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WEEKLY NEWSPAPER OF THREE RIVERS AND SEQUOIA~KINGS CANYON NATIONAL PARKS

Alta Acres embroiled in water dispute

By JOHN ELLIOTT

When Lake Kaweah is full to the brim, it's hard to imagine that in a few short weeks a sizable group of Kaweah River water users could be facing critical water shortages. Most locals, who own and maintain their own hard rock wells unless a pump fails, rarely even think about the possibility of a water shortage.

But consider the plight of hundreds of other Three Rivers residents who depend on river wells for their supply. When seasonal snowmelt is gone in some dry years during August and September, the flow of the mighty Kaweah River can slow to barely a trickle.

That recurring condition, which is predicted to become more the norm than the exception in this era of climate change, can really put pressure on the dozens of local

—see **WATER**, page 11



SUMMER MEANS... pie-eating contests! Anyway you look at it, this guy was a winner during the Pinehurst Lodge's centennial celebration.

—SEE STORY ON PAGE 7

California budget impasse causes state of emergency

The beginning of the fiscal year — July 1 — has come and gone, and California is making headlines because the state Legislature has failed to pass a budget nor solved the state's growing deficit — currently \$24.3 billion. As a result, Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger proclaimed Wednesday a fiscal emergency and called a Proposition 58 legislative special session to address this emergency.

Additionally, the Governor exercised his executive authority to save cash for vital state functions — think fire season — and services by ordering three furlough days every month for State of California employees.

This week, the Governor has followed through on his promise to veto any budget bills sent to him by the Legislature that failed to solve the entire deficit. He reiterated July 1 that he will not sign any legislation until a solution for the entire budget deficit is in place.

As a result of this impasse between Governor and Legislature, beginning Friday, July 10, state offices will be closed the first, second, and third Fridays of every month through June 2010. All affected state employees will be unpaid on those days.

Under Proposition 58, the Legislature has 45 days to pass and send a bill or bills to the Governor's desk addressing

—see **BUDGET**, page 11

Three Rivers rainfall season ends at 82 percent

In these wacky weather times the great debate is what's normal. But looking at rainfall for the last half-century in Three Rivers at the 1,000-foot elevation level, it's obvious that the normal "average" is 20 inches, plus or minus a few hundredths depending on the location.

What this means for the current season — 2008 to 2009 — is that the 16.33 inches for Three Rivers is 82 percent of the 30-year norm; the norm is based upon the average rainfall since 1979. The rainfall season runs from July 1 through June 30.

This year had some noteworthy events, including .62

inches of rainfall on June 6. That freshet was the first significant June rainfall in Three Rivers since 2000.

Here are some more stats for comparison. In 2007-2008, the rainfall total was 18.42 inches. The last season above normal was 2006-07 when it rained 28.26 inches.

In 2003-04 there was only 13.01 inches the entire season. In the last 50 years, more than 1,000 inches of precipitation has been recorded at the collection station on Barton Mountain, near the confluence of the North and Middle forks of the Kaweah River.

3R activist appointed to TCAG board

Tom Sparks, a longtime proponent of community improvement projects in Three Rivers and Tulare County was promoted from an alternate to an at-large position on the 16-member policy advisory board of the Tulare County Association of Governments (TCAG). The appointment was made at the May 18 meeting of TCAG; Sparks was seated and assumed his new responsibilities on the board at the June 15 meeting.

TCAG was created by a joint powers agreement in 1971 to oversee regional transportation planning. The policy advisory board consists of the five county supervisors, the mayors of the county's eight incorporated cities, and three

at-large members. The advisory board also includes a Caltrans representative; the final decision in all matters resides in the board of governors consisting of the 13 elected officials.

Sparks replaced Cliff Dunbar who retired from the board. The other at-large members who represent unincorporated Tulare County are Bob Zimmerman, who lives in the Ducor area, and Bill McKinley of Springville.

"Visalia has a huge influence as to what the board

—see **TCAG**, page 11

FIREWORKS ARE ILLEGAL IN THREE RIVERS, SEQUOIA-KINGS CANYON NATIONAL PARKS, AND ALL UNINCORPORATED AREAS OF TULARE COUNTY

If it's summer, it must be fire season

A lightning-caused fire continues to burn in the Golden Trout Wilderness, near where Shotgun Creek flows into the Little Kern River, just south of Sequoia National Park's southern border. The Shotgun Fire, as of the end of June, had burned 231 acres.

The fire, discovered Tuesday, June 23, was started by lightning earlier in June. It is being allowed to burn naturally, but is being managed by 70 firefighters from the U.S. Forest Service and National Park Service.

The National Park Service is gearing up to ignite a prescribed fire in Kings Canyon National Park as soon as a favorable weather window presents itself, which looks like it could be early next week. The Hart Prescribed Fire, when complete, will have treated 802 acres in giant sequoia forest between the Generals Highway and Redwood Canyon.

Several prescribed fires are planned this summer for the Giant Forest area, totaling about 220 acres. These projects, however, are dependent on conditions and commitments by NPS fire crews.

If lightning fires are sparked or if crews are called away to wildland fires in other areas of the West, the planned projects will be postponed.

• KAWEAH COUNTRY OUTLOOK: three rivers • lemon cove • woodlake •							WEATHER WATCH
INDEPENDENCE DAY, July 4	Sunday, July 5	Monday, July 6	Tuesday, July 7	Wednesday, July 8	Thursday, July 9	Friday, July 10	The cool temperatures that ushered in June are now but a memory as the calendar changes to July. A heat wave this past week has had Kaweah Country sweltering in temperatures that have been at or above 100 degrees. The mercury will drop a few degrees for the Fourth of July weekend... to the high 90s. All this hot air is colliding with the cool at higher elevations, creating the chance for afternoon thunderstorms in the high country. In addition, there is a chance of encountering snow if hiking at elevations above 9,500 feet, so use caution. Also be careful if seeking to escape the summer heat in the Kaweah River, which can be deadly for the uninitiated.
Sunny	Sunny	Sunny	Sunny	Sunny	Sunny	Sunny	
Hi 101 • Lo 66	Hi 99 • Lo 64	Hi 96 • Lo 62	Hi 92 • Lo 60	Hi 92 • Lo 62	Hi 97 • Lo 65	Hi 99 • Lo 69	