

# NEWS CLIPS

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**Resource Conservation and Public  
Outreach**

Organized by date

# The Salton Sea disaster ahead

Los Angeles Times | on March 29, 2019

California's largest lake is drying up, threatening an ecological and public health catastrophe.

California's largest internal body of water is steadily drying up, exposing a lake bed that threatens to trigger toxic dust storms and exacerbate already high levels of asthma and other respiratory diseases in Southern California.

Yet there is something about the Salton Sea that leads many lawmakers to ignore the urgency and put off remediation programs. It's just so far south — off the mental map of officials who represent more densely populated urban areas to the north, like Los Angeles. It is a disaster in the making, yet it is an afterthought.

That attitude is understandably galling to residents of the adjacent Imperial Valley, who are (for now) the ones most affected by the increasing dust and who have witnessed firsthand the degrading ecological conditions. They have heard officials promise repeatedly to fix this catastrophe by creating wetlands that moisten the exposed bed and sustain an ecosystem that continues to support migratory birds on the Pacific Flyway. They have repeatedly seen those promises broken.

The dimensions of the failure were for many years merely theoretical, but they became real in the winter just past. As the rain and snow washed away drought and at least temporarily diminished environmental problems in the rest of the state, the contraction of the Salton Sea accelerated. Increasing salinity kept the lake from sustaining even the salt-hardy tilapia. The birds failed to appear.

Until recently, lake levels had been sustained by Colorado River water under a 2003 agreement between the Imperial Irrigation District and the San Diego County Water Authority. It was an innovative and responsible arrangement. San Diego would pay for projects (lining earthen canals, for example) to help the Imperial Valley use water more efficiently. The water no longer needed in the valley would be exported to San Diego for residential use. Without excess water flushing through valley farmland, however, the runoff that formerly fed the Salton Sea would taper off, so for 15 years the Imperial Irrigation District would use some of its river water to counter evaporation at the lake. That would buy enough time for the state to develop and fund plans for the wetlands and other measures to keep the dust from blowing.

Or at least, that was the theory. The 15-year program of supplying "mitigation water" to the lake ended a little more than a year ago, but the state has so far failed to meet its benchmarks for developing wetlands.

This month, as the California Water Resources Board met at the Salton Sea lakeshore to discuss the remediation program's progress, members had to acknowledge that there hasn't been any. None of the promised projects have been completed. The Newsom

administration has vowed a new focus on the Salton Sea, and there is reason for hope — but the lake is shrinking rapidly and action must now be accelerated to prevent a public health and environmental disaster.

Meanwhile, the Imperial Irrigation District tried but failed to leverage its massive Colorado River water rights into federal funding for Salton Sea projects.

A 19-year drought in the Colorado River Basin has been drying up lakes farther upstream that are crucial to the Southern California water supply, including massive Lake Mead. To prevent the water there from dropping too low to operate Hoover Dam's hydroelectric generators, California and six other states entered into talks over a drought contingency agreement to cut back their use of river water. The Imperial Irrigation District is the largest holder of river water rights and held out in the hope of winning a \$200-million federal commitment for the Salton Sea.

But the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California wanted to move things along and covered Imperial's portion, so the drought agreement is proceeding without any funding for the Salton Sea. The Imperial Irrigation District asked members of Congress this week to not allow the drought contingency plan to move forward unless the district is included, and to ensure that federal funding legislation provides money for the Salton Sea, but the district has lost much of its leverage.

That leaves a shrinking lake, lots of broken promises and a looming disaster. Both California and the feds have to do better than this — especially if they want to encourage agreements such as the one that makes Imperial Valley farmers more water-wise while keeping San Diego residents from deep rationing. The Salton Sea is not going away, even if it goes away. It can become a wetland and wildlife preserve, or it can become — if we let it — a health and ecological catastrophe.

## **PUBLIC SAFETY BRIEFS**

## **Ventura County Star | on March 28, 2019**

Officials name man who plunged to death from overpass

MOORPARK - A 62-year-old man who plunged to his death Tuesday from a highway overpass in Moorpark has been identified.

The Moorpark office of the California Highway Patrol identified the man Wednesday as Eddick Telime, of Chatsworth.

CHP said in a news release that the “unusual incident” at the Highway 23/Highway 118 freeway transition is still under investigation and that Telime’s death has not yet been determined to be a homicide, suicide or accidental.

The agency is asking witnesses to call 805-553-0800.

CHP received a report at 10:10 a.m. Tuesday of an unoccupied red Mazda sedan with its hazard lights activated on the right shoulder of Highway 23. Sgt. Marco Marin, a CHP spokesman, said the Mazda had a flat front right tire.

Responding officers discovered a male on the right side of Princeton Avenue under the Highway 23 overpass.

By 10:54 a.m., the Ventura County Medical Examiner’s Office had been contacted to send staff to the scene.

Oxnard police make arrest over narcotics and firearm

OXNARD - Oxnard police arrested a 27-year-old man Tuesday evening after finding him inside a vehicle with a firearm and narcotics, according to authorities.

The arrest occurred around 6 p.m. in 100 block of Carmelita Court.

Police said they pulled over a vehicle for a suspected code violation and made contact with the driver, identified as Eric Madrid, 27, of Oxnard. Officers said they noted narcotics in plain view inside the vehicle upon making contact.

Further investigation revealed a 9 mm handgun, ammunition and additional narcotics for sale, authorities said.

Madrid is a documented gang member and convicted felon prohibited from possessing firearms, police said.

Madrid was arrested on suspicion of being a felon in possession of a firearm, being in possession of a firearm with a controlled substance, transporting and selling a controlled substance and removing the manufacturing number from a firearm, police said. He was booked into county jail.

Bacteria warning issued for water at Ormond Beach

OXNARD - Testing this week shows water at a Ventura County beach failed to meet state standards for bacteria, the Ventura County Environmental Health Division reported.

The problem with a sample taken from Ormond Beach at Arnold Road in Oxnard resulted in signs posted about high levels of bacteria present in the water. The signs will remain in place until the water quality meets California standards.

The public is advised to avoid the beach within 50 yards of the signs. Any items that come in contact with ocean water at this location should be washed thoroughly with soap and water.

Additionally, any shellfish from Ventura County beaches may have been exposed to the contaminated water and should not be consumed.

Ocean water quality monitoring will continue with weekly samples tested from Ventura County beaches. Results for specific beaches can be checked by calling 805-662-6555 or visiting [https:// vcrma.org/envhealth/ technical-services/ocean/index.html](https://vcrma.org/envhealth/technical-services/ocean/index.html).

## **Shore offers view of gray whales**

**Ventura County Star | on March 27, 2019**

## More than 20,000 migrate along our region's coast

**Cheri Carlson** Ventura County Star USA TODAY NETWORK

VENTURA – Michael Smith stood on a lookout above the Goleta coast, getting ready for a day of searching the water for a curved mottled-gray back poking out of the water or a heart-shaped blow.

Smith has organized the Gray Whales Count effort for more than a decade. He and a team of volunteers watch as the whales make their way back north after spending the winter in lagoons off the coast of Mexico.

They take a sample of the whales, counting from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. from February through May.

“I’ve got a whale in front of me right now,” he said over the phone. But it was before 9 a.m., so that whale didn’t make the day’s tally.

More than 20,000 gray whales make the annual migration past Ventura and Santa Barbara counties – one of the longest migrations of any mammal.

Each fall, the whales head south from Arctic waters, where they spend summers feeding. Then, starting about mid-February, they turn around and head back.

April and May are the best times to see cows and their young calves, which swim together closest to shore, Smith said. The last calf generally is spotted off the Ventura County coast in late May.

“It’s always different. It’s always interesting,” he said. “This year, we’ve had a lot of whales.”

The daily survey got off to a bit of a rough start when rain and wind prevented counting over the first couple of weeks or so. Since then, a steady stream of whales has passed by.

So far, watchers have counted 557 gray whales. On March 10 alone, they counted 65, and their count topped 50 on three other days.

“There is no such thing as normal,” Smith said about the numbers.

At the end of the count, they’ll plug the numbers into a formula to come up with an estimate. Their estimates show figures generally are on the rise over the past several years.

### **Whale reported tangled in buoy**

On Sunday, a report came in that a whale was entangled miles off Oxnard. It was a humpback whale, not a gray whale.

More humpbacks also start showing up about this time of year to forage off the coast and around the Channel Islands.

The humpback appeared to be trailing some kind of an orange buoy, said Justin Viezbicke, California stranding network coordinator with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. It was moving at the time, and a team couldn't reach it by dark.

## **Whales**

If the whale is spotted still entangled, Viezbicke said, they'll try to send to a team to try to help it.

### **How many gray whales are off the coast?**

NOAA also counts the whales on the northbound migration, estimating the number of calves born in the lagoons.

"In terms of calf production, 2012-2016 were banner years in terms of the number of calves counted," said Dave Weller, a researcher with NOAA's Southwest Fisheries Science Center.

The surveys found an average of roughly 1,300 calves a year over those five years. Numbers dipped slightly lower in 2017 and 2018 but were still good, he said.

The count at the Piedras Blancas Light Station began this week.

### **What does a gray whale look like?**

Gray whales don't have a dorsal fin but do have a distinctive mottled gray and white color.

Not really big as far as whales go, they weigh up to 99,000 pounds, according to NOAA. A blue whale can weigh up to 330,000 pounds.

### **Where to spot whales**

People can spot whales on boat tours, but some of the gray whales swim close enough to shore to see them from there.

In Ventura and Santa Barbara counties, look for a spot close to shore that has a little bit of height.

The count happens from a lookout at Coal Point Oil Reserve, but that's just one place for whale spotting, Smith said.

In Ventura County, Sycamore Canyon in Point Mugu State Park can be a good location. A little farther south, Point Dume Nature Preserve in Malibu has a whale-spotting platform overlooking the ocean.

## **What should you look for to spot a whale?**

During the count, they typically look for a blow (water shooting into the air). Then, you can watch for a curved, mottled back, a whale tale or even a breach.

## **When is the best time to see whales?**

Now is a good to spot whales from the coast. But, Smith said, it will get even better.

By the second week of April, the migration will become almost exclusively mother-calf pairs. They generally stick closer to shore where people can see them.

## **What's the allure?**

This year marked the 15th survey. Smith said he has threatened each of the past five years would be his last. Each time, he has returned.

"It's so exciting. It really is," Smith said. "There is a rush seeing a whale."

But they also see a lot more from their spot overlooking a kelp bed, from different species of dolphin to humpback whales, blue whales and fin whales – "just this vast variety of marine mammals."

## **How to report a whale in distress**

To report an injured or entangled whale, call 877-SOS-WHALE or 877767-9425.

Find out how to report a stranded or injured marine animal in your area at [www.fisheries.noaa.gov/report](http://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/report). In Ventura and Santa Barbara counties, contact Channel Islands Marine and Wildlife Institute at 805-567-1505.

# **Coaches plead not guilty in scam**

**Ventura County Star | on March 26, 2019**

Prosecutors say they took bribes to get students accepted as recruits

**Alanna Durkin Richer ASSOCIATED PRESS**



BOSTON – Athletic coaches charged in a sweeping college admissions scam pleaded not guilty Monday to taking bribes from wealthy parents in exchange for helping students get into elite universities such as Georgetown.

They appeared in Boston’s federal court nearly two weeks after they were arrested in what authorities have described as the biggest college admissions scheme ever prosecuted by the U.S. Justice Department. It has ensnared such prominent parents as actresses Felicity Huffman and Lori Loughlin.

Authorities say the coaches were paid tens of thousands of dollars to help falsify students’ athletic credentials and get them admitted as recruits for sports they didn’t play.

They include longtime tennis coach Gordon Ernst, who’s accused of getting \$2.7 million in bribes to designate at least 12 applicants as recruits to Georgetown, as well as former UCLA men’s soccer coach Jorge Salcedo, Wake Forest University women’s volleyball coach William Ferguson and former USC water polo coach Jovan Vavic.

One by one, the suit-clad coaches stood before the packed courtroom before leaning into the microphone to say “not guilty.”

Ernst, Salcedo, Vavic and their attorneys left the courthouse without commenting.

An attorney for Ferguson said his client is innocent and “does not belong in this indictment.” Ferguson is charged with taking a \$100,000 bribe to recruit a student who had been placed on the wait list.

He’s been suspended by Wake Forest.

Ernst, who also was the personal tennis coach.

For former first lady Michelle Obama and her daughters, left Georgetown in 2017 after an internal investigation found he violated admissions rules. He was later hired by the University of Rhode Island, which says it wasn’t told about the admissions rules violations. The school said Saturday that Ernst has resigned.

Huffman, Loughlin and Loughlin’s fashion designer husband, Mossimo Giannulli, are scheduled to make their initial appearances in the Boston court on April 3.

## **Camarillo pool makes splash with reopening**

**Ventura County Star | on March 27, 2019**

Aquatic center was closed since Jan. 1 for several renovations

Jeremy Childs Ventura County Star USA TODAY NETWORK

Camarillo resident Aaron Villa was 6 years old when he learned to swim at the Pleasant Valley Aquatic Center.

Now 56, he returned over the weekend to swim in the same pool during its grand reopening and 50th anniversary celebration.

The aquatic center at 1030 Temple Ave. has served the Camarillo community for half a century, offering swim classes, water exercise sessions and recreational swimming.

On Jan. 1, it closed so renovations could take place, according to Macy Trueblood, a recreation supervisor with the Pleasant Valley Recreation and Park District.

The remodeling involved draining the pool to resurface it with fiberglass instead of plaster, restructuring the 65-foot water slide and adding support beams to the stairs. The indoor facility can fit eight swimming lanes and also has a diving board.

During the reopening party on Saturday, dozens of people came for a free swim, including Villa, who recalled the pool's popularity when it first opened.

"I remember it clear as a bell," he said about his visit to the center when it opened back in 1969.

He described the aquatic center as a vast improvement over its predecessor, Kihl Pool in Somis, which was outdoors.



Chris Sanchez swims Saturday at the Pleasant Valley Aquatic Center in Camarillo. PHOTOS BY JUAN CARLO/THE STAR



Karina Costello plays with her daughter Rylee Costello on Saturday at the Pleasant Valley Aquatic Center in Camarillo. The center was marking a grand reopening and celebrating its 50th anniversary.

“We have nice weather here in Camarillo, but we would freeze in the wind at Kihī,” Villa said.

Villa would continue to return to the aquatic center over the course of his life, whether as a student on the Rio Mesa High School swim team or to drop off his daughter for her job as a swim instructor. However, over the years, Villa noted the aquatic center has grown less crowded.

“Back then, there was no other option,” Villa said. “Now with people putting in pools at their homes, the popularity may have waned overtime.” Villa said he hopes the renovations help the pool become a hub for the community like it was when he was growing up.

Among those visiting the newly renovated pool for the celebration on Saturday were Camarillo resident Liz Magdaleno and her 8-year-old son, Axel.

“I bring my son for swimming lessons here, and they’ve done an excellent job at boosting his confidence,” Magdaleno said.

Magdaleno was impressed with how her son went from not knowing how to swim to jumping into the deep end over the course of several months.

She credits the staff with helping her son fall in love with swimming and encourages many people in her life to visit the center.

“The center is a benefit for children and for adults,” Magdaleno said.

The reopening party also was an opportunity for some local residents to experience the pool for the first time.

Camarillo resident Tina Butler, who brought her 10-year-old daughter Hayden and two of her daughter's friends, had never been to the center before.

"Now that I know that it's here, we're definitely coming back," Butler said.



Hayden Butler slides down into the pool at the Pleasant Valley Aquatic Center on Saturday. PHOTOS BY JUAN CARLO/THE STAR

## **Trump targets states' say on drilling**

**Los Angeles Times | on March 25, 2019**

After outcry from public officials, president is quietly trying to weaken a law that helps them fight oil and gas development in federal waters



PRESIDENT Trump is targeting a law that empowers states to curb offshore development in federal waters. (Luis Sinco Los Angeles Times)

By Anna M. Phillips and Rosanna Xia

WASHINGTON — When President Trump proposed opening nearly the entire U.S. coastline to more offshore oil and gas drilling, the backlash from states seeking exemptions was swift.

Governors, Republican and Democratic, and state legislatures up and down the Atlantic and Pacific coastlines protested so vigorously that the administration promised to consult with them before finalizing any plans.

Instead, Trump is quietly laying the groundwork to weaken a decades-old federal law that empowers California and other states to slow and even stop offshore development in federal waters.

“Republicans are always supposed to be in favor of states’ rights,” said Richard Charter, who has worked on oil issues for 40 years and is a senior fellow at the marine conservation nonprofit Ocean Foundation. “But this is in fact an effort to take away states’ rights when it comes to offshore drilling.”

In a notice published this month, the Commerce Department's National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration asked the public to weigh in on ways to "streamline" a state review process granted under the Coastal Zone Management Act.

The 1972 law is widely considered one of the most powerful tools states have to regulate activity off their coasts. It applies to all of the coastal and Great Lakes states, with the exception of Alaska.

The act gives states a voice when federal projects or industry development affect their coast, even activities that occur outside a state's jurisdiction, which extends three miles from the coast.

The scientific agency can't change the law, but through regulation and implementation, it can have a major effect on how it is enforced.

Among other things, the administration appears to be considering limits to the scope of states' review powers and a shorter period of time to process an appeal. The full extent of its plans is unclear.

The goal, officials wrote, is to provide "greater efficiency and predictability" for oil and gas projects — language often used to justify deregulation.

The oil industry cheered the administration's move.

"We appreciate and support efforts to modernize and improve the governance and efficiency of the permitting and approvals process so that unnecessary barriers to oil and natural gas development are minimized and eliminated," said Erik Milito, a vice president of the American Petroleum Institute.

Passed in the wake of the devastating 1969 Santa Barbara oil spill, the act ensures that drilling, shipping, commercial fishing, mineral extraction, wind power projects and other activities fit into states' plans for protecting their coastal zones.

In practice, this means that activity in federal waters that would otherwise not be open to extensive public scrutiny can be subjected to hearings and local environmental impact assessments.

State leaders can insist on modifications. They can negotiate with industry representatives to reach a compromise.

According to a 2016 NOAA report, states end up approving 93% to 95% of the federal projects they review. Supporters of this coordinated review process say it has resolved some of the nation's most contentious cases without costly litigation.

And though their word is not final, states have used the act as a weapon to defeat projects that threatened the environment and public health.

Citing the law in the early 2000s, California managed to halt 36 controversial oil leases between Monterey Bay and Channel Islands national marine sanctuaries.

In 2007, the state blocked a proposed liquefied natural gas port that would have floated 14 miles offshore from Ventura and Los Angeles counties. The project was ultimately abandoned after a state review found it posed significant risks to air quality and marine life.

“These regulations provide an important public process,” said Linda Krop, chief counsel at the Environmental Defense Center, a nonprofit environmental law firm based in Santa Barbara. Obtaining these rights has been a hard-fought battle by coastal states, with California leading the charge.

“It’s very meaningful,” she said, “and that’s what the federal government is afraid of.”

Mark Delaplaine, who manages the California Coastal Commission’s Energy, Ocean Resources and Federal Consistency Division, said attempts to weaken the law were alarming.

“It gets to the heart of arguably the most powerful tool, even with the checks and balances, that the state has. Period,” Delaplaine said.

This is not the only states’ rights battle California is fighting with the Trump administration, which is also seeking to end California’s unique ability to set fuel-economy standards for cars higher than the federal level.

The Trump administration’s draft offshore proposal would allow new oil and gas drilling in more than a billion acres off the Atlantic, Pacific and Arctic coasts.

It includes plans for 47 lease sales over a five-year period, more than half of which would take place in the Gulf of Mexico and off Alaska.

The plan would give the oil and gas industry the first new access to California waters in decades, with six proposed lease sales. Another lease sale would be held off Washington and Oregon. Governors of all three states have vowed to protect their coastlines from offshore drilling.

Some now fear the Interior Department is slow-walking the unpopular plan to avoid upsetting the nomination of David Bernhardt, the agency’s acting chief, who faces a Senate confirmation hearing this month. A revised draft of the offshore plan — which was expected earlier this year — has been delayed without explanation.

On Wednesday, 17 senators sent a letter to Bernhardt asking him to clarify how much of the country's coast would be included in the plan.

"The American people deserve to know your plan for the Outer Continental Shelf before the Senate votes on your nomination," they wrote.

Florida politicians who secured the Interior Department's promise a year ago to exempt the state from new offshore drilling were scrambling to figure out whether the administration would honor it. Florida's entire congressional delegation signed a letter last month asking to be left out of Trump's offshore drilling plan.

New Jersey, Delaware, New Hampshire, California and other states enacted laws prohibiting new oil and gas pipeline and other infrastructure from being built on state lands — an attempt to make transporting oil prohibitively expensive.

Cindy Zipf, executive director of the New Jersey advocacy group Clean Ocean Action, said the states' resistance probably prompted the administration's effort to reduce their power by revising the coastal law.

"I do think this is blowback from President Trump in response to the states' actions to block oil and gas drilling and infrastructure in state waters," Zipf wrote in an email.

Trump has also tried to weaken the law by gutting its funding.

In his recent budget proposal, the president sought to end the grants given to states to help implement their coastal management programs, which include reviewing federal offshore activities. The administration made a similar attempt last year, but Congress restored funding in the final budget.

Previous administrations have also tried to limit states' role in overseeing what happens in federal waters — part of a decades-long tug of war.

In the 1980s, California sued the Reagan administration to protect its right to review activities occurring off its coast. Under former President George W. Bush, key parts of the review process were expedited "to address concerns raised by the energy industry," according to a NOAA report.

Delaplaine, of the Coastal Commission, said that when he started in 1976, California lacked review authority in federal waters.

When Exxon asked that year to build an offshore storage and treatment facility in state waters less than a mile from shore, the commission denied the project. So Exxon moved the project 3.1 miles offshore, into federal waters, and built the same storage and treatment facility. The state couldn't do anything about it.



“The risk of oil spills was enormous,” Delaplaine said. “So this tool is infinitely powerful — we don’t have absolute authority ... but the state can be a lot more involved in the process to negotiate less environmentally damaging alternatives to a project.”

## **Flood risk in drenched Midwest may continue**

**Los Angeles Times | on March 24, 2019**



GRAIN BINS are surrounded by floodwater in Craig, Mo. Snowmelt and rain are expected to keep water levels high in several Midwestern states. (Scott Olson Getty Images)

#### ASSOCIATED PRESS

ST. LOUIS — Even as floodwaters receded in hard-hit places in the Midwest, experts warned Saturday that with plenty of snow still left to melt in northern states, the relief may only be temporary.

Rainfall and some snowmelt spurred flooding in recent weeks that's blamed in three deaths so far, and two men in Nebraska have been missing for more than a week. Thousands were forced from their homes in Nebraska, Iowa and Missouri, as water broke through or poured over levees. The damage is estimated at \$3 billion, and that figure is expected to rise.

As temperatures start to warm, snowmelt in the Dakotas and Minnesota will escalate, sending more water down the Missouri and Mississippi rivers and their tributaries.

Lt. Col. James Startzell, deputy commander of the Corps of Engineers' Omaha district, said even warmer temperatures are possible this week. He urged people living near rivers to be watchful.

Bill Brinton, emergency management director for hard-hit Buchanan County, Mo., which includes St. Joseph's 76,000 residents, said his counties and surrounding ones have already been ravaged by flooding.

“There’s a sense from the National Weather Service that we should expect it to continue to happen into May,” Brinton said. “With our levee breaches in Atchison and Holt and Buchanan counties, it’s kind of scary really.”

A precautionary evacuation involving hundreds of homes in the St. Joseph area was lifted as the Missouri River began a swift decline after unofficially rising to an all-time high.

## **ARCHITECTURE**

**Los Angeles Times | on March 24, 2019**

THE RENZO PIANO-designed sphere at the Academy Museum of Motion Pictures takes shape in L.A. (Renzo Piano Building Workshop)

By Mimi Zeiger

Construction is abundant across Los Angeles right now, and amid the backhoes and the cranes we are seeing signs of fresh takes on expressive architecture: glass domes, geometric facades, soaring arches. Charges of elitism swirl around big-time architecture, but many of the new designs opening this season promise to advance cultural and social life in L.A., whether with a riverside park that filters rainwater or a campus crafted to uplift the lives of LGBTQ homeless youth.

March

### Materials & Applications

For more than a decade the experimental architecture and design gallery Materials & Applications operated out of a front yard on Silver Lake Boulevard. Swooping metallic shade structures or free-form bamboo sculptures entranced passersby, and the courtyard was a gathering place for the local design community. But as the neighborhood transformed from bohemian to seriously chic, the nonprofit founded by Jenna Didier and currently helmed by executive director Jia Gu pulled up stakes and was nomadic for a couple of years. Now it has settled into a new storefront on Sunset Boulevard, a brightly hued apartment building by Warren Techentin Architecture. The ground-floor space opens with a timely exhibition exploring past and present development issues in Echo Park.

1313 Sunset Blvd., L.A. [materialsandapplications.org](http://materialsandapplications.org)

March 30

### Los Angeles River

A dozen years in the making, the Albion Riverside Park designed by the Bureau of Engineering opens to the public, bringing new soccer fields, trails, playgrounds and picnic areas to Lincoln Heights. The 6.3-acre park occupies the site of the former Ross Swiss Dairy distribution center and was funded by Proposition O funds. The 2004 initiative provided bonds to clean up the city's watercourse and conserve resources. Redeveloping the parcel from industrial to recreational use required remediation of existing pollution and contaminated soil and the introduction of an extensive infiltration system (by L.A.-based Tetra Tech) to filter and harvest storm water.

Downstream, the Sixth Street Viaduct Replacement Project is slowly rising out of the L.A. River channel. When completed in 2020, the 3,500-foot-long span designed by Michael Maltzan Architecture and engineered by HNTB will reconnect Boyle Heights and the Arts District. Custom wood forms are in place to pour the large rib beams that will connect the bridge's swooping arches.

April

## The glass dome at the Academy Museum

While the Los Angeles County Museum of Art waits for its new building, construction continues nearby on the 300,000-square-foot Academy Museum of Motion Pictures by Renzo Piano. The Italian architect, who designed the Broad and Resnick pavilions at LACMA, has grafted a giant sphere onto the historic May Company Building — the Death Star attached to mid-Wilshire Steamline Moderne. The belly of the 45,000-square-foot sphere will house a 1,000-seat theater, while its domed roof will be event space. Installation is underway on the dome's 1,500 glass panels, the museum's target opening date is in late 2019.

April

## The Avery: Transbay Block 8 in San Francisco

For decades, the Transamerica Pyramid by Angelino architect William Pereira branded San Francisco's skyline, but recent high rises are battling for prominence: Studio Gang's twisting MIRA, the Salesforce tower by Pelli Clarke Pelli and the infamously sinking Millennium Tower by Handel Architects. This spring architect Rem Koolhaas' firm OMA enters the fray with the Avery, a 56-story residential tower on Fulton Street in downtown San Francisco designed by Koolhaas' partners Shohei Shigematsu and Jason Long. With a height of 618 feet and a stepped silhouette, the glass skyscraper won't dwarf its much taller neighbors, but it does represent the architecture firm's first tower on the West Coast — a milestone for a practice whose constructions define cities around the globe. Local architects Fougeron Architecture contributed to OMA's pedestrian-friendly master plan by designing two smaller podium buildings that flank a walk street that cuts across the site.

April 7

## Los Angeles LGBT Center's Anita May Rosenstein Campus

As the housing crunch continues in Southern California, a new project promises to care for two particularly vulnerable communities: seniors and LGBT youth. The 183,700-square-foot Anita May Rosenstein Campus will provide 99 units for seniors, 25 units of supporting housing for young people, and 100 beds for homeless youth, all across the street from the L.A. LGBT Center's current Hollywood home, the Village at Ed Gould Plaza. The new campus — the New York firm Leong Leong and Los Angeles-based Killefer Flammang Architects worked on the project — will serve its multigenerational community with a tight ensemble of all-white geometric buildings and shaded courtyards.

April 12-14, 19-21

## Architecture blooms at Coachella

Sure, a main-stage set by Childish Gambino may be the highlight of the Coachella Valley Music and Arts Festival. But each spring, ever more ambitious art, architecture and design installations pop up on the polo field. Last year, wire mesh ghost cathedrals by Italian artist Edoardo Tresoldi towered over the crowd, but an upcoming piece by Berlin-based architect Diébédo Francis Kéré may be more down to earth. Kéré is best known for schools and civic structures in his home nation of Burkina Faso, buildings often constructed of local clay bricks and other modest materials. A Coachella installation by Los Angeles-based Office Kovacs, however, will likely prove more whimsical. Principal Andrew Kovacs relies on collage and assemblage techniques to create dollhouse-like designs, sampling architectural history and pop culture like a DJ mixing tracks and loops.

July

UCLA Margo Leavin Graduate Art Studios in Culver City

In 2016, Los Angeles gallerist Margo Leavin helped to kick-start construction of the UCLA Margo Leavin Graduate Art Studios with a \$20-million donation. Three years later, the design by Los Angeles architecture firm Johnston Marklee remakes the rundown Culver City art studios that had occupied the industrial Hayden Tract since 1986 — expanding and unifying the existing buildings (including a historic wallpaper factory) into a 48,000-square-foot campus wrapped in a facade of tilt-up concrete panels. Cast on site, the panels form an unusual surface: oversize corrugated concrete. New studios, galleries and classrooms are inside, sheltered by a series of wooden vaults — some roofed, some with skylights and some open-air.

## **The bounty of the desert**

**Los Angeles Times | on March 24, 2019**

In poetic essays, Bruce Berger captures charm, surrealism and beauty in vast spaces.



THE DESERT and its beauty flourish in “A Desert Harvest.” (Ricardo DeAratanha Los Angeles Times)

By Sean McCoy

A Desert Harvest

Bruce Berger

Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 272 pp., \$26

“The real desert sunset occurs in that unlikely direction, the east,” writes Bruce Berger, in one of his essays from “A Desert Harvest.” “It is opposite the sun that the last rays, deflected through clear skies, fall on the long, minutely eroded mountain ranges and bathe our eyes with light of decreasing wavelengths.”

In this latest collection, comprising both new and previously published work, Berger makes a habit of these subversive observations. He looks where others may look — at the Phoenix canals or a simple found photograph, for instance — and then turns away, examining the subject within another context, collapsing the space between history and present, between one place and the next: “That is the revelation about desert sunsets: that the distance is so unmoored, so delicious, that you want to be there, to become that distance.” The reader can almost taste it.

Berger was raised in Chicago and educated on the East Coast, but now, at 80, he's a bona fide desert veteran. His style is more poetic and less raucous than contemporary Edward Abbey — his conservationism equally felt if not as stridently expressed. Taken in its entirety, "A Desert Harvest" renders Berger's travels across the Southwest and down through Baja California Sur with plenty of charm and a comic sense for the surreal, but it also leaps beyond: into questions of water use or the substance of time (those foremost of arid subjects), grounding readers in the issues of the region.

In one exemplary essay, "The Mysterious Brotherhood," Berger begins with the task of describing varieties of decayed cactus: "the barrel's great mashed thumb, the organ pipe's burnt candelabra, the staghorn still more like antlers when stripped of its flesh." Death is a common preoccupation, the result of encroaching human activity in his treasured and adopted home, of his many years engaged with a land of extremes: vastness, temperature, extraordinary spines. "Cactus tells us nothing of what's ahead, any more than the death of a close friend: all they reveal is process, but process which retains, even in human terms, immeasurable beauty."

This emphasis on process, or linked events, is one of Berger's strengths, which appears in his style of storytelling as much as the stories themselves. The standout "Cactus Pete" takes place during multiple visits across three years to the namesake's remote Arizona outpost. Pete claims to map the mountains on Venus, cure cancer and discover rare minerals with his trusty "doodlebug," a mysterious contraption that seems nothing more than a spring with a rubber handle and a plastic cone (apparently tipped with uranium). Berger's willingness to return and engage with Pete, embracing his antics, provides material for a wonderfully nutty portrait. But Berger has more in mind: He uses Pete's mention of caliche to turn the essay inward, likening the hard mineral substance (the desert's "false bottom") to Pete's persistent solitude. This new angle is where real meaning develops, as Berger finds himself navigating between "nostalgia and dementia," attempting to understand the mixed motives of desert settlers: escapism to some pristine, primeval world, paired with a desire to make that world one's own — to shape it.

"Phoenician Shipwrecks" charts the fascinating history of the Phoenix canals, some of whose routes predate the city by nearly two millennia. Berger begins the essay around 200 AD — when the Hohokam Indians used handheld digging tools to create more than 250 miles of irrigation lines — and then proceeds to the canal's retrenching by settlers in the mid-1800s (for grain and alfalfa), to the citrus boom that soon followed, and into the recent past: when residential neighborhoods replaced the groves, children swam in the canals, families congregated on the banks, and adventurous water skiers ploughed past at 50 mph tethered to cars on adjacent streets. "The history of Phoenix, from outpost through oasis to elephantiasis, is written in channeled water," he writes. Now the neighborhoods are walled and the canals dredged each year to remove the tires, guns, refrigerators and dead fish that accumulate. It's an engrossing and illuminating look at the development of one of the West's most populous places.



“A Desert Harvest” also includes a number of shorter pieces, two-page meditations on heat, sunsets, slick rock and side canyons, that verge on prose poetry:

“The addict knows that to enter a side canyon is to spin the wheel of fortune. ... It does no good to tell him his behavior is about as reasonable as a frayed rope, that his days are a compendium of minutiae, that he cannot see the river for its tributaries.”

The book’s final essay, “Arrows of Time,” takes up the theme of time most explicitly, despite the abstract angle. Berger accompanies a friend to a physics conference in Spain on the “Physical Origins of Time Asymmetry” and, between meals with Stephen Hawking and chasing birds in the nearby preserve, distills the behavior of quantum-level particles. The essay meanders and feels somewhat out of place in the collection but manages to provide an interesting counterpart to Berger’s reflections on geologic time in his pieces set in the Southwest.

“A Desert Harvest” has the feel of a tributary collection for Berger; the book places him among the best of past generations to write about the Southwest. For longtime readers, though, it fails to offer much in terms of new material. The finest essays — “Cactus Pete” and “Curse of the Adorers” and “Mata Hari” — are culled from prior works. This wide range presents new readers with an excellent survey of Berger’s career but also leaves the collection, as a whole, spread somewhat thin; it lacks the cohesion and sustained devotion of his earlier investigations.

Nonetheless, “Harvest” is a welcome revival for an author for whom too many books have gone out of print. In Berger’s words: “The more our lands are surfeited by our presence, the more the forces that spawned us retreat from sight. As landscape without our image recedes, the wilds only deepen in their strangeness.” Berger brings us closer to the strange and encourages us to preserve it: to bridge the distance with care or else steer clear.

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## **Mammoth snowfall goes to great depths**

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Residents tunnel out after a winter that lived up to history.



A 20-FOOT wall of white rises along Davison Road in Mammoth Lakes, which has experienced copious snow. (Brian van der Brug Los Angeles Times)

By Joe Mozingo

MAMMOTH LAKES — By February, the snow made many neighborhoods here feel subterranean.

Twenty-foot walls of white, corniced by the wind, leaned over the plowed roads. Residents worked feverishly to keep the snow from swallowing their homes. They dug tunnels and narrow passageways to the street, opened portals to get light through second-story windows, shoveled dangerous weight off their roofs.

Unoccupied homes were so buried that a child might unknowingly sled down one. On still nights, when the wind stopped and the plows had passed, the silence was absolute. Only the streetlights and spirals of smoke from unseen chimneys suggested human life.

This year's record-setting February and continued storms have reconnected residents to a historic rite of passage in California's highest town, a place that largely came to be because of its monumental snowfall.

Brenda McCann had gone through the many harsh Mammoth snowfalls since her first autumn here in 1998, when four feet fell in two days at Thanksgiving. The old-timers called her neighborhood of Old Mammoth "Moleville" because of its propensity to get buried, turning homes into burrows.

The long drought began to make those eerie winters feel distant, a fading quirk of a town just five hours from Los Angeles that regularly made winters in Buffalo look moderate.

But the heavy snows of 2017 brought back memories. Many homeowners were unprepared, and roofs collapsed.

This winter, the town was ready, as 17 feet of snow landed in February, with more storms following in March.

“My whole house is encased in snow,” said McCann, 54, last week. “I’m in an igloo.”

While her house sits a good four feet above her driveway, she had to climb five feet over a frozen berm to get out, until she had someone plow it away. In the backyard, the snow rises straight up over the two-story roof of her next-door neighbor.

“I’ve seen a lot of dogs on roofs this winter.”

During and after white-out days, people spend so much time shoveling, blowing, shoveling, that their backs wince and their abs feel like they’d done a couple hundred sit-ups. Members come into the gym where McCann works, they say, “I worked out all day, I just need the Jacuzzi.”

One of her friends, who had moved back to Mammoth in summer after many years away, told her: “I’m outta here. Now I remember why I moved away in the first place.”

The sheer volume of the snow creates a logistical puzzle. Where to put it?

The town’s public works crews and the California Department of Transportation use large ribbon-bladed blowers to shoot it up on hills between homes, where it builds until it looms over the roads like a wave ready to take a ship down. Dump trucks haul the rest to a site down Highway 203, where it’s bulldozed off the side of the mesa.

From the huge ski operations on the mountain to town hall to condo complexes to small cabins and trailer homes, the urgent matter day and night has been “snow management.”

“People can’t understand this type of snow,” said Grady Dutton, the town’s public works director. “Fifty-three feet fell at the top of the mountain.”

During storms, his crews hack away at it 24 hours a day. County employees scrape 104 miles of street with seven plows and five massive Kodiak snowblowers, delivering the snow to scattered spots and the “snow pit” off the mesa. “We have a good idea of every nook and cranny in town,” Dutton said.

The machinery keeps the resort town functioning at the height of the ski season.

Mammoth gets its heavy snow due to its altitude and the topography surrounding it. Generally in the Sierra, Pacific storms hit the western slopes and rise into thinner atmosphere against the ridges. The clouds' relative humidity climbs, ice particles congeal and snow falls — mostly in the highest, uninhabited interior — wrung dry by the 12,000- to 14,000-foot peaks.

But here, storms roll up the deep gorge of the middle fork of the San Joaquin River, rising quickly to a wide break between the high peaks — Mammoth Pass, just 9,300 feet.

Clouds funnel through the pass, and dump snow with a vengeance, particularly on the volcanic Mammoth Mountain, which rises to 11,059 feet.

Most of California's big snow areas rely on this orographic effect of the storms rising and funneling up deep canyons — Squaw Valley, Bear Valley, Echo Summit and the home of America's original snow nightmare, Donner Pass.

The community of Tamarack, three miles from Bear Valley, holds the record for the greatest snow depth ever measured in the U.S. — 37 1/2 feet.

In Mammoth, the remoteness of the area combined with the harsh winters, keeping settlers at bay.

The first to try it were some 2,500 prospectors who built a boom town they called Mammoth City in 1879. That December, storms dumped snow for 18 days. By spring, 28 feet had engulfed the newcomers.

“Residents were forced to cut a warren of snow tunnels to allow them to make their way through town, and businesses hacked long rows of snow steps down to their front doors,” wrote Martin Forstenzer, in “Mammoth: The Sierra Legend.”

Miners strapped barrel staves to their boots to use as skis, taking their cues from a Norwegian man who delivered U.S. mail all over the Sierra no matter the weather. Only a handful of residents stayed to endure the following winter.

Modern Mammoth traces back to 1936, when a penniless 21-year-old from Independence took a job as a hydrographer for Los Angeles Department of Water and Power, which had famously diverted the snowmelt of the Eastern Sierra into an aqueduct to the exploding city.

Dave McCoy's job was to ski throughout the Sierra measuring snowpack so the water managers in L.A. would know what to expect come summer. He came to realize with the bald lava dome of Mammoth Mountain that it had the deepest snow he had seen, and regularly trekked there with friends to ski. Where the miners had failed, McCoy struck what would become white gold.

But it was a place where skiers could race giddily down a wide bowl in brilliant sunshine, and an hour later, as a blizzard howls through, start envisioning a fate like the Donner Party's.

One day McCoy arrived at his friend Ted Cushion's cabin, only to have it snow unrelentingly for 11 days, according to Forstenzer. When it stopped 20 feet later, McCoy and Cushion went to check on neighbors who ran a tavern. They climbed in a second-story window to find them alive and well. Cushion asked McCoy to check on a couple named Phillips who were winter caretakers of a summer camp.

"He told me about how far it was and how to get to it," McCoy recalled to Forstenzer. "But when I got there, I couldn't see a cabin or anything, anywhere.

"Pretty soon I saw a little opening in the snow with a little bit of smoke coming out of it, and heard a strange noise."

Down below, the Phillipses were trying to tunnel out by shoveling snow by the front door into the cabin. McCoy helped dig them out. Such conditions never daunted him. McCoy built the first chairlift on Mammoth Mountain in 1955, and retired 50 years later, selling his ski resort for \$365 million.

The town contains many microclimates sloping down a thousand feet from the base of the mountain at 8,700 feet into the Long Valley caldera. Some areas might have 10 feet of snow, where others have two. Near the top, and just below the pass, Old Mammoth, gets heaps.

"If you go down some of the smaller streets in town, it is literally tunnels," said Jo Louise, a hotel receptionist who moved here 22 years ago. "You have to be careful. It's eerie."

She was taking a bus to work because her car was buried.

Dave Harvey, 72, was once the president of the town's search and rescue team. In February, he could hear his house in Old Mammoth groaning under the weight. "You got to respect the snow and wind," he said. "Make no mistake, this is rugged country."