

Stormy weather ahead for forecasts

Staff shortages and NWS cutbacks are blowing in along with the winter season

By Anthony Edwards
NEWSROOM METEOROLOGIST

National Weather Service offices in California are scaling back operations ahead of the

critical winter storm season, as federal cuts and staffing shortages take a toll. The California-Nevada River Forecast Center, which is run by the weather service and pro-

vides water managers with critical data to prevent river flooding, is seeing cutbacks that could end up “limiting the state’s ability to track ... dangerous shifts in weather,” Gov. Gavin Newsom’s office said last week. Elsewhere, weather service scientists are stretched so thin that meteorologists in Los Ange-

les, San Diego and the San Francisco Bay Area are simultaneously forecasting waves at Pacific beaches and snow in the Sierra Nevada — far beyond their typical area of responsibility. The number of written forecasts issued by the Sacramento office, which watches for winter storms across the Northern Sier-

ra, has plummeted since it announced cutbacks in April. The forecasts contain critical information that doesn’t exist elsewhere, and the decline has been noticeable, according to Daniel Swain, climate scientist at UC Agriculture and Natural Resources. *Weather continues on A9*

15 of the Bay Area’s best-kept secrets



The Bay Area is teeming with worth-the-hype landmarks and destinations, from the Golden Gate Bridge to Wine Country to the island prison of Alcatraz Island. Haven’t been there yet? Book the next available ferry. But remove all the things you find in snow globes and on postcards, and your life can still be filled with days of exploration and wonder. In the Bay Area, we’ve discovered,

Our guide to the odd museums, hidden arcades, under-the-radar hikes and cactus gardens that make the region so fascinating

PETER HARTLAUB
TOTAL SF

surprise destinations are an unlimited resource. Earlier this year I shared one of my favorite Bay Area secrets with Chronicle readers — the world’s greatest pinball machine, set on free play in Alameda — and asked for your favorite under-the-radar hikes, museums, downtowns and other hidden fun deserving more love. You came up with stellar *Hartlaub continues on A8*

Family disputes Fremont school’s final exam

By Jill Tucker
STAFF WRITER

Burning firewood does not produce oxygen. That is an incontrovertible scientific fact, one of several a Fremont family spent six months fighting for, a battle they never thought they’d have to wage against their own school district. This bitter battle, dating to May, technically revolved around just six disputed answers on the final exam for honors chemistry at Mission San Jose High School last spring — which might seem insignificant compared to the massive financial, political and academic challenges facing public school systems across the state. But what was really at stake, said the mom, Shilpa Viswanathan, was what was “right.” She didn’t mean morally right, or the right thing to do, but literally the factually accurate right answers on a 10th-grade multiple-choice science test. In a current environment where the country’s top officials are making unsupported claims — including Health Secretary Robert Kennedy Jr.’s contention that vaccines cause autism and President Donald Trump’s statements that wind turbines cause cancer as well as whale deaths — the sanctity of proven science has waned. Viswanathan said she didn’t want to see disregard for established scientific truths trickling into her son’s school, which is located amid one of the Bay Area’s major tech hubs and is one of the top academic public high schools in the state. That it could be happening in Fremont, in her son’s sophomore science class, shocked her. *Exam continues on A7*

TOP ROW: The East Bay Vivarium is a pet store in Berkeley that specializes in reptiles, including snakes, geckos and turtles. Figurines of the Rebel Alliance are displayed at Rancho Obi-Wan, the largest private collection of “Star Wars” memorabilia in the world, in Petaluma. **MIDDLE ROW:** The Arizona Garden at Stanford University was designed in the 1880s. Miriam Cox is the owner of Revival Coffee, which is in an old mortuary chapel in Crockett. **BOTTOM ROW:** The Radio Central Museum packs more than a century of radio history into a 125-year-old stone telephone building in Alameda. Broken ceramics line Tepco Beach at Point Isabel Regional Shoreline in Richmond.

Sarah Feldberg/S.F. Chronicle; Yalonda M. James/S.F. Chronicle; Santiago Mejia/S.F. Chronicle; Carlos Avila Gonzalez/S.F. Chronicle; Peter Hartlaub/S.F. Chronicle; Colin Peck/For the S.F. Chronicle

For many S.F. parents, private school is worthy trade-off

By Jessica Roy
PERSONAL FINANCE COLUMNIST

Shane Curnyn never expected to wind up as a private school parent. His mom had taught kindergarten in public schools, and Shane, an architect, went to public school in Virginia from kin-

dergarten through high school. But his family’s journey years ago through multiple rounds of the San Francisco Unified School District lottery placed his daughter Nora not at the school six blocks from their home in the Outer Sunset, but at one on the other side of town. On the drive

to enroll her, Nora started crying. Shane got out of the car to comfort her — and stepped in some sort of feces (“not hers”). In that moment, holding a crying child on his way to a school he didn’t want to send her to, he says his frustration with the process boiled over.

The family wound up enrolling Nora at San Francisco Schoolhouse, a nonreligious K-8 school that opened in 2011 with two students and now has just over 100 enrolled. Even then, the family still planned to try their chances *Private continues on A10*