# Invasive weed spreads from Tahoe to Truckee River to Pyramid Lake

**By Jeff Delong, Reno Gazette-Journal**

A troublesome water weed that has spread through Lake Tahoe for decades is now established along the length of the Truckee River, posing possible problems of unknown scope and scale.

From the outlet of the Tahoe City Dam to where the river flows into Pyramid Lake 116 miles downstream in the desert, anywhere the river's waters flow slowly enough Eurasian watermilfoil can be found, experts said.

"It goes all the way to the end of the river," said John Mosely, environmental director of the Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribe. "In every irrigation diversion, in every backwater, we can find it.

"It's a huge concern," Mosely said.

An exotic and aggressive invader, Eurasian watermilfoil is trouble. The weed crowds out native plants and takes away oxygen needed by fish. It can ruin boating and clog irrigation ditches, water intakes and pipes.

No one knows for sure when it first showed up in Lake Tahoe.

A good guess is that watermilfoil appeared in South Lake Tahoe's Tahoe Keys Marina – a place now thoroughly infested – sometime in the mid- to-late-1980s, said Lars Anderson, a scientist with the U.S. Department of Agriculture who has tracked the weed's spread since 1994.

Spread by boats or as weed fragments carried by currents took root on the lake bottom, Eurasian watermilfoil can now be

found in most of Tahoe’s marinas and some other near-shore areas.

Established near the Tahoe City Dam, the weed may have escaped into an overflowing Truckee River during the flood of January 1997.

It was found growing in a quiet part of the river near Verdi a few years later and is now firmly established in the lower river near Pyramid Lake.

The weed has not yet posed any serious problems for the Truckee Meadows Water Authority, which draws the bulk of its drinking water supplies from the river.

The utility’s hydroelectric plants are located in parts of the river that flow too fast for the weed to grow.

Recent multimillion-dollar upgrades to the Highland Canal, which serves the area’s primary drinking water treatment plant, substantially increased water velocity and diminished any threat, said Bill Hauck, water supply coordinator for the authority.A troublesome water weed that has spread through Lake Tahoe for decades is now established along the length of the Truckee River, posing possible problems of unknown scope and scale.

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# Burglary suspect forces Sierra House to be on lockdown

Students and staff at Sierra House Elementary School had some unexpected excitement this last week of school.

The school was on lockdown Wednesday afternoon when a nearby resident saw an uninvited visitor in her home.

“We set up a perimeter around the house to contain the suspect, and called the school to have them lockdown until we could arrest the suspect,” El Dorado County sheriff’s Lt. Pete Van Arnum said.

A resident of Musgrave Court, which is a couple blocks from the South Lake Tahoe school that is on Marshall Trail, saw a man in her house going through drawers. She called deputies from a neighbor’s house.

Arrested at the scene on suspicion of burglary was 39-year-old Brett Bartee.

*— Lake Tahoe News staff report*

# Colleges court California students

**By Stephen Ceasar, Los Angeles Times**

Their pitches were simple and tailored to the audience.

Come to my college, the out-of-state recruiters recently told high school students in Lakewood, and you will be taught in small classes and you'll graduate in four years. We'll even throw in a few thousand dollars just for being from California. And at one school, you won't even be far from an In-N-Out Burger.

Their attempt at wooing California high schoolers was a not-so-subtle move in a state whose public universities have been hit with severe budget cuts — $1.6 billion in 10 years — leading to tuition hikes, enrollment caps and fewer courses.

Meanwhile, nearby out-of-state colleges have reaped the benefits.

Neighboring states have seen an influx of California students enrolling in their universities, and colleges have significantly bolstered their recruiting efforts in the state. By enrolling Californians, not only do these schools receive non-resident tuition, they increase the diversity of their campuses as well.

Some schools have doubled the number of Californians in their freshman classes. Washington State University enrolled 132 freshmen from California in 2011, twice as many as the year before. The University of Arizona and Arizona State University each have boasted freshman classes with more than 1,000 Californians in recent years.

# 3 fundraisers at Vikingsholm raise money for historic castle

The Sierra State Parks Foundation and California State Parks announces three rare opportunities to drive to the Vikingsholm Castle in Emerald Bay for an enchanted evening on June 21, July 19 and Aug. 15.

Tickets are $50 per person with proceeds earmarked to provide critically needed funds for the maintenance and repair of the Vikingsholm. Seating is limited to 30 guests and advanced reservations are required by calling (530) 583.9911.

Guests will meet at the visitor center at D.L. Bliss State Park at 4:45pm and then be escorted to Vikingsholm, via carpool, for the two-hour event.

“Conversations with History” will feature a behind-the-scenes tour of the incomparable Vikingsholm. Guests will be treated to viewing areas of the house that are not on the public daily tours. Following the tour, guests will meet in the courtyard where wine and hors d’oeuvres will be served.

Helen Smith will host an informal conversation about her experiences spending 14 summers at Vikingsholm as the guest of Lora Knight, the original owner of Vikingsholm. Smith will present a signed copy of her book, “Vikingsholm”, to every guest to top off the experience.

# Villalobos sues casinos for return of debt payments to add to bankruptcy estate

**By Dale Kasler, Sacramento Bee**

Alfred Villalobos, the central figure in the California Public Employees' Retirement System bribery investigation, has won and lost millions gambling in Nevada's casinos.

Now he's suing two of his favorite haunts for $600,000, demanding his money back.

The lawsuits, filed last week in U.S. Bankruptcy Court, are an outgrowth of the Lake Tahoe businessman's 2-year-old bankruptcy case.

Villalobos is trying to retrieve money he paid to the two casinos to settle gambling debts in April 2010, about two months before he filed for Chapter 11 protection.

Villalobos wants the Eldorado Hotel Casino in Reno to return $500,000. He wants $100,000 back from the MontBleu Resort Casino & Spa at Lake Tahoe.

If Villalobos wins, he doesn't keep the money. The funds would be distributed among his various unsecured creditors.

So why is he bothering to sue? Because he has little choice. A debtor has a legal obligation to make sure creditors are paid as much as possible – and everyone is treated fairly.

**Read the whole story**

# Future of California state parks remains uncertain

**By Matt Weiser, Sacramento Bee**

Dozens of California state parks struck down by the budget ax are slated to close their doors in three weeks. Yet that process remains so unsettled that even state officials can't say with certainty how many parks will actually close.

One year ago, the state Department of Parks and Recreation released a list of 70 parks that would be closed to achieve a $22 million savings in operational costs. The closures – unprecedented in the 150-year history of California state parks – are set to occur no later than July 1.

The uncertainty is a silver lining for park lovers. It means far fewer than the original 70 parks will close, because many local groups have raised money and rallied volunteers to rescue a state park in their community.

"If there's anything positive out of all this, it's that it's connecting local communities back with their parks, making people pay attention to them, and realizing they don't just take care of themselves," said John Woodbury, general manager of the Napa County Regional Park and Open Space District.

Woodbury's organization, in partnership with the nonprofit Napa Valley State Parks Association, signed an agreement with the state to operate two parks: Bothe-Napa Valley State Park and Bale Grist Mill State Historic Park.

The groups have an ambitious plan to turn the neighboring parks into a break-even operation after decades as a money loser for the state. Among other changes, they plan to return the campground to year-round operation, install 13 yurts as pricier overnight accommodations, and turn historic buildings

into rentals.

Dozens of partnerships across the state are still in the works at this late date, partly because the state has never before handed over an entire park to a nonprofit group. It took months to resolve the legal issues and prepare contracts. And every such agreement is different, so a uniform approach was impossible.

Roy Stearns, a state parks department spokesman, said last week his agency's best estimate is that 22 parks have operating agreements signed with new partners that will keep them open. Such agreements are pending at 14 other parks.

So the worst case at the moment is that 48 parks would close, not 70. The number may drop to 34 – and possibly lower.

The state also is mulling concession contracts with private companies to operate other parks on the closure list. These numbers are even less certain because the most recent closing date for bids was just five days ago.

"We do not have a listing of what parks will close, as we are still in the process of seeking partners," Stearns said via email. "We shall not be putting a park on the closed list if there appears to be a deal in the works that is possible soon."

**Read the whole story**

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# Matthew Christenson –

# 1981-2012

A memorial service for Matthew Christenson, 30, who was killed in a construction accident on June 7, 2012, in Bolton, Vt., are June 13 at Grace Congregational Church of Rutland.

He was born in Fairfield, Conn., on July 5, 1981; Matt graduated from Rutland High School and earned a bachelor's degree from the University of Vermont.

A lover of all aspects of the outdoors, Matt was a lifelong skier and started his accomplished racing career at Pico Mountain. He went on to coach for several years, most recently with the well-esteemed program at Squaw Valley, where he lived after college.

In addition, Matt was also an avid sailor and competed in several prestigious regattas up and down the eastern seaboard. When not skiing or sailing, Matt ran his own tree service, land clearing and construction business.

Matt is survived by his father, Brian Christenson of Burlington: mother Deborah (Kurtz) Weaver and her husband Howard Weaver of Shrewsbury; brother William Christenson and his wife Jean of New York City; brother Peter Christenson of Killington; and maternal grandmother, Virginia Kurtz of Woodstock.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made in honor of Matthew Christenson to the Pico Ski Education Foundation.

*– Vermont Standard*

# Synchronized skating event at South Tahoe rink

More than 300 ice skaters from Northern California and Nevada will be competing at the annual Skate at the Lake Competition this weekend.

The synchronized skating event is at the South Lake Tahoe ice arena on Rufus Allen Boulevard.

Teams of 10 to 20 skaters perform intricate routines to music. Spectators are encouraged to watch. It’s free.

The June 16-17 event begins at 4:55pm and will last until about 7:15pm.

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# LTUSD not in agreement regarding equality of ball fields

**By Kathryn Reed**

Lake Tahoe Unified School District is going to come up with a list of priorities for the ball fields it owns to give the committee recommending how to spend $500,000 of taxpayer money.

The district owns all the fields where children and adults play softball-baseball-soccer on the California side of the South Shore except for the one by Lake Tahoe Community College. The city of South Lake Tahoe, though, owns some of

the improvements.

At issue Tuesday night at the school board meeting was whether the softball field still under construction at South Tahoe High is of equal caliber to what the boys play baseball on.

Board member Sue Novasel emphatically and repeatedly said they are not equal.

“It should be equal, which would be a fence and lighting,” Novasel told her fellow board members June 12.

Even with the 4-0 approval (Judy Cefalu was absent) to allocate $160,557 from the special reserve fund to pay for improvements, that doesn’t buy a fence or lights for the softball field.

Facilities Director Steve Morales is of the belief that what has been done and the worked slated to be done will comply with the Office of Civil Rights complaint filed in 2010 against the school district.

“It’s not a regulation size softball field and is a regulation baseball field,” Novasel countered.

The Title IX issue was not resolved at the meeting.

Morales and Novasel will make a list of what the district would like improved, with the high school softball field likely to be at the top.

The fields committee of the Measure R joint powers agreement will meet June 25 at 4pm at Lake Tahoe Airport. This group is running out of time to have a plan of action together before the JPA board meets July 27 to hear proposals and possibly vote on how to spend the half million dollars for field upgrades.

# Sharing the road key to safe travels

During the busy warm months of spring and summer, auto and bicycle traffic fills our roadways. During this time, we at the fire department respond to an increasing number of injury accidents that could have been prevented.

Roadway users must remember that sightseeing and map reading should only be done while your vehicle or bike is stopped and well off the roadway.

Motorists, bicyclists, and pedestrians all must be aware of each other in order to share the roadways in a safe manner.

*– Sallie Ross-Filgo, South Lake Tahoe Fire Department*