Charges of neglectful oversite of logging on private lands

By Matt Weiser, Sacramento Bee

California's regulation of logging on private land has run afoul of state law as a result of recent budget cuts, a coalition of environmental groups claims.

In a letter last week to John Laird, secretary of the state Natural Resources Agency, the groups charge that a $1.5 million cut to the Department of Fish and Game put the state in violation of laws intended to protect wildlife and habitat.

The budget cut was imposed by former Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger shortly before he left office, and continued by Gov. Jerry Brown. It slashed a Fish and Game program set up to determine whether logging harms sensitive wildlife, including salmon, owls and other species.

Logging on private forestland is regulated by the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection. The agency is required to consult with Fish and Game biologists on the impact of logging on wildlife. But because of budget cuts, Fish and Game has fewer people, and these consultations aren't happening in many cases.

"We need Fish and Game oversight," said Justin Augustine, an attorney at the Center for Biological Diversity. "It's required by law, and it's not happening."

The state has 30 days to respond to the complaint, he said, and a lawsuit may follow. Eleven other groups joined the letter, including the Sierra Club, Federation of Fly Fishers and Defenders of Wildlife. The budget cuts hit hard in the

Sierra Nevada and Cascade ranges, where clear-cutting remains common and has the potential to damage wildlife and water quality.

Read the whole story

Apple season means time to make a pie

Publisher's note: ***Apples are being sold at the Tuesday farmers' market in South Lake Tahoe, which runs through Oct. 11.***

By Debbie Arrington, Sacramento Bee

It's our favorite fruit and American as, well, its most popular baked good.

A new apple season is here, offering a crisp, sweet edge to fall meals plus the promise of lots of pie – and pie-inspired dishes.

What makes apples and apple pie so all-American?

"It brings people together," said Ken Haedrich, author of "Apple Pie: 100 Delicious and Decidedly Different Recipes for America's Favorite Pie" (Harvard Common Press, 250 pages, $14.95). "It's the closest thing we have, food-wise, to a universal symbol of goodness and contentment.

"It manages to do this with unabashed honesty and not an ounce of pretense. It's an edible reflection of America's best character traits."

And, lucky us, a bountiful apple supply is close by and ready for the picking on Apple Hill near Placerville.

“Right now, we’ve got the early varieties: Gala, Red Delicious and Golden Delicious,” said Scott Larsen of Larsen Apple Barn in Camino. “We’re starting to see the Jonathans and Braeburns, then it will be one after another.”

With 20 varieties in cultivation, the Larsen family has grown apples on its Sierra foothill ranch since the 1870s, making it the longest continually family-run operation on Apple Hill.

Read the whole story

Opinion: Child’s health involves the mind and body

By Vicki Barber

I thought this brief, succinct message from Mental Health America was appropriate, particularly at the beginning of the school year. I could not have said it better, so am sharing the information with your readers. My thanks to John Bachman, behavioral health services director with the El Dorado Community Health Center and Placerville Health & Wellness Center, for bringing this to our attention.

Helping children grow up healthy – mind and body

It is easy for parents to identify a child’s physical needs – nutritious and balanced meals; adequate shelter and clothing; sufficient rest and physical activity; immunizations; and a healthy living environment.



Vicki Barber

However, a child’s mental and emotional needs may not be as obvious. Good mental health allows children to think clearly, develop socially, learn new skills, build self-esteem and develop a positive mental outlook.

These are the basics for a child’s good mental health:

• Give children unconditional love. Children need to know that your love does not depend on their accomplishments.

• Nurture children’s confidence and self-esteem. Praise and encourage them. Set realistic goals for them. Be honest about your mistakes. Avoid sarcasm.

• Encourage children to play. Play time is as important to a child’s development as food. Play helps children be creative, develop problem-solving skills and self-control and learn how to get along with others.

• Enroll children in an after school activity, especially if they are otherwise home alone after school. This is a great way for kids to stay productive, learn something new, gain self-esteem and have something to look forward to during the week. Or check in on children after school if they are home alone. Children need to know that even if you’re not there physically, you’re thinking about them, and interested in how they spent their day and how they’ll spend the rest of it.

• Provide a safe and secure environment. Fear can be very real for a child. Try to find out what is frightening him or her. Be loving, patient and reassuring, not critical.

• Give appropriate guidance and discipline when necessary. Be firm, but kind and realistic with your expectations. The goal is not to control the child, but to help him or her learn self-control.

• Communicate. Make time each day after work and school to listen to your children and talk with them about what is happening in their lives. Share emotions and feelings with your children.

• Get help. If you're concerned about your child's mental health, consult with teachers, a guidance counselor or another adult who may have information about his or her behavior. If you think there is a problem, seek professional help. Early identification and treatment can help children with mental health problems reach their full potential.

Vicki Barber is superintendent of El Dorado County Office of Education.

Snippets about Lake Tahoe



• South Lake Tahoe Mayor Hal Cole's state of the city address has been moved to Oct. 18 at 6pm at Lake Tahoe Airport.

• Julia Mancuso left Chile for her home at Squaw Valley to shoot a profile piece last week for NBC that will air this winter during the Aspen Winternational World Cup.

• Sugar Pine Foundation is partnering with Heavenly for a

planting in the Van Sickle Bi-State Park on Oct. 1 from 9am-1pm. The foundation has a series of fall plantings.

• The search continues for Marie Hanson of South Lake Tahoe who went missing this summer while attending a festival in Washington.

• The seventh annual Passport to Dining is Oct. 6 from 6-9pm at the North Tahoe Event Center in Kings Beach. For more info, call (530) 546.9000.

Gunsch: Pay as you go is better than getting into debt

Publisher's note: ***Lake Tahoe News is profiling the six candidates who will be on the Nov. 8 ballot for the South Tahoe Public Utility District board. They are being published in the order they were submitted. Claude Gunsch is running for the seat vacated by Marylou Mosbacher.***

Name: Claude Gunsch

Age: 62

How long have you lived on the South Shore?: 38 years

What water company supplies your home? Your work?: STPUD supplies both.



Claude Gunsch

Job/profession?: Retired South Tahoe Public Utility District employee

What stands out to you in the 2011-12 budget?: In my opinion, the outstanding issues on the 2011-2012 budget are water meters and the ability to obtain grants should the district decide to purchase the Lukins water system.

What boards, commissions, or other experience, including volunteering, do you have?: I am a member of the volunteer fire department at Fallen Leaf Lake. I have taught youth soccer as well as served as an assistant for the high school ski team. I have participated in a short-term mission trip to Guatemala for Church Family Missions.

Is there any individual, group or organization you would not take campaign money from? Why?: Currently, nothing comes to mind. However, if a company or individual had a large project up for review, I would most likely decline.

What is the No. 1 reason someone should vote for you over another candidate?: I think the biggest asset I would bring to the board is my 34 years of experience as a water and sewer treatment employee. Additionally, I am honest and fair and would put the community's needs first, as well as try to keep rates down.

California law mandates water meters be installed. What is your solution to make the fee equitable for those on meters and those without one?: I believe it would be most equitable if all meters were installed concurrently. Unfortunately, we

don’t have the time or money to install them all at the same time. I don’t have a solution at this time, but will do my best to find creative ways to make it as fair and equitable as possible to all customers under the guidelines that are mandated by the state.

To get the remaining 60 percent of South Tahoe PUD customers on meters it will cost $15 million. As a board member, where will you get the money to pay for the meters?: I will work with district staff seeking grants and/or low interest loans. With the cost of borrowing so low at this time, acquiring a loan could negate the necessity to raise rates.

Do you believe the district should spend money on lobbying efforts in Sacramento and/or Washington, D.C.? Why or why not?: Yes, I believe the district should spend money on lobbying efforts. Changing legislation saves the district dollars that are not passed on to the ratepayers. We have saved $34 million through lobbying. To date, according to my study of the budget, the return of money to the district is millions more than the amount the district spends on lobbying.

What do you know about STPUD getting money from the Lake Tahoe Restoration Act?: I need to do more research on this subject.

How do you balance the economic situation of the community with the infrastructure needs of the district?: We need to move forward to continue the high standards of clean water and support for fire protection. We also need to protect the environment from sewer spills. Receiving grant money helps alleviate raising the rates for upcoming projects. I believe in the policy of ‘paying as you go’ rather than being in debt. The cost of taking out small loans may eliminate the need to pass the cost on to the customer.

With 38 percent of a customer’s sewer bill going to meet the needs of the Porter-Cologne Water Quality Act and $100 million already invested in Alpine County to take STPUD’s wastewater,

would you leave things as they are? If yes, why? If no, what would you change and how do expect to accomplish those changes?: Yes. Because it is a state law and we need a place to put treated water for irrigation, I would leave things as they are. If we no longer had a place for our irrigation water to be held, the district could be fined millions.

What should be done with the land STPUD owns where the old post office was on Black Bart?: It stands to reason that the district should evaluate all the property it has. If some property could be sold without jeopardizing operations, I would support that decision.

There has been a three-year wage freeze for employees. What are your thoughts on employee raises and benefits?: The district needs to keep an eye on the economy and see what happens over the coming years. I would like to see our current employees keep their jobs, rather than give raises and as a result have to lay off valuable employees. I believe there must be a balance in terms of what is the best interest of the customers and what is good for valuable employees.

When would you vote for a hike on water and sewer rates and why?: Obtaining a grant is one way to keep rate hikes to a minimum and through that money continue to protect the environment and meet water standards. The ideal situation is to work diligently on applying for grants which is basically free money to do a project. If we did not have grant money to pay for a proposed project, the benefit to the community would have to be very substantial before I would consider a rate hike of any kind.

Lukins Brothers Water District – any comments?: I don’t believe it would be ethically right for STPUD to pass the burden on to the rate payers to bring Lukins Water up to the level of standards that is mandated by us. Perhaps the answer is in diligently working to obtain a grant with which to purchase this company.

What should be the main priority of South Tahoe PUD?: South Tahoe PUD's main priority should be to maintain a reliable water system that provides clean drinking water and fire protection to the community, as well as waste water system that protects the environment at a cost efficient rate.

What should be the main priority of a South Tahoe PUD board member?: I believe the main priority of a South Tahoe PUD board member is to set policy and to be a liaison between the community and the employees while keeping costs at a minimal.

Tell readers something about yourself that most people don't know: I am a straight shooter. I am honest and fair. If I cannot answer a question, I will search to find the answer. I am not a politician. My desire is to give back to the community that has supported me and my family over the years. I have extensive knowledge about the utility district which could help save the district money.

Law gives state agency say in how invasive mussels are handled

By Central Valley Business Times

A new law is letting the California Department of Fish and Game to continue an aggressive strategy to combat the spread of quagga and zebra mussels in state waterways.

"If we didn't allow the DFG to continue with this aggressive control strategy, dreissenid mussels will colonize with alarming speed and cause major harm to our state waterways,"

says state Sen. Bob Huff, R-Diamond Bar, the author of the measure.

Dreissenid mussels attach to and rapidly colonize boat hulls, piers and water intake pipes. They reproduce quickly and in huge numbers. They have been found in the Colorado River system and in aqueducts, waterways and reservoirs in Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, San Diego, Imperial and San Benito Counties.

According to the U.S. Department of Fish and Wildlife, quagga mussels have the potential of collapsing entire food webs. The mussels are filter feeders that "remove food and nutrients from the water column very efficiently, leaving less or nothing for native aquatic species" and they "have no natural predators in North America."

Read the whole story

McAvoy Layne keeps spirit of Mark Twain alive

By Allen Pierleoni, Sacramento Bee

See that man over there, the one with curly, grayish-white hair? Is that Mark Twain of Hannibal, Mo., or McAvoy Layne of Incline Village? It's hard to tell them apart – and that's the point.

For 24 years, Layne has transformed himself into the famous humorist as the "Ghost of Mark Twain" to deliver more than 2,000 performances to fascinated audiences in venues worldwide.

Closer to home, he stars in the year-round “An Evening With Mark Twain for Adults” at the Mark Twain Cultural Center in Incline Village. The venue is a cross between a theater, a music hall and a living-history museum co-owned and curated by Layne and his wife, Rebecca (www. marktwainculturalcenter.org, www.ghostoftwain.org and www.spiritoftwain.org).

Layne’s popular “Mark Twain’s Tales of Tahoe” summer cruises take place aboard the two sternwheelers that ply Lake Tahoe — the Tahoe Queen and the M.S. Dixie II.

Layne played the ghost of Samuel Clemens in A&E’s Twain biography and in the Discovery Channel’s award-winning documentary “Adventures of Huckleberry Finn.”

Layne as Twain will have his say Thursday at The Big Read/Bee Book Club event, where he will remind us that the reports of his death “are greatly exaggerated.”

Read the whole story

Al Tahoe clean-up day

The Al Tahoe neighborhood in South Lake Tahoe is having a clean-up day on Oct. 15 from noon-3pm.

This clean-up day event is the result of feedback from a neighborhood service team meeting this summer. The clean-up event is focusing on collecting trash, not large scale items such as furniture.

Trash bags are being provided courtesy of the Caltrans Adopt-a-Highway program.

Participants should put out their filled trash bags in front

of their homes for regular trash collection.

The flyer has more information.

‘Pregnant in America’ to be shown in Meyers

“Pregnant in America” is having a showing at Bona Fide Books in Meyers Oct. 12 at 6pm.



This is the true story of Steve and Mandy Buonaugurio, a young, adventurous, expectant couple, who decide to take a daring and potentially dangerous approach to having their first child – outside the modern American medical system.

This is a movie about what “they learned” about birth as they travel across the United States and Europe interviewing experts and confronting birthing situations, exposes them to some the realities about America’s maternity care system and what is happening to women and babies. Ultimately, what they learn impacts on and alters the outcome of their own pregnancy.

Th showing is sponsored by Sierra Nevada Birth Network and Safe Haven Chiropractic. For more information, call (775) 790.1293 or (530) 577.5433.

K-9 units find drugs at STHS, 2 students suspended

Two South Tahoe High School students have been suspended and face criminal charges after School Resources Officer Aaron Crawford said marijuana and paraphernalia were found in their vehicles on campus.

K-9 units from the South Lake Tahoe Police Department were brought to STHS and South Tahoe Middle School on Sept. 26 to sniff around lockers and vehicles.

The school board in March approved the random periodic narcotic searches by the dogs.

Crawford, in a press release, said, the more students see police K-9s on campus, the less likely they are to bring drugs and drug paraphernalia to school.

The students, whose names are not being released based on their age, were cited for possession of marijuana on school property, lost their driving privileges on campus, were suspended and await a decision from the El Dorado County District Attorney's Office if charges will be pressed.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report