USFS won’t tolerate people-wildlife interaction



People in search of bears eating Kokanee at Taylor Creek are being warned to behave. Photos/Kathryn Reed

By Kathryn Reed

CAMP RICHARDSON – Fish, bears and people are such a potentially deadly situation that the U.S. Forest Service is taking pre-emptive measures to ensure there is no conflict at Taylor Creek.

This is the time of year when the Kokanee salmon spawn at Lake Tahoe – though they are a tad late this year.

Signs are up on a rope that prohibits people from walking all the way along the rocky shore of the creek. This is because last year the conflicts between people and wildlife were getting out of hand and the feds don’t want a repeat or worse.

“Last year there were a lot of really close calls,” Lindsay

Gusses with the USFS told *Lake Tahoe News*. “Bears will be the losers.”

People were walking into the water. They got close to bears. It was all about getting the perfect selfie.

Gusses called it a “blatant disregard” for wildlife. People seemed to have zero concept of what a 200-pound bear is capable of. And if a bear were to go after a person, while the person might survive, that bear will be caught and killed all because a person acted irresponsibly.

The Forest Service has the ability to completely close off the site if people get too out of line. For now, the directive is to stay on designated trails. The agency has people regularly patrolling the area to ensure visitors (which includes locals) are educated about why they need to keep a safe distance and then to make sure they do so.



Kokanee are slow this year to spawn in Taylor Creek.

Still, there are plenty of viewing areas. On Friday the most salmon could be seen from the bridge along the Rainbow Trail.

Bears eating the Kokanee are a relatively new phenomena in Tahoe. It’s a learned behavior for them, according to Gusses. “They learned it because these fish are not native and bears

are opportunistic.”

Plus, she added, it’s a lot of work to catch a live fish that only has 2 pounds of meat on it.

Estimates are that between 200 and 300 bears call the basin home. The Taylor Creek area has seen seven of them.

“If this were a known reliable food source, we’d have all 300 here,” Gusses said.

Two weeks ago water was released from Fallen Leaf Lake, thus ensuring there would be plenty of water for the fish to swim in. There is even more water this year than last because the summer rains filled Fallen Leaf, which in turn meant more could be released this fall.

The drought may be contributing to the late spawn. Kokanee like cold water for this migration. The shallow waters of Tahoe where they enter Taylor Creek are warm.

Other wildlife are ready for their arrival. Mallards are about – waiting to eat the eggs; mergansers want the live fish.

Last year salmon were seen in the Tahoe Keys. This year there are reports of them in the Upper Truckee River and Incline Creek. The fish return to where they were born, so it’s possible Taylor Creek will no longer be the only place they regularly spawn.

Even so, this South Shore waterway will always remain the primary place to spawn as long as the California Department of Fish and Wildlife keeps stocking the lake with Kokanee. Each year the state officials gather a half million Kokanee eggs from Taylor Creek, then raise them in Folsom, and return them to the creek in April.

Letter: Slow down in school zones

To the community,

Twice daily when school is in session we are faced with racing motorists and excessive traffic on San Diego Street. This is the neighborhood of the magnet school. My husband and I call it the “circus”. At approximately 9am and 3pm parents are in such a hurry to deliver or pick up their precious cargo they forget they are in a residential neighborhood and not on a freeway.

I’m sure the woman who yelled out her car window (this week) “I’m going 25!” when I told her to slow down felt justified. But for those of us who have not read the California Driver’s handbook in a while, here is what it says about speed limits:

“California has a basic speed law. This law states you may never drive faster than is safe for the current conditions regardless of the posted speed limit. Your speed should depend on;

· The number and speed of other vehicles on the road

· Whether the road surface is smooth, rough, graveled, wet, dry, wide or narrow

· Bicyclists or pedestrians walking on the road side or crossing the street

· Whether it is raining, foggy, snowing, windy or dusty.”

In others words, drive safely no matter the posted speed

limit. Common sense must prevail. So let’s all remember whatever neighborhood you are driving through, show some respect for those residents and slow down.

Janet Rodriguez, Meyers

How the drought is hurting health

By Deborah Schoch, Center for Health Reporting

Four years of drought in California is wearing on the bodies and minds of the people who live in the San Joaquin Valley.

State health officials say they have not seen anything to link the drought to changes in residents’ health. But local doctors and health experts, and a drive south on Highway 99 from Sacramento to Tulare County, tell a different story.

Physicians say they’ve treated more children and adults struggling to breathe as dust from plowed-over farm fields and wildfires penetrates nostrils and lungs. Mental health counselors report that they’re hearing from more residents suffering anxiety and depression, fearing that the drought will cost them their homes, farms and livelihoods. Calls are up sharply at a local suicide prevention hotline.

Read the whole story

Media outlet wins court victory over billionaire

By Monika Bauerlein and Clara Jeffery, Mother Jones

Today we are happy to announce a monumental legal victory for *Mother Jones*: A judge in Idaho has ruled in our favor on all claims in a defamation case filed by a major Republican donor, Frank VanderSloot, and his company, Melaleuca Inc. In a decision issued Tuesday, the court found that Mother Jones did not defame VanderSloot or Melaleuca because "all of the statements at issue are non-actionable truth or substantial truth." The court also found that the statements were protected as fair comment under the First Amendment.

This is the culmination of a lengthy, expensive legal saga that began three years ago when the 2012 presidential primaries were in full swing. On Feb. 6, 2012, we published an article about VanderSloot after it emerged that his company, Melaleuca, and its subsidiaries had given $1 million to Mitt Romney's super-PAC. The piece noted that VanderSloot had gone to unusual lengths to oppose gay rights in Idaho, and that Melaleuca had run into trouble with regulators.

VanderSloot's lawyers sent us a letter complaining about the article. We reviewed their concerns and posted a correction about a few details. So far, not an uncommon scenario; it's something every newsroom deals with from time to time.

Read the whole story

California law bans plastic microbeads

By Rachel Abrams, New York Times

Gov. Jerry Brown signed legislation on Thursday that bans plastic microbeads, giving his state one of the country's strongest laws against the tiny abrasives used in exfoliators and other products.

The consumer products industry had objected to certain aspects of the bill, arguing that it was overly restrictive and did not allow companies to come up with environmentally friendly alternatives.

The California rules include a prohibition against biodegradable microbeads, which other states with similar legislation allow.

Read the whole story

Snippets about Lake Tahoe

· TAMBA is putting on a skills workshop at Bijou Bike Park in South Lake Tahoe on Sunday at 11am.

· Rep. John Garamendi, D-Fairfield, introduced the Lake Tahoe Restoration Act of 2015 into Congress to complement the Senate version and compete with the one introduced by Rep. Tom

McClintock, R-Granite Bay.

· Tahoe Improv Players will be performing their last Tahoe show of the year as a benefit for Unity at the Lake on Oct. 10 at 7:30pm. Tickets are $10 and are available at the door, or by calling Unity at 530.544.2266. Unity is located at 1195 Rufus Allen Blvd., South Lake Tahoe.

· University of Nevada Cooperative Extension's Living with Fire Program is hosting the second annual Nevada Network of Fire Adapted Communities Conference on Nov. 9 form 8am-5pm in Reno. For more info, go **online**.

· The North Tahoe Public Utility District is seeking interested high school juniors and seniors for volunteer positions on the Recreation and Parks Commission. Contact Park and Facilities Manager Kathy Long at 530.546.4212 or klong@ntpud.org for more info.

LTCC tuition for some Nevadans to decrease

By Kathryn Reed

Tuition is going down at Lake Tahoe Community College for people who live on the Nevada side of the basin.

Known as the "good neighbor policy", the legislation was signed by Gov. Jerry Brown this week. A few issues still need to be ironed out, but the hope is the new fees will be in place by winter quarter.

A similar law was signed by Nevada Gov. Brian Sandoval in which California basin students may attend Western Nevada

College in Carson City at a discounted rate.

Until 2011, there had been a policy in place that allowed Nevada basin residents to attend LTCC at California rates plus a small fee. Nevada did away with that law. Much of it had to do with politics, which is also the reason the two states took so long to come to another agreement.

LTCC President Kindred Murillo has been fighting to get the legislation back in place ever since arriving four years ago. She has had to contend with politicians believing Tahoe is full of rich kids, not realizing so many work multiple jobs and don't have the transportation to take higher education courses elsewhere.

"Another misconception out there is they think people just come to Lake Tahoe Community College to take PE classes," Murillo told *Lake Tahoe News*. "When we ran the numbers of the students from Nevada they were truly students trying to get job skills, go to the fire academy, get bookkeeping skills or transfer to a four-year school. They were serious students."

The new law is not as good as the old one. This one provides for a 45 percent discount to Nevada residents. The current California resident tuition is $31 per unit, or $1,395 for a full-time student per year. The current non-resident tuition is $170 per unit, or $7,650 for full time. That will be reduced to $93 per unit, or $4,185 to attend full time. That is a savings of $77 per unit, or $3,465 for full-time, year-round attendance.

The California Legislature had no appetite to go back to the original deal that would have made rates closer to what residents pay. State Sen. Ted Gaines, R-El Dorado, carried the legislation. Without the compromise of the higher tuition, it's likely there would have been no deal.

"The Tahoe basin is a single economy that is divided by a political boundary that is of little meaning to the people in

the area, who may live in one state and work in the other, and who eat, shop and use amenities in both states. I'm pleased the governor signed the bill," Gaines told *Lake Tahoe News*. "It is a chance for California to improve the lives of the students and families of the Lake Tahoe Basin by making sure that all students get the best, most affordable education and work force training possible."

Each year since the good neighbor policy went away LTCC lost between 65 and 85 full-time equivalent students. This equates to more than 200 students per year because not everyone takes a full load.

How many students will take advantage of the new policy remains to be seen. LTCC will track those who enroll from Nevada to gauge the effectiveness of the legislation.

Placer County deputy's headstone vandalized

The gravesite of a fallen Placer County sheriff's deputy has been vandalized.



William Bean

Placer deputies on Oct. 8 at 7:40pm found the headstone of

William Bean at the Colfax Cemetery had been defaced.

Bean was shot and killed in the line of duty when he was a Sacramento police officer. Bean was with the Placer County Sheriff's Office for four years as a deputy prior to his service with the Sacramento Police Department.

Suspects forcibly removed two monumental badges from Bean's headstone. Both badges symbolized his service to the two agencies.

Anyone with information is asked to call Placer County Detective Scott Alford at 530.889.7844 or anonymously to Placer County Crime Stoppers at 800.923.8191.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Quest to save water may come at an ecological cost

By Haya El Nasser, Al Jazeera America

LOS ANGELES – Lush lawns have become vilified during California's historic drought that is searing the state for the fourth consecutive year. And removing thirsty turf has been rewarded with generous incentives from local water districts, rebates so popular that the demand has outstripped funds available.

But now, some ecologists are raising concern that the state's water conservation fervor may be harmful to the environment.

"The key thing is what are we replacing lawns with," said Peter Gleick, president and co-founder of the Pacific

Institute, a global water think tank based in Oakland.

Mulch and native plants are the preferred environmentally sound alternatives. But some are painting their brown grass green and even paving over their yards.

Read the whole story

Tahoe median house prices increasing

By Mark Glover, Sacramento Bee

The median price for a home in the high-end Lake Tahoe real estate market continued to climb in the third quarter, according to Nevada-based Chase International Real Estate.

The median price of a Lake Tahoe home increased 5 percent year-over-year to $482,500.

Chase said the Tahoe City and South Shore markets saw year-over-year sales gains at 6 percent and 14 percent, respectively.

Read the whole story