USFS implements fire restrictions in basin

Fire restrictions on National Forest System lands in the Lake Tahoe Basin begin July 1 and will remain in effect until the official end of fire season.

Campfires will be restricted to certain exempted recreation sites and other fire-related activities will be prohibited.

Illegal and unattended campfires cause more than 90 percent of wildfires in the Lake Tahoe Basin and increased fire danger due to the ongoing drought and warm summer weather is a big concern.

On National Forest System Lands, fire restrictions mean:

· No open fires, campfires or charcoal fires are allowed outside of exempted recreation sites even with a valid campfire permit. Campfires must be built within agency installed and approved fire rings or grills. Lanterns and portable stoves using gas, jellied petroleum or pressurized liquid fuel are allowed with a valid California Campfire Permit.

· No smoking, except within an enclosed vehicle, building or exempted recreation site.

· Internal combustion engines are restricted to National Forest System roads, routes, trails and areas as identified on the LTBMU Motor Vehicle Use Map.

· No possessing, discharging or using any kind of firework or other pyrotechnic device, using an explosive or operating a welding or other torch with an open flame. All fireworks, including sparklers and firecrackers, are always illegal in the Lake Tahoe Basin.

Rare wolverine seen in Tahoe National Forest

By Robert Kuo, Sacramento Bee

The California Department of Fish and Wildlife posted two videos last week of a wolverine in the Tahoe National Forest captured by cameras earlier this year, stirring the same excitement that occurred in 2008 when a similarly rare California sighting occurred after an 86-year absence.

The first video from this year was recorded on the night of Feb. 17, showing a brief glimpse of the wolverine before it scampered away. The second video, taken during the day on Feb. 27, provides an extended look at the wolverine scaling a tree to retrieve bait that wildlife biologists had tied to the tree.

The life expectancy of wild wolverines ranges from four to 10 years.

Read the whole story

Fire, drinking rules for July

4 in the basin

Wildfire prevention is everyone’s responsibility, according to the U.S. Forest Service.

Possession of fireworks of any kind, including firecrackers and sparklers, is illegal in the Lake Tahoe Basin.

Campfires and portable charcoal grills are not permitted on National Forest beaches or in the general forest. If planning to barbecue on the beach, bring a portable gas grill instead of charcoal.

Fire restrictions on National Forest System land in the Lake Tahoe Basin begin July 1. For complete information on fire restrictions, go **online**.

The annual alcohol ban will be in effect at Nevada Beach, Zephyr Cove Resort, and Zephyr Shoals (the former Dreyfus Estate) from 6am to midnight on July 4. In addition, county and state laws ban the possession or consumption of alcohol on the Truckee River from Tahoe City to Alpine Meadows and Chamber’s Landing Beach on the West Shore, beginning July 1 and continuing through July 6.

Day-use parking fees for July 4 at Pope, Baldwin, and Nevada beaches will be $20 and at Zephyr Cove Beach $25 to cover increased security and facility maintenance costs of the holiday.

Trash cans may become full, so plan ahead and pack out all garbage.

Path to paradise is paddle-powered

By Tom Stienstra, San Francisco Chronicle

The summer horror story is a getaway or camping vacation that is overrun with crowds. The vision is fed by year-round traffic nightmares in the Bay Area, Sacramento and other cities, where people jammed shoulder to shoulder can start to feel like an omnipresent condition you can’t escape.

Yet with one small change in your life, you can find redemption.

It starts in a boat. Of the dozens of styles available, the cheapest, fastest and easiest boat that provides a gateway to freedom is a flat-water kayak.

With just a few strokes, you propel yourself to escape from every worry. That’s the thing about boats. No traffic jams. No red lights. Just open water in every direction.

Read the whole story

Motorized vehicles damaging USFS land

By Kathryn Reed

Saying you didn’t know the rules isn’t good enough.

“They don’t understand if takes time and effort to rehabilitate the damage and it is taxpayer dollars that go

toward that," Frank Machler with the U.S. Forest Service said.

He's talking about damage to forestland by motor vehicles.

Machler is a law enforcement officer in the Lake Tahoe Basin. He spent part of last weekend investigating damage done by motorcyclists near Griff Creek above Kings Beach.

It's not severely rutted, but it is noticeable and undeniably a violation of the motorize vehicle regulations. Proving resource damage is more difficult, Machler said. For example, driving over alders actually helps them to propagate.

"We do get lot of motor vehicle violations, but rarely do we see bad resource damage in the basin," Machler told *Lake Tahoe News.*



Motorcycles are allowed on 250 miles of roads in the Lake Tahoe Basin. Photo/LTN file

Even though there may not be signs in a given area saying motorized vehicles are not allowed, it is up to the user to know the rules of the land they are riding on.

The culprits in the Kings Beach incident have not been caught. If an LEO catches someone riding where they aren't supposed

to, at a minimum a $150 citation can be issued. If it goes to court, a judge has the authority to issue a fine up to $5,000 and six months in jail.

“The court has said recreation users need to know the rules of the land they are traveling on,” Machler said. “I’m not sure people are talking the time to find out who owns the property they are recreating on and what the rules are. People are not taking the time to read the signs that are in place. They walk past bulletin boards.”

To catch more of the scofflaws takes the public’s help because the number of LEOs and rangers in the woods is finite. Machler said there are ways to protect reporting parties.

One good thing about a more normal winter this year is people were not able to violate the motorized rules as blatantly as they did in drier years. Snow prevented a person from driving around the gates – which was happening in the last few years.

The basin has 250 miles of roads where motorized vehicles may travel. This is a small number compared to some forests, but the Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit it also on the small side.

The USFS provides free motor vehicle use maps at its offices as well as online.

Feds to sterilize mustangs to slow growth

By Scott Sonner, AP

A federal agency is on a path to sterilize wild horses on U.S.

rangeland to slow the growth of herds – a new approach condemned by mustang advocates across the West.

The U.S. Bureau of Land Management also continues to resist calls from ranchers and western Republicans to euthanize or sell for slaughter the animals overflowing holding pens so as to clear the way for more roundups.

Bureau of Land Management Deputy Director Steve Ellis delivered those messages at an emotional congressional hearing last week. He offered a glimpse of the challenges facing the agency that has been struggling for decades with what it describes as a $1 billion problem.

Highlights of the hearing included Nevada's state veterinarian calling for the round-up and surgical sterilization of virtually every mustang in overpopulated herds, a protester who briefly interrupted with shouts denouncing "welfare ranchers" turning public lands into "feedlots," and an Arkansas congressman whose puppy is about to get neutered.

Rep. Tom McClintock, chairman of the House Natural Resources subcommittee on public lands, took aim at those who object to euthanizing mustangs "and yet seem perfectly willing to watch them succumb to excruciating death by starvation, dehydration and disease."

"That is the future we condemn these animals to if we don't intervene now," said the California Republican who represents Lake Tahoe.

Rep. Cynthia Lummis, R-Wyoming, emphasized the 1971 law protecting mustangs allows for their destruction if they go unadopted. But since 2012, Congress has required horse purchasers to sign documents promising not to resell them for slaughter, and the Bureau of Land Management opposes lifting those restrictions.

Ellis said the estimated 67,000 wild horses and burros on

federal land in 10 states is 2.5 times more than the range can support. However, there's no more room in government corals and leased pastures, where 47,000 horses cost taxpayers about $50,000 per head over the course of their lifetime.

"Quite frankly, we can't afford to feed any more unadopted horses," Ellis said. "I understand your frustration. We are frustrated too."

Ellis said the agency's "roadmap to the future" includes use of temporary contraceptive vaccines as well as sterilization.

"We feel that before we can implement a spay-neuter program on the range, we've got to do the research to make sure we can do it efficiently and safely," he said. "It is going to take a little time to do that."

Rep. Rod Bishop, R-Utah, chairman of the Natural Resources Committee, said it's time to have "that real tough conversation about something more permanent."

Other Republicans turned on the lone horse advocate called to testify – Ginger Kathrens, founder of The Cloud Foundation based in Colorado Springs, Colorado and member of the Bureau of Land Management's wild horse advisory committee.

But Kathrens said most Americans want to see mustangs "roam freely on their native home ranges as intended."

"Castration, sterilization and long-term confinement of horses in holding facilities … is unnecessary, cruel, unhealthy and fiscally irresponsible," she said.

Rep. Bruce Westerman, R-Arkansas, noted, however, that "thousands of domesticated animals are spayed and neutered every day."

"I've got a new puppy and he's got his day coming soon," he said.

That prompted an outburst from Edita Birnkrant, campaigns director for Friends of Animals.

“They are wild animals. They are not cats and dogs,” she shouted as McClintock banged the gavel and called for Capitol Police. “The solution is getting welfare ranchers off of our public lands, which have been turned into feedlots.”

J.J. Goicoechea, the Nevada Department of Agriculture’s veterinarian and longtime rancher, urged the gathering of “as close to 100 percent of horses as we can” in overpopulated herds for surgical sterilization before returning some to the range.

“Those of us who truly make a living caring for animals … have a moral obligation to manage populations in balance with natural resources,” he said.

Bay Area man to swim length of Lake Tahoe

By Kate Flanagan, InMenlo

“Getting from point A to point B” has been a major part of Scott Kaloust’s life ever since he first learned to swim from one end of the pool to the other.

Now, decades after he first jumped into the water, he still applies that principle – both to his swimming endeavors as well as to his Menlo Park-based orthodontic practice.

On July 22, he will attempt to swim across Lake Tahoe, a 22-mile journey. Though he has been swimming since he was young boy, he only started doing open water, long-distance swims a

few years ago when a teammate on the Menlo Masters swim team introduced him to it.

Read the whole story

Drone exploring what's beneath Lake Tahoe

By John Markoff, New York Times

GLENBROOK — A vast, largely unexplored world is being opened by hobbyists piloting robotic submarines capable of traveling hundreds of feet below the surface of lakes, rivers and oceans.

Styling themselves as citizen scientists, two young engineers, Eric Stackpole and David Lang, have created OpenROV, a small start-up based in Berkeley that builds submarine drone kits. They hope to create a mirror image of the airborne drone craze.

This month, the OpenROV researchers took over a vacation home here and turned it into a command center for the maiden dive of a prototype of the next version of their Trident submarine. The sub explored the wreck of the Tahoe, a turn-of-the-last-century steamer that now lies less than a half-mile offshore in depths up to almost 500 feet below the surface of Lake Tahoe.

OpenROV has sold more than 3,000 of a first-generation submarine, which is able to navigate below the surface, connected by a thin cable and controlled by software running on a tablet or smartphone.

Read the whole story

Family rescued from PCT near Truckee

By Sammy Caiola, Sacramento Bee

A Sunnyvale family of four had to seek rescue from the Truckee Fire Department and California Highway Patrol when their youngest child became so ill from dehydration that she could no longer walk.

Father Kent Johnson and mother Patricia Johnson were on a four-day backpacking trip with their two daughters on the Pacific Crest Trail near Paradise Lake on Thursday when Adele, the younger of the two, became extremely nauseous and weak. She was dehydrated and had possibly ingested contaminated water, said CHP Officer Matt Calcutt.

Recognizing Adele needed help, Kent Johnson hiked out Thursday night and kept walking until he could call the Truckee Fire Command, which then called California Highway Patrol Helicopter 24, according to a CHP news release.

Read the whole story

Wind main culprit in keeping Lake Tahoe chilly

By Brant Allen

Does this year's snowpack and cool spring rains mean swimmers will have to delay their summer Tahoe adventures? Not necessarily.

Interestingly, Lake Tahoe's surface water warms at about the same rate each year regardless of the winter snowpack. As solar radiation increases during the longer days of spring, the surface water begins to warm. It may not be inviting enough for a swim in April but the shallow water will already be several degrees warmer than the water just a few meters below.

When the winter snowpack begins to melt and join the nearest stream, water in that stream becomes very cold—maybe just a few degrees above freezing. As the cold, dense stream water enters the lake, it "plunges" below the warmer surface water, to a depth where the lake water is the same temperature and density.

Though this happens all the time at stream mouths, we rarely get to see it. This spring, UC Davis researchers observed a thin layer of dark brown water suspended midway between the bottom and the surface of the lake while working on a nearshore water quality station. The water was stained with tannins (from fallen leaves), making it visible in Tahoe's clear water.

Back to swimming and what can cause the lake to warm more slowly. Spring storms and especially the strength and duration of the wind, not the associated precipitation, is what keeps the lake cool. Wind adds energy to the lake, mixing cold water from depth back to the surface. It is not uncommon for the

lake surface temperature to drop several degrees following a strong spring wind event.

So, if you are one of those Tahoe summer people who long for days in the water, don’t curse the big winters and extended snowpack. That keeps the lake level high. It is the wind that will prolong cold surface temperatures.

Brant Allen is a researcher with UC Davis TERC. This article first appeared in the TERC newsletter.