

N. Nevada developing plan to promote sports-recreation

By Anne Knowles

CARSON CITY – Northern Nevada is looking at sports and recreation from every angle to boost its economy.

The bid for the 2022 Winter Olympics, the Reno Bighorns minor league basketball team, the UNR Wolf Pack athletic program, even makers of outdoor gear, all figure into plans to capitalize on sports.

Nevada Lt. Gov. Brian Krolicki and Jon Killoran, the chairman and CEO, respectively, of the Reno Tahoe Winter Games Coalition, and others talked about the various efforts during a breakfast meeting at the governor's mansion Wednesday hosted by the Northern Nevada Development Authority.



Northern Nevada officials want people to think of the area for sports that go way beyond betting on games at a casino.

"We're here to talk about sports and the passion of athleticism, but also about business," Krolicki said.

Krolicki said the coalition of California and Nevada interests are in "hot pursuit" of the 2022 Winter Olympics. He said bids to bring the games to Lake Tahoe are due next summer to the International Olympic Committee, which will decide on the location in 2015, giving the winner seven years to build up the needed infrastructure to host the two-week event.

Killoran said the 2002 Winter Games had a \$100 million economic impact on Salt Lake City, which expanded its airport and overhauled Interstate 80 in preparation, and raised the city's profile internationally.

In the Lake Tahoe Basin, he said, public transportation would be expanded to include high-speed water ferries and to reduce personal vehicle traffic. Krolicki promised the Olympics would be a boon, not a burden, to the basin environment. Money generated by the event, for example, could help fund efforts to improve lake clarity.

Lisa Granahan, Douglas County's economic vitality manager, said the county has identified suppliers of outdoor gear, particularly soft goods like tents and backpacks, as an industry to attract to the region.

She said the county is already home to four such businesses: North Sails, Aviso Surfboards, Sierra 4x4 Trailers and TechSpec.

"Our goal is to have 700 new jobs by 2022 in new businesses and to develop the services to attract them," she said.

To that end, the county is planning a cut-and-sew center to make soft goods. Granahan said suppliers are interested in relocating manufacturing to the United States from China, where costs are now rising. A \$70,000 grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture funded start up of the center, which

is being housed in space at the Carson Valley Business Park donated for a year rent-free by its owner, Bill Miles, owner of Miles Construction.

Granahan said she would be presenting an update on the county's economic vitality plan, which comprises 12 areas, including Tahoe revitalization and the South Shore Vision Plan, and trails development, to the Douglas County Board of Commissioners at the commission's Feb. 10 meeting.

Mike Samuels, assistant athletic director of Nevada Wolf Pack Athletics, described the economic impact of the Wolf Pack moving from the Western Athletic Conference to the Mountain West Conference, which is expected to happen this summer. He said the UNR program, which now receives \$500,000 annually from the WAC, will get \$2.1 million from the Mountain West. He said the program is working with the Reno Sparks Convention and Visitors Authority to develop tourism packages around the program's football and basketball schedules.

John Kinkella, director of the Reno Bighorns, talked about the team's place in the D League, which acts as a minor league to the National Basketball Association, and the money it brings to the region, including 1,200 room nights during this month's weeklong D League Showcase at the Reno Events Center. The team is now locally owned after being purchased in August 2011 by Reno attorney Herb Santos, and Stephen and Jeffrey Adams.

While no one from the Reno Aces was at the Jan. 25 event, the minor league baseball team will bring money to the area when it hosts the Triple-A All-Star Game in 2013.