow.

“The best way to make our communities more resilient to drought is to invest in projects that get the most out of every drop of water,” said Senate leader Darrell Steinberg, who joined the governor and Assembly Speaker John A. Pérez in announcing the plan at the state’s Office of Emergency Services at Mather Field.

Money for the proposal would largely come from water and flood-prevention bonds voters approved in 2006, which means lawmakers don’t have to wait for the annual budget process to approve spending the money. Steinberg and Pérez said they thought the legislation could go through in the next couple of weeks.

Read the whole story

Fallen Leaf Lake fire tax up for a vote

Fallen Leaf Lake voters will be asked on June 3 to vote on a special fire tax.

The small South Shore enclave is not generating enough money to support its volunteer fire department.

The tax would not exceed \$660 per unit each year. However, the amount would rise based on inflation.

The annual appropriations limit would be extended for four years.

It will be called Measure A.

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*

Study: Warm weather brings more crime

By Louis Sahagun, Los Angeles Times

A study broadens a notion held by the earliest criminologists: Periods of higher temperatures – on an hour-by-hour or week-to-week basis – are likely to produce more crime.

The study by Matthew Ranson of Abt Associates, a research and consulting firm in Cambridge, Mass., suggests global warming will trigger more crimes including murders and rapes over the next century, with social costs estimated to run as high as \$115 billion.

Between 2010 and 2099, climate change can be expected to cause an additional 22,000 murders, 180,000 cases of rape, 1.2 million aggravated assaults, 2.3 million simple assaults, 260,000 robberies, 1.3 million burglaries, 2.2 million cases of larceny and 580,000 cases of vehicle theft, the study published this week in the Journal of Environmental Economics and Management says.

Read the whole story

Study: People like getting snail mail

By Jennifer Liberto, CNN Money

WASHINGTON — Americans dearly love getting their mail daily. But they can't say what they'd miss if the U.S. Postal Service disappeared.

"People seemed to sense that the Postal Service disappearing would be a bad thing, but they had trouble articulating more specifically how this would affect them personally," the report from the U.S. Postal Service Office Inspector General says.

The inspector general's office commissioned the report, which posed questions to 101 people in 10 focus groups nationwide. It summed up the answers in the white paper called: "What America Wants and Needs from the Postal Service."

[Read the whole story](#)