Opinion: Calif. reaps bitter harvest of environmental extremism

By Darrell Issa, Orange County Register

California has always prided itself on setting an example for the nation. From its early Gold Rush days, through the rise of its tech industry and the Silicon Valley, the Golden State has repeatedly positioned itself on the cutting edge of the next significant undertaking in American society.

Today, unfortunately, California's lack of preparedness for this multiyear drought is an example of what happens when the state's historic boldness and ingenuity take a backseat to a radical political ideology.

How could such an industrious and forward-thinking state – which is also the world's eighth-largest economy – ever allow itself to get in this position?

In the 1970s, the environmentalist movement began to take shape in the United States. Many California lawmakers and the state's youthful first-term governor, Jerry Brown, embraced the tenets of this movement and set ambitious goals to create a futuristic Golden State in the vein of environmental idealism. While the notion of making California the greenest state in the country at all costs probably seemed as exciting and ambitious to politicians as building a high-speed bullet train to connect San Francisco to Los Angeles, the consequences of environmental extremism have proven to be, at best, problematic and, at worst, detrimental during times of crisis.

Read the whole story

Letter: A Brush With Kindness says thank you

To the community,

Habitat for Humanity, A Brush With Kindness in South Lake Tahoe, would like to thank the following companies who donated time and materials to our 2015 projects:

- Environmental Inspection and Construction, Inc.
- Lake Tahoe Glass
- Lowe’s Home Improvement (they truly saved the day)
- Meeks Lumber & Hardware in Meyers
- South Tahoe Public Utility District
- Valspar Paint

Thanks to their support, A Brush With Kindness was able to provide qualified low-income homeowners in our community with much needed maintenance and repairs.

A Brush With Kindness in South Lake Tahoe provides exterior home improvements to qualified homeowners who cannot complete the work themselves. Volunteer teams work to improve the condition of homes by completing necessary painting, yard work and minor exterior repairs. We are currently accepting applications for the 2016 summer projects. Interested homeowners that could meet income criteria can contact Norine Hegy at 530.544.2620 for more information and an application packet.

Pam Barrett, A Brush With Kindness

Opinion: The eternal birthday present



Water skiing became a summer ritual at age 6.

By Kathryn Reed

My parents gave me a gift at an early age that I continue to enjoy today – the love of sport.

I don't know if they knew they were doing that at the time, but I thank them for it. They are why I ski (we learned together – they were 40, I was 10), they are why I play tennis (mom enrolled me in a community program at about 10), they are why I love the water (I was called a fish as a kid), and they are why I embrace the outdoors (so many family camping trips).

My earliest memories of sports center around the water – swimming and skiing. At 4 I was a fairly proficient swimmer. I went on to compete in AAU swimming, making it to Far West Championships on a relay team. At 6 I was on water skis. Not long thereafter I asked if I could try a slalom ski. Mom said

not until I was good at going over the wake on both sides. I demonstrated that that day. Mom acquiesced. I learned to beach start like she did. However, I never was able to drop back into the water without getting my hair wet as she would do.



One year of tennis at San Francisco State University.

I have such wonderful memories of ski trips to Lake Tahoe while growing up in the Bay Area. There were three families who annually stayed at a house in Squaw Valley – right on the slopes. (No wonder I think vacation home rentals are normal.) And so many weekends were also spent at Northstar – pre-village and overdevelopment.

Then there was tennis. Mrs. Lackey toughened me up. She taught us to aim for our opponent and if we felt sick, vomit off the court, and then keep playing. I'm not saying those are the best things to learn, but they've stuck with me. It might be why a year or two ago I continued playing in a USTA match despite a groin pull – quitting didn't cross my mind even though losing was inevitable. It might be why in college when I tweaked my Achilles' I was OK with the trainer taping it and still playing. All the injury did was get me out of running up the hill every practice. Not playing wasn't an option I ever considered.



Carolyn Wright, Kae Reed, Donna Rockwood at World Team Tennis in Citrus Heights in July.

Mom had me playing in junior leagues, which led to four years of high school varsity tennis and a year in college. I've played competitively on and off as an adult; currently I'm on two USTA (United States Tennis Association) teams out of Zephyr Cove Tennis Club.

As a kid, these experiences were about family, friends, being outdoors, and just playing. It's the same today – having fun with friends on the court, the slopes and trails.

Who knows if I would have embraced these activities if it weren't for my parents.



Angelique Kerber, eventual winner of the Bank of the West tournament at Stanford in August, lunges for a forehand. This is a tournament the reporter first went to years ago with her parents. Photo/Carolyn E. Wright/Copyright

Today, as I mark the half century milestone, I can't thank my parents enough for introducing me to so many sports – some of which I continue to participate in, some that I was never going to excel at (gymnastics), and others that I tend to spectate more than play (baseball). All of them, though, hold a special memory.

And I thank them for taking me to see professional sports – mostly tennis, a little baseball and football, the 1984 Olympics in Los Angeles; as well as watching them on TV.

All of it fueled my desire to be an athlete and a sports fan.

What a present – the lifelong gift of sport.

Opinion: Expect increase in bear activity

By Carl Lackey

As autumn begins, the appetite of the Sierra Nevada black bear takes a dramatic swing upward. Motivated by signals from nature known as zeitgebers, the bears spectacularly increase their daily caloric intake from 3,000 calories per day to upward of 25,000 calories per day.

This physiological wonder is known as hyperphagia. Nature's dinner bell is ringing.

Hyperphagia is a period where bears eat as much as they possibly can so they can put on as much fat as possible to carry them through winter hibernation. Nothing much gets in the bear's way when they are this hungry.

Armed with that big appetite and motivated by zeitgebers like decreased daily sunlight and cooler morning temperatures, the bears will search far and wide in the hunt for food. Those 25,000 calories are the human equivalent of eating about 50 cheeseburgers per day over the next couple of months.

The moon is at or nearly full for the rest of September and the first days of October. They will eat up to 20 hours per day during a full moon period as they pile on the fat. People living in bear country should not be tempting these already hungry bears with easy access to garbage, bird feeders, bowls of pet food or ripened fruit falling from trees.

Areas most at risk of attracting bears by granting access to garbage and other attractants are the Lake Tahoe Basin, west Carson City and the foothill areas of Douglas and Washoe counties.

Nevada has had four dry winters in a row and the natural foods that the bears desire are not in abundance in the wild lands. Plants that create nuts and berries like manzanita, squirrel tail, snowbush, desert peach and rosehips are highly desired but not always abundant in dry years. It will be a busy next few weeks in bear country.

People needing to report nuisance bear activity can call the NDOW's Bear Hotline telephone number at 775.688.2327. For information on living with bears persons can go **online** and find the "Bear Logic" page.

Carl Lackey is a biologist with the Nevada Division of Wildlife.

Opinion: Pensions eating more of local budgets

By Pete Constant, Orange County Register

As more and more tax dollars are siphoned off to pay escalating public pension costs, local governments across California are increasingly struggling to provide quality services to their residents. And the problem gets worse with each passing year.

Last month, the California Public Employees' Retirement System indicated it is raising required contribution rates by more than 9 percent, a move that will cost state and local governments nearly $600 million. This is just the first in a series of rate hikes that CalPERS plans over the next several

years in an effort to become fully funded. CalPERS was just 70 percent funded after 2013, but double-digit investment returns helped it rise to 77 percent funded in 2014. But the largest pension system in the U.S. still has a long way to go before it is fully funded and able to actually pay for all of the retirement benefits that have been promised to government workers.

As these state and local pension payments and debts continue to rise, the pathways to pensions reform continue to vanish. Efforts to reform broken pension systems have been blocked by the Public Employees Relations Board and the courts.

Read the whole story

Letter: Ridgeline development a disaster in the making

To the community,

During a recent District 5 constituent gathering in Supervisor Jennifer Montgomery's office in Tahoe City, Fire Chief Michael Schwartz stated: "On average, we put out a fire a day around here."

One day – likely a windy day – one of these fires is sure get out of hand, or some monster will blow in from elsewhere .I've been in the midst of a wind-blown, out-of-control, 100,000-acre wildfire.

Harrowing and life threatening only begin to express the terror. The ground was so hot I could feel the heat through the soles of my shoes. The wind was blowing embers more than

a mile ahead of where we were trying to find safety. Simply breathing was an exercise in pain management, and it didn't matter how many showers I took, I stunk of smoke for days afterward. Those who live on the North Shore know that we're already at or near capacity with summer traffic that routinely gridlocks for a mile or more on highways 28 and 89. Weekday construction traffic entering and leaving Martis Camp backs up Highway 267 for miles, morning and evening. Kings Beach has experienced ever-growing congestion for years, but it has recently worsened with the narrow, single lane roads in each direction, no pedestrian control, and roundabout "improvements."

Now, imagine the additional impact of the proposed ridgeline projects comprised of the 550-site Brockway Campground, 760-home Martis Valley West Project, and acres of commercial amenities. These new developments, with 25-year building permits would be accessed from Highway 267. On a daily basis, there would be hundreds of additional cars and RVs – some towing boats and other toys – logging trucks, and construction vehicles up and down Highway 267, congesting traffic for miles in either direction. Can anyone reasonably argue or defend the likelihood of something other than a gridlocked death trap within the basin and along Highway 267 during an emergency evacuation?

Recently, on Southern California's I-15 freeway between Los Angeles and Las Vegas, dozens of vehicles were overtaken and trapped by a fast-moving wildfire. Drivers and passengers were forced to abandon their vehicles and run for their lives. If this occurred on a four-lane freeway during routine traffic conditions, imagine what Highway 267 would look like with thousands of residents and visitors attempting to flee to safety.

There are many issues that I find disconcerting about these two developments in addition to the assured traffic congestion/public safety issues they will create. What about

the added exhaust pollution trapped in the basin, and the resulting impact on the health of our residents, the lake, and forests? Where will the water come from to support these developments, and how will it affect the quality of water provided by local utilities in the basin? Which agency will provide first responder services to a new “Kings Beach-sized” community far from existing infrastructure? Will this be only the first ridgetop development to push its way into the Tahoe basin, forever destroying our unspoiled ridgelines and our uncompromised nighttime celestial views?

The list is endless.

Landowners have a limited right to find the highest and best use of their land. Conversely, as a check and balance, citizens’ elected or appointed representatives need to exercise their moral and ethical responsibility to protect and safeguard their communities and constituents in order to maintain a balance for the common good. As citizens, we must be observant and informed in order to effectively participate and protect our rights, our environment, our community, and our treasured Lake Tahoe. I can attest firsthand that in a wildfire few things go according to plan, especially evacuations. Many lives are at risk if North Shore residents and visitors simply can’t get to safety. I’ve yet to hear any sound arguments to convince me that the two ridgeline developments, and the hundreds of additional vehicles they will assuredly bring, will do anything but jeopardize public safety.

Robert Heinz, retired Realtor/investor and 18-year North Shore resident

Letter: Looking for input on sales tax hike idea

To the community,

The Placer County Transportation Planning Agency is strongly considering asking the voters to increase the sales tax countywide by 0.5 percent (half cent) in 2016 in order to fund transportation related projects such as roads, trails, and transit. It would require a two-thirds majority to pass, and funds would be dedicated to transportation improvements within the county.

Funds collected specifically in the North Lake Tahoe region would only be used for transportation improvements in our region, totaling approximately $1,200,000 annually. This increase would also allow Placer County to be eligible to obtain additional funding from federal and state programs.

Your input on this very short survey will help the local leaders to identify how to best spend those funds should this proposal move forward to the ballot in 2016. Thank you for your time and input and don’t hesitate to contact me if you have any questions.

Click here for the survey. Please reply by Sept. 30.

Sandy Evans Hall, CEO/executive director North Lake Tahoe Resort Association

Letter: NDOW bear actions questioned

To the community,

Many of you are probably aware of the female mother bear captured at Incline High School last Wednesday morning without her cub. The story has been covered by the **media**. There have been daily reports since Wednesday through Saturday.

Unfortunately, many of the details within the reports are misleading and not truthful on the part of NDOW.

The mother bear was on the football field of Incline High School on Wednesday morning and the school went into lockdown. A volunteer for the Nevada Department of Wildlife, who is also an Incline Village resident, was called to the school to act on NDOW's behalf. The NDOW volunteer treed the female bear on campus and kept her there for two hours until NDOW personnel arrived. Despite her being a lactating female, she was tranquilized and removed from IHS and taken to Carson City. NDOW said this mother bear was caught in the wrong place at the wrong time and was not a "threat".

She was brought back to IHS in the late afternoon in the hopes of reuniting her with her cub. The BEAR League and other bear advocates were aware of the plan and steered clear so the mom and cub could be reunited. NDOW brought a family trap with the mom to IHS Wednesday late afternoon behind a locked gate. NDOW, however, reported that "someone found their way in there and disrupted the area and kept the reunion from happening."

Chris Healy of NDOW further stated, "Unfortunately, NDOW bear trapping efforts in Incline Village have been greatly hindered by people tampering with traps. The strategy has a chance of working only if the trap is not tampered with. Over the past few years, a small group of people have seen fit to prevent

NDoW from trapping bears at Incline Village by encouraging activists to monitor traps and prevent bears from entering those legally set traps”

As many of you know, from 2009-2013, NDOW killed 48 percent of trapped Incline Village bears. Because of this, some Incline Village BEAR League volunteers and bear activists have peacefully protested and monitored trap activity in Incline Village the last few years. It is clear to those in the community and beyond that NDoW’s comments about the disruption Wednesday night are clearly targeting and accusing the BEAR League volunteers as interfering and disrupting the mother-cub reunion. NDoW’s comments are not only dishonest but NDOW knows they are highly misleading:
Since the story broke out on Mynews4 on Wednesday, the BEAR League, BEAR League Incline Village volunteers, and other bear advocates all chose to “stand down” and not discuss or post anything publicly relating to the trapped mother bear. Bear advocates only concern was reuniting the mother with the cub. Everyone agreed to stay clear of IHS so NDOW could reunite the mother and cub in the family trap. Unfortunately, this did not happen Wednesday night/Thursday morning.

On Thursday morning the BEAR League received a call about a cub sighting near IHS. Two BEAR League volunteers immediately went to the area and also immediately called NDoW to report the sighting.

BEAR League volunteers canvassed the neighborhood. Four different households reported seeing a cub. Three sightings on one street still appear legitimate while a fourth sighting on a different street turned out to be a yearling.

At this time, NDOW also said they would prefer to place the trap very near to the last sighting of the bear cub.

BEAR League volunteers approached, asked and secured full approval from a property owner to place the trap on their

property. The BEAR League then called NDoW explaining they secured a placement of the trap and the location was not readily visible for others to see.

The trap stayed in place from Thursday night through Saturday morning. Unfortunately, the cub did not enter the family trap. The lactating mother bear was released out of the area Saturday afternoon with a GPS tracking collar in case the cub is located.

NDOW should have never trapped and removed a mother bear without getting the cub. She could have been easily escorted off the school property. Mother bears typically place their cubs in trees for their safety and leave only to come back a short time later. Again, this lactating mother should have been allowed to leave school grounds to get back to her cub. Instead, she was treed for two hours, tranquilized, and taken to Carson City.

Furthermore BEAR League volunteers assisted NDoW both in reporting sightings and arranging permission on private property for the trap to be set so the cub can be reunited with his mom. NDoW, however, has implied and continues (with Saturday reporting) to infer that BEAR League volunteers hindered their efforts. NDoW's Chris Healy through carefully crafted Press Releases, emails and interviews continue to slander and tell untruths about bear advocates in Incline Village and continue to blame others for their actions that lead to an abandoned cub.

It's unfortunate that this Incline incident is not the first time NDoW abandoned a cub. On June 2nd of this year, NDOW quietly trapped a lactating female in Carson City. They did not catch the cub and NDOW relocated this lactating mother bear in the Pinegrove Mountains two and one half hours away. NDOW is not always transparent as this information was obtained through a public records request. Because this most recent abandoned cub happened in Incline Village where bear

advocates monitor NDOW's activities, NDOW could not sweep this under. Instead, they are attacking the very organization and people who truly wanted to reunite the mom and cub as NDOW handled this situation wrong from the beginning.

If anyone sees this lone cub with two tags in both ears, please call the BEAR League at 530.525.7297.

Thank you,

Carolyn Stark, BEAR League volunteer

Opinion: Nutting and his shenanigans

By Larry Weitzman

Last column I promised more discussion regarding Ray Nutting's claim against the county for "malicious prosecution, abuse of process and numerous other torts" as Nutting identified in his own claim against El Dorado County filed Dec. 5, 2014, receiving case number 14.00096.

All the documents are readily available via the Public Records Act or with a little research. Remember all these documents are public as the county is a public entity and should operate with complete transparency, with very few exceptions. Unfortunately it doesn't, but that's another story and a basic problem with all government.



Larry Weitzman

Nutting’s claim goes back to a criminal grand jury indictment of several felonies based on filing false documents to obtain taxpayer funded Proposition 40 grant money, failure to disclose income, perjury and conflicts of interest in voting for over $600,000 of EDC funds to conservation districts whose boards that have authority over Prop. 40 Grants, along with some misdemeanors. Nutting was found not guilty on all but one of the felonies, as the jury was hung (7-5 for conviction) on that remaining felony, and he was convicted on six of seven of the misdemeanor charges. Because of the acquittals Nutting thinks he can sue for malicious prosecution.

The fact is anybody can sue anybody for anything, but to be successful in a lawsuit a litigant needs a good and viable claim (cause of action) and Nutting has none as the filing of charges by a criminal grand jury creates “probable cause” and bars the filing of a civil suit or claim as Nutting is doing here in the case of an acquittal. Supporting that absolute defense is the fact that in a motion to dismiss the case before the trial based on the facts that the criminal grand jury indictments were improperly obtained among other claims was also dismissed. A reading of the response to that motion gives one a real insight into this case.

That defense motion to dismiss the Nutting case was heard Sept. 20, 2013, and denied. That denial was upheld in Court of Appeal. The violation of Nutting rights during the criminal grand jury proceedings were thoroughly litigated and reviewed by several extremely competent judges and found to be meritless.

But that doesn’t stop Nutting. In a single spaced, densely worded attachment to his claim, he alleges in paragraph 25 that he was invited by the criminal grand jury to submit exculpatory evidence. Nutting says he submitted 141 pages of what he claims was exculpatory evidence, and that the district attorney did not properly present such evidence to the criminal grand jury, therefore prejudicing the criminal grand jury.

Before I go any further, understand that this claim was filed on Dec. 5, 2014, and was denied by the county on Jan. 20, 2015. Nutting had six months to file a lawsuit, which according to the county has not been filed or served. But in another twist the denial of the claim was based on the fact that the claim itself wasn’t filed within six months of its occurrence and therefore barred by the statute of limitations. So before any suit could be filed Nutting would first have to file a lawsuit to allow the filing of a claim. Nutting’s claim is essentially null and void.

But the Nutting case and arguments says a lot about Nutting. Outside of this criminal case, Nutting claims to be a smart guy, a graduate of a California State University, a supervisor and thinker entrusted to make important decisions for the county, some of them with far reaching ramifications that require study and thought, a guy with lots of common sense.

At the trial, which was jointly prosecuted by the state Attorney General’s Office and our local district attorney, Nutting portrayed himself as a no nothing, inept at paperwork and that he had no intention of trying to do something dishonest, they were all unintentional, inadvertent mistakes. Like he was too dumb to file a false document. Nutting’s defense attorney said the facts of the case were not in dispute and he as much as said so during his closing argument.

“Obviously a woodsman, he can make mistakes, he can bumble, “ argued David Weiner. Nutting’s attorney described him as “not

a polished witness.”

A conviction on a felony count would have certainly ended Nutting’s career on the BOS. He would have been removed. But a lesser misdemeanor conviction that Nutting received left his tenure on the BOS up to the judge in his trial. Perhaps the judge’s decision to remove Nutting from his board seat is an indication that the judge, the so to speak 13 juror in the room, thought Nutting wasn’t as truthful as he claimed when he found Nutting unqualified to continue his term. Perhaps he thought Nutting’s story of being a country bumble not believable. In a recent BOS meeting, many of Nutting’s supporters continued unabated with false claims and blaming others for his political downfall. It was ugly “political theater.” The bad acting never stops.

Larry Weitzman is a resident of Rescue.

Letter: NDOW needs to change its policy

To the community,

The sow of which I speak was treed and tranquilized in the tree at Incline High School on Sept. 16.

The trapping of this sow is a travesty. This sow could have easily been handled by the book from the bear aversion training manual entitled “Responding to Human-Black Bear Conflicts A guide to non-lethal Bear Management Techniques” used by many law enforcement, wildlife agencies, and forestry bear managers in a multitude of jurisdictions here in the U.S. and Canada. It was first developed and applied in the national

parks of Canada and the United States.

Walking this bear off into the desired direction could have easily been achieved with the NDOW officers present. Instead they decided to trap a lactating sow and hold her for three days. Not only has that cub gone three days without mother's milk, that three days could slow or end the production of milk for her cub. Add to that the stress this bear and her cub have suffered to this point!

NDOW is trap/kill happy. Talk about a serious overreaction to an easily remedied situation. Carl Lackey is completely out of control and operates by the seat of his pants with no real operational plan or standards in place. And they keep little or no documentation on each trapping, release, or depredation, or so they tell us at the Bear League, other than blood draw and tagging.

On Sept. 18 criminal complaints were filed against IVGID Public Work's Director Joe Pomroy and NDOW Deputy Director Jack Robb for violations of the Public Records Act including concealment of documents, the later of which is a Class C Felony. The Washoe County Sheriff's Office is investigating.

And the vast majority of bears he actually releases, as opposed to killing, he releases in the Nevada bear hunt zones, by his own inadvertent admissions now and again. And I find it interesting that many of those he kills are far too small to be considered trophies to hunters. This man doesn't even possess a degree in biology, so how exactly is he the NDOW state biologist? As far as I know being a sustainability major in college does not qualify him in any way, shape, or form to hold that title.

People need to start calling him out on the carpet and hold him and NDOW to a higher standard of professionalism, which seems to be set to a very low bar within NDOW.

Toogee Sielsch, member and bear aversion specialist for the

Bear League