Forest Service warnings for July 4 in Lake Tahoe

With the busy Fourth of July holiday approaching, the U.S. Forest Service Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit asks residents and visitors to help protect public safety and our environment.

Keep wildfire prevention in mind during Fourth of July celebrations. Possession of fireworks of any kind, including sparklers, is illegal in the Lake Tahoe Basin. Campfires and charcoal barbecue grills are not permitted on Forest Service beaches or in the general forest.

This year, an additional safety concern is the volume of runoff from snow melt causing rivers, creeks and waterfalls to run high, fast and cold. Water that you may have crossed easily at one point in the day may not be crossable when you're ready to return.

The annual alcohol ban will be in effect on Nevada Beach, within Zephyr Cove Resort and Zephyr Shoals (the former Dreyfus Estate). These areas will be patrolled by law enforcement personnel from the Forest Service, and Douglas County and Carson County sheriff's deputies, and by private security staff. County and state laws also ban the possession or consumption of alcohol on the Truckee River from Tahoe City to Alpine Meadows over the holiday weekend.

If you're parking on the side of the road to access Forest Service facilities, make sure you're parked completely on gravel or dirt, not on vegetation. Parking on vegetation may result in a citation for resource damage, plus there's a chance your car's catalytic converter could spark a fire. Even better, consider public transportation if you're going to the beach that day. The Nifty Fifty Trolley stops at Forest

Service beaches along the South and West Shores.

Please keep in mind that in developed recreation sites, such as Kiva, Tallac and the Taylor Creek Visitor Center, parking is allowed only in designated parking spaces, not along the roadway. Do not park where you will block access or narrow lanes, which could impede response in an emergency.

Day-use fees for the Fourth of July at Pope, Baldwin, and Nevada beaches will again be $20 this year to cover increased security and facility maintenance costs on the holiday. The beaches have become increasingly popular for Tahoe visitors and locals on the Fourth of July.

Finally, please respect the rules on where dogs are allowed. Dogs are not allowed at designated swim beaches, including Nevada, Pope, Baldwin, Meeks and William Kent. If you are looking for a place to take your leashed dog, try Kiva Picnic Area from Valhalla Boathouse/Pier to Tallac Point in South Lake Tahoe, Echo Lakes on Echo Summit, Zephyr Shoals on the East Shore (the old Dreyfus Estate located north of Zephyr Cove Resort), Hidden and Chimney beaches on the East Shore, Coon Street Beach (at the boat launch) in King’s Beach, Kaspian and 64 Acres in Tahoe City.

For more information, visit the Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit website at http://fs.usda.gov/ltbmu or call (530) 543.2600.

Doggie Day at Cove East

Bring your human and canine companions and join the California Tahoe Conservancy for fun and educational Doggie Day festivities at Cove East near the Tahoe Keys Marina in South

Tahoe on June 30.

The event begins is from 4-7pm.

This is the first Doggie Day event hosted on CTC land.

The event is free.

Pet-friendly giveaways, costume and talent contests, games, pet health and safety information, grooming tips, and other information will be available. Pet owners will learn about the Conservancy's public lands and be given an opportunity to hone their pet etiquette skills. Well-behaved, leashed dogs are welcomed; costumed dogs are encouraged and may win a prize.

Partners for the canine festival include El Dorado County Animal Control, Lake Tahoe Humane Society, Pet Station, Pet Supermarket, RSN, Sierra Veterinary Hospital, SLTPD K-9 Unit, Tahoe Keys Marina and other community members.

For information, contact Sarah Huntress or Hazel Birnbaum at (530) 543.6004.

Scarce money taking toll on California State Parks

By Sacramento Bee

The images won't appear in any California State Parks brochure.

MacKerricher State Park: Fifty elementary-school kids arrive for their annual end-of-year camping trip, only to find the drinking water contaminated.

Mount Tamalpais: A trail near the visitors center greets disabled visitors and families with a 12- to 50-foot sheer drop-off – and no guardrail.

Hearst Castle: The marble Neptune Pool at California's most famous state park leaks so much that stalactites have formed in a cavity underneath.



Pam Valentine and Sue Wood found the showers at Bothe State Park in Napa Valley in June to have issues. Photo/Kathryn Reed

Look beyond the crashing waves and towering redwoods, and California's 278 state parks are a tangle of troubles. The nation's largest state parks system is weighed down by a $1.3 billion maintenance backlog, according to a review of park records by the *Sacramento Bee*.

Read the whole story

A meadow of memories

By Kathryn Reed

It’s hard not to come across several dogs when walking along Trout Creek behind Lake Tahoe Community College.

It’s a favorite urban walk, as some call it, for two-legged and four-legged animals on the South Shore. Plenty of opportunities abound for access to the cold water – either for a quick swim in the icy wet stuff or for a drink.



A makeshift pet cemetery near Trout Creek. Photos/Kathryn Reed

The meadow is wide-open for much of the walk. This makes spotting the lurking coyote that much easier.

Different offshoots of the trail take people closer to the creek, while others lead to the college’s Demonstration Garden.

It’s such a popular spot for dogs that several have been buried in the area. Markers of loving tribute are written to and about these pets.

ngg_shortcode_0_placeholder (Click on photos to see full size.)

Cash rebates for defensible space work

Help is available for Lake Tahoe Basin residents to make their homes and families safer in the event of wildfire. Free home inspections, tree removal permits and 50 percent rebates – up to $1,000 – for vegetation management such as tree removal are available in most Lake Tahoe communities.

A partnership of Tahoe Bbsin agencies called the Tahoe Fire and Fuels Team is encouraging property owners to take action now to establish defensible space around their home. Visit http://www.TahoeFireSafe.com for details.

Many of the steps needed to create defensible space can be completed by the homeowner, such as:

* Removing dead vegetation, including dead shrubs, dried grass, fallen branches, pine needles, pine cones, etc.

* Thinning brush and trees to create a separation. Most local fire protection agencies can provide free inspections and tree removal permits. Call (530) 543-3473 to learn more.

* Removing “ladder fuels” by pruning lower tree branches and brush underneath trees that allow wildfire to climb and spread.

Last year, more than 750 homeowners completed the Nevada Fire Safe Council’s defensible space program and received a rebate. Additionally, forest fuel reduction was completed on approximately 1,400 acres in and around Lake Tahoe communities by local fire crews.

The Five-Step Defensible Space Rebate Process:

1. Contact your local fire protection agency to schedule a defensible space inspection

2. Call the NVFSC to receive a free inspection voucher: (530) 543.3473 or apply online

3. Get any work done on your property recommended by your local fire agency as soon as possible

4. Contact the NVFSC to schedule a property evaluation

5. When the property passes the final evaluation, the NVFSC will mail a rebate check within 21 days of the completed evaluation

For more information, call (530) 543.3473 or visit www.nvfsc.org.

TRTA backpacking class

The Tahoe Rim Trail Association is offering a Backpacking 101 class.

It is led by seasoned guides and Snowcamping 101 instructors Wayne McClelland and Jordan Summers. This class will go over all the basics of backpacking from how to pack to choosing a campsite and cooking your meals.

The two will guide participants to Gray Lake on a 5-mile hike with 2,000 feet of elevation gain. You must be able to hike 5-plus miles per day at elevation with a 20-30 pound backpack. Participants must provide their gear, food and clothing.

Backpacking 101 is designed to equip people with the confidence to plan a safe backpacking trip. This course will

start in the classroom, but then the skills you just learned are tested in an overnight experience. Specifically, your guides/instructors will cover: trip planning; packing; basic orientation skills; bear awareness; campsite selection and set-up; cooking hints and demonstrations; principals of Leave No Trace.

Course time: 10am July 10-2pm July 11

Cost: Suggested $60 donation

For more information, and for prerequisites for this course, call (775) 298.0012 or email programs@tahoerimtrail.org.

Guatemala lake tapping into how Tahoe has been preserved

By Science Daily

A team of scientists from the University of Nevada, Reno, DRI, Arizona State University and University of California, Davis has returned from a two-week expedition to Guatemala's tropical high-mountain Lake Atitlan, where they are working to find solutions to the algae blooms that have assailed the ecosystem and the drinking water source for local residents.

The lake's water is contaminated with watershed runoff and waste water, which contributes to increased algae growth and suitable conditions for bacteria and pathogens such as, Escherichia coli and Giardia that can proliferate and enter untreated drinking water.

In 2009, the Global Nature Fund designated Guatemala's Lake Atitlan as its "Threatened Lake of the Year."

Read the whole story

SLT Rec Center offers youth summer passes

South Lake Tahoe Parks and Recreation Department offers savings for teens at the ice arena and swimming pool for grades 5-10. LTUSD ID required.

The recreation center pass for the summer is $25, ice arena pass is $35 and the combo pass is $50.

Visit www.recreationintahoe.com or call (530) 542.6056 for details and times.

Bike trail to be paved when Al Tahoe Blvd. gets overlay

By Kathryn Reed

The 20-year-old Al Tahoe bike trail is going to look and feel brand new by the end of summer.

South Lake Tahoe Parks and Recreation Director Gary Moore said the trail from Johnson Boulevard to Pioneer Trail was almost closed because of the terrible condition it is in. He called this the worst section of Class I trail in the city.



Cycling on the Al Tahoe bike path in South Tahoe is about to be smoother. Photo/Kathryn Reed

The 1.1 miles are filled with cracks, weeds growing between some of them, quite a number of ant hills bringing dirt onto the path and bumps that weren't there when the asphalt was first laid. It rides more like a mountain bike trail than something road bike riders would want to pedal on.

With the bid for paving on the actual road coming in below expectations, there was leftover money, so to speak, so the bike trail gets to be overhauled.

Construction will begin July 13. Expect delays as the road is reduced to one lane.

When the project is completed the bike path will meet today's higher specifications. Twenty years ago no base work was required.

Granite Construction of Watsonville will be doing the work on the road and trail at the same time.

The City Council had budgeted nearly $1.2 million for the pavement project. The bid came in at $605,605, which left money in city coffers to re-do the bike trail. The bike trail will cost about $143,000 to reconstruct.

Effort to cleanup after unsanitary Rubicon Trail users

El Dorado County is asking off-road enthusiasts to support its Yellow Bandana Campaign to eradicate the infamous “white flowers” on the world-famous Rubicon Trail. White (toilet paper) flowers are found where off road enthusiasts have failed to follow proper human waste disposal and sanitation procedures while on the Rubicon.

Last year the Central Valley Water Quality Control Board issued a Cleanup and Abatement Order to El Dorado County and the U.S. Forest Service to address water quality issues stemming from the use of the Rubicon Trail. Since then El Dorado County has identified the trail location, installed various best management practices such as waterbars, and rock filters, and completed a user count.

Off-road coalition Friends of the Rubicon with support from Rubicon Trail Foundation has organized a Volunteer Day on June 26 from 8:30am-4pm. More than 100 volunteers are expected to work with county staff on trail improvements from the Loon Lake Kiosk to Gatekeeper, a famous trail obstacle. The day also marks the official kick-off to the Yellow Bandana Campaign.

The California State Parks Off-Highway Vehicle Division is also supporting El Dorado County’s efforts through a $1.2 million grant. The county plans to hire dozens of seasonal workers this summer with the grant funds to advance trail improvements before next winter.

More information about the Rubicon Trail and the Yellow Bandana Campaign is available at www.YellowBandanaCampaign.com.