

138-year sentence in sex crimes case

By Cathy Locke, Sacramento Bee

A man was sentenced Aug. 9 in El Dorado County Superior Court to 138 years to life in prison for acts of sexual misconduct committed more than a decade ago.

An El Dorado County jury in July convicted Patrick Senatore, 45, of 10 felony counts of sexual misconduct.

In October 2001, two children reported incidents of sexual misconduct and forcible rape to the El Dorado County Sheriff's Department.

Read the whole story

El Dorado slow-growth advocates fight development

By Peter Hecht, Sacramento Bee

In the county that brought the Gold Rush, surging with newcomers and rough-hewn mining camps, prospects of another boom are unnerving the modern-day populace.

Amid an improving real estate economy, developers are proposing nearly 7,000 new houses for the Western Slope of El Dorado County.

The new wave of potential major projects is emerging after a 2004 county general plan that promised to preserve the county's rural character while anticipating up to 21,000 additional houses.

In a region renowned for perhaps the most bitter growth battles in the lower Sierra Nevada, current residents are pushing back. Where miners once ravaged land for gold, determined homeowners are digging in for a protracted political fight to protect rustic lifestyles from new people, more houses and increased traffic.

Slow-growth advocates are now threatening a 2014 vote to limit new construction.

Read the whole story

Caesars raising cash by selling Macau property

By Ed Komenda, Las Vegas Sun

Caesars Entertainment Corp. is selling its Macau golf course to an Asian developer for \$438 million.

The gaming giant, which owns Harrah's Lake Tahoe and Harveys at Stateline, announced the sale Friday in a filing with the Securities & Exchange Commission.

The deal landed this week with Pearl Dynasty Investments Ltd., which put up a \$65.7 million deposit.

If Caesars successfully closes the deal by the end of the year as expected, it plans to use the money to help pay down its

\$20 billion debt.

Read the whole story

Calif. braces for worst part of fire season

By AP

BANNING -- California truly is the Golden State this summer – golden brown – and that has fire officials worried heading into the peak of the wildfire season.

It's still weeks before the fire-fanning Santa Ana winds usually arrive and already it's been a brutal fire season, with nearly twice as many acres burned statewide from a year ago, including 18,000 scorched this week in a blaze still raging in the mountains 90 miles east of Los Angeles.

So far this year, California fire officials have battled 4,300 wildfires, a stark increase from the yearly average of nearly 3,000 they faced from 2008 to 2012, said Daniel Berlant, a spokesman for the CalFire.

Until last week, those fires had already burned 111 square miles or more than 71,000 acres, up from 40,000 acres during the same period last year. The annual average for acreage charred in the last five years was 113,000 acres, he said – roughly 177 square miles.

"We have seen a significant increase in our fire activity and much earlier than normal," said Berlant, adding that fire season began in mid-April, about a month ahead of schedule after an especially dry winter. "We're not even yet into the

time period where we see the largest number of damaging fires.”

Sen. Barbara Boxer, D-Calif., who lives in Riverside County, said more than 165,000 acres or 258 square miles have burned in California this year, and climate change is setting conditions for more disastrous blazes, while budget cuts are limiting resources to fight them. Boxer’s data comes from both California officials and federal agencies, including the U.S. Forest Service.

This year, state fire officials have called up more firefighters and reserve engines on days with hot, dry conditions, Berlant said.

And while state officials encouraged residents to rid their properties of dry brush before fire season starts, he said authorities are now urging the public not to use lawnmowers or weed eaters during the heat of the day because a spark off the metal blades can trigger a blaze.

On Friday, firefighters launched a fleet of seven retardant-dropping airplanes against Southern California’s latest destructive wildfire, which has destroyed 26 homes and threatened more than 500 others in the San Jacinto Mountains.

The so-called Silver Fire injured five firefighters and seriously burned one civilian.

It had grown to 28 square miles late Friday, but it was 40 percent contained and showed little more than white smoke.

At its peak, it forced the evacuation of 1,800 people, including 800 campers, but orders were lifted for many areas Friday and only a few hundred evacuees remained.

Gov. Jerry Brown declared an emergency for the area Friday, freeing up additional funds and resources for the firefight and recovery.

In the Twin Pines neighborhood outside Banning, Andy Schrader said he couldn't get out in time. The wildfire crept up suddenly and blew over his house, burning his motor home and singeing his hair as he sprayed water from a hose to try to keep the house wet.

"I could feel my face burning," the 74-year-old carpenter said. "And I thought I was going to die."

Most of Southern California's severe wildfires are associated with Santa Ana winds, caused by high pressure over the West that sends a clockwise flow of air rushing down into the region.

This week's fire, however, was being fanned by a counter-clockwise flow around a low pressure area over northwest California. The National Weather Service said conditions could change in the second half of next week, with weaker winds in the mountains and deserts.

Wildfire experts say the traditional fire season has grown longer in California as rainfall has been lower than usual over the last two years and tapered off sooner.

Los Angeles, for example, received only 5.85 inches of rain from July 2012 through June 2013, compared with 8.71 inches a year before and a 30-year average of 14.93 inches, said Eric Boldt, a meteorologist with the National Weather Service.

Tom Scott, a natural resources specialist who teaches at University of California campuses in Riverside and Berkeley, said plants can have a harder time staying hydrated under such conditions.

"The whole system is like a bank account – it's being drawn down," he said.

Richard A. Minnich, a professor of earth sciences at UC Riverside, said much of Southern California is in pretty good

shape because older vegetation burned off during a spate of wildfires over the past decade, but there are spots at serious risk because of the prevalence of old-growth chaparral.

“Wherever there is very old chaparral, we’ve got a tremendous threat,” he said.

Motorists leave pedestrian in middle of Hwy. 50

A 31-year-old Carson City man was seriously injured early this morning when a vehicle struck him as he was crossing Highway 50 in Stateline.

The man, whose name has not been released, was walking near Lake Parkway by MontBleu just after 3am Aug. 10. Nevada Highway Patrol officers say it is possible he was hit by more than one vehicle.

“One witness who stopped to render aid told troopers that he was driving west when he observed a person lying in one of the eastbound travel lanes. When he turned his vehicle around to provide assistance, he saw a full size blue Dodge pickup strike the downed pedestrian,” Trooper Chuck Allen said in a press release.

CalStar took the man to Renown Medical Center in Reno where he was listed in critical condition.

NHP is asking anyone who saw the accident to contact Trooper Doug Hildebrand at (775) 689.4623 or dhildebrand@dps.state.nv.us.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Tourists being scammed by fake vacation rental owners

South Lake Tahoe police officers are advising vacation homeowners, rental companies, and future visitors to the area of a scam over the Internet through vacation rental websites.

At least three families have been victimized by this scam recently, and it is suspected there may be more.

The scam involves false postings on legitimate vacation rental websites advertising rental properties available in South Lake Tahoe. They include photographs of residences in the area, which make the postings appear authentic.

Typically a victim contacts the suspect(s) via email through such a website, and the suspect emails realistic appearing rental agreements with an out of state bank account number, and routing number for the victim to send money. The suspect then has the victim wire transfer the money, which makes it non-refundable to the victim by a bank. The victim then sends the money unknowingly to the suspect(s), thinking they have a reservation for the property.

They arrive at their destination to discover that the transaction was fraudulent and they have been scammed out of their money.

The thieves have used accounts in multiple states and have used different names, both male and female. One common denominator is that a cell phone number of (940) 238.4477 is listed on the rental agreement.

If anyone is a victim of these suspect(s), contact Officer

Mark Hounsell at (530) 542.6100.

S. Tahoe murder victim ID'd, reward offered

A \$4,000 reward has been set up to help find the man who gunned down a South Lake Tahoe gas station clerk on Aug. 6.

Manpreet Ghuman Singh, 27, was working behind the counter Tuesday night when he was shot at pointblank range in the upper torso. He died at the USA gas station on Highway 50 and Lodi Avenue.

The murder suspect acted alone and did not appear to have any intention of robbing the station, according to police.

The suspect is described as a male between the ages of 20 and 40, between 5-feet-8 and 5-feet-10, wearing a dark hoodie and dark mask over his face, his skin tone is light but exact race unknown.

The Lake Tahoe Secret Witness Program has offered a \$1,500 reward for information leading to the arrest of the suspect. An anonymous donor contribute an additional \$2,500. The phone number is (530) 541.6800.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Companies slow to initiate online gaming

By Cy Ryan, Las Vegas Sun

CARSON CITY – Some casinos that gained prior approval from state regulators are taking a go-slow approach in entering the online poker market.

The state Gaming Control Board Wednesday recommended approval to three companies to extend their license for another six months before they offer the computer poker business in Nevada.

Board chairman A.G. Burnett said the law requires companies to activate their licenses within six months. He said these firms are in a “holding” mode, waiting to see how the market emerges.

And he said some companies are still developing their product or waiting for the control board’s staff to clear their interactive game system.

Read the whole story

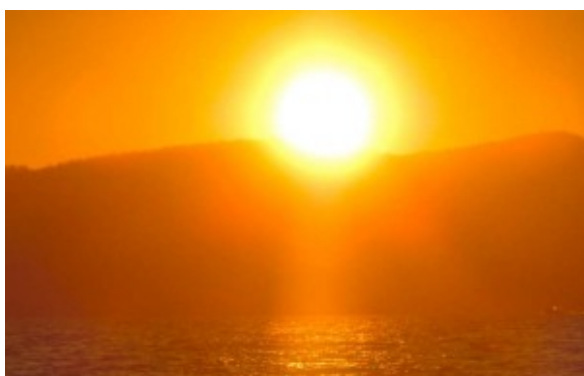
Report: Global warming already impacting Calif.

By Paul Rogers, San Jose Mercury News

Rising ocean waters. Bigger and more frequent forest fires. More brutally hot summer days.

These aren't the usual predictions about global warming based on computer forecasts. They're changes already happening in California, according to a detailed new report issued Thursday by the California Environmental Protection Agency.

Climate change is "an immediate and growing threat" affecting the state's water supplies, farm industry, forests, wildlife and public health, the report says. The 258-page document was written by 51 scientists from the University of California, Scripps Institution of Oceanography, Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory, U.S. Geological Survey and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, among other agencies and institutions.



A report released Aug. 8 points out how global warming is affecting California. Photo/LTN file

"Climate change is not just some abstract scientific debate," said California EPA Secretary Matt Rodriquez. "It's real, and it's already here."

Most Californians seem to agree. In a poll last month by the nonpartisan Public Policy Institute of California, 63 percent of the state's residents said the effects of global warming are already being felt, while 22 percent said they will happen in the future. Eleven percent said they will never happen.

Read the whole story

Names in fatal Cave Rock accident released

Details of the fatal July 30 accident on Highway 50 at Cave Rock are emerging as Nevada Highway Patrol officers continue their investigation.

Sixteen people were involved in the three-vehicle crash that claimed the life of 3-year-old Caroline M. Maxfield of Centennial, Colo.



A child died in this car accident on July 30 near Cave Rock. Photo/Provided

Sylvia Hurtado of South Lake Tahoe was driving a black 2011 Cadillac SRX4 west when the vehicle crossed the double-yellow line and sideswiped a black 2008 GMC Yukon traveling east. Ross King of Centennial, Colo., had seven passengers in the Yukon. Every person in that vehicle was hurt when it rolled over.

The Cadillac then collided head-on with a red 2008 Chrysler Town & Country van driven by Emily Maxfield, of Centennial, Colo. She had six passengers. The child who died was Emily

Maxfield's daughter.

Witnesses to the crash and anyone with additional information are encouraged to contact Trooper Doug Hildebrand at (775) 689.4623 or dhildebrand@dps.state.nv.us.

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*