

AIS
➤ continued from A1

The training and trailer decal program was established through 2011 legislation with a delayed implementation. It was approved by the Legislature as part of a suite of aquatic invasive species laws were put into place. “There was a big invasive species push that year, with support from both sides of the aisle in the Legislature,” said Rust. “This is one piece of a multi-pronged approach.” The framework for the course and decal program is in place and DNR staff are working to finish details of the program and its launch,

planned for Jan. 31. “We want to give people enough time to hear about (the course), take it and get ready,” she said of the July 1 effective date. “They do have time.” Rust said the DNR is just now starting to provide information about the law in an effort which will gain momentum in the new year. “Don’t panic,” she urged people. “We will get the word out.” The course will be offered online and on paper by the same vendor that offers the boat and water safety course. She said the paper course will only be available from the vendor. The DNR has created a

“We recognize there is an issue with the law as written. And we will know more about that as the legislative process unfolds.”

April Rust
Minnesota Department of Natural Resources aquatic invasive species training coordinator

website at trailers.mndnr.gov where information about changes to the law or implementation delays will be posted, said Rust. Now, a “frequently asked questions” page on the new law is offered on the website. The course will be similar to training and permitting required in the past few years

for lake service providers, such as dock builders, resort operators, and irrigators, to make sure they know how to follow the law and not spread invasive species, said Rust. The Koochiching County Board heard about the new requirements last week from county Environmental Services Director Dale Olson.

LUTEFISK
➤ continued from A1

this story. It was not a well kept secret as he pulled the dry fillet from a plastic bag for a photo allowing the pungent aroma to waft through the building. Known as “Lutefisk” by members of his coffee group, Bergh prepares a lutefisk meal for the Sons of Norway Vinland Lodge 1-193. He’s also cooked it for the Moose Lodge a few years ago. “It’s fun,” he said of the ritual involved in preparing the fish. “I like it.” Fifty pounds of the lye-soaked fish are ordered and delivered by Day Fish Company, Braham, Minn., for the Sons of Norway meal. “Then, I generally keep about 20 to 25 pounds to do it off and on during the summer,” he said. “It’s not only for Christmas.” Bergh special orders the fillets with skin, which he said is not the preferred style of most people. Day Fish Company gets its fillets dried and dehydrated from Norway. “I do a rinsing process night and morning for five days,” he said. “Without the skin you have to be more careful because the fish will separate.” Bergh places the fillets on cookie racks over the sink

and with a light pressure sprays them with cold water, causing the sink to fill up like soap suds as the lye is washed away, he said. He places the fish in a bin of heavily salted water kept outdoors for three days. The salt keeps the water from freezing, he notes. And then he again sprays with water the racks of fish over the sink until he sees no foam. He leaves the fish on the racks to allow all liquid to drain out. The day he prepares it, he places the fish on a towel and pats it dry. He bakes the fish at 325 degrees on big aluminum pans, bent at an angle to catch liquid from the fish, and covers it with aluminum foil with slits cut to allow moisture to escape. It is baked from 30-45 minutes depending on the thickness of the fillet. “It comes out nice and firm like halibut,” he said. “And, you end up with no more than a tablespoon of water in the pan.” Many people boil cheese-cloth containing lutefisk,

he said. “The fish in the center are not cooked the same as the ones outside and in a matter of seconds it will go to jelly on you,” he said. Lutefisk is prepared that way for many large gatherings during the holidays, he said. The water is allowed to drip from the fish briefly, which doesn’t get all the water out and then the fish is placed in large roasters where water drips to the bottom and continues cooking the fish. Boiling, if watched carefully, can produce a flaky lutefisk, “but you need to know what you’re doing,” he said. “You have to be awfully careful and you still have moisture in the fillet.” “They dish it up in bowls with spoons,” he said of the kind of lutefisk many people have loved to hate. When he serves the fish, Bergh said he leaves the fish on the aluminum pans, places foil over it, and places the pans 8-10 inches from

the bottom of the roaster, so it keeps warm, but does not cook. And the proof of Bergh’s methods is in the tasting, he said. He reported that eight couples came from Cook to the Falls to eat his lutefisk because they’d heard it was the best in the country. And, he said, a woman who had never eaten lutefisk “because she just never could eat it,” ate two plates before she was done. The big secret is getting the moisture and caustic soda, or lye, out of the fish, he said. “That’s the way my dad had always did it.” And his dad knew a little about lutefisk, said Bergh. His mom and dad ran a general store between Mondovi and Eau Claire, Wis., and were the biggest supplier of lutefisk for miles around. He said his father rinsed the fish even before he sold it. Bergh serves lutefisk with melted clarified butter, meatballs and boiled red potatoes. Others prefer lutefisk in a white sauce. Eating lutefisk, along with drinking a Scandinavian liquor, has gotten the thumbs up from his doctors, he said. “My doctor says ‘I don’t understand, but everything, the tests, all come out perfect,’” recalled Bergh. “He says, ‘The only thing I can say is stay on lutefisk and akavet.’”



STAFF PHOTOS BY EMILY GEDDE

Jena Sullivan, left, helps her sister, Chloe, with her pallet project.

PROJECT
➤ continued from A1

with the idea to put the discarded pallets to good use. “I was thinking about a project we could do with all the pallets because I knew there would be an excessive amount,” she said. After searching Pinterest, the popular ideas website, she knew transforming the pallets in Christmas trees would be the way to go. “The trees are special beyond the kids making them,” she said. “A lot of the kids were affected by the flood or helped sand-

bag this summer. Using these pallets meant a lot to them.” Kim McDonald asked her husband, George McDonald, if his eighth-grade wood shop class would help and said she later found out he was skeptical at first. “But then I found out he said (the trees) turned out really nice,” she said. And the kids loved them, too. “They didn’t want to leave the wood shop class,” Kim McDonald said. “They are really proud of what they’ve made...It kind of commemorates the flood this summer and shows out of difficult things, comes good things.”

Merry Christmas to your gas tank

JOURNAL STAFF REPORT

Average retail gasoline prices in Minnesota have fallen 10 cents in the past week, averaging \$2.30 per gallon Sunday, according to GasBuddy’s daily survey of 2,856 gas outlets in Minnesota. This compares with the national average that has decreased 10.8 cents in the last week to \$2.42 per gallon, according to gasoline price website MinnesotaGasPrices.com. Regular gas prices in International Falls ranged from \$2.03 to \$2.29 per gallon, according to the site. Including the change in gas prices in Minnesota

during the past week, prices Sunday were 68.5 cents per gallon lower compared to the same day one year ago and are 42.5 cents per gallon lower than a month ago. The national average has decreased 41.1 cents per gallon during the last month and stands 80.4 cents per gallon lower than this day one year ago. “As Americans take to the road for Christmas travel, they’ve all been given a gift that keeps on giving: falling gas prices,” said Patrick DeHaan, senior petroleum analyst with GasBuddy. “Americans are saving over \$13 million dollars an hour versus gas prices a year ago-

adding up to over \$315 million every day. Big declines were witnessed in Montana, Michigan, Indiana, Idaho, and Ohio, where average prices fell over 20 cents on average just in the last seven days but everyone has been a winner.” “Just in the last 24 hours, the national average has declined nearly 7 cents per gallon, one of the largest single day decreases ever. However, I’m worried the decline may soon begin slowing- oil prices have held in the mid-\$50s, and the concrete may be setting in. If it does, and oil prices fail to drop below \$50 per barrel gas prices likely won’t drop more than an-

other 10-20 cents per gallon. Either way, a sneak peak at our soon to be released 2015 gas price forecast reveals a yearly national average far lower than what we saw this year,” DeHaan said. GasBuddy.com is a tool to help motorists save money at the pump by collecting gas price data and displaying it on websites and on a free smartphone app that has been downloaded over 37 million times. The site operates MinnesotaGasPrices.com and more than 250 similar websites that track gasoline prices at more than 140,000 gasoline stations in the United States and Canada.

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HAPPY HOLIDAYS

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Merry Christmas To All

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