

Nev. panel discusses e-games wagering

By Daniel Rothberg, Las Vegas Sun

State leaders and regulators explored Friday whether Nevada could allow wagering on e-sports, a growing industry of video game competitions that attracts millennials and is expected to bring in \$1.9 billion by 2018.

As many groups push for a larger e-sports presence in Nevada, officials must determine whether spectators can bet on them like they would a sporting event.

During the meeting of the Nevada Gaming Policy Committee – a panel that included Gov. Brian Sandoval, regulators and casino executives – topics such as daily fantasy sports, e-sports, skills-based gaming and online gaming were discussed. The popularity of the video game industry could bring significant economic development if regulators agreed to take wagers on the outcome.

Read the whole story

Several controlled fires planned for South Shore

Lake Valley Fire Protection District and the U.S. Forest Service may conduct prescribed fire operations beginning May 16, weather permitting.

Operations on the South Shore may take place northeast of the

Lake Tahoe Airport near Barbara Avenue, off Lake Tahoe Boulevard and Sawmill Road, off Panther Lane near the west end of Gardner Mountain and off Santa Claus Drive and West River Parkway near Christmas Valley. To view a map with project locations and details, go **online**.

Residual smoke may be seen in locations where operations have taken place over the last several weeks.

Vaccinations necessary for Calif. students

The California immunization law that went into effect Jan. 1 will effect children for the 2016-17 school year.

The law eliminates exemptions based on personal beliefs, including religious beliefs, for the vaccines that are currently required for entry into child care or school, kindergarten through grade 12.

Personal belief exemptions on file for a child already attending a California child care or school will remain valid until the child reaches the next immunization checkpoint at kindergarten (including transitional kindergarten) or seventh grade.

Students will no longer be required to have immunizations for school entry if they attend a home-based private school or an independent study program with no classroom-based instruction.

For students to enter or transition into preschool, TK/kindergarten or seventh grade; or students in any grade

enrolling in a California school from out of state or out of country, at least one of the following conditions must be met before the student is allowed to attend class:

- Submit documentation of receiving required immunizations to the school.
- Parents/guardians of medically exempt students must submit a medical exemption letter from a licensed physician and provide documentation of immunizations which have been received.

The El Dorado County Immunization Assistance Program has more info by calling 530.621.6100.

Truckee planning civic pride day

Truckee Day is a townwide street clean up and civic pride day. The 13th annual event is June 4.

Check in stations will open at 8am for people to get their materials, volunteer T-shirt, and free lunch ticket. Pre-registration is not required.

People will be assigned a stretch of road to clean. Children are welcome as long as they are accompanied by a responsible adult.

The block party starts at noon at Truckee River Regional Park on Brockway Road. Local nonprofits and public agencies are invited to setup a booth at the block party as part of our Community Expo. For more information, go **online**.

In conjunction with Truckee Day, Truckee Police Department

will be hosting a free paper shredding event for residents from 10am-noon in the Truckee Town Hall parking lot on Truckee Airport Road. Truckee residents may bring up to 100 pounds of paper to be shredded.

Scientists analyzing crayfish impacts on Tahoe

By Tom Lotshaw

Researchers with UNR are working to better understand the impacts that a small but voracious non-native freshwater crustacean is having in Lake Tahoe and Crater Lake, two of America's deepest, clearest lakes.

Public agencies deliberately introduced signal crayfish into Lake Tahoe and Crater Lake in the early 1900s to help feed stocked sport fish popular with fishermen. The crayfish may be doing more than altering food webs in the two lakes; they may be affecting their famed water clarity.

An omnivore that can feed on plants and animals, signal crayfish rapidly established themselves throughout Lake Tahoe's near shore waters, negatively impacting native invertebrate and non-game fish species.

At Crater Lake, signal crayfish did not start to expand beyond a couple of sites until the mid-2000s. They are now spreading and taking over the habitat of the Mazama newt, an endemic amphibian found nowhere else in the world. It was the top predator in Crater Lake before fishes and crayfish were introduced into its waters.

"From 2008 to 2014 crayfish increased their range in Crater Lake. We are now finding crayfish where we used to find Mazama newts," said John Umek, UNR freshwater ecology researcher.

The spread of crayfish and the corresponding decline in newt populations raised questions for researchers: Is there competition between the two species for habitat or food? Or are crayfish eating newts when they can?

"Turns out it is all of the above," Umek said. "We found they prefer the same substrate areas, rocky boulder areas where there is protection to hide from predator fish and ultraviolet light. They are also eating similar food sources, so we do see competition for food and habitat."

Researchers suspect climate change is helping crayfish expand in Crater Lake. Increased water temperatures give crayfish more energy to forage and reproduce, and as crayfish populations reach their maximum in one site, they head out to colonize new areas.

"As crayfish populations expand in nearshore areas in Crater Lake, we see the area for newts getting smaller and smaller. There's a lot of discussion about what we can do to impede or slow down crayfish in the nearshore and hopefully provide refuge for these newts," Umek said.

One potential area of refuge for the newts is the small seasonal pools around the shore of the lake, formed by rock slides and avalanches. "We have not found crayfish in any of those pools, so one idea is to do more research into how newts are using those pools and make sure we keep crayfish out of those areas," Umek said.

Crayfish are impacting more than newts at Crater Lake. Researchers have seen a seven- to eight-fold decrease in benthic (deep water) invertebrate densities in the areas where crayfish have expanded. As crayfish reduce those populations, researchers are seeing an increase in algae biomass along the

shoreline, a result of invertebrates no longer consuming algae at the normal rate.

Umek is also working to understand how crayfish are impacting benthic invertebrate populations and algae growth at Lake Tahoe, as well as how crayfish are impacting non-game nearshore fishes such as the redbside shiner, Tahoe sucker, and Tui chub, since they also compete for food sources and habitat.

"From other research in our laboratory at the University of Nevada we've seen a reduction in benthic invertebrates in Lake Tahoe, almost a 60 percent decline from research done in the 1960s and 1970s compared to research done in 2009-10," Umek said. "So we're curious how the reduction in benthic invertebrates may increase algae on rocks and sand in the near shore. Are crayfish helping increase the amount of algae as they reduce invertebrates that eat the algae? Or maybe the increase of algae comes from the addition of nutrients to the nearshore that increase the numbers of crayfish as they graze on this plant material in the nearshore environment."

Understanding the impacts that signal crayfish are having and managing the impacts is a goal for both lakes.

Now that crayfish are well-established in the lakes, it would be extremely difficult to eradicate them. That's in part because young crayfish hide in rock crevices for their first year to avoid predation, making them difficult if not impossible to trap. "Even if we went in and trapped heavily, we may remove certain age classes, so we would need to have a continual removal of crayfish," Umek said.

A few years ago, California and Nevada changed their policies to allow the private harvest of crayfish from Lake Tahoe. Working with private business and encouraging them to remove crayfish could be an opportunity to facilitate the continual removal over time.

“Visitors expect to see clear, blue nearshore areas at Tahoe, and if crayfish are impacting algae biomass in those areas, that could have impacts not only for the ecology of the lake, but the economy as well. People don’t want to see these large algae blooms,” Umek said.

Tom Lotshaw is public information officer at the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency. This article first appeared in Tahoe In Depth.

Volunteers sought for Brush with Kindness

El Dorado County Habitat for Humanity’s A Brush with Kindness will be having a volunteer orientation meeting on May 24 from 6:30-8pm.

Volunteers are being recruited to assist low-income homeowners who need exterior maintenance work on their homes, such as painting, minor exterior repairs, yard cleanup, and minimal landscaping.

Volunteers with specific skills in carpentry, painting, and general home maintenance are especially needed as well as a flatbed trailer to haul ladders, tools and paint to work sites.

The volunteer orientation will include information about ABWK and the particular needs of each project site. In addition, volunteers will have the opportunity to get all their questions answered and indicate their individual interests/availability for one or more of the summer projects.

The meeting is at the Carpenters Local 1789 Hall ,2720 Young St., South Lake Tahoe.

For questions or additional information, call 530.541.2844.

Think twice before fertilizing in Tahoe

By Angela Stevens

As summer approaches in the Tahoe basin, people naturally start looking at their yards and wondering what they should do to make that grass grow thick and green.

Many Tahoe homeowners and residents in recent drought years have opted to replace their lawns with native or drought-tolerant landscaping that saves water by needing less irrigation. Those who have kept their grass might be thinking it's time to apply fertilizer to keep that yard looking healthy.

Think again!

Many of us unknowingly waste time and money by putting too much fertilizer on our plants and lawns, often at the wrong times. Fertilizers contain nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium (N-P-K), the primary nutrients for plant growth. All plants need an appropriate balance of essential nutrients, but applying fertilizer doesn't always mean a healthy green lawn, and there can be consequences for Lake Tahoe.

Why fertilizer can be a problem

Lake Tahoe is naturally oligotrophic (nutrient-poor) due to

the geology in the basin. This contributes to the lake's remarkable water clarity. Water bodies require some nutrients to be healthy, but too much can be harmful. Human-caused disturbances such as urbanization, accelerated erosion, fertilizer use, and stormwater runoff have caused nitrogen and phosphorus to become unnaturally abundant in the lake.

In Lake Tahoe, algae growth is limited by the available supply of phosphorus. Excess phosphorus in the lake feeds the growth of algae and periphyton (attached algae). Increased algae growth decreases the water quality and lake clarity. The water can become green and cloudy, blocking light and depleting oxygen for fish and aquatic plants. Algal blooms can have an unpleasant odor and appearance that reduce the aesthetic quality and alter the ecology of Lake Tahoe.

Fertilizer, when it is overused, overwatered, or spilled onto paved surfaces or bare soil, can end up in the lake. Fertilizer typically finds its way into Lake Tahoe when irrigation, rain, or melted snow picks it up as the water flows over driveways, sidewalks, streets, or parking lots. This runoff delivers debris, dirt, road sand, fine particles, nutrients, and other pollutants, which flow directly into storm drains, streams, rivers, and Lake Tahoe.

What you can do

You can help prevent fertilizer from reaching the lake by planting native or adapted vegetation instead of a lawn. Lawns can provide defensible space, erosion control, and play areas for children and pets, but these grassy areas tend to be overfertilized and overwatered. Many other combinations of trees, shrubs, and groundcover can achieve the same erosion-control benefits while using less water.

Generally speaking, lawns need much less fertilizer than is advertised. To find out exactly what your lawn needs, have your soils tested for pH and nutrient levels. Tahoe soils

contain plenty of phosphorus, so choose a fertilizer that doesn't have any. Fertilizer labels will have a nutrient ratio for N-P-K, so choose a fertilizer with a middle number of zero, or ask your landscaper to use phosphorus-free fertilizer.

Choose alternatives: instead of synthetic fertilizers, select slow-release, organic fertilizers or organic compost. Synthetic fertilizers are more concentrated than organic ones, which makes it is easier to overfertilize. This can burn vegetation and harm soil organisms. Synthetic fertilizers also tend to be more water-soluble, leaching out of the soil faster.

Angela Stevens is an associate environmental specialist at Tahoe Regional Planning Agency. This article first appeared in Tahoe In Depth.

Split-second decisions all part of cops' job

By Kathryn Reed

An agitated suspect danced around, moving toward the officers in an aggressive manner. To shoot or not to shoot? Use another tool like a taser or baton?

In a matter of seconds some of these "officers" shot at the suspect, others held back.

It turned out the "perp" was reaching for his wallet, and after that a cell phone to record what was going on. All the while he was acting like he was hyped up on meth.

While this was a make believe scenario last week, it resembles what real law enforcement officials are faced with on a regular basis. On this particular night it was the South Lake Tahoe Citizens Academy classmates who had to make the decision – to pull the trigger or not.

The academy is a free seven-week course designed to give residents a better understanding about how the city works as well as an opportunity to ask questions of staff. This reporter is part of the current class.

The class participated in three scenarios using guns with non-lethal bullets. The suspect was a real officer playing the part of the bad guy. Later that night video from the dash camera on a patrol car was shown in a debriefing. The camera only captures what is going on immediately in front; there is no way for it to track the entire scene.

The use of cameras was a big part of Police Chief Brian Uhler's opening presentation. South Lake Tahoe officers do not wear body cameras even though these devices are becoming more popular in the wake of officer involved shootings.

He explained how the norm is the cameras are not on all the time, that officers must consciously activate them. For Uhler, he'd rather have his officers focused on the situation at hand instead of whether it should be filmed. After all, seconds can mean the difference between life and death.

A video showed how police cameras don't always capture everything that is going on. The outcome was that cameras could actually favor officers.

Uhler is hoping technology will be developed to better aid officers and the public to the point that one day cameras would be more seriously considered as a viable tool in South Lake Tahoe.

Officers Jeff Roberson, Mick Carlquist, Matt Morrison and

Davis Spaid handled most of the nearly four-hour class session.

Many officers have gone to wearing vests instead of a belt to carry all of the tools of their trade. It's easier on their bodies; still they've been criticized it makes them look more militarized. Those vests weigh about 30 pounds for the average officer, closer to 70 pounds for SWAT.

Handcuffs, expandable baton, gun, taser, radio, flashlight, ammo, wireless microphone – it's all part of the standard equipment. The only thing really optional is to carry pepper spray.

Officers find the audio recorder most beneficial during domestic violence calls because the truth tends to come out in the heat of the moment. After the fact the couple might make up and recant their statements.

Most officers carry a Glock 22. Each quarter they must pass a shooting test. To practice there is a mobile range at the department. They also have rifles. Shotguns with beanbags are used as a pain compliance tool, or to shoot out windows, as was the case in the most recent fire in the Tahoe Keys.

The type of crimes local officers contend with is all over the board, especially being a border and tourist town.

"For a city our size we have an inordinate amount of gang activity," Detective Carlquist said.

He spent a good amount of time talking about the various cases he has worked in the eight years he's been with the department.

A large part of what the 12-member SWAT unit contends with is gang related.

At the end of the night the class left with a greater appreciation for what the men and women in blue deal with 24

hours a day, and seemed to appreciate what Officer Morrison said: “Everyone behind the badge is human. We are not a robot.”

Opinion: Legal action could extinguish fire tax

By Jon Coupal

By now, most rural homeowners have become accustomed to receiving an annual bill of \$150—or higher—for what is euphemistically called a “fire prevention fee.” However, this familiarity does not make writing out the check to the state Board of Equalization any more palatable. Many property owners, who are receiving no additional fire protection services, recognize this as the rip-off that it is.

It is hard to believe that those in the Legislature, who created this tax in 2011 with a simple majority vote while calling it a fee, did so with a straight face. Even Gov. Jerry Brown questioned its legality while signing it into law. And we at the Howard Jarvis Taxpayers Association saw clearly that it was not a fee—which requires that a specific service be provided in return for the payment—but a tax, which under Proposition 13 requires a two-thirds vote of each house of the Legislature.

Of course, the “fee” was established, not so more money could be provided to the Department of Forestry, the stated beneficiary of the new revenue, but to allow lawmakers to divert money previously spent for this purpose to pet projects. Basically it was a switcheroo, with the new money being used to backfill for the money diverted to other

programs.

In response, HJTA filed a class-action lawsuit to provide relief to nearly 1 million California property owners who received bills for the illegal “fire prevention fee.” The complaint was filed against the California Department of Forestry and the Board of Equalization, which is the collection agency for the “fee.”

The class action complaint seeks to overturn the fire “fee,” which costs property owners an extra \$150 per year charge for each habitable structure. It challenges the constitutionality of the fee on the grounds it is really a tax that needed a two-thirds vote of the Legislature, but garnered a bare majority and therefore should never have become law.

On the legal front, progress has been slow, although there has been progress.

The delay in reaching a resolution is primarily due to two reasons: First, the California courts are struggling with a backlog of cases. But the biggest problem has been a powerful opponent, the state of California, which is determined to hang on to every ill-gotten nickel.

State bureaucrats, fearing that a successful class action suit would require refunds to those taxpayers who filed a protest, used delaying tactics. State attorneys filed repeated motions to postpone trial, including motions to dismiss the case and motions challenging the “class action” status of the suit.

After HJTA responded to each of the state’s challenges—nearly four years of legal work—the court ruled that the case may proceed as a class action. We have just completed the public notification process that a class action suit requires. It is our hope and intention that the legal process will now proceed rapidly.

Some will ask, “If the fire tax is illegal, should I pay it?”

Although HJTA attorneys are confident of the eventual outcome, we strongly urge homeowners to pay the bill. Property owners have 30 days from the mailing of the bill to pay it. If you are late, there is a 20 percent penalty, plus interest. For every 30 days after that, another 20 percent penalty is added, plus interest. The fee is a lien on property, and failure to pay can result in foreclosure.

If the Howard Jarvis Taxpayers Association lawsuit is successful, the court may order refunds to people who have filed a Petition for Redetermination. For instructions on how to file this form, go **online** and click on the Fire Tax Protest banner. Once there, you can also sign up for free informational bulletins on progress of the suit against the fire tax.

Rural property owners have been paying this illegal tax for years, but we remain optimistic that a court will ultimately grant relief from this unconstitutional money grab.

Jon Coupal is president of the Howard Jarvis Taxpayers Association in Sacramento. This column was originally written for the California Farm Bureau Federation.

Study: Schools have role in income segregation

By Sonali Kohli, Los Angeles Times

It's no secret that in searching for a home, parents scrutinize nearby schools. The wealthy can afford to live in neighborhoods with small school districts, where most other students are wealthy, too.

Now, a new study out of USC lends credence to the notion that this decision-making process is partially responsible for the rise in America's income segregation between 1990 and 2010.

In the country's 100 largest metropolitan areas, "income segregation is nearly twice as high among households with children as among those without," according to the study from USC sociologist Ann Owens, published in the American Sociological Review in late April.

Read the whole story