Youth tennis lessons available at ZCTC

Zephyr Cove Tennis Club, through a series of summer programs, hopes to instill a love of tennis for youngsters in grades 1-8 so they will be playing years from now.

Deanne Larsell, who has been teaching tennis for 35 years, will be leading the clinics. Larsell puts the fun in fundamentals and has the expertise to develop abilities of more advanced players so they are comfortable on the court without a coach.

With classes limited to eight students, instruction will be individualized.

Classes are:

· Beginner grades 1-3

June 6, 8, 13, 15 – 3:20-4:20pm

June 7, 9, 14, 16 – 1-2pm

July 12, 13, 19, 20 – 3-4pm

Aug. 2, 3, 9, 10 – 3-4pm

· Beginner grades 4-8

June 6, 8, 13, 15 – 1-2pm

June 7, 9, 14, 16 – 3:20-4:20pm

July 12, 13, 19, 20 – 4-5pm

Aug. 2, 3, 9, 10 – 4-5pm

· Advanced beginner grades 1-3

June 6, 8, 13, 15 – 4:20-5:20pm

June 7, 9, 14, 16 – 2-3pm

July 12, 13, 19, 20 – 1-2pm

Aug. 2, 3, 9, 10 – 1-2pm

· Advanced beginner grades 4-8

June 6, 8, 13, 15 – 2-3pm

June 7, 9, 14, 16 – 4:20-5:20pm

July 12, 13, 19, 20 – 2-3pm

Aug. 2, 3, 9, 10 – 2-3pm.

Each four-session class costs $45. For information on scholarships, email carolyn@zctennis.com. All participants must preregister **online**. Larsell may be reached at 503.679.2502.

A limited number of rackets will be available for those who need one. Come dressed to play – which means athletic wear and non-marking shoes. Be sure to bring water and wear sunscreen. Arrive 15 minutes before the start time.

Zephyr Cove Tennis Club is on Warrior Way off Highway 50 in Zephyr Cove.

USFS to sell firewood permits

Firewood permits from the U.S. Forest Service Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit go on sale May 23.

They will be available at the Forest Supervisor's Office at 35

College Drive in South Lake Tahoe on starting Monday and at the North Shore office at 855 Alder Ave. in Incline Village on May 25. Permits cost $20 per cord, with a two-cord minimum and a limit of 10 cords per household.

Permits should be purchased early and wood collected promptly as fire restrictions are likely to go into effect early and there may be days when no cutting is allowed.

Permits have specific conditions and complete information is provided when the permit is issued. Maps to designated cutting areas are provided and must be in the permit holder's possession along with the valid permit.

The permit is for collection of "down-dead" wood up to a 30-inch maximum diameter in designated fuelwood areas within the Lake Tahoe Basin. "Down-dead" means the tree is down on the ground and dead, rather than dead and standing.

NorCal lakes brim with chances for fun on the water

By Tom Stienstra, San Francisco Chronicle

Memorial Day weekend is two weeks off, and dozens of lakes are filling in time for the start of the vacation season.

Many lakes will hit their peak in the next two weeks. A great summer is imminent for lake-based vacation and recreation – camping, boating and fishing.

The U.S. Forest Service and recreation outfitters will open most of their campgrounds in time for the holiday weekend. Above 7,500 feet in most areas, there is still a lot of snow.

Access to high-country lakes and wilderness probably won’t be available until mid- to late-June.

In the central Sierra, Caltrans reported that it cleared and opened Highway 4 over 8,730-foot Ebbetts Pass. Caltrans also projected that Highway 108 over 9,623-foot Sonora Pass will be open in the week leading up to Memorial Day.

Read the whole story

Nevada parks to nix fee for 1 day

Admission to Nevada’s 23 state parks will be free on June 11.

This statewide event encourages Nevadans and visitors to explore the outdoors.

Discover Nevada State Parks day is also an opportunity for visitors to take the passport challenge and add a stamp to their passport booklet, or if they don’t have one yet, to pick one up while visiting a state park. Once visitors have their passports stamped at 15 different parks, they earn a free annual pass to all Nevada State Parks.

For more information on the Nevada State Parks Passport Booklet, or to find a list of state parks, go **online**.

Gauging the health of Lake Tahoe tributaries

By Tom Lotshaw

Wading in the Upper Truckee River in South Lake Tahoe, Sean Tevlin and Tiffanee Hutton run fine mesh nets through the water to collect benthic macroinvertebrates, insects that live on the bottom of streams and require clean water and good habitat.

Populations are poor, even in shallow riffles where they should be thriving. Instead of stoneflies, mayflies, caddisflies, and other indicators of healthy Sierra streams, they find mostly blackfly larvae, a species more tolerant of pollution and degraded stream conditions.

Assistant environmental specialists for TRPA, Tevlin and Hutton wade 150 meters of the Upper Truckee River, Lake Tahoe's largest tributary, and one of its largest contributors of clarity-robbing fine sediment.

They assess the river's habitat conditions and aquatic life, measure water temperature, flow, and depth, and make extensive notes about its physical attributes, such as riparian vegetation and substrate size.

Stream channels restored or enhanced
2010: 2,780 feet
2011: 8,207 feet
2012: 13,117 feet
2013: 1,570 feet
2014: 1,000 feet
2015: 1,601 feet
Source: *Lake Tahoe Environmental Improvement Program Project Tracker*
Photo/LTN: *Trout Creek in March 2016*

This span of river in the meadows near Highway 50 is in marginal condition. There's heavy channelization, bank erosion, and a layer of fine sediment carpeting the bottom. Water temperatures are high. Similar to the insect life, fish habitat and populations are lacking.

Lingering impacts from cattle grazing and logging decades ago are partly to blame for degrading the stream. But urban stormwater runoff from the highway and the nearby Sierra Tract neighborhood also discharges directly into the river, something the city of South Lake Tahoe and Caltrans are working to address with water quality improvement projects.

Downstream, the California Tahoe Conservancy is planning a broader project to restore the Upper Truckee Marsh. It's the

largest remaining marsh in the Tahoe basin and its restoration would greatly benefit the Upper Truckee River's water quality and habitat.

"It's sad to see poor-quality sections of streams in a beautiful environment like Tahoe, but it shows just how far we have to go to get where we want to be in terms of stream health," Tevlin said.

Lake Tahoe's mid-lake water clarity measurements get lots of attention as a key indicator of water quality and environmental health. But regular monitoring of the 63 streams that flow into Lake Tahoe also provides important information about water and habitat quality, plant and animal populations, and overall watershed health.

Tevlin leads TRPA's stream bio-assessment program. Each year from June through September, Tevlin and his assistant assess the health of randomly selected sections of Tahoe's tributaries. They range from remote, rugged streams with raging whitewater to small backcountry trickles and streams through golf courses and urban areas.

Information from the assessments helps measure the success of stream restoration projects, water quality improvement projects, and conservation measures. It also helps determine whether Tahoe is meeting the mandate to attain and improve threshold standards for things such as water quality and fish habitat.

Tevlin estimates about one-quarter of Tahoe's tributaries are in marginal condition. The rest are in good or excellent condition.

Streams in the Tahoe basin can face many challenges. During the last four years of drought, many streams have seen low water levels and high water temperatures lethal to fish. Other common issues include erosion, sedimentation, stormwater pollution, invasive species, and culverts that block fish

passage. In a 2010-11 survey of 218 stream structures on public land in the Lake Tahoe Basin, including old culverts and dams, the U.S. Forest Service found 64 percent are impassable to fish.

“Compared to the rest of California and Nevada, our streams are pretty good. But for the relatively pristine environment we have, there are a lot of issues,” Tevlin said.

Tevlin hopes to see overall stream health improve because of the stream restoration projects that agencies have completed and other projects in planning. “A lot of sites are falling in areas that have been restored or are going to be restored, so we should see the trend line improving. But it will take time,” Tevlin said.

And as the health of Tahoe’s tributaries improves, the water quality, clarity, and health of Lake Tahoe will benefit as well.

Tom Lotshaw is public information officer at Tahoe Regional Planning Agency. This article first appeared in Tahoe In Depth.

Sand Harbor boat ramp open

Increased water levels at Lake Tahoe have allowed for the opening of the boat ramp at Sand Harbor.

For now, only boats under 14 feet will be able to launch. As the lake raises, Lake Tahoe Nevada State Park officials hope to allow more boats to launch.

Boaters are required to have their powered watercraft inspected and/or sealed prior to arriving at the ramp. For

more information on the invasive species program, go **online**.

The boat ramp is open Monday through Wednesday from 7am-3:30pm, and Thursday through Sunday from 6am-8pm. The cost to launch is $20 per vehicle.

Sand Harbor State Park is located three miles south of Incline Village on Highway 28.

Nev. panel discusses e-games wagering

By Daniel Rothberg, Las Vegas Sun

State leaders and regulators explored Friday whether Nevada could allow wagering on e-sports, a growing industry of video game competitions that attracts millennials and is expected to bring in $1.9 billion by 2018.

As many groups push for a larger e-sports presence in Nevada, officials must determine whether spectators can bet on them like they would a sporting event.

During the meeting of the Nevada Gaming Policy Committee – a panel that included Gov. Brian Sandoval, regulators and casino executives – topics such as daily fantasy sports, e-sports, skills-based gaming and online gaming were discussed. The popularity of the video game industry could bring significant economic development if regulators agreed to take wagers on the outcome.

Read the whole story

Several controlled fires planned for South Shore

Lake Valley Fire Protection District and the U.S. Forest Service may conduct prescribed fire operations beginning May 16, weather permitting.

Operations on the South Shore may take place northeast of the Lake Tahoe Airport near Barbara Avenue, off Lake Tahoe Boulevard and Sawmill Road, off Panther Lane near the west end of Gardner Mountain and off Santa Claus Drive and West River Parkway near Christmas Valley. To view a map with project locations and details, go **online**.

Residual smoke may be seen in locations where operations have taken place over the last several weeks.

Think twice before fertilizing in Tahoe

By Angela Stevens

As summer approaches in the Tahoe basin, people naturally start looking at their yards and wondering what they should do to make that grass grow thick and green.

Many Tahoe homeowners and residents in recent drought years

have opted to replace their lawns with native or drought-tolerant landscaping that saves water by needing less irrigation. Those who have kept their grass might be thinking it’s time to apply fertilizer to keep that yard looking healthy.

Think again!

Many of us unknowingly waste time and money by putting too much fertilizer on our plants and lawns, often at the wrong times. Fertilizers contain nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium (N-P-K), the primary nutrients for plant growth. All plants need an appropriate balance of essential nutrients, but applying fertilizer doesn’t always mean a healthy green lawn, and there can be consequences for Lake Tahoe.

Why fertilizer can be a problem

Lake Tahoe is naturally oligotrophic (nutrient-poor) due to the geology in the basin. This contributes to the lake’s remarkable water clarity. Water bodies require some nutrients to be healthy, but too much can be harmful. Human-caused disturbances such as urbanization, accelerated erosion, fertilizer use, and stormwater runoff have caused nitrogen and phosphorus to become unnaturally abundant in the lake.

In Lake Tahoe, algae growth is limited by the available supply of phosphorus. Excess phosphorus in the lake feeds the growth of algae and periphyton (attached algae). Increased algae growth decreases the water quality and lake clarity. The water can become green and cloudy, blocking light and depleting oxygen for fish and aquatic plants. Algal blooms can have an unpleasant odor and appearance that reduce the aesthetic quality and alter the ecology of Lake Tahoe.

Fertilizer, when it is overused, overwatered, or spilled onto paved surfaces or bare soil, can end up in the lake. Fertilizer typically finds its way into Lake Tahoe when irrigation, rain, or melted snow picks it up as the water

flows over driveways, sidewalks, streets, or parking lots. This runoff delivers debris, dirt, road sand, fine particles, nutrients, and other pollutants, which flow directly into storm drains, streams, rivers, and Lake Tahoe.

What you can do

You can help prevent fertilizer from reaching the lake by planting native or adapted vegetation instead of a lawn. Lawns can provide defensible space, erosion control, and play areas for children and pets, but these grassy areas tend to be overfertilized and overwatered. Many other combinations of trees, shrubs, and groundcover can achieve the same erosion-control benefits while using less water.

Generally speaking, lawns need much less fertilizer than is advertised. To find out exactly what your lawn needs, have your soils tested for pH and nutrient levels. Tahoe soils contain plenty of phosphorus, so choose a fertilizer that doesn’t have any. Fertilizer labels will have a nutrient ratio for N-P-K, so choose a fertilizer with a middle number of zero, or ask your landscaper to use phosphorus-free fertilizer.

Choose alternatives: instead of synthetic fertilizers, select slow-release, organic fertilizers or organic compost. Synthetic fertilizers are more concentrated than organic ones, which makes it is easier to overfertilize. This can burn vegetation and harm soil organisms. Synthetic fertilizers also tend to be more water-soluble, leaching out of the soil faster.

Angela Stevens is an associate environmental specialist at Tahoe Regional Planning Agency. This article first appeared in Tahoe In Depth.

Drought, beetles take toll on Tahoe trees

By Terra Breeden

INCLINE VILLAGE – Take a drive around Lake Tahoe and you'll notice red and brown trees jutting out of the evergreen forests, their brittle pine needles dropping off dead branches. Since the snow melted, hundreds of dying trees have been exposed. They are everywhere, from Spooner Summit to Crystal Bay. Dead trees stand forlornly on the roadside, in brick-colored clusters in the meadows, and in huge swaths on the mountain slopes.

Patricia Maloney

Forest ecologist and conservation biologist Patricia Maloney explained the scourge of recent tree deaths in the Lake Tahoe Basin at a May 10 presentation at Sierra Nevada College.

According to Maloney, the prolonged California drought has weakened the trees' natural defenses to pests and disease. When there is a lack of water, Lake Tahoe's trees are susceptible to attacks from bark beetles, forest pathogens – native and invasive – and stress caused by human activity.

“I’ve been studying why trees die for over 20 years,” Maloney said. “I know what’s going on and it’s an important issue.”

Maloney studies tree mortality in the Lake Tahoe Basin by examining the forests and extracting core samples from dead and healthy trees.

“Part of my work is to take a physiological study on drought-stressed trees in the Lake Tahoe Basin,” Maloney said. “I take a core sample and can go back over a 100 years to see how these trees are affected by drought.”

The results are not pretty. Although Maloney is still conducting her research, she’s noticed that the drought has led to increased bark beetle populations.

“In droughts you get elevated bark beetle activity,” Maloney said. “When there’s competition for resources – especially water – everything is aggravated.”

Three types of bark beetles are indigenous to the Sierra Nevada: mountain pine beetles, Jeffrey pine beetles, and fir engraver beetles. As their names imply, each species feeds on specific types of trees, with the mountain pine beetle being the most aggressive.

Usually, trees defend themselves from a bark beetle onslaught by secreting a sticky sap called a pitch tube, which stops beetles from burrowing under the bark. However, in times of drought, many trees simply can’t retain enough fluid to halt a beetle attack.

“Unfortunately, we are seeing no evidence of pitch tubes. The trees’ tanks are empty,” Maloney said. “We’re seeing everything from massive trees to little seedlings die. The trees are so stressed out by the drought that it doesn’t take many beetles to kill them.”

Tree mortality is a growing concern throughout the Lake Tahoe Basin. Photo/Terra Breeden

Another cause of tree death in the Tahoe basin is the spread of forest pathogens like dwarf mistletoe and white pine blister rust. Dwarf mistletoe is a native plant, but white pine blister rust, named for the scab-like eruptions that form on infected trees, is invasive and has recently wiped out many trees in North Lake Tahoe.

“White pine blister rust was introduced to the U.S. by white pine seedlings in the early 1900s, and probably entered the basin area in the 1940s,” Maloney said.

According to Maloney, 65 percent of the white bark pine trees on Rifle Peak are infected with blister rust.

This winter, frequent snow removal has put salt in the wound of drought-stricken trees along roadsides surrounding the lake. Quite literally, the brine that’s been slung across the road with every snowstorm is killing trees. Maloney calls this “salt stress.”

“Essentially, the salt binds with water and is absorbed by the tree, scorching the leaves,” Maloney said. “Salt stress affects trees up to 60 feet along roadsides. But in this case,

public safety trumps tree health.”

Lake Tahoe isn’t the only area affected by a high rate of tree deaths this year. The U.S. Forest Service conducted a statewide survey of forest health in California and concluded that since 2015 more than 10 million trees have died. Most of the tree deaths are in the Southern Sierra where last year, temperatures and mountain pine beetle populations skyrocketed.

But Maloney insists that it’s not all doom and gloom; forests recover from droughts. It can take several years, but healthy young saplings will grow and replace the dead stands of trees. Maloney and her team of biologists speed up the forest recovery process by replanting trees in the areas most affected.

“I have 500 seedlings that we are planting from Tunnel Creek to Sand Harbor,” Maloney said.

Maloney also questions whether tree thinning, a practice that’s been utilized around the lake to reduce the risk of wildfire, is actually good for forest health. She thinks that maybe leaving forests dense and un-thinned will give more trees a fighting chance in drought years, even though it increases the threat of wildfire.

As Maloney continues to study tree mortality In Lake Tahoe, she has more questions.

“I’m a conservative optimist,” Maloney said. “Tree mortality is alarming and I’m concerned. But there’s also a lot we don’t understand. What I’m trying to do is find out why some trees die and some don’t.”

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Notes:

· El Dorado County and Georgetown Divide resources conservation districts, CalFire and Society of American

Foresters are co-sponsoring a workshop on tree mortality on June 17 form 8:30am-3pm at the El Dorado Board of Supervisors’ chambers in Placerville.