

Daylight Saving Time begins this weekend



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

Visalia man drowns at Lake Kaweah

In Kaweah Country during a big water year, there is bound to be tragedy. Most often, a local drowning occurs when an unsuspecting victim enters the Kaweah River either by design or accident.

But the chilly Lake Kaweah water can claim victims, too. That's what happened Saturday, March 1, just before 4:30 p.m. after a fishing party had launched earlier that afternoon from the Kaweah Marina. From reports of witnesses at the scene, the troubling incident began when the small boat that a trio of Visalia residents were using to fish 100 yards from shore began

—see **DROWNING**, page 11



SNOW SHOW: From the Big Meadows Road in Giant Sequoia National Monument, there is a snowscape for as far as one can see. A current pack of more than six feet makes the spring skiing conditions the best in the past decade. The Generals Highway is currently open with no chain restrictions.

It's official: There's lots of snow

By JOHN ELLIOTT

Even if the higher elevations of Kaweah Country don't get another flake of snow for the rest of the season, the pack that is already piled up has ensured an above normal runoff for the Kaweah drainage. With a few more storms — and according to the long-range forecast that's entirely possible — the Kaweah River and its downstream users could be in for a whopper of a water year.

All that good news is between the lines of the countless water statistics released March 1 by the California Department of Water Resources (DWR). Overall, the statewide percentage of water content for the Sierra region is 118 percent, but the drainages farthest south have the best news of all.

The most recent electronic sensors data show the northern Sierra water equivalents at 122 percent; the central Sierra at 118 percent; and the southern Sierra at 130 percent. One year ago, those same readings were 69 percent for the

—see **SNOW**, page 6

Slick Rock environmental assessment available for public review

In what could be the final hurdle before construction, Phil Deffenbaugh, Lake Kaweah park manager, announced this week that a draft Environmental Assessment (EA) is now available for public review. The review period will end Wednesday, March 19, for the document that evaluates the construction of an access road, parking lot, and boat launching ramp that proposes expanding the existing facilities at the Slick Rock Recreation Area.

Following a lengthy planning process that began in 2000 when a Cal Boating grant was approved in concept for Lake Kaweah, the construction phase appears ready to get the green light from federal officials. The possible consequences of the scope of work described in the draft EA were evaluated with consideration given to environmental, economic, social, and engineering feasibility. Findings

of the study, which were coordinated with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the State Historic Preservation Officer,

indicate that the project would not result in significant impacts to the environment or any cultural resources.

The project became a priority to provide alternative launch facilities while other areas of

—see **LAKE**, page 11

Car vs. rock: Rock wins

By JOHN ELLIOTT

It's difficult to say how many lives have been saved, but the wider shoulder that was drilled through solid granite in several places for widening a one-mile stretch of Highway 198 for the Three Rivers bike lane has undoubtedly made a difference. The wider margin for error along the shoulder has made Sierra Drive a little safer and on more than one occasion and has meant the difference between a near miss and a horrific accident.

Last Sunday's mishap that occurred in the S-curve section of Sierra Drive below Pumpkin Hollow, where a narrow shoulder

does not have room for a bike lane, is a good case in point that wider is better. From the earliest days of travel in the upper canyon, the steep canyon walls in this section of roadway have been witness to an untold number of tragic accidents.

On the afternoon of Sunday, March 2, a youthful resident of Lemon Cove was driving to work when she lost control in this shady area bordered on one side by a solid rock outcrop and the other by a concrete barrier. Apparently her 2004 Mustang crashed into the jagged granite wall and absorbed a glancing

—see **WRECK**, page 6



THE DRIVER OF this 2004 Ford Mustang walked away unhurt after crashing into a rock outcrop on Sierra Drive just below the Pumpkin Hollow area last Sunday.

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

Saturday, March 8	Sunday, March 9	Monday, March 10	Tuesday, March 11	Wednesday, March 12	Thursday, March 13	Friday, March 14
Clouds and sun Hi 73 • Lo 44	Clouds and sun Hi 74 • Lo 46	Sunny Hi 75 • Lo 45	Mostly sunny Hi 71 • Lo 42	Sunny Hi 72 • Lo 45	Clouds and sun Hi 73 • Lo 46	Sunny Hi 72 • Lo 44

WEATHER WATCH

Turn clocks forward before turning in Saturday night as Daylight Saving Time begins Sunday at 2 a.m. Although there will be one less hour in the weekend, more daylight in the evening makes it the perfect weekend to take a drive on the Generals Highway, where the road is open over the top from Sequoia to Kings Canyon. The snow is a beautiful sight to see or in which to play. With no precipitation forecast for the next seven days, lots of sun, temperatures into the 50s at the 5,000-foot level, and the vernal equinox just two weeks away, the snowpack will soon be on the wane.