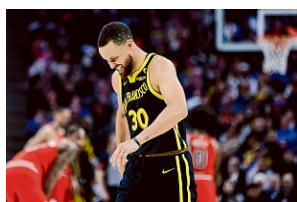


LOSING CURRY HURTS

Prospects dim even with star's absence probably short-term.

SPORTING GREEN, B1



SPRING FORWARD THIS WEEKEND

Time to move your clocks ahead an hour Sunday as daylight saving begins.

BAY AREA & BUSINESS, A7



OSCAR TIME IS HERE

Four takes on state of movie business in uncertain times.

DATEBOOK, B7

San Francisco Chronicle

SFCHRONICLE.COM

SATURDAY, MARCH 9, 2024

CONTAINS RECYCLED PAPER

\$3.00



Photos by Scott Strazzante/The Chronicle

Docent Laura Lee Miller, left, talks with Garrett Lee, Marchelle King and Alana Lee of Berkeley at Duxbury Reef in Bolinas last month. At low tide, the area is made up of almost 500 acres of Monterey shale and tide pools.

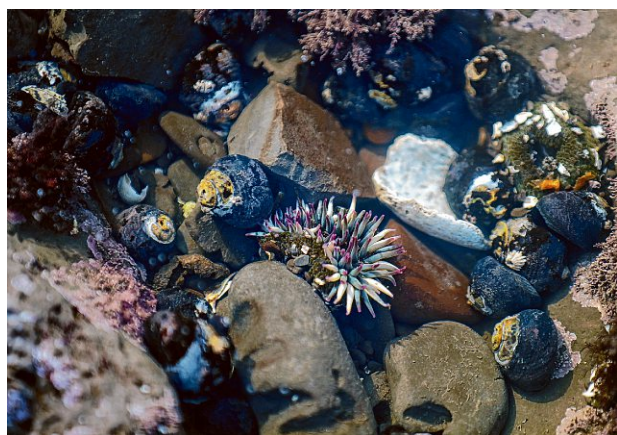
Reef visitors urged to use 'light footprint'

Volunteers stress how not to harm vulnerable Marin tide pools

By Tara Duggan

Leslie Adler-Ivanbrook took careful steps across Duxbury Reef near Bolinas, tiptoeing between patches of algae and anemone in soft running shoes.

The conservationist was demonstrating how to visit California's largest exposed shale reef without injuring any of the over 200 different species that thrive in its tide pools. That includes black turban snails that can live



Sea urchin are among the more than 200 species that make their home in the tide pools.

to 35 years and neon-hued chitons that burrow into the soft shale mudstone.

"Try to only step on bare rock, wherever you can," is the motto suggested by Adler-Ivanbrook, program director of Environmental Action Committee of West Marin.

After visitation to Duxbury Reef increased before and during the pandemic, the organization launched a docent program in late 2022 in partnership with Marin County. **Reef continues on A9**

Partner in bribery scheme sentenced

S.F. restaurateur who funneled payouts to Nuru gets 9 months

By St. John BARNED-SMITH

Executives at one of San Francisco's largest contractors needed a favor in 2018 from then-Public Works director Mohammed Nuru, so they paid him a bribe to help fund his extravagant annual department holiday party.



Bovis

The man who handled the transaction was restaurateur Nick Bovis, who was sentenced Thursday to nine months in prison on fraud charges in a long-running federal probe into city corruption. Officials from Recology Inc. issued a \$20,000 check to the Lefty O'Doul's Foundation for Kids, which was established to provide access to baseball equipment for underprivileged children. Bovis, in turn, used the money to fund the party and even catered it with his employees.

That was one of several interactions Bovis had with Nuru that federal officials described in court documents related to their long-running corruption investigation that resulted in charges against more than 20 city and business officials. Bovis also was implicated in a scheme with Nuru

Bribery continues on A9

Regulator OKs another increase in PG&E rates

By Julie Johnson

State regulators have voted to approve another bill hike for Pacific Gas and Electric Co. customers that will add just under \$5 a month for typical households, piling onto a sharp increase in bills that hit in January.

PG&E asked for the increase to recover expenses paid for projects in 2020 through 2022 that mostly dealt with wildfire prevention and modernizing the company's infrastructure. PG&E said most of those projects were mandated by the state.

Even so, the increase comes as customers are reeling from dramatically higher utility bills.

PG&E already raised its electricity rates 20% this year, which means typical residential customers will pay about \$400 more annually, according to the company's estimate. And the California Public Utilities Commission is still considering allowing PG&E to charge customers even more to pay for a range of programs, from emergency storm response, past wildfire expenses and keeping its Diablo Canyon Power Plant in operation.

PG&E continues on A9

Biden seeks a fix for housing crisis

By Shira Stein

WASHINGTON — President Joe Biden had a difficult needle to thread in his State of the Union speech Thursday night ahead of his expected rematch with former President Donald Trump: Tout the strength of the economy under his administration while acknowledging the frustration many Americans feel about the cost of living.

He attempted to do that by zeroing

in on the housing crisis, an issue acutely familiar to Californians that is becoming more serious across the country. The proposals he floated Thursday included expanded tax credits for low-income and first-time homebuyers, grant funding to increase housing construction, and efforts to address rental price-fixing and hidden fees.

Biden's speech to a sharply divided Congress felt more like a political rally at times, with Democrats chanting

"four more years" and Biden chiding his "predecessor" over a dozen times — without saying his name. He criticized the Supreme Court for overturning Roe v. Wade as the justices sat stone-faced in the front row of the chamber.

The president also addressed the primary concern facing voters headed into a heated election: his age.

"My fellow Americans, the issue facing our nation isn't how old we are, **Housing continues on A10**

Tribes use new council to document trauma, seek justice

By Robin Buller

On a Thursday in March 2022, several dozen Indigenous people met on the banks of the American River in Sacramento. After two years of operating exclusively over Zoom due to pandemic-era restrictions, the California Truth and Healing Council was holding its first in-person meeting.

Attendees included tribal representatives like Frankie Myers, vice chair of the Yurok Tribe and one of the council's 12 governing members, and his sister Virginia Hedrick, a Yurok Tribe member and executive director of the California Consortium for Urban Indian Health. They were there to

participate in a talking and listening circle, during which individuals shared personal and family histories — stories that were invariably characterized by dispossession and oppression.

"I look forward to creating an uncomfortable space," Myers said, introducing himself to the group. "These are uncomfortable discussions that we're having, and I think that's a good thing, because that's how we grow."

Nearly two years later, Hedrick remembers the experience as both productive and painful.

"It was very beautiful to see people come together, but it was a lot to sit in this outdoor space — to hear the trauma of others, to share trauma and to share frustra-

tion with the state government," she said.

She isn't alone. California Native Americans — whose ancestral claims to state lands date to long before statehood — share mixed feelings about the council. Most, especially those who have attended hearings, support the native-led truth-finding process. They see establishing a clear historical record of the state's legacy of violence against native people as a necessary step toward reconciliation.

But the project requires heavy lifting in terms of time, finances and mental fortitude — an undertaking that has been placed almost exclusively on the shoulders of Indigenous people. **Indigenous continues on A10**



Jessica Christian/The Chronicle

Siblings Virginia Hedrick and Frankie Myers were part of the California Truth and Healing Council's first in-person meeting.



REEF

From page A1

ty Parks to get the word out about tide pool etiquette. At low tide, the marine protected area is made up of almost 500 acres of Monterey shale and tide pools. The softness of the rock attracts a wide array of creatures and makes the area more delicate than the granite that covers most California tide pools.

“Duxbury Reef is a really vulnerable environment because it’s so exposed at low tide, and there’s so much potential direct impact from visitors,” Adler-Ivanbrook said.

Many of the practices the group suggests can be applied to protect any tide pool, such as never stepping inside the pools themselves, though the reef’s status as a state marine conservation area means it has more rules than most.

But many of the regulations aren’t widely known or followed. Docents observed violations, such as removing animals from tide pools and letting dogs off leash, increase from 2022 to 2023.

Other than hook-and-line fishing from shore, the harvesting of any other living thing — including edible snails, clams, urchins, mussels or seaweed — is considered poaching at Duxbury Reef, even though clamming is allowed at other nearby areas. Red abalone collection used to be allowed, but its season is closed until at least 2026.

Also not allowed: taking home rocks and even picking up animals from tide pools briefly, which is true of other marine protected areas. That includes the age-old children’s practice of moving hermit crabs from one tide pool to another. The pools might have different predators or changes in temperature and salinity, which could injure or stress the animals, Adler-



The Duxbury Reef is a designated state marine conservation area. Other than hook-and-line fishing from shore, the harvesting of any other living thing — including edible snails, clams, urchins, mussels or seaweed — is considered poaching at Duxbury Reef. Violations, such as removing animals from tide pools and letting dogs off leashes, increased from 2022 to 2023, so a docent program was created to inform visitors of tide pool etiquette and rules.

Scott Strazzante/The Chronicle

Ivanbrook said.

“It’s like just picking up and moving us out of our own homes into somebody else’s home,” she said.

Instead, she suggests squatting down next to a tide pool and focusing on it until you start noticing things move around.

The top three animals people ask to see are octopus, sea stars and the small, outrageously colorful sea slugs called nudibranchs, said docent Laura Lee Miller, who volunteered on the day of Adler-Ivanbrook’s visit. The first two are rare, and nudibranchs are most abundant in fall and summer (and easier to spot on cloudy, windless days). But people’s questions about those popular animals give her a chance to introduce them to lesser-known ones.

“It’s an opportunity for me to talk about the diversity of mollusk body forms,” she said. For example, she might say, “Did

you know that an octopus is related to a snail?”

Miller and Adler-Ivanbrook compared notes on which invertebrates they had seen that day. They enthused about how the chitons can live to 25 years, and giant green anemones to 70 — not to mention that some anemones can clone themselves.

“So there’s the consideration of that, like, ‘Are you immortal?’” Miller said.

Part of the reason Duxbury Reef has such biodiversity is because its soft rock allows animals to make homes in its cracks, Adler-Ivanbrook said. The Monterey shale here was formed by sediments and phytoplankton that hardened on top of granite, pushed northward up the coast by the same plate tectonics that formed the Point Reyes peninsula.

Smaller anemone that live in cracks in the rock are usually covered in broken white shells

and pebbles that become attached during high tide, when water currents carry them over the animals and they become stuck with a special “anemone glue,” Adler-Ivanbrook said.

The animals somehow know to hang on to white shells, which reflect sunlight, and let go of black shells, which absorb it, according to research.

“They selectively cast them off,” Adler-Ivanbrook said. “They can feel that temperature difference, I guess.”

Boring clams can scrape habitats out of the rock, and chitons carve a “home scar” that they nestle in at low tide for protection from predators as well as from overheating and drying out. During high tides, when water covers the reef, the chitons venture a few feet away to forage for food and always return to the same spot.

“Invertebrates have adaptations that are well beyond

ours,” Miller said.

Nonetheless, the animals’ already vulnerable habitat is becoming more vulnerable because of the added stress of climate change. The challenge is to get the word out about how to visit Duxbury Reef carefully, without encouraging even more people to come, Adler-Ivanbrook said.

“We should consider it an amazing privilege that we can visit on special occasion and not overuse it,” she said. “Part of protecting it is to have a light footprint.”

Duxbury Reef Marine Conservation Area is located at Agate Beach Park, 350 Ocean Parkway, Bolinas. The reef is exposed at low tides; to check when they occur, look for Point Reyes tide charts rather than Bolinas.

Reach Tara Duggan: tduggan@sfnchronicle.com; Twitter: [@taraduggan](https://twitter.com/taraduggan)

BRIBERY

From page A1

to bribe a San Francisco International Airport commissioner to try to win a restaurant lease there, and Nuru admitted he received numerous bribes from Bovis in the form of restaurant meals and entertainment for himself and his family, in return for business opportunities with the city.

Senior U.S. District Judge William Orrick handed down the prison sentence to Bovis on Thursday for two counts of fraud.

Bovis’ court date came four years after investigators arrested him and Nuru, marking the government’s opening salvo in the corruption probe. It has ensnared a Chinese billionaire, a senior building inspector and titans of San Francisco’s business community. Engineers have fallen, as well as bureaucrats, contractors and permit expeditors, and even a former parole officer.

Just days after his arrest in January 2020, Bovis pleaded guilty and began cooperating with prosecutors. His defense

attorneys said his assistance “salvaged an otherwise compromised investigation” after Nuru told other city officials and potential targets he was being investigated.

He also pleaded guilty to fraud related to a 2018 fire that damaged his restaurant, Broadway Grill, prosecutors said. Bovis filed fraudulent claims for \$85,000 in payroll expenses even though he wasn’t paying his former employees anymore.

In court, defense attorney Michael Stepanian argued that despite his bribery efforts, Bovis had not derived significant benefit because he never won city contracts.

“He never made a dime in any city contract,” he said, “He never made any money, never got any contracts. ... He never got one of those.”

Because Bovis had cooperated quickly and extensively with prosecutors, his attorneys had argued he should not have to serve time behind bars. Home confinement, community service and electronic monitoring would be sufficient, they said.

Prosecutors had asked Judge Orrick to sentence him to nine months in prison, as well as a

year of probation and a \$100,000 fine.

Bovis grew up in San Francisco with “every opportunity to live the American dream,” Assistant U.S. Attorney David Ward wrote. He was involved in Boy Scouts as a child and later graduated from California Polytechnic University. His restaurants included Lefty O’Doul’s, Broadway Grill, Spinnerie and Gold Dust Lounge. All are now closed, though Bovis still runs a food distribution company.

Prosecutors put Bovis’ net worth at more than \$5 million.

Stepanian argued that Bovis had endured public humiliation because of the attention the case received and argued that Bovis has been “punished in the public eye over and over again.”

Ward argued that the publicity came about as a consequence of Bovis’ actions. The city of San Francisco, and the employees of Public Works, had suffered far worse, he said.

“Trust is a precious necessity of any social enterprise, and bribery is a betrayal of that trust,” Ward said.

Orrick ultimately sided with

prosecutors, telling Bovis that while Nuru was the “leader of the pack” of the corruption scandal, Bovis was “the face of private corruption in San Francisco for this scandal, and you are the face for a reason.”

Friends and relatives described him as a loving father, committed to making amends. Others described his passion for his annual toy drive.

But in 2015, he began showering Nuru with bribes, including \$22,000 in high-end kitchen appliances that he had delivered and installed at Nuru’s vacation home. He hoped to curry favor with Nuru and win city business, whether supplying the city with portable public toilets, furnishing container-type portable housing units for the homeless, or helping build a new Navigation Center on the Embarcadero.

Those efforts never came to fruition, Bovis’ defense attorneys said.

The FBI caught Bovis and Nuru trying to bribe an airport commissioner in 2018. Undercover agents met Bovis and recorded him telling them how Nuru told Bovis to give the commissioner \$5,000. Bovis

brought the money to a meeting with Nuru and the commissioner, but the commissioner declined to take the money.

Starting in 2016, Bovis and Nuru used the Lefty O’Doul’s Foundation to funnel tens of thousands of dollars in bribes to Nuru for his holiday parties. Recology, which collects San Francisco’s garbage, needed Nuru’s approval for rate hikes. Two Recology executives, John Francis Porter and Paul Giusti, later pleaded guilty to bribery charges related to the company’s donations.

When he appeared before Orrick, Bovis said the past four years had left a profound mark.

“I cannot even begin to describe the pain I’ve caused to the people I love most,” he said. “I harmed my wife’s reputation. She doesn’t deserve the harm I’ve done to her.”

He also apologized for ruining the reputation and legacy of the charity he once ran.

“All the work we did in the last 20 years was ruined,” Bovis said. “I ruined it for a lot of people here in San Francisco.”

Reach St. John Barned-Smith: stjohn.smith@sfnchronicle.com

PG&E

From page A1

Before Thursday’s vote, California residents upset about another potential rate increase urged the commission to limit further rate increases.

“I’m a ratepayer for PG&E, but I feel more like a hostage,” said one speaker during the commission’s meeting. “How high are you going to allow our rates to get?”

Another speaker, a Bay Area resident who said she was a nurse and mother of three, noted that commissioners could still approve additional rate increases for PG&E because of other pending proposals, and urged them to consider capping further rate hikes.

“When is enough enough?” she said.

The \$4.68 per month estimated increase for average households will last for a period of 12 months starting in April.

But bills could climb even higher this year if the commission takes up another proposal from PG&E that would add \$14 to \$15 per month for average residential customers to recoup costs incurred during last

year’s winter storms.

Combining that with the January hike and Thursday’s decision, typical residential bills could become at least \$53 higher per month than prices last year.

Mark Toney, executive director of ratepayer advocate nonprofit The Utility Reform Network, criticized commissioners for voting on the rate hike without discussion.

“The commission owes an explanation to customers whenever they adopt a rate increase but now more than ever,” he said.

April should bring temporary relief to customers’ bills. PG&E will apply a state-subsidized climate credit of about \$146 to typical residential bills with both gas and electric service. The once-a-year credit is paid for through California’s cap-and-trade program.

PG&E has said the company is “focused on finding ways to reduce our operating costs” and striving to keep future bill increases closer to inflation, an average of about 2% to 4% annually.

Reach Julie Johnson: julie.johnson@sfnchronicle.com; Twitter: [@juliejohnson](https://twitter.com/juliejohnson)



Stephen Lam/The Chronicle 2021

The Plumas County community of Greenville burns in the 2021 Dixie Fire. Pacific Gas and Electric Co. sought a rate hike, OK’d Thursday, to recover expenses on projects including wildfire prevention.