

Northern Exposure: Covering issues of Northern California

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Vintage theater's new look

EUREKA When the red carpet rolls out in the Eureka Theater today the festivities will be for more than the Oscars.

Patrons of the largest single-screen theater between [San Francisco](#) and Portland are celebrating its 75th birthday with a glitz-and-glam champagne party in the freshly painted Streamline Moderne lobby. Cocktails will be served on a newly installed mahogany bar, part of a \$3 million restoration launched by the Eureka Concert and Film Center.

Built in 1939 by theater magnate George M. Mann, the F Street edifice features a 50-foot vertical sign that rises above the roof like an overwrought ship's prow. The Eureka Theater originally seated 1,700 moviegoers who paid 35 cents to see such classics as "The Wizard of Oz," "Stagecoach" and "The Hound of the Baskervilles."

Today the theater is on the [National Register of Historic Places](#) and hosts dances and weddings, films and concerts, including a motorcycle documentary and a band performing the music of [Pink Floyd](#) later this month.

The restoration is 85 percent complete, said Wendy Petty, president of the nonprofit Eureka Concert and Film Center. Volunteers have repaired the roof, renovated the heating and lighting systems, expanded the [dance floor](#) and more. The work is designed to accommodate community activities while it continues.

The theater renovations are part of Eureka's downtown revival, where the economy is "picking up," Petty said. Today's Oscar party offers locally made appetizers and 1939-era cocktails. Black tie is optional.

Willits isn't waiting for water

WILLITS Gov. Jerry Brown's \$687 million drought aid plan may eventually help hard-hit Willits, but this Mendocino County city is not waiting around for that off chance.

With its primary [water supply](#) reservoirs at 50 percent of capacity and expected to last only into May, Willits officials have authorized construction of emergency pipelines to tie two city irrigation wells into the drinking water system.

The \$1.4 million project, which includes a new water treatment plant, is getting support from previously established state programs. The California Department of [Public Health](#) approved \$250,000 in [emergency funding](#) to purchase and install the pipe.

Cal Fire and the [California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation](#) are supplying the labor through several 15-man hand crews comprising low-level inmates from the Chamberlain Creek Conservation Camp in [Fort Bragg](#).

“It’s a great partnership,” said Adrienne Moore, Willits city manager.

Still, it leaves Willits with little more than an emergency supply and a City Council wondering how to pay for it. The city’s 4,845 residents have been on mandatory water restrictions since November and are now limited to 150 gallons a day for a family of four.

It could be worse, Moore said. Neighboring Brooktrails Township has restricted its 1,553 residents to 110 gallons a day for a four-person household.

“We just hope it rains,” said Brooktrails General Manager Denise Rose.

Tussle over coyote killing

MODOC COUNTY Big Valley Coyote Drive 2014 tally: 42 dead coyotes; one fractured lumbar; one assault and battery citation.

This isn’t the highest kill for the weekend derby, now in its eighth year, sponsored every February by Adin Supply Co. and Pit River Rod and Gun Club. And it isn’t the first time the event has provoked an incident between participants and opponents of the hunt, designed to reduce predation on local ranchlands.

This year, however, Steve Gagnon, Adin Supply owner and a principal contest organizer, was cited for assault and battery in a case still under review by Modoc District Attorney Jordan Funk. Gagnon allegedly pushed Roger Hopping, 73, to the ground after he photographed hunters gathered outside Gagnon’s store.

Hopping sustained a fractured lumbar vertebra and is expected to recover.

In addition to the assault citation, this year's hunt was held three days after a decision that could end it. The California Fish and Wildlife Commission voted 4-0 on Feb. 5 to consider banning wildlife-killing contests throughout the state. The issue is scheduled for the commission's April 16 meeting.

Hopping, an Adin resident and former duck hunter, said he is "the instigator" who several years ago began alerting statewide animal rights groups to the derby. His photographs of dead coyotes dumped in local ditches spurred opposition that peaked last year, when more than 6,000 people signed a petition to end such "killing contests."

Despite the opposition, the Coyote Drive enjoys widespread local support. Participants in the 2014 event received T-shirts that celebrate "Our Outdoors. Our Freedoms." Modoc County Sheriff Mike Poindexter is among the "proud sponsors" listed on the shirt.

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