



Photographs by GINA FERAZZI Los Angeles Times

REMOVAL of dams and draining of reservoirs enabled the Klamath River to return to its historic channel, exposing submerged land.

‘Feeling inspired’ by dam removal

Historic effort has freed the Klamath, lifting hopes of Indigenous people who sought change to help salmon. ‘The river is healing,’ an activist says.

By IAN JAMES

HORNBROOK, Calif. — Excavators clawed at the remnants of Iron Gate Dam, clattering loudly as they unloaded tons of earth and rock into dump trucks.

Nine miles upriver, machinery tore into the foundation of a second dam, Copco No. 1, carving away some of the last fragments of the sloping concrete barrier that once towered above the Klamath River.

Over the last few weeks, crews have nearly finished removing the last of the four dams that once held back the Klamath River near the California-Oregon border.

On Wednesday, workers carved channels to breach the remaining cofferdams at the last two sites, allowing water to flow freely along more than 40 miles of the Klamath for the first time in more than a century.



BROOK THOMPSON of the Yurok Tribe stands above the Iron Gate Dam removal site. “It’s like a magic trick, like it was there and now it’s not.”

Indigenous leaders and activists cheered, smiled and embraced as they watched the river slowly begin to pour through what was left of Iron Gate Dam. Some were in tears.

For activists who have been waiting for this moment for years, the feelings of joy and excitement have been building in recent weeks as the undamming work neared completion.

“The biggest thing for me, the significance of the dam removal project, is just hope — understanding that change can be made,” Brook M. Thompson, a Yurok Tribe member, said recently as she stood on a rocky bluff overlooking the remnants of Iron Gate Dam.

“This is definitely one of the highlights of my entire life, seeing this view that we’re looking at right now,” Thompson said. “This is everything.”

[See Dams, A7]

Six facing federal charges in alleged crime tourism ring

Van Nuys car rental business is accused of working with South Americans to steal goods worth millions.

By RICHARD WINTON AND HANNAH FRY

A multimillion-dollar crime tourism scheme that operated for years in Southern California, facilitating thefts across the country, led investigators to a most unusual hub: a Los Angeles car rental business.

But this wasn’t just any rental car shop. The business “catered only to crooks,” U.S. Atty. Martin Estrada said at a news conference Wednesday.

Federal prosecutors allege Juan Carlos Thola-Duran, who owns Driver Power Rentals in Van Nuys, ran the go-to rental car business for thieves, providing vehicles for crime tourism groups ar-

iving from South America and directing them to locations both in and outside California for their thefts.

Thola-Duran, 57, is one of six people facing charges including wire fraud, conspiracy to commit wire fraud, money laundering and conspiracy to transport stolen goods for their alleged roles in the scheme, federal prosecutors said. The indictment identifies the other five as Thola-Duran’s girlfriend, Ana Maria Arriagada, 41; his son John Carlo Thola, 33; Miguel Angel Barajas, 57; Patricia Enderton, 43; and Federico Jorge Triebel IV, 78, court records show.

“These defendants acted essentially as quarterbacks for a massive team of eager thieves,” Estrada said.

Estrada said the group directed crime tourists who committed hundreds of thefts across the nation — including in Santa Barbara, Ventura, Los Angeles, Orange and San Diego counties — beginning around [See Crime tourism, A10]

Back to college, with stricter security

Campuses tighten rules on protests and ban encampments. Students are seeing the changes.

By JAWEED KALEEM

When Lawrence Sung returned to USC this week, he encountered a campus starkly different from the one he’s come to know over the last three years.

In place of open gates for public access, students lined up, waiting for staff to scan their IDs. Once inside, new signs warned of a possible “secondary verification screening” and that bags and personal items would be “subject to inspection.”

Tall, black fencing cordoned off parts of Alumni Park, the heart of campus and site of last spring’s pro-Palestinian encampments. Students are allowed to enter the park, where they typically rest beneath shade trees, only through specified entries and exits.

“It’s overblown,” said Sung, a senior studying international relations and global business who never protested. “It feels like a fortress closing itself down to the community.”

Last academic year, college campuses throughout the nation were roiled and divided by dueling rallies between pro-Israel and pro-Palestinian groups, accusations of antisemitic and anti-Palestinian bias, and tensions over an antiwar movement pushing for divestment from Israel. University presidents struggled with how to respond to a slew of fortified protest encampments, many that ended only after police were called in to make arrests — numbering in the thousands across the country.

Now administrations are clamping down ahead of a potentially volatile fall of continued protests opposing the Israel-Hamas war, compounded by a divisive [See Campuses, A5]

No student debt relief for now

The Supreme Court lets stand an appellate court order blocking Biden’s revised program. **NATION, A4**

More density ahead in L.A.?

The huge planned Fourth & Central project may be indicative of downtown’s trajectory. **CALIFORNIA, B1**

Discover the best studio tours

Go behind the scenes and onto the trams to take in iconic sets and immersive attractions. **ENTERTAINMENT, E1**

Weather
Turning sunny.
L.A. Basin: 81/62. **B6**

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ALLEN J. SCHABEN Los Angeles Times

CONSTRUCTION is progressing at Cotino, a master-planned community that Disney is building in Rancho Mirage, Calif. Some city residents are dubious.

Disney’s new mega-neighborhood is taking shape in California desert

By JACK FLEMMING

RANCHO MIRAGE, Calif. — Mickey Mouse is making his way to the Coachella Valley — whether locals want him there or not.

In Rancho Mirage, the Walt Disney Co. is making progress on an ambitious development that promises

to sprinkle some Disney magic into real estate. Dubbed Cotino, the master-planned community is the first of the entertainment giant’s “Storyliving” projects, designed for home buyers who want to bring Disney deeper into their everyday lives.

Donald Duck won’t be delivering your mail, but the

specs offer plenty of Disney flourishes, including an “Incredibles”-themed gathering space and a 24-acre lagoon. It’s a massive undertaking, with 1,932 planned homes spread across more than 600 acres.

But some desert dwellers say they’ve already found their happiest place on [See Cotino, A10]



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