



The Covanta Marion municipal waste incinerator facility in Brooks. DAVID DAVIS AND KELLY JORDAN/STATESMAN JOURNAL

Burns

Continued from Page 1A

part of a coalition of 14 organizations, called Clean Air Now, advocating for the county to stop burning garbage.

County Commissioner Kevin Cameron said the incinerator provides an important service to companies like Nike and Nordstrom that have zero-waste policies.

“We all know why they don’t want to go to landfills,” Cameron said. “That’s one of the reasons we support the waste-to-energy facility.”

As for trucking waste long distances, he said, that’s just typical practice in the waste management industry.

The county’s other two elected commissioners, Colm Willis and Danielle Bethell, did not respond to interview requests.

Covanta officials said the waste helps pay for the facility’s operation and maintenance. Without it, fees would be higher for the county’s waste haulers, Regan said. Those fees impact customer garbage rates.

“The facility is a very important re-

gional asset for waste that must be (incinerated) for destruction,” he said. “The supplemental waste program also serves many businesses that do not want to use landfills for sustainability and end-of-product-life liability reasons.”

Decades of controversy

Covanta Marion is Oregon’s only municipal waste incinerator and, with the exception of one in Spokane, the only one in the Northwest.

It’s a subsidiary of New Jersey-based Covanta Energy Corp., which operates about 40 incinerators nationwide. Many of those incinerators offer industrial, medical and hazardous waste disposal services.

The Brooks facility burns about 176,000 tons of waste per year, generating up to 13 megawatts of energy. That’s enough to power about 6,000 homes.

Neighbors and environmental groups have long worried about the composition of the materials burned there. They say the state doesn’t re-

See BURNS, Page 3A



Meek fire at north Tahoe on June 9, 2021. PROVIDED/ NORTH TAHOE FIRE

Smoke

Continued from Page 1A

During the summer, the metabolism of the lake increases and organisms that live in and on the lake thrive. But with reduced light reaching the lake due to the smoke and ash, the amount of food available to the lake’s fish, birds and other wildlife was altered.

“Humans breathe in and breathe out. That’s metabolism. Lakes do the same thing. In the summer they create the base of the food web,” Chandra said. “All of a sudden, smoke affects our lungs the same way. We cough. We can’t breathe. We were curious how a lake’s breathing would stop when light was turned off. The lake is breathing, and the lake requires light.”

The smoke and ash fertilize the lake, according to Sadro. This can cause algae blooms that impact lake clarity, drive fish deeper into the lakes and potentially causing fish die-offs from a lack of oxygen.

That could have implications for

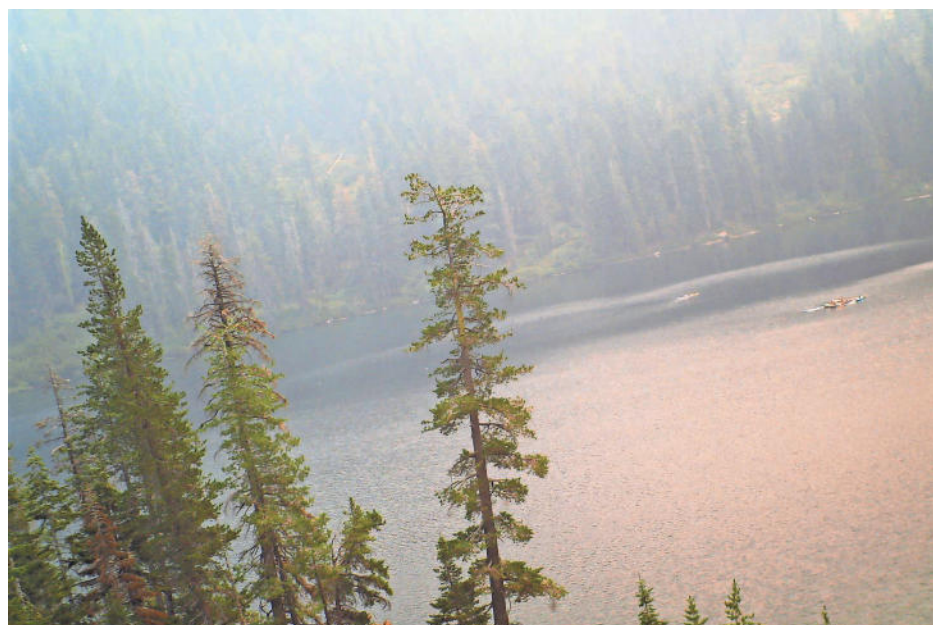
mountain lakes as wildfires continue to grow in size and frequency across the West.

“Connecting wildfire smoke impacts to the water quality in aquatic ecosystems is of urgent relevance as the frequency and severity of fires increase in California,” Sadro said.

At the time, 2018 was the largest wildfire season on record for California, when 1.9 million acres burned. Then, in 2020, a new record was set when nearly 4.4 million acres burned. A total of 10.1 million acres burned that year across the United States.

“We’ve had drought in the past, we’ve had fire in the past, but the increases of fire in North America are going up. The California forests are really brittle,” Chandra said. “We are all globally implicated in this issue.”

Amy Alonzo covers the outdoors, recreation and environment for Nevada and Lake Tahoe. Reach her at aalonzo@gannett.com or (775) 741-8588. Here’s how you can support ongoing coverage and local journalism.



Smoky skies obscure Castle Lake. Scientists have sensors in the lake, measuring anything they can – light, plankton, fish. PROVIDED BY UNIVERSITY OF NEVADA, RENO

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Carly Blue Myers of Silverton puts together a charcuterie board and other items, part of the activities involved in her event catering business, The Blue Pomegranate. GEOFF PARKS/SPECIAL FOR THE STATESMAN JOURNAL

Caterer

Continued from Page 1A

In the short time since, she has catered nine events and she is booked every weekend for the summer — her way of counting the business a success. The hospitality focus is apparent in some of her online marketing.

She urges clients to “Be a guest at your own dinner party. By coming up with your dream menu together, I can come into your kitchen and make it a reality while you mingle with your guests.”

Services include themed events with names like “Romantic Garden Party,” “Roaring ’20s,” and “A Night in Istanbul,” interactive classes like pasta making and sourdough bread making, and catered celebrations such as weddings, baby showers and anniversaries.

She has garnered good reviews for her work in the short time she has been in business. Comments are specific and complimentary: “It was a high class dining experience in the comfort of our own home,” is an example.

The themed nights are some of her favorites, she said, as it allows her to showcase the knowledge she has gained from her travels and introduce others to exotic cuisines.

“I want you to feel like you are on a candlelit rooftop in Tuscany or a bustling cafe in Istanbul,” she says on her website. That includes appropriate music and other notes of place-specific ambiance.

She plans to expand her collection of kitchen tools (such as a food processor and new knives) to make the time-



Carly Blue Myers of Silverton shows off a charcuterie board, part of her event catering business called The Blue Pomegranate. GEOFF PARKS/SPECIAL FOR THE STATESMAN JOURNAL

intensive prep and organizational tasks flow more smoothly, but is generally happy with the way her nascent business is maturing.

“I love the fresh, bold, exciting food of the Middle East and the Mediterranean,” she said, “and I love introducing those flavors to people here who might not have been able to travel, especially during this pandemic.”

“I want it to look good, I want it to sound good, I want it to smell good and I want it to taste good,” Myers said.

“It’s all about the senses.”

Freelance writer/photographer Geoff Parks is based in Salem. Do you have Silverton story ideas? Email him at geoff-parks@gmail.com.