

Tahoe resorts bouncing back after years of drought

By Jim Carlton, Wall Street Journal

TAHOE CITY – At this time last year, so little snow had fallen around Lake Tahoe that a nearby golf course opened months earlier than usual, and ski resorts had to make their own powder on runs flanked by bare ground.

But this year, Lake Tahoe is once again a winter wonderland: resorts are enjoying the most snowfall since California's drought began more than four years ago. That is creating a positive ripple effect throughout the picturesque region in the Sierra Nevada mountains, which has suffered economically due to the dry weather.

Squaw Valley/Alpine Meadows says it is on track to record more than a million visitors this season for the first time ever. Vail Resorts Inc. credits strong performance at its Heavenly, Northstar and Kirkwood destinations at Tahoe for helping lift the company's overall U.S. ski visits 11.1 percent in the season through Jan. 11 compared with a year earlier.

"In the context of the past four years, it's as good as it gets," said Andy Wirth, president and chief executive officer of Squaw Valley Ski Holdings Inc., whose namesake resort has been buried this season in nearly 25 feet of snow—more than in all of the 2014-15 season.

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