



LAKE POWELL, shown from above, is at 34% of capacity — a significant gain from last spring for the nation’s second-largest reservoir.

JOE SOHM Visions of America / Universal Images Group

Reprieve for the Colorado River

Feds say storms and conservation have eased immediate risk of depleting reservoirs, leaving ‘breathing room’ to develop long-term plans for adapting to climate change

BY IAN JAMES

After a wet year and a push to conserve water in the Southwest, the risk of the Colorado River’s reservoirs declining to critically low levels has substantially eased, federal officials say.

The Biden administration’s water and climate officials said the rise in reservoir levels and ongoing conservation efforts will provide breathing room for the next couple of years, allowing the region’s water managers to come up with new long-term rules to address the river’s chronic over-allocation and the worsening effects of climate change.

“Even with the welcome rain and snow forecast across the West, the big picture remains the same. The past two decades have culminated in critically low reservoir conditions,” Camille Calimlim Touton, commissioner of the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, said Tuesday.



ALLEN J. SCHABEN Los Angeles Times

WATER is released back into the Colorado River at Hoover Dam on Lake Mead, at the border of Nevada and Arizona. The largest reservoir in the U.S. has risen nearly 29 feet in the last year.

“The prolonged drought crisis is driven by effects of climate change, including extreme heat and low precipitation,” Touton said. “The reality is that aridification will only intensify the drought-related impacts in the Colorado River Basin and the communities it supports. We know we must adapt to this new reality with innovative and durable solutions.”

She said the Biden administration, working with states, tribes and water agencies, has made progress in helping “protect the sustainability and stability of the Colorado River.”

The river’s flow has declined dramatically since 2000, and global warming driven by the burning of fossil fuels worsened the long stretch of extremely dry years through 2022, research shows. Last year, however, storms blank-

[See River, A6]

ANALYSIS

Biden seizes moment to show strength

His State of the Union delivery rebuts GOP claims he’s too frail heading into election.

BY DAVID LAUTER

WASHINGTON — President Biden arrived at the Capitol on Thursday night facing a tough assignment: a high-stakes State of the Union speech.

He responded by throwing a punch — and then several more.

The fiery performance, leavened by some humor at the close, aimed to rebut one of the main lines of Republican attack on Biden — the effort to portray the 81-year-old president as doddering and weak.

That’s an attack that has registered with many Americans.

More than 6 in 10 American adults, including about a third of Democrats, lacked confidence that Biden has the mental capacity to serve effectively as president, according to a poll for the Associated Press released earlier this week.

That finding isn’t quite as dire as it might look — former President Trump is 77, and the share of Americans who lack confidence in his mental capacity to serve is only slightly smaller — 57%.

Still, worries about Biden’s capacity to deal with a turbulent world provide a major reason — perhaps *the* major reason — why he

[See Analysis, A5]

U.S. hiring is robust; California falls short

Tech industry cuts are among the reasons the state’s job growth trails national curve.

BY DON LEE

WASHINGTON — U.S. employers continued hiring workers at a brisk pace last month, providing fresh evidence that the overall economy remains sturdy, but the new data showed that California is still looking like an underachiever.

California’s job growth has been trailing the national curve all year, and even though it made up some ground in January, the Golden State still lags when it comes to adding jobs.

The state’s unemployment rate also continued a months-long run of exceeding the national average by more than a full percentage point. California’s most recent unemployment rate, for January, was 5.2%.

The national jobless rate went up slightly in February and now stands at 3.9%, marking 25 straight months in which the unemployment figure has remained below 4%.

Across the country, Friday’s report by the Labor Department said, employers added an unexpectedly strong 275,000 jobs last month, many in healthcare

[See Hiring, A5]

In progressive San Francisco, voters take shift to right

Mayor championed measures that toughen approaches to drug and crime problems.

BY HANNAH WILEY

SAN FRANCISCO — Mayor London Breed was all smiles during a packed primary party on Tuesday in

Hayes Valley, a boutique neighborhood about a half mile from City Hall, stopping for selfies and congratulations as she navigated the crowded bar toward a microphone.

“Change is coming!” Breed shouted to thundering applause from the patio at the hip cocktail bar Anina.

Early results showed promise for a slate of local candidates running on a

more centrist agenda, and for ballot measures that would transform downtown with new development and called on the city school board to reinstate Algebra I as an offering for middle school students.

But the focus of Breed’s excitement that evening was two ballot measures she championed to broaden police surveillance powers and impose drug treatment

mandates that were garnering overwhelming voter support — a stunning rightward shift for a city known nationally for its progressive politics.

The first measure, Proposition E, bolsters police powers in the city. The second, Proposition F, will require drug screening and treatment for people receiving county welfare benefits who are suspected of drug

use.

The measures give teeth to efforts to address the city’s open-air drug addiction crisis — and the street crime and homelessness that come with it. Taken together, they give credence to Breed’s message that San Francisco is not the bastion of lawlessness its critics love to claim.

“Enough is enough,” [See San Francisco, A6]

COLUMN ONE

Long-forgotten family history of Native Americans in film

My three Chickasaw great-great-uncles were prolific movie makers in early Hollywood.

BY ERIK HIMMELSBACH-WEINSTEIN

The critical success of the FX series “Reservation Dogs” and the spotlight on performers like Lily Gladstone, an Academy Award nominee for “Killers of the Flower Moon,” have heightened awareness of Indigenous cultures and stories, particularly in Hollywood, where until

recently they’ve been mostly caricatured — or absent — during the century-plus history of the entertainment industry.

But Indigenous people weren’t completely invisible in show business, as I learned during a decade of weekly conversations — family history lessons — with my great-uncle Wally Fox before his death at the age of 96 in 2022. Inside his ramshackle Westside home, Wally gingerly positioned his bony frame sideways on an armrest of his recliner and played the role of raconteur, narrating remarkable stories about our lineage. The most notable were a series of vintage Hollywood tales — about his father, Wallace Fox Sr., and his

[See Fox, A7]



Photo from the Fox family

WALLACE FOX SR., seated on the left, on the set of a western, a potentially challenging genre for the Chickasaw director.



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