

Law bars fines for dead lawns during drought

By Melanie Mason, Los Angeles Times

Cities and counties will no longer be able to impose fines on residents for unsightly brown lawns while the state is in a drought, under a bill signed by Gov. Jerry Brown.

The measure, by Assemblywoman Cheryl Brown, D-Rialto, prohibits local governments from issuing fines for violations of “lawn maintenance” ordinances when the governor has declared a state of emergency due to drought conditions.

Brown has said she’s aware of a number of cities that have levied fines or issued warnings to residents who allowed their lawns to go brown.

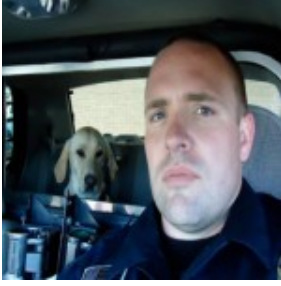
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Newbie to SLTPD involved in fatal shooting

By Kathryn Reed

A police officer with 10 years of experience who joined the South Lake Tahoe department in January is responsible for the killing of an unarmed suspect in June.

Officer Josh Klinge, 35, remains on paid administrative leave.



Josh Klinge

Officers were called to the Tahoe Hacienda Motel on Lake Tahoe Boulevard at 2:40am June 15 because of reports of a woman who was screaming and crying.

A single bullet fired by Klinge killed Kris Jackson, 22, of Sacramento.

Jackson was on criminal probation at the time of the shooting. On June 1, he had been arrested by South Lake Tahoe police officers for allegedly possessing several baggies of cocaine, scales and packaging materials. On May 21, he had been arrested by local officers on a Sacramento failure to appear warrant related to a drug possession charge.

The deceased's family has hired attorney Alan Laskin. The attorney questions whether proper commands were given to Jackson to stop as he was climbing out a hotel bathroom.

Shortly after the shooting the police department issued a statement saying, "The involved officer's statement explains he perceived a deadly threat from Kris Jackson. After interviews and a search of the crime scene, no firearm or other weapon was located."

The El Dorado County District Attorney's Office is conducting the criminal investigation to determine if Klinge was justified in the shooting.

District Attorney Vern Pierson told *Lake Tahoe News* he hopes the investigation will be wrapped up in 30 days, but is making no promises.

“We need forensic items to be completed,” he said.

Per protocol, SLTPD will be conducting a separate internal investigation to determine if Klinge followed department policies. This was the first officer involved shooting in South Lake Tahoe in more than 10 years.

Before starting with SLTPD, Klinge was an officer with Ceres Police Department from May 2007 to January this year. Prior to that he was a deputy with the Merced County Sheriff’s Department from December 2004-May 2007. He attended the Fresno City College police academy in 2003. At Ceres, Klinge was a K-9 officer.

Drought may increase West Nile cases

By Sophie Mattson, San Jose Mercury News

Laura Jaramillo woke up one morning in the summer of 2005 and sensed something was horribly wrong. After going to the hospital, she fell into a coma and spent six weeks fighting for her life – waking up to find her right side paralyzed.

Doctors were baffled until they discovered the culprit – the West Nile virus.

“I had to learn how to eat, walk and talk all over again,” said Jaramillo, 69, of Oakley. “But I was just glad to be alive.”

Thirty-one Californians last year weren’t as fortunate. They succumbed to West Nile infection in one of the worst outbreaks the Golden State has seen in years. More than 800 state

residents were infected.

Read the whole story

Polling places getting lonely on election day

By John Wildermuth, San Francisco Chronicle

With more and more California voters casting ballots by mail, the neighborhood polling place is becoming one of the loneliest spots in town on election day, forcing local and state officials to puzzle out what to do about it.

In the June 2014 statewide primary, 69 percent of the turnout was by mail ballots, triple the 23 percent in 2000. In November's general election, fewer than 40 percent of the ballots were cast in person at the polls.

The break between the two types of voting is even more stark in typically low-turnout special elections.

It's a situation that's frustrating for the poll workers, who have to sit with nothing to do from before the polls open at 7am until after they close at 8pm. It's also expensive for the counties, which not only have to train and pay the poll workers, but also must find and secure potential polling places and shoulder the costs of transporting and storing the voting machines and other equipment.

While tiny rural Alpine and Sierra counties already are all-mail, all the time, don't expect California to go that route anytime soon. As Secretary of State Alex Padilla noted soon after being elected in November, "Many people still prefer to vote at the polls. Including my mother."

Read the whole story

Man claims self-defense in Tahoe bear killing



The bear that was shot to death last week is removed from the forest. Photo/Toogee Sielsch

By Jeff DeLong, Reno Gazette-Journal

Authorities are investigating the shooting death of a bear at

Lake Tahoe last week and say they already know who did it.

The unidentified South Lake Tahoe resident said he shot the black bear Thursday night in self-defense, said Capt. Patrick Foy of the California Department of Fish and Wildlife. Foy said game wardens had previously offered the man a permit to legally shoot the bear due to damage at his property but he turned it down due to fear of retribution by animal activists.

Bear advocates dispute accounts as described by the Department of Wildlife based on an interview with the man, with some suggesting the animal may have been shot out of a tree.

Read the whole story

California overusing its natural resources

By Mathis Wackernagel, Sacramento Bee

The drought in California has made the economic risks of living beyond the means of nature all too clear. Just last month, estimates pegged the state's economic losses from the drought at \$2.7 billion, an enormous number that still fails to capture the toll on individual farmers and farmworkers.

Water, however, isn't the only natural resource that our state is overusing and must manage more carefully to ensure a resilient future.

On Tuesday, the United States will go into ecological deficit. That means our nation will be using more of nature's renewable resources and services than our ecosystems can regenerate in the entire year. Of all 50 states, California is running the

largest ecological deficit, according to our analysis, which we will release Tuesday in a report called “State of the States.” We found we would need a land area equal to eight – eight! – Californias to support the “ecological footprint” of California residents.

Read the whole story

Prescription drug abusers turn to heroin

By Lisa Girion, Los Angeles Times

Standing in the pulpit above Austin Klimusko’s casket three years ago, his mother used his death to draw the connection between pills from a pharmacy and drugs from the street.

“When his prescriptions dried up, he turned to heroin,” Susan Klimusko said in a frank eulogy meant as a warning to the young mourners at Simi Valley’s Cornerstone Church.

Last week, the nation’s top public health official used the bully pulpit to sound the same alarm. The prescription drug epidemic is stoking the nation’s appetite for heroin with disastrous results, Dr. Tom Frieden, director of the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, told reporters in a teleconference.

“We are priming people to addiction to heroin with overuse of prescription opiates, which are, after all, essentially the same chemical with the same impact on the brain,” he said.

Read the whole story

Hundreds groove to bluegrass at Tahoe



Lake Tahoe's Dead Winter Carpenters play July 11 at the inaugural Bluegrass Festival at Lake Tahoe Hard Rock. Photos/Terra Breeden

By Terra Breeden

STATELINE – It was all fun and fiddles Saturday at the inaugural Bluegrass Festival on the South Shore, part of the Hard Rock's summer concert series.

Thousands of people came to enjoy the all-day event and dance to the twanging tunes of an all-star lineup of bluegrass bands, which included New Monsoon, Dead Winter Carpenters, Del McCoury Band, Greensky, David Grisman Sextet, and Earls of Leicester.

New Monsoon kicked off the show with upbeat jam music and tons

of vitality.

Dead Winter Carpenters from North Lake Tahoe played next, bringing heavy bluegrass music to the stage. The Dead Winter Carpenters have had a busy year touring throughout the United States and Brian Houston, a member of the band and Tahoe native said, "We are very excited for the show, it's nice to be back in Tahoe after so much time on the road."

Later in the afternoon, big-name bluegrass groups such as Earls of Leicester, which won the 2015 Grammy Award for best bluegrass band, dominated the stage and crooned to the audience. Earls of Leicester showcased a traditional bluegrass sound defined by banjo fingerpicking and soaring fiddles. Their music is inspired by the classic songs by Earl Scruggs and Lester Flatt, and the Foggy Mountain Boys.

"The Earls of Leicester is the band we came to the festival to see," said concert-goer and fan Robert Glover. "Their music is good ol' honky-tonk twang and it's the original bluegrass sound."

Many people came to the outdoor festival for the atmosphere.

High-stepping energy and good vibes abounded at this event as the sound of bluegrass filled the air. Families and friends spread their blankets out in front of the stage and joined in conversation and laughter, sipping drinks and munching on good food. Laughing children darted around their legs, hula-hooping and dancing to the tunes at this family-friendly concert.



Hundreds of people congregate at Hard Rock to listen to bluegrass.

The Bluegrass Festival is the brainchild of PR Entertainment, a company that puts on other bluegrass events like Hangtown Halloween in Placerville and Winter Wondergrass in North Lake Tahoe.

Ryan Kronenberg of PR Entertainment said that, "I had the thought that we should just get a Tahoe bluegrass show going that's more of a summer event, something that would bring bluegrass music to South Lake."

The plan is for it to be an annual event.

"It's fun to get outside and listen to music," Kronenberg said, "and I am glad the weather worked out."

After a week of gray skies and rain, July 11 was the first clear, blue-sky day Tahoe has seen in a while. Concert-goers lazed on blankets, soaking up the sun and jamming to the music.

“This is a great venue and the Hard Rock staff has been amazing,” Bluegrass Festival attendee from North Lake Tahoe Samantha Gruetchemach said. “I think this festival is great. Everyone is super nice, the food is good, everyone is having fun, and the weather is perfect after all that rain.”

Opinion: Senseless killing of Tahoe bear



Someone on the South Shore killed this bear last week.
Photos/Toogee Sielsch

By Toogee Sielsch

On July 9, a family living on Minniconjou Drive in a neighborhood off Pioneer Trail in South Lake Tahoe had the pleasure of enjoying seeing one of our furry forest denizens cruising through their neighborhood. These are the kind of folks who feel getting a view from a safe distance of one of

the black bears that live in the basin is a true gift to be cherished.

Later that evening they remember hearing what they described as a single large firework explosion or maybe a gunshot.

I can't even imagine what went through their minds when the next day, Friday, while taking a walk on a trail through the forest-meadow interface below their neighborhood. They found the lifeless body of the untagged, beautiful, healthy, and muscular 2 1/2-year-old black bear they had seen alive and well the day before. They immediately returned home and made a call to Lake Tahoe Wildlife Care.

Apparently one of their neighbors from Minniconjou Drive, or one the nearby streets like Jicarilla Drive, didn't quite feel the same way about the bears living in the basin that this family and many of the rest of us that live here in the Tahoe basin feel.



Sunglasses give perspective of how big this bear was.

At 5:40pm July 10, I received a call from LTWC asking if I could go take a look at a possible dead bear. My youngest son,

Ian, and I met the family at the end of Minniconjou Drive. They showed us where the carcass was. As we approached the dead bear, I was struck by his body position. He was on his back, head rolled to one side, and tongue out and bitten through at the base of two trees.

I took pics on the approach and from other angles before I moved in and did a field examination on the body, looking for any wounds or signs of trauma. I was baffled by the lack of blood at the scene. On the bear's backside I found multiple small puncture wounds. I must admit that my first impression is that this could possibly be an accident and the bear received those puncture wounds falling out of a tree. But I also know that the first thing a black bear learns when its mother takes it out of the den for the first time is how to climb a tree and stay up it in danger. And there weren't any freshly broken branches around the body, which would be scattered if it had hit and was injured by branches in the fall.

My second impression was that the puncture wounds were buckshot wounds and the bear was shot while climbing up the tree and let it's grip go and fell to its death.

Ian and I dragged the 200- to 225-pound, 2 1/2 year old bear uphill as it was getting dark and not wanting to leave the carcass to the other wild animals in the area and thereby destroying any evidence.

On Saturday, California Fish and Wildlife Game Warden Darrell Stevenson was called to examine the body at LTWC and confirmed the wounds as being from large buckshot from a shotgun. At 2:30pm on Saturday, I walked Stevenson through the site where the bear was found dead. He had spent much of the morning going door-to-door on Minniconjou Drive and adjacent streets interviewing folks for any information.

Above are the facts, and now on to the opinion section of this

piece: What kind of inferior life form feels that for nothing more than knocking over a few trash cans, which isn't a bear's fault that they are left out, a bear deserves a death penalty? Not to mention some wingnut is shooting off a firearm in an inhabited neighborhood here in our town? Some folks like to frame we animal activists as crazy, but this horrendous action defies crazy, and tips into the realm of psychotic. Ann Bryant of the Bear League is setting up a donation fund for the information that leads to an arrest and conviction of the scumbag who did this heartless deed. Anyone having any information about this crime may call the Bear League at 530.525.7297.

This crime might very well go unpunished, but please, let's not let it go unnoticed.

Toogee Sielsch is a resident of South Lake Tahoe.

Slots remain important cog in Nev. gaming

By J.D. Morris, Las Vegas Sun

Although Nevada casinos don't make nearly as much money from slots as they did before the recession hit, the machines are starting to make a comeback.

Slot revenue dropped sharply in 2008 and 2009, much like the rest of the state's gambling business, and still remains far below its peak from before the economic downturn. After a few years of more stable performance, however, recent financial indicators suggest that the situation is improving.

Through May of this year, statewide slot revenue increased 4.3

percent compared with 2014, according to Michael Lawton, senior research analyst for the state Gaming Control Board. On the Strip, which accounts for the bulk of Nevada's total gaming revenue, slot revenue is up 6.1 percent for the calendar year.

Read the whole story