Minnesota joins growing number of states tackling invasive species

By Dennis Anderson, Star Tribune

Department of Natural Resources conservation officer Lisa Kruse has extracted an angry raccoon from a suburban hot tub and thwarted the picture-window rampages of a kamikaze-style ruffed grouse — two unusual types of "invasive species."

Now she and the DNR's 136 other conservation officers will focus their considerable enforcement powers on far more threatening critters — zebra mussels, Asian carp, round gobies and spiny water fleas, as well as Eurasian watermilfoil and other invasive aquatic plants.

Armed with tougher invasive-species laws expected to pass the Legislature this session, more costly penalties for violators and support from Gov. Mark Dayton and thousands of concerned anglers and lake-property owners, the DNR this summer will be on heightened alert for anyone toting destructive aquatic hitchhikers on their boats or trailers as they travel from lake to lake.

"Written citations will be the norm this summer for invasive-species violations, rather than the exception, as they were last year," said DNR conservation officer Lt. Jason Jensen.

A bill passed by the Senate this session calls for a $500 fine for boaters who launch boats with zebra mussels attached to them into state waters. The penalty would double for a second violation.

High stakes warrant the high fines, officials say. At risk in the fight against invasive species are the state's fabled

10,000 lakes and its nearly $3 billion sport fishing industry. Already, zebra mussels have infested Minnetonka and Mille Lacs, two of Minnesota's most popular fishing lakes.

The intensified invasive-species enforcement effort this summer will kick off what might become the most prolonged natural-resources protection undertaking in Minnesota history, as the DNR tries to accomplish what no other state has: stopping the spread of zebra mussels and other evil aquatic critters and plants.

But it might be too little, too late. Already, zebra mussels infest at least 20 Minnesota lakes, along with the St. Croix, Mississippi and Zumbro rivers, among other state waters. Round gobies are in the Duluth harbor. Spiny water fleas inhabit various northern Minnesota waterways, and a bighead carp – one of four species of highly destructive Asian carp – was caught this spring in the St. Croix River by a commercial fisherman.

Read the whole story

El Dorado County drops charges against man allegedly transporting pot

By Greg Welter, Oroville Mercury-Register

Charges have been dropped in El Dorado County against a Chico man arrested with a large amount of marijuana in his car, but he now faces prosecution in Butte County, where it was allegedly grown.

Robert Daniels, 62, was arrested in October 2010 after

California Highway Patrol officers reportedly found 103 pounds of processed pot in his vehicle during a traffic stop near Tahoma. Officials said he was on his way to deliver it to a pot cooperative in South Lake Tahoe.

An investigation led to the discovery of an additional 295 pounds of marijuana and 62 plants at Daniels' Chico residence during a search warrant served by El Dorado County officials.

Prosecutors in El Dorado asked a judge to drop charges against Daniels so he could face allegations in Butte County of cultivating marijuana and possessing it for sales.

An investigation revealed Daniels was allegedly among five other people operating a pot grow in the Richardson Springs area, east of Chico.

Read the whole story

Slightly Stoopid at Harveys

Slightly Stoopid plays at the Harveys Outdoor Concert Series in Stateline on July 27 at 6:30pm.

Opening is Rebelution + Shwayze.

Tickets are $37.50 through Ticketmaster.

Steve Miller Band

Steve Miller Band will play at Harveys Outdoor Concert series on July 30 at 7pm.

Tickets range from $39.50 to $125. The are available through Ticketmaster.

Dave Mason is opening.

Alta Alpina Challenge: Riding the Wild Sierra

There is a new ride coming to town on June 11 that challenges kids and families alike. It will be quite different than the other big rides for hardcore cyclists in the area.

As part of this year's "Alta Alpina Challenge: Riding the Wild Sierra" cycling event, the Alta Alpina Cycling Club is organizing a fun, non-competitive ride for people of all ages. Designed to accommodate cyclists of all abilities, the course will allow riders to experience the scenic beauty of the Sierra foothills along the popular road riding area of Diamond Valley. Options for the ride range from 15 to 20 miles.

For more information, go to the website or call 877.845.2453.

The Alta Alpina Challenge: Riding the Wild Sierra is a cycling event which encompasses five distinct rides: The Family Fun Ride is a ride aimed at local individuals and families along with the companions of cyclists participating in one of the other rides. There is also a metric century, century, five

pass challenge and “The World’s Toughest Double Century”, the eight-pass challenge.

Highway-road closures in Tahoe-Truckee for bike race

Law enforcement will be closing Highway 50 through South Lake Tahoe and Highway 89 north of the South Shore for part of May 15 for the Amgen Tour de California bike race.

These roads will be closed to all vehicular traffic from 10:10am to approximately 10:45am; and from approximately 12:45pm to 1:15pm. The timing for the second closure may vary greatly depending on the speed of the race and how spread apart the riders get for their second lap through the South Shore.

Click on road closure times for more specific South Lake Tahoe information.

For people riding a BlueGo bus on Sunday, don’t expect to be on time. Routes 50 and 53 will not be in service on Highway 50 from 10:15-11:15am and from 1:15-2:15pm. This is because all lanes of traffic must be clear for the cyclists.

On May 16, when the second stage leaves from Squaw Valley, it will be Truckee with the roads being shutdown.

Road closures will be of a short duration as the cyclists pass major intersections and should start about 9:50am on Highway 89 and West River Street, at about 10am on Highway 89 and and Donner Pass Road, progressing westbound on Donner Pass Road to the Donner Lake area and finally exiting the town limits by

10:30am. Motorists can expect delays of up to 20 minutes at each of the major intersections.

The cyclists will be accompanied by CHP officers on motorcycles.

Fortier changes financial forms after questioned by League

By Kathryn Reed

Claire Fortier received nearly $10,000 from the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency last year. Now she is on the Governing Board of the bi-state regulatory agency and the League to Save to Lake Tahoe is going through TRPA documents to find out what all Fortier has done for TRPA.

Since the League brought the information to light, Fortier has since amended her financial disclosure forms.



Claire Fortier

"I'm not sure I did need to change it. That's the big if. For the year before you are on the TRPA board you have to disclose what you made," Fortier told *Lake Tahoe News*. "I amended my

statement even though (the payment) was outside of a year."

Fortier did the work for TRPA on behalf of her Reno-based company Laren Communications. The last check she received was in February 2010. A year later she was on the Governing Board, after being appointed to it by her colleagues on the South Lake Tahoe City Council, to which she was elected in November 2010.

"It's not that she did anything wrong, but the fact she revised her disclosure statement (is something) the public should know," Rochelle Nason, executive director of the League, told *LTN*.

Fortier also worked on a brochure for TRPA a few years ago regarding Pathways 2007.

"I absolutely believe they are going after me because I am calling them on having an unbendable stance that is stymieing our ability to fix ourselves, to fix Lake Tahoe," Fortier said of the League.

Jeff Cowen, spokesman for TRPA, said the $9,681 worth of work Fortier did was research of the agency's history so a presentation for that 40th anniversary could be put together. He said staff did not have time to do it.

"Claire Fortier did not have a contract with TRPA. Our purchase procedures call for a formal bid and contract when the expense is above $25,000 and this project's total cost was under $10,000. The project Claire Fortier/Laren Inc. worked on for TRPA began with a scope of work which evolved over the course of the project," Cowen said. "The project necessitated more of Claire's time to complete the State of the Basin slideshow and report to the Governing Board, vs. the 24-page report and website we had initially scoped."

She was paid an hourly rate.

“The League is glad Claire has stepped up and done the right thing in disclosing her financial dealings with the TRPA. We are encouraging her to be proactive about contacting the Fair Political Practices Commission and making sure she has made all the disclosures required by state law as well,” Nason said. “We are still concerned with the question why TRPA would spend almost $10,000 for historical research on its 40th anniversary. All that information has been assembled repeatedly in the past, in connection with the 30th, 25th, 20th, and 10th anniversaries of the agency. We will be seeking information about the contract, payments, and work product and expect to offer some suggestions about how the agency might operate more efficiently.”

Here are the forms involving Fortier:

• Jan. 11, 2011, 700 form

• Jan. 11, 2011, TRPA form

• April 27, 2011, TRPA form.

And here is the end result of her work – the TRPA slide show.

The Block’s ex-owner still owes Tahoe cash as he starts airline

By Tim O’Reiley, Las Vegas Review-Journal

Even as he promotes his vision for a high-flying airline called LV Air, Eneliko Smith continues to be dogged on the ground by what he terms “my stupid-ass mistakes in the past.”

When he first announced the plan in February, Smith laid out a vision for luxury air service flying four daily round trips between Sin City and New York starting in 2011.



The Block in South Lake Tahoe has been fenced off for years.
Photo/LTN

“Soon you will be able to fly LV Air to Las Vegas,” the LV Air website promises. “Experience the luxury, the service, and the brands that illustrate the world of Las Vegas when you board your aircraft – everything afterwards is fantasy.”

The *Associated Press, Bloomberg Television, CNN Trave*l and *Huffington Post* have featured stories about Smith and his audacious airline, which touts plush seats that fold out as beds, complimentary Ipads, limo service and meals fit for “sheiks and moguls.”

In mid-April, Smith upped the ante by announcing that 16 destinations were now under consideration.

But in El Dorado County, officials are still waiting for Smith to pay restitution for a previous failed venture, the Block Hotel in South Lake Tahoe, where he was the managing partner.

After months of not paying room taxes collected at the boutique hotel that catered to hard-partying snowboarders, Smith was arrested in September 2008 in Las Vegas and

extradited to California.

“I paid my employees instead of my bed taxes, and I paid the price for it,” Smith wrote in an email. “I never took one penny out of malfeasance and never will.”

A year ago, Smith pleaded no contest to a felony count of grand theft by embezzlement. As part of the plea deal, the felony is to be dropped to a misdemeanor if he pays more than $120,000 in back taxes, said El Dorado County Assistant District Attorney Hans Uthe.

But Smith has paid nothing, Uthe said.

“We are less than pleased with his progress. He’s in trouble.”

Read the whole story

Diabetes research part of Tour de California race

In a first step to fill a major void in diabetes sports research, global sports organization Team Type 1, the official parent company of the Team Type 1-sanofi aventis professional men’s cycling team, will launch a clinical study at the Amgen Tour de California.

The pioneering study conducted by the TT1 Diabetes Sports Research Institute, will assess blood glucose levels of elite cyclists – with and without diabetes – with a goal of identifying optimal levels for peak athletic performance. The study will be led by Institute Medical Director Juan P. Frias. Frias is affiliated with the UC San Diego Department of Medicine, and is the former chief medical officer of Johnson &

Johnson, Diabetes Care.

“While there have been several athletes with type 1 diabetes who have competed and succeeded at the professional and Olympic levels, there is very little published clinical data related to optimization of athletic performance in persons with type 1 diabetes,” Frias said in a statement. “We strongly believe our efforts will play an important role in expanding research in this field and in helping other athletes with diabetes manage their glucose to perform safely and optimally.”

Throughout the eight stages of the ride, which includes grueling climbs and hundreds of miles of racing from Lake Tahoe to Thousand Oaks, Team Type 1-sanofi-aventis athletes who have volunteered to take part in the study will wear continuous glucose monitors, while meters on their bikes measure parameters such as speed, power and energy expenditure.

The study will continue at other cycling events throughout the racing season including the USA Pro Cycling Challenge in Colorado from Aug. 22-28. Additionally, a controlled laboratory component is planned in collaboration with the San Diego State University School of Exercise and Nutritional Sciences.

Tour de California gains prestige in cycling circles

By John Schumacher, Sacramento Bee

The world’s best cycling races drip with tradition. The Tour

de France started in 1903, the Giro d’Italia in 1909 and the Vuelta a España in 1935.



Any discussion of the sport’s standout events begins with those three grand tours, each lasting three weeks and testing the skills and stamina of the world’s top riders.

But the Amgen Tour of California, set to begin its sixth year Sunday with an opening stage at Lake Tahoe, has quickly thrust its way into the conversation.

The eight-day stage race, which is scheduled to reach Sacramento with a Stage 2 finish Monday at the state Capitol, is widely considered the top cycling event in the United States.

It doesn’t have the grand tours’ history or the prestige of the World Championships or Olympic Games, but the Tour of California is highly regarded by many in the cycling world.

A 2010 Cyclingnews Reader Poll ranked the Tour of California the third-best stage race in the world, trailing only the Tour de France and the Giro d’Italia.

Riders also give the event high marks.

Read the whole story