

The Record
Published Tuesday, Sep 19, 2006

Council to discuss building laboratory

TRACY - City Council members will discuss a proposal tonight to build a laboratory that would research biological warfare agents and agricultural diseases.

The University of California has submitted a bid to the U.S. Department of Homeland Security to build the 500,000-square-foot laboratory on Site 300, a testing ground for high explosives south of Tracy. A bio-safety level 4 facility, the lab would handle some of the most dangerous and incurable diseases that affect agriculture and humans.

The site is on its short list of locations DHS is considering. Homeland Security officials expect to name a site in early 2008.

The council meets at 7 p.m. in the council chambers, 950 East St.

Cross Channel to close for work

WALNUT GROVE - The Delta Cross Channel will be closed through Nov. 15 for maintenance work, meaning boaters will have to find another route.

The channel, which connects the Sacramento and Mokelumne rivers, closed Monday, the Bureau of Reclamation reported.

The gates to the water-diversion structure are open, but scaffolding will block vessels from getting through, the bureau said.

Information: (916) 979-2683 or www.usbr.gov/mp/cvo.

Protest over more river water rights

SAN ANDREAS - Calaveras County supervisors voted Monday to protest efforts by Stockton East Water District to secure additional water rights on rivers. The vote was 4-0, with Supervisor Tom Tryon absent.

Stockton East is seeking additional water from the Stanislaus and Calaveras rivers to serve its growing customer base in San Joaquin County and to recharge aquifers being depleted by overpumping. Stockton East seeks to gain rights to water that belong to entities in Calaveras County but is not yet being used.

Calaveras County officials and builders, however, are alarmed the move would set a precedent that someday could make it difficult for them to get water for new developments such as those in the Copperopolis area.

The county's protest means it will be a party to negotiations when the matter goes before the California Water Resources Control Board.

Barges causing long traffic delays

ISLETON - Drawbridges making way for barges hauling hundreds of tons of rocks and other materials to repair Sacramento River levees north of Isleton have caused traffic delays up to 30 minutes along Highway 160 and at the Rio Vista Bridge on Highway 12, according to transportation officials.

The increased barge traffic responsible for the delays will cease by mid-November, when the estimated 800 tons of material has been moved into place, according to the California Department of Transportation.

The use of large tugboats and barges will continue to cause a "significant increase" in drawbridge openings, which already have caused 15- to 30-minute delays in Isleton, Rio Vista, Walnut Grove and Courtland, according to Caltrans.

Dutra Construction Co. is making the repairs to the levees as part of a project led by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

Caltrans owns and operates six drawbridges and two ferries between Rio Vista and Courtland.

- The Record