

HABITAT

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and the DNR the technical expertise. “It is an ongoing project,” McKay said. Applying for the grant, according to McKay, started last fall when Voyageurs National Park Superintendent Mike Ward was contacted by the NPCA inquiring if any area projects would benefit from grant funding. McKay said the Rat Root River project focuses on how the number of walleye spawning in the river appears to have declined, and an increase in the average size of male and female walleyes suggest the population may not be replenishing itself with as many new recruits as in the past. “Years back, we had a hydrologist assess the Rat Root River to give us a background on what has gone wrong with (the decline in spawning) over the years,” he said. “There is a long list, some things we can fix, some we can’t.” One of the items on the list was the change in root

systems which causes river-bank erosion. McKay said it was recommended that more hard wood – slower growing trees – be planted that would live longer and not fall into the river causing blocking the river’s flow. “We thought this would be a good fit for the Nature Valley money,” he said. “The money doesn’t target areas directly in a national park,” McKay said. “In this case, the Rat Root project aims to restore habitat for walleye spawning and walleyes, of course, benefit (Voyageurs National) park.” The NPCA website indicates that grant money is intended to protect and preserve national parks for generations to come, and while McKay said the restoration project may not see results “for several years,” it will hopefully benefit the next generation. “We may not see results this year or next year, but we’re doing a lot of work to restore the tens of thousands of fish that once spawned in that river,” he said. McKay added that a considerable amount of money

has been given to the project through the Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council and while the RLSC wanted to keep the Nature Valley money separate, it “ultimately wanted the money to compliment the whole project.” “We hadn’t looked at tree planting yet, and saw the Nature Valley grant as an opportunity,” he said. “We’ve ordered 3,000 trees.” McKay said Nature Valley representatives as well as staff members of local lawmakers will travel to Borderland to take part in the tree planting effort, which will occur on private property along the Rat Root River. “Fall is typically not the ideal time to plant trees, but we’ll make it work,” McKay said. He added that plans to plant additional trees next year are in the works and if any landowners living along the Rat Root River are interested in having trees planted on their property, free of charge, they should contact a RLSC member. “There is a lot of work to be done out there,” McKay said. “This is a start.”

New laws take effect Thursday

HOUSE STAFF REPORT

The following is a listing of selected new laws passed during the 2013 legislative session that take effect Thursday. The asterisk following the bill number denotes the language that became law. Summaries of all laws passed by the 2013 Legislature are available online from nonpartisan House Public Information Services at <http://www.house.mn/hinfo/Newlaws2013-0.asp>. **BUSINESS AND COMMERCE** 100-year-old mining inspection policy will be updated Mining companies and employees will have an updated list of mine inspection standards. A new law, sponsored by Rep. Tom Anzelc (DFL-Balsam Township) and Sen. David Tomassoni (DFL-Chisholm), will clarify language related to mine inspection policy and require inspectors to have at least two years of practical experience in mining or mining-related safety work. The law will allow counties to abate the nuisance of an abandoned mine through various remedies and recover costs through a special assessment. The law will also require notice of an accident to the inspector of mines within one hour of the stabilization of the scene. ■ HF1320/SF1291/CH38 **CIVIL LAW** Help to secure family possessions after a crime Sponsored by Rep. Tony Cornish (R-Vernon Center) and Sen. Bill Ingebrigtsen (R-Alexandria), a new law will amend the state’s so-called “slayer statute,” which is in place to prevent a killer from benefiting, through inheritance, from the victim’s death. As a law enforcement officer, Cornish was one of the first on the scene of a friend’s murder in August 2010. Later, the victim’s wife confessed to her husband’s death. The victim’s family tried to recover mementos and

personal property, both theirs and his, from the house. At the time, the law called for the property to be sealed until there was a guilty verdict or other court finding. The new law will allow a personal representative to file with the court an inventory of the decedent’s personal property that may be affected by the so-called “slayer statute.” This list may serve as documentation for later claims. Additionally, the court will be authorized to order certain relief regarding the inventoried property, such as reserving determination of its distribution, holding it in trust or prohibiting its disposition pending a final determination under the statute. It would also provide a notice of the rights to crime victims. ■ HF161 / SF196 / CH94 Marriage no longer limited to a male and female The state’s marriage laws will change from being male/female specific to authorize marriage and divorce of two persons, regardless of gender. It will provide exemptions for churches and other religious associations from providing goods or services related to same-sex marriage ceremonies, if doing so would be in violation of the entity’s religious beliefs. The law is sponsored by Rep. Karen Clark (DFL-Mpls) and Sen. D. Scott Dibble (DFL-Mpls). As a bill, its introduction into the legislative process came six months after voters turned down a ballot measure to place in the state constitution a definition of marriage as being between one man and one woman. The debate in the Legislature was contentious, with frequent rallies at the State Capitol from those on both sides of the issue. But an amendment on the House Floor to insert “civil” before the word “marriage,” in all state statute references, tempered the debate, bringing in enough bipartisan support for the measure to pass both bodies. The

language change, it was thought, would clarify the distinction between state-sanctioned civil marriages and marriages within religious faith traditions. ■ HF1054/SF925/CH74 New law helps clarify who owns what upon a partner’s death Sponsored by Rep. Mike Freiberg (DFL-Golden Valley) and Sen. Melisa Franzen (DFL-Edina), a new law will have Minnesota adopt the Uniform Community Property Rights at Death Act, which will clarify, upon death, disposition of the property acquired by a married person. States vary on how they treat property acquired by married couples. For instance, Minnesota is a common law state, which means the property belongs to the person whose name appears on the ownership document. Wisconsin, on the other hand, is a community property state where property and possessions brought into the marriage remain with that partner; but whatever is earned or acquired during the marriage is co-owned by both parties, regardless of who earned it or whose name is on the title. If a couple has lived and acquired property in different states, this can create problems for the courts when they attempt to determine rightful ownership upon one partner’s death. ■ HF369/SF350/CH24 **CONSUMERS** Installment plans for prefunded funeral expenses available Minnesotans will be able to prefund their funeral expenses and pay it out over a period of time. The new law, sponsored by Rep. Carolyn Laine (DFL-Columbia Heights) and Sen. Dan Sparks (DFL-Austin), will exempt preneed insurance from the graded death benefit law, which requires the policy premium to be paid in a single upfront payment. The specialty life insurance product is sold through a life insurance contract. ■ HF654/SF748/CH53

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LAYOFFS

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salary employees with an annual payroll of \$74 million. After Oct. 1, the mill will employ 486 hourly and 96 salary employees with an estimated payroll of \$53 million. ■ 94 employees elected to take the controlled layoff program — a two-tier program based on the number of years of service and covered weeks of pay an employee could receive as well as medical/dental and Cobra insurance benefits. ■ New configuration maximized the use of the Boise International Falls pulp mill. And it will continue to purchase some recycled pulp and manufacture grades of paper with recycled fiber. ■ Key to the reconfigured mill in the future is being competitive. The mill is presently in about the middle of all mills in the U.S. regarding cost of producing a product and must get lower in cost to remain competitive. ■ The reconfiguration plan has a shutdown by Oct. 1 of those assets announced on May 2. Primary reasons for the shutdown are: electronic substitution; global competition and the need to shed costs associated with purchased pulp and the complexity of grades on 12, 14 paper machines and the off-machine coater. ■ The mill has concerns about excessive environ-

mental regulations: Boise MACT, capital improvement permitting process, proposed legislation known as extended producer responsibility. ■ Announced investment for 11 machine winder is temporarily delayed, while other improvements to the winder are gong forward. I3 machine will continue to manufacture some commodity and specialty grades of paper and will likely see some upgrades to the unit for quality reasons. The paper sheeting operation will continue, however it may require that employees assist with operations at the roll wraps as more rolls of paper are produced versus sheeted paper. ■ Mill personnel are researching how the community and the mill hazardous material operations might be forged into a more community driven hazmat coverage that includes other businesses in the area. ■ Challenges include the cost of wood, known as stumpage; quality of wood and having wood available near the mill; need for county to keep harvest levels up and planned wood sales up and the availability of summer wood for harvest because wood yard cannot store enough wood for entire year. About 70 percent of wood is harvest in the winter period. ■ Large and challenging cost is energy and need to support cost-based electric rates; a level playing field for

utility and manufacturers. The mill is estimated at 47 percent self sufficient; studies continue to determine if mill can become more energy self sufficient. ■ Concern and cost about taxes — additional taxes make mill less competitive. Need to reduce property taxes; water and sewer rates too high. ■ Mill working closely with Department of Employment and Economic Development and Department of Labor to assist employees, and their families, that will be laid off. In related business, 8th District Congressman Rick Nolan told The Journal that Trade Adjustment Assistance information meetings have been scheduled for Tuesday and Wednesday, with four sessions each day at the mill’s training center. Nolan encouraged every Boise worker affected by the layoffs to attend one of the Trade Adjustment Assistance meetings. “Trade Adjustment Assistance is a program that directly benefits American workers who lose their jobs due to unfair competition from a foreign company that receives subsidies from its government,” he said in a statement to The Journal. “In the long term, we need to fix our trade policies. But in the short term, this program will provide valuable help to Boise workers and their families during this difficult time.”



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