

**THEATER
CHAIN SOLD**

Sony Pictures purchases Alamo Drafthouse.

DATEBOOK, B7



**S.F. CENTRE INKS
7 NEW LEASES**

The city's biggest mall welcomes tenants, not all of which are retailers.

BAY AREA & BUSINESS, A5



**SURPRISE
PLAYER**

Steph Curry stuns in pickup games at Folsom gym.

SPORTING GREEN, B1

San Francisco Chronicle

SFCHRONICLE.COM

FRIDAY, JUNE 14, 2024

CONTAINS RECYCLED PAPER

\$3.00



Photos by Tracy Barbutes/Special to the Chronicle

Representatives from the Trust for Public Land walk through the newly restored Ackerson Meadow in Yosemite National Park on Wednesday. Grazing and logging had left the land covered in weeds and eroded.

Yosemite's largest restoration project

Less than a decade ago, the largest mid-elevation meadow at Yosemite National Park, nestled in foothills near Hetch Hetchy Reservoir, was privately owned rangeland. It was widely trampled on by cattle, dried up and of little or no interest to visitors.

Today, the area is a whole different place.

An \$18 million makeover of what's known as Ackerson Meadow, which was recently acquired by the National Park Service, is transforming this dusty tract on the park's western edge into a vibrant hub of wildflowers, songbirds and water-loving grasses — an effort billed as the biggest restoration project in Yosemite history.

Work crews with excavators and dump trucks have been rebuilding the property's wetlands since last summer, after decades of grazing and logging left the meadow littered with weeds and heavily eroded. The hope is that the revived meadow, like a sponge, will hold more water for native plants,

\$18 million effort transforms dusty cattle lands into vibrant hub of wildflowers, songbirds

By Kurtis Alexander



A moth lands on a wildflower in Ackerson Meadow, now revived with native species and restored wetlands.

wildlife and downstream communities that depend on the region for water supplies.

"This restoration project is really helping the land become naturalized to what it was before," said Tim Kuhn, a biologist for Yosemite who helped pilot the endeavor. "Re-

storing the habitat is really important to the park."

On Wednesday, representatives from many of the 15 or so government agencies, conservation groups and corporations that contributed to the restoration gathered at Ackerson Meadow to celebrate their work. In addition

to the park service, the neighboring Stanislaus National Forest, the Yosemite Conservancy and environmental advocacy American Rivers led the effort.

While the 400-acre property sits at a lower, less-visited part of the park, visitors may be familiar with the site because of its recognizable wooden barn along Evergreen Road on the way to Hetch Hetchy.

"It's off the beaten path," said Melissa Steller, a biological science technician at Yosemite who helped with the project. "But it's an important place for people who really love bird-watching, people who love botany and wildflowers."

The work being celebrated this week is the first of two phases of the project, with other parts of the meadow scheduled for rehabilitation later this year and early next. The main challenge, though, has already been confronted: stopping the stream-bank erosion that **Meadow continues on A8**

Top court preserves abortion pill access

All justices reject challenge to mifepristone, other drugs

By Bob Egelko

Two years after repealing the constitutional right to abortion that it had declared in 1973, the Supreme Court voted unanimously Thursday to preserve women's access to mifepristone, the pill used in nearly two-thirds of all U.S. abortions.

A group of anti-abortion doctors said that mifepristone, found to be safe and effective by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration in 2000, was actually dangerous and had been wrongly approved.

INSIDE

GOP lawmakers wage crusade against contraception despite setback. **A10**

But the court said the Alliance for Hippocratic Medicine, as the group calls itself, has not shown it is being harmed by women's use of the medication and therefore lacked legal "standing" to challenge its use.

"A plaintiff's desire to make a drug less available for others does not establish standing to sue," Justice Brett Kavanaugh, an appointee of former President Donald

Trump, wrote in the 9-0 ruling. "For a plaintiff to get in the federal courthouse door and obtain a judicial determination of what the governing law is, the plaintiff cannot be a mere bystander, but instead must have a 'personal stake' in the dispute."

And while the doctors group said its members could be forced to perform abortions on patients who had unsuccessfully taken mifepristone to terminate their pregnancies, Kavanaugh said the argument was foreclosed by a federal law that protects physicians and others from "being required to perform abortions or to provide other treatment that violates their consciences."

He said there was no evidence that members of the group, or any other doctors, had been required to perform an abortion against their will since the **Abortion continues on A10**

Likely La Niña could mean state's in for a dry winter

By Jack Lee

El Niño is officially over.

The Climate Prediction Center announced Thursday that waters in the eastern equatorial Pacific, which are warmer-than-average during El Niño, have cooled to "neutral," or near-normal temperatures. Sea surface temperatures are expected to continue to drop in the coming months, with a 65% chance of La Niña developing by the period from July to September and lasting through the winter.

Warmer-than-average sea surface temperatures associated with El Niños can produce rising air that has big effects on global weather. El Niño winters typically bring wetter-than-normal conditions to Central and Southern California.

This was the case for much of the state in 2024, with more than 6 inches of rain falling in both January and February in San Francisco, well above 1991-2020 averages closer to 4 inches.

La Niña continues on A8

Dems link retail theft bills to ballot measure's death

Lawmakers say they plan to repeal their own legislation if Prop. 47 initiative isn't defeated

By Sophia Bollag

SACRAMENTO — In a blow to a ballot measure to increase jail time for drug possession and theft, California Democrats are vowing to repeal a package of bills to combat retail theft if the measure passes.

The Democrats plan to make

a package of anti-retail-theft bills contingent on the failure or withdrawal of the ballot measure, a move that has provoked ire from Republicans.

The initiative, which qualified for the ballot Tuesday, would roll back parts of Proposition 47, a law voters approved in 2014 that reduced jail populations by

downgrading drug possession crimes and thefts of items valued at less than \$950 from felonies to misdemeanors.

The new initiative would eliminate the \$950 threshold for a third theft, meaning someone caught stealing three times could be prosecuted for a felony, regardless of the value of the merchandise stolen. It would do the same for a third drug possession charge and increase jail time for repeat and organized

retail theft. The measure also contains provisions to compel people with multiple drug convictions into treatment.

The measure has picked up support from retailers, who say thefts have gotten out of control, as well as moderate Democratic mayors — including San Francisco's London Breed — who argue Prop. 47 has emboldened criminals.

"We want change," Elk Grove (Sacramento County) Mayor

Bobbie Singh-Allen said during a Wednesday news conference. "We place these sensible and compassionate reforms on the ballot to address the unintended consequences of Prop. 47."

Gov. Gavin Newsom, Assembly Speaker Robert Rivas and Senate President Pro Tem Mike McGuire, all Democrats, say they still support Prop. 47 and oppose the measure to roll it back. Instead, they are fast-

Bills continues on A9

