

January on course to be record dry month



Two pilings of the Tahoe Keys pier remain in the water.
Photo/Kathryn Reed

By Kathryn Reed

January is destined to be a record for the weather books. And it might be for some companies in the Lake Tahoe Basin, too.

No snow means no money for many businesses, which in turn means no paycheck or a smaller one because of reduced hours for employees. And with locals not making money, it then means less being spent throughout town.

For the first 20 days of the month the city has recorded a trace of moisture, according to the National Weather Service in Reno. The driest January was in 2003 when 0.03 inches fell.

Tahoe City hasn't recorded any wet stuff this month. The record low precip for January was in 1991 with 0.08 inches.

It is the water equivalency that the Weather Service measures.

If the storm that is on the horizon for Jan. 27-28 materializes, this January may not be a record. But it will still likely be one of the worst on record.

Rain is what is being predicted for 8,500 feet and below. That means water on most of the already sketchy ski slopes.

For consecutive seasons Tahoe area resorts have been unable to open all of their terrain. This means not being fully staffed. And now hours are being cut. Tahoe Donner Cross Country, Dodge Ridge, Donner Ski Ranch, and Badger Pass have closed in the last week. That could change if Mother Nature comes through.



The only snowmen in Tahoe right now are inflatable, like this one at Tulare Avenue and Highway 50 in South Lake Tahoe. Photo/Toogee Sielsch

Tennis nets are back up in some places. Bikes were never put away for the season.

Vacancy signs were the norm last weekend – a three-day weekend that in the past often had lodging properties full.

While last summer was good for so many businesses in and around Tahoe, the same may not hold true for 2015. If snow, rain, and runoff don't fill Lake Tahoe, the boating season could be over before it starts. It's hard for most boats – except human powered – to access most of the marinas.

Tahoe Keys Marina owners have not taken out a dredging permit. It's up to Aramark – operators of the Tahoe Queen – to dredge the Ski Run Marina. No permit has been sought and the Queen is not operating because of the low water level.

While there are plenty of things to do besides be on the lake in the summer, it is a big draw.

The only benefit of the low lake level may be larger beaches to accommodate more people. But one beach this month became off limits. Tahoe Keys Property Owners Association has put a fence up so only homeowners can access the sand and pier.

It's going to be near beach-like weather this weekend.

Other records being set are for heat. It was 58 degrees in South Lake Tahoe on Jan. 18 – a record. The previous high was 57 in 1985. Another record may be set this Sunday where the forecasted high is for 62 degrees. The previous high was 57 in 1982.

Tahoe City on Jan. 25 may break the 1984 record of 51 degrees.

"It just continues to be mild and dry," Jessica Kielhorn, meteorologist technician in Reno, told *Lake Tahoe News*.