

Flood, avalanche risks after storms



Ethan Swope/For the S.F. Chronicle

Fallen trees, such as this one that damaged a house near Guerneville, resulted from storms this week in California.

Weather service warns of rising creeks, streams amid showers

By Jessica Flores
STAFF WRITER

The Christmas week storms that slammed into California buried Tahoe in snow and a Southern California town in mud while knocking down trees, flooding roads and cutting power in many communities, but the Bay Area emerged Friday in fairly good shape — having dodged disaster but still watching for trouble.

More showers hit the Bay Area on Friday and were expected to linger into Saturday morning, though the most severe weather had subsided, meteorologists said.

The National Weather Service
Storms continues on A11



Kyle Grillot/For the S.F. Chronicle

A sinkhole appears Wednesday along Highway 2 in Wrightwood (San Bernardino County). The storms caused catastrophic debris flows there.

Parks across city getting big upgrades next year

Along with projects, agency works on finding new leader

By Sam Whiting
STAFF WRITER

San Francisco's parks will see a steady run of openings and overhauls in 2026, beginning with a new McLaren Park gymnasium in January and culminating in the long-awaited Buchanan Street Mall makeover.

The year may also include the most controversial groundbreaking in recent parks history: the renovation of Embarcadero Plaza, which will include the removal, at least temporarily, of the giant landmark Vaillancourt Fountain. That plan is facing an appeal to the Board of Supervisors and possible legal action that may delay the removal or even stop it altogether.

Elsewhere in the city, there will be park openings or reopenings every season of the year, not to mention the biggest "opening" of them all: the vacancy at the top of the San Francisco Recreation and Park Department.

General Manager Phil Ginsburg stepped down effective Dec. 5 to become president of the Sacramento-based Resources Legacy Fund. Sarah Madland, the park department's director of policy and public affairs, has taken over as interim general manager and will oversee the spate of openings.

"Great parks and playgrounds make life better, neighborhoods stronger and our community more connected," Madland said. "And in 2026, we're bringing new life to parks"
Parks continues on A7

Clinic marks 60 years of serving S.F. community

By Erin Allday
STAFF WRITER

Back in the 1990s, Stafford Hemmer would visit San Francisco's Castro-Mission Health Center near his home every three months or so for an HIV test.

He was having "constant unprotected sex" at the time but was still somehow convinced he was invincible. So it was a gut punch when he tested positive in July 1996. Though staff at the clinic tried to set him up with care, Hemmer ran out the door. "I wasn't the kind of person who could readily ask for help," he said.

Hemmer stopped going to the clinic for years, because he no longer needed testing. But a new health problem led him back there 10 years ago, and the clinic has become his primary medical care home: Hemmer, now 59, gets all of his health care there, from HIV meds to flu shots and cyst removals.

Hemmer's relationship with the center mirrors the role that the Castro-Mission Health Center has played in San Francisco
Clinic continues on A9

Trans pilot who warned about Trump forced out

By Rachel Leibrock
CONTRIBUTOR

SACRAMENTO — Brynn Tannehill just wants to fly.

As a member of the California Air National Guard, she's piloted Black Hawk helicopters on search and rescue and firefighting missions across the state since

2023, and more than a decade in the U.S. Navy before that.

But on a rainy November afternoon at a coffee shop north of downtown, Tannehill, 51, appears at turns anxious, sad and defeated. Her frame is small but sturdy at 5 feet 4 inches, and her brown hair sparkles with silver strands. She's staying at a

"I don't want to be a token or a poster child."

Brynn Tannehill

friend's house near McClellan Air Force Base; it's home whenever she's in town for her monthly California Air

National Guard stint.

Now, that career appears to be over. Tannehill's car is packed with her belongings. The next day her wife, Janis, will arrive to drive with her to Vancouver, British Columbia.

After years spent writing for the New Republic, Dame and other publications
Trans continues on A8

Pickleball helps prisoners rebuild lives

S.F. County Jail one of many lockups nationwide to embrace the popular sport

By J.K. Dineen
STAFF WRITER

When Jonathan Ratcliff gets out of San Francisco County Jail No. 3 next month, along with his phone, wallet and personal papers, he will be carrying an unusual accessory: a pickleball paddle.

While Ratcliff still has federal drug charges to deal with when he is released — he is hoping to be sent to a treatment center for a 2020 methamphetamine distribution conviction — he is planning to make pickleball a central part of his post-incarceration rehabilitation.

"One thing we are taught in recovery is that we have to change

our people, places and things, to replace our bad habits with new good habits," Ratcliff said. "You have to have new hobbies to replace the past, which was full of negative people and negative habits."

Pickleball is all the rage at the Road to Recovery dorm at County Jail No. 3 in San Bruno, one of many prisons and jails across the country that have embraced the sport as a tool for rehabilitation.

Every Monday afternoon, volunteers Anne Stuhldreher, Karen Levine and Adelaide Hulbert lead a total of 16 players split into groups of four for pickleball in a rectangular yard barely big enough for a court and a half.

Pickleball continues on A9



Gabrielle Lurie/S.F. Chronicle

Avery Clark hits the ball at the San Francisco County Jail in San Bruno, where a pickleball program was recently started.

