

Report card: Nev. housing market earns a C

By Michelle Bliss, NPR

Nevada's housing market earned a C grade from the state department of business and industry for its performance in the final quarter of last year.

The grade is part of the Nevada Housing Stability Index report, which looks at a dozen different factors affecting the market like foreclosure volumes and underwater loan percentages.

Research analysts say a C represents average quality and is an improvement from the D+ Nevada earned at the end of 2012.

[Read the whole story](#)

S. Tahoe voters to decide on paid parking

By Kathryn Reed

South Lake Tahoe voters will get to decide whether there are parking meters in town.

The City Council unanimously decided Tuesday to put the question before voters June 3. If the majority says no to paid parking, then the program ends Aug. 31. If voters say yes, then it stays.

No matter what happens, the kiosks on Bellamy Court and

Transit Way will remain and the parking garage at Heavenly Village is not affected.

Tahoe 4 Tahoe, a group of concerned citizens, had brought an initiative forward in hopes of asking voters to do away with paid parking. But during the process it came to light that this was not the legal way to change the parking policy. Plus, the initiative reached beyond the original intent and would have far-reaching consequences involving other ordinances.

The Tahoe 4 Tahoe group, represented by attorney Bruce Grego, formally withdrew its initiative Feb. 18 with the caveat the council put its own question before voters.

The council then immediately voted to rescind the fiscal impact study that it had approved at an earlier meeting to study the impacts of Tahoe 4 Tahoe's ballot question. That study was going to cost no more than \$25,000.

A June election will cost the city approximately \$10,000.

Study casts doubts on value of mammograms

By Gina Kolata, New York Times

One of the largest and most meticulous studies of mammography ever done, involving 90,000 women and lasting a quarter-century, has added powerful new doubts about the value of the screening test for women of any age.

It found that the death rates from breast cancer and from all

causes were the same in women who got mammograms and those who did not. And the screening had harms: One in five cancers found with mammography and treated was not a threat to the woman's health and did not need treatment such as chemotherapy, surgery or radiation.

The study, published last week in the British Medical Journal, is one of the few rigorous evaluations of mammograms conducted in the modern era of more effective breast cancer treatments. It randomly assigned Canadian women to have regular mammograms and breast exams by trained nurses or to have breast exams alone.

Read the whole story

Yosemite bike, rafting rental bans eliminated

By Paul Rogers, San Jose Mercury News

In a major reversal, Yosemite National Park officials have dropped controversial plans to ban a wide variety of recreational activities in Yosemite Valley, including ending bike and raft rentals and tearing out swimming pools at the Yosemite Lodge and famed Ahwahnee Hotel.

The decision came after a yearlong battle in which more than 30,000 people commented on the park's plans to curtail recreation as part of a broader effort to restore natural conditions along the valley's Merced River. Many said the proposal went too far and penalized families who enjoy visiting the park – an opinion echoed by several members of Congress.

The saga – which featured 14 years of legal battles – highlighted the near-impossible mission of the National Park Service: providing public recreation while preserving spectacular landscapes.

Read the whole story

Lake Forest boat ramp to be overhauled

Tahoe City Public Utility District is going to rehab the Lake Forest boat ramp.

The plan is to remove the existing concrete boat ramp, dredge the boat ramp fairway, construct a precast concrete boat ramp and cast-in-place concrete drive, and install sheet pile.

TCPUD is in the process of soliciting bids for the project. The deadline to submit a bid is March 4 at 2pm.

Engineers expect the project to cost \$554,222.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Water quality fine will restore areas of Truckee



Erosion causes excessive flow in Middle Martis Creek. Restoration would eliminate these peak flows and restore the headcuts. Photo/Brian Hastings/Balance Hydrologics

By Kathryn Reed

More than \$700,000 from stormwater violation fines is going to be spent on three projects in the Truckee area.

Five years after a settlement agreement was reached with Lahontan Regional Water Quality Board and East West Partners, the parent company of Northstar Mountain Properties, the remaining money is going to be put to use.

At the time the \$2.75 million penalty was the largest rendered by Lahontan. The fines were for 11 projects that encompassed 325 acres, including work at the Village at Northstar, employee housing and trailside townhomes. Work at the Ritz-Carlton was also part of the fine, though some documents call it Highlands Resort Hotel.

East West later filed bankruptcy, which then lessened the fine

by about \$1 million.

The Lahontan board in April 2011 allocated the money in part to the Northstar Fire District. That money has been spent. Another portion was for restoration at the Waddle Ranch.

"It didn't make sense to spend the rest of the money on that site when there are other areas in the watershed that are actively impacting water quality," Eric Taxer, engineer with Lahontan, told *Lake Tahoe News*.

That is why the Lahontan board at its meeting last week revisited how best to spend the fine.

Also at the Feb. 12 meeting the board changed the supplemental environmental projects (SEP) protocols. This will give the board more of a say in what goes on instead of being left with a yes/no vote when negotiations are completed.

Spending the Northstar Mountain Properties fine will be the first test of the changes to SEP rules. Board members Amy Horne and Peter Pumphrey helped staff with the SEP revisions.

"The overall concept is transparency so the public has a say in the process," Taxer said. "Projects were developed through a public input process that consisted of local stakeholders up there."

The projects approved on Wednesday are restoration at Elizabethtown Meadow, Dry Creek and Middle Martis Creek Wetlands. Those three will use the remainder in the account, or \$704,000.

Truckee River Watershed Council will be the lead agency to get the work done.

At Elizabethtown, roads will be decommissioned and drainage will be reconnected, along with meadow restoration. The design should be finished in March, with CEQA documents done in June. Construction should be done by October. This project will cost

\$79,500.

At Dry Creek there are logging issues that go back to the late 1800s. Taxer told the board that in places the meadow has turned into sagebrush. With stream and meadow restoration, the goal is to return it to its pre-logging conditions.

The \$224,500 project will be completed in October 2015.

At Middle Martis Creek the channel will be realigned, old fill will be removed and wetlands replaced. Issues arose in this area when the creek was realigned and confined to go under Highway 267.

This project costs \$400,000. It will be done by the end of this construction season. Revegetation will occur in 2015.

Travel marketing proves profitable for U.S.

By Amy Langfield, CNBC

A little marketing can go a long way when it comes to luring travelers, even if you're a well-known destination like the United States. That's the message from Brand USA, the public-private partnership created in 2010 to stop the U.S. from shedding its share of the world's tourists.

The U.S. was increasingly losing out to spots such as Canada, Mexico and the Caribbean.

According to the Department of Commerce, 67 million international travelers visited the United States in 2012.

And Chris Thompson, CEO of Brand USA, said that not all of them would have come without a nudge from a \$72 million marketing campaign focused on eight countries. That expenditure elicited 1.1 million trips and \$7.4 billion in spending that otherwise would have gone to other destinations, according to a report that the firm released Thursday.

Read the whole story

El Dorado County, Miwok Indians create joint court

El Dorado County Superior Court and the Shingle Springs Band of Miwok Indians are creating the first joint jurisdictional court of its kind in California for juvenile and family cases.

Christine Williams, chief judge of the Shingle Springs Tribal Court, and Suzanne Kingsbury, presiding judge of the Superior Court El Dorado County, will hear cases together and bring tribal and county services together. The two judges have just received a national grant from the Bureau of Justice Assistance of the federal Department of Justice to create this collaborative court.

They will hear cases involving child welfare, domestic violence, juveniles, and substance abuse affecting families. The two judges will hear these cases together, alternating between tribal lands and Placerville.

CalFire may bill Nutting for fire suppression

By Peter Hecht, Sacramento Bee

El Dorado County Supervisor Ray Nutting, already facing charges for allegedly failing to declare state income for brush clearing on his ranch, is now waiting to find out if he will be billed for a November incident in which fires broke out from smoldering burn piles that reignited.

CalFire says four small fires broke out Nov. 22 on Nutting's 340-acre timber ranch in Somerset. CalFire investigators recently completed their report on the department's response to the Nutting property. Since 2001, state crews have responded five times to fires on Nutting's ranch resulting from burn piles as part of work to clear vegetation and other fire hazards.

CalFire spokesman Daniel Berlant said the agency is reviewing the incident to determine if Nutting should be held liable for fire response costs and, if so, how much he should pay.

[Read the whole story](#)

Game warden shot in El Dorado

County

By Andy Furillo, Sacramento Bee

A California Department of Fish and Wildlife game warden was listed in serious condition Saturday at Sutter Roseville Medical Center after being shot the previous night while on routine patrol in a rural area near Georgetown in El Dorado County.

Warden Bob Pera, 35, an 11-year veteran of the agency, was shot in the hand and neck around 8 or 9pm while he was conducting a compliance check on two hunters, according to Fish and Wildlife spokesman Lt. Patrick Foy.

Read the whole story