

Opinion: How much can Calif. ask of its rivers?

By Joe Mathews

California is finally embracing its rivers. It may be a choking embrace.

We Californians have long celebrated our coastal splendor and beautiful mountains. But our rivers were seen as mere plumbing for our hydration convenience.



Joe Mathews

Now California's communities, seeking space for environmental restoration and recreation (and some desperately needed housing), are treating rivers and riverfronts as new frontiers, and are busily reconsidering how these bodies of water might better connect people and places.

A state bond passed in 2014 offers billions for water-related projects, and the epic drought is inspiring imaginative thinking about our waterways.

But the new thinking is also opening up broad new conflicts. So many California places now are making so many plans for so many rivers that we may have to ask just how much change our rivers can handle.

Some of these conflicts are bigger, updated versions of older battles. The so-called California Water Fix—Gov. Jerry Brown's

plan to build two tunnels under the Bay Delta—is really just another chapter in a decadeslong battle over how the state manages its longest and most important river, the 445-mile Sacramento. The tunnels would reroute water from the Sacramento in the name of creating a more predictable water supply for Southern California.

The newer—and, potentially, nastier fight—involves the river that, with the Sacramento, forms the Delta: the overtaxed and often dry San Joaquin. State plans to restore fish species by leaving more water in the San Joaquin and its vital tributaries, the Merced, Tuolumne and Stanislaus, present the hottest and most representative battle in this new era of river appreciation.

The river and its tributaries are part of the landscape of Yosemite and Kings Canyon National Parks, support abundant wildlife, supply some of the world's most productive agriculture, power 4 million homes, provide recreation, and help deliver drinking water to 25 million Californians.

But the state wants the San Joaquin to do even more for fish species. And those who currently rely on the river say that is too much to ask. San Francisco officials argue that the state plan to leave more water in the river could force their city to ration water. San Joaquin Valley officials have all but declared war on the state proposal, arguing that it underestimates the consequences of cutting water to existing users.

“With substantially less water, jobs will disappear, land values will fall and less will be collected in taxes,” wrote the Modesto Bee’s Mike Dunbar early this year in a withering critique of the state’s intentions. “A congressional report already calls us the Appalachia of the West; with less water, we could be the Sahara.”

Such fighting over water in California, while hard, can be

easier than making peace. Back in 2010, stakeholders in the far north of California (and southern Oregon) negotiated agreements to restore the Klamath River basin by sharing water and removing some dams. But the deal required the agreement of Congress, which failed to act, forcing players to try to move forward themselves with certain aspects of the agreements.

In Los Angeles, a complicated debate has erupted over competing plans to restore the L.A. River, the famous concrete flood control channel. Many Angelenos see a beautified, renewed river as the spine of nothing less than a new L.A. with new open space, denser housing, and more amenities for pedestrians, bicyclists and, on the river, boaters. But there are growing clashes between the river's elite and grassroots champions over details and control.

Rivers are also a big part of the conversation elsewhere in urban Southern California. Ventura County's tight development restrictions have allowed for restoration of the Santa Clara River, the closest thing Southern California has to a wild river. The 96-mile Santa Ana River, which runs from near Big Bear all the way to Huntington Beach, is a hot topic in three counties—Riverside, San Bernardino and Orange—inspiring plans for parks, bike and equestrian trails and riverfront economic development. Further south, San Diego is planning a parkway along the length of the San Diego River.

That I've gotten this far without mentioning perhaps the most endangered river in America—the Colorado—is testament to just how river-crazy we've become. Drought, climate change and the demands of agriculture and western cities are crushing the Colorado. And Mexico is demanding the river not dry up before it reaches the Gulf of California.

All California's river dreams and duels could be roiled by the currents of the Potomac. Among his bizarre campaign pronouncements, President-elect Donald Trump denied that California is in a drought, while promising farmers quantities

of water that defy nature's laws.

I suppose we'll have to cross that river when we come to it.

Joe Mathews writes the Connecting California column for Zócalo Public Square.

Congress allows mass hacking by government

By Erin Kelly, USA Today

WASHINGTON – In a defeat for privacy advocates, Senate leaders rebuffed a last-ditch effort by a bipartisan group of senators to allow a vote to block a new rule that allows federal agents armed with a single search warrant to hack millions of Americans' computers or smartphones at once.

That rule took effect Thursday.

Sens. Ron Wyden, D-Ore., Chris Coons, D-Del., and Steve Daines, R-Mont., took to the Senate floor to seek agreement to bring up bills to stop the rule from taking effect or at least delay it for three to six months to give Congress more time to study it. Republican Senate leaders denied the three senators' requests for a vote.

Read the whole story

3 U.S. women in top 15 in Lake Louise downhill

By USSA

LAKE LOUISE, Canada – The American women stacked three in the top 15 on the second day of downhill in Lake Louise, led by Laureenne Ross (Bend, Ore.) in seventh place. Friday's top American Stacey Cook (Mammoth Lakes) was 11th and Mikaela Shiffrin (Eagle-Vail, Colo.), in only her second Audi FIS Ski World Cup downhill, was 13th.

Ilka Stuhec of Slovenia wore a red bib marking her as the World Cup leader in downhill after a surprise win on Friday, and showed that the win wasn't a fluke. She skied to victory again, ahead of Switzerland's Lara Gut in second and Edit Miklos of Hungary in third.

Ross was happy with her result, pointing out the conditions that hindered racers starting behind her. "There was a lot of sun at the very beginning of the race and I think for every person, the sun was less and less," said Ross. "But that's ski racing. I got lucky ... I'm happy with the result."

While Shiffrin still plans to focus on giant slalom and slalom, she was excited to count two solid downhill results under her belt with an 18th place finish in Friday's race. "I'm sure I'll do another (downhill) this year," said Shiffrin. "I love it, so I'll for sure be back on the downhill circuit, but I have to keep sight of my real goals this season."

After a great result in Friday's race, Breezy Johnson (Jackson, Wyo.) again skied into the points, taking 21st. Alice McKennis (New Castle, Colo.) and Jackie Wiles (Aurora, Ore.) also grabbed points, snagging 26th and 30th, respectively. Leanne Smith (North Conway, N.H.) was 34th and

Anna Marno (Steamboat Springs, Colo.) did not finish.

Calif. asks Trump for guidance on pot, banking

By Michael R. Blood, AP

LOS ANGELES — California Treasurer John Chiang on Friday appealed to President-elect Donald Trump for guidance on how the state's projected \$7 billion marijuana industry can participate in the nation's banking system while pot remains illegal under U.S. law.

California voters last month approved Proposition 64, which legalized the recreational use of marijuana, beginning in 2018. Largely at issue is how the state will collect an estimated \$1 billion in annual taxes from legal pot sales and cultivation, when cannabis businesses can face obstacles opening bank accounts, getting loans or obtaining insurance.

The "conflict between federal and state rules creates a number of difficulties for states that have legalized cannabis use, including collecting taxes, increased risk of serious crime and the inability of a legal industry under state law to engage in banking and commerce," Chiang wrote to Trump.

"We have a year to develop a system that works in California and which addresses the many issues that exist as a result of the federal-state legal conflict," he added. "Uncertainty about the position of your administration creates even more of a challenge."

The California vote on Nov. 8 represented the national

legalization movement's biggest victory to date. The new law will attempt, at least in theory, to tame a market that now ranges from legal, medicinal production and sales to vast illegal grows operated by drug cartels.

With pot illegal on the federal level, it's unclear what stance the incoming Trump administration will take with the new California pot economy and other weed-friendly states. Trump's pick for attorney general, Alabama Sen. Jeff Sessions, has called marijuana a danger that should not be legalized.

Twenty-eight states and Washington, D.C., allow marijuana for medical or recreational purposes.

In other states, the business of legal marijuana has created a patchwork of banking and tax practices.

In Oregon, officials have built a fortified office, with bulletproof glass, security cameras and armed guards, for collecting huge cash payments for pot taxes. In Washington, most businesses are paying taxes electronically, a sign of better access to bank accounts.

And the number of U.S. banks and credit unions willing to handle pot money under Treasury Department guidelines issued two years ago is growing, though they are often smaller institutions.

California tax collectors, however, released a report that concluded tax payments from marijuana-related businesses would be made in cash, since pot is illegal under federal law and businesses struggle to get access to banks.

Chiang wrote that federal policies have not provided certainty for financial institutions to give access to the cannabis industry and "California might exacerbate the banking problem even more."

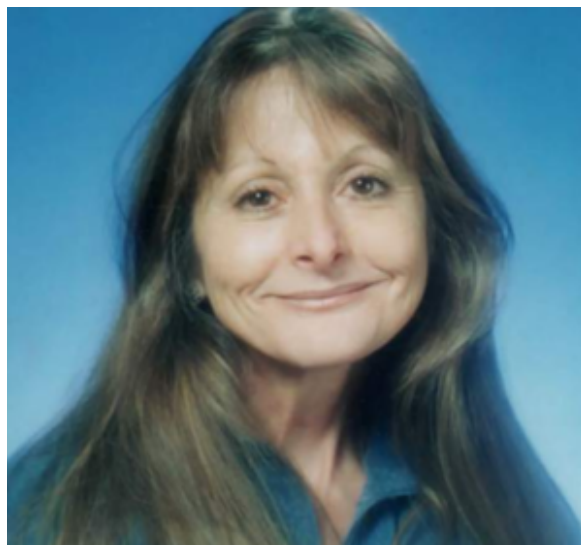
The treasurer said he was forming a group to study banking

issues that he says could hamper the coming legal pot economy in the state.

In general, the state will treat cannabis like alcohol. Taking effect in 2018, the law allows people 21 and older to legally possess up to an ounce of pot and grow six marijuana plants at home.

Associated Press writer John Antczak contributed.

Laurie Weatherston — 1952-2016



Laurie Nelson Weatherston

Laurie Nelson Weatherston died Oct. 10, 2016, from complications with surgery at UC Davis Medical Center in Sacramento. She was 64.

Laurie was born June 11, 1952. She grew up in the Los Angeles area. After successfully battling cancer in her early 20s, she completed her studies at Sonoma State University, earning her

bachelor's in psychology in 1976.

Her interests in running, hiking, skiing, and snowshoeing led her to Lake Tahoe in the early 1980s, where she met her future husband, Scott Weatherston, and her soon to be stepson Sean. Scott and Laurie celebrated their 27th wedding anniversary on Sept. 17.

Laurie's career began in 1984 working for Turner & Associates Inc. in Stateline. This was followed by Lumos & Associates Inc. in Carson City and R.O. Anderson Engineering Inc. in Minden.

She became a licensed professional land surveyor in 2002. In 2006, she started Weatherston Surveying LLC.

Laurie loved her mountains, often venturing out solo to hike, run and snowshoe in the Upper Kingsbury area. She trekked the mountain sides of Virginia City and Kingston to plot out properties for her clients.

She was also an avid San Francisco Giants fan, played the piano, acoustic guitar, and flute.

Her love of the outdoors led her to being an active and valuable member of the Douglas County Sheriff's Search and Rescue (DCSAR) team for 12 years. Along with responding to people in need, she also managed the first aid program for DCSAR, and took the lead in providing first aid teams for the many bicycle and running events at Lake Tahoe. Never turning down an assignment, she met the challenges with enthusiasm, in spite of her small stature, all of 95 pounds and 4-feet-11-inches.

Laurie leaves behind her loving husband, Scott; sister Kathy Nelson; stepson Sean Weatherston; and stepmother Marilyn Nelson. She also leaves behind numerous cousins, friends and her beloved cats, Persia, Wolfie and Yoda.

Laurie is preceded in death by her parents, Don Nelson and Barbara Eiler; part of a landmark entertainment family headed by her uncle and aunt, Ozzie and Harriet Nelson; and her stepfather Martin Sperzel.

A memorial and celebration of life for Laurie will be Dec. 10 at 2pm at Edgewood Tahoe in Stateline.

Snippets about Lake Tahoe

- The South Lake Tahoe pool will be closed starting next week from 12:45-2pm Mondays-Thursdays for the fourth-grade learn to swim program.

- Brenda Knox, financial advisor with Waddell & Reed, and Heather Satin, attorney and principal of Satin Legal, are hosting a free Q&A session regarding estate planning for entrepreneurs on Dec. 6 from 5:30-7:30pm at Tahoe Mountain Lab, 3079 Harrison Ave., South Lake Tahoe. RSVP by Dec. 5 to Knox at bknoxwradvisors.com or 530.318.5733.

- Tioga Pass is closed for the season.

- Mark Gibbs has been hired as the manager of Lake Tahoe Airport.

- Truckee High School bands will be performing the annual Winter Concert on Dec. 6 at 6:30pm in the school's auditorium.

Multiple controlled burns planned for basin

The Tahoe Douglas Fire Protection District, California Tahoe Conservancy and the U.S. Forest Service will continue prescribed fire operations next week as conditions allow.

Operations may take place in multiple locations around Lake Tahoe including Glenbrook, Cave Rock, Round Hill, Lower Kingsbury Grade, South Lake Tahoe, Tahoe Paradise and Meyers. To view a map with project locations and details, go **online**.

Before prescribed fire operations are conducted, agencies post road signs around areas affected by prescribed fire, send email notifications and update the local fire information line at 530.543.2816.

Smoke from prescribed fire operations is normal and may continue for several days after an ignition depending on the project size and environmental conditions.

The coming California drought in 2017

By Jay Lund, KQED

California is a big, diverse place.

California probably will experience droughts this year of different types in different places, and no drought at all in some places, simultaneously. Even if conditions this year are very wet, with flooding, parts of California will have drought

issues. (This is what makes California a great place to work on water problems.)

The first two months of this new water year have been wetter than average in the north and much drier than average in the south. But it is still early days.

Reservoir storage in California is now about 2.5 million acre-feet (3.08 billion cubic meters) below historical averages for this time of year. (This is 0.8 million acre-feet – 987 million cubic meters – better than two months ago.) Some major reservoirs are below average, particularly Oroville, Trinity, San Luis, New Melones and the Tulare Basin. Cachuma Reservoir near Santa Barbara is in the worst shape at 7 percent of capacity or 10 percent of average storage for this time of year.

Read the whole story

Climate change to highlight annual meteorologist conference

California Senate President Pro Tem Kevin de León will be the keynote speaker at Operation Sierra Storm Meteorologist Conference in January.



Kevin de León

He will discuss California's role as an international leader in carbon emission reductions and national implications longterm economic, environmental and cultural impacts; impacts a new president will have on policy, environmental initiatives and funding.

Richard Somerville, professor emeritus with the Scripps Institution of Oceanography at UC San Diego, will also join the presentation to provide insights on President-elect Donald Trump's climate change policy options and the impacts of COP 21 policy implementation.

The conference is Jan. 10-13. Richard Somerville will talk Jan. 12 from 8-9am, and de León from 9:15-10:15am. Both will be in Harveys Cabaret Theater in Stateline.

2 nights of MontBleu Holiday Extravaganza

This is our 22nd year for the MontBleu Holiday Extravaganza.

The annual show at the Stateline casinos started in 1995. The show consists of third-, fifth-, sixth-, eighth-, ninth-, 10th-, 11th-, 12th-grade choirs, as well as a faculty-parent choir. Included is the award winning Blue Ribbon Classical

Choir.

The finale includes more than 200 singers. Special guests include selected performers from Marcia Sarosik Shining Stars dance troupe and Liz Niven's musical "White Christmas" at South Tahoe High School.

Shows are Dec. 14 and Dec. 15 at 7pm.

Tickets are \$10 for adults and \$5 for students and seniors. Younger than 5 are free.