CalFire to suspend burn permits

Due to the drought and the threat of large damaging wildfires, beginning June 1 the Amador-El Dorado and Nevada-Yuba-Placer units of CalFrie will suspend dooryard burning permits.

CalFire has responded to twice as many wildfires than average and it is anticipated that fire season will only continue to get worse.

Anyone who burns on or after June 1 in these areas may be subject to civil or criminal action including cost recovery charges for a fire suppression response.

Nevada offering free entrance to state parks

In celebration of the Silver State’s Sesquicentennial, and in conjunction with National Get Outdoors Day, residents and visitors will have free access to Nevada state parks June 14.

Park visitors will receive free day use admission and free fishing (no license required) at Nevada’s 23 state parks. In addition, the first 150 vehicles at each park on June 14 will receive a complimentary deck of commemorative Nevada Heritage playing cards.

In honor of the state’s sesquicentennial, Nevada State Parks will also be giving away two annual park passes per week

during the four weeks leading up to the Discover Nevada State Parks Day.

Demo veggie garden being cultivated in SLT

Publisher's note: *This is one in a random series of stories about gardening in Lake Tahoe.*

By Kathryn Reed

Getting one's hands dirty is not only a physical workout it is a mental recharger.

"There is a biological link between soil and people. We have lost that because we are no longer an agrarian society," De-Anne Hooper told *Lake Tahoe News*.

Hooper runs the South Lake Tahoe Family Resource Center and is the driving force behind a demonstration garden at the site that will break ground June 2.



The dirt to the right of the Family Resource Center will become a garden. Photo/LTN

Providing prevention and early intervention when it comes to mental health issues are two of the center's core objectives. The garden will be a component to help people cope.

"Not many people have the opportunity to get their hands dirty in South Lake Tahoe, especially kids. We thought this would be a perfect match," Hooper said.

She is working in cooperation with Brian Hirdman, who teaches gardening classes through Lake Tahoe Community College's Connect Community Education. He has been trying to start a community garden for the last three years. And while this 30-foot-by-50-foot plot isn't big enough to feed a community, it will act as a way to show people what can grow in the basin and how to grow it.

Right now the growing area is raw dirt between the center and chain link fence for the ball field. First to be built is the fence that will enclose the growing area. This will be a joint project by the FRC and Lake Tahoe Unified School District, which owns the property.

Hirdman has some logs, boulders and planter boxes that will be used. The center has boxes already planted on the other side of the parking area that have herbs growing.

"This isn't a farm, so we are not going to have a super high volume of food, especially the first year. It will provide an opportunity for people to dig in the dirt and there is scientific evidence that it helps mental illness and that is the biggest part for me," Hooper said.

The goal is to have a summer program for the kids so they can be tending to the garden.

Hirdman will be teaching a four-part class through Connect Ed where the practical aspect is working at the demo garden. FRC students and their parents are expected to be the long-term caretakers.

The classes may be taken individually. The first one – Creating Healthy Soil – is May 31. July 12 is about which plants grow well here. It will include creating a hoop house to create a microclimate. July 19 focuses on advanced growing techniques. Permaculture and biodynamic growing principles are part of this class. The July 26 class is about xeriscape, which is about being smart about water use.

“This summer I will have workshops with kids. I will teach them how to plant trees, plant vegetables and get in the dirt,” Hirdman told *Lake Tahoe News*. “My goal is to train a group of volunteer leaders who can go about and train kids.”

Hirdman would like to plant fruit trees that have been grafted to stand up to Tahoe’s climate. These could include apple, cherry, plum, apricot and pear.

Large shrubs like elderberries and smaller ones like raspberry, blueberries and currants grow well here.

Another lesson will be learning what annuals work in Tahoe versus perennials.

Hirdman envisions a salsa garden where tomatoes, peppers and cilantro are grown. He also wants to show how squash and corn can be cultivated in Tahoe.

“It will be just like your standard garden … nothing too exotic,” Hirdman said.

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Notes:

• Information about the Connect Ed classes as well as how to register is online.

• Brian Hirdman may be reached at naturesgardener@hotmail.com.

• De-Anne Hooper is available at 530.542.0740.

North Tahoe opening seasonal recreation sites

North Tahoe Regional Park’s summer hours are 7am-8pm.

Parking is $5 for non-residents and free for residents with a valid resident sticker.

Annual North Tahoe PUD parks parking discount passes are available to non-residents for $100 per vehicle. They are available at the district offices during normal business hours. These expire on December 31, 2014 and are not pro-rated.

Tahoe Vista Recreation Area and Boat Launch is open seven days a week from 7am-8pm, weather permitting.

Daily boat launch fees (which include parking until the lot is full) for the Tahoe Vista Recreation Area are $15 for North Tahoe Public Utility District residents and $20 for non-residents. Daily vehicle parking fees for Tahoe Vista Recreation Area are $5 for North Tahoe Public Utility District residents, $10 for non-residents and $25 for buses.

Season parking and launch passes are available at the main NTPUD office on National Avenue for $150 for residents and $275 for non-residents. Please note that the District will not be maintaining Coon Street boat launch so these launch passes will not be accepted at that location if it is open.

When no staff is present, the launch will be closed and locked. Fees listed above do not include TRPA fees.

TRTA working in Tahoe City on National Trails Day

Tahoe Rim Trail Association on June 7 is celebrating the 22nd anniversary of National Trails Day.

TRTA is kicking off the summer trail building season by pitching in to help maintain the trail heading east from Tahoe City on the 64 acres near Fanny Bridge.

No experience is necessary. Groups and families are welcome.

The event is from 8:30am to 4pm.

Meet at the parking lot to register, get lunches packed, provide details for the day and to wrap up at the end of the day.

Tahoe Rim Trail Association will provide lunch for all preregistered volunteers.

For more information or to register, contact Morgan Fessler at morganf@tahoerimtrail.org or 775.298.4489.

Workshops delve into planting suitable ornamentals

In searching for ideal ornamental plants, sometimes people find that seemingly perfect plants refuse to stay where they are planted, and begin to invade adjacent areas. Attendees at the Don’t Plant a Pest workshop will be taught how to select suitable ornamentals that will save them trouble and expense and help protect Lake Tahoe’s natural environment.

The workshops are all from 5:30-6:30pm. They are free an put on by the Lake Tahoe Master Gardeners.

- June 17 at TERC Tahoe City Field Station, aka Historic Fish Hatchery, 2400 Lake Forest Road, Tahoe City
- June 23rd at Lake Tahoe Community College Demonstration Garden, 1 College Drive, South Lake Tahoe
- June 25 at North Lake Tahoe Demonstration Garden, Sierra Nevada College, 999 Tahoe Blvd., Incline Village.

USFS to sell firewood permits for Tahoe basin

The U.S. Forest Service Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit will begin selling firewood permits at the South Shore office on May 19 and at the North Shore office on May 21.

Permits cost $20 per cord, with a two-cord minimum and a limit of 10 cords per household.

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. Cutting any standing tree, whether dead or green, is not allowed.

No off-road travel is allowed and permit holders must comply with all permit conditions.

The last day to purchase a permit is Nov. 14. The last day to cut wood is Nov. 16.

USFS thinning trees by STHS, Sand Pit

The U.S. Forest Service this week started thinning trees for fuels reduction and forest health near South Tahoe High School and the Sand Pit OHV area in South Lake Tahoe.

The Forest Service has closed the areas in units 19 and 117 from 7am-6pm daily through Oct. 14 for public safety due to heavy equipment operations and falling trees.

Project work will not occur on Memorial Day Weekend. Thinning

at the Sand Pit is expected to be completed by the end of May or early June, at which time the Sand Pit will reopen.

Hazards may be present even when operations have finished for the day and the closure is not in effect. Individuals disregarding the closure may be cited, with subsequent fines or jail time.

Wandering wolf may have found a mate

By Jeff Barnard, AP

MEDFORD, Ore. -– Oregon's famous wandering gray wolf, dubbed OR-7, may have found the mate he has trekked thousands of miles looking for, wildlife authorities said Monday. It's likely the pair spawned pups, and if confirmed, the rare predators would be the first breeding pair of wolves in the Oregon's Cascade Range since the early 1900s.

Officials said cameras in the Rogue River-Siskiyou National Forest in the southern Cascades captured several images of what appears to be a female wolf in the same area where OR-7's GPS collar shows he has been living.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service biologist John Stephenson said it is not proof, but it is likely the two wolves mated over the winter and are rearing pups that would have been born in April. Biologists won't start looking for a den until June, to avoid endangering the pups.

"It's amazing that he appears to have found a mate," Stephenson said. "I didn't think it would happen. It makes me

more impressed with the ability of wolves to survive and find one another."

Young wolves typically leave their pack and strike out for a new territory, hoping to find a mate and start a new pack.

OR-7 has been looking for a mate since leaving the Imnaha pack in northeastern Oregon in September 2011. His travels have taken him thousands of miles as he crossed highways, deserts and ranches in Oregon, moved down the spine of the Cascade Range deep into Northern California and then back to Oregon, all without getting shot, having an accident or starving.

Federal Endangered Species Act protections for wolves have been lifted in eastern Oregon, where the bulk of them reside, but they remain in force in the Cascades. Protections for the animals have also ended in the last several years in the Northern Rockies and western Great Lakes.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has proposed ending the listing across most of the rest of the country as populations have rebounded. A final decision is expected later this year.

If a wolf was going to start a pack in a new part of Oregon, ranchers should be glad it is OR-7, who has no history of preying on livestock, said Bill Hoyt, past president of the Oregon Cattlemen's Association. The group supports Oregon's wolf recovery plan and is looking forward to the day the predator's numbers and range expand enough for their protections to be removed.

Steve Pedery, conservation director of Oregon Wild, said the news was "spectacular." The conservation group won a court ruling barring the state from killing two members of OR-7's home pack for preying on livestock and later won a settlement strictly limiting when wolves can be killed.

"It goes to show that when we act on America's best impulses for the environment, amazing things can happen. We can bring

endangered species back," he said.

Stephenson expected the battery on OR-7's GPS collar to die soon, so the biologist set up trail cameras based on the wolf's most recent whereabouts. The GPS locations also showed OR-7 was staying within a smaller area, common behavior when wolves have pups to feed.

When he checked the cameras last week, Stephenson said one had recorded a black wolf he had not seen before. An hour later, OR-7 was photographed on the same camera. The black wolf was confirmed to be female because she squatted to urinate.

Officials had planned to let OR-7's collar die, but now that he appears to have found a mate, he will be fitted with a new one this summer to monitor the pack.

Stephenson said officials had no idea where the female came from.

Sierra mountain range on the rise

If it seems like the Sierra are getting taller, it's because they are.

Depletion of groundwater is causing the Sierra Nevada mountains to rise, according to a study published in the journal Nature on May 14.

"We first wrote two years ago about the rapid rise of the Sierra, with its 14,000-foot peaks in the south and 10,000-foot peaks at Lake Tahoe, moving as much as 1 to 3 millimeters per year," UNR Professor Geoff Blewitt said. "The puzzling

results of our earlier research cannot be explained easily by geology alone. We've now found that a reason for the rapid uplift may be linked to human activity."

The newest chapter of research shows draining of the aquifer for agricultural irrigation in the Central Valley results in upward flexing of the earth's surface and the surrounding mountains due to the loss of mass within the valley. The groundwater subsidence was found to also correlate with seismic activity on the San Andreas Fault.

In the past 150 years, about 40 trillion gallons of groundwater in the Central Valley have been lost through pumping, irrigation and evapotranspiration. That's roughly equal to all the water in Lake Tahoe, the volume of which can cover the entire state of California in 14 inches of water.

"This massive withdrawal of water has relieved pressure on the Earth's crust, which is now rebounding upward in response," Blewitt said. "This is counter-intuitive to most people, even geologists, who tend to only think that water withdrawal causes subsidence, which is only true in the sediments of the valley from which the water is withdrawn. With the weight of the groundwater missing, the hard-rock crust under the valley is actually rising too."

The rise is quite fast in geologic time, with these mountain ranges rising by a similar amount each year – about the thickness of a dime – with a cumulative rise over the past 150 years of up to 6 inches, according to the team of geophysicists.

Blewitt and colleague Bill Hammond, who run the Nevada Geodetic Laboratory at UNR, partnered with University of Western Washington, UC Berkeley and University of Ottawa in the research.

"The real importance of this research is that we are demonstrating a potential link between human activity and

deformation of the solid Earth, which explains current mountain uplift and the yearly variation in seismicity," said Colin Amos, assistant professor of geology from Western Washington University and lead author of the Nature article. "These are questions that lots of geologists have been puzzling over, and it's a real eye opener to think that humans are the ultimate cause."

Blewitt shared the research in a presentation at the European Geophysical Sciences Union conference in Vienna on April 28. The annual EGU General Assembly is the largest and most prominent European geosciences event.

The study is based on detailed GPS measurements from California and Nevada between 2007 and 2010.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report