

Sierra water content 20% of average

Results of the Jan. 3 manual readings by the Department of Water Resources:

Location	Elevation	Snow Depth	Water Content	% of Long Term Average
Alpha	7,600 feet	7.9 inches	2 inches	15
Phillips Station	6,800 feet	9.3 inches	2.3 inches	20
Lyons Creek	6,700 feet	15.4 inches	3.6 inches	31

By Kathryn Reed

PHILLIPS STATION – While there was snow to be found during the first water content survey of the season Friday, it was minimal.

The readings taken Jan. 3 in the field next to the entrance to Sierra-at-Tahoe along Highway 50 measured 2.3 inches of water content, a snow depth of 9.3 inches for what amounts to 20 percent of average. This makes it the second driest reading on record for this time of year.

Two years ago Gehrke was walking on dirt, while in 2013 there was about six times the amount of snow there is today. But both years turned out to be dry water years, and this is looking like it will be the same.

Phillps Station had its lowest water content reading of 0.1 inch in 2012, in a snow depth of 0.6 inches. On Jan. 2, 2013, at the same location 12.1 inches of water in 48.8 inches of snow were recorded.

Of the 50 years that records have been kept, other dry years include 1987 (0.9 inches of snowpack water content), 1981 (2 inches), 1976 (2.7 inches) and 2000 (3 inches).



Frank Gehrke with the Department of Water Resources on Jan. 3 measures the water content of snow at Phillips Station. Photo/Kathryn Reed

While Gehrke was taking his readings, Gov. Jerry Brown's Drought Task Force that he created last month was meeting.

"It's not good news (for reservoirs)," Frank Gehrke with the Department of Water Resources said. "We are really eating into the reservoir storage."

Sierra snowpack feeds the reservoirs downstream, which in turn provide for about one-third of the drinking and irrigation water for California.

Lake Oroville is at 36 percent of its 3.5 million acre-feet capacity and Shasta Lake is at 37 percent of its 4.5 million acre-feet capacity.

December, January and February are usually the wettest months of the year. December was disappointing and January is balmy. It's possible today's record high of 58 for South Lake Tahoe that was set in 2012 could be broken. South Lake broke a

record Dec. 31 with a high of 57. The previous record of 54 was set in 2011.

While there is a slight chance of moisture for the Lake Tahoe Basin on Jan. 7, the temps will be warm so it could just be rain.

Meteorologist Zach Tolby with the National Weather Service in Reno told *Lake Tahoe News*, "We are not expecting a lot of precipitation out of it. Then it gets unpredictable after that."

Besides needing to ration the water coming out of the tap, dry winters affect recreation, the environment and the economy.

Plus, with the ground being dry much of the snowmelt is going into the ground instead of going downstream.

Nev. won't make deadline for pot dispensaries

By AP

State officials say they will miss the Nevada Legislature's April 1 deadline to begin accepting applications from medical marijuana providers and growers.

Marla McDade Williams of the state Health Division said regulations must be approved before the agency can accept applications.

Williams, who will manage the program for the Health Division, said she doubts the state will license facilities to provide patients with medical marijuana until September or October.

After the division writes the regulations, they must be approved by the state Board of Health and the Legislative Commission. They also must be reviewed by the Legislative Counsel Bureau.

Once the regulations win approval, Williams said, applicants have 30 days to submit paperwork to become a cultivator; manufacturer of marijuana-based products such as edibles; testing lab; or dispensary. The state then has a 90-day period to review applications.

Although Nevada voters approved a constitutional amendment allowing medical marijuana in 2000, patients had no legal way to obtain the drug.

The Legislature earlier this year established a regulated system for dispensing medical marijuana to patients with a state-issued card. The law sets up a taxing, regulatory and distribution system for medicinal pot. The law also authorizes one pot dispensary in each of Nevada's 14 rural counties, with up to 40 allowed in Clark County, 10 in Washoe and two in Carson City.

The Health Division is tasked with adopting regulations and implementing the law that was supposed to take effect April 1.

Williams provided an update during a hearing last week in Carson City to review proposed regulations.

Several lawyers representing potential applicants said it would be difficult to comply with some of the rules.

The audit requirements are particularly onerous, said Patrick McDonnell of the law firm Rainey & Devine. A rule requiring a full accredited audit every year could cost businesses from \$25,000 to \$50,000, he said.

Northstar plans to expand terrain, lift access

By Kathryn Reed

New lifts, increased terrain and a better experience – those are some of the goals of Northstar.

The Truckee ski resort is in the midst of getting environmental documents for the Northstar Mountain Master Plan approved. Comments will be taken for another week. The final environmental impact report is expected in the spring, with necessary approvals shortly thereafter.

But what gets built first remains to be seen. Officials said it's too early to say how specific projects will be prioritized.

A gondola is proposed to take people from the lower parking area to the village. Parking and traffic have been major complaints of guests ever since the village was built. The village and additional lodging wiped out a significant amount of parking that was close to the base area.



Northstar's proposed lift
and on-mountain

improvements.

It's likely a lift would start in the village to take riders to the top of Lookout Mountain. Right now that area takes a few lifts before it can be accessed.

Expanding the resort to include Sawtooth Ridge has long been talked about. The proposal calls for 300 acres to be incorporated into the ski boundary.

Northstar is mostly on private land and is outside the Lake Tahoe Basin. This is why the U.S. Forest Service and Tahoe Regional Planning Agency are not involved.

"Our priorities remain in line with the initial goals of the Northstar Mountain Master Plan, which are to implement a plan consistent with habitat and land use goals defined in the Northstar Habitat Management Plan; and to offer a better balance of beginner, intermediate, and expert terrain in order to improve and extend the vacation experience for the destination guest and day use skier," Northstar COO Bill Rock told *Lake Tahoe News*. "The primary project objectives contained in the EIR and proposed NMMP (are to) maintain Northstar's competitiveness as a resort destination by upgrading existing services, amenities, and operations. This includes providing a better balance of skier amenities, improving lift technology, and increasing the variety and mix of recreational activities."

Northstar's eventual expansion will require more electric power for new lifts as well as increased snowmaking.

While Liberty Utilities, the electric company for the resort as well as all of Truckee and the California side of the Lake Tahoe Basin, is looking at revamping its lines in Truckee-North Lake Tahoe.

"The proposed NMMP improvements would connect to existing electrical infrastructure and would not require new

distribution facilities, upgrades to the Northstar substation or any other off-site improvements,” Rock said.

Liberty and Northstar have told *Lake Tahoe News* that the resort’s plans have nothing to do with the utility company’s wanting to upgrade its system. It’s a matter of being able to keep providing consistent power – a reliability issue that Liberty says needs addressing today under current conditions.

“We expect that building out the additional improvements proposed in the master plan will increase electrical power consumption over existing levels. This is disclosed in the draft EIR and determined to be a less-than-significant impact,” Rock said. “Ski related equipment such as chairlifts and snowmaking guns are continually being improved in terms of energy efficiency in order to reduce both consumption and operating expenses. Northstar intends to take full advantage of the improvements in these technologies over time in order to realize the benefits they offer. In addition, the California Building Code sets strict limits on the energy efficiency of each new building that is constructed, for example new on-mountain skier service buildings and warming huts.”

Liberty’s feeder tie between Northstar and Truckee is a 14.4 kilo volt line.

“This project again is not driven by Northstar load additions. It is another reliability issue that exists today and is being addressed,” Rock said. “Based on information supplied by Liberty Utilities, the current Northstar substation is at roughly 50 percent of its capacity on a peak winter day.”

Northstar is doing its part to try to conserve energy. Older snowmaking guns have been replaced with energy-efficient models and the underground parking garage was recently upgraded with energy-efficient lighting.

Notes:

- Comments are being taken until Jan. 13. They may be emailed to cdraecs@placer.ca.gov.
- The draft environmental impact report is online.
- There will be a public hearing about the document Jan. 9 at 10:20am in the Placer County Planning Commission Hearing Room, 3091 County Center Drive, Auburn.

Nevada bear hunt ends with 14 kills

By AP

Nevada's third black bear hunting season is in the books.

The Department of Wildlife says 14 bears were killed by hunters, with the last one killed on Nov. 23.

Of those, four were female and 10 were male.

As many as 20 were allowed to be killed in the season that ran from Sept. 15 through Dec. 31.

The agency this year excluded the Lake Tahoe Basin and areas along popular hiking trails on Mount Rose Summit from the hunt area after complaints from residents.

Wildlife commissioners have said they will review the bear hunt after this season.

During the last three years, 135 bear hunting tags were issued and 39 bears were been killed.

Economists forecast bright 2014

By Marilyn Geewax, NPR

As the new year begins, most economists' annual forecasts are brimming with good cheer.

"The economic news remains broadly encouraging," the Goldman Sachs forecasters write in their 2014 outlook.

And the brighter prospects are not limited to this country. "The global economy is likely to emerge in 2014 with modest growth of 3.3 percent compared with 2.5 percent this year," according to Nariman Behravesh, chief economist at the forecasting firm IHS Global Insight.

Most stock analysts also see more gains coming on Wall Street. JPMorgan chief U.S. equity strategist Tom Lee, who accurately predicted stock advances for 2013, says Americans are now in the midst of "a classic bull market," driven by good earnings.

So, why all the upbeat forecasts? What has changed?

Read the whole story

U.S. cancer mortality rate decreasing

By Michelle Fay Cortez, Bloomberg

The number of Americans dying from cancer has continued to fall since peaking in 1991, averting 1.5 million deaths that otherwise would have stemmed from one of the most feared diseases in the world.

The American Cancer Society, in its annual statistical report, estimates that 1.7 million Americans will be diagnosed with malignancies and 589,430 will die from them in 2015, roughly 1,600 people a day.

Cancer already is the leading cause of death among Americans ages 40 to 79, and is expected to overtake heart disease as the nation's top killer in the next several years, said Chief Executive Officer John R. Seffrin.

Just four types account for half of all cancers in the U.S.: prostate, breast, lung and colorectal tumors.

[Read the whole story](#)

Pedestrian killed in South

Lake Tahoe

Law enforcement officers are trying to identify the pedestrian who was killed on Highway 50 at 8pm News Year's Day.

The man, who is estimated to be in his 40s, was found face down in the driveway of the Town and Country Shopping Center in South Lake Tahoe. He had no identification on him and no one as of Thursday morning had reported him missing. The El Dorado County coroner will be doing an autopsy.

It is not known what direction the pedestrian was walking. The vehicle that hit him was going east on the highway. South Tahoe police officers said the driver, 19-year-old Uriel Ortiz of South Lake Tahoe, was driving less than 40 mph – the posted speed limit. Officers said Ortiz was not under the influence of drugs.

The accident is still under investigation.

Anyone who saw the accident is asked to call Detective Doug Sentell at (530) 542.6100.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

AAA: Gas should be lower in 2014

By Shan Li, Los Angeles Times

Motorists driving in the U.S. in 2014 may enjoy some relief at the gas pump, shelling out about 5 cents less per gallon compared with this year, according to AAA.

Rising domestic crude oil production and increased refining capacity are helping insulate the U.S. from global disruptions in production, according to the motorist club. That has helped drive down average gas prices this year to their lowest level since 2010. In 2013, the average price of a gallon of regular gas was \$3.49, compared with \$3.60 in 2012 and \$3.51 in 2011, AAA said.

Read the whole story

No major crime on S. Shore on New Year's Eve

South Lake Tahoe police officers are reporting fewer arrests during the New Year's Eve celebrations, while Douglas County sheriff's deputies are reporting more compared to a year ago.

Between 12:01am Dec. 31 and 3pm Jan. 1, there were seven arrests in South Lake Tahoe. Most people were taken into custody for being drunk or disorderly in public. Fourteen people were arrested in the 48-hour holiday period in the city last year.



Thousands rang in the New
Year at SnowGlobe in South
Lake Tahoe. Photo/Lesia
Witkowski

“Although the city was quite full with holiday revelers, the number of calls for emergency police responses was fewer this year than during many past years,” Lt. Brian Williams said in a press release. “While the SnowGlobe festival has generated thousands of attendees over the past three years, the number of arrests generated there have not caused an overall uptick in arrest stats. Numbers of arrests have ranged from a high of 39 in 2001-02 to a low of seven this year.”

In Douglas County, 24 people were arrested in the Stateline casino area. Charges included assault, affray, domestic battery, disorderly conduct, minor consuming alcohol and civil protective custody. Last year, 14 people were arrested.

Highway 50 by the casinos was closed to motorists from 11pm Dec. 31 to 1am Jan. 1 because of the thousands of people who filled the streets.

Nevada Highway Patrol officers arrested five people in Northern Nevada for driving under the influence. Seven faced DUI charges a year ago. Troopers responded to six collisions; four were property damage events, two involved non-life-threatening injuries.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Not all ski deaths are counted by NSAA

By Vernon Silver, Bloomberg

There's a grim certainty that comes with the start of a fresh U.S. ski season: Inevitably, for a tiny number of those who take the slopes, winter fun will end in deadly tragedy. Counting just how many perish in accidents is a job that falls to the skiing industry itself, and the tally stops short of trying to reflect each and every death on skis.

The statistics compiled by the National Ski Areas Association exclude a range of deaths, including those that happen outside commercial ski slope boundaries, those who ski after normal operating hours, victims of heart attacks on the slopes, participants in competitions, and ski area employees who die on the job. This means that Ian Lamphere, 35, who died while skiing in Colorado this April, didn't make the count. Nor did the four snowboarders who died with him. The group was out of ski area boundaries when an avalanche claimed their lives at Loveland Pass.

Over the past decade the NSAA's count has averaged 39.6 annual snowboard and skiing deaths in the U.S., or 0.69 deaths per million skier visits.

Read the whole story