

Opinion: We are not all going to die from climate change

By Steve Fleischli, Natural Resources Defense Council

The climate is changing. That simple fact really shouldn't be subject to dispute.

Something else that probably shouldn't be subject to dispute: We are not all going to die from climate change.

Undoubtedly, some people will die. Those without resources. Those with no place to go. Those without water. Or those with too much water as the seas rise or local floods increase. And there certainly will be misery for many of those that don't die.

But the simple truth also is that some people will have access to sufficient resources to withstand the changes. Some will be prepared. Some will adapt. Some will move. Some could even flourish in the face of a disproportionate allocation of resources.

So why should you care about climate change? You probably don't live in Bangladesh or on some tiny island in the Pacific Ocean. You've got nothing to worry about, right?

Wrong.

No matter where you live, you will not be immune to climate change. Scientific studies show that nearly every community in the U.S. will be impacted in some way by climate change. As a new report from NRDC highlights, cities like New York, Miami and San Francisco all face serious challenges from sea level rise. Phoenix and communities across the southwest face water shortages. Places like Chicago and St. Louis face more intense storms and floods.

Read the whole story

Opinion: Fire tax for rural areas is a good idea

Publisher's note: *This editorial is from the July 24, 2011, Sacramento Bee.*

If people choose to live in areas prone to wildfires, shouldn't they pay their fair share for the escalating costs of protecting their structures from inevitable infernos?

The answer should be a simple "yes," but state lawmakers didn't make it part of the budget until this year. That's when they approved a \$150 annual fee on 800,000 structures that sit within the vast acreage where California has firefighting responsibility.

In tight budget times, this fee will raise revenue to ensure that the state's firefighting capability isn't excessively cut back, putting rural residents in danger.

Yet that argument doesn't wash for Sen. Ted Gaines, R-Roseville. Attempting to make himself out as a caped crusader for taxpayers, Gaines has filed papers for a referendum to eliminate the fee.

Gaines claims the fire fee isn't a legitimate fee but a tax, and as such should have been subject to a two-thirds approval from lawmakers, instead of a majority vote.

Read the whole story

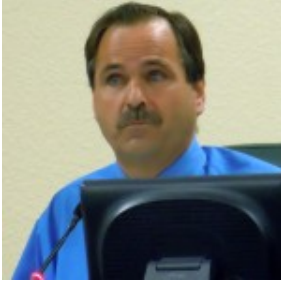
Opinion: El Dorado asks for flexibility to achieve environmental goals

Publisher's note: *The following letter was approved Aug. 2 by the El Dorado County Board of Supervisors to be sent to the Governing Board of the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency.*

Dear Governing Board:

The purpose of this letter is to convey our support for your continued pursuit of lake clarity through environmental threshold gains, transportation enhancements, economic development and expanded public and private partnerships, but, to also bring your attention to the difficult condition of water quality program compliance by local jurisdictions.

Only through partnerships with the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency, the California Tahoe Conservancy and the US Forest Service, has the county been able to complete 53 erosion control oriented projects at a cost of \$83 million in the last 28 years. But, sadly, that number pales to what is facing local jurisdictions over the next 15 years. Basin wide, it will cost \$1.5 billion to achieve the goals and objectives of the recent Total Daily Maximum Load mandated improvements at a time when all local jurisdictions suffer from severe fiscal impacts of a state and federal budget crisis and enormous local tax receipt losses.



Ray Nutting

The key to achieving these goals is a committed funding component and a reduced and reasonable dollar match that allows local jurisdictions a better chance to fund the required improvements. The County of El Dorado needs the ability to have operations and maintenance dollars included in the 50% match. Otherwise, these goals will be impossible to reach without affecting every county department, including public health and safety services.

The County supports projects of mutual interest that benefit the ecology and economy for generations to come and greatly appreciates your commitment to lake clarity. We also appreciate any assistance in reaching reasonable solutions to environmental improvements.

Sincerely,

Raymond J. Nutting, Board of Supervisors chairman

Clarification: Police chief knew nothing about daughter's

ticket

South Lake Tahoe Police Chief Brian Uhler was unaware his adult daughter went to El Dorado County traffic court on an infraction issued from a different agency.

He let *Lake Tahoe News* know about this on Saturday. His boss, City Manager Tony O'Rourke, knew none of the facts until after chastising *Lake Tahoe News* for inquiring about the issue.

O'Rourke continued to personally to attack this reporter through a series of emails for her initial question to Uhler: "Can you tell me anything about why your daughter was in court on a speeding ticket?"

Uhler told *Lake Tahoe News* his daughter wanted to handle this without him knowing about it. It was a basic speeding ticket.

Instead of the city trying to "spin" this into how this police chief does not ask for special treatment for his offspring, O'Rourke made it a story by denying the media public information. That was the story. For a city manager that continues to boast about being transparent, he muddied the waters.

The public has a right to know people with connections are treated the same as someone without – especially when this town has a history of favoritism.

– Kathryn Reed

Opinion: Every day prepares kids for kindergarten

By Vicki Barber

As the doors open to a new school year, more than 3.5 million children in the United States will enter kindergarten. Yes, really, that many. Kindergarten entry means schools all over the country are readying themselves for a new generation of learners. Just think, this will be the graduating class of 2024.

Getting a child ready for kindergarten is a large project. For some it may feel like it starts this month with the purchase of new clothes, pencils, and a ruler. But getting ready for kindergarten truly begins the day a child is born. Just breathing is a new experience. So is hearing and seeing. A first step is new. So is a first word. Any and all of these new experiences help children get ready for kindergarten.



Vicki Barber

I recently spent a few days with a 2½ -year-old little girl. She's gaining words every moment. "What's that?" "Where are you going?" "What are you doing?" She is curious about everything. She wants to attach a word to every item and event within her world. Her parents talk with her and encourage the questions. Although, I did notice a time or two when they requested a break, it is important they recognize that she is getting ready for kindergarten in her own way.

Preschool provides a marvelous opportunity to expand learning. Where else can a child learn about bunnies, goldfish, and sand play all in one place? Where else can a child make cookies and share them with friends in the same hour? Those friends may speak the same language or they may come from families speaking different languages. Over cookies, the language doesn't matter a great deal. At the end of the day, they'll all know the event was a tasty one and each will have words to describe the experience. They're getting ready for kindergarten. From age zero to 5, every childhood experience is setting the stage and now we've arrived. It's time for kindergarten.

This year the schools in El Dorado County are using a new screening tool. It's called the KSEP, short for Kindergarten Student Entrance Profile. The information is used to help the teachers in the schools learn about the words, experiences, and thoughts a child brings to this new world of school. It helps school staff decide how to help each child take the next step into learning.

Education in the next 13 years will bring with it a great deal of excitement and learning. Like the first steps and the first words in the first five years, these years will bring more firsts, opening up an exciting world that includes reading, mathematics, science and social studies. Just as the first five years readied students for kindergarten, these next years will ready them for their lives – all 3.5 million of them.

Ready or not, here they come.

Vicki Barber is superintendent of El Dorado County Office of Education.

Opinion: Business as usual is robbing the homeowner

To the community,

On July 22, 2011, I sent a letter to the publisher. This is a follow up to this situation.

At the time we were waiting for permission from the power company to remove some trees using a crane over there power lines. The contractor had told us there would be a charge for the power company to shut down power and stand by but he was not sure how much it would be.

Well, we found out that the charge would be \$1,200, later reduced to \$900 because the contractor told them it would not take very long.

This is a new policy by the power company and my contractor said that he had never been charged before. As you can imagine I had to think this one over as the contract to remove the trees was only \$2,400. This added 50 percent to the contract.

After a while I decided to go along with this project as there was no alternative.

My contractor is Cook Tree Service; a local respected business which I have used before with great results. It looks like every time I need a job done the local utility or the city has put a road block in the way and then they are always crying about no jobs in the area.

If there is a policy that needs to be changed, this should be first one.

Well, the trees are down and it took Cook Tree Service about two hours to do the crane work.

I will complete this project despite the problems, but there has to be a better way.

David DeWitt, South Lake Tahoe

Opinion: Time for S. Tahoe to honor its written agreements

Publisher's note: *The following letter was read into the record at the Aug. 2, 2011, South Lake Tahoe City Council meeting.*

Dear Mr. [Hal] Cole and Members of the City Council,

Landscaping the Highway 50 Linear Park in front of Tahoe Meadows must be a top priority of the City this year in fulfilling an agreement between the City and Tahoe Meadows in 1999. Here is why this project should be number one, two or three on the City's Capital Improvement Project (CIP) list.

On March 16, 1999, now more than twelve years ago, the City of South Lake Tahoe entered into a legally binding agreement with Tahoe Meadows Association and other individual homeowners within Tahoe Meadows for the purchase of property along Highway 50 in order to create a "Linear Park". The Deed is filed with the El Dorado County recorder's office under document 99-0016968. Part of the negotiated agreement stipulates that the City upon completion of the transaction shall landscape from the Highway 50 curb to five feet inside the fence in a manner acceptable to Tahoe Meadows.

No fewer than five different times within the last twelve years, we have sought to have this agreement enforced, to no

avail. I quote a May 25, 2005 letter from our then president, Mr. Michael Fry to the City of South Lake Tahoe Planning Department, which says:

“Re: Linear Park Bike Trail Agreement for Acquisition of Real Property & Escrow Instructions – March 1997 to August 1997. The City entered into the above mentioned agreement with property owners along the Linear Park Bike Trail. Paragraph 3 b. of the agreement states, ‘Upon receipt of a written request from Seller, and mutual approval of a conceptual landscape plan, Buyer shall landscape and maintain a five (5) foot wide area along the length of the Seller’s lot.’”

Our board has repeatedly asked that the City, as Buyer, do its part to fulfill the agreement. The Linear Park should be landscaped with grass between the bike path and Highway 50 similar to what has been installed across Highway 50 and along Ski Run Boulevard. From the bicycle path to the City-owned fence should be a transition zone of shrubs and trees. Irrigation must be provided so that planting will not die, including the negotiated zone of five feet inside the fence. (I was informed ... that the inside-the-fence irrigation may originate on the highway side of the fence). Irrigation is also important from a fire safety standpoint.

The Tahoe Meadows Board believes that the City has reneged on its legal promise because since 1999, the city has undertaken to landscape Ski Run Boulevard and other projects before fulfilling its prior commitment to Tahoe Meadows. As of this writing, the Linear Park has still not been landscaped and is thus a continuing eyesore. Our attempts to enforce the 1999 agreement have met with delays and excuses until recently.

We became optimistic when two years ago, Gene Palazzo engaged Landscape Architect Brett Long to develop plans for landscaping the linear park. However, in spite of repeated requests I made to Gene after these plans were drawn, he never allowed me (or anyone within Tahoe Meadows) to see the result

of Mr. Long's work. Finally, after Gene left the city's employ, I contacted Nancy Kerry to determine the status of the project. On May 27, 2011, for the first time, I was able to see the plans and share them with the Tahoe Meadows Board on May 29, 2011. The board was not happy with several aspects of the plan as drawn by Mr. Long. We specifically asked for grass between the bike path and highway all along the linear park from the North Gate to the South to join with the grass in front of McDonald's Restaurant. Our members at a Membership meeting ratified our request for grass prior to the time the park property was purchased by the City under threat of imminent domain. On Mr. Long's plans we also objected to the Plum at the entrance gate as being un-natural in this environment. We would prefer aspen or another species native to the Tahoe Meadows area at the entry. We would also like to see trash containers and cigarette disposal containers near the bus stops along with lighting incorporated into the plan for safety and fire reasons.

I am asking you to move forward in doing whatever is necessary to revise the plans as we request, obtain our approval for those revisions and take whatever action is required to implement the landscaping plan this year. Time is of the essence. We want to work with the City to avoid unnecessary continued delays. Please inform me of the Linear Park Landscaping ranking in the City CIP projects immediately following your August 2 Council meeting.

Sincerely,

Frank Bliss, president of Tahoe Meadows home owners

Opinion: State can't afford to mismanage land

Publisher's note: *This editorial is from the Aug. 29, 2011, Fresno Bee.*

The people of California own the waters and beds of the state's rivers, streams, lakes, bays and estuaries. They own the waters and tidelands along the 1,100-mile coastline, out to three miles offshore. And they own lands granted by the federal government in 1853 to benefit public education.

The State Lands Commission – composed of the Lieutenant Governor (currently Gavin Newsom), State Controller (currently John Chiang) and Director of Finance (currently Ana Matosantos) – manages these public lands.

Some bring in considerable revenue from leases – \$426.5 million last year. But, as a recent Bureau of State Audits report shows, they could bring in even more.

Though California halted new offshore drilling leases after the 1969 Santa Barbara oil spill, existing leases continue to be the big revenue-generator for State Lands – \$402 million in 2010-11. Most of the rest comes from marine terminals, industrial wharves, commercial marinas and pipelines.

Yet time-lags between expiration of old leases and finalization of new leases means outdated rents can go on for years, a loss to the state.

Read the whole story

Opinion: State is wise to eliminate redevelopment agencies

To the community,

The city of South Lake Tahoe is unhappy about the state's new laws on redevelopment and labels the state an extortionist. The fact is the city's Redevelopment Agency has been the extortionist when it exercised the power of eminent domain.

It goes like this: If a property owner isn't willing to sell, the agency condemns the and takes the property. The result is the property owner loses a business or home or livelihood. So the city pot is getting a taste of distasteful medicine and lectures the state kettle, yells foul and threatens a lawsuit.



Bill Crawford

In fact, the city's Redevelopment Agency through use of eminent domain has created a tyranny in South Lake Tahoe. Redevelopment here is financially and morally a failure. It is time to kill it.

The state is right in its attempts to control or lay to rest redevelopment agencies in California.

Bill Crawford, South Lake Tahoe

Opinion: States must work together to preserve Tahoe

Publisher's note: *This editorial is from the Aug. 1, 2011, Fresno Bee.*

The upcoming annual Lake Tahoe Summit, to be hosted this year by Sen. Dianne Feinstein, D-Calif., on Aug. 16, promises to be a doozy. The challenges to the lake's legendary clarity and to cooperation between California and Nevada are greater than ever.

– Water quality. Lake Tahoe remains one of the clearest large lakes in the world. But its famed clarity has been declining since the post-World War II building boom. Homes, casinos and golf courses brought sedimentation, pollution and algae growth. University of California at Davis scientists measured the lake's clarity at 102 feet in 1968, reaching a low of 64 feet in 1997. In 2009, it was 68 feet. Aggressive measures to attack pollution and sedimentation remain necessary.

– Governance. In a major threat to two-state cooperation, Nevada has threatened to withdraw from the compact governing Lake Tahoe by 2015 – unless California and the U.S. Congress adopt amendments to change the voting system. The two states have equal representation, with seven members each on the governing board.

To approve changes to the regional plan, a majority of members (four) from each state must vote "aye," a fair process. Nevada wants to change that – to nine of 14 votes without regard to state. It also wants to change the voting requirements for particular projects. Two-thirds of the lake is in California. Nevada funds one-third and California two-thirds of the cost

for the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency. Why would California agree to Nevada's proposed changes?

Read the whole story