



IRFAN KHAN Los Angeles Times

POLICE INVESTIGATE the Burbank scene where an LAPD officer fatally shot an unarmed man after a car chase in 2015. The Los Angeles Police Commission later ruled the killing of Sergio Navas, 35, as unjustified.

LAPD panel is moving forward on backing off

Civilian commission weighs new use-of-force policy after finding more police shootings are unjustified

BY KATE MATHER

For nearly two years, the Los Angeles Police Department's civilian bosses have embarked on a high-profile campaign to curb the number of shootings by officers, pushing department brass for more training and less-lethal devices.

This week, the Police Commission will consider taking a major step to help the LAPD deliver on

that goal.

Commissioners on Tuesday are expected to approve a new use-of-force policy that would require officers to try, whenever possible, to defuse tense encounters before using deadly force — a decades-old concept known as “de-escalation.”

The change would allow the commission to judge officers specifically on whether they could have found a way to resolve an encounter without resorting to firing

their weapons. The move is the culmination of a series of actions aimed at reducing shootings.

A Times analysis found that commissioners ruled eight shootings by LAPD officers to be unjustified in 2016 — the highest number in at least a decade. In three of those cases, the board took the rare step of disagreeing with the LAPD's chief, who had cleared the officers.

At the same time, The Times found, commission-

ers more often faulted the tactics officers used before a shooting, such as forgetting to carry a Taser or splitting from a partner during a foot chase. Last year, the panel decided there were tactical errors in 50% of the 46 shootings it reviewed, up from 32% the year before and 16% a decade ago.

These incidents are rare, given the million-plus contacts LAPD officers make with the public each year. [See LAPD, A9]

ANALYSIS

Trump's tax plan depends on trade-offs

He said changing laws would be ‘so easy.’ But an overhaul can't be done without creating winners and losers.

BY NOAH BIERMAN

WASHINGTON — One of the biggest stumbling blocks to President Trump's failed efforts at passing a healthcare bill turned out to be his own words — promises of insurance for everyone, lower costs and better care — which can't all be achieved at the same time.

For a president who likes to make gold-plated policy sales pitches, Trump's next attempt at a major legislative achievement poses an even stiffer challenge. Overhauling the tax system, perhaps more so than the healthcare system, cannot be done without creating winners and losers.

And Trump, even more than typical politicians, dismisses the notion that he needs to sell the public on



EVAN VUCCI Associated Press

PRESIDENT TRUMP has offered few specifics on how he'd cut taxes.

making trade-offs, often promising that changing laws will be “beautiful” and “so easy,” and that compromises made in the past were the result of “stupid politicians” who forged bad deals.

Yet rewriting the tax laws depends on a strict diet of tough choices. Want to lower tax rates for everyone without killing popular deductions or driving up the deficit? Good luck. Want to raise money with a consumption tax without hiking prices at Wal-Mart? Nice try. [See Tax laws, A7]



TOMAS OVALLE For The Times

DON CAMERON, general manager of Terranova Ranch in Helm, Calif., is using high flows off the Kings River to recharge the San Joaquin Valley aquifer.

POURING IT ON

The idea of flooding cropland to replenish groundwater basins is taking hold in California

BY BETTINA BOXALL

HELM, Calif. — The water spread into every corner of the fields, beckoning wading ibises and egrets as it bathed long rows of sprouting grapevines.

Several inches had covered the vineyard ground for a couple of months. But rather than draining it, Don Cameron was pouring more on.

“This is not about irrigation,” the sprawling farm's manager kept telling his quizzical workers. “It's about recharge. ... I want all the water you can get into the

grape fields now.”

After a drought-busting winter, reservoirs up and down California are dumping water to make room for spring snowmelt.

There is so much water in the state's vast plumbing system that for weeks, the big government water projects have reduced exports from the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta. San Luis Reservoir, where the projects park water on its way south, is full.

Yet there is [See Water, A12]

Babies, booze and taxes

A plan to put diapers and tampons on alcohol's tab faces a tough battle.

BY LIAM DILLON

SACRAMENTO — The slogans are simple, and meant to convey a clear choice.

“It's time to tax liquor before ladies,” Assemblywoman Cristina Garcia (D-Bell Gardens) said.

“We should be putting babies before booze,” Assemblywoman Lorena Gonzalez Fletcher (D-San Diego) echoed.

Garcia and Gonzalez Fletcher made the pitches at last month's unveiling of their proposal to eliminate sales taxes on tampons and diapers and make up for the lost revenue by increasing alcohol taxes.

But if history is any indication, their bill is likely to fail.

For more than a decade, polls have shown Californians overwhelmingly support raising alcohol and other “sin taxes.” Yet despite numerous attempts, state [See Tax, A7]



LILIANA NIETO DEL RIO For The Times

RELATIVES of Saeed Sheikh, one of those killed in the Syrian convoy bombing, arrive in Jibreen.

Bus trip to safety turns into horror for Syrian evacuees

The death toll climbs over 120 in the bombing of a convoy carrying civilians.

BY PATRICK J. McDONNELL

ALEPPO, Syria — She had already lost her eldest son, Jamal, a Syrian soldier killed in action three years ago. He was 25.

Her family endured two years of shortages of food, water, medicine and other essentials — along with frequent shelling — in her hometown of Fuah, which has been the target of a more than two-year rebel siege.

All that misery was supposed to end for Hanan Hussein on Saturday. She was among thousands of people who boarded buses promising an evacuation from Fuah

and Kfarya, pro-government bastions in Syria's Idlib province that had been under steady attack by rebels seeking to overthrow President Bashar Assad.

The trip offered a safe new beginning. Instead, it ended violently and tragically when a car bomb detonated amid the buses, killing [See Syria, A4]

Turkish leader declares victory

A vote gives him broad new powers, but critics cry foul. **WORLD, A3**

Weather
Partly sunny.
L.A. Basin: 74/60. **B6**



Los Angeles Times

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Flooding crops to recharge aquifers

[Water, from A1] more room than ever in one of the state's most capacious storage spaces: the San Joaquin Valley aquifer.

Parts of it have been over-pumped for a century. Groundwater levels fell even further during the last five years of drought as growers in California's heartland drilled new and deeper wells to make up for huge cuts in irrigation deliveries.

"We have a great reservoir under our feet. Why not use it?" Cameron asked.

The water spilling into the vineyard had been diverted from a brimming flood-control channel nearby. Now it seeped into the sandy loam at the rate of 3 to 4 inches a day, percolating into the San Joaquin Valley aquifer that, year in and year out, provides Terranova Ranch and its neighbors with most of their irrigation water.

"It goes down fast," observed Cameron as he stood amid 150 acres of flooded Barbera vines that were topped with healthy new leaves and tiny clusters of grape buds.

Most of the time, the bed of the North Fork of the Kings River is bone-dry. Near Helm, where it is called the James Bypass, the channel fills only when upstream Pine Flat Reservoir makes flood releases.

This year, milk-chocolate flows are streaming down the bypass, swirling past islands of grass and half-submerged shrubs. The chatter of birds mixes with the sweet sound of rippling water as it makes its way to the San Joaquin River and ultimately out to sea.

But on the last day of March, 10,000 gallons a minute were passing through a 24-inch pipe into a canal Cameron built to carry the water to his Arbequina olive groves, baby pistachio trees, alfalfa and Barbera grapes that Gallo Winery buys. All told, Cameron is putting Kings River floodwater on about 700 acres this year, and he plans to continue the diversions as long as the flood flows hold up.

"We're reconnecting the



TOMAS OVALLE FOR THE TIMES

DON CAMERON stands in a water-saturated vineyard at Terranova Ranch. The 64-year-old started experimenting with flood recharge on a small scale in the 1990s. In 2011, California's last wet year, he flooded vineyards well into the growing season; they did just fine.

river to its flood plain," he says.

The idea of using cropland to replenish groundwater basins is just beginning to take hold in California.

UC Davis researchers are experimenting to determine which crops will tolerate having their roots wet for weeks or months at a time. The Almond Board of California is funding work to identify almond acreage that has soil suitable for recharge.

Cameron has been at it much longer.

"We were pioneering this. We had a lot of skeptical people. To me it seemed natural," he said.

"We lose 2, 2½ feet of water table a year [to overdraft]. It kind of adds up," he added. "I realized a long time ago we need to take corrective action."

White-haired and 64, Cameron is more willing to embrace unconventional practices than many growers — probably, he says, because he doesn't have a farm background.

"I've been called a communist," he notes wryly.

Cameron grew up in

Redding and Fresno, earned a biology degree from Fresno State and wanted to go into wildlife management.

When he didn't get a state wildlife job, he wound up doing agricultural pest-control work for a small company used by Terranova. In 1981, he went to work for the 5,500-acre farm operation, which is owned by a private family trust. Six years later, he was named general manager and vice president.

During the record wet winter of 1982-83, Cameron drove by vineyards that had been flooded by the overflowing San Joaquin River. He kept watching as the months passed and the water receded. The vines bore healthy fruit and that September, pickers harvested the grapes.

"I thought 'OK,' and filed it away," Cameron recalls.

He started experimenting with flood recharge on a small scale in the 1990s. In 2011, California's last wet year, he flooded vineyards well into the growing season. They did just fine.

"We've proven in 2011 that it does work," he said, adding that monitoring showed

that 70% of the water applied to the fields made its way past the root zone into the aquifer.

He thinks one of the reasons it works is that the cold floodwater holds oxygen, so the plant roots don't suffocate. When the water temperature warms up in late spring, he stops.

But 700 acres is just the beginning. This summer Terranova expects to start construction on the first phase of a \$7.5-million project to capture Kings River floodwater and use it for recharge on 16,000 acres of cropland.

A \$5-million flood grant from the state is covering most of the cost, with the rest coming from Terranova. Backers have agreed to take a certain amount of floodwater for as long as it is available to relieve downstream flooding.

"We're designing this to make a difference in the area here," Cameron said. "It will include all of the growers in our area."

Neighboring farmers used to think Cameron was nuts. "But now," he says "they're believers" — converted by a landmark 2014

state law that requires groundwater users to end overdraft over the course of the next two decades.

They will either have to increase aquifer recharge or cut back on pumping, which would probably force growers to take cropland out of production.

The law "is a big stick," Cameron said. "They're understanding how important it is to replenish our underground water supplies for the long term. Without doing this, we're not going to be farming all our farmland. It's pretty simple."

But not every part of the valley can do what Terranova is doing.

"Part of the problem is getting the water to the right location," Cameron said. "We desperately need more conveyance to move this kind of water when it is available."

In some areas, the soil is too heavy for water to percolate into the aquifer. Some irrigation districts don't have rights to floodwater. Growers remain wary of harming their crops with weeks of long baths.

And they fret that someone else will pump the

water that they put in the ground.

"I think it's just not as easy as people would hope it could be," said water researcher Philip Bachand, who is working on the Terranova project.

To overcome the concerns, growers need an incentive, said Daniel Mountjoy of Sustainable Conservation, a nonprofit group.

Why not pay growers to capture floodwater and apply it to their fields, he wonders. The cost for new reservoirs sought by many in the farm sector is far greater than that for groundwater replenishment, Mountjoy said.

"So why don't we use that storage money to pay a fraction of the cost and get farmers to fill that aquifer up to the extent possible?"

Cameron, for one, sees the obligation to replenish the groundwater reserves that keep fields green even through drought as more than a matter of money.

"Morally," he says, "I thought it was the right thing to do."

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