

Tahoe's rising level a boon for downstream users

By Benjamin Spillman, Reno Gazette-Journal

Reno is experiencing its wettest winter on record and Lake Tahoe-area ski resorts anticipate Fourth of July skiing and snowboarding.

Lake Tahoe is likely to hit its storage limit for the first time since 2006. And that means water from the largest alpine lake in North America will spill into the Truckee River for years to come.

"After Tahoe fills it is good for three years," said Chad Blanchard, the federal water master in Reno. "We could have unprecedented dry (weather) and it still ends up being two years."

With seven months of the water year remaining, Reno has recorded 12.74 inches of precipitation. The old mark for a 12-month water season was 12.72 from Oct. 1, 1982, to Sept. 30, 1983. Since Oct. 1, Tahoe City has seen 56.38 inches of precipitation in the form of rain or snow water equivalent. That beats the previous record for October through February, set in 1969, by more than 10 inches. Even if it doesn't rain or snow before the end of March, it would beat the October to March record, set in 1982, by two inches.

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