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

'River Watch' makes contact at Slicky

by JOHN ELLIOTT

Imagine if your job was to hang out at the river all day. Among the items in your job description was to advise youthful visitors where and how to safely swim in the river. Oh, and also you must constantly remind everyone you meet about their responsibility of keeping the river clean and pristine.

That's how Eric Burger of Three Rivers spent this past Fourth of July weekend, and Margaret Roberts, owner of Rio Sierra Riverhouse, credits Eric,

along with some proactive Sheriff's deputies, for keeping the peace at Slicky.

In general, the weekend was safe and sane at all the popular area swimming holes.

At Slicky, Eric, a former computer instructor, landscaper, and lifeguard really made an impact by being at the river the entire weekend.

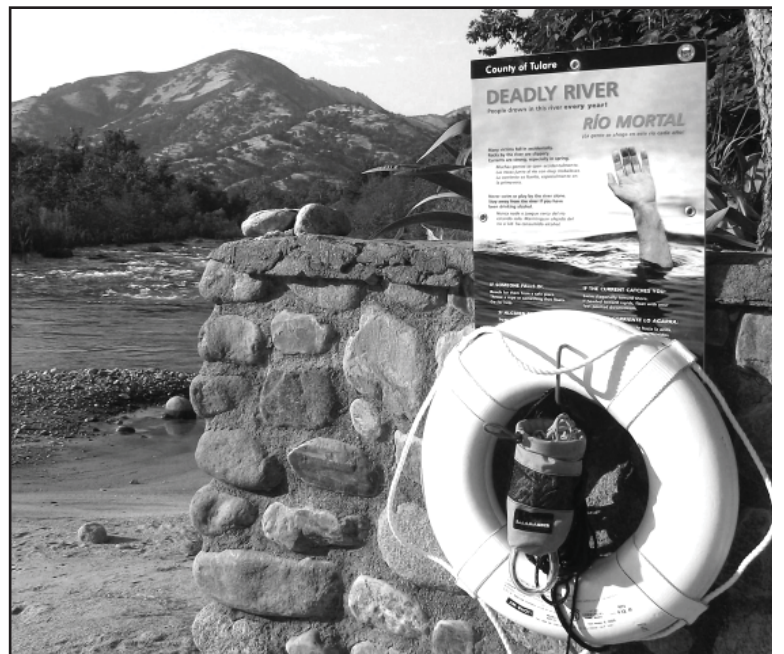
"I'm in the process of being re-certified as a lifeguard so my priority is warning everyone about river dangers and helping to save a life if that becomes necessary,"

Eric said.

Eric's involvement at Slicky came about because of Margaret's desire to have someone on-site to remind Slicky users where her property line is located so as to enforce a small buffer between the public users and her paying guests at Rio Sierra Riverhouse.

Roberts said she couldn't be more pleased with Eric's approach to his role as "point man" for River Watch at Slicky. The watch is a newly-organized committee of locals that is working

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A SIGN NEAR Slicky warns of river danger. Rescue gear, including a throw rope bag and rescue ring, are ready when needed.

Incidents keep parks personnel busy

Traditionally, the local national parks are packed throughout the Fourth of July weekend. That means there will be a spike in emergency calls and this season, with the extremely high water, there's even greater risk to visitors and more calls for assistance.

On the morning of Sunday, July 4, a group of backpackers

reported seeing a body in the South Fork of the Kings River near Mist Falls. Park rangers located the apparent drowning victim just below the falls in steep terrain within Kings Canyon National Park.

After a technical recovery of the body the next day using 20 rescuers and a helicopter, the

victim was identified as Khan Nguyen, a 40-year-old male. His remains were released to the Fresno County Coroner to determine the cause of death.

Also on July 4, the parks dispatcher received a report of a 29-year-old woman who was suffering seizures in the Mehrtzen Creek area on the High Sierra Trail. An 11-person detail of NPS rescuers departed Crescent Meadow at midnight to hike the

—see PARKS, page 11

Local kayaker aids in rescue

by JOHN ELLIOTT

For one amateur rafter on Thursday, July 1, there was some high anxiety as he realized he was out of control on the Middle Fork of the Kaweah River. The incident began when a group of makeshift rafters entered the water at the North Fork Bridge.

Although the rafters were wearing life vests, their gear nor their rafts would not meet navigation requirements on this day

for a safe trip down the swiftly flowing river. Within seconds of entering the water, the 18-year-old victim got caught in the swift current and separated from the rest of the group, disappearing down river. Someone in the party called 911 at 4:44 p.m., and the search and, hopefully, rescue was on.

In a matter of minutes, a helicopter was flying the treetops above the river, searching for any signs of the wayward rafter. Firefighters on foot were combing the riverbank up and down from Three Rivers Golf Course to below the post office.

While all this search activity was taking place, Sage Root, an experienced local whitewater guide, launched his kayak just upriver from the North Fork Bridge.

It didn't take Root long to locate the victim among the dense vegetation on an island near the golf course. Root assisted the

—see RESCUE, page 11



ON THURSDAY, JULY 1, a helicopter hovered over the Middle Fork of the Kaweah River to search for a missing amateur rafter.

Pot eradicated in Sequoia

Law enforcement rangers eradicated an illegal marijuana grow site west of Crystal Cave in Sequoia National Park. The raid was completed Thursday, July 1, and marked the opening of this season's war on growers who desecrate public lands in order to plant thousands of acres of the illegal herb.

A total of 20,324 plants with an estimated street value of \$81 million were removed from the grow

site. Park personnel also carried out trash, fertilizers, pesticides, herbicides, and other hazardous materials from the clandestine encampment. A number of spent shell casings were also found at the site.

According to investigators, there was evidence at the scene that the camp is linked to Mexican drug cartels. No arrests were made however, the investigation is ongoing.

• KAWEAH COUNTRY OUTLOOK: three rivers • lemon cove • woodlake •

| Saturday, July 10 | Sunday, July 11 | Monday, July 12 | Tuesday, July 13 | Wednesday, July 14 | Thursday, July 15 | Friday, July 16 |
|-------------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|
| | | | | | | |
| Mostly sunny Hi 99 • Lo 68 | Sunny Hi 99 • Lo 66 | Sunny Hi 100 • Lo 67 | Sunny Hi 100 • Lo 66 | Sunny Hi 99 • Lo 64 | Sunny Hi 97 • Lo 65 | Sunny Hi 98 • Lo 65 |

WEATHER WATCH

There won't be much change in the current conditions in the near future but the level of Lake Kaweah will continue its annual downward swan song. The current (as of July 8) pool elevation is 707.07 feet already down more than seven feet in the last two weeks. The storage is 168,926 with an outflow of 2,285 cfs; mean inflow is 1,231 cfs, which marks a significant decrease from the daily sustained flows of more than 2,000 cfs during June.