



Photographs by ROBERT GAUTHIER Los Angeles Times

THE TULARE Lake Basin has been placed on probation after a local plan for managing groundwater was deemed inadequate.

State puts farming area on notice

Water board takes an unprecedented step to curb chronic overpumping

By IAN JAMES AND JESSICA GARRISON

SACRAMENTO — For the first time, California water regulators are cracking down on one of the state's major farming regions for failing to take steps to curb growers' excessive groundwater pumping, which has sent water levels into rapid decline and is causing the land to sink.

The State Water Resources Control Board voted unanimously Tuesday to place the Tulare Lake basin on "probationary" status for failing to adopt sufficient measures to address chronic overpumping.

Falling groundwater levels have caused the ground to sink as much as 6 feet in parts of the area over the last decade, and state officials have determined that a local plan for managing groundwater would allow the free fall to continue. They say that without stronger measures, hundreds of household wells are at risk of running dry.

It's the first time California officials have used their authority to intervene in a community to force stronger measures to rein in the depletion of groundwater, as required under the state's decade-old Sustainable Groundwater Management Act, known as SGMA.

"The goal here is to set folks up for success locally. We recognize this is a really hard job," board member Laurel Firestone said before the vote. "When these decisions are this big and this hard, some-

[See **Groundwater**, A7]



A PUMPING station takes water from the Kings River. Excessive withdrawals have caused land in parts of the San Joaquin Valley to sink as much as 6 feet.

Campus safety vs. free speech at USC

Some ask if keeping the valedictorian from speaking at graduation takes students' need for security too far.

By JENNY JARVIE

Five months ago, USC cited safety as a rationale for banning economics professor John Strauss, who is Jewish, from campus after student activists said they felt threatened when he approached them at a protest and said "Hamas are murderers. ... I hope they all are killed."

"Our north star is protecting the safety of our community," a USC spokesperson said at the time.

Now the university is again citing safety concerns for canceling a Muslim valedictorian's speech at its May commencement ceremony.

More than six months after the Hamas attack on Israel that started a war, campus administrators nationwide are struggling to uphold principles of free expression amid mounting pressure from donors, legislators and activists who claim an ever-expanding amount of speech — or potential speech — subjects students not only to physical danger but also to psychological harm.

[See **USC**, A10]

USC valedictorian defends her views

Asna Tabassum says the university failed her in canceling her graduation speech. **CALIFORNIA, B1**

Anaheim OKs major Disneyland expansion

By SALVADOR HERNANDEZ AND RUBEN VIVES

Disneyland's multi-billion-dollar plan to reimagine and expand the world-famous theme park has won the unanimous approval of the Anaheim City Council, opening the door for one of the region's largest employers to add new attractions, shops and restaurants.

With a promise from Disney to invest \$1.9 billion to \$2.5 billion, the plan approved Wednesday marks a historic moment for the park, promising to give Disneyland its most substantial makeover since the 1990s, when it took action to add a park (California Adventure) and a downtown dining district.

The council voted 7 to 0 after an hours-long meeting that started Tuesday evening and ended in the early hours of Wednesday, with more than 200 people — including residents, Disney employees, city officials, business associations and union groups — weighing in on a plan expected to affect

[See **Disneyland**, A10]

In Ukraine, the unthinkable is now 'what if?'

The specter of losing to Putin gains voice amid stalled aid, war fatigue and dimming attention. But nation is not giving up the fight for its life.

By LAURA KING

KYIV, Ukraine — Could Ukraine lose this war?

For more than two years, as this country of 44 million people has fought off an all-out invasion by neighboring Russia, a spirit of stubborn optimism prevailed even amid the most frightening moments. Any notion of defeat was unthinkable, an almost taboo topic.

But now the question hovers, flitting in and out of view: What if?

The stalling of crucial American aid, a distinct dimming of the world spotlight, and simple war weariness are all exacting a heavy cost. On the front lines, exhausted Ukrainian troops are rationing ammunition as they fend off the latest Russian advances, and anxiety is mounting along with the military and civilian toll.

"Every day, we're dying," [See **Ukraine**, A4]



OLEKSI CHUMACHENKO SOPA Images/LightRocket

MONTHS of military setbacks have left many Ukrainians wondering whether their front lines can hold. Above, the coffins of two servicemen are carried in Kyiv.

Senate rejects impeachment

Vote along party lines dismisses counts against Homeland Security Secretary Mayorkas. **NATION, A5**

Will Goldmans finally be paid?

The death of O.J. Simpson may open a new door to collecting judgment in civil case. **CALIFORNIA, B1**

Unhappy staff at Disneyland

Character performers explain why they are unionizing: "The fairy dust fades away." **BUSINESS, A6**

Weather

Partly sunny. L.A. Basin: 74/55. **B6**

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