91 pounds of pot, 658 plants found in South Tahoe

By Kathryn Reed

Between two storage sheds, a house and a vehicle in South Lake Tahoe 91 pounds of pot and 658 marijuana plants were confiscated.

The bust started when a California Highway Patrol officer pulled John Morrissey, 29, of South Lake Tahoe over for reportedly going 50mph on Highway 50. He was arrested on charges of transporting 6.5 pounds of processed marijuana.

This led to a search warrant being executed May 19 by South Lake El Dorado Narcotics Enforcement Team officers at two storage units at 2140 Emerald Bay Road and Morrissey's residence at 1842 Guadalupe St.

"He had packages for sale ready to, other parts were drying and other parts were on racks," explained Jeff Catchings, SLEDNET commander.

Catchings said the storage sheds were big enough to pull a tractor-trailer into.

At the suspect's house officers said they found 30 grams of psilocybin mushrooms and two gummy bears injected with LSD. They also confiscated a butane honey oil extraction lab that is used to extract pure THC from the plant.

"It's on the same scale as operating a meth lab," Catchings said.

The street value of the marijuana is about $230,000. It sells for between $2,000 and $3,000 a pound.

An arrest warrant has been issued for Morrissey's partner,

Jonah Shanks of South Lake Tahoe, for cultivation and conspiracy to distribute.

Catchings said Morrissey told officers he was selling to one of the collectives in town. That particular collective denied buying from Morrissey. Morrissey does not possess a medical marijuana card.

Sammy Hagar at Harveys

Sammy Hagar & The Wabos close out the Harveys Summer Concert series Sept. 10 at 7pm.

Tickets are $59.50 in advance, $65 day of show.

Soundgarden at Harveys Lake Tahoe

Soundgarden will play at Harveys Outdoor Concert Series on July 20 at 7pm in Stateline.

Tickets are $59.50.

The Mars Volta will open.

Closing state parks may pose more problems

By Paul Rogers, San Jose Mercury News

A week after Gov. Jerry Brown announced that California will close up to 70 state parks to save money, parks officials are facing dozens of practical questions that could complicate – if not scuttle – the plan altogether.

The obstacles to shutting down parks range from state coastal laws that hamper efforts to close beaches to deciding whether to cite trespassers. Without a clear solution, state Parks Director Ruth Coleman also is considering a plan to simply leave the gates on closed parks open to the public.

“We are working through this process on a trial-and-error basis,” she said. “We know there are liability issues. Our overarching goal is to preserve these resources. That’s our fundamental mission. If we can do that in a way that preserves public access, we will.”

Among the emerging problems:

- Beach access laws. Eleven state beaches are marked for closure, including Twin Lakes State Beach in Santa Cruz, Gray Whale Cove in San Mateo County and Garrapata State Park in Big Sur. But under the 1976 Coastal Act, the public cannot be legally blocked from walking along the state’s shoreline.

Any attempt to close off access will require a permit from the California Coastal Commission, said Peter Douglas, executive director of the California Coastal Commission. That could mean months of public hearings, reports and potential lawsuits.

“If people are ticketed for walking across the state beaches, then we are going to be involved,” Douglas said.

- Trespassers. Last year, 5.6 million people visited the 70 parks on the closure list. Some of them, particularly hikers and mountain bikers, will simply walk around closed gates. State parks rangers could write trespassing tickets with fines of up to $400 each. But that requires leaving rangers at parks, which could undercut the $22 million in annual savings Brown hopes to achieve with the closures.
- Liability. In March, Brown signed a bill, AB 95, that absolves the state from liability if a person in a closed park is injured or causes damage. The new law has not been tested in court, however.
- Politics. What if dozens of surfers, mountain bikers or Sierra Club members start showing up at closed beaches en masse? “I’m planning on continuing to go hiking in these parks anyway,” said Tom Taber, of San Mateo, author of “The Santa Cruz Mountains Trail Book.” “Maybe I just won’t carry any ID, and I’ll tell them my name is John Q. Public. What are they going to do, haul me in from miles away on some trail?”

Read the whole story

Exhibit highlights women’s journey across Overland Trail

By Susan Skorupa, Reno Gazette-Journal

Voices of the women who traveled across the continent in the 1800s come alive in a program Thursday at the Nevada State Museum in Carson City.

Historian Doris Dwyer will present “Women’s Voices from the Overland Trail,” blending stories from diaries and journals of women who traveled west on the pioneer trails during the mid-19th century.

The program is part of Archaeological Awareness & History Preservation Month.

Much of the program “is based on stories I’ve gotten from women’s journals, diaries, reminiscences, mostly from the Overland Trail, but not exclusively,” said Dwyer, who has taught history at Western Nevada College since 1980. The talk is mostly from “the 1840s, ’50s and ’60s, the high points of emigration.”

There’s enough literature from that time to explore how women recorded their journeys differently than men, she said.

Read the whole story

What events would you like to see in Lake Tahoe?

Tour de Nez

The 19th annual Tour de Nez cycling is July 31 in Reno.

STPUD locks in rates for people with water meters

By Kathryn Reed

Although the South Tahoe Public Utility District board was offered more options in how to bill metered water customers, the board on Tuesday voted unanimously to stick with the original proposal.



This means residential customers with meters will see 55 percent of their bill a fixed rate and 45 percent based on consumption at a rate of $2.05 per 100 cubic feet.

While the topic brought out the masses May 5, only two people attended the May 24 morning meeting.

However, at a different meeting that same day resident Jim Long brought up the inequity of the rate structure with state Sen. Ted Gaines, R-Roseville. Gaines was in town talking to constituents at the Riva Grill in South Lake Tahoe.

Gaines said his staff will follow-up on the question to see if there is a better way for the state to be dealing with metered customers in tourist areas where consumption averages fluctuate because of the number of second homeowners.

It’s the people with large lawns who will see the most difference in their rates. Long said he is one of those people.

Dennis Cocking, spokesman for South Tahoe PUD, said staff will

be looking at ways to help people who end up with exorbitant bills, but he stressed they will also have to come up with a new landscaping design.

It's the state of California that is mandating meters be put in. The idea is this will lower consumption. But no money was put in the bill for the installation of meters. Nor does the state allow water districts to wait to bill customers based on consumption until all meters are in by 2020. This is why STPUD customers now have different rates instead of everyone continuing on with the flat rate.

California water districts with less than 3,000 customers do not have to install meters. This means on the South Shore that Lukins, Lakeside and Tahoe Keys water customers under the current law will not have meters installed.

Nevada water customers have meters because the state said do it or lose funding.

Excitement surrounds arrival of LTCC's next president

By Kathryn Reed

Kindred Murillo is able to identify with college students in ways many presidents aren't able to. That is as a recent student herself.

Murillo, whose contract as the next president of Lake Tahoe Community College was ratified Tuesday night, went through graduation ceremonies last weekend at Pepperdine University. She had earned her doctorate in December.



Incoming LTCC President Kindred Murillo, left, speaks May 24 with board member Roberta Mason. Photo/Kathryn Reed

After the board unanimously approved the three-year contract that takes effect July 1, applause filled the boardroom. This was much the same reaction that greeted the board's decision earlier this month to hire Murillo.

Murillo, 56, attended the May 24 meeting. The first weekend of June she will be in the area with her husband looking for a place to live. And she plans to be here full time starting June 24.

"I want to help bring people together. That is what I do well," Murillo told *Lake Tahoe News* after the meeting. "And I want to be part of the community."

She is moving to Tahoe from Pleasant Hill. She is currently vice chancellor for the Contra Costa Community College District based in Martinez.

Murillo has had her eye on LTCC for a while. She almost applied for the president position when Guy Lease left three years ago. She knows Lease and has heard good things about

LTCC.

“It has a good reputation for being a good college, student focused, good faculty and a good community,” Murillo said.

As someone who went through the community college system at a time when she was a young mother – her son is 40 – Murillo has high praise for what these two-year institutions can provide students.

“I’m one of those people it helped,” she said of community colleges.

She is familiar with Tahoe, being an avid skier. She has a scar from ACL surgery to prove she’s been on the slopes.

One of the things that caught the board’s attention is that she wants to stay in Tahoe for a while and not use this position merely as a steppingstone.

Her current office is in a high rise and does not afford her much interaction with students. That will change at LTCC because the president’s office is in the main building of campus and requires walking through the commons area to get to it.

Faculty and staff are practically giddy about Murillo’s arrival. She received several hugs Tuesday night.

One person called her “genuine,” adding that during Murillo’s public forum she talked about wanting to be part of the fabric of the college.

Murillo’s contract is for $165,000 a year, includes the normal health and pension benefits, calls for $625/month for in district travel expenses, and $10,000 moving expenses.

This compares to Paul Killpatrick, the third president of the college and the one who did not fulfill his three-year contract, who started at $190,000 a year. He received the same

other perks, plus a $1,000/month housing allowance. For the past year Steve Maradian has been the interim president. He leaves in a month.

Throughout Tuesday's meeting Murillo was taking notes – evening noting the June 4 softball game between students and staff/faculty.

Murillo says she wants to make sure LTCC is a focal point of the community.

"A small college in a small community is important to the economic development," Murillo said.

North Lake Tahoe defensible space evaluations beginning

The North Lake Tahoe Fire Protection District is gearing up for defensible space evaluations, tree marking and chipping services for the 2011 season.

These programs will start as soon as the snow melts and bare ground is completely visible on your property. What this means is that people living in the lower elevations will be able to take advantage of these services before folks living in the higher elevations. It is mandatory that the checklist items on the Defensible Space Checklist are completed prior to obtaining a tree removal permit.

Defensible space evaluations will be begin, weather permitting, the first week of June. Chipping services will also begin the first week of June, also weather permitting. The fire district will notify folks that have requested

chipping services prior to visiting their homes.

To request a defensible space evaluation or chipping service, call (775) 831.0351, ext. 8118 and leave your name, phone number, address and service requested.