

Drought declaration for Calif. expected



More sand than water is currently under the Tahoe Keys Pier. Photo/Kathryn reed

By Matt Weiser, Sacramento Bee

The California Department of Water Resources is planning to draft an emergency drought declaration for Gov. Jerry Brown's consideration as dry winter conditions continue.

DWR Director Mark Cowin told the California Board of Food and Agriculture at a meeting Tuesday that his agency is weighing whether to present the governor with a drought declaration. Spokeswoman Nancy Foley said that declaration could be forthcoming "within a couple weeks."

"We will likely, given the circumstances, make a recommendation for a drought declaration," Foley said. "The snow survey last Friday was so dismal and there doesn't seem to be any storms on the horizon, so it just seems we've got to start preparing a drought declaration."

Read the whole story

El Dorado forced to alter sex offender law

By Kathryn Reed

El Dorado County Board of Supervisors on a 3-0 vote Tuesday repealed the sex offender ordinance that was created with Phillip Garrido in mind.

Garrido and his wife, Nancy, were sentenced in 2011 to spend the rest of their lives behind bars for the 1991 kidnapping of then 11-year-old Jaycee Lee Dugard from a bus stop in Meyers and then holding her captive 18 years in a shack and raping her at will.

A 48-year-old registered sex offender last year challenged the constitutionality of the ordinance in federal court, saying it was too restrictive. The 2012 ordinance limited sex offenders from being within 300 feet of a park, school, public pool, library or playground.



Phillip and Nancy Garrido's abduction of Jaycee Lee Dugard has changed sex offender laws.

El Dorado County District Attorney Vern Pierson said his office believes the judge was sympathetic to the plaintiff and therefore he is willing to rewrite the ordinance to comply.

"We tried to put a buffer between certain sex offenders and parks and kids," Pierson told *Lake Tahoe News*.

One of the issues raised by the sex offender, who in court documents is called John Doe, is that he would not be allowed to go to a fast food establishment that has a playground because there would be children there.

"You are right. I don't want you in close proximity to children. I'm sorry that is an inconvenience for you," Pierson said in response to that challenge.

Before the county begins amending the ordinance it will wait for a decision out of Southern California related to where sex offenders are allowed to be. A decision is expected within a month. Pierson hopes to have something before the supervisors within 60 days.

At the Jan. 7 meeting Supervisor Norma Santiago was absent and Supervisor Ray Nutting did not participate in the vote. The ordinance will be void in 30 days.

South Lake Tahoe and Placerville have adopted similar ordinances that would be subject to the same challenge. However, the county ordinance only affects unincorporated areas of the county.

Pierson said he plans to talk to officials in both cities once the county ordinance is redrafted and the ruling from Southern California comes out. South Lake Tahoe hasn't bothered to start revising its ordinance even though it knows it will have to. City Attorney Tom Watson said he would review the federal case and present the City Council with options, but he didn't say when or what those options might be.

“Our law has the same issue that is present in the county’s law. In my estimation, most of the time there are provisions that allow the parts of the laws that are deemed unconstitutional to remain unenforced but the other parts remain in effect. I would support an update to the law as opposed to repealing,” South Lake Tahoe Police Chief Brian Uhler told *Lake Tahoe News*.

Reward offered in serial burglary case

A \$1,000 reward is being offered by Washoe County Secret Witness for information leading to the arrest and prosecution of the person or people responsible for a series of residential burglaries in Incline Village.

The Incline burglaries started in November and have occurred other places around the lake. The suspects have used similar methods in the 18 thefts to lead authorities to believe the same person or people are involved.

Two possible suspects were seen leaving a burgled residence. They are described as a white man and woman in their 20s, wearing black ski outfits and driving a gold Lexus.

Anyone with information should call Washoe County Sheriff’s Office at (775) 328.3320 or Secret Witness at (775) 322.4900.

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*

Grandson of Vail Resorts founder killed in avalanche

By Kieran Nicholson, Ryan Parker and Jason Blevins, Denver Post

The grandson of Vail's founder was killed in an avalanche while skiing near the resort Tuesday.

Tony Seibert, 24, the grandson of Peter Seibert, was killed and three others were injured in the out-of-bounds avalanche.

Vail Resorts declined to comment on the matter and directed all questions to the sheriff's office. The identity of the victim has not been officially released, but was confirmed by a close family friend and through a family member on social media.

Teri Salani Seibert, Tony's mother, works for Vail Ski Patrol, according to her Facebook page. His father is Peter Seibert Jr.

The avalanche struck about 11:35am in East Vail Chutes, said Jessie Mosher, an Eagle County Sheriff's Office spokeswoman.

Read the whole story

Flu bug circulating throughout Lake Tahoe

By Kathryn Reed

While there have been no deaths this season in the Lake Tahoe Basin from the flu, that is not the same case for bordering counties.

A woman in her 30s and a man in his 50s died last weekend in Sacramento County from the H1N1 flu strain. This is the same strain that gripped the country in 2009. On Friday, a 61-year-old woman was the first recorded flu death for Sac County.

This strain, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, is predominately afflicting young and middle-age adults who are otherwise in good health.

Barton Health's PR department said four times the number of people are coming in with flu symptoms this year compared to a year ago, but no numbers were provided so it's hard to ascertain if this is a big deal.

"From what they have observed, the community clinic is much busier and they are seeing more cases of the flu. The flu cases they are seeing are more severe and more frequently in young, typically healthy adults," Molly Hucklebridge, Barton communications specialist, told *Lake Tahoe News*.

According to the CDC, for the last week of 2013, 20 states experienced high levels of influenza-like illness. Nevada was one of those states. Three people in Southern Nevada this season have died from the flu. California, to date, has had a minimal number of cases.

"Although H1N1 primarily affects children and young to middle-aged adults, it can affect anyone of any age. This year's flu

vaccine is designed to provide protection against H1N1, along with two or three other flu strains,” Margaret Williams with El Dorado County Health & Human Services told *Lake Tahoe News*.

It is not too late to be vaccinated. It costs \$10 through the Public Health Division. Call (530) 573.3155 in South Lake Tahoe.

El Dorado County Public Health urges individuals to take the following actions to protect themselves and others from the flu:

- Get vaccinated against the flu annually. Minimum age is 6 months.
- Avoid close contact with sick people.
- Stay home if you are sick.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Sneeze or cough into your arm or a tissue; not your hand.
- Take flu antivirals if your doctor prescribes them.

Paul Rork, a physician with Barton Health, told *Lake Tahoe News*, “As soon as you experience flu-like symptoms – which may include a high fever, muscle aches, sore throat, chills, fatigue, cough, and/or headache – visit a doctor immediately. If you see a doctor early, they can treat the flu with medication. If you find your symptoms getting worse after your flu symptoms have improved, you need to visit a doctor. You are at risk of contracting a secondary infection.”

Calif. lawmaker wants free public preschool

By Sharon Bernstein, Reuters

SACRAMENTO — A top California lawmaker on Tuesday is expected to unveil a proposal to fund free public preschool for all children in the most populous state.

The plan by Senate Pro Tem Darrell Steinberg, D-Sacramento, to offer a pre-kindergarten program to 4-year-olds comes as he and other Democratic legislators try to push Gov. Jerry Brown to increase spending on social services, including education, in next year's budget.

The proposal is expected to involve expanding an existing program aimed at children who turn 5 years old too late in the year to attend regular kindergarten. Details such as the cost of the plan would be released today.

A spokesman for Brown on Monday said the governor, who is set to release his budget on Friday, has no comment on the preschool plan.

Read the whole story

Why is cancer so prolific?

By George Johnson, New York Times

Every New Year when the government publishes its Report to the Nation on the Status of Cancer, it is followed by a familiar lament. We are losing the war against cancer.

Half a century ago, the story goes, a person was far more likely to die from heart disease. Now cancer is on the verge of overtaking it as the No. 1 cause of death.

Troubling as this sounds, the comparison is unfair. Cancer is, by far, the harder problem – a condition deeply ingrained in the nature of evolution and multicellular life. Given that obstacle, cancer researchers are fighting and even winning smaller battles: reducing the death toll from childhood cancers and preventing – and sometimes curing – cancers that strike people in their prime. But when it comes to diseases of the elderly, there can be no decisive victory. This is, in the end, a zero-sum game.

Read the whole story

Lawsuit threatens future Lake Tahoe fireworks

By Kathryn Reed

Fireworks at Lake Tahoe may come down to tourism vs. the environment.

There is no question the twice annual fireworks show shot from barges on Lake Tahoe on the South Shore are a crowd pleaser on July 4 and Labor Day weekend. But the piles of debris collected afterward and the perchlorate entering the water are another story.

A lawsuit has been filed by Joan and Joseph Truxler of Zephyr Cove against Lake Tahoe Visitors Authority and Pyro Spectaculars. Pyro has been putting on the Lake Tahoe shows

for 30 years. LTVA is the lead agency responsible for paying for the fireworks shows that cost upward of \$100,000 each.



Fireworks at Lake Tahoe are rated some of the best in the country. Photo/Howie Nave

These are the two biggest fireworks shows in the Lake Tahoe Basin. However, there are other shows around the lake during July 4 that are mostly tied to municipalities celebrating Independence Day as well as private fireworks displays throughout the year. The South Shore pyrotechnics are in South Lake Tahoe, but the current can take debris into Nevada.

LTVA has divers collect debris, most of which is cardboard because that is what explosives are stuffed into. The material is also plucked from the surface of the lake.

“These are pollutants that people are consciously shooting into the lake,” Mike Lozeau, the attorney representing the Truxlers, told *Lake Tahoe News*. “The Truxlers are not interested in stopping the events. They just don’t want to pick up trash.”

Although the fireworks company picked up more than a dozen bags of trash after the July event, the Truxlers reportedly spent days picking up trash on Pinewild beach. They were doing the same in September after that show.

They have owned their house since 1999 and have been full-time residents since 2006, according to the lawsuit.

However, this is the first year they or anyone has complained to LTVA about trash from the fireworks.

“At this point because of the litigation we are not able to offer additional details or comments,” Carol Chaplin, executive director of LTVA, told *Lake Tahoe News*.

A goal of the lawsuit, according to Lozeau, is to have the fireworks permitted by Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board in California and/or Nevada Division of Environmental Protection.

The lawsuit claims the Clean Water Act is being violated. Court documents state, “Both the state of California and the state of Nevada have established water quality standards strictly prohibiting floating debris on Lake Tahoe and other waters. California’s water quality standards provide that ‘[w]aters shall not contain floating material, including solids, liquids, foams, and scum, in concentrations that cause nuisance or adversely affect the water for beneficial uses.’”

Lahontan after the July 2001 display monitored the water, but has not done so since then. On July 4, 2001, 63 micrograms per liter of perchlorate were found. This is 10 times the amount the federal government says should be in water. However, 12 hours later non-detectable levels of perchlorate were found in the same location.

Lauri Kemper with Lahontan told *Lake Tahoe News* that because the perchlorate had dissipated her agency determined there were no long-term effects to the lake from the chemical.

She added that no one has asked for a fireworks permit. If they were to do so, that is something the Lahontan board would have to address.

Nevada also does not issue fireworks permits.

“The Nevada Division of Environmental Protection encourages the Lake Tahoe Visitors Authority and its contractors to continue compliance with any applicable local permits, plans or requirements. NDEP does not require additional oversight of the twice a year firework displays,” JoAnn Kittrell with the Nevada Department of Conservation & Natural Resources told *Lake Tahoe News*.

Jeff Cowen with the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency said his agency also does not issue any permits for the fireworks shows.

Mediation is the next step for both sides; however, a date has not been set.

Wheat straw being used for paper instead of trees

By Nick Leiber, Bloomberg

Actor Woody Harrelson is known for his roles in such films as “White Men Can’t Jump,” “Natural Born Killers” and “The People vs. Larry Flynt.” He’s also an environmentalist who in 1998 co-founded Prairie Paper Ventures to make paper from crop waste instead of trees. The idea is to save forests as demand for paper increases despite lofty claims about the coming paperless era. “Just know that two boxes of this paper saves one tree, so you can make a very real difference,” Harrelson says in a video on the company’s site promoting its “new paper paradigm.”

It took around 14 years for the Winnipeg business to develop a way to turn wheat straw left over from harvesting into paper. The result is just as high-quality and affordable as the conventional stuff made from wood, says Jeff Golfman, who co-founded Prairie Paper with Harrelson and Clayton Manness, a former Manitoba finance minister. Manufactured in two mills in northern India, the line, called Step Forward, acts like regular paper and works in standard printers. "We like to say the most remarkable thing about our paper is how unremarkable it actually is," says Golfman. "Where our process is unique is in the formulas [and] recipes we're using."

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Read the whole story

**Explosive device found
outside El Dorado County
office**



This explosive device was
found in Shingle Springs.
Photo/Provided

El Dorado County's bomb squad today detonated an explosive device that was found outside the Probation Department in Shingle Springs.

The suspicious device was found Monday at 7am.

A section of pipe approximately 8 inches by 1.5 inches was capped on both ends, according to officials. A makeshift fuse appeared to be attached to the object.

The building was evacuated for about three hours.

Officials said in a press release that it was "an explosive device that had malfunctioned."

– Lake Tahoe News staff report