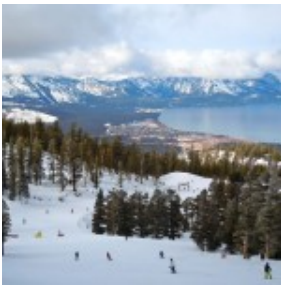


# Scarcity of snow puts winter businesses in Tahoe in a bind

By Bill O'Driscoll, Reno Gazette-Journal

Presidents Day weekend is when Paco Lindsay usually puts sale prices on ski gear in Paco's Bike & Ski shop in Truckee.

Not this year. Sales at Paco's began the day after Christmas – a first for Lindsay. Now eight weeks later, struggling like others in a winter devoid of snow by Sierra standards, he aims simply to survive what's left of the ski season and look to next year.



Clouds on Presidents Day deliver zero moisture to Lake Tahoe. And temps are expected to be in the 50s all week.

Photo/Kathryn Reed

“This is one of those winters you just want to get out of,” Lindsay said of a Tahoe Basin snowpack that last week was less than one-third of last winter's epic depths as measured by the Natural Resources Conservation Service.

“It’s tough. On the ski side, we’re off by a good 35 percent,” he said. “This is the first time I’ve had to go to my vendors and restructure my payments. In talking to credit people, it’s a bad year everywhere. Everybody’s pulling the ripcord.”

With up to a foot of new snow earlier this week, Tahoe-area ski operators are hoping for something extra out of the Presidents Day holiday, the last three-day weekend of the season, to boost visitor numbers running as much as 40 percent below a year ago.

“It’s crucial. We’re tremendously down from last year,” said Janet Tuttle, co-owner of Donner Ski Ranch. “We opened Jan. 25, the latest opening since we’ve owned it in eight years. So this will be the first holiday we get this year.”

Other operators who opened earlier on machine-made snow say it’s difficult to overcome perceptions the dry winter has created in their key drive-up market, the San Francisco-Sacramento corridor.

**Read the whole story**