



NEWS



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Controversy, development and natural disasters were the main issues that faced the growing Tri-Community region of the High Desert, which features Phelan, Pinon Hills and Wrightwood.

The following are five of the biggest stories that made headlines in 2017.

1. Serrano High troubles

The claims of racism, bullying and intolerance flooded the campus of Serrano High School during a special meeting in November, where hundreds of parents voiced their concerns to Snowline Joint Unified School District Superintendent Ryan Holman and district officials.

Parents of the 2,500-student school claimed the district has done nothing to stop the barrage of alleged racist remarks and bullying activity that have come from students, parents and district employees over the years. Several parents said they've witnessed students and parents use racial slurs to describe others, and one teacher referred to all Future Farmers of America students as racists.

During that same month, about 300 students staged a peaceful walkout on campus, where they met to discuss issues of racism and discrimination. The students also had a time of dialogue with Holman and members of the district management.

Holman vowed to parents and students that the district would bring "racial harmony and peace" to the school, emphasizing it would be a long but fruitful process.

2. Highway 138 West project completed

Nearly 25 years after the project was proposed, the Highway 138 West Widening Project was formally announced as completed.

The \$52 million Caltrans-led project began construction in February 2015 and was completed in November. The elements of the project include the addition of two mainlines, a 14-foot median buffer and three wildlife undercrossing structures between Phelan Road and Interstate 15, a roughly 14-mile stretch. The new Vista Point rest area was also built adjacent to the highway.

Next up — the widening of the Sheep Creek Bridge on Highway 2 in Wrightwood to accommodate 8-foot shoulders, including the upgrading of bridge rails and installation of guardrails. The \$3 million Caltrans project is expected to begin construction in July and finish in August 2020.

3. Coach Ray Maholchic retires

With a CIF-Southern Section title and 222 wins, Ray Maholchic, the longest-serving football coach of the Serrano High School Diamondbacks resigned.

The Ray Maholchic era of Serrano football began in 1992 and ended in February when the coach stepped down to become the school's athletic director. In his 25 years with Serrano, the Diamondbacks won 16 MRL titles and made six trips to section title games. Maholchic's record is 222-84-2.

In March, SHS announced that Maholchic's son, Casey, would take over the reins as head coach. Casey, who worked as a physical education teacher and offensive line coach at SHS for 10 seasons, played center for SHS and graduated in 2004.

4. The Zermatt Fire

The Wrightwood area experienced a weekend blaze in June that broke out in a residential area along the east side of the mountain community.

The vegetation fire started near Zermatt and Pacific Crest drives and forced mandatory evacuations for 30 to 35 homes as **San Bernardino County Fire** Department and San Bernardino National Forest Service firefighters battled the fire that was contained at nearly 12 acres.

5. Storm damage

A fast-moving summer storm created a flash flood that ravaged the area with large boulders and mud that smothered several roadways.

The storm brought nearly 2 inches of rain, with water washing out several roadways, including stretches of Lone Pine Canyon Road, Desert Front Road, and Sheep Creek Road. County and California Highway Patrol units were requested for road closures. Other units worked to clear debris from the impacted roads.

<http://www.vvdailynews.com/news/20180105/year-in-review-tri-communities-see-hwy-138-west-project-completed-troubles-at-serrano>