

# Calif. has lengthy history of dry periods

By Paul Rogers, San Jose Mercury News

California's current drought is being billed as the driest period in the state's recorded rainfall history. But scientists who study the West's long-term climate patterns say the state has been parched for much longer stretches before that 163-year historical period began.

And they worry that the "megadroughts" typical of California's earlier history could come again.

Through studies of tree rings, sediment and other natural evidence, researchers have documented multiple droughts in California that lasted 10 or 20 years in a row during the past 1,000 years – compared to the mere three-year duration of the current dry spell. The two most severe megadroughts make the Dust Bowl of the 1930s look tame: a 240-year-long drought that started in 850 and, 50 years after the conclusion of that one, another that stretched at least 180 years.

**Read the whole story**

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# 10 states contemplating online gambling

By Wayne Parry, AP

ATLANTIC CITY, N.J. – At least 10 U.S. states are considering bills to legalize or expand Internet gambling this year,

according to a group that tracks gambling-related legislation worldwide.

But the Gambling Compliance survey also finds slim chances for a national law to regulate Internet poker, predicting a major effort by online gambling opponents to block it in Congress.

So far, three states allow Internet gambling: New Jersey, Nevada and Delaware. The report says proposals for new or expanded Internet betting could be considered in California, Colorado, Hawaii, Illinois, Iowa, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Mississippi, New Jersey and Pennsylvania.

“In 2013, 10 states considered legislation that would legalize online casino-style gambling, which was a historic high,” said Chris Krafcik, the group’s research director. “This year is shaping up to be at least as busy.”

In California, one of the largest potential markets, Indian tribes are trying to agree on how to legalize Internet poker. Tribal leaders from two coalitions met last month and said they made progress but still need more time to work out an accord. The report said a bill is likely to be acted upon before an Aug. 31 deadline.

A bill in Mississippi that would have legalized Internet gambling died Tuesday when the state legislature failed to act on it.

Gambling Compliance also says Nevada may consider expanding online gambling, which is currently limited to poker.

It predicts Delaware, where Internet gambling is off to a slow start, will seek cross-border agreements with other states to expand the pool of bettors, a tactic New Jersey also is considering. A bill awaiting consideration in the New Jersey legislature would create a new class of licensing to permit interstate and foreign bets to be taken by the Atlantic City casinos.

New Jersey's 15 Internet gambling sites took in nearly \$8.4 million between their late November launch and the end of last year. The state will release January revenue figures next week.

The report holds out little hope for a national bill legalizing Internet poker, noting that it is a midterm election year where anything politically risky is unlikely to be enacted. In fact, it said proponents and opponents of Internet gambling are jockeying for position in the U.S. Senate, which is considering a blanket prohibition on Internet gambling.

That is the goal of Las Vegas billionaire Sheldon Adelson, who is funding a campaign to ban online gambling.

On the pro-Internet gambling side, Caesars Entertainment lobbied more heavily last year than any other group to legalize Internet gambling at the federal level, according to the report.

The report also predicted a handful of other states will consider joining Georgia, Illinois and Minnesota in permitting lottery tickets or games to be purchased or played online.

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## **Obama pledges high-speed Internet in schools**

**By Ovetta Wiggins and David Nakamura, Washington Post**

Visiting an innovative Prince George's County middle school where each child has a tablet computer, President Obama spoke Tuesday about his plan to give 20 million more students access

to high-speed Internet connections at the nation's schools and libraries.

Obama announced Tuesday that the Federal Communications Commission will dedicate \$2 billion and that several private companies – including Apple, Verizon, Sprint and Microsoft – have committed \$750 million to help bring some of the technological opportunities provided at Buck Lodge Middle School in Adelphi, Md., to schools across the country. He said he hopes that 99 percent of U.S. students will have high-speed access to the Internet within five years, something his administration has called a “foundation for a transformation in the classroom” that will give teachers the best technology and training along with rich, digital content.

The initiative, known as ConnectEd and originally announced last summer, could have a widespread impact at thousands of schools. White House officials said the Internet speed in 70 percent of the nation's schools is too slow.

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**Edgewood Companies tweaking hotel project; golf holes to move into South Lake Tahoe**



The parcels with the yellow bubbles are owned by Edgewood Companies in South Lake Tahoe and will be affected by the Edgewood Lodge project.

### **By Kathryn Reed**

To accommodate the Edgewood Lodge, which could break ground in August, some changes to planning documents are necessary. And this involves South Lake Tahoe because part of Edgewood Tahoe Golf Course is in the city limits.

Holes 8 and 9 cross into California from Stateline. Part of No. 8's green complex is in the city as well as the tee boxes for No. 9.

Edgewood owns about 10 acres on four parcels in South Lake Tahoe that go from the lake to about Manzanita Street. The parcels are odd shaped. The Julia Morgan-designed house that is on one parcel will not be touched.

Edgewood Companies is now planning to alter holes 7-8-9 to accommodate the 159-room hotel. The hotel will be repositioned slightly.

“It’s not a big change, but it hits all the right buttons. It will be a better hotel guest experience, better community guest experience and it reduces the impact to beach soils,” Patrick Rhamey, executive vice president of real estate for Edgewood Companies, told *Lake Tahoe News*.

By modifying Hole 9 more than what was approved in 2012 it will add 130 lineal feet of public beach access to the already 500 feet that was allocated. It also means having more of the golf course on high-capability land and not on beach soil.

Hole 7 is being altered for the entrance road to the hotel. It will generally be in the same location, but have better exposure to sun.

The big change for Hole 8 is that the tree in the middle will be on the right. The creek along this hole will also be restored.

Hole 9 will have the most dramatic changes. Today it starts in California, plays south to north and finishes by the parking lot. In the future it will dogleg right near Lake Parkway in a westerly direction and end with a dogleg right to finish in front of the hotel.

By June 2015 all the changes to the course should be ready for golfers to test.

Because there are changes to the original plans the company will need the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency to approve an amendment. South Lake Tahoe officials must vote on the negative declaration as well as changing the Edgewood General Plan and approve an amendment to the plan area.

The Tourist Core Area Plan that was just approved does not

cover this area. In the past, Douglas County incorporated the California part of the golf course in its plans. That was eliminated last year when its area plan for Stateline was approved.

The changes affect Plan Area Statements 70 and 89. The changes would allow golf where it currently is prohibited. No additional development would be permitted.

Changes to the course will not occur until after the July celebrity golf tournament. It's possible for a bit the course will be 15 holes or the three affected holes could temporarily be modified.

The lodge is expected to take 20 months to build. It could be open in May 2016.

Expanding the south banquet room in the clubhouse is also planned. It's likely that won't happen this year. It will not impact the restaurant.

"We have put a hold on taking weddings after the second or third week of September until we figure out the schedule for the south room," Rhamey said.

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#### **Notes:**

- Feb. 13 3pm South Lake Tahoe Planning Commission meeting at Lake Tahoe Airport regarding Edgewood General Plan/Plan Area amendment.
- Feb. 24 is the deadline to comment on the draft negative declaration for the proposed General Plan and Plan Area Amendment. Send comments to South Lake Tahoe Planning Department, 1052 Tata Lane, South Lake Tahoe, CA 96150.
- March 13 3pm South Lake Tahoe Planning Commission meeting at Lake Tahoe Airport regarding negative declaration.

- March 18 the South Lake Tahoe City Council will take up the Edgewood negative declaration. The meeting starts at 9am at Lake Tahoe Airport.
  - The Tahoe Regional Planning Agency could hear the changes at its March meetings.
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## Suspect, cause of S. Tahoe fire remain unknown



The Jan. 29 fire threatened surrounding structures.  
Photo/Denise Haerr

It could be a month before officials know the ignition source of the fire that destroyed a house last week in South Lake Tahoe.

The fire on Long Avenue erupted Jan. 29, causing more than \$300,000 in damage. It was unoccupied while repairs were being made from prior frozen pipe damage.

Police and fire officials are working the investigation to determine who set the fire.

“The lab samples take about a month, so the fire investigation is still open and undetermined at this point,” Fire Chief Jeff Meston told *Lake Tahoe News*.

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*

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## Republicans not in lock step regarding immigration

By Leigh Ann Caldwell, CNN

WASHINGTON – The similarities are plentiful. Both congressmen are Republican. Both represent central California – their districts share a border. Both are recently elected to Congress. Both have outspoken positions on immigration reform.

And that’s where the similarities end.



Rep. Tom McClintock, R-Granite Bay, represents the California side of Tahoe in Congress. Photo/LTN file

Rep. Jeff Denham, who represents California’s 10th Congressional District, is actively lobbying his Republican

colleagues to get on board behind immigration legislation that includes a path to legalization.

But Denham's views don't cross district lines. His congressional neighbor and fellow Republican, Rep. Tom McClintock, couldn't disagree more. While his 4th District is next to Denham's, a wide gap exists between the two on this issue.

"We have a path to citizenship and it's a path that has been followed by millions of legal immigrants who have obeyed all of our laws," McClintock said. "It's unfair to have 11 to 20 million illegal immigrants cut in line ahead of them."

**Read the whole story**

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## **Snowboarder dies at Heavenly**

A Southern California man died Tuesday while snowboarding at Heavenly Mountain Resort.

An autopsy showed Wyatt James Colvard, 18, of Fountain Valley died due to internal injuries from blunt force trauma, according to the Douglas County Sheriff's Office.

Deputies and Tahoe Douglas paramedics were called to Boulder Lodge on Feb. 4 at 11:45am to help an injured boarder. Advanced life support could not save him.

According to deputies, witnesses said they found Wyatt lying in the snow unconscious and he was having a difficult time breathing. Ski patrol transported Colvard down the hill to awaiting paramedics.

Deputies are investigating the death.

# Impact of Calif. drought could be felt nationwide

By Bruce Kennedy, MoneyWatch

The ongoing severe drought in California is much more than a statewide emergency or a local news story. It will likely have ripple effects nationwide, affecting grocery store receipts in all 50 states, and putting a dent in the nation's economy.

California is a major player in the country's economic engine. If California were its own country, it would be the world's eighth-largest economy – surpassing the GDP of Italy and Russia.

A big part of the Golden State's wealth comes from its agricultural base. The state's 80,500 farms reportedly generated a record \$44.7 billion for their production output in 2012 – making California the top U.S. state in cash farm receipts, accounting for more than 11 percent of the overall national total.

**Read the whole story**

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# Bill would tie Calif. minimum wage to inflation

By Kathleen Miles, Huffington Post

California may soon require the highest minimum wage of any U.S. state.

State Sen. Mark Leno, D-San Francisco, introduced a bill Monday to raise the state minimum wage to \$11 per hour in 2015, \$12 per hour in 2016 and \$13 per hour in 2017. Beginning in 2018, the state minimum wage would be adjusted annually with the rate of inflation.

Leno said that, in part, he is responding to President Obama's State of the Union address last week urging mayors, governors and state legislators to take the lead on raising the minimum wage.

California is already ahead of the pack in the national movement to raise the minimum wage. In the fall, California Gov. Jerry Brown signed a law that raises the state's current \$8 an hour minimum wage to \$9 per hour in July and to \$10 per hour in 2016.

[Read the whole story](#)

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## Tentative paid parking compromise for S. Tahoe

By Kathryn Reed

If the South Lake Tahoe City Council rescinds the paid parking ordinance, the Tahoe 4 Tahoe group is likely to back off from going forward with its initiative.

While much of the Feb. 4 council meeting centered on the paid parking controversy, the discussion did not end there. That night Bruce Grego, representing Tahoe 4 Tahoe, and Hal Cole and Brooke Laine from the council met to see if they could come to an agreement.

During the public meeting Laine's solution to the paid parking strife was for the city to put a legally solid question on the ballot for South Lake Tahoe residents to choose if they want paid parking or not.

There are some in the group who agree something like that could work.

"There is a win-win out there. It is up to the city reps and committee to see if they can reach that agreement to start over," Dave Jinkens, who has been working with the anti-paid parking advocates, told *Lake Tahoe News*.

The proposal that came out of Tuesday night's powwow is largely what Laine proposed at the council meeting. If the Tahoe 4 Tahoe group agrees to this idea, it could come back to the council on the Feb. 10 agenda when the electeds meet to discuss fiscal matters. Grego told *Lake Tahoe News* it's possible the current parking ordinance could be turned into the ballot question.

The negotiators now must seek approval from the larger bodies they represent.

## **Legal questions**

At issue is the Tahoe 4 Tahoe group has an initiative that qualifies for the ballot. The problem is case law and the state Vehicle Code say the referendum process, not initiative

is the way to deal with parking meters.

Even though the courts and California Vehicle Code have stated the initiative process cannot change parking meter law, the Tahoe 4 Tahoe group wants a judge to tell them that and not rely on what is already written. They believe if they don't exhaust all of their options, they will have let down the 1,422 people who signed the petition to get the question on the ballot.

The city's hands are somewhat tied in that it must follow the law even if this initiative could be legally challenged. It is most apt to be challenged once it is on the ballot or if voters approve it.

And while both sides profess to want to compromise, a lack of trust may prevent that from happening. Plus, there has been no vote by the council to scrap the ordinance.

### **Financial conundrum**

Per Elections Code, the council had to act Tuesday on receiving the certificate that states enough valid signatures were gathered for the initiative to move forward. The law states the council must do so at the first regular meeting after the county certifies the signatures.

This then triggered another Elections Code rule where the council had three options:

- Adopt the initiative as is to be the new city code;
- Put the initiative on the ballot;
- Order a fiscal report.

The council unanimously agreed to the last option. The contract with Urban Futures Inc. out of Walnut Creek is based on the number of hours the consultants work, not a flat fee. The amount is to not exceed \$25,000. They have 30 days per

Elections Code to complete the report.

But it's possible if a compromise were reached in the next week, the fiscal report could be scrapped. In turn, this means not much money would have been spent by the city. This is because the city will be tasked with gathering the documents requested by Urban Futures, so it's city time that will have been wasted, not money spent. Urban Futures earns the bulk of its money from its analysis and final report.

The report is designed to show voters the financial impacts if they approve the initiative. It's written in such a manner that it would tie the city's hands when it comes to parking rules elsewhere, including at Campground by the Lake; it would also mean money from parking kiosks that is designated for maintenance would be missing from the city budget.

The Feb. 4 City Council meeting was dominated by paid parking. It's going to take up the bulk of the Feb. 18 meeting too, which is going to consist of a morning and evening session involving the topic. At those sessions the current parking program will be discussed and likely revised.

#### **In other action:**

- The fire department's new ladder truck should arrive Feb. 15. The old one has already been taken out of commission.
- The fiscal workshop on Feb. 10 has been moved to 3pm.
- The council refused to write a blank check for council members to travel as was requested by Councilwoman Angela Swanson. She is on a couple committees for the League of California Cities. But those are optional beyond regular council assignments. Instead of having to get each item approved the compromise was for her to bring back projected expenses for the remainder of her tenure, which expires when her term is up in December.