



## TRUCKEE MEADOWS WATER AUTHORITY Board of Directors

### AGENDA

**Wednesday, February 17, 2021 at 10:00 a.m.**

**Virtual meeting only.**

MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC MAY ATTEND VIA THE WEB LINK, OR  
TELEPHONICALLY BY CALLING THE NUMBER, LISTED BELOW.  
NO PHYSICAL LOCATION IS BEING PROVIDED FOR THIS MEETING

**(be sure to keep your phones or microphones on mute, and do not place the call on hold)**

**Please click the link below to join the webinar:**

<https://tmwa.zoom.us/j/93199705901?pwd=b1BNd2hHM2pqVkVhZFJlCcGgzV1NkUT09>

**Password: 205040**

**Or call:**

**Phone: (888) 788-0099**

**Webinar ID: 931 9970 5901**

### Board Members

Chair Vaughn Hartung  
Member Neoma Jardon  
Member Jenny Brekhus  
Member Paul Anderson

Vice Chair Kristopher Dahir  
Member Alexis Hill  
Member Naomi Duerr

#### NOTES:

1. This meeting is being conducted pursuant to the Governor's Declaration of Emergency Directive 006 ("Directive 006 [http://gov.nv.gov/News/Emergency\\_Orders/2020/2020-03-22\\_-\\_COVID-19\\_Declaration\\_of\\_Emergency\\_Directive\\_006/](http://gov.nv.gov/News/Emergency_Orders/2020/2020-03-22_-_COVID-19_Declaration_of_Emergency_Directive_006/) and will be held by teleconference only.
2. The announcement of this meeting has been electronically posted in compliance with NRS 241.020(3) and Directive 006 at <http://www.tmwa.com>, and NRS 232.2175 at <https://notice.nv.gov/>.
3. Pursuant to Directive 006, the requirement contained in NRS 241.020(3)(c) that physical locations be available for the public to receive supporting material for public meetings has been suspended. Staff reports and supporting material for the meeting are available on the TMWA website at <http://www.tmwa.com/meeting/> or you can contact Sonia Folsom at (775) 834-8002. Supporting material is made available to the general public in accordance with NRS 241.020(6).
4. The Board may elect to combine agenda items, consider agenda items out of order, remove agenda items, or delay discussion on agenda items. Arrive at the meeting at the posted time to hear item(s) of interest.
5. Asterisks (\*) denote non-action items.
6. Pursuant to Directive 006, public comment, whether on action items or general public comment, may be provided without being physically present at the meeting by submitting written comments online on TMWA's Public Comment Form ([tmwa.com/PublicComment](http://tmwa.com/PublicComment)) or by email sent to [boardclerk@tmwa.com](mailto:boardclerk@tmwa.com) prior to the Board opening the public comment period during the meeting. In addition, public comments may be provided by leaving a voicemail at (775) 834-0255 prior to 4:00 p.m. the day before the scheduled meeting. Voicemail messages received will be noted during the meeting and summarized for entry into the record. Public comment is limited to three minutes and is allowed during the public comment periods. The Board may elect to receive public comment only during the two public comment periods rather than each action item. Due to constraints of TMWA's videoconference system, public comment must be provided by voicemail, email or online comment as indicated above.
7. In the event the Chairman and Vice-Chairman are absent, the remaining Board members may elect a temporary presiding officer to preside over the meeting until the Chairman or Vice-Chairman are present (**Standing Item of Possible Action**).
8. Notice of possible quorum of Western Regional Water Commission: Because several members of the Truckee Meadows Water Authority Board of Directors are also Trustees of the Western Regional Water Commission, it is possible that a quorum of the Western Regional Water Commission may be present, however, such members will not deliberate or take action at this meeting in their capacity as Trustees of the Western Regional Water Commission.

<sup>1</sup>The Board may adjourn from the public meeting at any time during the agenda to receive information and conduct labor-oriented discussions in accordance with NRS 288.220 or receive information from legal counsel regarding potential or existing litigation and to deliberate toward a decision on such matters related to litigation or potential litigation.

1. Roll call\*
2. Pledge of allegiance\*
3. Public comment — limited to no more than three minutes per speaker\*
4. Possible Board comments or acknowledgements\*
5. Approval of the agenda (**For Possible Action**)
6. Approval of the minutes of the January 20, 2021 meeting of the TMWA Board of Directors (**For Possible Action**)
7. National Weather Service (NWS) Winter Outlook — Chris Smallcomb and Tim Bardsley, NWS\*
8. Water Supply Update — Bill Hauck\*
9. Discussion and possible action and direction to staff regarding 2021 legislative activities, current bills, and TMWA recommended positions on legislative proposals — John Zimmerman and Leo Drozdoff (**For Possible Action**)
10. Presentation on the status of the Digital Plan Review Process — Danny Rotter\*
11. Presentation of Fiscal Year 2021 Q2 year to date financial results — Matt Bowman\*
12. Informational report regarding TMWA involvement with the Steamboat canal project and Steamboat Canal & Irrigation Company — John Zimmerman\*
13. General Manager's Report\*
14. Public comment — limited to no more than three minutes per speaker\*
15. Board comments and requests for future agenda items\*
16. Adjournment (**For Possible Action**)

<sup>1</sup>The Board may adjourn from the public meeting at any time during the agenda to receive information and conduct labor-oriented discussions in accordance with NRS 288.220 or receive information from legal counsel regarding potential or existing litigation and to deliberate toward a decision on such matters related to litigation or potential litigation.

TRUCKEE MEADOWS WATER AUTHORITY  
**DRAFT** MINUTES OF THE JANUARY 20, 2021  
MEETING OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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The Board of Directors met on Wednesday, January 20, 2021, via Zoom Virtual Meeting, Reno, Nevada. Chair Hartung called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m.

1. ROLL CALL

**Members Present:** Paul Anderson, Jenny Brekhus, Kristopher Dahir, Naomi Duerr, Neoma Jardon, Vaughn Hartung, and Alexis Hill.

A quorum was present by telephonic appearance.

3. WELCOME NEW BOARD MEMBER

Chair Hartung welcomed Commissioner Alexis Hill to the TMWA Board of Directors.

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The pledge of allegiance was led by Member Hill.

4. PUBLIC COMMENT

Mr. Kyle Hess, Reno resident, expressed his concerns regarding the Steamboat Ditch project being pushed through quickly without giving the community opportunity to provide input. Mr. Hess stated members of the public who enjoy the trail along the ditch appreciate the foliage, wildlife, and water the ditch provides and that they oppose the proposed pipeline and anything that would limit the wildlife and aesthetics. He suggested that if there was a need for a pipeline for them to consider an alternate location.

5. POSSIBLE BOARD COMMENTS OR ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS\*

There were no Board comments.

6. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

**Upon motion by Member Dahir second by Member Duerr, which motion duly carried by unanimous consent of the members present, the Board approved the agenda.**

7. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF THE DECEMBER 16, 2020 MEETING

**Upon motion by Member Brekhus, second by Member Duerr, which motion duly carried by unanimous consent of the members present, the Board approved the December 16, 2020 minutes.**

8. WATER SUPPLY UPDATE

Bill Hauck, TMWA Water Supply Administrator, informed the Board the snowpack outlook decreased slightly since December due to the lack of precipitation, snowpack levels for both the Truckee and Lake Tahoe Basins, are at 58% and 59% of normal, respectively; fortunately in the Truckee Meadows, even with a below average snowpack, any runoff will be captured in upstream reservoirs and released at a later date according to the Truckee River Operating Agreement (TROA); TMWA's upstream storage is in a good state at about 36,000 acre-feet (AF); there is enough carry over storage in Lake Tahoe from 2019 and 2017 to provide for normal river flows for the rest of the year; projections show about 55% in normal runoff, but there will be normal river flows for the rest of the year; and, according to the terms of TROA, no drought will be declared on the Truckee River system this year.

The Board discussed potentially begin messaging to the public to consider increased conservation measures due to the probability of a dry year (perhaps consider a policy to capture the motivation in the community) and how TMWA has enough resources to supply its customer due to upstream storage; inquired about the amount of reservoir storage under TROA; and if there will be an increase in groundwater pumping as the region continues to grow. Mr. Hauck replied that it is too early to decide on messaging, staff is monitoring the situation and will design messaging for the summer by spring; currently there is about 22,000 AF stored under the terms of TROA; added that TMWA did call for extra conservation in 2015 and drought hardening continues (cautioned about requesting conservation measures too early); and so long as normal river flows are expected, groundwater pumping remains normal. Andy Gebhardt, TMWA Director of Operations, added staff is working on messaging which utilizes content from the 2020-2040 Water Resource Plan, which better explains our water supply than in years past.

9. APPOINTMENT OF TRUSTEE TO THE WESTERN REGIONAL WATER COMMISSION (WRWC) PURSUANT TO SEC.25(3)(C) OF THE WRWC ACT FROM THE FOLLOWING LIST OF QUALIFIED PERSONS TO FILL THE REMAINING TERM ENDING MARCH 31, 2021 VACATED BY MEMBER JEANNE HERMAN: ALEXIS HILL

**Upon motion by Member Dahir, second by Member Anderson, which motion duly carried by unanimous consent of the members present, the Board approved to appoint Alexis Hill to the WRWC, pursuant to Sec.25(3)(c) of the WRWC Act, to fill the remaining term ending March 31, 2021 vacated by Member Jeanne Herman.**



10. DISCUSSION AND ACTION ON NOMINATION AND APPOINTMENTS OF TRUSTEE(S) TO THE WESTERN REGIONAL WATER COMMISSION (WRWC) FROM THE TMWA BOARD OF DIRECTORS FOR THE FOLLOWING POSITIONS TO FILL VACANCIES ENDING MARCH 31, 2021 AND FOR NEW TWO YEAR TERMS FROM APRIL 1, 2021 TO MARCH 31, 2023:

A) PURSUANT TO SEC.25(3)(A) OF THE WRWC ACT FROM THE FOLLOWING LIST OF QUALIFIED PERSONS: JENNY BREKHUS AND NEOMA JARDON.

B) PURSUANT TO SEC.25(3)(B) OF THE WRWC ACT FROM THE FOLLOWING LIST OF QUALIFIED PERSONS: PAUL ANDERSON.

C) PURSUANT TO SEC.25(3)(C) OF THE WRWC ACT FROM THE FOLLOWING LIST OF QUALIFIED PERSONS: ALEXIS HILL.

D) PURSUANT TO SEC. 25(4) OF THE WRWC ACT REPRESENTING TMWA AS SUCCESSOR TO SOUTH TRUCKEE MEADOWS GENERAL IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT (STMGID) FROM THE FOLLOWING LIST OF QUALIFIED PERSONS: JENNY BREKHUS, OSCAR DELGADO, NEOMA JARDON, DEVON REESE, HILLARY SCHIEVE, JEANNE HERMAN, BOB LUCEY, KITTY JUNG, CHARLENE BYBEE, AND ED LAWSON

Member Duerr asked for clarification about members being appointed by their respective agencies. Mr. Zimmerman replied pursuant to the WRWC Act, the TMWA Board gets to appoint a TMWA Board member to represent TMWA on the WRWC from each of the three jurisdictions and the TMWA Board gets to appoint any elected official to the WRWC as a successor to the former STMGID; eligible members must not also be appointed to the WRWC by their representative agencies.

**Upon motion by Member Hartung, second by Member Brekhus, which motion duly carried by unanimous consent of the members present, the Board approved to appoint Jenny Brekhus to the WRWC, pursuant to Sec.25(3)(a) of the WRWC Act, to fill the vacancy ending March 31, 2021 and for a new two-year term from April 1, 2021 to March 31, 2023.**

**Upon motion by Member Dahir, second by Member Hartung, which motion duly carried by unanimous consent of the members present, the Board approved to appoint Paul Anderson to the WRWC, pursuant to Sec.25(3)(b) of the WRWC Act, to fill the vacancy ending March 31, 2021 and for a new two-year term from April 1, 2021 to March 31, 2023.**

**Upon motion by Member Brekhus, second by Member Duerr, which motion duly carried by unanimous consent of the members present, the Board approved to appoint Alexis Hill to the WRWC, pursuant to Sec.25(3)(c) of the WRWC Act, to fill the vacancy ending March 31, 2021 and for a new two-year term from April 1, 2021 to March 31, 2023.**

**Upon motion by Member Hartung, second by Member Hill, which motion duly carried by unanimous consent of the members present, the Board approved to appoint Bob Lucey to the WRWC, pursuant to Sec.25(4) of the WRWC Act, to fill the vacancy ending March 31, 2021 and for a new two-year term from April 1, 2021 to March 31, 2023.**

**11. UPDATE ON 2020 INTERIM SESSION AND DISCUSSION AND ACTION ON ESTABLISHING A LEGISLATIVE SUBCOMMITTEE FOR THE 2021 LEGISLATIVE SESSION AND APPOINTMENT OF BOARD MEMBERS TO SUBCOMMITTEE**

Mr. Zimmerman updated the Board on the activities that he, Michael Pagni, TMWA General Counsel, and Leo Drozdoff, TMWA Lobbyist, conducted during the 2020 interim session; per Board direction, they took on a more active role and met with legislators (along with the Chair and Vice Chair of the subcommittee) and presented to state regulators. Discussions involved briefing legislators on TMWA's priorities and interest in working with the Nevada Department of Administration to maximize the beneficial use of water from the Marlette Lake water system (TMWA staff received positive feedback and support from legislators); regulations required by AB62 from the 2019 session regarding extensions of time and evidence required to prove beneficial use of water (the State Engineer has introduced updated revisions that are less onerous to TMWA), and staff are preparing written comments due February 12th addressing concerns that the revisions will increase staff time and administrative cost in preparing applications for extensions of time; and AB30, "3M" (monitoring, management and mitigation) plans, failed to pass in 2019 and will not be pursued until AB62 regulations have been finalized.

In preparation for the 2021 Legislative Session that will begin February 1<sup>st</sup>, staff is recommending the Board create a legislative subcommittee to meet on a regular basis to allow staff to provide updates and receive direction that is timely and that the Board appoint members to the TMWA Legislative Subcommittee.

**Upon motion by Member Jardon, second by Member Hill, which motion duly carried by unanimous consent of the members present, the Board approved the appointment of Members Dahir, Hill and Duerr as primary members, and Member Anderson, as the alternate, to the TMWA Legislative Subcommittee.**

**12 INFORMATIONAL PRESENTATION ON MANAGEMENT OF TMWA'S WATER RESOURCES, COOPERATION AND INTEGRATION OF REGIONAL WATER RESOURCE MANAGEMENT AND POTENTIAL FUTURE DEVELOPMENT OF ADDITIONAL WATER SUPPLIES**

John Enloe, TMWA Director of Natural Resources, and Mr. Zimmerman informed the Board of the ongoing water resource planning efforts and projects, many are highlighted in the 2020-2040 Water Resource Plan (2040WRP). The essence of which was to explain how TMWA considers all factors relating to water rights, surface and groundwater rights, to ensure the most efficient use of Truckee River and groundwater resources. As was stated in the 2040WRP, there are a limited number of Truckee River water rights remaining, 35,000-40,000 AF, and per Board direction, staff is being more aggressive in purchasing large blocks of water rights on the open market. A few other projects to note are: Return Flow Management Agreement, Marlette Lake Memorandum of Understanding, water banking (Advanced Purified Water Aquifer Storage & Recovery), Fish Springs groundwater resources, Spanish Springs Valley temporary moratorium on groundwater rights, and reduced water rights dedication (Rule 7). The briefing provided a foundation of knowledge and understanding to the Board for when staff returns with proposals and recommendations for their consideration at future meetings.

The Board inquired about the prospect of using groundwater rights from golf courses in Spanish Springs, the potential of creating a connection between South Truckee Meadows Water Reclamation Facility (STMWRF) and Truckee Meadows Water Reclamation Facility (TMWRF), the possibility of using Steamboat Ditch water rights to satisfy other obligations (not at this time), TMWA's role in the Steamboat Ditch watershed project (TMWA would be involved because of its water resource management knowledge and expertise), the concept of utilizing Whites creek water and ensuring there's no negative impact downstream (TMWA has a monitoring plan approved by the State Engineer's Office to ensure there is adequate water in Whites creek for environmental purposes that was reviewed and approved by the Nature Conservancy), the opportunity for water banking, Advanced Purified Water projects, and aquifer storage recovery programs to help mitigate the impacts of droughts, whether TROA allowed for the use of Fish Springs resources in the Truckee River Basin (TROA does not apply to the Fish Springs resources), the water quality of Fish Springs resources (very good and consistent with groundwater quality throughout the Truckee Meadows, and as long as TMWRF meets its discharge permit, Fish Springs water can be used anywhere in TMWA's service territory), for staff to consider the enforcement authority regarding landscape provisions under Rule 7, and additional information regarding the Spanish Springs temporary moratorium on groundwater rights be provided to the Board as necessary.

13. DISCUSSION AND INFORMATIONAL PRESENTATION IN RESPONSE TO BOARD MEMBER INQUIRIES REGARDING SUSPENSION OF WATER SERVICE FOR WATER WASTE ON PRIVATE LATERALS AND LANDLORD AUTHORITY TO IMPOSE WATER SERVICE SURCHARGE ON TENANT RENT BILLS AND POSSIBLE DIRECTION TO STAFF

Mr. Zimmerman stated that TMWA's Rule 3.D authorizes TMWA to terminate delivery of water already, providing two notices were delivered to the customer prior to termination. Also, Mr. Pagni researched restrictions on landlords and determined there are no Nevada laws prohibiting a landlord from adding a water service surcharge to tenant rent bills.

Chair Hartung cautioned the Board to consider TMWA's liability.

Member Duerr, who asked for staff to review suspension of water service due to water waste, asked staff to be mindful of this and take the opportunity to think about the issue.

Member Brekhus, who asked for staff to review the landlord authority to impose water service surcharge, understood it was a state issue and mentioned it may be an issue for the subcommittee to consider addressing during the legislative session.

**No action taken.**

#### 14. GENERAL MANAGER'S REPORT

Mr. Zimmerman reported that TMWA was nominated by the Nevada Division of Environmental Protection (NDEP) for the American Water Works Association (AWWA) Exemplary Source Water Protection award for our collaboration with state and local agencies on the Integrated Source Water Protection Plan. He acknowledged TMWA's Kara Steeland, Hydrologist, and Christian Kropf, Hydrogeologist, who devoted their time and expertise to the project. Also, OneWater Nevada was chosen as the winner in the category of Community Water Champion award as part of the water reuse associations awards for excellence.

Mr. Enloe added Lydia Peri, TMWA Emerging Resources Program Administrator, received the Water Environment Federation (WEF) 2021 Water Reuse Award for Up and Comer of the Year.

#### 15. PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

#### 16. BOARD COMMENTS AND REQUESTS FOR FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

Member Brekhus requested an agenda item regarding TMWA's involvement and interest (as a water purveyor, potential water resource and personnel involvement) in the proposed Steamboat Ditch project to be added to the February agenda.

The Chairman stated discussion on the issue should be whether such agenda item should be put on a future agenda item in March for substantive discussion.

Member Hill suggested a written letter by the Board be put on TMWA's website that addresses the Steamboat Ditch project issue.

#### 17. ADJOURNMENT

With no further discussion, Chair Hartung adjourned the meeting at 12:46 p.m.

Approved by the TMWA Board of Directors in session on \_\_\_\_\_.

Sonia Folsom, Board Clerk.

# Weather Outlook

*February 17, 2021*

*Chris Smallcomb*

*NWS Reno*

*[chris.smallcomb@noaa.gov](mailto:chris.smallcomb@noaa.gov)*

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Reno National Weather Service

Forecasting for the Sierra and western Nevada since 1905



*The "Sparks Ducks" hanging out along the North Truckee Drain on my run, 1/29/21*



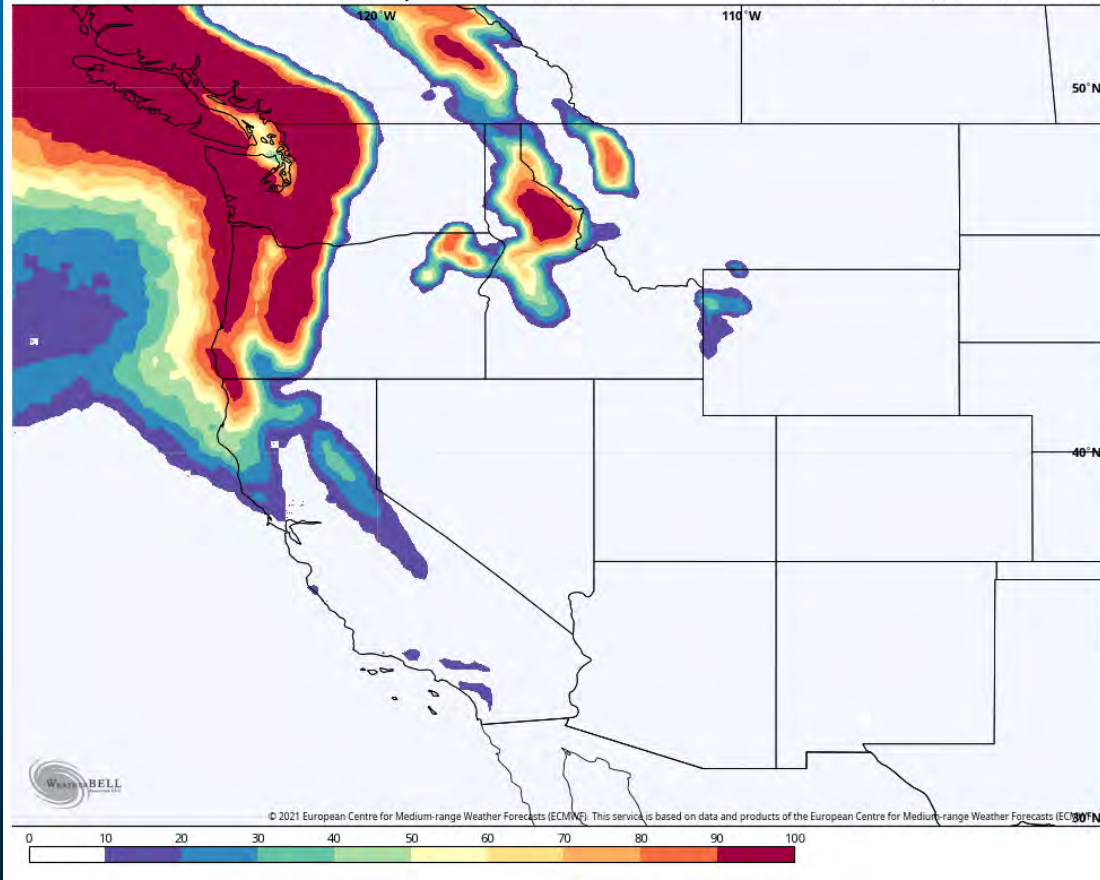


## Next 1-2 Weeks

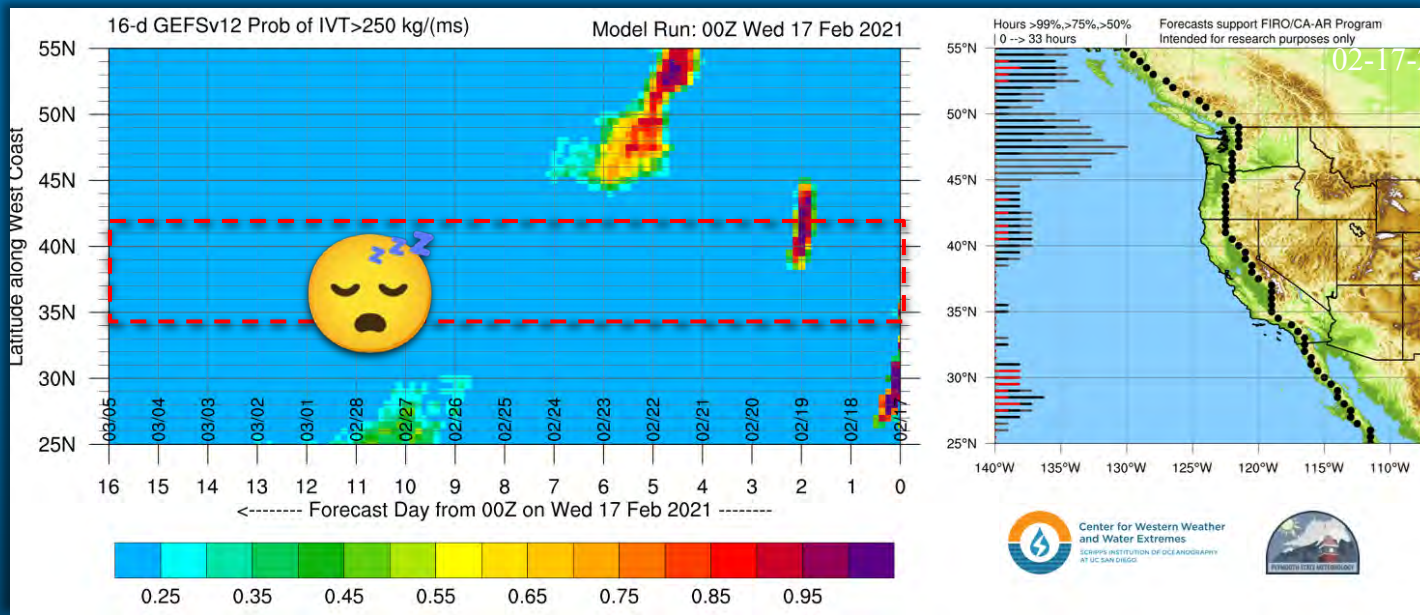
- Favoring drier than normal with high pressure off the coast deflecting big storms to the north.
- We will still have storms, just likely not big ones.

## Next 1-2 Weeks

- Storms: yes
- Big ones: better luck next time



ECMWF ensemble threshold probabilities through end of the day March 3, 2021. Source: WeatherBell



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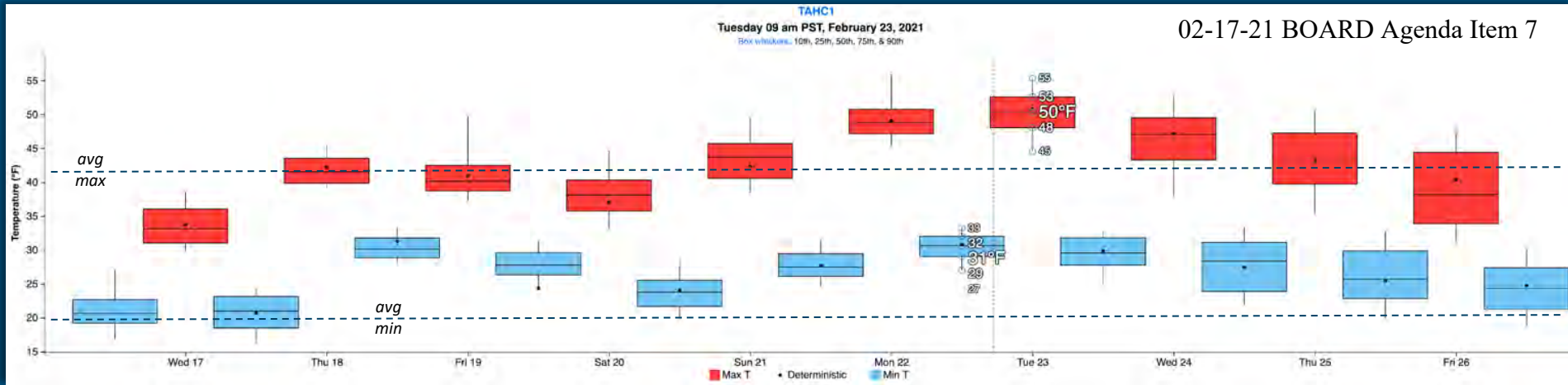
Probability of significant moisture making it to the major mountain ranges, from GFS Ensemble. Source: [CW3E](#)

## Next 1-2 Weeks

- All quiet on the atmospheric river front for our region.
- Helps increase confidence in below normal precip for Sierra.

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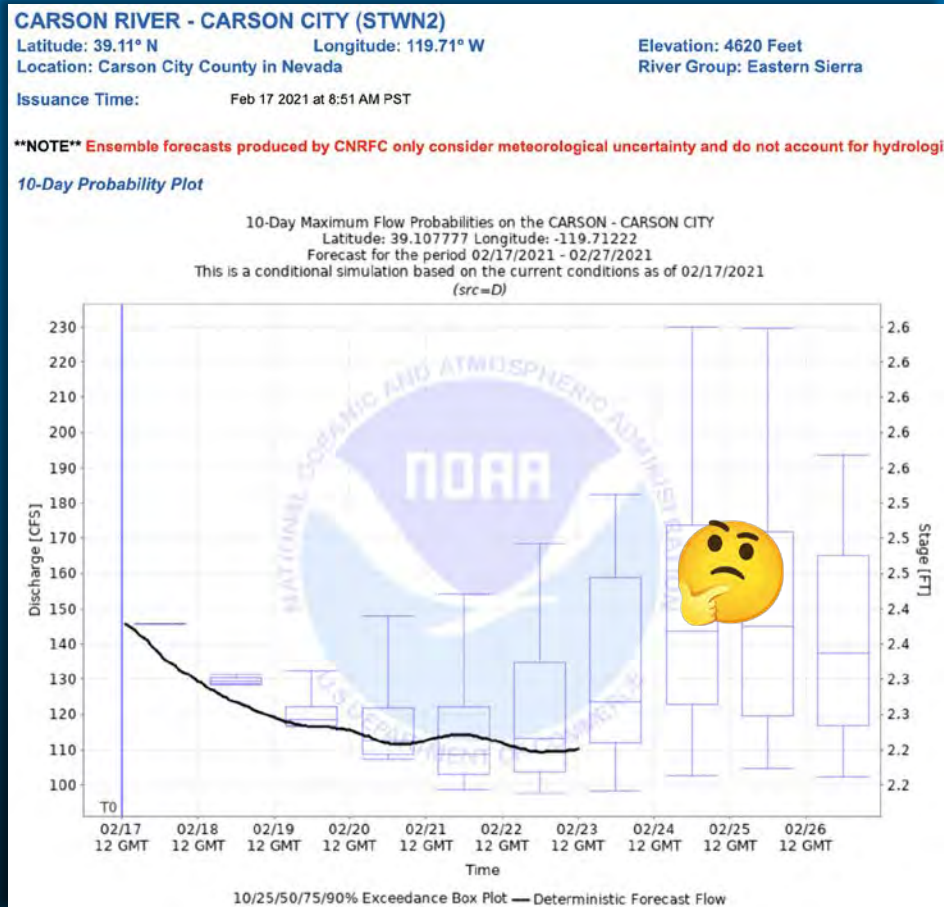
National Blend of Models temperature forecast ranges. Larger rectangles = more uncertainty. Source: NWS

## Next 1-2 Weeks

- Temperatures will have typical seasonal variability.
- Could see decent warmup early-mid next week.

## Snowmelt Already??

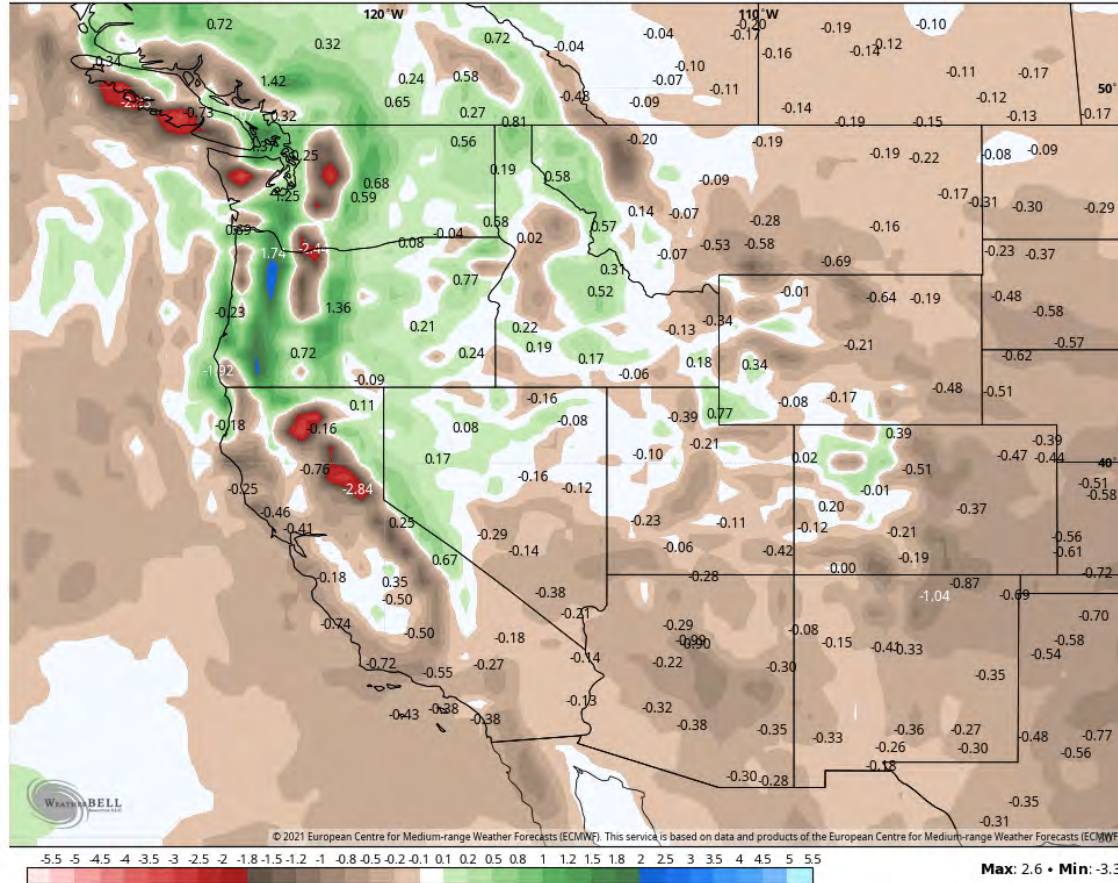
- Above normal temps early-mid next week.
- Above freezing at night in mountain areas.
- 10-day outlooks hinting at slightly increased flows. Nothing big at all.



10-day ensemble probability for streamflow on the Carson River @ Carson City. Source [CNRFC](#) Page 6 of 9

ECMWF Weeklies [M] 0.4° Init 00z 15 Feb 2021 • QPF 30-Day Anomaly (Inches)

Hour: 1008 • Valid: 00z Mon 29 Mar 2021



## How About March?

- Last 5 Marches have been at or above normal on precip.
- ECMWF sub-seasonal outlook leaning that way for NV but not Sierra. Showery?
- Temps near to below normal.

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ECMWF Sub-seasonal model 30-day precipitation anomaly ending March 29. Source: WeatherBell

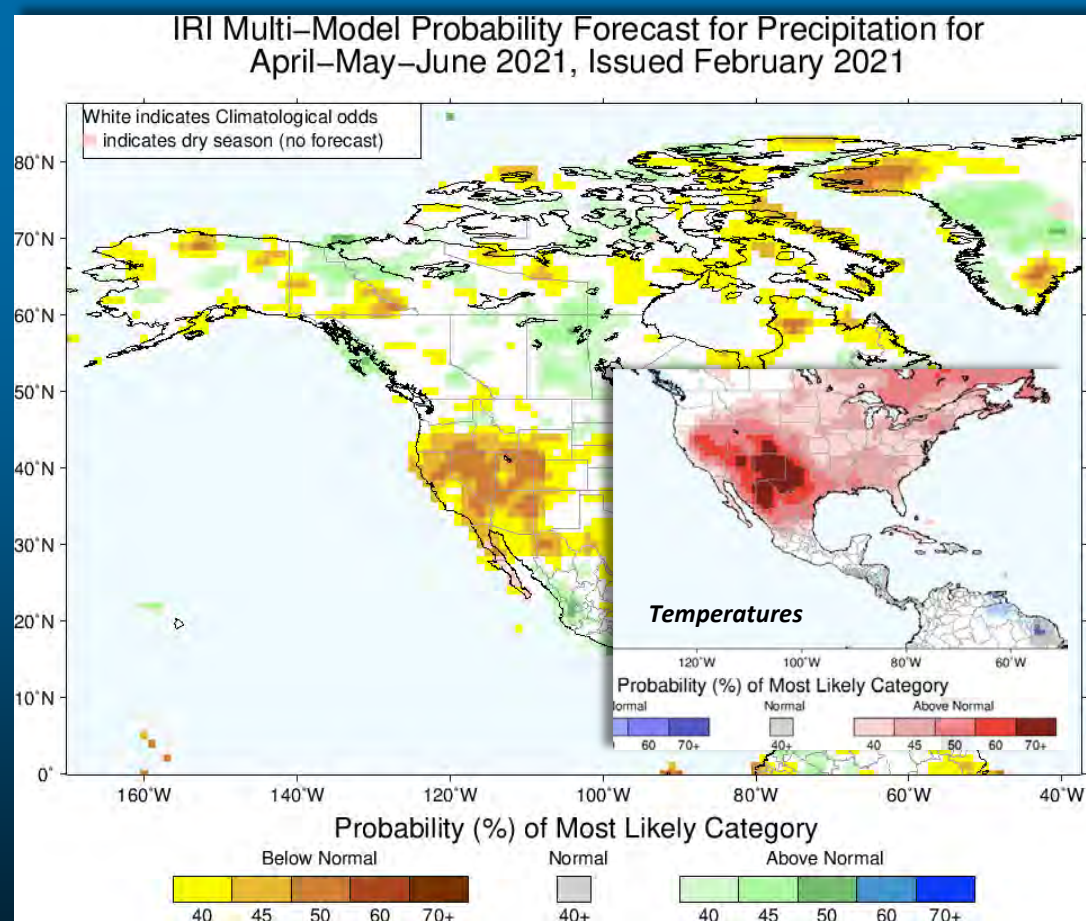
Reno National Weather Service  
Forecasting for the Sierra and western Nevada since 1905





## Rest of Spring

- Seasonal simulations leaning toward drier and warmer than normal April-June.
- Signal is moderately strong but does not entirely preclude wet, cool periods.

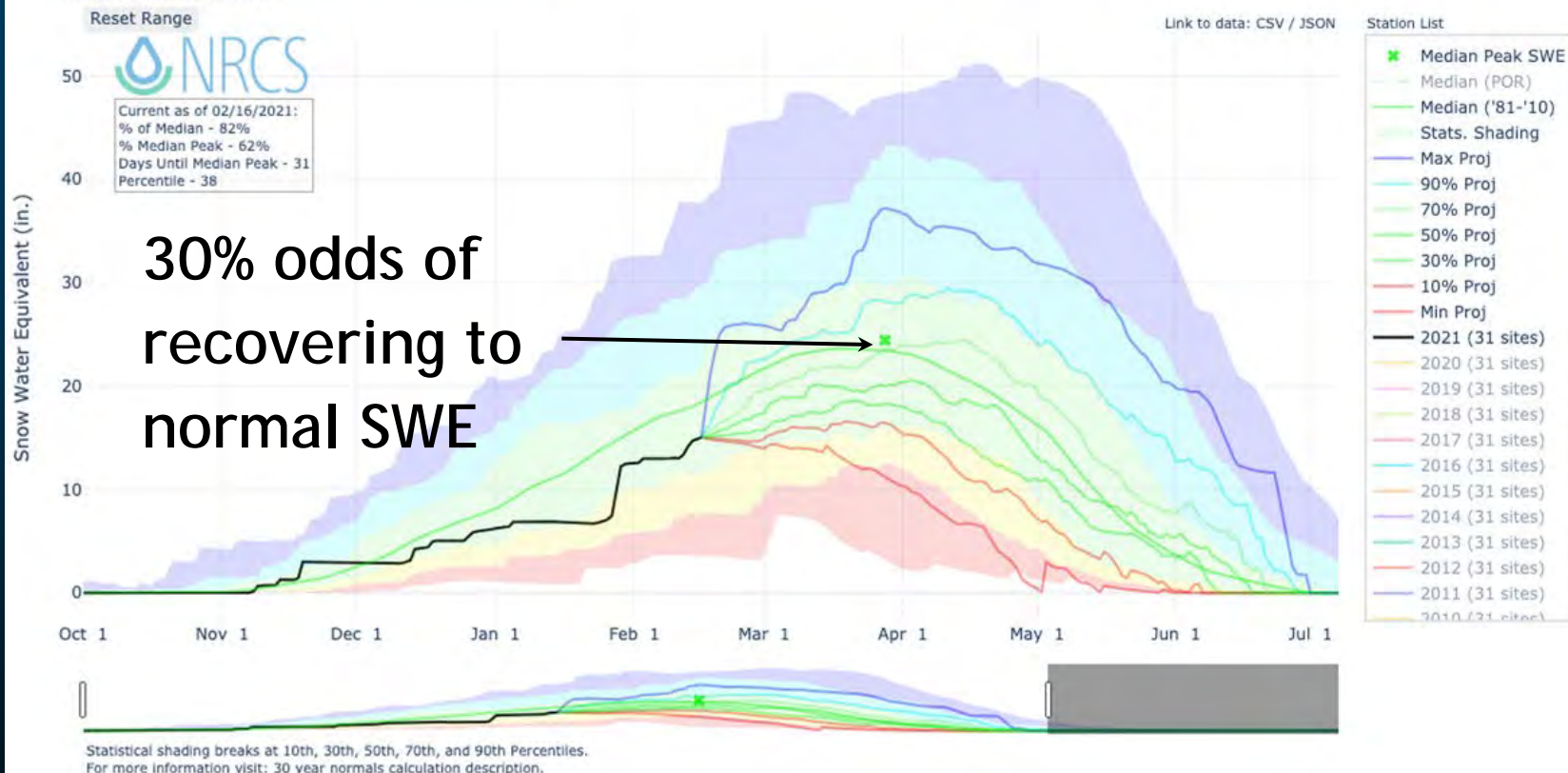


North American Multimodel Ensemble probabilistic precipitation forecast (inset shows temperatures). Source: IRI

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# SNOW WATER EQUIVALENT PROJECTIONS IN EASTERN SIERRA

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Snow water equivalent projections using historical data starting with current conditions. Source: [NRCS](#) Page 9 of 9





# Northern Nevada Water Supply Outlook

TMWA Board of Directors Meeting

Bill Hauck, Water Supply Administrator

February 17, 2021

W WEST NW  
B I-80 AT KINGVALE

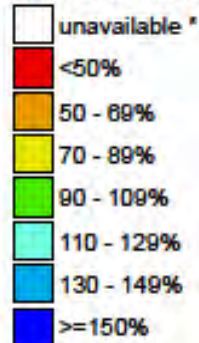




# Nevada/California SNOTEL Current Snow Water Equivalent (SWE) % of Normal

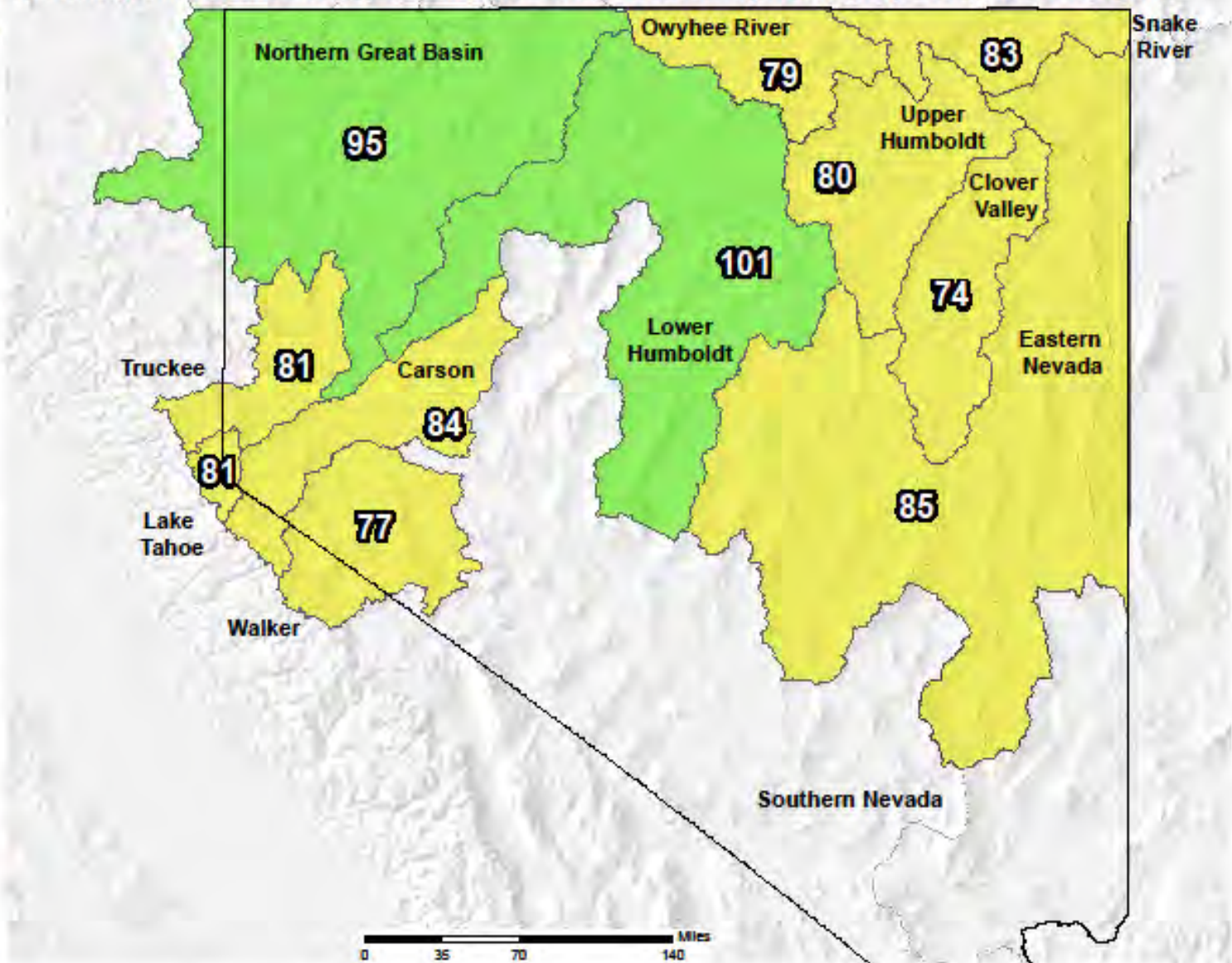
Feb 16, 2021

Current Snow  
Water Equivalent  
Basin-wide Percent  
of 1981-2010 Median



\* Data unavailable  
at time of posting  
or measurement  
is not representative  
at this time of year

Provisional data  
subject to revision



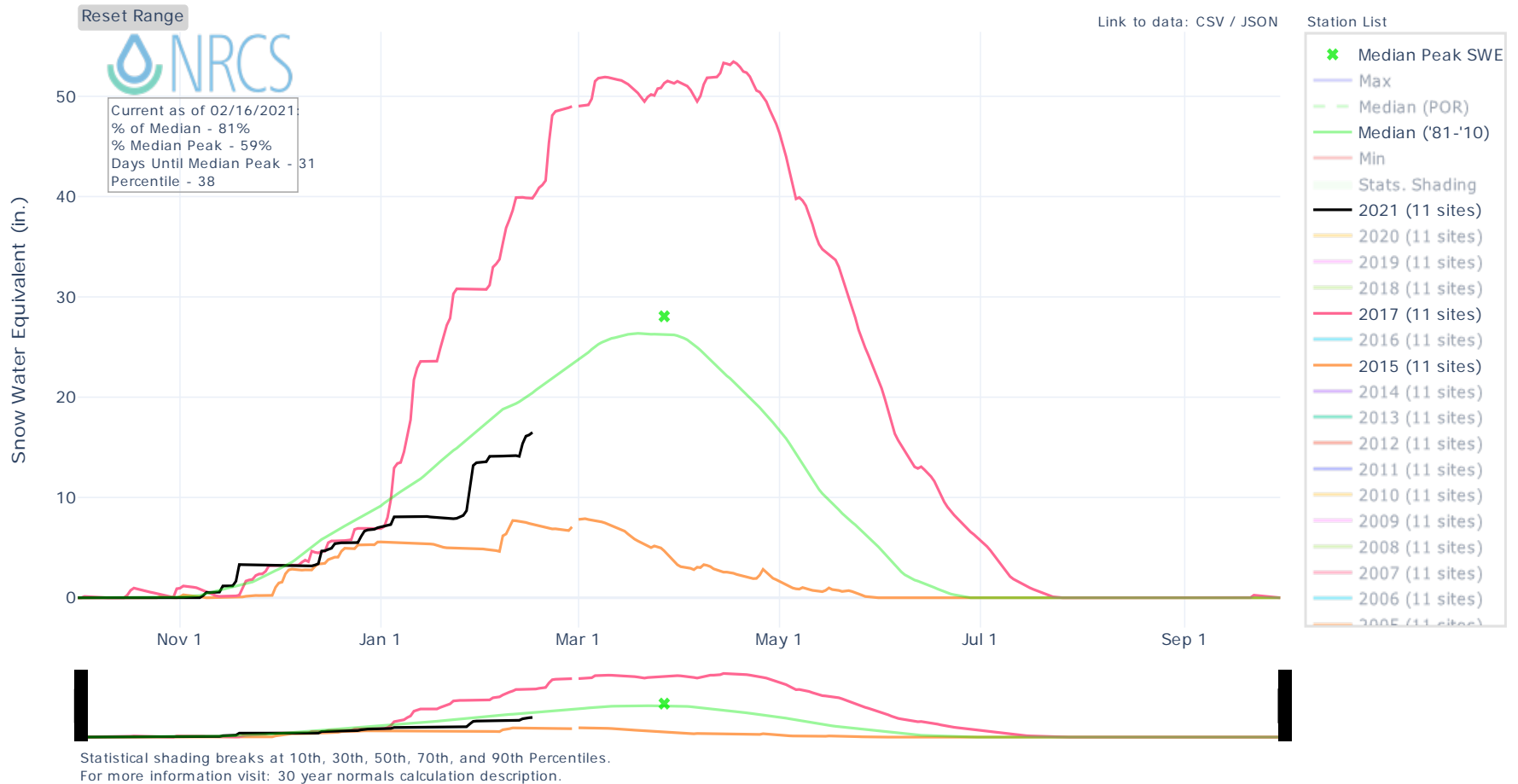
The current snow water equivalent percent of normal represents the snow water equivalent found at selected SNOTEL sites in or near the basin compared to the average value for those sites on this day. Data based on the first reading of the day (typically 00:00).

Prepared by:  
USDA/NRCS National Water and Climate Center  
Portland, Oregon  
<http://www.wcc.nrcs.usda.gov>

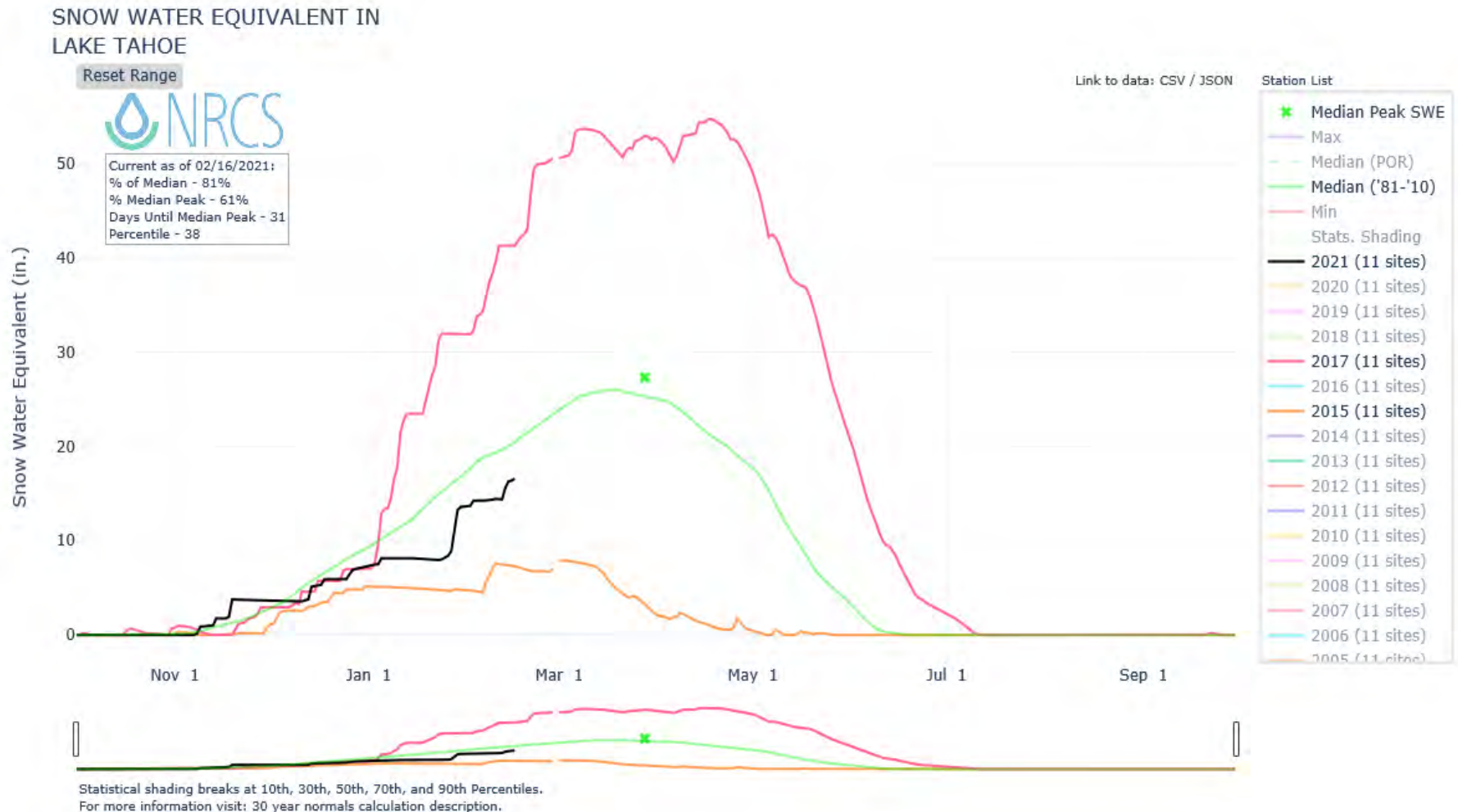


# Truckee Basin Snowpack (02/16/2021)

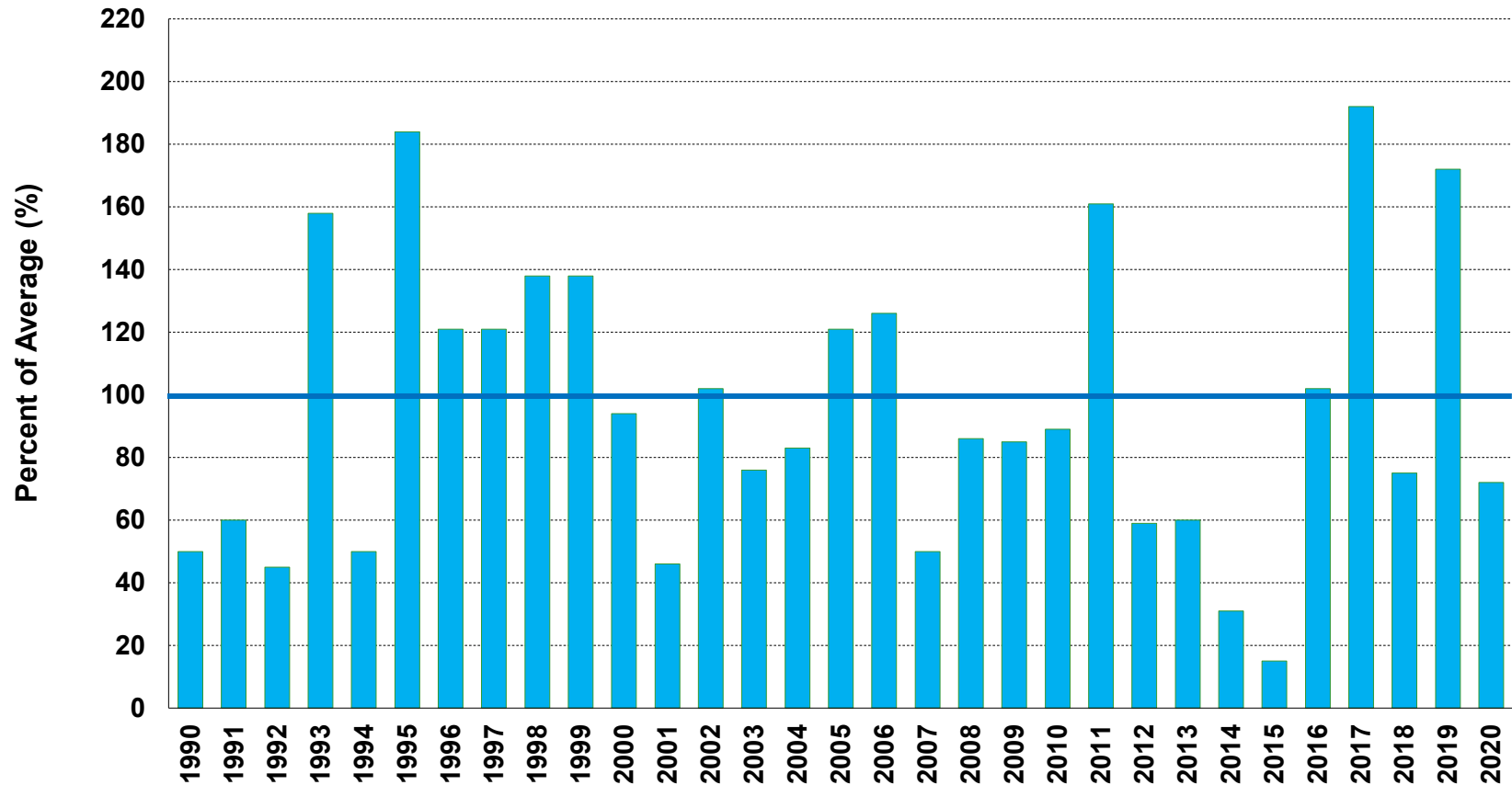
## SNOW WATER EQUIVALENT IN TRUCKEE



# Lake Tahoe Basin Snowpack (02/16/2021)



# April 1 Truckee River Basin Snowpack (last 30 years)



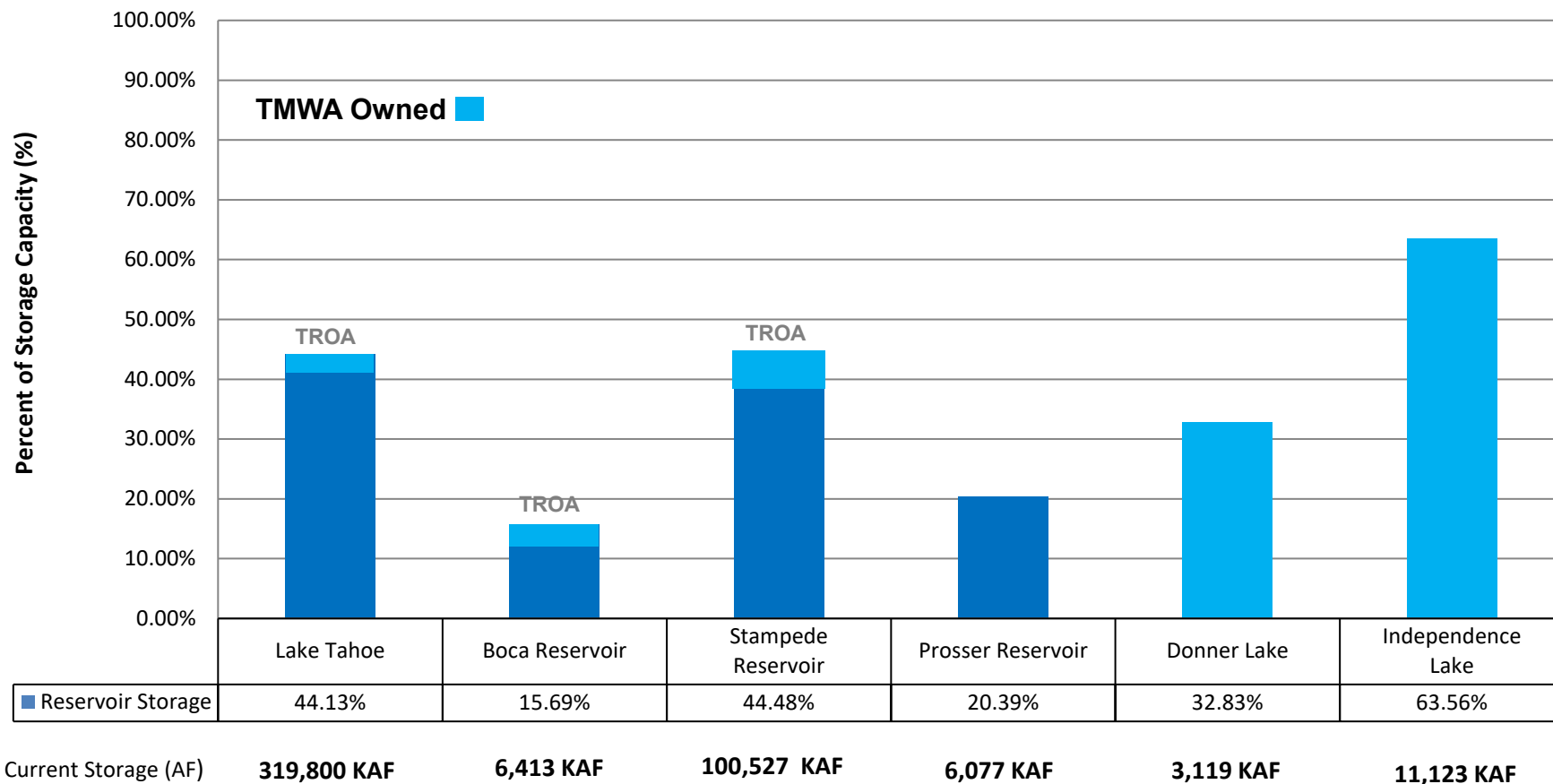




# Truckee River System



# Truckee River System Storage (02/17/2021)



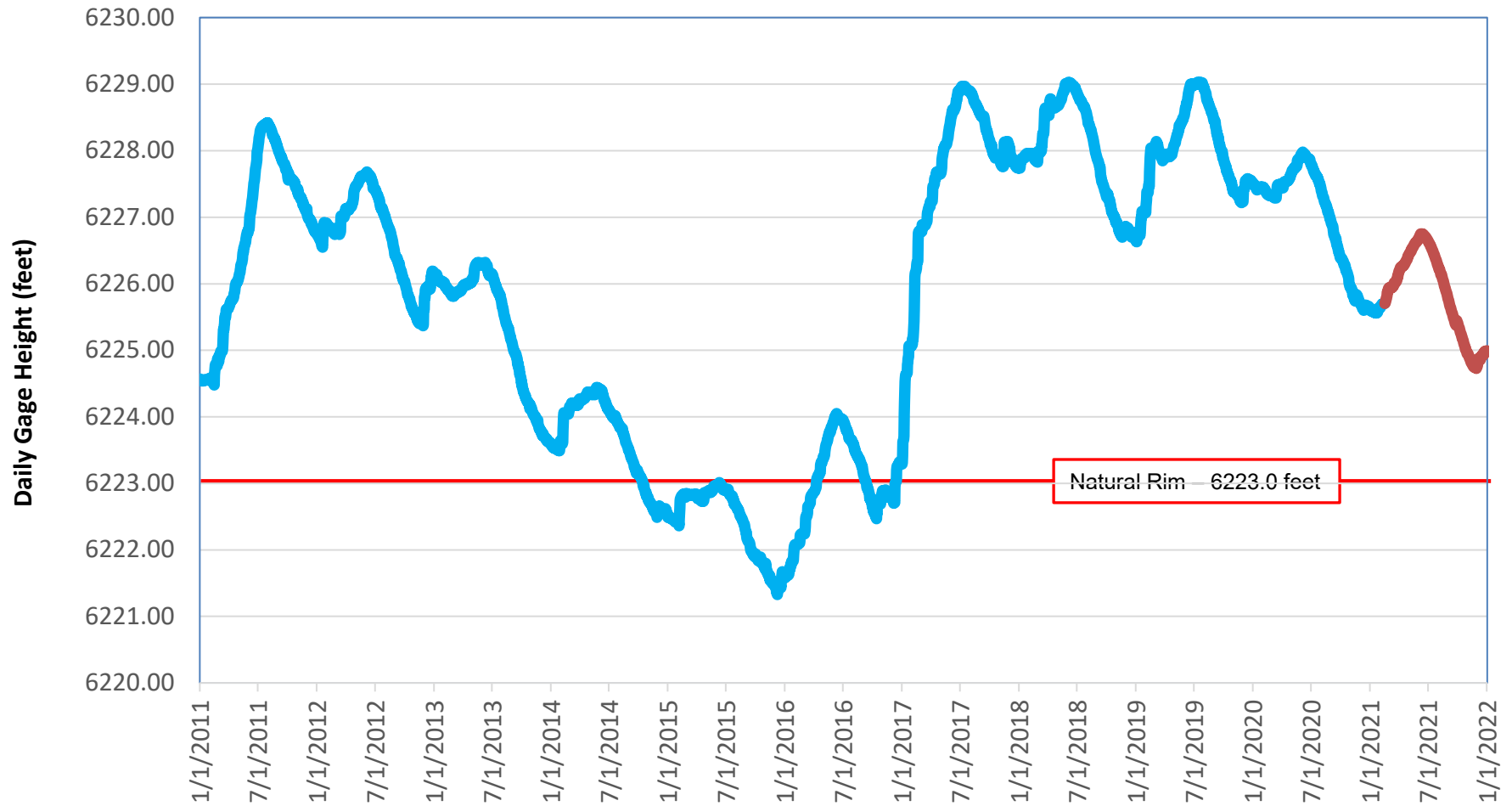
**MAX SYSTEM CAPACITY 1,068,270 AF**

**CURRENT CAPACITY 447,059 AF (42% Capacity)**





# Actual and Projected Lake Tahoe Elevation through 2021







**Thank you!**  
Questions?

Bill Hauck, Water Supply Administrator  
Email: [bhauck@tmwa.com](mailto:bhauck@tmwa.com)  
O: (775) 834-8111 M: (775) 250-1333



## STAFF REPORT

**TO:** Chairman and Board Members  
**THRU:** Mark Foree, General Manager  
**FROM:** John Zimmerman, Manager, Water Resources  
**DATE:** February 9, 2021  
**SUBJECT:** Discussion and possible action and direction to staff regarding 2021 legislative activities, current bills, and TMWA recommended positions on legislative proposals

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### SUMMARY

The 2021 Session began on February 1 and the TMWA legislative subcommittee, general counsel Michael Pagni, lobbyist Leo Drozdoff, and staff have been reviewing bills as they are released by the Legislative Counsel Bureau (LCB). All bills have not yet been publicly released. The Legislative Subcommittee will meet on February 11 after which staff will send an updated list of bills and recommended positions to Board members for review. At the Board meeting, staff, Michael Pagni, and Leo Drozdoff will provide an update regarding the Session and a summary of all significant bills and bills on which the Legislative Subcommittee recommends TMWA support or oppose.

### Key 2021 Legislative Deadlines:

February 1	Session Begins
February 8	Legislators' BDR Requests
March 15	Legislators' Bill Introductions
March 22	Committees' Bill Introductions
April 9	Committee Passage (1 <sup>st</sup> House)
April 20	First House Passage
May 14	Committee Passage (2 <sup>nd</sup> House)
May 21	Second House Passage
May 31	Session Ends

Bill	Description	Sponsor(s)	Status	Past Meetings	Past Action	Future Meetings	Leg. Subcommittee Recommendation
AB1	Revises provisions relating to training for Legislators. (BDR 17-438)	Committee on Legislative Operations and Elections	Legislative Operations and Elections	Assembly Committee on Government Affairs 2/11/2021 9:00 AM	Mentioned no jurisdiction		MONITOR
AB3	Revises provisions concerning the electronic transmission of certain maps and other documents relating to the approval of divisions of land. (BDR 22-406)	Committee on Government Affairs	Government Affairs	Assembly Committee on Government Affairs 2/12/2021 9:00 AM	Heard		SUPPORT
AB5	Makes various changes to provisions relating to judicial review of orders and decisions of the State Engineer. (BDR 48-311)	Committee on Natural Resources	Natural Resources				MONITOR
AB6	Revises provisions governing an application for a temporary change relating to appropriated water. (BDR 48-309)	Committee on Natural Resources	Natural Resources				SUPPORT
AB15	Revises the membership of the Colorado River Commission of Nevada. (BDR 48-341)	Committee on Natural Resources	Natural Resources				MONITOR
AB28	Imposes an inverse preference on certain bidders for state purchasing contracts. (BDR 27-238)	Committee on Government Affairs	Government Affairs	Assembly Committee on Government Affairs 2/3/2021 9:00 AM	Mentioned		MONITOR
AB37	Revises provisions relating to the enforcement of obligations for support of children. (BDR 3-301)	Committee on Judiciary	Judiciary	Assembly Committee on Judiciary 2/12/2021 8:00 AM	Heard		MONITOR
AB39	Revises provisions relating to public records. (BDR 19-333)	Committee on Government Affairs	Government Affairs				MONITOR
AB49	Revises provisions relating to disciplinary action by the State Contractors' Board. (BDR 54-322)	Committee on Commerce and Labor	Commerce and Labor			Assembly Committee on Commerce and Labor 2/15/2021 1:30 PM	MONITOR
AB61	Revises provisions relating to trade practices. (BDR 52-424)	Committee on Commerce and Labor	Commerce and Labor				MONITOR



Bill	Description	Sponsor(s)	Status	Past Meetings	Past Action	Future Meetings	Leg. Subcommittee Recommendation
AB65	Revises provisions relating to ethics in government. (BDR 23-257)	Committee on Legislative Operations and Elections	Legislative Operations and Elections	Joint Meeting of the Assembly Committee on Legislative Operations and Elections and Senate Committee on Legislative Operations and Elections 2/4/2021 4:00 PM	Mentioned no jurisdiction		MONITOR
AB83	Revises the date of the legal holiday for the observance of Nevada Day. (BDR 19-70)	Yeager	Government Affairs				MONITOR
AB87	Makes various changes to provisions governing the vacation or abandonment of certain easements. (BDR 22-460)	Nguyen and Roberts	Government Affairs				OPPOSE
AB90	Requires counties to pay impact fees to certain local governments for projects of intercounty significance. (BDR 22-883)	Benitez-Thompson	Government Affairs				MONITOR
AB93	Revises provisions relating to states of emergency or declarations of disaster proclaimed by the Governor. (BDR 36-41)	Wheeler, Dickman, O'Neill, Ellison, Hafen, Hansen, Hardy, Kasama, Krasner, Leavitt, Matthews, McArthur, Roberts and Titus	Government Affairs				MONITOR
AB95	Revises the membership of the Legislative Committee on Public Lands. (BDR 17-463)	Committee on Legislative Operations and Elections	Legislative Operations and Elections			Assembly Committee on Legislative Operations and Elections 2/16/2021 4:00 PM	MONITOR
AB97	Revises provisions governing toxic chemicals. (BDR 40-141)	Watts	Natural Resources				MONITOR
AB100	Revises provisions relating to wildfires. (BDR 42-109)	Committee on Government Affairs	Government Affairs	Assembly Committee on Natural Resources 2/10/2021 4:00 PM	Mentioned		MONITOR
AB108	Creates the Nevada Office of the Inspector General. (BDR 18-64)	Brittney Miller	Printer				MONITOR
AJR2	Recognizes that forest health and water quality are inextricably linked. (BDR R-112)	Committee on Natural Resources	Printer				SUPPORT

Bill	Description	Sponsor(s)	Status	Past Meetings	Past Action	Future Meetings	Leg. Subcommittee Recommendation
SB11	Authorizes certain incorporated cities to impose a supplemental governmental services tax. (BDR 32-433)	Committee on Revenue and Economic Development	Revenue and Economic Development				MONITOR
SB13	Revises provisions relating to collective bargaining by local government employers. (BDR 31-370)	Committee on Government Affairs	Government Affairs	Assembly Committee on Government Affairs 2/12/2021 9:00 AM	Mentioned no jurisdiction		MONITOR
SB14	Revises provisions relating to certain emergency response plans and assessments. (BDR 36-280)	Committee on Government Affairs	Government Affairs	Senate Committee on Government Affairs 2/8/2021 3:30 PM	Heard, No Action		MONITOR
SB18	Revises provisions governing penalties for certain violations relating to public utilities. (BDR 58-277)	Committee on Growth and Infrastructure	Growth and Infrastructure			Senate Committee on Growth and Infrastructure 2/17/2021 3:30 PM	MONITOR
SB26	Revises provisions relating to the protection of personally identifiable information from release. (BDR 52-332)	Committee on Commerce and Labor	Commerce and Labor				MONITOR
SB33	Revises certain provisions relating to natural resource management. (BDR 47-312)	Committee on Natural Resources	Natural Resources	Senate Committee on Natural Resources 2/11/2021 3:30 PM	Heard, No Action		MONITOR
SB40	Provides for the collection of certain data relating to health care. (BDR 40-415)	Committee on Health and Human Services	Health and Human Services				MONITOR

Bill	Description	Sponsor(s)	Status	Past Meetings	Past Action	Future Meetings	Leg. Subcommittee Recommendation
<a href="#">SB67</a>	Revises provisions relating to public works. (BDR 28-400)	Committee on Government Affairs	Government Affairs				MONITOR
<a href="#">SB71</a>	Revises provisions governing unclaimed property. (BDR 10-398)	Committee on Judiciary	Judiciary	Senate Committee on Judiciary 2/3/2021 1:00 PM	Heard, No Action		MONITOR
<a href="#">SB73</a>	Allows the imposition of certain taxes or the reallocation of certain tax revenue to fund certain natural resources projects and services in the City of Reno based on the recommendations of a committee and voter approval. (BDR S-432)	Committee on Revenue and Economic Development	Revenue and Economic Development				MONITOR
<a href="#">SB88</a>	Revises provisions relating to emergency management. (BDR 36-51)	Pickard, Settlemeyer, Hansen, Buck, Goicoechea, Hammond and Hardy	Government Affairs				MONITOR
<a href="#">SB106</a>	Enacts the Uniform Easement Relocation Act. (BDR 10-833)	Harris	Judiciary			Senate Committee on Judiciary 2/16/2021 1:00 PM	MONITOR
<a href="#">SB107</a>	Makes various changes relating to the statute of limitations for certain causes of action. (BDR 2-872)	Ohrenschall	Judiciary			Senate Committee on Judiciary 2/18/2021 1:00 PM	MONITOR
<a href="#">SB109</a>	Revises provisions relating to the collection of certain information by governmental agencies. (BDR 19-95)	Spearman	Government Affairs				MONITOR



## STAFF REPORT

**TO:** Chairman and Board Members  
**THRU:** Mark Foree, General Manager  
**FROM:** Danny Rotter, Engineering Manager  
Scott Estes, Director of Engineering  
**DATE:** February 17, 2021  
**SUBJECT:** **Presentation on the status of the Digital Plan Review Process**

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### **Recommendation**

No action needed.

### **Summary**

For several years, the Development Community has been requesting improvements to the regional permitting process to include submission and review of electronic plan sets. There have been a few challenges and successful solutions to date with more opportunities for improvements in the future. Below is a summary of events and items related to TMWA's New Business process.

**January 2019:** Nevada State Board of Professional Engineers and Land Surveyors (NVBPELS) revises NAC 625 to clarify and define the requirements of electronic submittals and digital signatures.

**September 2019:** TMWA participates in "Blue Ribbon Regional Data Strategic Meeting" with representatives from regional entities including elected officials and agency staff of City of Reno, City of Sparks, Washoe County, Washoe County Health District (WCHD), TMWA and the Builders Association of Northern Nevada (BANN).

**September 2019:** TMWA participates on panel for digital signature workshop with ASCE, APWA and NVBPELS. TMWA was part of the ongoing NVBPELS 'digital signature task force' through October 2020.

**October 2019:** TMWA adds strategic goal for FY2020 "Provide public access to TMWA New Business project information and status". This became <https://projectportal.tmwa.com/>. Also added a strategic goal of "Create an implementation plan for allowing digital plan submission and review/approval for New Business Projects"



**December 2019:** TMWA hosted BANN and representatives from 5 local engineering firms to discuss the overall land development process and the pain points associated along the way. There was also focused discussion on TMWA's role in that regional process and possible improvements such as approval notification into Accella or some other mechanism.

**March 2020:** COVID19 strikes. In furtherance of the Governor's Emergency Directives, TMWA staff shifts to temporarily allowing scanned copies of plans to be electronically submitted to TMWA for review and approval.

**May 2020:** ProjectPortal.TMWA.com went live providing real time information on review status by entered in the TMWA project number into the portal.

**July 2020:** Nevada Division of Environmental Protection (NDEP) revises NAC 445A to reference and align with the NVBPELS regulation changes in NAC 625 regarding electronic submittals and digital signatures. This paves the way to officially allowing electronic submittal of digitally signed plan sets for a 'water project' as defined by NAC 445A.

**October 2020:** NVBPELS Publishes it's "Electronic Submittal Digital Signature Guide"

**October 2020:** TMWA adds strategic goal for FY2021 "Formalize and improve digital plan submission and review/approval for New Business Projects including new digital signature regulations from the Nevada State Board of Engineers."

**October 2020:** Certain TMWA staff receive logins to Accela as "outside agencies" to allow electronic approval and verification of certain tasks like water rights and backflow prevention for tenant improvements (TI) projects.

**December 2020:** TMWA Requires digital signatures complying with the NVBPELS guide for all submittals. All submittals are being handled electronically. Approved plans are being provided via hard copy for submittal to the permitting agency for routing to WCHD.

**January 2021:** Statewide Discussion with NDEP, WCHD, SNHD, LVVWD and TMWA regarding electronic submittals and electronic records. Paper has been the official record medium up until the NAC 445A revision in July 2020. NDEP will slowly move towards electronic submittals and digital signatures but the rest of the agencies can implement in their timing for 'water projects'. WCHD staff mentions wanting to move to electronic submittals.

**February 2021:** AB 3 proposes to change NRS 278. The bill description is "Revises provisions concerning the electronic transmission of certain maps and other documents relating to the approval of divisions of land". TMWA staff recommends support. TMWA Legislative Subcommittee moves to support.

**Future plans:** TMWA staff has been manually creating folders in OneDrive for applicants to place all their documentation. This process is a great opportunity for automation. This likely means an 'add-on' to the Project Portal. Other minor process improvements could benefit from this also such as notifications. Another opportunity is exploring possible integration and information exchange with Accela's system and TMWA's system.



**TO:** Board of Directors  
**THRU:** Mark Foree, General Manager  
**FROM:** Michele Sullivan, Chief Financial Officer  
 Matt Bowman, Financial Controller  
**DATE:** February 8, 2021  
**SUBJECT:** Presentation of Fiscal Year 2021 Q2 year to date financial results

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### Summary

Please refer to Attachments A-1 and A-2 for full Statements of Revenues, Expenses and Changes in Net Position for both actual to budget and year-over-year comparisons as discussed in the report below.

### Budget to Actual

	Actual YTD 2021	Budget YTD 2021	Variance \$	Variance %
CHANGE IN NET POSITION	\$ 35,141,951	\$ 26,145,303	\$ 8,996,648	34 %

Change in net position was \$9.0m or 34% higher than budget through two quarters of fiscal year 2021. This is due primarily to higher than budgeted water sales, lower operating expenses and higher capital contributions.

### Year over Year

	Actual YTD 2021	Actual YTD 2020	Variance \$	Variance %
CHANGE IN NET POSITION	\$ 35,141,951	\$ 35,455,418	\$ (313,467)	(1)%

Change in net position was \$0.3m or 1% lower than prior year for the first half fiscal year 2021. This was due to higher operating income of \$3.5m, offset by lower capital contributions of \$2.6m and higher nonoperating expenses of \$1.2m.

## Revenue

### Budget to Actual

	Actual YTD 2021	Budget YTD 2021	Variance \$	Variance %
<b>OPERATING REVENUES</b>				
Charges for Water Sales	65,541,871	62,129,358	3,412,513	5 %
Hydroelectric Sales	1,275,646	1,325,504	(49,858)	(4)%
Other Operating Sales	1,201,089	1,400,058	(198,969)	(14)%
Total Operating Revenues	68,018,606	64,854,920	3,163,686	5 %

Operating revenue was \$3.2m or 5% higher than budget through the first two quarters of the fiscal year due to higher water sales offset slightly by lower hydroelectric and other operating sales. Water sales were up \$3.4m or 5% due to higher water usage in residential and irrigation categories. Active water services are in line with projections, showing about a 2% increase year over year. However, hot and dry weather during the summer months led to higher water use than average and projected. It's unknown whether this variance will continue through the end of the year as late spring water sales are heavily dependent on precipitation and temperature which is difficult to predict.

### Year over Year

	Actual YTD 2021	Actual YTD 2020	Variance \$	Variance %
<b>OPERATING REVENUES</b>				
Charges for Water Sales	65,541,871	60,574,187	4,967,684	8 %
Hydroelectric Sales	1,275,646	1,816,370	(540,724)	(30)%
Other Operating Sales	1,201,089	1,398,403	(197,314)	(14)%
Total Operating Revenues	68,018,606	63,788,960	4,229,646	7 %

Total operating revenues were \$4.2m higher than prior year due to higher water sales offset by lower hydroelectric and other operating sales revenue. Water sales revenue was higher by \$5.0m or 8% due to more consumption and added service connections as discussed above. While the first half of FY 2021 has been above average for water use, the first half of FY 2020 was below average, so change year over year is substantial. Hydroelectric revenue was lower due to the Washoe plant being out of service for the first two quarters for the rebuilding of the damaged flume. Other operating sales were lower than prior year due to lower late fee and service call revenue, primarily due to the pandemic.

## Operating Expenses

### Budget to Actual

	Actual YTD 2021	Budget YTD 2021	Variance \$	Variance %
<b>OPERATING EXPENSES</b>				
Salaries and Wages	11,539,328	12,399,227	(859,899)	(7)%
Employee Benefits	5,052,278	5,353,955	(301,677)	(6)%
Services and Supplies	15,021,030	16,921,704	(1,900,674)	(11)%
Total Operating Expenses Before Depreciation	31,612,636	34,674,886	(3,062,250)	(9)%
Depreciation	16,573,967	16,759,426	(185,459)	(1)%
Total Operating Expenses	48,186,603	51,434,312	(3,247,709)	(6)%

Total operating expenses were \$3.2m lower (6%) than budget. Salaries and wages and employee benefits are lower due to position vacancies and increased labor charged to capital projects. Services and supplies expenses are lower for various reasons but primarily due to timing of certain expenses (temporary), lower power costs and lower training/travel costs. These were offset by higher treatment plant chemical costs and software costs. Services and supplies expenses are expected to end the year under budget, but because of timing of spend, will likely be closer to budget than through the first half of the year.

### Year over Year

	Actual YTD 2021	Actual YTD 2020	Variance \$	Variance %
<b>OPERATING EXPENSES</b>				
Salaries and Wages	11,539,328	11,246,886	292,442	3 %
Employee Benefits	5,052,278	4,928,192	124,086	3 %
Services and Supplies	15,021,030	14,648,376	372,654	3 %
Total Operating Expenses Before Depreciation	31,612,636	30,823,454	789,182	3 %
Depreciation	16,573,967	16,626,868	(52,901)	— %
Total Operating Expenses	48,186,603	47,450,322	736,281	2 %

Year over year for the first two quarters, operating expenses were \$0.7m higher than the prior year. This is due to slight increases in each salaries and wages, employee benefits and services and supplies. With minimal exceptions, operations remain consistent year over year so it's expected that operating expenses will remain consistent year over year. There are no significant changes expected in the second half of the year so it's expected to finish the year with similar variances.

Non-Operating ExpensesBudget to Actual

	Actual YTD 2021	Budget YTD 2021	Variance \$	Variance %
<b>NONOPERATING REVENUES (EXPENSES)</b>				
Investment Earnings	1,421,152	1,932,553	(511,401)	(26)%
Net Increase (Decrease) in FV of Investments	(719,792)	—	(719,792)	— %
Gain (Loss) on Disposal of Assets	—	—	—	— %
Amortization of Bond/note Issuance Costs	(83,808)	(95,400)	11,592	(12)%
Interest Expense	(6,131,484)	(6,054,917)	(76,567)	1 %
Other Nonoperating Revenue	—	—	—	— %
Other Nonoperating Expense	—	—	—	— %
Total Nonoperating Revenues (Expenses)	(5,513,932)	(4,217,764)	(1,296,168)	31 %

Nonoperating expenses were \$1.3m higher than budgeted. This is due mostly to lower investment income and a net decrease in the fair value of investments due to continued low interest rates on invested cash balances. The ten-year US Treasury Yield was at 0.69% at September 30, 2020 and 0.93% at December 31, 2020 down from 1.88% on January 2, 2020.

Year over Year

	Actual YTD 2021	Actual YTD 2020	Variance \$	Variance %
<b>NONOPERATING REVENUES (EXPENSES)</b>				
Investment Earnings	1,421,152	2,200,665	(779,513)	(35)%
Net Increase (Decrease) in FV of Investments	(719,792)	269,650	(989,442)	(367)%
Gain (Loss) on Disposal of Assets	—	(258,147)	258,147	(100)%
Amortization of Bond/note Issuance Costs	(83,808)	(123,653)	39,845	(32)%
Interest Expense	(6,131,484)	(6,389,988)	258,504	(4)%
Other Nonoperating Revenue	—	—	—	— %
Other Nonoperating Expense	—	—	—	— %
Total Nonoperating Revenues (Expenses)	(5,513,932)	(4,301,473)	(1,212,459)	28 %

Nonoperating expenses were higher than prior year in the first half by \$1.2m or 28%. Similar to the reasons above, this variance is primarily due to lower investment earnings and a decrease in the fair value of investments. Offsetting decreases in those categories were lower gain/loss on disposal of assets (timing related) and lower interest expense (lower rates on commercial paper).



## Capital Contributions

### Budget to Actual

	Actual YTD 2021	Budget YTD 2021	Variance \$	Variance %
<b>CAPITAL CONTRIBUTIONS</b>				
Grants	—	475,000	(475,000)	(100)%
Water Resource Sustainability Program	576,476	434,850	141,626	33 %
Developer Infrastructure Contributions	7,548,233	5,613,273	1,934,960	34 %
Developer Will-serve Contributions (Net of Refunds)	1,678,671	2,092,704	(414,033)	(20)%
Developer Capital Contributions - Other	4,656,879	5,121,078	(464,199)	(9)%
Developer Facility Charges (Net of Refunds)	6,156,220	2,999,304	3,156,916	105 %
Contributions from Others	174,601	68,750	105,851	154 %
Contributions from Other Governments	32,800	137,500	(104,700)	(76)%
Net Capital Contributions	20,823,880	16,942,459	3,881,421	23 %

Capital contributions were \$3.9m higher than budget for the first half of the year. This was driven primarily by increases from budget for developer infrastructure contributions and facility charges offset by other, smaller decreases from budget. Developer infrastructure contributions are non-cash transactions where water infrastructure is installed by developers, then after inspection, dedicated to TMWA. This is expected to remain higher for the remainder of the year. Facility charges are supply/treatment, area and storage charges and can fluctuate throughout the year due to large projects. During the first half, ten projects made up approximately 40% of the total charges collected out of over 200 projects. This budget overage may come back in line during the second half. Grant revenue is lower due to timing of receiving grant awards for two outstanding FEMA grants which are still expected to be received during the year.

### Year over Year

	Actual YTD 2021	Actual YTD 2020	Variance \$	Variance %
<b>CAPITAL CONTRIBUTIONS</b>				
Grants	—	—	—	— %
Water Resource Sustainability Program	576,476	669,889	(93,413)	(14)%
Developer Infrastructure Contributions	7,548,233	10,072,821	(2,524,588)	(25)%
Developer Will-serve Contributions (Net of Refunds)	1,678,671	2,370,908	(692,237)	(29)%
Developer Capital Contributions - Other	4,656,879	4,719,221	(62,342)	(1)%
Developer Facility Charges (Net of Refunds)	6,156,220	5,557,914	598,306	11 %
Contributions from Others	174,601	27,500	147,101	535 %
Contributions from Other Governments	32,800	—	32,800	— %
Net Capital Contributions	20,823,880	23,418,253	(2,594,373)	(11)%

Year over year, capital contributions are \$2.6m or 11% lower in the first half. The main driver of this is developer infrastructure contributions which is \$2.5m lower. Will-serve contributions are lower, however this is timing related and contributions are expected to catch up in the second half of the year.

### Capital Spending

Cash spent on capital outlays and construction projects during the first half was approximately \$19.3m. Total budgeted capital spend for fiscal year 2021 is \$54.7m. Projected capital spending for the year is \$40m - \$45m. Top project spend through the first quarter is below -

- |   |        |
|---|--------|
| • Mount Rose Water Treatment Plant        | \$2.8m |
| • Washoe Flume Reconstruction             | \$2.3m |
| • Boomtown to TMWA Connection             | \$1.9m |
| • Customer Information System Replacement | \$1.6m |

### Cash Position

At December 31, 2020 total cash on hand was \$218.3m or \$12.5m higher than at the beginning of the fiscal year. Of the total cash on hand, \$161.0m was unrestricted to be used to meet upcoming and future operating & maintenance expenses, principal & interest payments and construction project payments. The remaining \$58.1m was restricted to pay for scheduled bond principal and interest payments as well as maintaining required reserves as stipulated in our bond covenants.

# Truckee Meadows Water Authority

Comparative Statements of Revenues, Expenses and Changes in Net Position  
For the six months ended December 31, 2020

	Actual YTD 2021	Budget YTD 2021	Variance \$	Variance %
<b>OPERATING REVENUES</b>				
Charges for Water Sales	\$ 65,541,871	\$ 62,129,358	\$ 3,412,513	5 %
Hydroelectric Sales	1,275,646	1,325,504	(49,858)	(4)%
Other Operating Sales	1,201,089	1,400,058	(198,969)	(14)%
Total Operating Revenues	68,018,606	64,854,920	3,163,686	5 %
<b>OPERATING EXPENSES</b>				
Salaries and Wages	11,539,328	12,399,227	(859,899)	(7)%
Employee Benefits	5,052,278	5,353,955	(301,677)	(6)%
Services and Supplies	15,021,030	16,921,704	(1,900,674)	(11)%
Total Operating Expenses Before Depreciation	31,612,636	34,674,886	(3,062,250)	(9)%
Depreciation	16,573,967	16,759,426	(185,459)	(1)%
Total Operating Expenses	48,186,603	51,434,312	(3,247,709)	(6)%
<b>OPERATING INCOME</b>	<b>19,832,003</b>	<b>13,420,608</b>	<b>6,411,395</b>	<b>48 %</b>
<b>NONOPERATING REVENUES (EXPENSES)</b>				
Investment Earnings	1,421,152	1,932,553	(511,401)	(26)%
Net Increase (Decrease) in FV of Investments	(719,792)	—	(719,792)	— %
Gain (Loss) on Disposal of Assets	—	—	—	— %
Amortization of Bond/note Issuance Costs	(83,808)	(95,400)	11,592	(12)%
Interest Expense	(6,131,484)	(6,054,917)	(76,567)	1 %
Other Nonoperating Revenue	—	—	—	— %
Other Nonoperating Expense	—	—	—	— %
Total Nonoperating Revenues (Expenses)	(5,513,932)	(4,217,764)	(1,296,168)	31 %
Gain (Loss) Before Capital Contributions	14,318,071	9,202,844	5,115,227	56 %
<b>CAPITAL CONTRIBUTIONS</b>				
Grants	—	475,000	(475,000)	(100)%
Water Resource Sustainability Program	576,476	434,850	141,626	33 %
Developer Infrastructure Contributions	7,548,233	5,613,273	1,934,960	34 %
Developer Will-serve Contributions (Net of Refunds)	1,678,671	2,092,704	(414,033)	(20)%
Developer Capital Contributions - Other	4,656,879	5,121,078	(464,199)	(9)%
Developer Facility Charges (Net of Refunds)	6,156,220	2,999,304	3,156,916	105 %
Contributions from Others	174,601	68,750	105,851	154 %
Net Capital Contributions	20,823,880	16,942,459	3,881,421	23 %
<b>CHANGE IN NET POSITION</b>	<b>\$ 35,141,951</b>	<b>\$ 26,145,303</b>	<b>\$ 8,996,648</b>	<b>34 %</b>

# Truckee Meadows Water Authority

Comparative Statements of Revenues, Expenses and Changes in Net Position  
For the six months ended December 31, 2020

	Actual YTD 2021	Actual YTD 2020	Variance \$	Variance %
<b>OPERATING REVENUES</b>				
Charges for Water Sales	\$ 65,541,871	\$ 60,574,187	\$ 4,967,684	8 %
Hydroelectric Sales	1,275,646	1,816,370	(540,724)	(30)%
Other Operating Sales	1,201,089	1,398,403	(197,314)	(14)%
Total Operating Revenues	68,018,606	63,788,960	4,229,646	7 %
<b>OPERATING EXPENSES</b>				
Salaries and Wages	11,539,328	11,246,886	292,442	3 %
Employee Benefits	5,052,278	4,928,192	124,086	3 %
Services and Supplies	15,021,030	14,648,376	372,654	3 %
Total Operating Expenses Before Depreciation	31,612,636	30,823,454	789,182	3 %
Depreciation	16,573,967	16,626,868	(52,901)	— %
Total Operating Expenses	48,186,603	47,450,322	736,281	2 %
<b>OPERATING INCOME</b>	<b>19,832,003</b>	<b>16,338,638</b>	<b>3,493,365</b>	<b>21 %</b>
<b>NONOPERATING REVENUES (EXPENSES)</b>				
Investment Earnings	1,421,152	2,200,665	(779,513)	(35)%
Net Increase (Decrease) in FV of Investments	(719,792)	269,650	(989,442)	(367)%
Gain (Loss) on Disposal of Assets	—	(258,147)	258,147	(100)%
Amortization of Bond/note Issuance Costs	(83,808)	(123,653)	39,845	(32)%
Interest Expense	(6,131,484)	(6,389,988)	258,504	(4)%
Other Nonoperating Revenue	—	—	—	— %
Other Nonoperating Expense	—	—	—	— %
Total Nonoperating Revenues (Expenses)	(5,513,932)	(4,301,473)	(1,212,459)	28 %
Gain (Loss) Before Capital Contributions	14,318,071	12,037,165	2,280,906	19 %
<b>CAPITAL CONTRIBUTIONS</b>				
Grants	—	—	—	— %
Water Resource Sustainability Program	576,476	669,889	(93,413)	(14)%
Developer Infrastructure Contributions	7,548,233	10,072,821	(2,524,588)	(25)%
Developer Will-serve Contributions (Net of Refunds)	1,678,671	2,370,908	(692,237)	(29)%
Developer Capital Contributions - Other	4,656,879	4,719,221	(62,342)	(1)%
Developer Facility Charges (Net of Refunds)	6,156,220	5,557,914	598,306	11 %
Contributions from Others	174,601	27,500	147,101	535 %
Net Capital Contributions	20,823,880	23,418,253	(2,594,373)	(11)%
<b>CHANGE IN NET POSITION</b>	<b>\$ 35,141,951</b>	<b>\$ 35,455,418</b>	<b>\$ (313,467)</b>	<b>(1)%</b>



## **STAFF REPORT**

**TO:** Chairman and Board Members  
**THRU:** Mark Foree, General Manager  
**FROM:** John Zimmerman, Water Resources Manager  
**DATE:** February 9, 2021  
**SUBJECT:** **Informational report regarding TMWA involvement with the Steamboat canal project and Steamboat Canal & Irrigation Company**

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### **STEAMBOAT CANAL/NRCS PROJECT**

The Steamboat canal project was proposed by the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to use Federal funds (\$25M) to identify improvements that would provide flood protection and improve agricultural water management within the Steamboat ditch irrigation system. NRCS requested TMWA be a “cooperating agency” on the proposed project, which in essence gives an agency greater involvement in the planning and environmental review process. TMWA staff accepted the request pending Board approval and provided initial comments (attached), but before the request could be brought to Board for consideration, NRCS put the project on hold indefinitely (see attached). Staff will monitor and update the Board as necessary.

### **TMWA STEAMBOAT CANAL & IRRIGATION COMPANY INVOLVEMENT**

TMWA acquired 228 shares in the Company as part of the purchase of Sierra Pacific Power Company’s water utility assets in June 2001 and pays annual assessments based on this interest and water deliveries to ponds at the Hunter Creek reservoir. TMWA’s shares represent a little over 13% of active shares in the Company. TMWA acquired this obligation in the purchase from Sierra, which had a long-standing policy of paying its portion of annual assessments to the Company. This policy was a goodwill gesture and mandated by the Company because, as Sierra acquired and converted decreed Steamboat Ditch water rights to municipal use, there were less active irrigators to contribute to the annual operation of the ditch. TMWA has no interest to use the ditch for municipal water purposes. TMWA maintains a good relationship with the Company because a portion of the ditch is located adjacent to TMWA’s Fleish hydropower canal and must coordinate repairs because of the close proximity between the canal and ditch. The ditch also supplies water to TMWA’s Hunter Creek reservoir property to maintain the ponds on that property. Since TMWA’s inception in 2001, the shareholders of the Company have elected a TMWA representative to the Company’s Board of Directors and Mark Foree has held that seat since 2008. Mr. Foree was also President for a brief time period after the passing of long time President Gene Curti (in July of 2020) to help facilitate the transition until a successor to Mr. Curti was hired. Mr. Foree no longer serves as President.





January 14, 2021

Elizabeth Spaulding  
The Langdon Group  
2760 W. Excursion Lane  
Suite 400  
Meridian, ID 83642  
email: [TruckeeRiver@NVWatershed.com](mailto:TruckeeRiver@NVWatershed.com)

Re: Truckee River Watershed Plan Environmental Assessment

Dear Ms. Spaulding:

The Truckee Meadows Water Authority (TMWA) is a cooperating agency related to the Truckee River Watershed Plan Environmental Assessment. TMWA is the regional municipal water purveyor for the Reno/Sparks community, and as such, offers the following input for your consideration.

Secondary recharge from irrigation within the Truckee Meadows is an important source of groundwater recharge. Unlined irrigation ditches are a component of this secondary recharge. TMWA operates numerous municipal wells within the proposed project vicinity. In addition, hundreds of domestic wells may also rely on secondary recharge as a component of the local groundwater resource.

TMWA recognizes that Nevada water rights law does not necessarily entitle groundwater users to the potential benefits of recharge from ditch leakage. That said, certain improvements to the Steamboat Canal may have the potential to indirectly impact groundwater resources of municipal and domestic wells. We ask that your environmental review consider these potential impacts, and that the project proponents investigate targeted solutions through canal lining and/or piping in areas where these risks are limited. Targeted solutions may mitigate these risks while still allowing for much needed improvements to the Steamboat Canal water delivery system.

Sincerely,

John Enloe, P.E.  
Director, Natural Resources  
[jenloe@tmwa.com](mailto:jenloe@tmwa.com)  
Office: (775) 834-8250,  
Mobile: (775) 722-7134

### **Truckee River Watershed Project Public Statement**

The U.S. Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), in cooperation with sponsor Washoe County Water Conservancy District (WCWCD), and partner Steamboat Canal & Irrigation Company (SCIC), began the Truckee River Watershed Project planning process, also known as the Steamboat Canal Project, in Washoe County, Nevada in late 2020. The proposed project intended to use federal funds from the NRCS Watershed Protection and Prevention Program (PL 83-566) to identify improvements within the Truckee River Watershed that would provide flood protection and improve agricultural water management within SCIC's system. The proposed project was sponsored by WCWCD on behalf of SCIC. J-U-B Engineers, Inc. was hired to conduct an Environmental Assessment and had begun the scoping process with a scoping meeting and accepting public comments.

In consideration of public comments received to date, and an intent to re-evaluate the feasibility, scope and extent of the project, as well as the effectiveness of the proposed project to meet conservation criteria; and identify the level of technical services that would be required to complete the project, the planning process has been halted at this time.

Comments received will be documented to inform NRCS of the interests and concerns associated with potential improvements to the SCIC system.

More information will be forthcoming through a press release and on the NRCS Nevada website as to the next steps in the planning process.

For additional information, please contact Jose Rosado at 775-834-0911 or [jose.rosado@usda.gov](mailto:jose.rosado@usda.gov)



## STAFF REPORT

**TO:** Board of Directors  
**FROM:** Mark Foree, General Manager  
**DATE:** February 8, 2021  
**SUBJECT:** General Manager's Report

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Attached please find the written reports from the Management team including the Operations Report (*Attachment A*), the Water Resource and the Annexation Activity Report (*Attachment B*), and the Customer Services Report (*Attachment C*).

Included in your agenda packet are press clippings from January 13, 2020 through February 9, 2021.

### **TMWA's new customer service information (CIS) system**

For the past two years staff has been working diligently to launch TMWA's new Customer Information Service (CIS) system. I am pleased to report that a kick-off date has been set for March 9<sup>th</sup> where customers will experience a new user-friendly customer portal to view, and pay their bills, see their water usage, and select notification alerts for a number of topics. We will communicate with TMWA customers over the next month, preparing everyone for the launch and what they should expect. A personal letter will be sent to all TMWA customers from Michele Sullivan, CFO, with their new customer account number. It will explain how to make revisions to their payment processes, and how to sign up for a new online account in the updated customer portal. We have anticipated for all eventualities, but understand that there may be some issues.



## STAFF REPORT

**TO:** Board of Directors  
**THRU:** Mark Foree, General Manager  
**FROM:** Scott Estes, Director of Engineering  
**BY:** Bill Hauck, Water Supply Administrator  
**DATE:** Feb 08, 2021  
**SUBJECT:** February 2021 Operations Report

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### Summary

- The water supply outlook for the region is fair
- Lake Tahoe storage is @ 43% of capacity
- Combined total upstream reservoir storage is 42% of maximum capacity
- Customer demands are at wintertime levels (~34 MGD)
- Estimated hydroelectric revenue for January 2021 was \$ 166,000

### **(A) Water Supply**

- **River Flows** - Truckee River flows at the CA/NV state line are below normal for this time of year. Discharge was approximately 280 cubic feet per second (CFS) this morning because of TROA operations.
- **Reservoir Storage** - Truckee River reservoir storage is mostly unchanged from last month @ 42% of capacity. The elevation of Lake Tahoe is 6225.83 feet (3.27' below maximum storage elevation). Storage values for each reservoir as of 2/8 are as follows:

<b>Reservoir</b>	<b>Current Storage (Acre-Feet)</b>	<b>% of Capacity (Percent)</b>
Tahoe	319,800	43%
Boca	6,514	22%
Donner	3,057	32%
Independence	11,097	63%
Prosser	6,009	20%
Stampede	100,817	45%

In addition to approximately 14,155 acre-feet of storage in Donner and Independence reservoirs, TMWA has about 24,425 acre-feet of water stored between Lake Tahoe, Boca, and Stampede reservoirs under the terms of TROA. TMWA's total combined upstream reservoir storage is approximately 38,600 acre-feet (as of 2/8).

- **Snowpack** - Both the Lake Tahoe and Truckee River basins are reporting 75% of normal conditions as of 2/8. The winter storms that the region received in late January noticeably improved snowpack totals from where they were (52% of average). But we still have a way to go as far as catching up to average is concerned, and with no major storms in the forecast over the next 10 days, it is looking more and more likely that we'll end the season on a sub-par note. The snowpack building season is still only at about the half-way mark and things could turn around. For that reason, this winter cannot be written off just yet.
- **Runoff Forecast** - While the latest runoff forecast is still below average for Lake Tahoe @ 69% of normal, and 67% of normal for the Truckee River at Farad, the outlook is noticeably better than it was this time last month.
- **Outlook** - We have reached the halfway point of the snowpack building season, and while the projected runoff forecast is below average, there is still enough carry-over storage in Lake Tahoe to help provide normal river flows for the remainder of 2021 and into 2022. The odds of ending up with a wet winter this time around are looking like a real long shot, but an average or normal winter at this juncture is still not out of the question. Regardless of how this year turns out, TMWA has more than enough drought storage and back up water supplies to meet projected customer demand not only this year, but for many decades to come even under the most protracted worse than worst case drought scenario.

#### (B) Water Production

- **Demand** - TMWA's customer demand averaged 34 million gallons per day (MGD) for the last full week of January. Overall, surface water is providing about 78% of our supply and groundwater the other 22%.

#### (C) Hydro Production

**Generation** - Truckee River flows at Farad (CA/NV state line) for the month of January 2021 averaged 306 CFS, which is below average. The Fleish power plant was on-line and available the entire month (100% available). The Verdi plant was off-line for 3 days due to a small canal breach. And the Washoe Power plant was still out of service as the flume rebuild continues. Below average river flows once again last month are the main reason for the below normal generation at Fleish and Verdi. Statistics for the month as follows:

Hydro Plant	Days On-Line	Generation (Megawatt hours)	Est. Revenue (Dollars)	Est. Revenue (Dollars/Day)
Fleish	31	1,383	\$ 103,255	\$ 3,331
Verdi	28	843	\$ 62,382	\$ 2,012
Washoe	0	0	\$ 0	\$ 0
<b>Totals</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>2,226</b>	<b>\$ 165,637</b>	<b>\$ 5,343</b>





## STAFF REPORT

**TO:** Chairman and Board Members  
**THRU:** Mark Foree, General Manager  
**FROM:** John Zimmerman, Manager, Water Resources  
**DATE:** February 8, 2021  
**SUBJECT:** Report Water Resources and Annexation Activity

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### RULE 7

Rule 7 water resource purchases and will-serve commitment sales against purchased water resources through this reporting period:

Beginning Balance		4,052.08 AF
Purchases of water rights	0.20 AF	
Refunds	0.00 AF	
Sales	– 56.54 AF	
Adjustments	0.00 AF	
Ending Balance		3,995.74 AF

Price per acre foot at report date: \$7,600

### FISH SPRINGS RANCH, LLC GROUNDWATER RESOURCES

Through the merger of Washoe County's water utility, TMWA assumed a Water Banking and Trust Agreement with Fish Springs Ranch, LLC, a subsidiary of Vidler. Under the Agreement, TMWA holds record title to the groundwater rights for the benefit of Fish Springs. Fish Springs may sell and assign its interest in these groundwater rights to third parties for dedication to TMWA for a will-serve commitment in Areas where TMWA can deliver groundwater from the Fish Springs groundwater basin. Currently, TMWA can deliver Fish Springs groundwater to Area 10 only (Stead-Silver Lake-Lemmon Valley). The following is a summary of Fish Springs' resources.

Beginning Balance		7,696.12 AF
Committed water rights	– 2.61 AF	
Ending Balance		7,693.51 AF

Price per acre foot at report date: \$41,500 (for SFR and MFR); \$36,000 (for all other services)<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Price reflects avoided cost of Truckee River water right related fees and TMWA Supply & Treatment WSF charge.

**WATER SERVICE AREA ANNEXATIONS**

There have been no annexations since the date of the last Board meeting.

**INTERRUPTIBLE LARGE VOLUME NON-POTABLE SERVICE**

None this reporting period.



## **STAFF REPORT**

**TO:** Board of Directors  
**THRU:** Mark Foree, General Manager  
**FROM:** Marci Westlake, Manager Customer Service  
**DATE:** February 17, 2021  
**SUBJECT:** **January Customer Service Report**

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The following is a summary of Customer Service activity for January 2021.

### **Ombudsman**

- No calls for the month of January

### **Communications**

- Lydia Peri did a virtual presentation of One Water, Advanced Purified Water Demonstration for Reno-South Rotary Club, 12 people attended.

### **Conservation (2021 Calendar year)**

- 0 Water Watcher Contacts
- 63 Water Usage Reviews

### **Customer Calls – January**

- 7,769 phone calls handled
- Average handling time -4 minutes, 12 seconds per call
- Average speed of answer –23 seconds per call

### **Billing –January**

- 134,842 bills issued.
- 7 (0.00%) corrected bills.
- 24,931 customers (18%) have signed up for paperless billing to date.

**Service Orders –January** (% is rounded)

- 7,837 service orders taken
- 2,894 (37%) move-ins / move-outs
- 540 (7%) cut-out-for-non-payment and cut-in after receiving payments, including deposits and checks for tamper only
- 988 (13%) zero consumption meter checks
- 658 (8%) re-read meters
- 863 (11%) new meter sets and meter/register/ERT exchanges and equipment checks
- 176 (2%) problems / emergencies, including cut-out for customer repairs, dirty water, no water, leaks, pressure complaints, safety issues, installing water meter blankets, etc.
- 63 (1%) high-bill complaints / audit and water usage review requests
- 1,655 (21%) various other service orders

**Remittance – January**

- 25,399 mailed-in payments
- 22,843 electronic payments
- 34,382 payments via RapidPay (EFT)
- 17,623 one-time bank account payments
- 8,239 credit card payments
- 177 store payments
- 912 payments via drop box or at front desk

**Collections –January**

- 11,468 accounts received a late charge
- Mailed 6,962 10-day delinquent notices, 0.05% of accounts
- Mailed 1,889 48-hour delinquent notices, 0.03% of accounts
- 830 accounts eligible for disconnect
- 247 accounts were disconnected (including accounts that had been disconnected-for-non-payment that presented NSF checks for their reconnection)
- 0.26% write-off to revenue

**Meter Statistics – Fiscal Year to Date**

- 0 Meter retrofits completed
- 3,107 Meter exchanges completed
- 1,740 New business meter sets completed
- 131,038 Meters currently installed





## **TMWA Board Meeting**

**Wednesday, February 17, 2021**

### **Press Clippings**

**January 13, 2021 – February 9, 2021**



**Winter sunset on the Truckee River**

# Hydroelectric flumes of Truckee: Using the power of the Sierra | SierraSun.com



**Ice on Fleisch Flume.** *Photo by Dave DePuy*



**The remains of Hydro Flume Floriston.** *Photo by Greg Zirbel*



**Wood and metal penstock at Farad Flume.**

*Photo by Dave DePuy*

Driving down Interstate 80 from Truckee to Reno I've often wondered about the wooden boxes that hug the road and Truckee River. Some look abandoned while others look like they are still being used. What I found is that these are "flumes" and have been here for over 100 years. But what were they used for?

Flumes have been used around Truckee for many purposes. Early on 'V-flumes' were used as a replacement for oxen, horse and mule power, and "donkey steam" engines to transport logs to the various mills found on the Truckee River, Alder Creek and Trout Creek. Flumes were also used to transport lumber, ice and wood cords. But one of the most important usages of flumes had to do with providing power to where it was needed most.

The flumes you see along Interstate 80 are box flumes used to transport water and are part of a vast hydroelectric system.

## Need for Power

Even a hundred years ago the need for affordable electric power was apparent. The finding of the great Comstock Lode in Virginia City helped fuel the decision to cross over 40 miles of rugged desert to bring electricity to the mining operations. With mining being Nevada's primary industry in the late 1800's, the installation of hydroelectric power was critical to the Silver State's economy.

The Virginia City mines needed this electric power desperately. The reason for the hydroelectric plants was to replace expensive, soot-producing coal and wood power. By the late 1800s, Virginia City mines were so deep that they required constant pumping to remove groundwater. Heat also plagued the mines. The deeper into the earth the mines went, the hotter they became. In some cases the air temperature would be 150°F with the water reaching 170°F. Steam-driven Cornish pumps were effective for a while but the expense of the electricity and drop in value of silver forced mine owners to find cheaper power alternatives.

## Hydroelectricity

The first hydroelectric plant between Truckee and Reno was built at Farad in 1899. It had two turbines and generators and could supply 2800 KW (KiloWatts) to the mining companies and town of Virginia City. At Floriston a 'diversion' dam was built and Truckee River water was diverted into a canal and flume system which created the 'headpond'. The headpond fed into the penstock pipes (pressurized round wooden pipes with metal bands) and into the generating station. The height of the pipe above the turbines and the flow of water in the pipe provide the force necessary to turn the turbines. The greater the fall and flow of water, the more electricity could be produced. The steep sides of the Truckee River canyon made it necessary to build a flume (of 2-inch thick native pine for nearly 2 miles), set on supports that clung to the walls of the canyon. (See sidebar on 'Seeing the Flume'). Power was first delivered to Virginia City from the Farad hydroelectric plant on Sept. 12, 1900.



**Hydroelectric flumes of Truckee: Using the power of the Sierra | SierraSun.com**

**file:///tmwa.net/watershare/Administration/Board%20&%20Committees/\_Board/Board%20Agenda%20Items/2021/02.Feb17.21/PRESS%20CLIPS/Hydroelectric%20flumes%20of%20Truckee\_%20Using%20the%20power%20of%20the%20Sierra%20\_%20SierraSun.com.html[1/15/2021 2:40:03 PM]**

**Flume Construction and Maintenance**

Flumes were built on the edge of cliffs or high in the air on a trestle. Farad’s highest flume was 36 feet off the ground. Box flumes were very different from the ‘V’ flumes for the logging industry. Box flumes were enclosed. The box flumes had ‘racks’ which would help keep debris and ice from going into the Powerhouse.

On the top of the box flume were boards creating a 12 inch walkway. Constant repairs required a two-man crew to work on the flume. One would be on the top on the walkway to hand over needed equipment. The other person doing the repairs was on a 12 inch wide ‘sill’ on the side of the flume. Before any repairs were done there was a painstaking analysis and physical walkthrough of the flume to see where maintenance was needed. Wood flumes are replaced approximately every 20 to 40 years. Replacing a section was and continues to be an interesting task. Historically they would send in a flume crew and have them manually take down the section of flume that needed replacement. In the most dangerous areas and in long sections, environmental requirements had them use explosives. Explosives worked for several reasons: 1) you could take down the section you needed to replace quickly, and 2) the material would fall in place and not into the river. Environmentalists were adamant that no “unnatural treated wood or contaminants” fall into the river.

Regular maintenance also entailed dealing with ice build-up on the flumes. In the winter there is still a flume crew who would approximately come in every two weeks to knock the ice off both the inside and outside of the flume.

**Working the Flumes**

Tom Macaulay and Walt Walker were two of the luminaries working on the hydroelectric plants. Tom was Supervisor of the four Sierra Pacific Power Company hydroelectric plants, managing operations. Walt was the Superintendent of Sierra Pacific Power Company General Construction.

Walt Walker managed the flume crew at each of the hydroelectric plants built by Sierra Pacific Power Company. He started as a laborer, in 1942, earning \$0.93/hour. On his first day on the job he was told to climb a ladder and caulk the leaks on the bottom of the flume. His supervisor was testing him to see how he did with heights. Walt also remembers the hard winter of 1947 when he started working on Nov. 15 through March 15 with no days off, working 10 hours per day, fighting the ice in and on the flumes.

Early on, many of the hydroelectric fulltime workers lived at the hydroelectric plants with four people assigned to each powerhouse. At the site were several rooming houses. His dad, Wesley Walker Sr., was an operator and foreman on the crew at Farad. Walt’s family lived in the Farad company housing with Walt Walker’s brother being born there. Later technology took hold and the plants were automated leading Walt to go from operations to, once again, supervising the flume team.

**Drama Along the Flumes**

Over the 100 years there have been many stories about the flumes.

Around 1958-1959 there were 43 boxes (512 feet of flume with each box being 12 feet long) that fell all at once at the Farad flume near the head. There was talk of sabotage but nothing was found. Farad also had issues with boulders coming down and damaging the flume. Over a three week period they blasted the hill above the flume to reduce the rock fall.

And there was the one person in the 1980s who wanted to ride the top of the flumes on his bike (with his dog) only to fall 35 feet. He lived but not without injuries. His civil suit was dropped when it was pointed out that he was riding beyond the “No Trespassing” signs. Needless to say fencing and more signs were added.

**Hydroelectric Plants Today**

The Farad Hydroelectric plant continued operations until a major high flood in 1989 irreparably damaged the diversion dam. Farad has been closed for over 30 years due to the costs of rebuilding and the low cost of wholesale electricity but can still be seen from Interstate 80.

Today the Truckee Meadow Water Authority (TMWA) operates three hydroelectric plants along the Truckee River, Fleish (1905), Verdi (1911) and Washoe (1904). The operational plant you see first off Interstate 80 coming from Truckee is Fleish. The Fleish hydroelectric plant is the most dramatic.

Upriver from the operational Fleish Plant (south side of Interstate 80) you can see the flumes coming into a solid granite tunnel. The tunnel was built in 2005 due to the numerous times the flume was washed out or damaged at the sharp bend of the river. The old flume location is still visible. Just past the tunnel the flume continues. Then as you enter Nevada you will see the spillway off the flume, before the power plant, to handle the overflow and any unneeded water.

Verdi and Washoe hydroelectric plants use both flumes and open canals to carry water. All three plants are still providing cheap, reliable electricity to TMWA customers.

The great part of hydroelectricity is that it uses a renewable resource and all the water goes back to the river. Flumes were an important part of building the West.

To learn more about the history of Truckee and how important this town has been to the opening of the West, visit <https://www.truckeehistory.org/>.

*Judy DePuy is avid about Truckee History and is a member of the Truckee-Donner Historical Society, Donner Summit Historical Society and a Board member of the Truckee Donner Railroad Society and the new Museum of Truckee History.*

How to see the flumes

**Farad dam and flume:** Start at the Floriston exit, 15 miles below Truckee on Interstate 80. First a Central Pacific Railroad section house, then site of the Rocky Run Ice Company. The Truckee River General Electric Company’s Farad diversion dam was built in 1899. The dam is visible on the northside of the highway, as is the upper portion of the Farad flume.

**Farad Hydroelectricity Plant:** 17 miles below Truckee, on the south (right) side of the highway. This is the location of the Farad generating station. The flume between the Floriston bridge and Farad is close beside the highway. The roof of the forebay house is visible from the highway just above the interchange. When you park off the Farad exit you can walk and see the original wood and metal penstocks (pipe to create power to turbines).

**Fleish Diversion:** About 20 miles below Truckee, built in 1905 by Truckee River General Electric Company. A wide spot alongside Interstate 80 provides a view of the Fleish flume. The dam is out of site from the freeway. The flume continues for two miles along the canyon wall, with one short section of ditch, and is one of the most prominent features of the canyon.

**Fleish Power House:** Twenty-two miles below Truckee, the Fleish forebay, penstock and power house are visible across the canyon. Two spill-ways are often seen. One is for Fleish, the other is for the Steamboat Ditch which takes water from the river a short distance upstream. Fleish was named for the Fleishacker brothers who financed the Truckee River General Electric Company.

**Verdi Diversion Dam:** 23.5 mile below Truckee, the Verdi diversion dam was built in 1911 by the Truckee River General Electric Company and is easily visible from Interstate 80. Water was supplied to Coldren/Datz/Merrill ditches, Essex Ice Company, Verdi Lumber Co., and the California Sugar and White Pine agency. The generating plant is not visible from Interstate 80 but can be seen with a detour through the town of Verdi.

— Judy DePuy



# Nevada environmental agency funds water projects in Tahoe

News [FOLLOW NEWS](#) |

Laney Griffo

[lgriffo@tahoedailytribune.com](mailto:lgriffo@tahoedailytribune.com)

Previous work being done on Nevada State Route 28 in Incline Village to improve water



INCLINE VILLAGE, Nev. – The Nevada Division of Environmental Protection announced that \$1 million in Clean Water Act grant funds provided by the U.S Environmental Protection Agency will be used to complete 11 projects, including two in Lake Tahoe, to reduce “nonpoint source pollution” and improve water quality across the state.

The EPA used to focus solely on point sources, i.e. chemicals being leached from pipes into the water as the water flowed through. They later realized nonpoint source water pollution was also a major issue.

Nonpoint source water pollution degrades Nevada’s water resources when rain, snowmelt and irrigation water flows over developed or disturbed land, carrying with it pollutants including oil, sediment, pesticides, bacteria and nutrients such as nitrogen and phosphorus which can contribute to excess algae growth. This polluted water makes its way into Nevada’s waterways either directly or through storm drains, and can impact overall water quality conditions.

Areas throughout the whole state experience different sources of water pollution, in Tahoe, the biggest issue is fine particle sediment.

Jason Kuchnicki, branch supervisor, Lake Tahoe Watershed Program for NDEP said fine sediment particles get into the lake and scatter light so that light can’t penetrate as far. When looking at lake clarity, fine sediment particles account for about two-thirds of what controls clarity, while nutrients that promote algal growth account for one-third.

“Urban stormwater runoff accounts for over 70% of fine sediment particles,” Kucknicki said.

Once the particles get into the lake, they are nearly impossible to remove. So when the NDEP looks at projects to fund, they look at projects that focus on prevention.

One of the projects funded this year in Tahoe is the Lower Wood Creek Phase I Water Quality Improvement Project in Incline Village.

Kucknicki said a lot of the major roads in Incline don't have shoulders so the roads account for a lot of runoff. This project aims to do two things.

The first is direct water to depressions in the ground that can hold water and filter out particles and nutrients. The second is road improvements such as putting in curbs and gutters to direct and catch runoff.

Washoe County is the subgrantee but they have partnered with Nevada Division of State Lands, Nevada Department of Transportation, Incline Village General Improvement District, and Nevada Tahoe Conservation District. They received \$153,000 for the project.

The second project funded by the EPA grant is the Best Management Practices Technical Assistance and Lower Kingsbury Area-Wide Treatment Implementation project.

Birgit Widegren, supervisor of NDEP's Nonpoint Source Program said the aim of this project is to work with property owners in the Lower Kingsbury area to retrofit their properties to prevent excessive runoff.

Widegren added this is a unique project because it is an area-wide project that will collect stormwater from multiple parcels. She also added that the abandoned post office is a major focus of the project.

The subgrantee is Tahoe Regional Planning Agency with partnership from Nevada Tahoe Conservation District and Douglas County Stormwater Program. They received \$100,000.

Widegren said they usually like to see implementation and reporting on the projects within two years, although this depends on weather conditions and water amount.

NDEP has been receiving EPA funding each year and they said they've seen a lot of measurable improvements from projects funded in previous years.

"The Nevada Division of Environmental Protection is excited to leverage Clean Water Act Section 319 grant funding to make important investments in community outreach and on-the-ground projects enhancing water quality for the benefit of all Nevadans," said Widegren in a press release. "We look forward to engaging with communities to protect our precious water resources by reducing the amount of pollution that enters our waterways. Small steps can add up to big improvements to Nevada's streams and rivers, and we thank the EPA for continuing to support NDEP's Nonpoint Source Program with these critical annual grant funds to help ensure the long-term health and vibrancy of Nevada's waterways."

Other projects funded throughout the state include streambank stability restoration projects on the Carson River in the Carson Valley by the Carson Valley Conservation District and Washoe Tribe of California and Nevada, implementation of erosion control and stabilization measures by the City of Reno on Chalk Creek to improve the quality of stormwater conveyed to the Truckee River, implementation of education and outreach initiatives by the Southern Nevada Water Authority to help inform residents how to reduce nonpoint source pollution from entering their water sources and coordination and collaboration with the Virgin River Coalition to implement their restoration plan to improve water quality and wildlife habitat in the Virgin River.

NDEP's 2020 Annual Report for the Nonpoint Source Management Program highlights the accomplishments of the program during the previous year. Twenty-four ongoing and completed water quality improvement projects resulted in significant reduction of pollutants entering Nevada's waterways. [Click here to view the report.](#)



## LATEST HEADLINES

# Pure Water Monterey project bolstered by federal grant

Moves to push ahead recycled water project expansion appear to falter



The Pure Water Monterey regional treatment plant. (Courtesy Monterey One Water)

By **JIM JOHNSON** | [jjohnson@montereyherald.com](mailto:jjohnson@montereyherald.com) | Monterey Herald  
PUBLISHED: January 8, 2021 at 2:44 p.m. | UPDATED: January 8, 2021 at 2:45 p.m.



Recognizing the groundbreaking nature of the Pure Water Monterey recycled water project, the U.S Department of the Interior's Bureau of Reclamation has awarded the project a \$15.5 million grant.

Under its WaterSMART initiative, which seeks to invest in technologies designed to enable "broader scale use of recycled water to supplement supplies," the federal Bureau of Reclamation awarded the local recycled water project nearly 40% of its \$40 million in grants awarded after a competitive review process, according to a release.

The release also noted that the grant funding was "prioritized for projects that develop and supplement urban and irrigation water supplies through water reuse, thereby improving efficiency, providing flexibility during drought or water shortages, and diversifying water supply."

The Pure Water Monterey project, which has provided potable water for extraction and use since the summer, treats a variety of local wastewater to drinking water standards before pumping it into the Seaside basin for later extraction and use on the Monterey Peninsula. It also facilitates collection of wastewater sources for expanded agricultural irrigation, removal of pollutants from waterways and improvement of local river habitats.

The \$140 million project is committed to provide 3,500-acre-feet per year in potable water, a capacity it expects to reach by the end of the year after an additional injection well is completed by November. The project has injected more than 700 acre-feet into the basin that is eligible for extraction so far after injecting a 1,000-acre-foot reserve starting early last year.

It is considered a key element of the larger Monterey Peninsula Water Supply project, which currently includes California American Water's proposed desalination plant and is aimed at developing a new portfolio water source to offset the state-ordered pumping cutback from the Carmel River aquifer.

Backed by Monterey One Water and the Monterey Peninsula Water Management District, the project has now received a total of \$39.35 million in grant funding representing nearly 30% of its design and construction costs. Monterey One Water spokesman Mike McCullough said the latest grant funding, when it's eventually received, will go into the Pure Water Monterey account and could be used to help pay off a low-interest loan for the project or for future capital costs, and some could go to partly reimburse the water management district for its contribution to the project.



"Obtaining grant funding is challenging but an important effort that directly benefits our community," Monterey One Water board chairman Ron Stefani said. "We are grateful for the Bureau of Reclamation's support of our innovative and multi-beneficial project."

Water management district board chairman Alvin Edwards said the district "appreciates the hard work of staff at both agencies to build relationships with federal staff and for telling the Pure Water Monterey story in a compelling way. We sincerely thank the Bureau of Reclamation for their commitment and support for helping our community develop a key water supply project."

U.S. Rep. Jimmy Panetta, D-Carmel Valley, was among a number of local elected officials, agencies and organizations offering letters of support for the grant bid, and praised the initiative.

"Understanding the importance of the Pure Water Monterey groundwater replenishment project for the water needs of the Monterey Peninsula, I was pleased to offer my support early on for potential Title XVI funding," he said. "Such a significant amount of federal funds will not only help further the development of the project, it will also further our goal for sustainable water sources for our home."

The grant funding announcement comes as a couple of local elected officials' attempts to shake loose a proposed 2,250-acre-foot expansion of the recycled water project, which has been stalled since last year, appear to be falling short of their goal.

During a special Del Rey Oaks City Council meeting Thursday, a split council voted 3-2 against Mayor Alison Kerr's attempt to replace Councilman John Gaglioti with new Councilwoman Kim Shirley on the Monterey One Water board, choosing new Councilman Scott Donaldson instead. Gaglioti cast a key vote against certification of the recycled water project expansion's environmental review document, calling it "fatally flawed," while Shirley vowed to immediately vote to certify the document and allow the recycled water project to move ahead. Donaldson has not expressly said how he would vote on the issue.

Earlier in the week, District 2 Supervisor John Phillips said he wanted to keep his current seat on the Monterey One Water board even as new Board of Supervisors Chairwoman and District 4 Supervisor Wendy Root Askew made a bid to replace Phillips with herself on the board. Phillips also voted against certification of the expansion project's environmental document, while Askew has said she supports the proposal. In her latest recommendation, Askew recommends leaving Phillips on the agency board with her serving as an alternate. A final decision on the



A single vote could reverse the current 11-11 weighted vote deadlock on the Monterey One Water board regarding certification of the expansion project environmental document. Agency staff has stopped working on the expansion proposal since the certification denial vote last year.

A water management district analysis has found that Pure Water Monterey with the expansion could provide an adequate potable water source to offset the river aquifer for at least the next quarter-century.

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Tags: [Newsletter](#)



## Jim Johnson | Reporter

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## Scientists keep watch on climate and weather as drought grips Nevada

### Interdisciplinary approach from University of Nevada, Reno Extension keeps people informed and involved

RENO, Nevada - January 14, 2021 (Investorideas.com Newswire) With much of the State of Nevada listed as in extreme drought, Nevadans are facing forecasts for a mild winter, with little precipitation since the rainy season started. With these designations, southern Nevadans are facing a mild and dry winter and northern Nevadans are looking at an uncertain forecast. All could face water restrictions, crop or pasture loss and, with exceptional drought, water shortage emergencies.

The University of Nevada, Reno's Nevada State Climate Office and Living with Drought Program with University of Nevada, Reno Extension are helping meteorologists better predict Nevada's confusing weather and helping communities contend with drought.

"We are in a significant drought in much of the state, and not starting the wet season with robust supplies of water, the D-3 (Extreme) and D-4 (Exceptional) conditions are a big concern," Steph McAfee, director of the Nevada State Climate Office (<https://extension.unr.edu/climate/>) said. "Especially in southern Nevada with La Nina, it will probably be dry, but La Nina could go either way for northern Nevada. We're already in drought, and we depend on winter to build snowpack - we had a dry fall, with a deficit too."

La Nina is a weather pattern that is influenced by ocean temperatures off the west coast of South America, and steers most storms to the Pacific Northwest, away from southern Nevada, and leaves northern Nevada in limbo between the two zones.

"In the Las Vegas area, 90% of the water is from the Colorado River," McAfee, who works in both Extension and the College of Science said. "Colorado has a somewhat similar La Nina response, it's a little mixed like Nevada. Colorado is having a decent drought right now. It's generally a little warmer here, but we are dependent on the snowpack and water from the Rockies."

According to the weekly U.S. Drought Monitor released Jan. 7, 23.7% of Nevada is in Exceptional Drought (the highest designation), 48.8% is in Extreme Drought, 18.7% is in Severe Drought, and 8.5% is in Moderate Drought.

One of the most intense periods of drought in the past 20 years, since the Drought Monitor was created, began the week of Dec. 1, 2020 where exceptional drought - the most extreme classification - is affecting Nevada. That region of drought in the southern Great Basin is still expanding. While reporting has improved over time, the last weekly drought monitor update reported the driest six-month period on record, with only a trace of precipitation at the McCarran International Airport.

"It looks like the Southwest is heading into drought, which is never good news, with drought likely continuing into spring and summer," McAfee said. "We'll keep our eyes on it, and we'll know more as the drought monitoring continues."

In the large urban centers of the state, TMWA - the Truckee Meadows Water Authority - and SNWA, the Southern Nevada Water Authority - are in good shape with backups with groundwater and decent surface storage. Farmers and ranchers in rural Nevada may not be as fortunate. How rural Nevada is affected depends on various concerns, whether people rely on groundwater - or springs - which could run low depending on use. People worry about operations, buying feed and selling livestock.

"We live in an arid climate, so we know how to operate with relatively smaller amounts of water, but with drought, those methods of dealing with low precipitation are strained. SNWA has their usual winter water guidelines in place with once a week yard watering," she said.

Nevada ranchers, water providers and public land managers rely on the U.S. Drought Monitor to keep track of climate and weather. The U.S. Drought Monitor started in 2000. Since then, the longest duration of drought (D1-D4) in Nevada lasted 269 weeks beginning on Dec. 27, 2011 and ending on Feb. 14, 2017.

Average annual average precipitation statewide is 10.3 inches. It is lower in southern Nevada - only 7.1 inches - and higher in northeastern Nevada, averaging 12.85 inches. Beyond the difference in the amount of rain and snow, there are differences in when, during the year, precipitation arrives. In southern Nevada, the summer is relatively wet, and in northern Nevada, the summer is dry.

The U.S. Drought Monitor is not a forecast; it looks backward. It's a weekly assessment of drought conditions, based on how much precipitation did or didn't fall, up to the Tuesday morning before the map comes out. So, for example, if a lot of rain falls in a drought area on a Wednesday, the soonest change in drought status on the map is the following week.

Drought is a slow-moving hazard, so you can be certain that an area will still be in drought if it doesn't get rain. But it also may take more than one good rainfall to end a drought, especially if an area has been in drought for a long time.

#### Living with Drought

"Drought can be difficult to define because the definition varies depending on the context in which it is used," Kerri Jean Ormerod, who leads Extension's Living with Drought program, said. "There might be a weather drought, or an abnormally dry period, but not a vegetative drought - if a little well-timed rain provides enough soil moisture to green up the pasture. The different types of drought highlight that drought is relative."

The drought monitor also triggers relief programs that can help agriculture-related businesses in Nevada. Ormerod said a robust data network of on-the-ground reports shared with a larger audience would help scientists, decision-makers and communities assess and track the severity of drought. Information exchange can help scientists, communities and federal partners understand shades of drought, which is useful for response and recovery, as well as evaluation and preparedness.

The Living with Drought (<https://livingwithdrought.com/>) website provides a one-stop-shop for homeowners, gardeners, farmers, ranchers, natural resource managers and others to find information they need, including current drought status information; data and tools that can be used to track and report drought impacts; and information about the basic types and causes of drought.



Ormerod conducts research and education on water, climate and drought hazards for Extension and is an assistant professor of geography with the University's College of Science. Besides helping meteorologists and others better prepare for and respond to Nevada's confusing weather, she hopes to help various groups, such as farmers, ranchers, emergency management personnel and research scientists, to make better-informed decisions.

Facing a dearth of equipment and data, University of Nevada, Reno climatologists and weather experts work to build a conduit of information that will improve the accuracy of climate and weather impacts from around the state.

"We are always looking to increase climate monitoring and research," Ormerod said. "There aren't a lot of weather stations. There's a paucity of data - so not a lot of information to work from to say it's a drought, and not a lot of data to inform decisions. Nevada has a problematic landscape. It's hard to do remote sensing and gather data, so we facilitate partnerships at the federal, state and local level, and down to the ground for reports, to characterize the climate outlooks."

The Living with Drought Program works closely with the Climate Office, Desert Research Institute, National Weather Service and the Nevada Resource Conservation District, as well as other organizations, to gather information.

"If we can collect more data on our precipitation and weather, and analyze and explain it, it can serve several purposes," Ormerod said. "As the driest state in the nation, it is especially important to report zeros, or the lack of precipitation. This is critical information necessary to track and respond to drought."

She said they are recruiting volunteer observers from "anywhere and everywhere" across the state through either the Community Collaborative Rain, Hail and Snow Network or a related citizen science platform designed for drought monitoring.

"We can provide rain gauges for rural observers," she said. "Even getting a month of zeros from observers is okay; zeros are data too. We also ask for photos and data from ranchers and others who know the landscape of our state. There lots of variability with the climate here. There is no normal, even as to time of year, so we like to get reports from people who know the landscape, like skiers, ranchers, dog walkers, hikers and hunters. We want to know how drought is affecting local conditions. Having a photo of a dry riverbed, greened-up grazing lands, a snowless landscape or a raging river helps us quantify what's happening with our weather and climate."

The Community Collaborative Network is active in all 50 states, several Canadian Provinces and parts of the Caribbean. Nevada began participating in 2007, with the University's Extension, Desert Research Institute and National Weather Service working together to coordinate the state program. The volunteers measure and map precipitation - rain, hail and snow - using low-cost measurement tools, mainly a 4-inch rain gauge. It takes these weather observers just a couple minutes each day to measure precipitation in their backyards. Training is provided online.

"My message to potential weather observers: you can help, get involved - we need you," Ormerod said.

The Living with Drought Program, in addition to facilitating drought impact reporting, facilitates landscape condition monitoring, such as low reservoir levels, poor rangeland conditions and increased groundwater use. This locally sourced data are used by scientists to better understand drought conditions across the state, which helps to characterize local, regional and national depictions of drought.

Collectively, these reports serve to improve drought assessment and reduce vulnerability to drought faced by individuals, communities, species and environments. The drought monitor informs and becomes policy, such as a trigger for federal recovery funds for agriculture and land management decisions.

"The Drought Monitor isn't a simply a map; it's the best assessment of where there is drought, and the severity of drought," Ormerod said. "Volunteer-submitted information helps to complement more traditional metrics and can bridge some of the data gaps across the state."

This statewide outreach to Nevadans for climate and drought is helpful day-to-day and season-to-season, and Extension also looks to the future, working with the water agencies, land managers and other stakeholders to find solutions to the long-term effects that changing climate has on Nevada and its reliance on a changing snowpack, reservoirs and groundwater.

#### **Water research addresses water managers' information needs**

Of the many forward-looking climate initiatives of which Extension (<https://extension.unr.edu/default.aspx>) is a part, perhaps the most comprehensive effort has been the recent Water for the Seasons five-year collaborative research and outreach program, funded by a grant from the National Science Foundation Water Sustainability and Climate Program. Based in the Truckee-Carson River System, Extension designed and coordinated an interdisciplinary research approach that included hydrologists, engineers and resource economists working with stakeholders representing diverse and competing municipal, industrial, agricultural, environmental and regulatory water management organizations from the system's headwaters to its terminus.

"Demand is diverse for water - and includes sustaining wildlife and wildlife habitat, irrigated agriculture, growing municipal populations and economic development initiatives," Loretta Singletary, an interdisciplinary outreach liaison and economist with Extension, said. "Water for the Seasons sought to find solutions to variable water supply in a changing climate. Drought is just one symptom of climate change, and we worked on climate and water supply projections for snowed lands in northern Nevada's high-desert environment, looking at temperature variability, less snowpack and earlier snowmelt."

Singletary's research and outreach programs focus on the role of water markets as a climate adaptation strategy as well as collaborative research processes, engaging community stakeholders as part of an integrated water management approach to address water supply variability, water scarcity and water quality issues.

Water for the Seasons aimed to identify new strategies for enhancing the resiliency of communities in northern Nevada to adapt to these challenges and changes. The research team, working closely with local water managers, integrated climate, hydrologic and economics research with extensive outreach to identify the expected impacts of climate change and solutions for protecting valuable water resources throughout northern Nevada.

What they found with the Water for the Seasons project might have been based in northern Nevada, but the reliance on snowpack for water and related challenges to water supply is also key to southern Nevada water availability, which relies on the Rocky Mountains and Colorado River.

"With 12 primary water management organizations with critical roles in the Truckee-Carson watershed and a total of 66 organizations that participated in an initial assessment, the project identified climate change impacts as an important challenge to sustaining water supply. The project succeeded in identifying and investigating specific climate adaptation recommendations," Singletary said. "It's a case study for snowed arid lands, which can inform decisions in similar snowed river systems in the semi-arid West and around the world."

Using the input from water management stakeholders, the research team modeled their information needs under plausible projected climate scenarios, such as warmer temperatures and pervasive drought, and how these conditions affect the river system and water supply across the system. The hydrologists, climatologists, resource economists and political scientists worked alongside local water managers to identify climate change impacts to water resources, to develop and simulate climate scenarios that test river system resiliency, and to examine the effectiveness of potential adaptation strategies to mitigate identified impacts.

## Press Clips

"We purposefully and strategically work with decision makers to benefit the public," Singletary said. "If key stakeholders participate in the research process from the beginning, collaboration is harnessed. It legitimizes both stakeholders' interests as well as research and research findings. We involved water managers in the research to intentionally represent the diverse water uses that typify these snowed systems. We wanted to know what are the system's tipping points, what aspects of river system management might adapt to become more climate resilient - whether it's water for cities and towns, crops, livestock, rangeland, environmental instream flows or industry."

"All stakeholders who participated agreed that more outreach education is needed, to stress that we live in the desert, and there's not an endless supply of water, even though when you turn on the tap you get water," Singletary added. "We need education in water conservation - land use, building and other uses - based on knowing that we live in a desert, and drought stresses this further."

The research team developed 10 key takeaways from the Water for the Seasons collaborative research program, which they published in Extension Special Publication 20-02, Water Sustainability and Climate in the Truckee-Carson River System. (<https://extension.unr.edu/publication.aspx?PubID=3508>)

Some of those takeaways include:

- climate projections across the river system generally show warmer temperatures and increased water supply variability;
- measurable snowpack changes affect the timing and availability of water supply;
- cycles of wet and dry years are important for evaluating future basin water supply and reservoir operation;
- allowing for storing water earlier in the year could enhance water supply;
- aquifer recharge can mitigate long-term impacts;
- and there is a need for additional collaborative research.

"One challenge that surfaced from this project is that we learned that we needed more time," Singletary said. "At the end of the five-year study, the project collaborators asked if we could keep meeting to continue the research. We really need 10-15 years to firmly establish a comprehensive integrated and collaborative research and outreach program, with more resources for education outreach to disseminate research findings. While it is clear that our climate is changing and that we need to adapt accordingly, it's promising that water managers and water users are already pursuing climate adaptation to enhance our water and climate resiliency."

- @unevadareno -

Photo Cutline: The Lahontan Reservoir is fed by the Carson River and by the Truckee River with water diversions from the Derby Dam, supplying water for irrigation. Pictured here in 2014, in the third year of a four-year drought, much of the lake was completely dry.

Extension is a unit of the University of Nevada, Reno's College of Agriculture, Biotechnology & Natural Resources engaged in Nevada communities, presenting research-based knowledge to address critical community needs. It is a county-state-federal partnership providing practical education to people, businesses and communities. For more information on its programs, visit [extension.unr.edu](https://extension.unr.edu) (<https://extension.unr.edu/default.aspx>).

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*A view of Hoover Dam on Wednesday, Aug. 28, 2018. (Jeff Scheid/The Nevada Independent)*

## **Indy Environment: With slow start to winter, drought conditions could linger in 2021**

*Good morning, and welcome to the Indy Environment newsletter.*

*As always, we want to hear from readers. Let us know what you're seeing on the ground and how policies are affecting you. Email me with tips at [daniel@thenvindy.com](mailto:daniel@thenvindy.com).*

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Nevada is the driest state in the nation, but 2020 — true to form — was especially dry.

In fact, Nevada and Utah witnessed their driest year on record in 2020, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration [reported on Friday](#). Things are not looking up in 2021, at least not yet. Even if things do rebound, **drought is shaping up to be a [big weather story in 2021](#)**.

To learn more about what's going on, I talked with Dan McEvoy, a researcher with the Western Regional Climate Center. He said my timing was good: "It's definitely worth talking about it now."

"The two driest states had their driest years on record, which meant there was very little water in the system last year," McEvoy said. "We need some big storms to come through the second half of the winter and this spring or else there are definitely going to be some drought impacts."

**Drought is not necessarily about a month or a year.** It's the steady creep of below-average months of precipitation, dry soils and a thirsty atmosphere that wants to evaporate more water.

"When we move into drought, it happens slower in time," said Jeff Anderson, a hydrologist who helps measure and forecast snowpack with USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service.

The problem is we entered this year at a precipitation deficit.

"We're coming out of a drought year from last year, where precipitation was below normal. The snowpack was below normal," said McEvoy, who works with the Desert Research Institute and studies drought behavior. "That pattern has really persisted to start the water year this year."

[According to the U.S Drought Monitor](#), nearly the entire state — about 99.71 percent — is in some form of drought, and about 72 percent of the state is in extreme or exceptional drought.

Nevada is not alone in this. Those numbers mirror the situation across much of the Southwest and the Colorado River watershed, which supports about 40 million people in seven states.

Drought affects all of Nevada, although in different ways. Urban areas, including Reno and Las Vegas, are often insulated from the immediate consequences of a short-term drought because water providers have long-term drought plans and use reservoirs to store water in tough years. Yet drought can place stress on the water system, and even affect politics (more on that below).

In other parts of the state, drought can have immediate effects on the economy — on things like grazing rights and recreation. So far, ski resorts in Lake Tahoe have been able to operate with a few storms bringing snow. But what happens the rest of the winter is crucial for the rest of 2021.

“If the storms can line up,” Anderson said, “we can make a dramatic recovery.”

**So how likely is it that we recover this year?** It depends on where you are. Mike Dettinger, a hydrologist who studies precipitation in California and Nevada, has a model that looks at the 70-year record of past precipitation to forecast the likelihood of getting back to average levels.

Given conditions at this point in the season, he said, depending on where you are in the West, there is a 5 percent to 35 percent chance of getting back to normal this year. In eastern Nevada, for instance, it’s at about 10 percent. Chances of normal precipitation improves a bit in western Nevada. But, he notes, “it’s going to take a real whopper of a Miracle March to bail us out.”

**Dry conditions amplify in other ways, too.** Even if “miracle” storms sweep through the West in February in March and precipitation returns to an average, it does not guarantee an average water supply in many places. That’s because much of the West’s water comes from runoff from snow. When snow melts, water fills rivers. Those rivers are used by municipalities and to irrigate farmland. But when soils are dry, it can make runoff less efficient, especially early in the season.

“We’re heading into the upcoming runoff season with very high soil moisture conditions,” said Cody Moser, a hydrologist for the [Colorado Basin River Forecast Center](#). “As it relates to runoff, the drier soil moisture conditions are going to generate less efficient runoff when it occurs.”

But Moser, as with others, said there is still time to turn things around.

“It’s still a little early to give up on the upcoming season,” he said.

There is a social dynamic to this. **How policymakers view water issues is often dependent on current conditions.** One thing about drought conditions is they can prompt elected officials and water managers to take action. With the Legislature going into session Feb. 1 and negotiations beginning on the Colorado River, it’s a dynamic that will be worth watching.

*Here’s what else I’m watching this week:*





*Sage grouse in Northern Nevada. (Tim Torell/Nevada Department of Wildlife)*

**The Steamboat Ditch Trail and a pipeline?** “Save the Steamboat Ditch Trail.” That was the message that went out across social media over the weekend. Reno residents are concerned about an early-stage project to upgrade water infrastructure along a 30-mile stretch of canals that makes its way from a diversion on the Truckee River and travels through sections of Reno.

Where there is water, there is vegetation and wildlife — and where the Steamboat Ditch flows, there is both. The area adjacent to the ditch has become a popular trail for hikers and runners. Now residents are concerned about its future. The Natural Resources Conservation Service is in the early stages of a project that they say is needed to bolster flood protection and to improve water management. There are several options on the table, but one possibility includes turning sections of the ditch into a pipeline, affecting the vegetation and wildlife habitat along the trail.

Although a pipeline is on the table, the federal agency has not yet said that it supports building one. It’s only one of several possibilities to address issues related to flooding and managing the water that flows through the ditch, according to Michael Callahan, an

engineer for the agency. For now, the agency is still in an early-stage process known as “scoping.” In this phase of the process, the agency solicits public comment to decide what to do next. The public can submit a comment at [truckeeriver@nvwatershed.com](mailto:truckeeriver@nvwatershed.com) until Feb. 16. [This is Reno's Jeri Davis has more.](#)

**Coming up:** The Nevada Division of Environmental Protection is [hosting a virtual listening session this afternoon](#) on efforts to adopt stronger vehicle emission standards.

**Right-wing extremism and Western roots:** After pro-Trump insurrectionists violently stormed the Capitol last Wednesday, multiple reporters pointed to echoes of their extremism across the West.

For [High Country News](#), Carl Segerstrom wrote: “The anti-government occupations bookending the rise and fall of Trump’s presidency show the mainstreaming of right-wing extremism in the United States. They also portend the potential for future conflicts here in the West.” It’s a piece that is very much worth your time. [NPR’s Kirk Siegler](#) also did a story. [Emily Crueton and Ryan Hass from Oregon Public Radio explored](#) another critical angle — **how elected leaders have enabled extremism**: “From county commissioners and state lawmakers to a member of the U.S. Congress, some Oregonians in power have enabled the extreme beliefs and conspiracy theories fueling political violence carried out in the name of President Donald Trump.”

We are working on a story about the undercurrents of this extremism in Nevada.

**Albemarle expansion:** Lithium company [Albemarle announced plans](#) on Friday to expand its production at its Silver Peak extraction facility near Tonopah. The announcement comes amid increased demand for lithium, needed for electric vehicles and batteries, both technologies that are seen as solutions to address climate change. Silver Peak is the only active lithium extraction operation in the United States, although several more projects, including in Nevada, could come online in the next few years. I’ll be writing more about Nevada and the lithium market soon.

**A Greater sage grouse review and a new administration:** “The Trump administration has completed a review of plans to ease protections for a struggling bird species in seven states in the U.S. West, but there’s little time to put the relaxed rules for industry into action before President-elect Joe Biden takes office,” the [Associated Press’ Matthew Brown reports](#).

**“No get-rich-quick scheme:”** [The Review-Journal’s Colton Lochead reports](#) on hemp farming in Nevada. The number of growers fell by half last year and farmed acreage fell by even more.

**Continued deregulation:** In the final days of the Trump administration, federal environmental regulators have continued a steady and quiet march to roll back regulations in favor of industry:

- The Trump administration rolled back protections for migratory birds, affecting liability for companies responsible for bird deaths that stem from environmental hazards, including oil spills and toxic waste ponds, [The New York Times' Lisa Friedman reported.](#)
- The EPA finalized a rule last week that restricts what scientific studies can be used in regulating pollution, a move that was criticized by the American Association for the Advancement of Science. [More from NPR's Rebecca Hersher.](#)
- Last week, [Reuters'](#) Ernest Scheyder reported that the administration moved to loosen mining restrictions, fast-track permitting and approve several new projects.

**Mining case before the Supreme Court:** [From KTVN](#), "The Nevada Supreme Court says two members of the Lyon County Board of Commissioners did not have a significant enough private interest in Comstock Mining to abstain from the vote." This strikes me as an important case, more generally, for defining what constitutes a conflict for elected officials in local government.

**A Justice Department with environmental chops:** President-elect Biden's pick for attorney general, Merrick Garland, has spent years on the U.S. Court of Appeals for D.C., a panel that often rules on the merits of environmental regulations. That experience could be significant in leading a Biden Justice Department, [Dino Grandoni of The Washington Post reports.](#)



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## Nevada Guard supports county health districts ramp up vaccination efforts

RENO, NV, UNITED STATES

01.15.2021

Story by 1st Lt. Emerson Marcus

152nd Airlift Wing Public Affairs



Photo By 1st Lt. Emerson Marcus | The Nevada National Guard ramped... [read more](#)

The Nevada National Guard ramped up operations this week at community based collection sites around the state in support of county health districts — not just for testing as it has done since last April, but now also for vaccination distribution.

“As we see a decline in demand for testing and a spike for vaccinations, we are beginning to convert our operations to meet that demand,” said Capt. Titus Roberson, officer in charge at Washoe County’s testing site at the Livestock Events Center in Reno.

Similar drive-thru operations include the Cashman Center in Las Vegas, the state’s largest site dedicated solely to vaccinations. Nevadans wanting vaccinations must make appointments through their county health district before arrival at each site. Availability is based on tier status of each county health district.

Guardsmen began assisting Washoe County with vaccinations on Wednesday and continued operations Friday. The goal is to eventually get to a point where the health district distributes up to 2,400 vaccinations per day in Washoe County, said Mast Sgt. Michael Link, non-commissioned officer in charge at the Livestock Events Center testing and vaccination site.

“Vaccination is the way forward to get back to any sort of normalcy,” said Link, who has worked at the testing site since last April. Link, a traditional or part-time Guardsmen with the 152nd Civil Engineer Squadron, temporarily left his full-time employment last year working facilities and grounds maintenance at the Truckee Meadows Water Authority.

“TMWA (my employer) has been completely supportive of me leaving to help with the testing and vaccination missions here at Livestock Events Center,” Link said. “They understand how important this is for our community.”

Roberson, who temporarily left his full-time employment in September at the Reno-Tahoe International Airport, said he began noticing a decrease in testing demand with an increase for vaccinations in mid-December. That’s when county personnel began vaccinations for medical professionals and first responders. With the demand in vaccinations, Guardsmen have seen their role increase as well. On Friday, two lanes were open for drive-thru testing while four were open for vaccinations.

In Washoe County, that currently includes educators in the Washoe County School District. Citizens aged 70-and-up are expected to begin vaccinations later this month, Roberson said. About 60 Nevada Army and Air Guardsmen are working at the Washoe County site for testing, vaccinations, contact tracing and at call centers. About 400 Nevada Guardsmen remain activated statewide for the Nevada’s COVID-19 response, down from the peak last summer when about 1,200 were activated.

“It’s been a smooth transition with the infrastructure already in place for testing,” Roberson said. “Aside from needles in arms versus collection of swabs for testing, much of the operation has remained in place. Of course, the demand has increased as more members of the community want to get vaccinated to help us get through this pandemic.”



# Son of a ditch!

## PIPELINE CONVERSION PLAN UPSETS USERS OF STEAMBOAT TRAIL



**PHOTO/GREGG STOKES:** A section of the Steamboat Ditch in summer. The trail is on the right side of the photo.

Renoites who walk, run or bike along a 14-mile portion of the Steamboat Ditch trail are worried the next generation of the 150-year-old path will resemble a barren moonscape with restricted public access.

“Four generations of our family have enjoyed the Steamboat Ditch trail for many years,” Valerie Cooke, who lives in the Skyline neighborhood, wrote in a post on a dedicated group on the **nextdoor** website. “The Tom Cooke Trail at Mayberry Park is named in my late father’s honor, as he was an early advocate for keeping the ditch trail open for recreational use back in the 1990s. So many of us have enjoyed the wildlife, vegetation, and beauty of the waterway and oppose efforts to enclose it.”

At issue is a plan to convert some or all of a 14-mile urban section of open ditch into a covered pipeline and make other changes. The ditch company and local agencies are just beginning a legally-required process to secure up to \$25 million in federal dollars to make flood mitigation improvements, upgrade the ditch’s infrastructure and achieve other goals.

Because most of the nearby residents didn’t get wind of the proposal until the public comment period was about to end, planners have extended the deadlines for comments to Feb. 16 and plan a second public comment meeting using Zoom whose details are not yet determined.

A spokeswoman for the firm involved in the planning process said the lack of public notification was caused by unexplained delays of most the postcards mailed to about 750 residents. She said people who use the path for recreation have jumped to conclusions, feeding a storm of “misinformation and suppositions” on social media.



## Residents weren't notified

"There's no forgone conclusion that a closed pipe is the option that they are going to go with," said Elizabeth Spaulding of the Idaho-based **Langdon Group**, a conflict-management. "The purpose of (the public comment process) is to solicit comments from agencies, local governments and the public. We're collecting information about issues and concerns."

**PROJECT CONTACT:** Elizabeth Spaulding, The Langdon Group



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She said that planners will look at a range of alternatives that don't include a pipe and look at mitigation strategies for reducing any adverse impacts. "It's a multi-year process and we have just put our toe on the starting line," she said. "I think that's where there is a lot of confusion. Everyone thinks that we're going to put a pipe in the canal, but that's not decided yet. It's one alternative among many."



**PHOTO/J-U-B ENGINEERS:** This picture from the **J-U-B website** is from a project in Utah in which the firm "enclosed six miles of open canal in box culvert, concrete pipe, HDPE pipe and PVC Pipe" to "restore irrigation water to shareholders" lost from a breach in the open canal.

## Covered pipeline pushed

Public records of previous local meetings about the federal grants show that a covered pipeline was the main – and sometimes the only – option mentioned. Some residents interviewed for this story fear that the ditch company already has a plan in mind and is only going through the motions of soliciting the public comments that are necessary to secure the federal money, a process administered by the **Natural Resources Conservation Service** (NRCS).

"I hate to make a general statement, but in a lot of these projects the NRCS promotes the interests of a fairly small number of landowners and (they) benefit a small number of stakeholders," said Jerry Wager of Reno, a retired environmental program manager who has years of experience with federal projects. "It's a public process, so let's see how this one plays out... I can't help but wonder if there is a hidden agenda that isn't being discussed."

The proposal to secure federal money for ditch improvements surfaced at a **Washoe County Water Conservation District** meeting on Aug. 18, 2020. That panel, which was created in 1929, is composed of representatives of Truckee Meadows' ditch companies and the Truckee Meadows Water Authority, the area's water provider. It is now the sponsoring agency for the Steamboat project.

### **Alternatives weren't discussed**

Michael Pagni, an attorney with the McDonald Carano law firm in Reno who represents the Steamboat Canal and Irrigation Company, was the first speaker at the Aug. 18 meeting, according to the meeting minutes. Pagni noted that Steamboat has qualified for a federal grant of up to \$25 million

*"to improve agricultural*

*water management by converting open channel canals to pipe,"* including funding, flood mitigation and the environmental assessment process, were discussed, but no alternatives to a pipeline conversion were mentioned.

Pagni, in an interview Jan. 15, said that piping the canal is "one of the options being looked at, not the only one, but may not be the one that wins out at the end of the day." He said the process involves "analysis, receiving input from the public, stakeholders, cooperating agencies." All of those things will be considered, he said, to "figure out what is the best and most feasible and most practical approach to address the problems that we're facing."

### **'v rybody was aware**

**E e**

He said alternatives to a pipeline weren't mentioned at the August meeting because "my recollection is that everybody (at the meeting) was aware that there were multiple options on the table." He noted that no members of the public were in attendance, but "it was understood there were multiple options on the table."

At a **Zoom meeting for public comment** held on Dec. 8, the benefits of converting the ditch in the Caughlin Ranch area also were discussed because that method has the potential to mitigate flooding and reduce seepage from the now-unlined canal. Early in the planning process, speakers noted, it was decided to focus improvements on 14 miles of the canal in the urban areas of the 34-mile waterway rather than in the more rural areas.

At the end of that meeting, Ben Volk, vice president of J-U-B Engineers, the firm administering the grant application, told participants that in terms of possible actions, "we really have no preference. We've wiped the slate clean." He said the options submitted in the funding application "may not be the ones we select. We're looking for ideas."

Volk said that a pipeline, lining sections of the ditch with concrete or changing the route of the canal in flood-hazard areas are among possible options. The **planning documents** are available online.

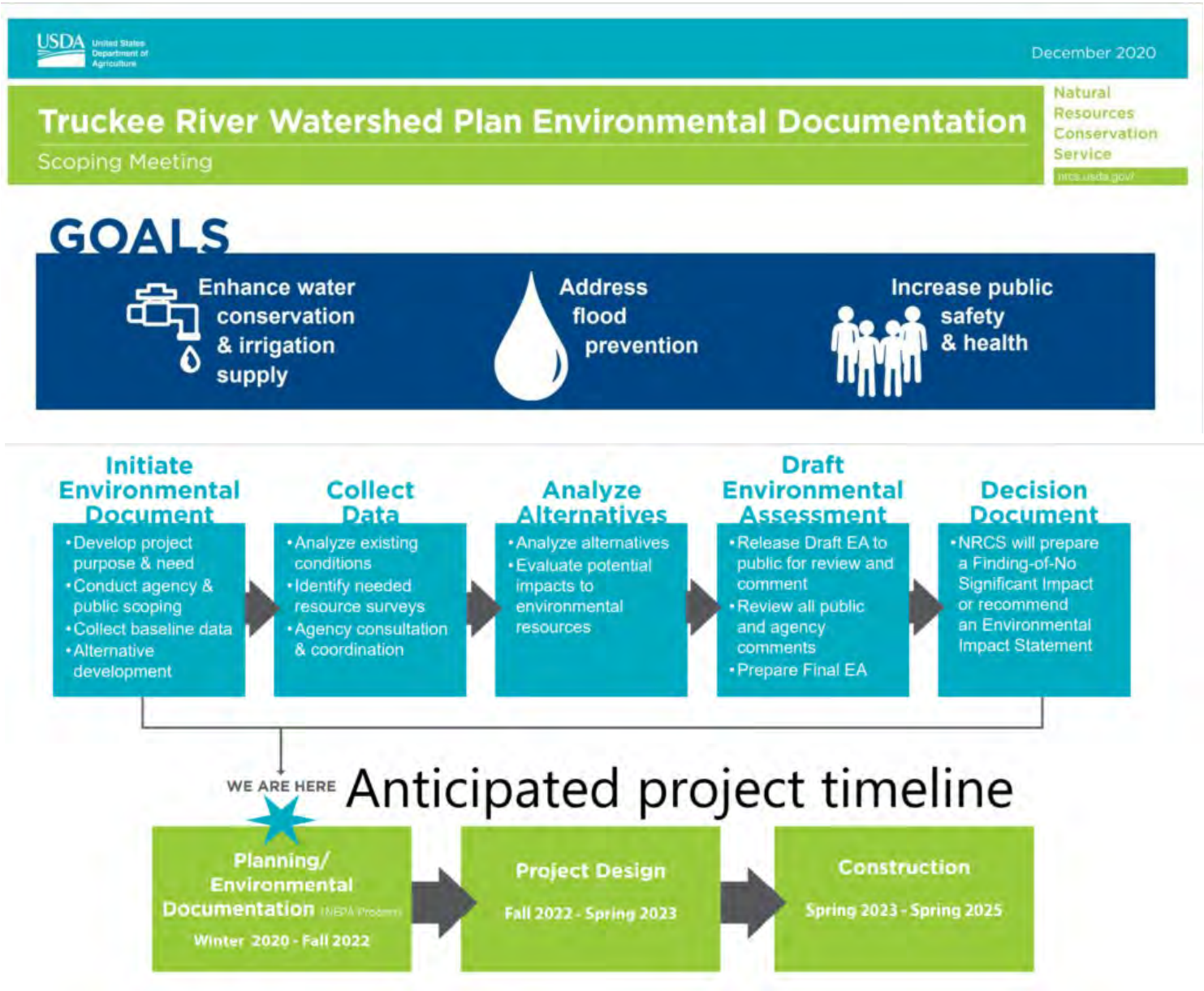
### **Conflict vs. coincidence**

The Washoe County Water Conservation District Aug. 18 approved a contract with J-U-B Engineers to handle the reporting and administration of the grant program. At the meeting, a commissioner asked whether there was any conflict of interest "with Shayne Dyer already being under contract with the district funneling this work to his own company?" (Dyer's Reno-based firm had merged with the Idaho-based J-U-B about 18 months ago, according to project planners.)

Pagni, the lawyer for the district, said the Steamboat and Orr ditch companies are working "with Dyer/J-U-B to facilitate this grant, (It's) more of a coincidence than a conflict." Nevada law (**NRS 539.081**) prohibits all directors and other officers of irrigation districts from being directly or indirectly interested in any contract awarded by the board or in the profits to be derived from the contract.

On Jan. 15, Pagni explained that because Dyer isn't a director or officer of the district, the law isn't applicable.

## The NEPA process



The **National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)** is a law that empowers local communities to protect themselves and their environment from dangerous, rushed or poorly planned federal projects. It requires planners of government projects to look before they leap by anticipating environmental and social consequences of projects. A "**Citizen's Guide to NEPA**" is available online.

## A wave of objections

*"There's a beauty and a majesty about the Steamboat Ditch and the trail as it exists right now. It follows the terrain. There's a quietness and calmness about it as it exists right now. If we can maintain that, maintain that ecosystem, birds, animals and trees, that should be a priority. Keep those things as well as achieve the goals (of the project). I'm not afraid of change, but not at the cost of destroying those things. It's so important to the community, so let's do everything we can to try and save it."*

– Gregg Stokes of Reno, who lives adjacent to the ditch and trail, in an interview Jan. 15.



A **sidebar to this story** features pictures of the Steamboat Ditch and trail taken by south Reno residents who frequent the trail.

Residents interviewed for this story and many more who commented on social media in the wake of the Dec. 8 meeting said they first heard about the project after that meeting and just a week or so before the initial Jan. 15 deadline for public comments. Once alerted to the plan, scores of people made their objections known on social media sites and to the planners.

Spaulding, the contact person for the project, was deluged with phone calls and emails. She received 1,100 emails and scores of phone messages by Jan. 15 and is “making sure everyone is caught up to speed” on the planning process, she said.

*“We saw that there is a community voice that really values the open canal... We want people to know there’s a range of alternatives. The trail was not necessarily part of this project, but we’re getting a lot of comments and that is something that will be explored. People are opposing a project that hasn’t taken its full form yet. We need to make sure we’re working with the community to develop this project.”*

– Elizabeth Spaulding, project spokeswoman.

## Critic worries ‘the fix is in’

Gregg Stokes, who is president of the Caughlin Creek Homeowner’s Association, said he’s concerned that discussions of the project so far are steeped in generalities with few specifics. Problems with flooding, seepage, health concerns, water quality and other factors are mentioned by the planners, but it’s unknown how extensive those things are. He said he is concerned that those things will be cited as the rationale for extensive changes to the canal and that “the fix is in” for converting the urban portions of the ditch into a buried, gravel-covered pipeline or concrete box.

“We hear about potential for this and that, but have very few facts,” Stokes said. He doesn’t doubt there are problems in some areas near the ditch, but wants to see a focused approach rather than a blanket solution to those problems. “It’s more than a question of getting water from point A to point B,” he said.

“Right now, we hear a lot of potentiality and very few facts. A **whole ecosystem has grown up around that canal** for 150 years. They need to design a system that addresses the concerns, but keeps the flora and fauna alive. The project can do good for the ecosystem and the trail users as well. It can do double duty.”

PHOTO/MELINDA BIANCALANA: A section of the Steamboat Ditch in south Reno.

Stokes said he also is fascinated by the history of the canal and that legacy also should be respected. Finding ways to use the trail as an educational as well as recreational resource could be a part of the project, he said.

## Built by Chinese laborers

Chinese laborers built the 34-mile Steamboat Ditch in the 1870s. The project cost \$40,000 and the canal opened in July 1880. The trail along the ditch is an easement used for maintenance by the ditch company, but the land it crosses is owned by individual property owners. For decades, much of the easement has been used as an unofficial trail by residents for hiking, biking, running and bird watching.

The waterway flows from a diversion structure on the Truckee River at the California/Nevada border and winds its way through Reno to connect to Steamboat Creek near Rhodes Road south of Mount Rose Highway by Virginia Street. The creek flows north from there and connects with the Truckee River near East Greg

Street in Sparks. The ditch carries water five months of the year to about 1,530 acres and 500 landowners, according to the canal company.

A detailed official map of the entire length of the canal that shows property owners and publicly accessible sections of the trail from the dam to the end of the pathway at Manzanita Lane isn't readily available.

## Waterway crosses private land

**MAP/KEVIN JOELL:** A map showing the Steamboat Ditch trail winding among private parcels. The green line shows portions with guaranteed public access. The yellow line designates line indicates portions that are open/not gated.

Kevin Joell of Reno, who uses the trail, recently mapped the ditch from **"Hole in the Wall"** near the Truckee River diversion to Manzanita Lane – a distance of about 12 miles. His research indicates that about 5.3 miles of the easement has legally-protected public access. The remaining 6.6 miles crosses approximately 85 private parcels. Each one would have to grant or sell an easement to protect public access into the future, the researcher concluded.

Over the years many sections of the ditch have fallen into disrepair. Some residents close to the canal often suffer flooded basements and section of the ditch **overflowed in January 2017**. The potential benefits of the project, according to the planning documents, include improving water quality to tributaries of the Truckee River, increasing water conservation, minimizing flood risks from a potential canal breach and eliminating the potential for people and animals to fall into the open canals.

**PHOTO/GARRETT BROTHERS:** A view of the Steamboat Ditch in winter. The trail is to the left of the photo.

## Balancing benefits, costs

Some of the residents who use the ditch said they understand that there are problems that need to be solved, but not at the expense of the ecosystem, the beauty and accessibility of the trail that runs along it.

Wager, the retired environmental engineer, said that if an "honest cost-benefit analysis" is done, weighing the specific benefits against "valuing what is to be lost, it might be very hard to justify it going forward." He said in his experience, many such federally-funded projects benefit a small number of landowners and "as long as they fly under the radar they can make it to construction. Let's hope this isn't one of them."

Spaulding said the planning process will be transparent and that all comments will be considered.

"There have been no decisions about what and where specifically this project is going to address," she said. "It's at the very beginning stages and there will be a wide range of alternatives. The solutions could be a pipeline, but we're ready to be creative and see what can be done."

EDITOR'S NOTE: This story was corrected Jan. 18 at 12:30 p.m. to substitute a map of public access portions of the trail with a previous map showing the trail.



FEATURED

## COVID-19: Health District reports lowest daily ne

By Sudhiti Naskar | January 20, 2021

Volunteers and public health nurses prepare to vaccinate individuals at Washoe County Health District's POD.  
Image: Eric Marks

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**W**ashoe County Health District is recording a decreased number of COVID-19 infections, with about 193 new cases per day. “That’s the lowest it has been since early November,” said health officer Kevin Dick during the weekly COVID-19 update on Wednesday. “We have been moving in the right direction,” Dick added. The regionally developed COVID-19 meter, too, is recording that the county is within the orange “High risk area, a few notches removed from the “Very High” zone it was in a few weeks before.

“Our hard work is paying off, the Truckee Meadows COVID Risk Meter has lowered from a Very High Risk, to a High Risk. A step in the right direction for our community. Keep up the good work!

[#stayhealthy #stayimportant #staysafe #communityhttps://t.co/MCXI9pC3H1pic.twitter.com/UCnKEh2ofm](https://t.co/MCXI9pC3H1pic.twitter.com/UCnKEh2ofm)

— TMRPA (@TMRPAtweets) *January 20, 2021*

Despite the drop in new cases per day, the district is still not out of the high-risk assessment provided by the state; 193 is still quite a high number, said Dick.

Currently the test positivity rate has also decreased and rests at 17.3%.

In fact, the county remains flagged for a high positivity rate under the state's county-tracking system both the number of daily new cases as well as the positivity rate. The state considers a county to be below the high-risk disease level when the test positivity rate is 8% or less.

Dick said the mitigation efforts have been successful as people of Washoe County are following the social distancing, handwashing and masking up measures.

“What we have seen is that when we are all working together and taking actions to prevent the spread of COVID-19 that can have a positive impact for our community... I am grateful for the action that everybody has taken,” Dick said.

The governor's “Pause” policy and the compliance to policy guidelines by businesses, bars, casinos and schools has had a positive impact on the disease mitigation as well, said Dick. He added that in the future the governor could be “easing some of the restrictions” that are currently in place.

Yet, the district does not want to get complacent.

As of Wednesday, the county is recording a total of 573 deaths from COVID-19 since the beginning of the pandemic. On a state level, the Governor's Task Force reported that Nevada lost 71 lives to COVID-19 today. “This is the highest increase in deaths the state has seen and a stark reminder of how deadly this virus can be,” the task force noted in a statement.

Last October, the district witnessed a period of low rates of infections followed by fewer restrictions resulting in a serious surge in disease. “We let our guards down,” said Dick. The district does not want to make the same error again.

“So it's great that we are moving in the right direction. We need to pat ourselves on the back for the progress we made, but we need to continue down that path of fewer cases in the community.”

The University of Nevada, Reno will resume receiving students and conducting in-person classes. Middle and high school students in the county will also begin a hybrid session to get instruction partly in-person and partly remote.

The health district will keep an eye on these increased in-person interactions.

## Vaccination

The health district has dispensed 11,176 COVID-19 vaccine doses as of Wednesday through the point distribution (POD) at the Reno Livestock Events Center out of a total of 17,545 doses received to-date the district. Yesterday the district received about 6,100 doses.

In the first couple of days this week the district vaccinated about 1,300 Nevadans. Frontline essential workforce including educators and workers at childcare facilities and tutoring centers are currently being vaccinated. The district is simultaneously finishing up vaccinating law enforcement groups and agencies.

Nevada System of Higher Education is also working with the health district to execute effective POD plans to get their frontline staff vaccinated.

Dick said that the health district is working toward vaccinating more Nevada seniors. Both Renown Health and Saint Mary's vaccinated people over the last weekend, and Smith's and Walgreens have made vaccines available for seniors through their pharmacies.

The district has invited about 1,800 seniors aged 70 and above off of its waiting list for vaccination. Vaccination for this age group started Tuesday; more seniors will receive vaccination this Friday, says Dick.

## Numbers at-a-glance in Washoe County

- Total COVID-19 cases in Washoe County: 39,982 (+68 from 1/19)
- Deaths: 573 (+5)
- Recovered: 24,600 (+198)
- Active Cases: 14,809 (-135)
- Tests performed: 330,126 (+1,290)
- Hospitalized: 176 (+1)

“ 5 COVID-19-related deaths, 68 new cases reported today.

More: <https://t.co/vRd179s7EY>

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(1/2) [pic.twitter.com/kHhAzDzTde](https://pic.twitter.com/kHhAzDzTde)

— COVID19Washoe (@Covid19Washoe) [January 21, 2021](#)

**According to the Nevada Hospital Association, in Washoe County as of Jan. 20:**

- 68% staffed hospital beds are occupied (-6% since 1/19)
- 67% of all licensed hospital beds are occupied (+2%)
- 54% of all Intensive Care Unit beds are occupied (+5%)
- 22% of all ventilators are in use (-1%)

*NOTE: Numbers are for all hospital patients in Washoe County and not just COVID-19 patients.*



**SUDHITI NASKAR**

Sudhiti (Shu) Naskar is a multimedia journalist and researcher who has years of experience covering international issues. In the role of a journalist, she has covered gender, culture, society, environment, and economy. Her works have appeared on B The National, The Wall Street Journal, Marie Claire, Reno Gazette-Journal, Caravan and more. Her interests lie in the intersection of art, politics, social justice, education, tech, and culture. She took a sabbatical from media to attend graduate school at the University of Nevada Reno in 2017. In this period, she has won awards, represented school at an international conference and successfully defended her thesis on political disinformation at the Reynolds School of Journalism where she earned her Master's Media Innovation.

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#### **I-TEAM SPECIAL REPORTS**

## **Swabbing the community one flush at a time: Nevada researchers test wastewater to track coronavirus**

*Scientists use sewer samples to track COVID-19, other diseases*

**LAS VEGAS (KLAS)** — What you flush is helping researchers track COVID-19 before cases spike and as new mutations of the virus appear.

by: [David Charns](#)

Posted: Jan 24, 2021 / 08:59 PM PST / Updated: Jan 24, 2021 / 08:59 PM PST



Scientists from the Southern Nevada Water Authority take samples from wastewater to see how much coronavirus is in our sewer system. These results help public health leaders find spikes and clusters before they can be identified through traditional testing methods.

“I don’t think it’s something that somebody thinks about when they flush the toilet, but there’s definitely value to what’s going down the toilet,” Daniel Gerrity, the water authority’s principal research scientist, said.

Every Monday, Gerrity drives out to the Flamingo Resource Center, a sprawling facility handling 100 million gallons of sewage a day, to fill two gallon-sized jugs.

The wastewater he collects is a snapshot in time. The untreated wastewater, which resembles a murky liquid, contains bacteria and viruses our bodies shed. By sampling the water, researchers can see what substances our bodies are excreting.

“As cases go up, our wastewater concentrations go up,” Gerrity said. “Then as cases go down, our wastewater concentrations go down.”

Coronavirus primarily affects our lungs, but the virus also causes secondary infections of the gastrointestinal tract, according to Gerrity. As the virus duplicates and is shed out of our bodies, some identifiable factors show up in our waste.

“It basically gives us an opportunity to swab the entire community all at one time,” he said.

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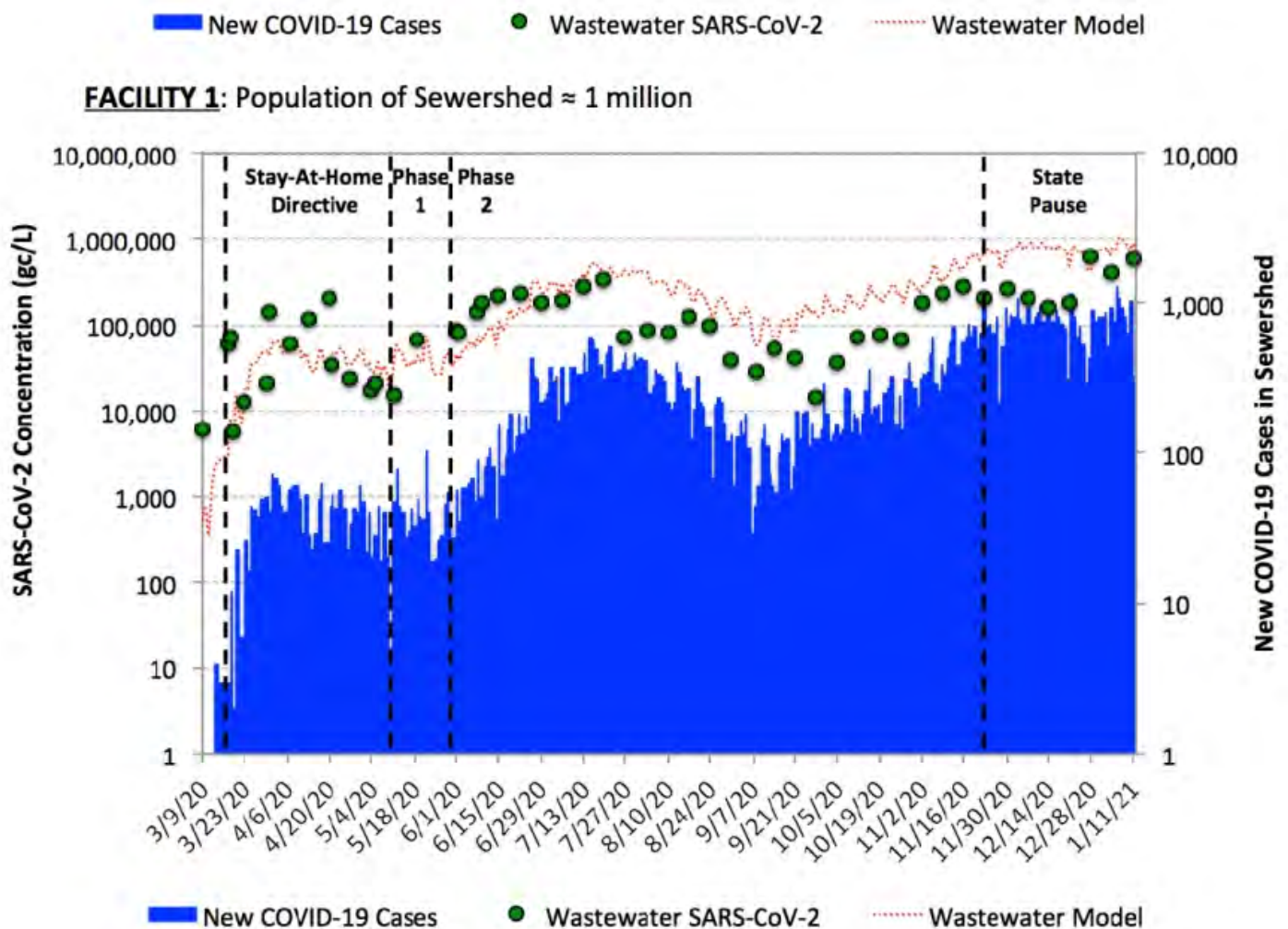
t a week before increa

ncentration of COVID-19 in

wastewater increased at least tenfold in December, Gerrity said.

“That’s a pretty big jump from what we’ve seen since we started,” he said.

The amount of genome copies per liter was below 10,000 at the start of the pandemic. During the first week of January, the amount rose to nearly 1 million copies per liter.



A chart from the Southern Nevada Water Authority shows new COVID-19 cases plotted with the amount of COVID-19 detected in wastewater. Notice the difference of scales. (KLAS/SNWA)

Researchers are also finding fewer cases of other contagious diseases, suggesting prevention mechanisms are pulling double duty.

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COVID-19,” Gerrity said.

As the pandemic continues, Gerrity will keep his Monday routine. As Mother Nature calls, scientists will continue studying what we are leaving behind.

“Wastewater is often viewed as something disgusting that people just want to go away,” Gerrity said. “But actually, from a scientific perspective, it gives us a window into the community.”

Researchers at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, are also studying the samples, focusing on the makeup of the virus and its mutations. The research will become even more important as more of the community gets vaccinated to see how test effectiveness it is.

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# Drought conditions could impact power generation in the West

Ongoing drought and low snowpack mean that hydro production at two big dams could be impacted, affecting the West's power supply in 2021.

JANUARY 25, 2021 **DAVID WAGMAN**

MARKETS UNITED STATES



High in the Rocky Mountains, a stream carries snowmelt.

*Image: David Wagman*

Ongoing drought in parts of the West could trigger water conservation measures across seven states this year.

It would mark the first time that cutbacks outlined in drought contingency plans drafted two years ago have been put in place.

Everything from hydroelectric power generation to agricultural production to the bubbling fountains at Las Vegas casinos could be impacted.

Impacts on hydro generation could have ripple effects across the Southwest, including solar and energy storage.

A forecast released in mid-January by the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation said that the federally owned Lake Mead and Lake Powell — the nation's two largest reservoirs and critical storage for Colorado River water and its 40 million users — are both approaching near-record-low levels. If those levels continue dropping as expected, agreements signed by the seven Colorado River Basin states in 2019 will go into effect, with water deliveries curtailed to keep the federal government from stepping in and imposing cuts of its own.

The Upper Colorado River basin region includes all or parts of Arizona, Colorado, Idaho, Nevada, New Mexico, Texas, Utah, and Wyoming. Drought has been an ongoing problem across much of the region for most of the century. The Bureau of Reclamation's latest quarterly report showed Lake Powell at 42% of capacity and Lake Mead at 40%.

Three hydro plants that could be affected as water levels fall are the 1,312 MW station built at Glen Canyon Dam in 1964, and two hydro plants at Hoover Dam, which were built in 1936 and have a combined capacity of 2,078 MW.

In 2019, the Glen Canyon station generated nearly 4 million MWh of electricity. Combined, the two Hoover Dam stations generated roughly 3.4 million MWh, according to S&P Global.

The Bureau of Reclamation said in its report that during the 21-year period from 2000 to 2020, inflow to Lake Powell, which is a good measure of hydrologic conditions in the Colorado River Basin, was above average in only four of the past 19 years. It said the period 2000-2020 was the lowest 21-year period since the closure of Glen Canyon Dam in 1963.

The report said that under the current most probable forecast, the total water-year 2021 inflow to Lake Powell would be 5.72 million acre-feet, or roughly 53% of average.

If worst-case projections materialize, the water level at Lake Powell could drop below a critical level — measured as 3,525 feet above sea level — in early 2022, threatening the ability of Glen Canyon Dam to generate electricity.



David Wagman is a senior editor at pv magazine USA. David is a seasoned energy journalist and editor.

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# Sierra Prepares To Be Buried Under Several Feet Of Snow From Atmospheric River

January 25, 2021 at 6:33 am Filed Under: [Sierra](#), [Snowfall](#), [Winter Weather](#)

TRUCKEE (CBS SF) — While a mid-week atmospheric river will bring pounding rains to the San Francisco Bay Area, its wintery blast will bury the Sierra under as much as 6 feet of new snow, forecasters predicted Sunday.

Light snow showers were predicted for Sunday as a weaker weather system rolls through the region and up to 6 inches could fall, but it is the arrival of potent plume of moisture by early Wednesday that is projected to be the main event.

“Multiple feet of snow are expected as an atmospheric river moisture source pushes into the Sierra,” National Weather Service forecasters warned. “While 3-4 feet of snow is what looking most favorable along the Sierra crest (1-3 feet in the lower Sierra basins), there is potential on the high end to reach 5-6 feet along the crest mainly where the atmospheric river plume pivots back northward.”

The weather service has issued winter weather advisory that will certainly be raised to a warning by Monday or Tuesday. Travel in the high passes of Highway 50 and I-80 will likely come to a halt and chains will be required through the upcoming weekend.

“If you are planning to travel through the area, plan wisely!!,” CHP Truckee warned on its Facebook page. “Be prepared for MAJOR travel delays, for chain control, and for possible road closures. Notice the possibility of 7 feet of snow.”

Strong wind gusts will also trigger drifting snow, blinding driving conditions and a heightening of a threat of avalanches.

While the San Francisco Bay Area has been locked into severe drought conditions, the Sierra has seen some snowfall this year. The Dec. 30th snow survey by the California Department of Water Resources — the first of the winter season — determined that the snowpack was 93% of average to date.

“Today’s survey is a little higher than what we’ve been seeing based on automated snow measurement based on 130 sensors statewide,” said Sean de Guzman, chief of snow surveys and water supply forecasting, at the time of the survey.

Squaw Valley officials reported that before Sunday’s storm they have had 108 inches fall this season at 8,000 feet and above. Meanwhile, Heavenly located in South Lake Tahoe has seen 72 inches of snowfall in total this season.

## **VIDEO: River Stewards continue clean-up efforts on the Truckee River**

By Bob Conrad | **Published:** January 25, 2021 | **Last Updated on**

**G**rant Denton of the Karma Box Project is continuing to work with the homeless people who live along the Truckee River. Of the more than estimated 7,000 area residents without a fixed address, nearly 200 are living near the Wells Avenue overpass.

Some of them, known as River Stewards, are trying to keep the area clean. But without the proper sanitation, bathrooms and amenities most of us rely upon, **garbage — and human waste — can quickly accumulate.**

One River Steward, Santiago, said he's been living on the river for more than a year. He struggles with addiction but found the River Stewards program helpful in setting goals for the future.

"It's good to get back to making an honest dollar," he said. "It does give me a little bit of satisfaction to help out. It makes me feel good."

Denton said the project, with support from the City of Reno, Washoe County, Truckee River Fund and One Truckee River, removes as much as 20 yards of waste from the Wells Avenue area each week. More than 2,000 bags of trash have been removed since the program began.



### **BOB CONRAD**

Bob Conrad is publisher, editor, and co-founder of This Is Reno. He has served in communications positions for various state agencies and earned a doctorate from the University of Nevada, Reno in 2011, where he completed a dissertation on social media journalism and crisis communications. In addition to managing This Is Reno, he holds a part-time research appointment for the Mineral County University of Nevada Extension office.

Travel // Travel: Editors' Picks

# As storm sets up to pummel Tahoe, meteorologists forecast a future without snow

Julie Brown

Updated: Jan. 26, 2021 10:44 a.m.

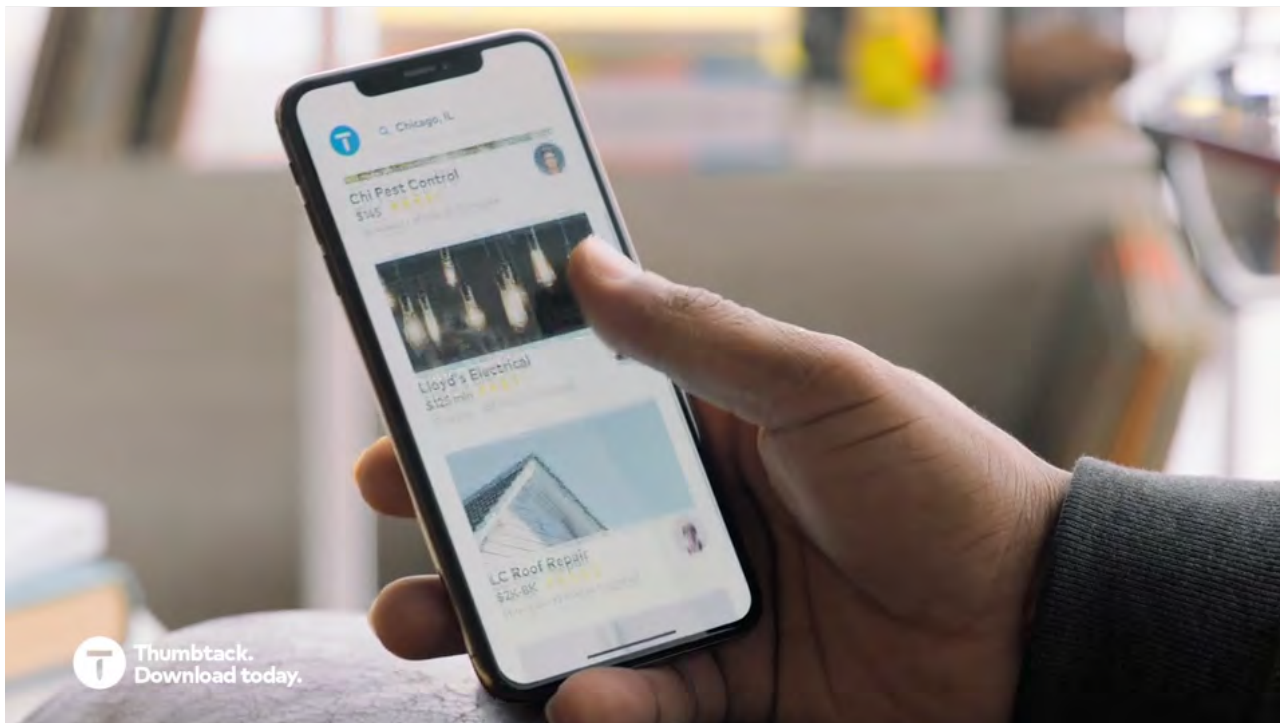
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In the middle of January, high winds and dry conditions sparked wildfires throughout California.

Now, an atmospheric river is taking aim at the state with a huge amount of water. In the Sierra Nevada and Lake Tahoe region, forecasters are calling for between three and six feet of snow by the end of this week.

This kind of dramatic shift from fire to fire hose is something California is already used to. But the tick-tock between extremes — or what climate researcher Daniel Swain calls “precipitation whiplash” — will only become more exaggerated as the climate crisis plays out, now and in the near future.



As the year's first major storm arrived in Lake Tahoe, meteorologists and climate scientists convened on the South Shore this week for the 24th Operation Sierra Storm, a leading nationwide conference about weather. Due to the pandemic, attendance was limited to 25 people, with panels and speakers livestreamed on Facebook. The conference opened Monday morning with a panel about climate change in California and Lake Tahoe.

Panelists forecast a grim outlook for the rest of the century. Climate models predict that storms like the one arriving this week will deliver more rain than snow to Lake Tahoe, a warming trend that will wreak havoc on future ski days.



Tahoe, a warming trend that will wreak havoc on future ski days.

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But it wasn't all talk about the future. According to the panel, the impacts of the climate crisis are already unfolding right now — see last week's headlines about wildfires in January.

"The future, I think, is here in California and Nevada," said Swain, who is a climate scientist at UCLA's Institute of the Environment and Sustainability. Swain opened the panel on climate impacts and solutions. "Climate change has arrived. We're already living in a different place than when 20th century policies, and water management infrastructure and flood control infrastructure developed."

Swain described a future California that's both wetter and drier. It's a paradox with



fewer storms offset by extended dry seasons. But when storms do come, they will be more intense. Winter, or the “wet season,” will become narrower and narrower, bookended by longer, drier falls and springs. That also means that fire season will extend, with the climate crisis driving larger and more intense wildfires.

This is already playing out across California, down to the local level. In Tahoe, the climate crisis has triggered changes impacting the entire region, from the highest elevations of the mountains to the bottom of the lake itself.

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Tahoe is a microcosm of the climate crisis in California, added panelist Dorian Fougères, the acting deputy director of the California Tahoe Conservancy. The conservancy is a state agency that manages around 6,500 acres in the Basin. Alongside the region’s sensitive ecosystems and biodiversity, Tahoe is dealing with a housing crisis and huge amounts of traffic. Fougères gave an updated number on Tahoe’s annual visitors: 24 million people come to the Basin every year, fueling a \$6 billion recreation economy. (It’s worth noting, however, that the visitation figure fluctuates depending on the source and method of counting. Regardless, Tahoe receives more visitors than the most popular national parks.)

“If you can adapt here, where you have these sensitive resources, a ton of people, these urban issues, you hopefully can adapt anywhere in California,” Fougères said at the panel.

By 2100, Tahoe is expecting a 3.6 to 9 degree temperature increase.

“That means summers in Tahoe in August will be as hot as San Jose,” Fougères said. “That is extreme heat for Tahoe.”

The climate crisis could turn Tahoe’s blue into a shade of green by disrupting the cyclical process that keeps Tahoe’s water so clear. Historically, the lake goes through a mixing process in the winter, when the top layers of water sink to the bottom. That cycle is fundamental to keeping the lake so blue. But warmer summers and warmer winters will disrupt that cycle, Fougères said.

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“It could become just another green lake by the end of the century,” Fougères said. “What is Lake Tahoe if it’s not blue? That’s something to ponder on our drives and travels.”

The California Tahoe Conservancy engages in a wide range of conservation projects, including two major initiatives to restore some of the Basin’s most critical wetlands and meadows. Restoration projects are underway for the Upper Truckee Marsh, which is the largest watershed in the Basin, and Meeks Bay.

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The Meeks Bay project is a partnership with the Washoe Tribe. As in the rest of California, wildfires are anticipated to worsen dramatically, not only straining public health and disaster response infrastructure but also threatening tribal lands. In December, the conservancy gave the Washoe Tribe a \$380,454 grant to restore Meeks Meadow, one of the largest meadows in the Basin. The Washoe traditionally call the meadow Máyala Wáta. As the climate crisis lowers Tahoe's water tables and triggers a shift in ecology, meadows are shrinking, Fougères said. The Meeks Meadow restoration project will remove encroaching trees, reintroduce cultural burning practices and also give the tribe an opportunity to transfer cultural and ecological knowledge from elders to younger generations.

"What are Tahoe's forests without meadows?" Fougères said.

Another question might be: What if Tahoe's mountains aren't white?

This week, a series of winter storms will drop feet of snow across Tahoe. But in the coming years, precipitation at the shores of Lake Tahoe will continue to shift from snow to almost entirely rain. That means an increase in floods in the Tahoe Basin. Fougère predicted floods will breach the dam in Tahoe City one or two times a decade. The shift from snow to rain will also bump peak runoff — or when the snowpack melts and the watershed drains into California's lower elevations — five months earlier, from June to January.

The climate crisis will also eviscerate Tahoe's ski industry.

Meteorologists have been forecasting this week's storm event since the middle of the month, as soon as the models started to hint at the possibility. As the storm draws closer, the precision of forecasts has sharpened. Bryan Allegretto, who covers Tahoe for the uber popular storm blog [Open Snow](#), says the storm will begin to move in on Tuesday evening, nipping in pace through the week. Heavy snow will

to move in on Tuesday evening, picking up pace through the week. Heavy snow will fall on Thursday. By Friday morning, the mountains should look quite different than the beginning of the week, with snow totals ranging from 32 to 77 inches, depending on location and elevation, with some forgiveness built in just in case the storm veers unexpectedly. Allegretto's forecasts are famously specific to Tahoe's micro-climates, which is why he has so much variation.

By the end of this century, however, those forecasts won't be so exciting.

Snow levels will rise to more than 9,500 feet by 2100, Fougères said. Most ski areas in Tahoe sit between 6,000 and 9,000 foot elevations. He said that translates to a \$268 million loss annually, split across the region's dozen ski resorts. The ski resorts are already investing in climate adaptation, like more efficient snowmaking systems, wind and solar power, and expanded summertime recreation. But the loss of skiing looms.

"What is Tahoe without skiing?" Fougères said.

In the meantime, I suppose we all better go skiing while snow is still falling.

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## More Lake Tahoe News

- [Scientists predict a Tahoe without snow.](#)
- [Bars are still open 24/7 in South Lake Tahoe. Here's why.](#)
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Written By

**Julie Brown**

Reach Julie on

Julie Brown is a contributing editor at SFGATE, covering Lake Tahoe. Her reporting focuses on the environment, public lands, recreation, and mountain communities. She is originally from Tahoe's West Shore.

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## Top shopping picks

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# Reno/Tahoe storm watch: Homeless shelter expands capacity; WCSD cancels schools Wednesday

**Amy Alonzo, Siobhan McAndrew and Chelcey Adami** Reno Gazette Journal

Published 7:28 a.m. PT Jan. 26, 2021 | Updated 6:43 p.m. PT Jan. 26, 2021

*This story is part of the Reno Gazette Journal's ongoing weather safety coverage Jan. 26, 2021 and is being provided for free. Please consider subscribing to support our **work**.*

**6:45 p.m. update:** All state government offices, except for public safety and corrections personnel, in the Carson City, Washoe County and Douglas County areas will open two hours later than normal on Wednesday due to dangerous road conditions.

Nevada Gov. Steve Sisolak ordered the delay in opening late Tuesday. As such, state offices in these areas will open at 10 a.m.

State employees are urged to leave extra time to safely commute in snow and icy road conditions.

**6:15 p.m. update:** Hundreds of homeless people have signed up for beds at the City of Reno's temporary shelter after it expanded capacity for the winter while also trying to keep people socially distanced amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

The city's two shelters include the Community Assistance Center (CAC) on Record Street and the emergency temporary shelter on East Fourth Street.

**More:** City, county leaders rush to spend COVID funds on homeless 'super shelter' at Governor's Bowl. The men's temporary shelter on Fourth Street houses approximately 307 men and has continually had room for about 30 more since opening at the beginning of the pandemic, according to a press statement from the city Tuesday.

The temporary shelter fills up more on cold nights but hasn't yet been full. However on Monday night as snow fell, 302 people signed up for beds there, the city noted.

In the last several years, a winter overflow shelter that can house 50 people has been used November through April, but the City of Reno said it's not a viable option this year due to COVID-19 restrictions.

Instead, the city planned for the community's cold weather needs by expanding capacity at the temporary shelter through added partition walls to keep people socially distanced and adding about 100 beds and a day area. These efforts allow the location to stay open 24 hours.

The CAC Record Street facility houses 88 men with limited capacity for additional clients, according to the city, and has averaged three to five empty beds each night.

The day areas are open to people trying to stay warm if the beds become full, and there's room for about 30 to 35 people between the tent and CAC locations to stay warm.

If anyone in the community is in need of housing assistance, they are encouraged to contact Volunteers of America at 775-329-4141 and the Reno Initiative for Shelter and Equality (RISE) at [renoinitiative.org](http://renoinitiative.org) for the women's shelter during very cold months.

**5:30 p.m. update:** As a result of the impending snowstorm, all schools in the Carson City School District will be closed Wednesday. All employees, students and teachers should remain home. The closure includes:

No student activities, school-work or programs will occur, including remote instruction. No school-course assignments, homework, afterschool programs and practices.

No school services such as transportation, nutrition or student health will be provided.

According to the Nevada Department of Education, snow days are not considered "days in school" regardless of the digital ability to provide remote instruction. Therefore, snow days can't be shifted to a 100% distance or remote learning day and will need to be made up at the end of the school year.

**WCSO:** No, you can't drive on Dog Valley, Henness Pass roads when weather shuts down I-80

**5 p.m. update:** The Washoe County School District has cancelled school on Wednesday. According to a note sent Tuesday, all schools are closed due to predicted heavy snowfall. Incline schools will be closed on both Wednesday and Thursday.

The Washoe County emergency manager has issued an avalanche warning for residents in Incline Village and the Third Creek area of Crystal Bay.

On Wednesday, all Truckee Meadows Community College online classes and remote operations will continue as scheduled. However, TMCC physical locations including the Child Care Center will be closed. All face-to-face classes and on campus operations are cancelled.

### **Original story:**

Slick roads, winter storm warnings and avalanche conditions are forecast for Tuesday following Monday's storm.

More snow is on the way as a second storm is set to touch down Tuesday night, with 6-10 inches falling in Truckee overnight, and similar amounts expected during the day Wednesday. Valley floors could see a foot by Thursday morning.

The National Weather Service has issued a winter storm warning, with up to six feet of snow and winds up to 90 mph expected in the Sierra through Friday morning. Drivers should expect whiteout conditions.

"Travel could be very difficult to impossible tonight through Friday morning," the National Weather Service posted in a Winter Storm Warning on Tuesday. "If you risk travel over the Sierra passes, you could be stuck in your car for several hours."

All Washoe County School District students are on two-hour delays due to the inclement weather.

Chains or four-wheel drive with snow tires are required on portions of most local interstates or highways. For current road conditions, call 511.

If driving in winter conditions, the American Red Cross of Northern Nevada advises:

Have a mechanic check your battery, antifreeze, wipers and windshield washer fluid, ignition system, thermostat, lights, flashing hazard lights, exhaust system, heater, brakes, defroster, and oil.

Install good winter tires with adequate tread. All-weather radials are usually adequate, but some areas require vehicles to be equipped with chains or snow tires with studs. Keep in your vehicle: A windshield scraper and small broom; small sack of sand for generating traction under wheels and a set of tire chains or traction mats; matches in a waterproof container; a brightly colored (preferably red) cloth to tie to the antenna; and an emergency supply kit, including warm clothing.

Keep your vehicle's gas tank full so you can leave right away in an emergency and to keep the fuel line from freezing.

A warm coat, gloves or mittens, hat, water-resistant boots, and extra blankets and warm clothing for each member of the household.

The Sierra Avalanche Center has also issued a warning for the greater Tahoe area through Friday morning, with extreme avalanche danger forecast from Yuba Pass in the north to Ebbetts Pass in the south.

Forecast heavy snow and high wind may result in widespread avalanche activity in the mountains, according to the center. Heavy snow loading on buried weak layers could cause large and destructive avalanches.

Backcountry travel is not recommended.

Visit [sierraavalanchecenter.org](http://sierraavalanchecenter.org) or for more information.

*Amy Alonzo covers the outdoors, recreation and environment for Nevada and Lake Tahoe. Reach her at [aalonzo@gannett.com](mailto:aalonzo@gannett.com) or (775) 741-8588. Here's how you can support ongoing coverage and local journalism.*

# reno gazette journal

**VOICES | Opinion** *This piece expresses the views of its author(s), separate from those of this publication.*

## Steamboat Ditch: a quandary | Stu Alderman

**Stu Alderman**

Published 1:00 p.m. PT Jan. 28, 2021

*This opinion column was submitted by Reno resident Stu Alderman.*

Changing a few words in Joni Mitchell's famous song ("They paved paradise, put up a concrete box ...") neatly describes a plan to convert the Steamboat Ditch watercourse into, essentially, a concrete box. This type of box or some type of piping could be used to channel large volumes of water across the mountainous areas in the west side of the Truckee Meadows. Whether Steamboat Ditch gets routed through a pipe, concrete or otherwise, the result will be an eyesore that degrades the beauty and serenity that has defined Steamboat Ditch for nearly 150 years.

For any of you who have walked parts of the Steamboat Ditch trail, you cannot help but recognize its beauty and its recreational benefits. Hikers, runners, bicyclists and families (including the dog) happily and peacefully share the trails that run alongside the ditch. Many wild animals including rabbits, raccoons, birds, deer, etc., depend on the ditch for their drinking water. Likewise, a variety of vegetation, including colorful wildflowers and trees that add a lush green to the desert landscape are also dependent on the ditch water.

**Opinion:** Cost of Steamboat Canal project far outweighs benefits | Jerry Wager

An article in the RGJ ("Historic Steamboat Ditch could get piped under proposed project; residents left 'unaware,'" Jan. 17) identified the city's interest in maintaining the Steamboat Ditch as well as two nearby ditches. The article stated that "In 2015, Reno paid the three companies a total of \$327,000. Reno's agreements also stipulate damage from storms falls to the city, not the ditch company." Noted in the same article, Reno City Councilwoman Jenny Brekhus stated that "(p)eople know they are infrastructure that needs to be maintained to prevent flood risk." She said the ditch company's proposal to pipe it in "could possibly have benefits to mitigate flood risk but, of course, those cannot be at the expense of losing a recreational amenity."

Recreational amenities, such as suburban hiking trails, are vital to the health, physical and mental of many Washoe County residents. The ditch adds immense value to our valley. Let's do the right thing by keeping the ditch and these trails open, maintaining the beauty and the safety of the ditch with regular and proper maintenance, and continuing to enjoy Steamboat Ditch as the awe-inspiring riparian zone that it is.

Let your Reno City and Washoe County representatives know that burying Steamboat Ditch under a concrete slab is not a viable solution.

*Stu Alderman is a Reno resident.*

**More:** How you can be heard on the Steamboat Ditch proposal

**Have your say:** How to submit an opinion column or letter to the editor





Home > Featured > **Community health focus of county me**

**FEATURED**

## **Community health focus of county meeting**

By Sudhiti Naskar | January 30, 2021

**T**he Washoe County Health District's (WCHD) [Community Health Improvement Plan](#) (CHIP) plan of action to identify and address local conditions that are causing or adding to poor health in Washoe County.

A large panel of health officials, including health district officer Kevin Dick and other representative from WCHD, Quest Counseling, other community partners and Nevada Senator Julia Ratti held a virtual discussion on Thursday to talk about the achievements of the 2018-2020 CHIP and what go remain to be fulfilled for 2021.

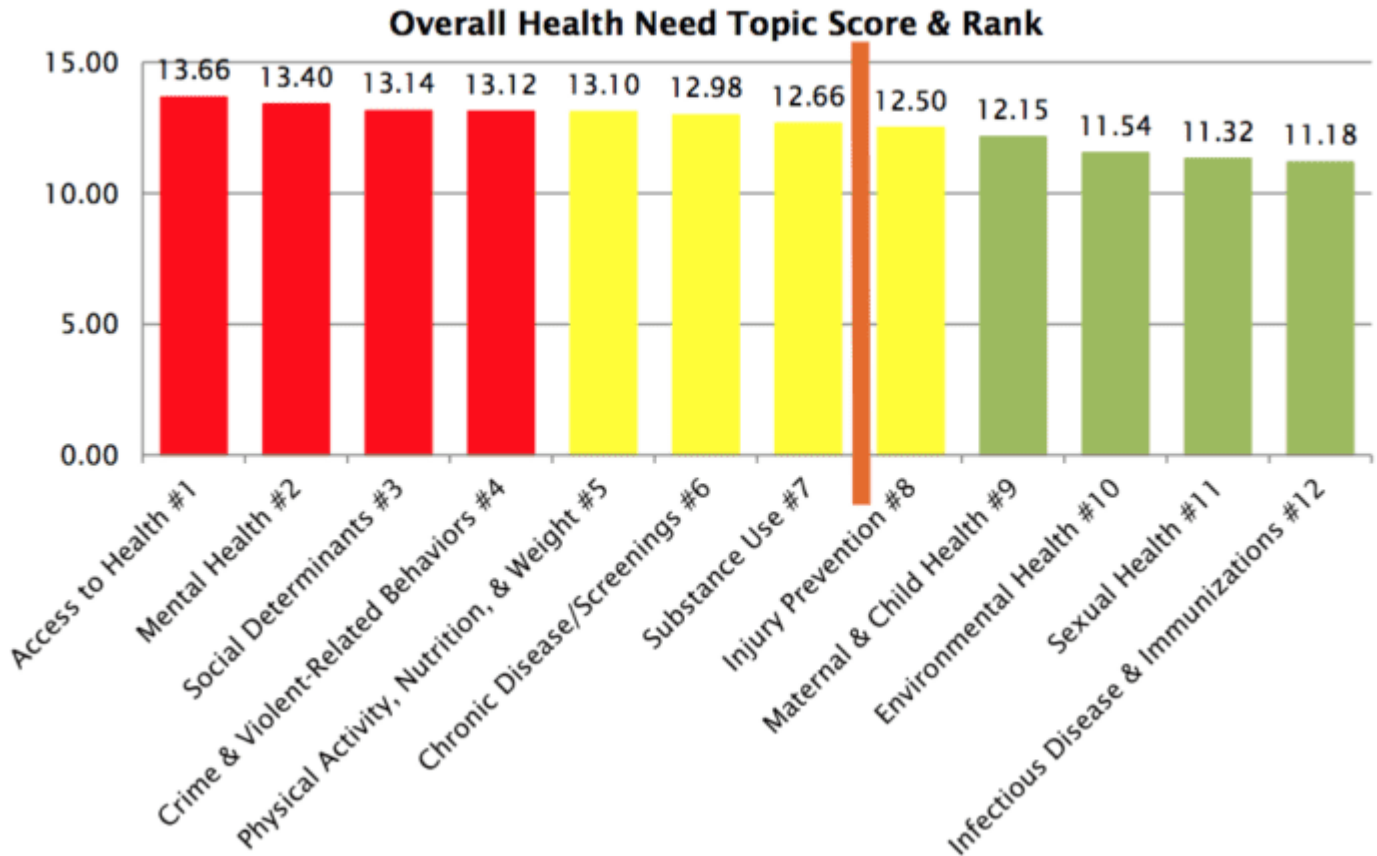
The national nonprofit Public Health Accreditation Board defines a CHIP as “a long-term, systematic effort to address health problems on the basis of the results of assessment activities and the community health improvement process.”

But how do stakeholders that create a CHIP determine what the needs of the communities are?

Traditionally, every three years the health district collaborates with community stakeholders to assess the needs of the community. This is done by gathering input from communities and residents through online surveys. These surveys are shared with partners to get a good representation of the population in Washoe County. Renown also did a similar survey last year, said Sen. Ratti.

Information is also gathered from 250 health indicators and sources like the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The data are analyzed and then discussed with community partners for chalking programs to address the needs of the community.

Over the last three years, the CHIP and WCHD have been focused on behavioral health, housing an homelessness, and physical activity and nutrition.



The top 12 health focus areas as determined in a Community Health Needs Assessment, a research-based precursor to developm the CHIP. Source: Washoe County Health District

## Current reality in Washoe County and CHIP goals

As northern Nevada witnesses growth because of corporations like TESLA and Panasonic, Apple, Sw and Google opening shop here, more people are moving to Washoe County. The influx of people is driving housing prices up. Nevada welcomes growth, yet it also recognizes that the most vulnerable populations who are at risk of homelessness need protection from rising prices and a scarcity of affordable housing.

“Currently, the average hourly wage in Reno remains 8% lower than the national average. As a resu households are often forced to pay a larger percentage of their income on housing,” said a WCHD document on the CHIP.

Many in the county are low income and spend 50% or more of their wages on housing. This is a tou situation, made worse by the COVID-19 pandemic and an economic recession. Many of these worke face impending homelessness.

## Housing and Homelessness

The CHIP will continue to build upon some of the progress in affordable housing made in the last th years. Stakeholders have continued to work on a regional strategy on housing affordability, that wa by the nonprofit Truckee Meadows Healthy Communities.

The program continues to advocate for building new affordable housing. It also observes that the community should support more policies to preserve existing affordable housing so as not to lose so of those subsidized units, said Ratti.

The CHIP's work groups of stakeholders aim to achieve most of these goals by Dec. 31, 2021.

Ratti also said there's been talk about a 1915i Medicaid waiver, which would allow programs to bill Medicaid for support services that are necessary for seriously mentally ill individuals to remain hou

There has been a lot of focus on raising the case-management ratio for individuals experiencing homelessness to national best practice standards.

It is rallying around the ["Built for Zero" program](#) to end homelessness through system-wide change.

It is working toward providing more training to homeless service providers and better integrating the providers in emergency service response systems.

Ratti said we not only need to provide someone a place to stay but also provide staff and help so that they can successfully go onto the next step.

## Behavioral health

Health care data remains somewhat opaque, but CHIP stakeholders have collected data to "make be decisions," said Ratti.

The plan calls for stakeholders to "recommit and refocus" to address isolation and suicide during th pandemic that remain a significant focus.

Those involved with CHIP are also dedicated to improving crisis response, to include more helpful t to better respond to mental health needs in the community. Ratti said, as a nation and community, are experiencing that better tools for mental health crisis situations can be included in the county's crisis response system.

The new CHIP will also expand prevention and care targeting adolescents. It is planned to:

- By Dec. 31, 2021 fill gaps in the system of care to meet both the behavioral and physical health needs of individuals with serious mental illness and/or complex diagnoses. (New objective and strategies)
- By Dec. 31, 2021 implement early intervention care to individuals experiencing a first episode o psychosis to prevent psychological and medical deterioration and improve medical and social outcomes. (New objective and strategy)
- By June 30, 2021 finalize the Regional Behavioral Health Emergency Response plan and incre the number of individuals available to assist with response. (New objective and strategies)
- By June 30, 2021, fully implement COVID-19 resiliency response. (New objective and strategy)

## Nutrition/Physical activity

CHIP stakeholders' nutrition and physical activity goals are responsive to the realities of Washoe County's communities—v

including many who are food insecure. That food insecurity was heightened for students who are at home during the pandemic and unable to access breakfast and lunch provided at school.

CHIP has already met some of the crucial goals in this area. By July 2019, access and availability of nutrition and physical activity opportunities was improved through creation of three Family Health Festivals in zip codes with high Community Needs Index (CNI) scores. In that same timeframe the nutrition environment in targeted parks was improved with increases in the number of environmental cues related to healthy food and beverage consumption, and by improving the nutritional offerings in vending machines and concession stand schools, workplaces and community settings.

## Health District updates

Dick updated the county on achievements made by the health district, as the district is an integral part of the CHIP's planning and implementation.

Since the start of the pandemic, 340,000 COVID-19 tests have been done and more than 19,000 do of COVID-19 vaccine have been dispensed.

The district also employed 24 additional staff in its call center, a response to mitigation and vaccina efforts for COVID-19. While with testing and vaccination the call center efforts are visible, what is n easily visible but commands tremendous amounts of work by staff is the back office data entry, including into WebIZ and phoning people with test results, said Dick.

The district increased the number of disease investigators from 30 to over 50 as part of its contact tracing efforts.

Public Information Officer Scott Oxarart has also held 60 media briefings, built two new websites to share COVID-19 information and managed the district's social media to get important COVID-19 More Information and updates on CHIP and Washoe County Health District's work will be published March this year.

### SUDHITI NASKAR



Sudhiti (Shu) Naskar is a multimedia journalist and researcher who has years of experience covering international issues. In the role of a journalist, she has covered gender, culture, society, environment, and economy. Her works have appeared on B The National, The Wall Street Journal, Marie Claire, Reno Gazette-Journal, Carava and more. Her interests lie in the intersection of art, politics, social justice, educatio tech, and culture. She took a sabbatical from media to attend graduate school at the University of Nevada Reno in 2017. In this period, she has won awards, represented school at an international conference and successfully defended her thesis on politi disinformation at the Reynolds School of Journalism where she earned her Master' Media Innovation.



# A New Type of Toilet from Portland on the Truckee River

The first of potentially 19 public Portland Loo restrooms was recently installed through a multi-partnered agreement at Broadhead Memorial Park, where many people without stable shelter congregate. The bathroom's unveiling came after years of some people complaining online and at protests of people using the river as their bathroom. "The river's not a restroom, and it should never be used as a restroom," John Enloe, the TMWA project manager, said.

Link: <http://www.ourtownreno.com/our-stories-1/2021/1/26/a-new-type-of-toilet-from-portland-on-the-truckee-river>

## From Portland to Reno, Conceived to Withstand Abuse

The Reno Restroom project began with the idea to provide restrooms to anyone utilizing the Truckee River path, including people without stable shelter who often gather in areas along the water.

"There's a lot of people, all involved," said John Enloe, the project manager from Truckee Meadows Water Authority (TMWA), of the process of getting just one of these Portland conceived bathrooms operational.

Enloe explained Renown Regional Medical Center provided a lot of in-kind contributions as well as financial aid. Other funding organizations include the collaborative organization called One Truckee River, the Washoe County Health District, and the City of Reno. Enloe said there is a long term goal to install 18 more of these types of restrooms on the path between Lake Tahoe and Pyramid Lake, even though it could be a while before a second one is installed.

The Portland Loo was initiated in that city over ten years ago. According to its own website, the Portland Loo "has proven to be a durable and inexpensive solution to keep your city clean and crime-free."

It's not without its detractors though. According to the Portland Loo Wikipedia page, one police officer called it "(former Portland city commissioner) Randy Leonard's crack house right there"

and "a favorite nighttime destination for drug dealers and prostitutes, who conduct their business behind its closed door." This is a similar refrain to what some people say happens in Reno's motels.

Enloe said another organization, the Truckee River Fund, which has money from water service rate payers, provided One Truckee River, a grant of almost \$125,000 to begin the project here. Each restroom will cost a couple hundred thousand dollars and be connected to the existing water and sewer systems here in the Truckee Meadows. "A bathroom on steroids, if you will," said Enloe.

The restroom is open to the public during mostly daytime hours and available year round via a key code that unlocks the door. Smoking and vaping are not allowed inside, and it reopens after ten minutes of use.



## **“Designed to discourage less than savory acts”**

Designed to be nearly indestructible and graffiti proof, these “Portland Loos” are constructed from special coated-stainless steel which also makes them easy to clean with a hose. The open wall panels allow anyone to see how many occupants are inside, helping to reduce crime and loitering. However, the slats are below knee level and above shoulder height and angled in a way that provides privacy.

The toilets operate with low voltage, in fact low enough to be powered by solar panels. “It’s not a place people can hang out in,” explained Enloe. “It’s designed to discourage less than savory acts.” The plumbing is all wrapped with a heating element to prevent freezing in the cold winter months. At night, a small light illuminates the outside but switches to an interior light when occupied.

Enloe said those without stable shelter have become some of the main users of the restroom, even though on a recent cold day, no one showed up to use it over a twenty minute period. “We are getting a tremendous response,” he said. “The response from the community that’s using them has been very positive.”

The restroom includes hand sanitizer, a sharps disposal, and a baby changing station. The open air design helps keep the facility’s odors down and ensures easy cleaning.

## **Trying to Keep the River Cleaner**

“I think everybody is optimistic,” said Enloe about the community’s response to the restroom. “I’ve been on that bike path and been wondering, when’s the next restroom.” Enloe hopes the addition of these public restrooms will ultimately keep the river cleaner and safer for the community, leading ultimately to more use from the public. Anything that goes in the river, TMWA has to take out, Enloe said. Everything from soda to human waste, TMWA has to treat and remove in order to keep the quality of the water drinkable, something nearly half a million people benefit from.

“Right now there are two more in the work,” noted Enloe. “We’re just finalizing the locations.” Potential locations include one closer to downtown and one near the end of Reno and the beginning of Sparks. These two restrooms, which will further serve the homeless community could be up and running within the next year if all goes according to plans. Enloe though anticipates the ongoing pandemic could cause delays. However, he says the funding has been secured and the final stage of design and selecting location is underway.

Located on the outside is an easy to use handwashing station ensuring proper sanitization. This also decreases the amount of time people spend inside.

## **A Needed Amenity**

“We really just want to prove it out and see that they’re used and that they’re practical,” said Enloe. He hopes the community will treat them well while utilizing them because that means less human waste will go into the river. “I think it’s a needed amenity,” Enloe said, “I think it’s better for everybody and better for the community.”

Other communities recently taking on Portland Loos as well include Athens, Georgia, Sacramento and Astoria, Oregon.

The blue light inside the typical Portland Loo is supposed to make it difficult for intravenous drug users to find a vein for injection, but alleged vandalism, drug use and drug deals inside

bathrooms were one reason Chico abandoned a project for 24-hour downtown bathrooms.  
Reno's first free Portland Loo is open just 12 hours.

# Our Town Reno Reporting by Richard Bednarski

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Monday 02.01.21

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STATE NEWS

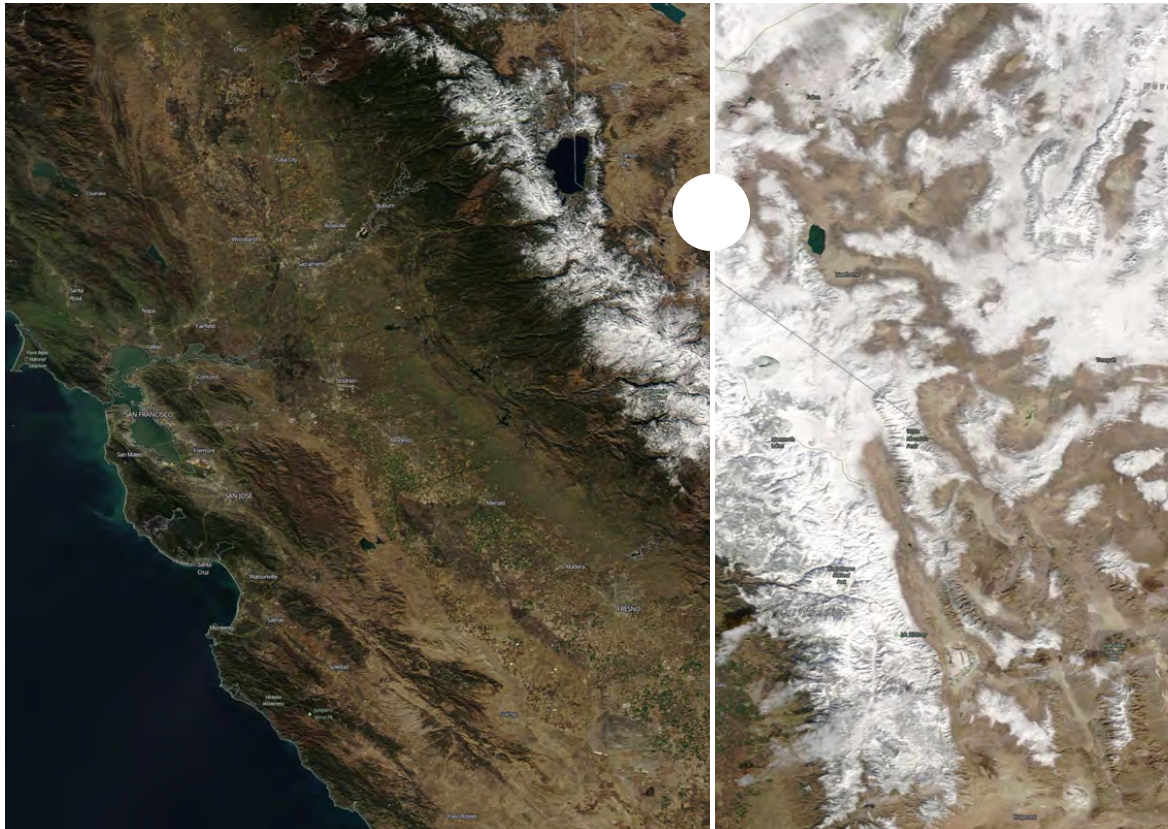
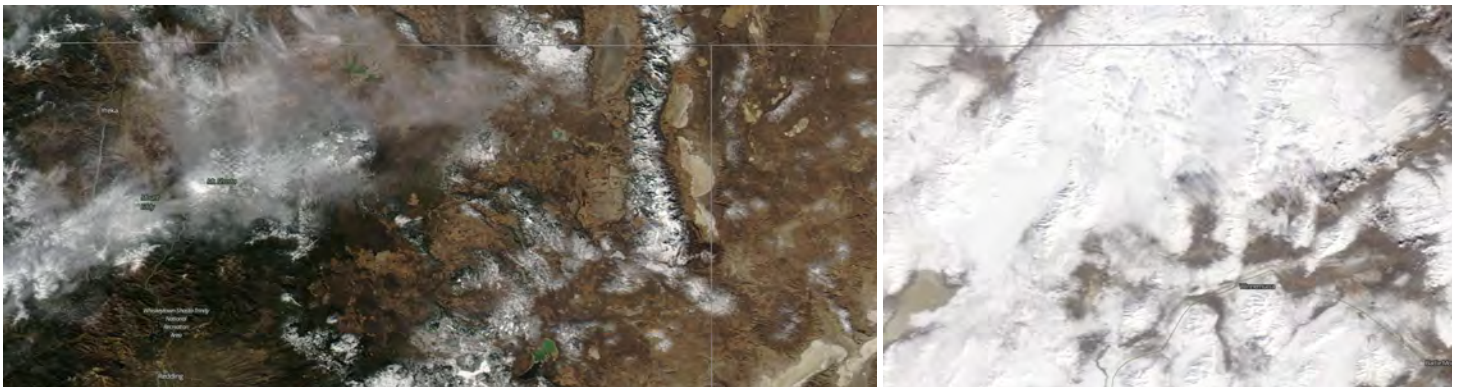
# Satellite photos compare Sierra Nevada mountains before and after winter storms

Satellite photos compare Sierra Nevada mountains before and after winter storms

by: [Jose Franco](#)

Posted: Jan 31, 2021 / 08:54 PM PST / Updated: Feb 1, 2021 / 07:35 AM PST

(KGET) — Satellite photos show the extent of the snowfall in the Sierra Nevada mountains following last week's winter storms.



The National Weather Service in Reno shared the two satellite photos Saturday on Twitter. The first image was captured on Jan. 20 and the second image was captured 10 days later on Jan. 30.

The storms brought much needed rain and snow to Kern County and surrounding mountain communities. The snow was also good news for drought monitors as the storms helped replenish the snowpack in the Sierras.

Data from the California Department of Water Resources showed automated snow sensors reporting an increase in the snowpack compared to the end of December. The Southern Sierra's snowpack was at 35% of normal Dec. 30, 2020 and on Jan. 29, 2021, data showed it was at 55% normal.

Recent storm systems have helped replenish the **#snowpack** in the Sierra. Here is a one month comparison of the percentage of normal snowpack in the Sierra since the end of December. Data is from automated snow sensors and collected by the CA Department Of Water Resources. **#cawx pic.twitter.com/UhtwCXBeCl**

— NWS Hanford (@NWSHanford) **January 29, 2021**

NWS in Reno said that prior to the storms, the snow water equivalent at Walker Basin was at 36% of the median and is now at 75% of the median — an approximate 40% gain.

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## **Governor's new directive to fast-track COV**

By Sudhiti Naskar | February 2, 2021



Public health nurses prepare to vaccinate other health care workers in Washoe County. Image: Eric Marks

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**G**overnor Steve Sisolak's office on Tuesday issued updated guidance on COVID-19 vaccination. Following the Governor's Medical Advisory Team's recommendation, this [new guidance](#) advises that emergency medical services (EMS) personnel are not required to hold a vaccine endorsement to provide the COVID-19 vaccine.

It is expected that this guidance will fast-track Nevada's ongoing vaccination drive.



“As the State awaits more vaccines from the federal government, expanding the number of qualified vaccinators helps ensure as many professionals as possible are able to administer doses to Nevadan quickly as possible,” the state’s COVID-19 Task Force said in a press release.

This directive is in compliance with previous directives meant to reduce bureaucratic red tape surrounding vaccinations. To this effect, the governor’s office issued [Emergency Directive 011](#) on January 14, which aims to broadly allow and encourage as many qualified medical services providers to administer the COVID-19 vaccine.

## Who are medical service providers?

The governor’s office defines providers of medical services as “all categories of skilled personnel.” This includes doctors, nurses, medical assistants and pharmacy workers, along with less obvious providers including dentists and dental hygienists, and at POD sites podiatrists and veterinarians.

Before administering vaccines, providers must meet a short list of requirements:

- The individual is competent in doing so (training, knowledge, skill and ability)
- If providing injections is outside their normal scope of practice, the individual has completed the CDC’s self-paced vaccine administration course (<https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/hcp/admin/admin-protocols.html>)
- The injections are given in a setting where potential anaphylactic reactions can be monitored by appropriately-licensed medical personnel.

## Gathering restrictions do not apply to vaccination events

The second piece of crucial vaccination information issued today from the governor’s office is that the restriction on gathering size does not apply to vaccination events.

The governor's Emergency Directive 035 limits the size of some gatherings, but provides vaccination venues an exemption for gatherings aimed at providing "emergency and medical services to the pub

This means that vaccination events do not need to comply with restrictions limiting gatherings to 2 of fire code capacity or 50 people.

When vaccination takes place inside a casino, restaurant or other facilities, the exemption will apply only to the room used for vaccination. The rest of the facility will still need to abide by the gathering rules in place.

Everyone at the vaccination events must follow other safety protocols, including masking and social distancing.



### **SUDHITI NASKAR**

Sudhiti (Shu) Naskar is a multimedia journalist and researcher who has years of experience covering international issues. In the role of a journalist, she has covered gender, culture, society, environment, and economy. Her works have appeared on B The National, The Wall Street Journal, Marie Claire, Reno Gazette-Journal, Carava and more. Her interests lie in the intersection of art, politics, social justice, education tech, and culture. She took a sabbatical from media to attend graduate school at the University of Nevada Reno in 2017. In this period, she has won awards, represented school at an international conference and successfully defended her thesis on political disinformation at the Reynolds School of Journalism where she earned her Master's Media Innovation.



# reno gazette journal

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## NEWS

# 'One storm does not make a winter': Tahoe region behind average for snowpack

**Amy Alonzo** Reno Gazette Journal

Published 3:35 p.m. PT Feb. 1, 2021

Despite last week's storm, the Tahoe area is well behind average in snowfall and precipitation for the year.

Following a dry autumn and an abysmal 2019-20 water year, the Truckee and Tahoe basins received one inch less precipitation than average for January.

"One storm does not make a winter," Nevada Natural Resources Conservation Service hydrologist Jeff Anderson said during a Monday snow survey near the west side of Mt. Rose Ski Tahoe. "It was a big storm. It helped us a lot, but the fact is, we are still below median."

The Mt. Rose site reported 74 inches of snow with 18.1 inches of water content. Before last week's atmospheric river, there was just 35 inches of snow and 10.1 inches of water content –about half of median for this time of year.

An atmospheric river is a storm that drops a narrow band of high intensity precipitation. The region needs two to three more heavy atmospheric rivers to come through to bring the snowpack up to median by early April, Anderson said.

"We really depend on those atmospheric rivers. That's where most of our water supply comes from," he said.

During an average water year, 44.1 inches of precipitation is measured in the Truckee and Tahoe basins. Since Oct. 1, the region has collected an average of 14.6 inches across 17 measuring stations.

"We missed a lot of precipitation this fall," Anderson said. "The soils under the snow are very dry."

As of Jan. 26, 93 percent of the state is in either a "severe" or "exceptional" drought, according to the U.S. Drought Monitor. The Reno-Tahoe region is currently in a "severe" drought, while central Nevada is in an "extreme" drought and southern Nevada is in an "exceptional" drought.

A storm set to touch down in the region Monday night could bring about a foot of snow to the Truckee region through Wednesday and about six inches to Mt. Rose. There is a 40 percent chance of rain in Reno.

*Amy Alonzo covers the outdoors, recreation and environment for Nevada and Lake Tahoe. Reach her at [aalonzo@gannett.com](mailto:aalonzo@gannett.com) or (775) 741-8588. Here's how you can support ongoing coverage and local journalism.*

# Steamboat Ditch plan on hold

PUBLIC OUTCRY SENDS AGENCY BACK TO DRAWING BOARD



PHOTO/MIKE BARNES: Children walk along the Steamboat Ditch trail with a dog in this undated photo.

Following a tidal wave of concern from Reno residents and environmental groups, a federal agency has hit the reset button on planning for a project that could convert up to 14 miles of the Steamboat Ditch into a pipeline or encase the open canal within a concrete culvert.

South Reno residents, who for decades have used the easement along the canal as a recreational resource, cheered the announcement from the federal National Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) that the planning process is on hold.

“This is great news,” said Sandra Obregon, who often takes her three grandchildren for walks on the Steamboat Ditch trail. “It’s a **slice of wild nature** surrounded by the city; it would be a travesty to turn it into a concrete block... It seemed that everything was being done in a hurry. (The project) needs to be put under a microscope.”

The Steamboat Ditch and Canal Company, sponsored by the Washoe County Water Conservation District, last year received a \$935,000 federal grant to be used for project planning. Once environmental requirements under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) are met, the project would then be eligible for up to \$25 million in federal funding to make flood mitigation improvements, improve water conservation and achieve other goals, according to grant documents.

### **Pipeline was preferred**

Planners initially decided to focus improvements on 14 miles of the canal in the urban areas of the 34-mile waterway. “Converting open channel canals to pipe” was the sole option mentioned during the early phases of the grant application process. Once the public comment period was underway, Ben Volk of J-U-B Engineers, the firm administering the grant application, said the pipeline was one of many options that will be considered.

“We really have no preference; we’ve wiped the slate clean,” he told participants in a public meeting Dec. 8. The options submitted in the funding application “may not be the ones we select. We’re looking for ideas.” A pipeline, lining sections of the ditch with concrete or changing the route of the canal in flood-hazard areas are among possible solutions, he said.





PHOTO/J-U-B ENGINEERS: This picture from the [J-U-B website](#) is from a project in Utah in which the firm enclosed six miles of open canal to restore irrigation water to shareholders lost from a breach. The company is also the contractor for the Steamboat grant.

## Plan still afloat

Many trail users said they heard about the pipeline proposal weeks after the Dec. 8 virtual public meeting, with the deadline for comments set for Jan. 15. That short notice resulted in **a bombardment of objections** voiced on social media and in more than a thousand emails and phone comments to the NRCS and local officials. The public comment period was subsequently extended until Feb. 16.

Some residents interviewed for this story initially interpreted the agency's Feb. 1 announcement as the death knell for the project or as a withdrawal of the federal funding. But it's a suspension that will be used for re-evaluation, officials said, and the money allocated for the planning process remains available.

## Comments still accepted

"The project is not going away, we're just talking a step back and evaluate making sure it fits the needs of the sponsor while taking in the views of the public and all the (issues) that come up," said Jose Rosado, state

conservation engineer with the NRCS office in Reno. “We need to make sure we have the specifics of the purposes of the project and reasonable alternatives that we can present, so that people can provide feedback.”

The agency is still accepting public comment on the project until Feb. 16 via the methods, below.

**PROJECT CONTACT: Elizabeth Spaulding, The Langdon Group**



2760 W Excursion Ln, Ste 400  
Meridian, ID 83642



208-685-9361



truckeeriver@NVwatershed.com

## Getting ‘ducks in a row’

Rosado said that during and after the Dec. 8 meeting it was obvious that his agency didn’t have enough information to be able to answer residents’ questions about the specifics of the project. The **planning documents** offered at that meeting remain available online.

“So we’re going to take a step back and take a more internal review of the project and make sure we have the right purpose in place, the right alternatives in place, before we move back into the full planning effort,” he said. “We need to specify what the needs are and what can be done. We have to get our ducks in a row before we engage with the public in that NEPA (environmental review) process.”

The National Resource Conservation Service in Reno has previously worked on projects involving NEPA review, he said, but the Steamboat Ditch proposal is a lot larger in scope. Previously, he said, the agency’s work mostly involved Farm Bill projects on private land. “(Those) are still under NEPA, but it’s a more streamlined process,” Rosado said. “We haven’t done one of these bigger ones in a long time. We need to do a lot more work before we get into this much bigger project.”

## Agenda item removed

The **Washoe County Water Conservation District** is the sponsoring agency for the project. That board is composed of representatives of Truckee Meadows’ ditch companies and the Truckee Meadows Water Authority, the area’s water provider. The commission’s sponsorship was on the panel’s agenda Feb. 2 listed as “update, discussion on status... and continued participation” of the project and marked “for possible action.”

During the public comment periods of the meeting, which was held via video teleconference, two residents asked about the status of the project and whether any panel members would benefit directly from the project, should it be constructed. However, the panel had removed the Steamboat update item from the agenda and declined to discuss related issues.

## Board won't respond

A representative of the board said the decision to table the agenda item was made before the meeting.

"Prior to the board meeting, NRCS provided a statement (excerpt, below) regarding the Steamboat project," wrote Mary Pat Eymann, board spokeswoman. "As a result, the agenda item to discuss the project was pulled at the beginning of the meeting. Public comments were received from two persons, but on advice of counsel and in compliance with open meeting law the board was not able to respond to or engage in discussions on the public comment."

*"In consideration of public comments received to date, and an intent to re-evaluate the feasibility, scope and extent of the project, as well as the effectiveness of the proposed project to meet conservation criteria; and identify the level of technical services that would be required to complete the project, the planning process has been halted at this time,"*

*– from the National Resources Conservation Service's (NRCS) announcement, Feb. 1.*

## Residents rejoice

"I am so happy that this community cared so much and went to bat for a historic Reno landmark and the plants and wildlife that call it home," said Garrett Brothers, whose property adjoins the ditch and who has been a leader in the neighborhood opposition to the pipeline plan. "This took effort from the whole community and it delivered."

He said residents interested in the issue should stay engaged. "It's not over," he said. "We don't really know what the next steps are; stay vigilant."

PHOTO/GREGG STOKES: A section of the Steamboat Ditch in summer. The trail is on the right side of the photo.

## **Environmental concerns**

In addition to comments from the public, the NRCS also received letters from environmental groups, which outlined concerns about the project and the planning process. The Sierra Club Great Basin Group's letter included suggestions about creating a fish passage in the Truckee River diversion dam that feeds the ditch, natural resource protection, flood control, mitigating water loss from the ditch and retaining and enhancing public use of the trail.

The group advocates a careful analysis of all the issues. Members welcomed the suspension of the planning process.

## **'An ephemeral waterway'**

"It's a really good reset," said Lori Bellis, a retired biologist, Sierra Club member and a property owner along the ditch. "We appreciate that NRCS has halted the planning process and is re-evaluating the project scope. Moving forward, I hope the public will be kept informed of what (planners) are trying to accomplish."



*“The Steamboat Ditch has been an ephemeral waterway and green space for more than 100 years. This project should view the ditch in this context and not just as an irrigation delivery system. Although the maintenance road was not originally intended for public recreation, it has been used by the public for recreation for many decades. Consequently, this project needs to take into consideration preserving the recreational and aesthetic aspects of current use. Preservation of the earthen canal where mature vegetation and wildlife habitat exist should be a project priority.”*

*– Lori Bellis, Sierra Club Great Basin Group.*

## **Biologists list species**

A group of 13 Reno biologists also submitted a letter of comment to the agency along with a list of species they have observed along the waterway.

“The proposed changes to the water supply along the ditch would eliminate a remarkable ecosystem that has developed over the last 100+ years,” the biologists wrote.

“Without the available water, the vegetation community will change and we will lose the presence of a large number of birds, butterflies, and other animals. The biodiversity in this part of Reno would be significantly reduced, with consequences for neighboring parts of the city as well as for at least one species of federal conservation concern (the monarch butterfly, candidate species under the Endangered Species Act)...”

**Monarch butterfly**

The biologists’ letter listed more than 100 birds, plants and animals found along the ditch, many of whom are “completely dependent on the water available in this unique ecosystem.”



# reno gazette journal

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## NEWS

# USGS to survey Northern California, Tahoe region with low-flying aircraft

**Amy Alonzo** Reno Gazette Journal

Published 6:05 p.m. PT Feb. 4, 2021

Area residents can expect to see low-flying aircraft passing over northern Nevada and northeastern California through March as the U.S. Geological Survey studies geologic and hydrologic units below the area's surface.

The flights are part of an ongoing USGS program to identify hidden features such as changes in rock types. The studies provide a better understanding of the geology and hydrology of the area for the purpose of groundwater assessment and seismic and volcanic hazards.

The survey will cover a region spanning from Susanville at the north to as far south as South Lake Tahoe. It will also cover Reno, Quincy, Truckee, Grass Valley and Portola.

Flights start Feb. 6 and are expected to last about two months.

The USGS is contracting with Edcon-Prj, Inc. of Denver, Colo. for the project.

For more information on the surveying project, visit <https://on.doi.gov/3jjMSE8>

*Amy Alonzo covers the outdoors, recreation and environment for Nevada and Lake Tahoe. Reach her at [aalonzo@gannett.com](mailto:aalonzo@gannett.com) or (775) 741-8588. Here's how you can support ongoing coverage and local journalism.*

## Someone tried to poison a Florida city by hacking into the water treatment system, sheriff says

By [Amir Vera](#), [Jamiel Lynch](#) and [Christina Carrega](#), CNN

🕒 Updated 11:07 PM ET, Mon February 8, 2021



Pinellas County Sheriff Bob Gualtieri speaks at a press conference on Monday, February 8, about the attempted hacking of the city of Oldsmar's water treatment system.

**(CNN)** — A hacker gained access into the water treatment system of Oldsmar, Florida, on Friday and tried to increase the levels of sodium hydroxide -- commonly referred to as lye -- in the city's water, officials said, putting thousands at risk of being poisoned.

The incident took place Friday when an operator noticed the intrusion and watched the hacker access the system remotely. The hacker adjusted the level of sodium hydroxide to more than 100 times its normal levels, according to Pinellas County Sheriff Bob Gualtieri.

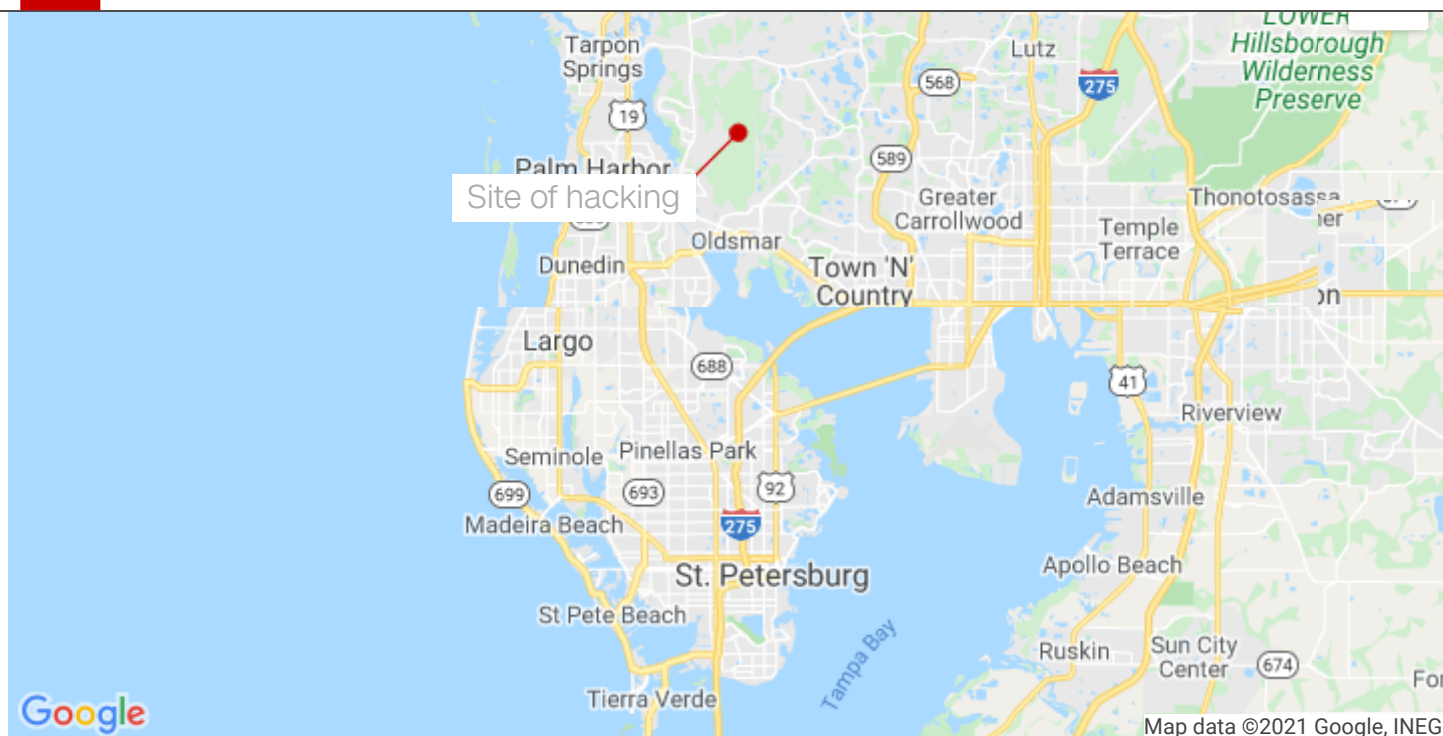
The operator immediately reduced the level back. At no time was there a significant adverse effect to the city's water supply, and the public was never in danger, Gualtieri said. It is unknown if the breach happened from someone locally, nationally or even outside of the United States.

"This is somebody who is trying, as it appears on the surface, to do something bad. It's a bad act. It's a bad actor," Gualtieri said. "This isn't just 'Oh, we're putting a little bit of chlorine or a little bit of fluoride, or a little bit of something,' we're basically talking about lye that you are taking from 100 parts per million to 11,100."

Early intervention prevented the attack from having more serious consequences, said Robert M. Lee, the CEO of Dragos Inc., an industrial cybersecurity company. But, he said, this type of attack is precisely what keeps industry experts awake at night.

"It was not particularly sophisticated, but it's exactly what folks worry about and as one of a very few examples of someone making an attempt to hurt people, it's a big deal for that reason," Lee said.

Gualtieri said it would have taken 24-36 hours for the water to reach the system and that there are several redundancies in place that would have alerted that the levels were too high before that happened. The city has taken steps to prevent further access into the system.



The Pinellas County Sheriff's Office, FBI and Secret Service are jointly investigating the breach, Gualtieri said. The FBI's field office in Tampa is working with Oldsmar and the sheriff's office, offering resources and assistance in the investigation.

CNN has reached out to the Secret Service for comment.

Florida Sen. Marco Rubio wants the hacking of the water treatment system handled as a national security measure, [he tweeted Monday](#).

"I will be asking the @FBI to provide all assistance necessary in investigating an attempt to poison the water supply of a #Florida city," the tweet read. "This should be treated as a matter of national security."

Sodium hydroxide, also known as lye, is the main ingredient in liquid drain cleaner, Gualtieri said.

Symptoms of sodium hydroxide poisoning include breathing difficulties, lung inflammation, throat swelling, burning of the esophagus and stomach, severe abdominal pain, vision loss, and low blood pressure, according to the [University of Florida Health System](#).

Long-term effects of poisoning depend on how fast the poison is diluted or neutralized in the system. Damage to the esophagus and stomach can continue to occur for several weeks after the poison was swallowed. Death can

occur as long as a month later.

It is unknown if the increased levels in Oldsmar would have led to any of these symptoms. Oldsmar, a city made up of about 15,000 people in Pinellas County, is about 17 miles west of Tampa. *CNN's Mary Kay Mallonee, Rishi Iyengar and Brian Fung contributed to this report.*

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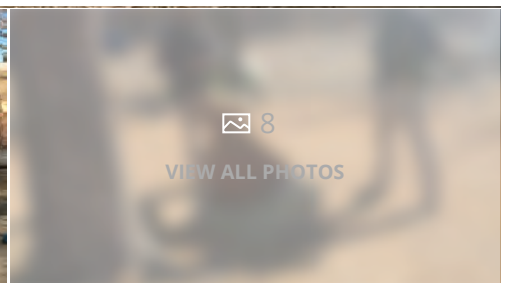
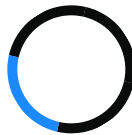
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## problem in Sparks

by Kim Burrows  
Monday, February 8th 2021

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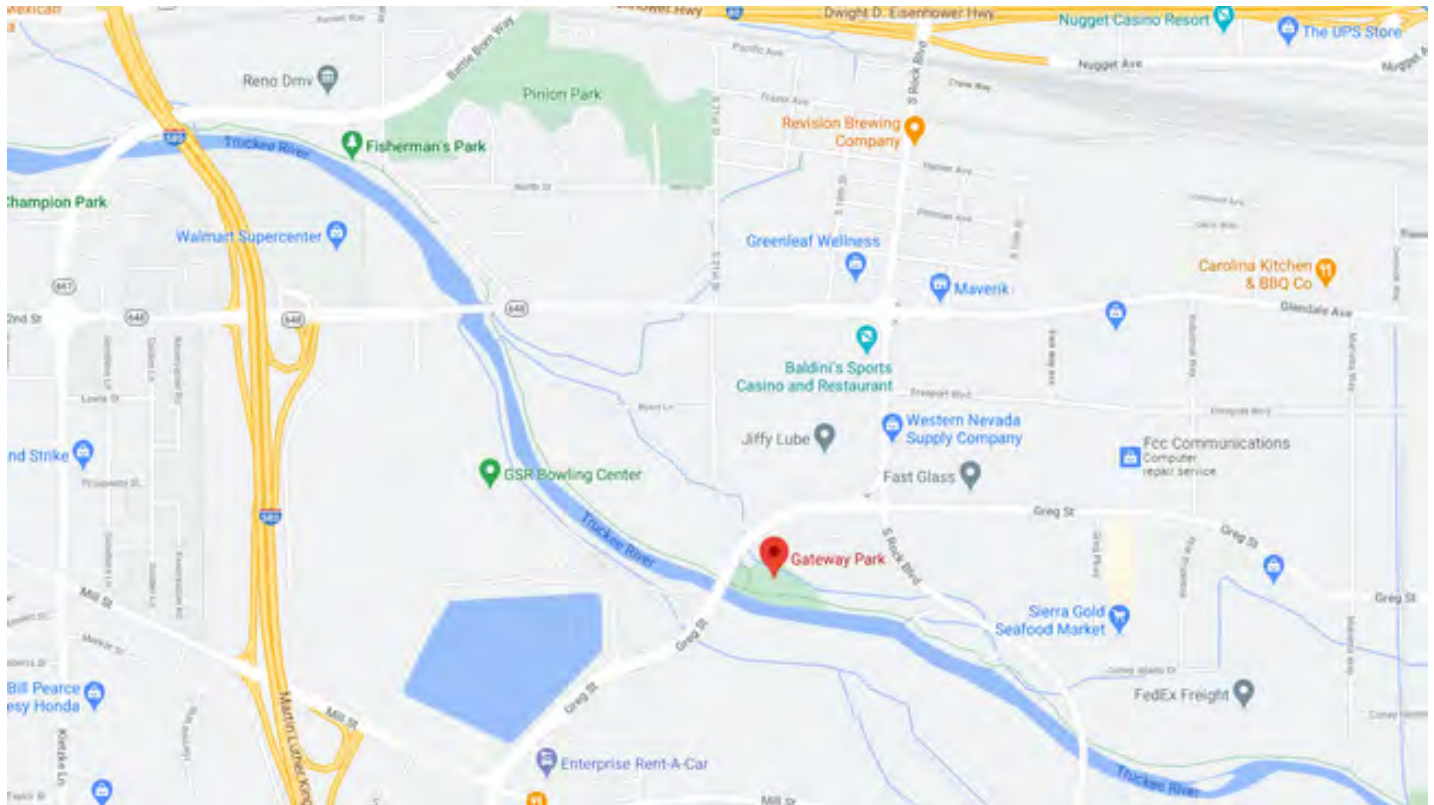
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RENO, Nev. (News 4 & Fox 11) — COVID-19 has brought the homeless issues front and center in northern Nevada. More camps have popped up around town as shelters swell under the increased capacity. Expensive and limited housing has pushed more people on the streets too.

Instead of clearing out the homeless and throwing away their belongings like many other communities, Sparks has taken a different approach. In fact, police welcome the homeless at

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*Gateway Park at 21st and Greg Streets in Sparks (Google maps)*

There are about two dozen camps there.



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"Over the years, the homeless situation has become worse and worse and more noticeable to the public so it's generated calls for service for the regular patrol officer," said Sgt. Patrick McNeely.

Sparks Police knew they had to do things differently. [They formed the H.O.P.E. Team.](#) It stands for Homeless Outreach Proactive Engagement. Three full-time officers work with community organizations to find services for people living on the streets.

"When the team first started we probably approached it the same way where we were doing a law enforcement actions and that's obviously doesn't work. When you're homeless and arrested for a misdemeanor it doesn't help you to not be homeless anymore so we are more about resources and the advocacy groups, we work with them to help the homeless with mental health issues, drug addiction, and eventually get them housed and off the street," said McNeely.



*Sparks H.O.P.E. Team officers check on transients at Gateway Park at 21st and Greg Streets (KRNV)*

The officers know them by name and learn about their medical conditions and where they need the most help. The idea is to get the homeless resources to get them off the streets and into housing, find jobs and resources.

Sgt. McNeely said research has shown that it takes about 15 to 20 visits before the transients start to trust them.

Matthew Kolojeski said he's lived in a tent at Gateway Park for more than a month.

"It's not easy to afford a place to stay," he said. "Me and my girl used to stay in a motel, we had an apartment but the rent got too high."

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*Matthew Kolojeski lives at Gateway Park in Sparks (KRNv)*

Sparks Police are helping Kolojeski and his girlfriend.

"They're trying to help us get like, with me they're trying to help me get some kind of housing and to see a heart doctor," he said. "Over in Reno it didn't seem like they were too interested in anything more than just telling us 'either go to the shelter but you can't stay where you're at.'"

A City of Sparks trash truck comes by to pick up garbage frequently. Police also make sure people aren't camping on the riverbanks.

Legally, officers can't kick them out of the park. [A decision from the 9th Circuit Court of Appeal in Boise vs. Martin](#) says citing the homeless when there is not enough shelter space is unconstitutional. That's the case in Reno and Sparks where housing is already tight and the pandemic limited the number of people in homeless shelters. In other words, police can't write these tickets if shelters are full.

Sgt. McNeely admits he does get calls from the public about the number of camps in the park. Some of them are quite large. One even has a make-shift fence to contain two dogs.

"I always tell (callers) we are working with folks and trying to get them off the street, it takes time," he said. The public has to be patient with us and what we are trying to accomplish. I'm

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## MORE TO EXPLORE

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NEWS

## Expanding Emergency Services for a Growing Community

As our area grows, local emergency services are adapting to continue to serve the needs of the community.

Wednesday, February 10th 2021, 3:25 AM PST

**Updated:** Wednesday, February 10th 2021, 3:43 AM PST

By **Chris Buckley**

As our area grows, local emergency services are adapting to continue to serve the needs of the community.

Last year Washoe County's fire department, Truckee Meadows Fire & Rescue, got a new name, logo, headquarters, and some new toys.

"We actually added 12 new pieces of apparatus," said Chief Charles Moore. "A ladder truck, a water tender, five new brush trucks and five new structural engines that are on the way."

And they've added to the crew. There's a new wildland fuels reduction team through a partnership with NV Energy.

"We have 17 new employees that are dedicated to removing fuels in the area," Moore said. "When they're working for NV Energy they're removing fuels in and around the electrical infrastructure, and when we have a fire we're able to use those employees to help fight the fire, as well as doing other public fuels reduction programs. This is an absolute game changer for our wildland threat going forward."

Though the population in Washoe County continues to grow, calls for service have remained steady over the past four years.

But being a first responder in the time of Covid means a whole new set of issues to deal with.

TMFR has expanded their peer support team during the pandemic.

"Our peer support team is designed to support one another; we're a family anyway," Moore said. "We've designed this team so when anyone needs to talk to somebody - and it doesn't even have to be about a bad fire call, it can be any struggle you're dealing with in life - that there are resources and support for that."

There's also plans to expand the Hidden Valley station, and build a new one in the coming years, most likely in the northern part of the district.

"We want to be a data-driven organization, so we're studying data to determine the best location for the station," Moore said. "Despite the pandemic, our financial resources are still in very good shape. We're still somewhere around 30% ending-fund balance, which means we have a lot of reserve capacity should revenues start to decline. But so far, that hasn't been the case for us."

You can find TMFR's latest community report [here](https://issuu.com/tmfpd/docs/2021_report_to_the_community_f48e2deee26b9f) ([https://issuu.com/tmfpd/docs/2021\\_report\\_to\\_the\\_community\\_f48e2deee26b9f](https://issuu.com/tmfpd/docs/2021_report_to_the_community_f48e2deee26b9f)).



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NEWS

## **Nevada Cares Campus for unsheltered people to open in April**

By Jeri Davis | February 9, 2021

Story by Jeri Davis | Video by Bob Conrad

**T**he Nevada Cares Campus homeless shelter—dubbed a “super shelter” by local officials—is slated to open at the old Governor’s Bowl site off of Fourth Street by April 1.

Jon Humbert, City of Reno spokesperson, said the shelter was originally intended to open in March. However, recent snowstorms have slowed down work, he said, adding that the project is still weather-dependent to some degree while things like concrete are still being poured.

In addition to showers, bathrooms, warming tents and day-use areas, the site will include a new 46,000-square-foot shelter space.

The Reno Housing Authority will also have space at the Nevada Cares Campus, Humbert said, and may “potentially, down the road” put in “some lower income and transitional housing things similar to [Village on Sage Street](#) and the [HOPES campus](#),” which will offer individual housing spaces to unsheltered people when it opens.

The costs of acquiring the land from the State of Nevada and private owners was paid for using [federal CARES Act dollars awarded to the region’s three government agencies](#). The City of Reno contributed just over \$9 million. The City of Sparks put in \$3.75 million, and Washoe County allocated nearly \$1 million. While the City of Reno paid the largest share of this out of its CARES dollars—54%—the bulk of the costs of operating the site going forward will fall to the county.

“Construction, again, is just the first part,” Humbert said. “Knowing that we have an ongoing liability for costs for this, the breakdown was around 70% for Washoe County moving forward, 22% for the City of Reno and 8% for the City of Sparks. So the goal there is to have these operations fully funded moving forward.”

Humbert said the local jurisdictions have also sought public-private partnerships with community groups to fund operations going forward and spread the word about the opening of the new space.



The Cares Campus is under construction at the former Governor's Bowl Park ball field. Image: Bob Conrad / This Is Reno. Feb. 9,

“We know as councilmembers have stated and the state has stated, we can't have this be an area that just throw money into and don't get a return,” Humbert said. “We want to make sure that this is quality from the start, but that does take money.”

Humbert said the City of Reno will begin more rigorously enforcing camping ordinances and moving people from sites near the river after the shelter is operational. However, he said there is not current timeframe for this since it will be necessary to allow time for the shelter to become fully operational

“Are there legal triggers that allow us, so to speak, to move people along under the auspices of what Supreme Court has decided? Yes, but this is a humane approach—and it always has been,” Humbert said. “So, we've had pretty good success with cleanups without requiring people to move over the last few months.”

Reno Police officers in June of 2020, however, [issued citations for illegal camping](#), and harassed and threatened the homeless under the Wells Avenue overpass. Members of the Mobile Outreach Safety Team stood by as one officer screamed at homeless people and cut through their tents with a knife.

Police also [ordered journalists off the site](#) and dispersed more than 250 people — against CDC guidelines for how to treat the homeless during the pandemic.

Humbert said if there is anything resembling a silver lining to come along with the COVID-19 pandemic, it's the ability for local governments to use relief funds to address the region's inadequate shelter options for homeless residents. He said it's an issue that has needed to be addressed for years

“As dark as these times have been for nearly a year, in a way COVID and the pandemic was a game-changer for the ability to do any of this at all,” he said. “Because so many of our local governments are strapped for cash in a way we've almost never been since the recession, the CARES Act on a federal level provided millions of dollars for our jurisdictions to be able to do something.”





## JERI DAVIS

Jeri Davis came to Reno from rural Nevada in 2004 to study anthropology at the University of Nevada, Reno. In 2012, she returned to the university for a master's degree in journalism. She is the former associate and news editor of the Reno News Review and is a recipient of first-place Nevada Press Association awards for investigative and business reporting. Jeri is passionate about Nevada's history, poli and communities.

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