

Study: 3 Tahoe area counties expected to see job growth

By Anne Knowles

Three counties near or surrounding Lake Tahoe should see faster job growth in the coming decade compared to the state as a whole, and more quickly than in the nearby Sacramento region, according to a recently released report.



Alpine, El Dorado and Placer counties – the Golden Sierra region – should see about 18,000 new jobs by 2015 and nearly 32,000 by 2020, according to the report by the Center for Strategic Economic Research in Sacramento.

That's a growth rate of 11.1 percent between 2010-15 and 19.6 percent between 2010-20, compared to 10 percent and 13.6 percent in the state overall, and 7.2 percent and 12 percent in Sacramento, for the same time periods.

Many of those jobs will come in the health care sector, which posted gains in the area even during the recession, and a rebound in construction, which lost more than 7,600 jobs between 2005-10 in the three counties.

Some of the upswing in construction, the report says, will come from retooling for green technology, which may require skilled workers like carpenters and electricians to retrain. In addition, new jobs will be available in green technology-specific occupations such as solar photovoltaic installers and technicians, and solar designers and engineers, as well as sales representatives for such products. The counties are home to about a quarter of the region's clean energy technology firms, including SMA America and Solar Power Inc., and close to 16 percent of the jobs, according to the report.

The report projects 7,254 new health care jobs in the Golden Sierra by 2020, 5,046 in accommodations and food services, 4,693 in construction, 2,816 in government and more than 1,000 each in retail, finance and insurance, and professional, scientific and technical services. The projected job losses, both less than 100 jobs, are in two job sectors: agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting; and mining.

About a dozen job sectors will post double-digit job growth, according to the report. Twenty occupations, including bookkeepers, cooks, registered nurses and retail salespersons, will account for 42 percent of the new jobs.

Job growth may be faster in the area, but it comes on the heels of higher job losses in the last half decade. Between 2005 and 2010, about 16,000 jobs were lost in El Dorado, Placer and Alpine counties, for a decline of 9 percent, compared to a drop of 7 percent and 5 percent in the Sacramento region and the state as a whole, respectively.

Most of the job losses in the Golden Sierra region were in construction (7,625), professional, scientific and technical services (2,494) and retail (2,194). The only gains in that time period were agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting (22), utilities (13), health care and social assistance (3,233) and other activities including government (1,328).

In 2010, nearly 32,000 Golden Sierra residents were unemployed for close to 12 percent unemployment, compared to about 5 percent unemployment in 2005, the report says. But after adding underemployed and discouraged workers no longer looking for work the real unemployment was 81 percent higher.

Nearly half, or 48 percent, of the workforce leaves the area for work and only about 74 percent of those are replaced by workers commuting from elsewhere. From 2004-09, 40 percent of workers in the area were categorized as high wage earners earning more than \$3,333 a month, 32 percent were considered

moderate wage workers making between \$1,251 and \$3,333 a month and 28 were low wage earners making less than \$1,251 monthly.

The report, Golden Sierra Area Labor Market Analysis, was commissioned by the Golden Sierra Workforce Investment Board in Auburn.