

CALIFORNIA

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California politics: Why Gov. Brown had to reluctantly let go of presidential hopes. **2**

Obituary: Samuel Goldwyn Jr., son of one of Hollywood's original moguls, was 88. **5**

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ENVIRONMENTAL ACTIVISM



Photographs by ALLEN J. SCHABEN Los Angeles Times

BOB SCHNEIDER, senior policy director of Tuleyome, takes in a view of Lake Berryessa. He and others are hoping the federal government will protect the area by creating the Berryessa-Snow Mountain National Monument.

A QUICKER PATH

A group trying to protect the Berryessa-Snow Mountain area bypasses Congress for faster action via the White House

By Julie Cart

WINTERS, Calif. — Nature has no rival when it comes to patience. It took millions of years for the gnashing of tectonic plates to form the magnificent riot of rocks that is home to the unspoiled rivers and rolling oak woodlands of California's inner Coast Range.

For a group of residents here determined to provide federal protections for this lesser-traveled region, their campaign has only felt like millions of years, but the effort has required no less endurance.

After a conservation bill stalled out in Congress, the methodical, decade-long effort to permanently protect 350,000 acres in the Berryessa-Snow Mountain region that host some of the most biologically diverse landscape in California may finally become reality.

The preservation campaign headed by the Woodland-based conservation group Tuleyome is bypassing Capitol Hill and going straight to the White House. A public meeting at Napa Valley College last month with Interior Secretary Sally Jewell has fueled speculation that President Obama may soon use his executive powers to create the Berryessa-Snow Mountain National Monument.

It would, with the stroke of a pen, afford permanent protection for the area's scientifically rich and often overlooked patchwork of land



SARA HUSBY, Tuleyome executive director, and Schneider hike in a region managed by federal, state and local agencies.

managed by more than a dozen federal, state and local agencies.

In his last State of the Union address, Obama pledged that if Congress continued to balk at legislation creating new protected areas, he would use his authority to set aside "pristine federal lands for future generations." The authority Obama referred to is found in the Antiquities Act, a 1906 law that gives the president the option to preserve public land without consulting Congress.

While the president's critics find his increasingly frequent use of independent executive action distasteful, Obama and Jewell have made protecting public lands a priority, invoking the law to preserve overlooked gems.

Last year, the president expanded the California Coastal National Monument with the addition of 1,665 acres at Point Arena-Stornetta. In October, he designated 350,000 acres of national forest land as the San Gabriel Mountains National Monument.

Tuleyome's carefully choreographed — and patient — effort to preserve this portion of the Coast Range has become a model for how to accomplish conservation goals in the realpolitik of the moment.

Working steadily since 2002, the [See **Berryessa**, AA7]

Steyer eyes Boxer's seat

The billionaire green activist is expected to make decision within days, sources say.

BY SEEMA MEHTA AND MICHAEL FINNEGAN

Billionaire environmental activist Tom Steyer is aggressively exploring a run for the U.S. Senate seat being vacated by Barbara Boxer and is expected to make a decision within days, according to multiple sources close to Steyer.

The former hedge fund titan has been huddling with advisors, polling California voters, buying website addresses and meeting with political and labor leaders as he weighs a bid, the sources said.

Boxer's announcement Thursday that she would leave her post in 2016 set off a frenzy of speculation about who would run for the first open U.S. Senate seat in California in more than 20 years. If Steyer opts in, with the ability to fund a race expected to cost tens of millions of dollars, he could upend a field that would otherwise be crowded with other ambitious Democrats.

"Steyer has the greatest incentive to plant his flag early," said Dan Schnur, head of the Jesse M. Unruh Institute of Politics at USC. He "has the capacity to scare other people out of the race."

But California has a political graveyard full of neophyte millionaires and billionaires. [See **Steyer**, AA6]

PR FIRM CALLED IN FOR BACKUP

Amid stalled contract talks, L.A. police union hires big guns in a bid for pay raises.

BY JOEL RUBIN AND DAVID ZAHNISR

The union representing rank-and-file Los Angeles police officers has hired a high-profile communications firm to spearhead a campaign aimed at persuading residents — and by extension elected officials — that officers deserve pay raises.

The move comes after months of stalled contract negotiations with city officials and as other city employees have agreed to contracts that denied them salary increases this fiscal year.

At a meeting last week, Police Protective League officials introduced the new public relations team to union delegates, who represent all the LAPD's various patrol divisions and specialized units. Delegates were told that as a first step, the firm had polled about 1,000 Angelenos on their opinions [See **Police union**, AA10]

Hermosa Beach's oil drilling dilemma

STEVE LOPEZ

Jani Lange lives un-comfortably close to the site of a proposed 8,000-barrel-a-day oil drilling operation in the seaside hamlet of Hermosa Beach, population 19,801.

How close? He could probably lob an egg from his front door and score a direct hit.

"Ninety-eight steps," said the 37-year-old lifelong resident and longtime surfer. He put his Converse sneakers heel to toe, showing me how he measured the distance to a city maintenance yard where an 84-foot

drilling tower would shoot up. "And I have small feet," added Lange.

Size 8, to be precise. And with a wife and two kids, ages 6 and 4, he is more than a little skittish about the risks of living across the street from a slant-drilling project in which 30-plus diagonal wells would knife underground and shoot under Santa Monica Bay to suck oil out of the Earth.

That's why a billboard-size banner hangs from the front of his townhouse, listing the "9 Significant & Unavoidable Impacts of Drilling for Oil," as identified by an environmental impact report.

Debate over oil drilling on the California coast is nothing new. But what's going on in Hermosa Beach offers a twist on the usual



LUIS SINCO Los Angeles Times

SOME HERMOSA residents oppose slant oil drilling, but stopping it would cost the city \$17.5 million.

narrative because of a complicated legal quandary.

Voters are going to the polls in March. If they tell E&B Natural Resources to get lost, the city would have

to fork over \$17.5 million to the oil company as part of a legal settlement.

But if voters lift the existing ban on drilling, and the black gold starts flowing,

the city could reap millions of dollars annually over the next 35 years.

"To me, this is purely a dollars and sense issue," said Ray Dussault, a retiree who says opponents are greatly exaggerating the risks and jeopardizing a windfall that could pay for more city services and coastal protection through a tidelands fund the oil proceeds would funnel into.

"There's more oil that seeps up naturally from the sea bed into Santa Monica Bay than it's possible for this project to accidentally put in the ocean," Dussault said.

Jim Sullivan, a commercial real estate broker and 33-year resident, argues that the drilling technology would be state-of-the-art [See **Lopez**, AA6]