

Could water supply be found under the ocean?

By Andrew Alden, KQED-TV

Underground boundaries between land and sea aren't as stark as they are to us as we stand on the beach. Water knows this. Groundwater everywhere responds slowly to changes above, even geological changes. In most of the Earth's crust, water moves around a meter per year. This enormous contrast between surface water and groundwater may be the big fact that hydrologists appreciate more than the rest of us, even geologists, who know a lot about slow things.

Seawater moving inland is a well-known problem for coastal cities. It arises when groundwater is pumped out faster than it can be replenished, and saltwater moves into the space. In the city of Fremont, the Alameda County Water District successfully manages saltwater intrusion in its major water source, the Niles Cone, by effectively building a wall of freshwater along the outer rim of the cone.

The opposite situation, freshwater intrusion, can occur offshore. Fresh groundwater lying above sea level on land would have the pressure needed to push aside the denser, salty water of the ocean once it reached that level. And scientists have known for a long time about freshwater springs that occur offshore. In the 1970s, U.S. government geologists learned that fresh water may underlie the seafloor for a surprising distance offshore, up to 100 kilometers in places.

Read the whole story

Hit and run driver leaves S. Tahoe teen in road

A 15-year-old South Lake Tahoe teen is at Renown Medical Center in Reno today recovering from injuries sustained the night before after being hit by a vehicle.

The name of the youth has not been released. The extent of his injuries is also not known.

The boy was at the intersection of Third and Washington streets in South Tahoe on Feb. 10 at about 6:45pm when a white or off-white Subaru struck him.

A witness did not see the impact, but saw the boy under the vehicle. The vehicle passed over him. The witness said the youth was bleeding from scrapes and was bruised. He asked the passer-by to drive him home. From there the witness took him to Barton Memorial Hospital.

He was later flown to the Reno hospital. It wasn't until the boy was at Barton that officers were notified of the incident.

The vehicle fled the scene headed east on Washington. A white male was driving the car, according to officers.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Bill would limit power of EPA

By Robin Wilkey, Huffington Post

A new bill introduced by House Republicans would limit the

ability of the Environmental Protection Agency to recommend or implement policies.

The bill, dubbed the Secret Science Reform Act, would force the EPA to publicly release its research on a topic before issuing a policy recommendation, and require that the research be “reproducible.” Supporters claim the bill will increase transparency in public policy, while opponents have accused the bill’s authors of trying to “keep the EPA from doing its job.”

“Virtually every regulation proposed by the Obama administration has been justified by nontransparent data and unverifiable claims,” Rep. Lamar Smith, R-Texas, who sponsored the bill, said in a statement. “The American people foot the bill for EPA’s costly regulations, and they have a right to see the underlying science. The Secret Science Reform Act of 2014, which I sponsored, prohibits EPA from using secret science to justify new regulations.”

Read the whole story

SLT council can't decide how to allocate surplus



Jim Marino with the South Lake Tahoe Public Works Department goes over the dilapidated conditions of city infrastructure at the Feb. 10 workshop.
Photos/Kathryn Reed

By Kathryn Reed

A workshop Monday was designed for the South Lake Tahoe City Council to figure out how to allocate any surpluses so policy is in place before the money is in hand and it doesn't get wasted. The council fell short of that goal.

City Manager Nancy Kerry said part of the goal was "to be more strategic" so the council, and therefore staff, would have a policy to follow instead of being reactive.

While some council members talked about divvying up the money by percentages, no consensus was found to create such a policy. Although hotel tax dollars are not as robust in January and February because of the lack of snow, there is still the possibility that at the March mid-year budget session a half million dollars will need to be allocated.

Instead, the council adopted a community investment policy that says, "We will focus on the built environment based on critical need and prioritize investment in geographic locations that strive to achieve the greatest return on investment."

A line item will be added to the budget for the community investment. But there was no true definition of the investment.

South Lake Tahoe has plenty of things it needs to spend money on, but the money to do so is lacking. However, revenues are on the upswing, so such a policy is needed so the money is not

frittered away.

Only two members of the public attended the 2½-hour meeting. Neither spoke.

While these five electeds heard a presentation from public works about the need for roads, facilities and fleet investments, any council could redefine community investment. Even these five, while sympathetic to the needs, did not commit to their being the focus of any new money.



The South Lake Tahoe City Council members, from left, Tom Davis, JoAnn Conner, Angela Swanson, Hal Cole and Brooke Laine, are unable to decide Feb. 10 how to deal with potential budget surpluses.

Jim Marino, No. 2 guy at public works, said if the 256 lane miles of city roads had been maintained properly, the weather the past few days would not have created the number of potholes that it has.

He told the council more than 47 percent of the roads in the city have about five years of life left to them. It would cost \$119,522,327 to replace current roads. The deferred maintenance backlog is at more than \$26 million. If no more money is put toward roads, the deferred maintenance bill grows by \$3 million annually.

To fix the roads, replace aging vehicles and bring facilities into the 21st century, the city would need to spend about \$300 million, Marino said.

While the city has seen \$80.5 million worth of capital improvements this century, 71 percent of those dollars came from state or federal sources.

“Those are new facilities we need to maintain,” Marino pointed out. But the maintenance fund has not increased. That is why the deferred maintenance bill keeps increasing.

There was agreement that recreation should be its own category when it comes to “extra” investing.

The other thing the council agreed to on Feb. 10 was for an analysis of the reserve policy to be conducted.

Consultant Mike Levison, who has a history of helping the city with strategic planning, said most cities have a reserve of about 18 percent. South Lake Tahoe, more than 10 years ago, set the policy to have a 25 percent reserve. This was after not having any extra in the kitty.

Excess reserves – money beyond the 25 percent – have been used in the lean years of late. But the 25 percent has not been tapped. To alter the 25 percent rule would take four out the five council members.

In other action:

- There was talk of Tahoe Olympians. Sierra-at-Tahoe is taking the lead in figuring out how best to celebrate the accomplishments of its three Olympians – Jamie Anderson, Hannah Teter and Maddie Bowman. All are residents of Meyers. South Lake Tahoe and Lake Tahoe Visitors Authority have offered to help. What the community event will be has not been determined. Sierra is not allowed to advertise anything involving its athletes until the Games are over.

- El Dorado County Elections Department has ruled that if the council at its regular meeting Feb. 18 decides to put a paid parking question to voters, that it can be on the June ballot.
-

Snowmobilers, Heavenly, T-D Fire challenge USFS

By Barbara Barte Osborn, Sacramento Bee

The U.S. Forest Service's refusal to revise existing restrictions on snowmobile use in the Lake Tahoe Basin is one of a dozen objections filed by groups and individuals against the agency's proposed updated land-management plan.

The objection charges that the current 25-year-old restrictions do not address the effects of additional snowmobile outfitters, permitted by the Forest Service, whose machines allegedly endanger cross-country skiers and snowshoers on popular trails and cause noise, air and water pollution.

The Tahoe Douglas Fire Protection District says the plan's fire suppression tactics in roadless areas near homes, rather than leaving continuous fuels in place, should have community safety as a primary objective. And Heavenly Mountain Resort officials ask that the plan be revised to clarify a 200-acre limitation on development, lest it encourage a development race between resorts.

Read the whole story

Easter Seal's client data in jeopardy

By Bill Lindelof, Sacramento Bee

Written notice has been sent to more than 3,000 clients of Easter Seal Society of Superior California after a laptop belonging to one of the charity's workers was stolen.

The employee's vehicle was broken into on Dec. 10, resulting in the theft of a number of items, including a work-issued laptop computer. Emails containing the health information of 3,026 Easter Seals clients and potential clients could be accessed with the laptop, according to a press release for the organization.

Easter Seal Society of Superior California serves children and adults in Alpine, Amador, Calaveras, El Dorado, Nevada, Placer, Sacramento, San Joaquin, Stanislaus, Sutter, Tuolumne, Yolo and Yuba counties.

Read the whole story

Middle class continues to

erode in U.S.

By Nelson D Schwartz, New York Times

In Manhattan, the upscale clothing retailer Barneys will replace the bankrupt discounter Loehmann's, whose Chelsea store closes in a few weeks. Across the country, Olive Garden and Red Lobster restaurants are struggling, while fine-dining chains like Capital Grille are thriving. And at General Electric, the increase in demand for high-end dishwashers and refrigerators dwarfs sales growth of mass-market models.

As politicians and pundits in Washington continue to spar over whether economic inequality is in fact deepening, in corporate America there really is no debate at all. The post-recession reality is that the customer base for businesses that appeal to the middle class is shrinking as the top tier pulls even further away.

If there is any doubt, the speed at which companies are adapting to the new consumer landscape serves as very convincing evidence. Within top consulting firms and among Wall Street analysts, the shift is being described with a frankness more often associated with left-wing academics than business experts.

Read the whole story

Swath of North Shore without power

A large number of Liberty Utilities' customers on the North

Shore are without power Saturday night.

No cause has been located as of 10:10pm. Because of that, there is no estimated time when power will be restored.

The outage is affecting customers serviced by the Brockway substation. The number of customers without power has not been disclosed by Liberty.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Illegal massage businesses on the rise in Calif.

By Jeremy B. White, Sacramento Bee

The sign wasn't the kind most businesses feel compelled to post.

"We Are Not A House Of Prostitution," proclaimed the notice that Assemblyman Jimmy Gomez, D-Los Angeles, recalled seeing in the window of a Los Feliz massage parlor.

To Gomez, the message illustrated how a perennial concern about massage businesses has intensified over the last few years. Cities and counties have witnessed a boom in massage establishments even as they have ceded some authority to regulate those businesses, heightening the risk of violators selling sex under the guise of massage therapy.

Lawmakers will soon have an opportunity to change how California regulates massages. A 2008 law replaced local control with a state nonprofit, the California Massage Therapy Council, that certifies massage practitioners, requires

background checks and oversees massage schools. The law creating the new framework will expire at the end of 2014.

Read the whole story

Flooding possible in Lake Tahoe Basin



Streets in South Lake Tahoe are flooding a bit after a whole day of rain Feb. 8.
Photos/Susan Wood

The National Weather Service in Reno has issued a flood watch for portions of California and Western Nevada, including the Lake Tahoe Basin and Alpine County from 4pm Saturday through Sunday afternoon.

Some streets in South Lake have standing water, trees are down and drains are clogged. The city is keeping an eye on the situation to determine if more employees need to be called in.

South Lake Tahoe has sand, bags and shovels at the Rufus Allen Boulevard yard through the back gate. Staff will be at the site to help. Truckee also has sand bags available for

residents.



Pent up winter took its toll on the flag at American Oil gas station in South Tahoe.

Minor flooding is possible on all small streams in the affected areas. The heavy rain may also trigger rock and mud slides.

The National Weather Service said Bear Creek near Alpine Meadows might have minor flooding. The bike path along the Truckee River between the River Ranch and Tahoe City may flood. Basements and yards of some low-lying homes along the river may also begin to flood.

Small creeks and streams are the most susceptible to flooding.

Snow levels will remain at about 8,500 feet into Sunday morning before slowly falling. However, ski resorts below that elevation are reporting it's been snowing all day. While it's raining in South Lake Tahoe, it was changing to snow at Stateline at 3:45pm.

A winter storm warning has been issued by the NWS in Reno for the 24-hour period starting 4am Feb. 9. Expect 1-4 inches at lake level, 1-2 feet above 7,000 feet.

The U.S. Forest Service has issued an avalanche warning for the backcountry through 7am Sunday. The area covered is between Yuba Pass and Ebbetts Pass.

– *Lake Tahoe News report*