

High fire danger weather in Tahoe region

The National Weather Service has issued a red flag warning for the Lake Tahoe Basin, Truckee, Carson and Reno areas from 2pm Thursday through 11am Friday.

The winds will be accompanied by low humidity. This combination can lead to fires quickly spreading out of control.

Fire officials are asking people to:

- Report any smoke to 911
- Start zero fires of any type
- Make sure campfires are dead out and cool
- Not use chain saws, lawn mowers or weed eaters
- Make sure trailer chains are not dragging
- Have an emergency evacuation plan
- Evacuate early if there is a fire.

Standup paddler missing at Lake Tahoe



This is an image from the GoPro found on the adrift paddleboard of the man who reportedly rented the board.

A man who rented a standup paddleboard in South Lake Tahoe is missing.

A boater found the board, GoPro camera, selfie stick and life jacket about one-half mile offshore from Timber Cove Marina on Aug. 12 about 4:45pm. The water there is about 17-feet deep. The equipment was returned to the shop about an hour later.

A man who identified himself as Morym had rented the board from South Tahoe Standup Paddle in South Lake Tahoe on Aug. 12 at 3:30pm for one hour. The renter paid cash and did not leave a credit card, phone number or any other identifying information.

The business called South Lake Tahoe Police Department at 10:10pm.

Officers conducted a shoreline search in the darkness. The U.S. Coast Guard and the El Dorado County Sheriff's Office will assist a SLTPD marine unit with a water search today.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

CVS dropping slew of prescription meds

By David Goldman, CNN Money

CVS is dropping more than two dozen prescription drugs from its list of covered medicines for 2016, including Viagra.

The drugs will still be sold at CVS/pharmacy stores, but customers who carry prescription benefit insurance with CVS/Caremark will no longer receive coverage for them.

CVS (CVS) said the medicines dropped from the list of drugs the company covers all have cheaper equivalents that are still covered by its insurance plan.

For example, customers taking Pfizer's (PFE) Viagra for erectile dysfunction will be able to take Cialis, made by Eli Lilly (LLY). CVS stopped covering Bayer's rival ED drug Levitra in January 2012.

Read the whole story

Cost-benefit analysis of aerial firefighting

By Kelsey Ray, High Country News

When large wildfires blaze, the public counts on airplanes to put them out. Pilots fly air tankers over mountainous terrain and drop fire retardant – up to nearly 12,000 gallons per trip – onto the dense forests below.

The bursts of red slurry bring hope to those whose homes are imperiled. Politicians and the media thrill at the sight and clamor for more.

But is it safe? And is it effective enough to justify the high costs?

The U.S. Forest Service, which saw its large air tanker fleet shrink to just nine planes in 2012, has 20 air tankers on exclusive-use and call-when-needed contracts for the 2015 season, plus one under Forest Service operation. Spokeswoman Jennifer Jones said the agency is working to bring up to 28 air tankers into service.

Read the whole story

Pharmacy robbery suspect behind bars

A Reno man has been arrested in connection with a series of pharmacy robberies in the region.

Placer County sheriff's detectives arrested Peter Joseph Terry, 48, on July 11 at 12:24pm after receiving a call that the Rite-Aid on North Lake Boulevard in Kings Beach had been robbed. This was the third time this pharmacy had been robbed.

Terry allegedly entered the store and demanded narcotics while displaying a firearm. When he fled the store citizens provided a vehicle description.

A pursuit ensued, but quickly ended when the suspect drove down a dead-end street.

Terry's bail was set at \$1 million. He is suspected of armed robbery at numerous pharmacies from Reno to the Bay Area over the past few months.

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*

Calif. law bars grand juries in police deadly force cases

By Melanie Mason, Los Angeles Times

Gov. Jerry Brown signed into law Tuesday a measure that prohibits secret grand juries to weigh in on cases involving excessive or deadly force by law enforcement, and another affirming the public's right to take audio or video recordings of police officers.

Both measures were part of a spate of proposals introduced by lawmakers earlier this year on police accountability; some of the more controversial bills dealing with body-worn cameras or reporting on use-of-force incidents have stalled in the Legislature.

Sen. Holly Mitchell, D-Los Angeles, offered the grand juries measure in response to high-profile incidents in Ferguson, Mo., and New York City, where grand juries declined to indict police officers for the deaths of Michael Brown and Eric Garner, respectively.

Read the whole story

Tahoe Keys answer to invasive weeds – herbicide



Milfoil is is choking the canals of the Tahoe Keys and spreading to Lake Tahoe.
Photo/LTN file

By Kathryn Reed

It's time to do something different.

That was the overriding message delivered Tuesday night regarding invasive weeds that are taking over of the Tahoe Keys canals in South Lake Tahoe. Twenty-five years of various methods – most notably harvesting – have not solved the problem.

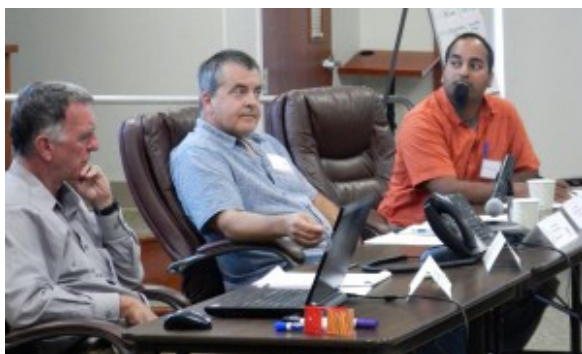
The Tahoe Keys Property Owners Association has spent about \$250,000 developing a multi-year plan to control Eurasian milfoil, curlyleaf pondweed and coontail – the three primary invasive weeds. Estimates are that treatment could cost as much as \$1 million.

Today the association spends about \$400,000 a year on the

harvester, which essentially is mowing the milfoil. It also upends particles that drift into Lake Tahoe proper – 4,000 per acre. Boat propellers are another way the weed gets into the bigger body of water.

The plan is to use herbicides over the course of five years to get rid of the bulk of the invasive weeds. It would be applied in conjunction with continued harvesting and placing barrier mats in locations to suffocate plants.

The draft plan was released Aug. 11, with comments on it being taken until Sept. 15. The plan has been vetted by a panel of five scientists, three who were at the meeting in person, with the other two participating remotely.



Joe DiTomaso, Joel Trumbo,
Sudeep Chandra

They are:

- Joe DiTomaso, non-crop weed specialist at UC Davis.
- Joel Trumbo, senior environmental scientist for the Lands Program for California Department of Fish and Wildlife.
- Kurt Getsinger, chairman of the Technical Advisory Committee of the Aquatic Ecosystem Restoration Foundation, member of the USDA's IR-4 Project Aquatics Committee, and expert to the EPA Office of Pesticide Programs.
- Sudeep Chandra, at UNR does limnological studies related to the restoration or conservation of aquatic

ecosystems.

- Pat Akers.

Collectively, they agree the plan is solid, especially liking that it is science based, there will be monitoring, and adaptive management will be used. That latter means if things aren't going as planned, changes will be made mid-course. Using herbicides in the spring and not everywhere were also praised.

"The plan is well-thought out and researched. We feel the problems in the Keys are significant and some action has to be taken, and quickly," DiTomaso said.

It was noted that these plants are invading waterways throughout the United States and that chemical applications have been used elsewhere. While each body of water is different, the Keys is not starting from scratch in terms of finding solutions.

Ultimately it will be up to the Lahontan Water Quality Control Board to issue a permit for the use of any herbicides, so it is not definitive this will happen. However, TKPOA would like to implement the plan in 2017. Environmental analysis would take place between now and then.

Many questions came up from the more than 80 people who attended Tuesday's meeting regarding the safety of applying chemicals to the lagoons in terms of drinking water, and other plant and aquatic life.

John Larson, president of the TKPOA board, said if contaminants are found in the drinking water, one of the three wells the self-contained water company uses could be taken off-line. In a worst-case scenario, the Keys water system could get its water from South Tahoe Public Utility District.

As for killing native plants, it was noted the more than a

dozen EPA approved herbicides that could possibly be used have particular attributes. It would be like applying a chemical to kill dandelions on a yard, but not killing the grass at the same time.

“Herbicides are toxic to plants. The converse is they are less risky to things that aren’t plants,” Trumbo said.

Killing the non-natives should also allow the natives to be healthier. These invasives are habitat for warm water fish, so eliminating their food source could help curtail their population.

No one expects the plants to be eradicated, but instead reduced to a level they can be controlled.

Still needing to be worked out is getting all the property owners on the same page. Within the Keys, besides the TKPOA, the Tahoe Keys Beach and Harbor Association, Tahoe Keys Marina, California Tahoe Conservancy, Tahoe Keys Village and lawyers who own the lagoon all have a say. And not all back the TKPOA plan.

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Notes:

- The plan is **online**, as is the ability to comment.

Cyclist-car collide in South Lake Tahoe

An 18-year-old South Lake Tahoe man is at Renown Medical Center in Reno after being hit while riding his bicycle.

The name of the victim has not been released.

He was struck by a vehicle at 3:53pm Aug. 11 on Ski Run Boulevard.

The cause of the collision is under investigation.

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*

Misdemeanor charge filed in dead bear case

A South Shore man is scheduled to be arraigned next month in the July 9 shooting death of a bear.

Gilbert Wetenkamp faces one misdemeanor count of unlawful taking of an animal. This is a violation under the state Fish and Wildlife code. The maximum penalty if convicted is one year in jail and a \$1,000 fine.

The 2½-year-old bear was shot in the backside with buckshot from a shotgun. It was sprawled on its back at the base of a tree off Pioneer Trail near Minniconjou Drive in the unincorporated area of South Lake Tahoe.

Wetenkamp originally told investigators he shot the bear in self-defense.

The Sept. 25 hearing will be before Judge Steve Bailey in El Dorado County Superior Court in South Lake Tahoe.

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*

Strapped states farm out upkeep of parks

By Jim Carlton, Wall Street Journal

California's cash-strapped parks system has a \$1.2 billion maintenance backlog. But many of its 279 parks are getting spruced up anyway thanks to a secret weapon: conservation groups that have stepped in to rebuild trails, renovate restrooms and even buy more land.

Park Champions, a program run by the California State Parks Foundation, a nonprofit umbrella group, has had 3,202 volunteers work 23,790 hours cleaning up tarnished facilities around the state during the past four years. In Mendocino County north of San Francisco, two nonprofits recently picked up half the \$160,000 tab to rebuild a dilapidated day-use area at Hendy Woods State Park that features a picturesque strand of towering, old-growth redwoods.

Similar public-private partnerships have formed in Florida, Pennsylvania and elsewhere. In Florida, the number of volunteer hours contributed to state parks by nonprofit workers in 2014 was up 33 percent from before the recession in 2008. Over the same period, full-time park staffing remained at about 1,060, according to the Friends of Florida State Parks nonprofit group.

Read the whole story