



A **BUSY** day at the beach at Summerhome Park on the Russian River in Forestville, Calif. The path leading to the beach is private.

Photographs by BRIAN VAN DER BRUG Los Angeles Times

A battle rages over beach access

FORESTVILLE, Calif. — Don McEnhill paddled down the Russian River under late-summer skies, smiling at a heron, admiring a lazily moving river turtle, and generally exuding an air of cheerful relaxation.

Until, that is, he came upon Hacienda Beach, a sun-baked expanse of gravel about five miles east of Guerneville. The beach, like a number of others along this languid Northern California river, was marked as private property, roped off with floating buoys emblazoned with stark red signs warning the public away.

McEnhill piloted his canoe straight into the cordoned-off area, staging an occupation. When he spotted other visitors nervously eyeing the signs, he urged them to proudly occupy the space as well.

“This is a public beach,” he declared to a family day-tripping from outside the area. Ignore the signs, he told them, saying that they’d been put

Property owners and visitors along the Russian River in Sonoma County increasingly clash over what’s public

By Jessica Garrison



DON MCENHILL, executive director of the organization Russian Riverkeeper, paddles along the river in Forestville in 2018.

there by a local homeowners’ association trying to “get away with privatizing beaches.”

Somewhat nervously — who was this man emerging from the river making pronouncements about public access? — the family plunked down their towels and began pumping up paddleboards.

McEnhill climbed back into his canoe and continued downriver, on patrol for more beaches he believes have been illegally privatized.

In his capacity as executive director of Russian Riverkeeper, a nonprofit that works to protect the public’s right to clean water, McEnhill monitors a whole range of issues along the river’s meandering 110-mile course, including floodplain restoration, the health of the salmon and permit compliance from the area’s many wineries. But this summer, like a lot of people in western Sonoma County, he has also been wading into a pitched battle over

[See **River**, A11]

Fight over VA campus turns into a brawl for a bar

One side wants more housing at West L.A. site; the other wants a hub for all veterans.

By Doug Smith

Building 13, at the center of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs’ West Los Angeles campus, is a century-old, two-story monolith composed of three wings adorned in intricate Art Deco detail.

It’s been vacant for decades, but it has a new destiny — if the money to restore it can be found: to anchor a town center at the heart of a community of veterans on the 388-acre campus.

For some veterans, its best use would be a veterans hotel — with a bar — a gathering place for those on the campus and their brothers and sisters around Southern California and the nation.

Bobby Shriver, the former Santa Monica mayor and veterans advocate who gathered ideas from focus groups he organized in 2015,

said he was caught off guard but came to understand.

“It became clear to me that what they wanted was a hotel bar where they could go to meet other veterans from out of town.”

That vision may never become reality because a master plan for the property has a sharply different vision for Building 13.

It calls for a mixed-use facility with 24 units of supportive housing on the second floor for disabled and chronically homeless veterans and a culinary center and grand hall on the ground floor to make the building “a bustling center of activity,” though one lacking the social catalyst of a bar.

The differing visions for Building 13 are part of a larger tussle over construction plans that will shape the character of the veterans’ land for decades.

There is almost universal support for a — uppercase — Town Center as essential to serve a community that will one day have 3,000 or more veterans living on site in temporary and permanent housing and potentially

[See **Veterans**, A8]



MARCUS YAM Los Angeles Times

SINCE 2020, California has added nearly 1.5 million acres of conserved lands, according to a report from the governor and the state Natural Resources Agency.

State making progress on 2030 conservation goals

By Hayley Smith

Four years after unveiling an ambitious plan to conserve 30% of California’s lands and coastal waters by 2030, state officials announced that they are closing in on that target.

Since the start of the so-called 30x30 Initiative, California has added nearly 1.5

million acres — or roughly 2,350 square miles — of conserved lands, according to a progress report from Gov. Gavin Newsom and the California Natural Resources Agency.

In all, the report shows that California has now conserved 25.2% of its lands and 16.2% of its coastal waters with a little more than five years until the deadline.

“In 2020, I signed an executive order to conserve 30% of lands and 30% of coastal waters in California by 2030,” Newsom said in a statement. “And four years into this effort, we’re on track to achieve this target, with over a quarter of our lands protected. We won’t stop working to protect California’s unparalleled natural beauty

[See **Conservation**, A8]

Black male vote is coveted, elusive

Presidents have ‘never affected anything in my household,’ one Philadelphia man says.

By Noah Bierman and Jenny Jarvie

PHILADELPHIA — Three construction foremen taking a break in an alleyway on a recent Wednesday are among the most coveted voters in the country: middle-aged Black men and union members, living in Pennsylvania, the largest battleground state.

They don’t sound excited about it.

“Whatever president we’ve had in office for the past 42 years, they’ve never affected anything in my household,” said Desmond Chandler, who is 43 and lives in Philadelphia.

His friend Mike Gray was just as disillusioned. Vice President Kamala Harris is a “puppet for the white people,” but he would never vote for former President Trump, who manufactured his neckties in China, used nonunion labor for construction projects and carves up the electorate with terms like “Black jobs,” he said.

Interviews in recent weeks with more than two dozen Black men across two of the most critical battleground states — Pennsylvania and Georgia — offer a broader context for what polls have shown. Harris is likely to win a commanding majority of Black voters, despite extensive efforts by the Trump campaign to entice Black men in particular.

But Harris still has work to do in what is expected to be an exceedingly tight election. She needs to expand her majority among Black voters even more, to match President Biden’s winning formula from 2020. As importantly, she also has to motivate people like Chandler and Gray to show up and cast ballots.

A recent Howard University survey of Black voters in seven battleground states showed Harris leading

[See **Black vote**, A6]

LAX to promote banned books

A partnership with the L.A. Public Library will offer free week-long passes to digital titles. **CALIFORNIA, B1**

Ohtani’s steals historic too

His increased efficiency stealing bases has produced the second-highest success rate ever. **SPORTS, B10**

Celebrities push for AI safety bill

More than 125 actors, directors, music artists and others urge Gov. Gavin Newsom to sign SB 1047. **BUSINESS, A10**

Weather
Clouds, then sun.
L.A. Basin: 78/60. **B5**

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