

CALIFORNIA RESOURCES CORP., the state's largest oil and gas company, is seeking permission to pump 1.46 million metric tons of carbon dioxide each year into its depleted Elk Hills oil field near Bakersfield.

Can old oil fields be used to slow global warming?

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has signed off on a California oil company's plans to permanently store carbon emissions deep underground to combat global warming — the first proposal of its kind to be tentatively approved in the state.

California Resources Corp., the state's largest oil and gas company, applied for permission to send 1.46 million metric tons of carbon dioxide each year into the Elk Hills oil field, a depleted oil reservoir about 25 miles outside downtown Bakersfield. The emissions would be collected from several industrial sources nearby, compressed into a liquid-like state and injected into porous Energy giants think so, and EPA has tentatively OKd state's first carbon storage project in Kern County

By Tony Briscoe

rock more than a mile underground.

Although this technique has never been performed on a large scale in California, the state's climate plan calls for these operations to be widely deployed across the Central Valley to reduce carbon emissions from industrial facilities. The EPA issued a draft permit for the California Resources project, which is poised to be finalized in March after public comments.

As California transitions away from oil production, a new business model for fossil fuel companies has emerged: carbon management. Oil companies have heavily invested in transforming

[See CO2 storage, A6]

One-two punch of COVID and flu lands hard in L.A. County

International and local health officials continue to call for preventing deaths through vaccination.

By Rong-Gong Lin II

Coronavirus levels are high and rising throughout California amid a postholiday spike in infections.

The uptick, documented through wastewater surveillance, is coinciding with a sharp rise in flu activity — a one-two punch for what's proving to be a busy respiratory virus season.

'We are certainly in some high levels of viral transmission. Flu is one of the bigger drivers of that right now," state epidemiologist Dr. Erica Pan said in a recent briefing. "We are seeing some increases in COVID-19 activity, especially often after the travel and gatherings of the holiday season."

Around Christmas, flu was responsible for 4% of weekly emergency room vis-

its statewide, up from 1% a month earlier. COVID was responsible for about 2%, up from about 1%.

In L.A. County for the week that ended Dec. 30, the wastewater concentration of SARS-CoV-2 — the virus that causes COVID-19 reached 60% of last winter's peak, up from the prior week's reading of 49%.

Statewide, the rates at which tests for COVID-19 and flu are coming back positive continue to rise. California continues to show 'very high" flu-like activity, which includes non-flu illnesses such as COVID-19, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

While COVID-19 is no longer exerting the dangerous and devastating pressure seen earlier in the pandemic, it has not been defanged. Officials from the World Health Organization noted that 10,000 deaths were reported globally from COVID-19 in December, based on data from fewer than 50 countries, mostly in the Americas and Europe.

[See Viruses, A10]

Leaving a broken dream in Golden State

In Iowa, the O'Neils wield clout in selection of GOP presidential pick

By Faith E. Pinho

The Barbies lived in California, of course.

On summer days, as Sara O'Neil pranced her dolls along the muddy stream that ran through her family's 168-acre Iowa farm, she could almost see them frolicking along a gleaming, palm-lined Pacific beach.

At 5 years old, she told her mom that she'd live by the ocean someday.

As an adult, she made her dream a reality. Sara joined the Navy, married, had four kids and, for more than two decades, built a life in South-



BRYON HOULGRAVE For The Times

PANDEMIC rules were a factor in her family's move, said Sara O'Neil, with Johnny, far left, and Christian.

ern California.

Her sons became homegrown groms, surfing Imperial Beach with their dad and flipping skateboard tricks in downtown San Diego. Sara walked along the ocean every morning.

Then the COVID-19 pandemic hit, and with it the realization that the Golden State's liberal politics didn't align with hers. So Sara and her husband, Johnny, a Southland native with a sunny disposition to match, packed up and joined the droves of Californians leaving the state, some for political reasons

[See O'Neils, A10]

California could give Trump early boost, poll says

Survey of state's voters shows tepid support for Biden and less for Kennedy.

By Laura J. Nelson

No matter the results of the Iowa caucus on Monday night, new polling suggests that Republicans vying for the presidential nomination face the equivalent of a brick wall on Super Tuesday in the form of former President Trump.

In California, one of 15 states holding Republican primaries on March 5, twothirds of voters considered likely to take part in the Republican primary said they would cast their ballots for Trump, according to the latest UC Berkeley Institute of Governmental Studies poll, co-sponsored by the Los Angeles Times. That's up from an already dominant 57% in

October. The poll, taken Jan. 4-8, suggests that California conservatives could provide a significant boost to Trump's efforts to clinch his party's nomination early in the primary season, despite his relatively light presence in early primary states.

This year's primary is the first under new "winnertake-all" rules set last summer by the California Republican Party, which allocate all 169 delegates — the most of any state — to a candidate who wins more than 50% of the vote.

California's delegation accounts for nearly 14% of the delegates needed to secure the Republican nomination.

"It's now a different ballgame, and it certainly benefits Trump if he can follow through on these numbers," said Mark DiCamillo, the director of the Berkeley IGS poll. "If Trump carries California, he's a long way toward securing the nomination.'

Previously, Republican [See Poll, A6]

Luis Sinco Los Angeles Times

ROUGH LANDING FOR RAMS

The Rams lost their NFC wild-card playoff game to Detroit 24-23 despite the efforts of quarterback Matthew Stafford, being tackled above. sports, D1

Making climate a priority

The next big front in the battle for racial justice is the environment, Erika D. Smith writes. CALIFORNIA, B1

Weighing the threat to birds

A study finds fracking is a bigger risk than wind turbines, columnist Sammy Roth writes. BUSINESS, A7

Weather

Some sun. L.A. Basin: 66/47. B6

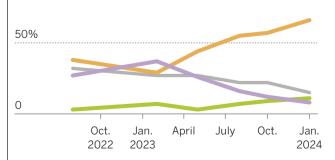
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Trump widens California lead

Two-thirds of likely Republican primary voters in California support former President Trump, as his lead over his rivals continues to grow.

Trump — DeSantis — Haley — Undecided/others



Survey of 1,351 voters considered likely to cast ballots in the Republican primary, conducted online in English and Spanish Jan. 4-8. Estimated margin of error +/- 3.5 percentage points.

UC Berkeley Institute of Governmental Studies

DAVID LAUTER Los Angeles Times



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