Mother Nature more of a threat to U.S. than terrorism

By Christopher Dickey, Newsweek

Paul Stockton, the Pentagon's point man for security in the homeland, plans for the kind of apocalyptic events that could forever change the lives of millions of Americans. Assistant Secretary of Defense Stockton, a lifelong academic who speaks passionate jargon, calls them "complex catastrophes" with "cascading effects," and, like Sept. 11, 2001, these new tragedies could have gut–wrenching social and political consequences. Yet the horrors he's preparing for are far bigger than 9/11: tens of thousands of people killed, the economy devastated, national security gravely compromised. And the terrorist who will be responsible for these atrocities is Mother Nature. Stockton's yardstick for cataclysms is not "worse than 9/11," it is "disasters even more severe than Hurricane Katrina."



Hail in South Lake Tahoe in July 2010. Photo/LTN file

They're coming. Of that, Stockton and other disaster-management specialists have little doubt. Last month the East Coast suffered the psychological shock of a relatively small earthquake and what turned out to be a pretty weak hurricane

after some pretty strong hype. “Apocalypse Not,” headlined the New York Post. New York City “dodged a bullet,” as Mayor Michael Bloomberg put it. But New Jersey, upstate New York, and several states in New England didn’t. In Connecticut alone, a record 650,000 households lost power, many of them for several days. In Vermont, food had to be airlifted to towns cut off by flooding. All told, Hurricane Irene killed 43 people in the United States, and estimates of the damage range up to $20 billion.

That’s just a little taste of things to come. Whatever the cause—greenhouse gases, natural warming, or both—-rising temperatures and sea levels already are breeding bigger, more intense hurricanes and more dangerous storm surges. Former vice president Al Gore, the teller of so many inconvenient truths about climate change, says it is “absolutely” a national-security issue. “We can expect continued increases in the frequency and severity of extreme floods, droughts, wildfires, storms and other events,” he says. “We need to begin the process now of preparing for the disasters that are to come.”

According to Gore, “some scientists are considering adding a Category 6 classification to the Saffir-Simpson hurricane scale, which uses wind speed to measure hurricane intensity.” (Irene hit the Northeast as a low-grade Category 1 and then was downgraded to a tropical storm; Katrina hit New Orleans as a Category 3. A Category 5 hurricane has sustained winds greater than 155 miles per hour; Category 6 would be upwards of 175 or 180mph.) And each notch on that scale means an exponential increase in destructive power.

Read the whole story

Say goodbye to fall – snow in the forecast

That four-letter S-word is returning – snow. So says the National Weather Service.

The strong low-pressure system that is expected to develop over the Gulf of Alaska this weekend could bring cold temps, wind and snow to the Lake Tahoe Basin early next week. The white stuff is expected to be above 7,000 feet, with rain below that. The phrase being used is “moderate to heavy precipitation”.

The 70s that have been filling the days will drop 20 degrees. Strong winds are part of the storm. Travel along Highway 395, according to the weather folks in Reno, could be problematic because of the high winds.



The seasons are about to change in Lake Tahoe.
Photo/LTN file

To have some fun with this, *Lake Tahoe News* would like to have a contest. When do you think you will have to shovel at least an inch of snow from your property? With the microclimates in and around the basin, the answer will be different for everyone.

Just put your guess down as a comment. Then when you are shoveling, email to info@LakeTahoeNews.net a picture of yourself shoveling, your full name, mailing address and T-shirt size. Feel free to add some comments that are publishable. The first 10 people seen shoveling will be sent a *Lake Tahoe News* T-shirt.

The other way to get a T-shirt is for subscribers to send in a check of $40 or more. For each check received, in addition to the T-shirt, you will be added to our special NEWS list. People on this list will qualify for special benefits like the ticket give-aways.

(Subscribe by putting your email address in at the bottom right of the home page. Then you will receive the morning digest.)

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Please include your email address so we can ensure you are subscribed to receive the daily digest.

Please don’t forget to include your mailing address and shirt size – S, M, L, XL or 2X.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Youth hockey leagues looking for players

The Tahoe Grizzlies Ice Hockey club season has started with preseason action at the Squirt, Pee Wee and Bantam levels.

The in-house Mite program is seeking new players to start playing ice hockey. Mites is for anyone 9 and younger. Typically most Mites will be in the 7- to 8-year-old range. But sometimes there are kids interested that are 6 years old or even younger. The object is to introduce kids to the joys of playing hockey.

First practice is Oct. 3 from 6-7pm at the South Lake Tahoe Ice Arena (1176 Rufus Allen Blvd.). Players must have a current 2011-12 USA Hockey membership and a copy of their birth certificate to practice. Contact STAHA on how to obtain a USA Hockey membership.

Regular practices are Mondays and Wednesdays from 6-7pm at the ice rink. Players are responsible for providing their own hockey gear (parents and coaches will be on hand at practice to help advise what is required). There is some loaner gear available. Skates may be rented at the rink. Players need to bring their own sticks, although there are also a limited number of sticks available for use by first time players.

Cost of the program is $395 per player. This represents double the ice time for the same price as last year. This covers all practices through mid-March.

STAHA (South Tahoe Amateur Hockey Association) will be organizing the coaches for the year. Coaches must be USA Hockey certified. If you are interested in helping, contact STAHA.

The 2011-12 season marks the first time in many years (the Club historians could not resolve when) that there were three travel teams in the same year. The following levels will be competing at the competitive level across Northern California:

- Squirts – ages 9 and 10
- Pee Wee – ages 11 and 12

• Bantam – ages 13 and 14.

STAHA also has a new president. After several successful years at the helm, Michael Newberger decided to retire. Phil Sorensen was elected to succeed Newberger.

Bicycle Achievement nominees being sought

The Lake Tahoe Bicycle Coalition, a bicycle advocacy organization promoting bicycle use and safety in the region, is accepting nominations for the third annual Lake Tahoe Bicycle Achievement Awards.



The purpose of the awards is to bring attention and recognition to those who have significantly contributed to the advancement of bicycling in Lake Tahoe area.

There are four categories that anyone may submit nominations for (one or all four) and they are: Individual, Business, Governmental Agency and Nonprofit organization. Nominations must accompany specific details, materials, press clippings and or biographies that demonstrate the nominee's significant contributions to bicycling in the area.

The deadline for submitting nominations is Oct. 15.

Nominations and the related materials may be sent to the Lake Tahoe Bicycle Coalition, P.O. Box 1147, Zephyr Cove, NV 89448 or by email to biketahoe@aol.com. Winners will be announced early in November.

For more information, contact (775) 586.9566 or email at biketahoe@aol.com.

Law gives state agency say in how invasive mussels are handled

By Central Valley Business Times

A new law is letting the California Department of Fish and Game to continue an aggressive strategy to combat the spread of quagga and zebra mussels in state waterways.

“If we didn’t allow the DFG to continue with this aggressive control strategy, dreissenid mussels will colonize with alarming speed and cause major harm to our state waterways,” says state Sen. Bob Huff, R-Diamond Bar, the author of the measure.

Dreissenid mussels attach to and rapidly colonize boat hulls, piers and water intake pipes. They reproduce quickly and in huge numbers. They have been found in the Colorado River system and in aqueducts, waterways and reservoirs in Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, San Diego, Imperial and San Benito Counties.

According to the U.S. Department of Fish and Wildlife, quagga mussels have the potential of collapsing entire food webs. The mussels are filter feeders that “remove food and nutrients from the water column very efficiently, leaving less or nothing for native aquatic species” and they “have no natural predators in North America.”

Read the whole story

Tree removal at Big Meadow part of USFS restoration project

The Forest Service will soon begin removing conifers (cone-bearing trees) from meadow, aspen groves and upland forest areas along Scotts Lake Trail, off Big Meadow Trailhead near Luther Pass on Highway 89.

The project should not affect access to the trail, but the Forest Service is asking that users remain on the trail at all times. A contractor will use crews with chain saws for the thinning project, which is likely to begin this week.



Big Meadow before thinning. Photos/Provided

The tree-thinning is part of a larger project, the Big Meadow Creek Watershed Fire Regime Restoration project. Prior to the recent history of active fire suppression, ground fires

occurred naturally.

Past logging and grazing have also affected the area's vegetation. Ultimately, excessive conifer growth can reduce or eliminate aspen stands and meadows and lead to forest die-off from insect infestation, drought or fire.

During this portion of the project, 55 acres of meadow, aspen and forest upland habitat will be treated. In all, the project aims to treat as many as 640 acres. Crews will pile material for burning. Piles generally must cure for about two to three years before they're dry enough to burn. Once forest thinning and pile burning are complete, the Forest Service will begin meadow burns that more closely simulate the natural role fire once played in the ecosystem.



Big Meadow after thinning.

The Forest Service has designed the project to reduce or avoid impacts to air quality, wildlife habitat, stream environment zones, recreation and other resources.

The project is funded by the Southern Nevada Public Land Management Act. For a complete project description, go online. Go to the links on the left and navigate to land and resource management and then projects and plans.

Boat ramps in Tahoe change inspection hours

The winter boating season starts Oct. 1. Lake Tahoe boat inspections are moving from the off-site inspection locations back to launch ramps.

Sand Harbor's boat ramp will be open Thursday through Monday 6am-2pm and Cave Rock's launch hours will be 6am to 4pm starting Oct. 1. These hours will be in effect until March 31, 2012.

Remember to keep current Tahoe Inspection seals intact to streamline inspections. Plan ahead to be familiar with new requirements and inspection locations. Launch ramps may be closed during periods of inclement winter storms.

For more information on launch locations and hours of operation, up-to-date weather closures or any other questions, call 888.824.6267 or go online.

Deaths climb in California national forests

By Matt Weiser, Sacramento Bee

Yosemite National Park has gotten all the attention for a spike in visitor deaths this year. But fatalities also are up on national forest lands throughout California, such as an

expert kayaker who drowned in a remote creek near Sonora.

Data provided by the U.S. Forest Service show there have been 27 deaths in 18 national forests in the state through Aug. 15, the most recent data available.

That is about equal to the total number of deaths in each of the last three full calendar years, said Stanton Floria, a spokesman for the Forest Service's Pacific Southwest Region, which is based in Vallejo and oversees all the California forests.

"We have been noticing a trend toward more injuries and fatalities," Floria said. "We're already at the point where we've been in past years, and we haven't concluded the year yet, so that's fairly telling."

The *Bee* reported in August about a similar deadly trend at Yosemite, after prominent incidents at Half Dome and Vernal Fall. Since then, six more people have died at Yosemite, bringing the park's total for the year to 20 fatalities.

As at Yosemite, many of the deaths on forest lands are water-related, including instances in which people were swept into creeks and drowned.

"This might be a result of a link to the heavy snow year, with heavier and longer runoffs," John Chang, chairman of the California Mountain Rescue Association, said via email. The addition of a mild summer may have "led to more people being caught off guard."

Some of the deaths are connected to extreme sports.

Read the whole story

North alignment of Stateline-Stateline bike trail under review

The north end of the Stateline-to-Stateline bike trail is undergoing an environmental assessment.

The Tahoe Regional Planning Agency, Federal Highway Administration and U.S. Forest Service are the lead agencies.

The area being studied is between Incline Village and Sand Harbor. This roughly 3-mile stretch would include a 10-foot wide paved path with 2-foot shoulders. It will also include a sidewalk on the west side of Highway 28 between Lakeshore Boulevard and the guard rail north of Hidden Beach, trailhead parking, and a drop-off/turn-around area just north of Tunnel Creek that may include limited parking.

This is part of the larger 30-mile trail going from Crystal Bay to Stateline. The Stateline demo portion has passed its environmental hurdles. Construction is supposed to start in 2012, with it taking three seasons for that section to be built.

The project description and alignment map are on TRPA's website and the project website.

People may comment on the north demo site until Oct. 21. Send comments to Brian Judge, TRPA, P.O. Box 5310, Stateline, NV 89449-5310.

A meeting on the project is slated for Oct. 5 at 6pm at the Chateau in Incline Village.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Kokanee Salmon Festival is more than just a fish event

The U.S. Forest Service Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit invites residents and visitors to attend the Kokanee Salmon Festival, which celebrates the annual fall migration of kokanee salmon at the Taylor Creek Visitor Center.

The event is Oct. 1-2 from 10am-4pm. The visitor center is located three miles north of South Lake Tahoe on Highway 89.



Participants can learn about the natural wonders of Taylor Creek and take part in many activities, including a salmon barbecue, kokanee trail runs, children's activities, educational and streamside programs, and much more.

On Sunday at 2pm, Wild Thing, Inc. will present a live wildlife program at the Lake of the Sky Amphitheater. This free program features live animals, which may include a bald eagle, barn owl, turkey vulture, a beaver, and snakes. Because of the live animals on stage, attendees should leave pets at home.

The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service will bring a 40-foot inflatable fish for children to explore, and the festival's two new mascots, Sandy and Rocky Salmon, will make appearances each day. There will even be a special appearance by Smokey Bear.

The Kokanee Salmon Festival and Oktoberfest at Historic Camp Richardson Resort, occur the same weekend, so the parking lot at the visitor center fills quickly. Visitors are encouraged

to ride a bike or walk along the bike path between Camp Richardson and the visitor center, or take public transportation from South Lake Tahoe. BlueGo and the Nifty Fifty trolley will provide special service for these events. Contact them at (530) 541.7149.

All proceeds from T-shirt sales, festival pin sales, and the trail runs benefit the U.S. Forest Service environmental education programs in the Lake Tahoe Basin.

For more information and a complete schedule of activities, call (530) 543.2674.