Hot tub draining not a simple topic in Tahoe

By Kathryn Reed

When hot tubs are purchased and installed in the Lake Tahoe Basin no one explains where the water is supposed to go when it comes time to draining them – at least not for residents.

For commercial hot tubs and pools, the rules are more defined.

“Commercial hot tubs and pools are connected to the sewer and they pay a fee for that,” Ross Johnson, manager of plant operations for South Tahoe Public Utility District, told *Lake Tahoe News*. “For residential hot tubs I tell them to do the thing I always do which is irrigate your yard with the hot tub water.”



Draining hot tubs can pose problems in the Lake Tahoe Basin. Photo/LTN

Draining hot tubs is getting attention lately because just this week property owners on Wildwood Avenue in South Lake Tahoe let the water from their spa go down an embankment. This presents erosion concerns because ultimately the dirt that wound up in the street is likely to reach Lake Tahoe. And it is sediment that is the No. 1 cause of declining lake clarity.

A neighbor notified the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency and other entities.

“It’s illegal to discharge chlorinated water into the city storm drains,” Jason Burke, stormwater program coordinator for South Lake Tahoe, told *Lake Tahoe News*.

In June, Lake Tahoe Vacation Resort notified Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board that its pool water was put down a storm drain.

While the resort admitted this, the city is contemplating what to do based on not having evidence of the infraction occurring. Burke said the city is working with TRPA on potential penalties for the hotel property.

Julie Regan with TRPA said their investigation is ongoing with the resort because the chlorinated water was also discharged into a stream environmental zone. This is never allowed.

Three people from the South Lake Tahoe hotel are no longer employed there because of this incident.

All the agencies agree commercial properties in the basin must tie their tubs and pools into a sewer line. These hot tubs are also a different grade than a residential one because they have stronger pumps and must have two drains.

TRPA in its best management practices handbook has a section addressing pools and hot tubs. The major concerns are if the chemicals in the water would harm animals or reach a water body, whether it’s a creek or Lake Tahoe.

“We are not enforcing how they empty personal hot tubs,” Regan told *Lake Tahoe News*. But doing so over grass or rocks so it does not create an erosion problem is highly encouraged.

A private hot tub can contain between 200 and 600 gallons of water.

Allen Miller with Lahontan said his agency doesn't have a problem with residential units draining tubs for irrigation purposes.

"To use it to irrigate seems like a pretty good option, especially in drought conditions," Burke said. "The only thing people should be careful is to not create erosion problems with all that water."

He recommends letting a chlorinated tub sit without replenishing chemicals for a week or using dechlorination tablets before draining.

South Tahoe PUD doesn't want private hot tub owners to start using the sewer system for multiple reasons. For one, it costs money to treat that water. Added costs to the district would eventually mean higher sewer bills.

Another concern is if people don't know what they are doing, the sewer line can get contaminated with dirt or sewage could flow the other way.

While residents are not draining their hot tubs all that often, vacation rentals in some jurisdictions are supposed to in between each new rental. Those are not considered commercial tubs even though it is a business operation taking place.

Calls to vacation rental and spa businesses were not returned.

None of the agencies is addressing whether the gray water violates the Porter Cologne Water Quality Control Act. That federal law is what mandates all the treated sewer water in the basin must be exported. People in the Lake Tahoe Basin aren't even supposed to collect water from a shower and use that for irrigation – even though that is a common drought busting tool.

Editorial: Time for feds to repeal pot ban

Publisher's note: ***This editorial is from the July 27, 2014, New York Times.***

It took 13 years for the United States to come to its senses and end Prohibition, 13 years in which people kept drinking, otherwise law-abiding citizens became criminals and crime syndicates arose and flourished. It has been more than 40 years since Congress passed the current ban on marijuana, inflicting great harm on society just to prohibit a substance far less dangerous than alcohol.

The federal government should repeal the ban on marijuana.

We reached that conclusion after a great deal of discussion among the members of the *Times's* editorial board, inspired by a rapidly growing movement among the states to reform marijuana laws.

There are no perfect answers to people's legitimate concerns about marijuana use. But neither are there such answers about tobacco or alcohol, and we believe that on every level — health effects, the impact on society and law-and-order issues — the balance falls squarely on the side of national legalization. That will put decisions on whether to allow recreational or medicinal production and use where it belongs — at the state level.

We considered whether it would be best for Washington to hold

back while the states continued experimenting with legalizing medicinal uses of marijuana, reducing penalties, or even simply legalizing all use. Nearly three-quarters of the states have done one of these.

Read the whole story

Placerville man admits cheating on tax returns

Thomas W. Stringfellow, 55, of Placerville pleaded guilty July 31 to two counts of willfully making false tax returns.

According to court documents, from 2006-10 Stringfellow underreported his business income on tax returns by more than $1.1 million, and underreported his personal income on tax returns by more than $1 million. Stringfellow owned New Horizon Painting. Rather than depositing all of the business checks into the appropriate accounts, he cashed some of the checks and did not report them income, according to U.S. Attorney Benjamin Wagner.

The underreporting led to a tax loss of more than $687,000, according to officials.

Stringfellow is scheduled to be sentenced Dec. 18. He faces a maximum of three years in prison and a $250,000 fine on each count.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

1 person seriously hurt at Angora Lakes

A person jumping off the rocks at Angora Lakes was seriously injured Thursday.

The severity of the injuries required the person be airlifted to Baron Memorial Hospital.
Lake Valley Fire Department, the lead agency on the July 31 rescue, did not know the gender, hometown or age of the victim.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

LTWC opening doors to public for one day



Two orphaned sparrow hawks are fed at Lake Tahoe Wildlife Care. Photo/LTWC

Lake Tahoe Wildlife Care's open house is Aug. 3 from 10am-4pm.

This is the one time of the year the public is permitted on the grounds where the wild birds and animals are rehabilitated before being released back to the wild.

Nine bear cubs and oodles of other animals are being cared for. Volunteers will be on hand to guide people through the grounds and describe the reasons the various wildlife are at LTWC, and the prognosis for their eventual release back to the wild.

LTWC is at 1485 Cherry Hills Circle, off Elks Club Drive in Meyers.

For more information, call 530.577.2273.

Study: Parents in denial about kids' obesity

By Cari Romm, Atlantic

There's a certain type of parental pride that grows from just the right combination of willful ignorance, unflagging optimism, and impressive mental gymnastics. Junior's latest report card was less than stellar? Well, yes—he's so smart that school just bores him. Little League game spent on the bench? The coach probably doesn't realize the talent he has on his hands.

But that usually harmless denial can also manifest itself in a more significant—and more damaging—way, according to a new study in the Journal of the American Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics. Specifically, the study lent more support to the

notion that parents of obese children often fail to see their kids' weight as unhealthy, even after a doctor's diagnosis.

Researchers from the University of California San Diego and Brown University surveyed parents of first-time patients at a pediatric obesity clinic, assessing the families' willingness to help their children lose weight. The patients, who ranged in age from 5 to 20, had all been classified as overweight or clinically obese, and most had been referred to the clinic for treatment by their regular pediatricians.

The majority of parents, 93.5 percent, correctly recognized that their children were, in fact, overweight or obese—but nearly 30 percent said they didn't see their children's weight as a problem, and roughly the same number rated their children's health as "very good" or "excellent."

Read the whole story

Nutting loses appeal to retain supervisor seat

Former El Dorado County Supervisor Ray Nutting lost his appeal July 31 to retain his seat.

He wanted the Third District Court of Appeal to vacate the June 6 decision of Superior Court Judge Timothy Buckley which said Nutting should be removed from office.

Nutting was convicted of six counts involving obtaining illegal loans from county employees and a county contractor.

A special election is set for September to fill Nutting's District 2 seat. His wife, Jennifer, is one of the candidates.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Snippets about Lake Tahoe



• The seasonal dog ban at the Upper Truckee Marsh ends Aug. 1.
• St. Anthony Greek Orthodox Church will be hosting its 27th annual Reno-Tahoe Greek Festival Aug. 22-24. For more info, go online.
• Kings Beach improvements are the topic of the Aug. 12 7:30am Tahoe Donner Chamber of Commerce breakfast meeting. For more info, call 530.587.2757.
• Drought conditions have increased the possibility of disease outbreaks in waterfowl, according to the California Department of Fish and Wildlife. Report any possible outbreaks to 916.358.2790.
• Nineteen-year-old blues phenom Matthew Curry has been added to Aug. 5 free Bluesdays concert at Squaw Valley. He will play from 5:30-6:30pm.

Waterfowl latest casualty of Calif. drought

By Matt Weiser, Sacramento Bee

Add another casualty to California's prolonged and punishing drought: Wildlife officials warned this week that dry conditions in the state's Central Valley could have a

devastating effect on North American waterfowl.

The Central Valley is recognized as the most important resting and wintering ground on the Pacific Flyway, a global migratory path for millions of ducks, geese and other birds. About 5 million waterfowl spend the winter on state and federal wildlife refuge areas and flooded rice fields in the Central Valley each winter.

This year, the worst drought in a generation means those Central Valley habitats have been dramatically reduced in size. Wildlife refuges have had their state and federal water supplies cut by 25 percent. Rice acreage has been reduced by a similar amount as farmers also have endured water cutbacks.

As a result, millions of migrating birds will be crowded into less habitat, significantly increasing the odds of botulism outbreaks, which spread rapidly and can kill thousands of birds in a matter of days. The problem is not limited to rural areas but can affect waterfowl drawn to urban water bodies as well. Officials also are concerned the drought could cause food shortages.

Read the whole story

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1 in custody, 2 at-large in Tahoe City burglary

By Kathryn Reed

A quick thinking Placer County sheriff’s deputy was able to recover jewelry stolen in a heist this morning in Tahoe City.

The deputy was driving when he heard a window smash about 6am

July 31. He saw a truck in an alley with three men looking at him. Two people fled on foot and the driver sped off.

The officer was able to pull the driver over near the River Ranch on Highway 89.

Michael Potter, 20, of Sacramento was arrested on charges of commercial burglary, possession of stolen property, conspiracy to commit a felony and possession of a stolen vehicle.

Detective Sgt. Dave Hunt said all of the jewelry taken from Bluestone Jewelry was recovered from the vehicle.

“They were in the store less than a minute,” Hunt told *Lake Tahoe News*. And in that time they were able to grab “a large amount” of jewelry, he added. He said they smashed a window to gain access.

A helicopter and large law enforcement presence have been scouring the area looking for the two male subjects who got away. They were wearing all black.

The vehicle used in the heist had recently been stolen in Tahoe City.

Different suspects who were eventually caught had burglarized Bluestone in the last year.

A similar caper happened in South Lake Tahoe in April, where a stolen vehicle was used in a jewelry store heist. No one has ever been arrested in the Simpson’s Jewelry smash and grab.