



PAUL KURODA For The Times

SUBMERGED METAL louvers arrayed in a zigzag pattern at the John E. Skinner Delta Fish Protective Facility block fish from reaching a pumping station that feeds water to the California Aqueduct in Byron, Calif.

A fish hazard clogs water system

Deaths of threatened species at a pumping facility trigger cuts in deliveries to the California Aqueduct.

BY IAN JAMES

BYRON, Calif. — Giant pumps hum inside a warehouse-like building, pushing water from the Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta into the California Aqueduct, where it travels more than 400 miles south to the taps of over half the state's population.

But lately the powerful motors at the Harvey O. Banks Pumping Plant have been running at reduced capacity, despite a second year of drought-busting snow and rain.

The reason: So many threatened fish have died at the plant's intake reservoir and pumps that it has triggered federal protections and forced the state to pump less water.

The surge in fish deaths has angered environmentalists and fishing advocates, who argue the state draws too much water from the delta while failing to safeguard fish. Conversely, the reduced pumping has vexed Central Valley growers and water districts, which have complained that they need more water from the estuary and that deliveries are being unduly limited by regulatory constraints and outdated infrastructure.

Together, their criticisms have placed renewed attention on the half-century-old pumps and fish protection facilities that are critical linchpins of the State Water Project, one of the world's largest water-delivery systems. The recent problems are also adding to the complex debate over how the state should manage water in the delta, and whether it should build a \$16-billion water tunnel beneath the region.

The Los Angeles Times recently requested a tour of the pumping plant and its nearby fish-collecting facility. [See Fish, A9]

Star witness says Trump signed off on hush payments

Michael Cohen testifies that he was told to stifle damaging stories

BY MICHAEL R. SISAK, JILL COLVIN, ERIC TUCKER AND JAKE OFFENHARTZ

NEW YORK — Donald Trump's fixer-turned-foe, Michael Cohen, directly implicated the former president in a hush-money scheme Monday, telling jurors that his celebrity client tasked him on several occasions to stifle stories about

sex that he feared could torpedo his 2016 presidential campaign.

"Stop this from getting out," Cohen, the prosecution's star witness, quoted Trump as telling him in reference to adult film actor Stormy Daniels' account of a sexual encounter with Trump a decade earlier.

A similar episode occurred when Cohen alerted Trump that a Playboy model was alleging that she and Trump had an extramarital affair. The order was clear: "Make sure it doesn't get released," Cohen said Trump told him. The woman, Karen McDougal, was paid \$150,000 in a hush-money arrangement that was made after Trump was given a "complete and total update on everything that transpired."

"What I was doing was at the direction of and benefit of Mr. Trump," Cohen testified, later adding: "Everything required Mr. Trump's sign-off."

Cohen, Trump's former lawyer and personal fixer, is by far the Manhattan district attorney's most important witness in the case, and his much-awaited appearance on the stand signaled that the first criminal trial of a former American president is entering its final stretch. Prosecutors say they could wrap up their presentation of evidence by week's end.

The testimony of a witness with such intimate knowledge of Trump's activities could heighten the legal exposure of the presumptive Republican presidential nominee if jurors deem him sufficiently credible. But prosecutors' reliance on a witness with such a checkered past — Cohen pleaded guilty to federal charges related to the payments — also carries sizable risks with a jury and could be a boon to Trump politically as he fundraises off his legal woes and paints the case as the product of a tainted criminal justice system.

[See Trump, A6]

More homeless families part of a troubling trend

High housing costs along with influx of migrants without benefits create dire situation as agencies struggle to help



BRIAN VANDER BRUG Los Angeles Times

A BOY exits a tent on Skid Row in March. Dozens of families have set up on sidewalks in the area, with babies sleeping in portable cribs.

BY PALOMA ESQUIVEL

On a Friday just before 9 a.m., men, women and children packed the lobby of the Family Solution Center in South Los Angeles. A mother with her two young boys said they had been sleeping in her car for months. She had arrived hoping to secure a spot in a shelter. Another, who sat with three of her children, ages 2, 6 and 8, lived in a shelter and was hoping for help with a deposit on an apartment.

They were among more than two dozen family members who started lining up hours before the center opened at 8:30, hoping for housing assistance.

"I want to find shelter so I can get back to working," said Rosibel Marcial, who has been living in her car with her boys.

In recent months, the center, which serves families that are homeless or on the verge of homelessness, has seen increasing numbers of people in need of assistance. And it is

[See Homeless, A6]

Shake-up in Rebecca Grossman case

Prosecutors are removed by the D.A.'s office ahead of her sentencing

BY RICHARD WINTON

The Los Angeles County district attorney's office has taken the highly unusual step of removing the prosecutors who convicted Rebecca Grossman of double murder, outraging the parents of the two young boys she killed in a Westlake Village crosswalk.

Dist. Atty. George Gascón's office replaced prosecutors Jamie Castro, Ryan Gould and their supervisor, Garrett Dameron, after claiming a conflict of interest in the Grossman case. The trio reported during trial to Assistant Dist. Atty. Diana Teran, who was recently charged with 11 felonies in connection with the illegal use of confidential sheriff's records. Teran is represented by James Spertus, Grossman's new attorney.

The district attorney's top bosses told Dameron the prosecutors were being re-



MEL MELCON Los Angeles Times

NANCY ISKANDER, whose two young sons were killed in a crash, called the decision "shocking."

moved so anyone who worked with Teran would be walled off from the case going forward. But according to an email by Dameron to his superiors, the move was taken only after his team suggested that Spertus, who is seeking a new trial for Grossman, could end up questioning Teran's decisions in the case.

Dist. Atty. Chief Deputy Joseph Iniguez said in an interview Monday that the prosecution will now be led by Habib Balian, assistant head deputy of the Major Crimes Division. The previous prosecutors, Gould and Castro, will remain on the case and assist, he said.

Iniguez said he decided a change of command was needed to distance the team from Teran, whose charging led to unusual circumstances.

"There was a perceived internal conflict with these supervisors having reported

[See Grossman, A12]

San Quentin appeal denied

The Supreme Court allows lawsuits over the prison's COVID outbreak to proceed. **NATION, A4**

Bass intruder stopped by dog

The man shouted L.A. mayor's name in her home, sources say, but his intent is in question. **CALIFORNIA, B1**

Erewhon sues to block project

Citing environmental law, it wants to halt demolition of neighboring Sportsmen's Lodge. **BUSINESS, A8**

Weather

Clouds to sun. L.A. Basin: 72/56. **B6**

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