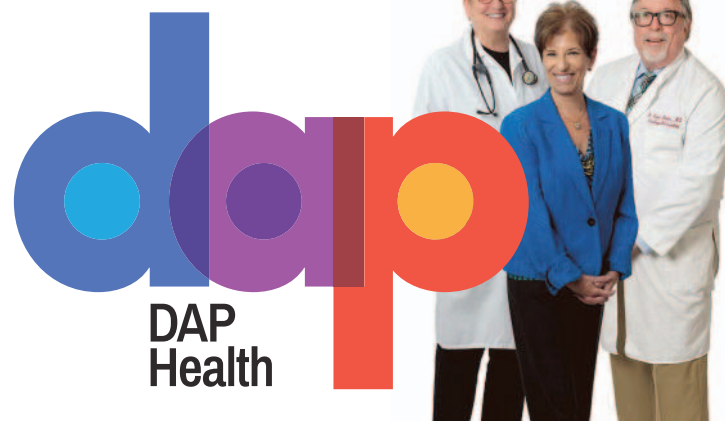


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Bill aims to ban fracking in state by '27

Legislation likely to face opposition from oil lobbyists, trade unions

Janet Wilson

Palm Springs Desert Sun
USA TODAY NETWORK

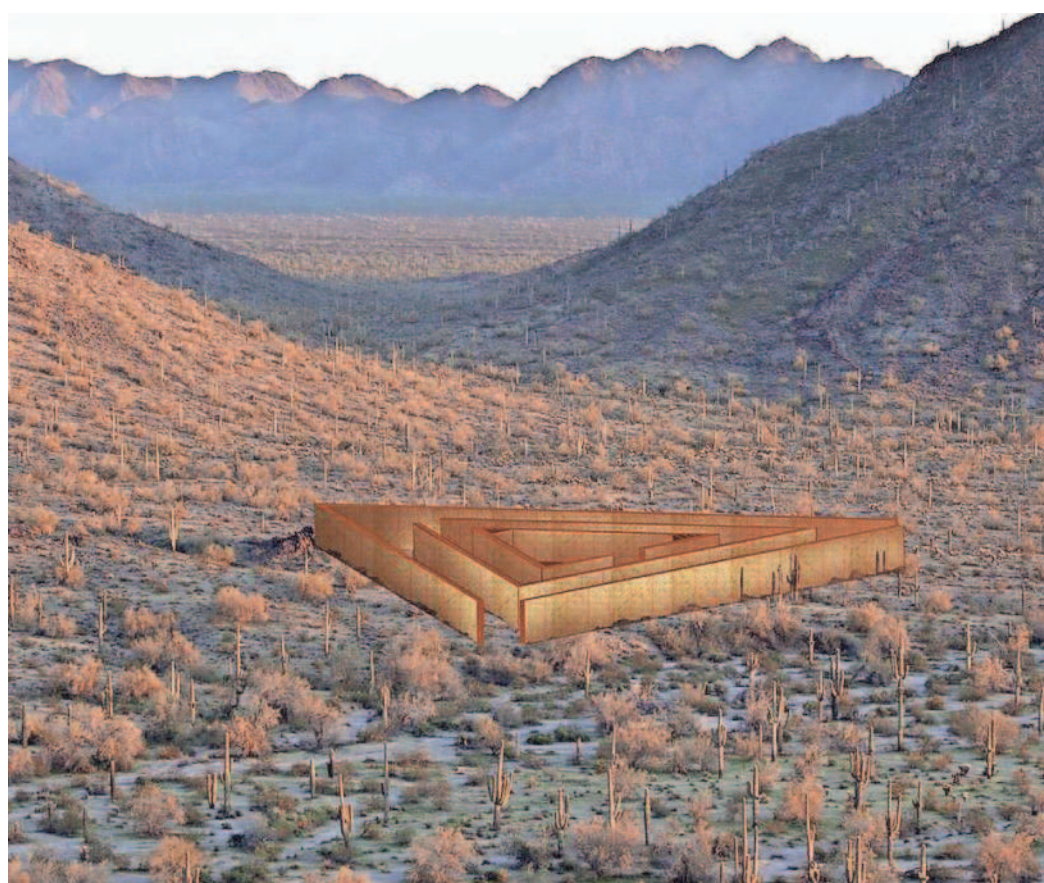
Two California state senators on Tuesday introduced legislation that would halt all new fracking, steaming and other risky oil and gas production tech-

niques next year, and end them completely by 2027. The bill, SB 467, "End Fracking & Harmful Drilling Act" will also include a renewed bid to require a 2,500-foot setback between oil operations and neighborhoods, similar to buffers already in place in Texas, Colorado and elsewhere mandating separation between hazardous facilities and schools or residences.

The legislation, authored by Sen. Scott Wiener (D-San Francisco) and Sen. Monique Limon (D-Santa Barbara), is certain to face stiff headwinds from oil industry lobbyists and building and trade unions.

In a bid to ease economic disruption and win support, Wiener and Limon have included a provision that would require the state's main oil regulator, the California Geologic Energy Management division, to

See **FRACKING**, Page 5A



A rendering of Eduardo Sarabia's "The Passenger," an upcoming work in Desert X's 2021 biennial exhibition in the Coachella Valley. The rendering does not depict the actual location of the artwork. COURTESY OF DESERT X AND EDUARDO SARABIA

Desert X 2021: Artists announced for exhibition

'Most far-reaching and diverse' works in event's history

Brian Blueskye Palm Springs Desert Sun | USA TODAY NETWORK

A large maze structure by Mexico-based artist Eduardo Sarabia. • A sculptural wall created by Saudi Arabia artist Zahrah Alghamdi that connects the Southern California landscape to other deserts around the world. • A smoke sculpture by American feminist artist Judy Chicago.

These are some of the artworks you'll see across the Coachella Valley as part of the outdoor biennial art exhibition Desert X when it returns March 12 to May 16.

The exhibition, which offers digital and in-person opportunities to view work across 40 miles of the desert, is being curated by Artistic Director Neville Wakefield and co-curator César García-Alvarez.

A map with exact locations of the installations will be available on desertx.org and on the Desert X 2021 app starting March 12.

Visitors will also be able to get maps and information at a "hub" at Ace Hotel & Swim Club (701 E. Palm Canyon Drive) in Palm Springs.

Desert X will also sell merchandise made by Windmill City Screen Printing and other local companies at Windmill City Super #1 (463 N. Palm Canyon Drive) in Palm Springs.

See **DESERT X**, Page 10A



Feminist artist Judy Chicago. Her Desert X exhibit "Live Smoke; A Tribute to the Living Desert" will be presented on April 9 in partnership with the Jordan Schnitzer Family Foundation. COURTESY OF DONALD WOODMAN

Palm Desert focuses bid for CSU campus on hybrid learning

Sherry Barkas

Palm Springs Desert Sun
USA TODAY NETWORK

The next California State University campus could be a hybrid school that combines in-person and virtual learning — borne from lessons of the COVID-19 pandemic, according to a Sacramento-based consultant working with a nonprofit Palm Desert created to help secure an independent CSU campus in the city.

If so, Palm Desert leaders says the city is already on track to provide the campus of the future with its current CSU San Bernardino satellite site.

"That CSU campus from the get-go has been a hybrid campus because many of those students were there and were studying virtually," Mayor Pro Tem

See **CSU**, Page 2A

MORE INSIDE PAGE 9A



Wildfires harm grape crop

Smoke and haze covers wine grape crops on the vine in Sonoma County. The worst wildfire season in modern California history resulted in the smallest wine grape crop in years, the U.S. Department of Agriculture has reported. ERIC RISBERG/AP

USA TODAY

Experts fear 4th wave of coronavirus cases coming

The numbers of Americans falling ill with the coronavirus have started to drop and some states have begun easing restrictions on indoor dining and masks. But public health experts warn that now is not the time to ease up on safety restrictions. These officials said they dread the possibility of a fourth wave in the future. 7A

County vaccination plea

Riverside County officials are asking residents who are not age 65 and older to make appointments at community providers and not at county COVID-19 vaccination clinics. County clinics are only vaccinating residents who are age 65 and older. 2A

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County clinics turning away those not 65 and over

Staff and wire reports

Riverside County officials are asking residents who are not age 65 and older to make appointments at community providers and not at county COVID-19 vaccination clinics.

“We seem to be having a lot of issues with people signing up for the vaccine at our clinics that are not qualified,” spokesperson Jose Arballo, Jr. said Tuesday. “When you sign up and you’re not eligible, you’re taking the spot away from someone else who is eligible and, when you get to the site, you’re going to be turned away, anyway.”

County clinics are only vaccinating residents who are age 65 and older. Individuals in other eligible tiers are being asked to find appointments elsewhere at this time.

The Curative vaccination sites in Palm Springs and Riverside are open to all eligible residents. Appointments are required at all sites.

FEMA opens mass vaccine sites

California opened federally supported mass vaccination sites Tuesday in Los Angeles and Oakland that are intended to bring inoculations to communities hit hard by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The sites opened on the east side of the nation’s second-largest city at California State University, Los Angeles, and on the east side of San Francisco Bay at Oakland Coliseum.

Each is expected to be able to administer 6,000 vaccinations a day by the end of the week. Each will also have mobile units to head out into communities.

At Cal State LA, groups of cars pulled up to tents manned by military personnel. People were able arrive on foot or public transportation as well.

“It’s proximate to a community that has been disproportionately impacted by this pandemic,” Gov. Gavin Newsom

Coachella Valley: Cases so far

Health officials on Tuesday reported 150 new cases, 10 additional virus-related deaths, and 926 new recoveries in the Coachella Valley. Here are the city and community breakdowns, with the numbers in parentheses showing increases over the weekend since Friday:

- **Cathedral City:** 6,821 cases (+29), 96 deaths (+1), and 6,032 recoveries
- **Coachella:** 7,729 cases (+7), 78 deaths (+2), and 6,995 recoveries
- **Desert Hot Springs:** 3,992 cases (+15), 58 deaths, and 3,508 recoveries
- **Indian Wells:** 188 cases (+2), 6 deaths, and 166 recoveries
- **Indio:** 11,905 cases (+30), 184 deaths (+3), and 10,577 recoveries
- **La Quinta:** 3,248 cases (+10), 53 deaths, and 2,862 recoveries
- **Palm Desert:** 3,775 cases (+19), 98 deaths, and 3,288 recoveries
- **Palm Springs:** 3,553 cases (+15), 105 deaths (+3), and 3,102 recoveries
- **Rancho Mirage:** 1,052 cases (+7), 37 deaths (+1), and 872 recoveries
- **Unincorporated communities:** Bermuda Dunes: 612 cases (+1), 7 deaths (+1), and 540 recoveries; Desert Edge: 337 cases, 12 deaths, and 276 recoveries; Desert Palms: 244 cases (+1), 19 deaths (+1), and 200 recoveries; Garnet: 860 cases, 18 deaths, and 762 recoveries; Mecca: 1,111 cases, 17 deaths, and 997 recoveries; North Shore: 344 cases, 2 deaths, and 315 recoveries; Oasis: 857 cases, 6 deaths, and 784 recoveries; Sky Valley: 211 cases, 4 deaths, and 175 recoveries; Thermal: 465 cases (+4), 5 deaths, and 422 recoveries; Thousand Palms: 1,009 cases (+8), 6 deaths, and 876 recoveries; Vista Santa Rosa: 296 cases (+2), 2 deaths, and 265 recoveries
- **California:** 3,412,057 cases (+5,692), and 47,107 deaths (+64)

told a press conference. “The effort here is to address that issue forthrightly.”

Snowy and icy weather across much of the U.S., meanwhile, forced the cancellation of some vaccination events and threatened to disrupt vaccine deliveries over the next few days. Houston’s public health agency lost power and had to scramble to give out thousands of shots before they spoiled.

Blue Shield aims to administer 3M vaccines a week by March 1

Blue Shield of California will create an algorithm to determine where to allocate COVID-19 vaccines statewide with the goal of being able to administer 3

million shots a week by March 1, according to a contract made public Monday that grants the insurance giant far-reaching powers in overseeing the state’s distribution of doses.

The company will attempt to drastically scale up the number of daily doses, but that goal will largely depend on the supply sent to the state. California received a little more than 1 million vaccine doses in the last week from the federal government.

Blue Shield, which wields considerable influence in state politics, will immediately work to centralize the state’s COVID-19 vaccination program after a sluggish start due to a lack of available doses, complex regulations dictating

which Californians should be prioritized, and data reporting issues.

The contract says Blue Shield’s algorithm will prioritize vaccine distribution with “a focus on equity” throughout the state and will be updated based on vaccine availability and COVID-19 rates. Few other details about the algorithm were available Monday.

Under the contract, Blue Shield also has wide latitude to select which healthcare providers and counties will continue to receive and administer doses in California as part of a vaccine network.

Biden: US will exceed goal of 100 million shots in 100 days

President Joe Biden expressed optimism Tuesday that the U.S. vaccine rollout will surpass forecasts, although a massive winter storm was stalling efforts to deliver shots this week.

“Before I took office, I set a big goal of administering 100 million shots in the first 100 days,” Biden tweeted Tuesday. “With the progress we’re making I believe we’ll not only reach that, we’ll break it.”

Biden’s goal had been considered conservative by experts who argued that vaccines must be manufactured, shipped and jabbed much more quickly for vaccines to become readily available by spring. Dr. Anthony Fauci said last week that it would be “open season” for all Americans who want the vaccine by April.

But the timeline remains unclear since the rollout has been marred by a lack of supply, forcing vaccination sites to shut down and leading to long lines and thousands of people on waiting lists. Biden has also said previously most Americans won’t be vaccinated until the end of the summer.

Contributing: Associated Press, Los Angeles Times, USA Today

CSU

Continued from Page 1A

Jan Harnik said.

Building a new campus at an estimated cost of \$100 million was a priority of Gov. Gavin Newsom as recently as a year ago, with Palm Desert on a list of five potential locations that also included Stockton, Concord, Chula Vista and San Mateo County.

The California State University San Bernardino satellite campus, off Cook Street, was built on land donated to the state by the city with the understanding it would one day be a standalone campus.

A group of consultants came to Palm Desert in February 2020 to meet with officials from throughout the valley. Valley officials laid out the need for a full-size independent four-year state university and gave the committee a tour of the satellite campus.10

The site study was completed by the consulting firm on July 1, 2020, and submitted to the CSU board. The study did not make any recommendation as to where a campus should go, but rather reported on socio-economic and other needs of each community being considered.

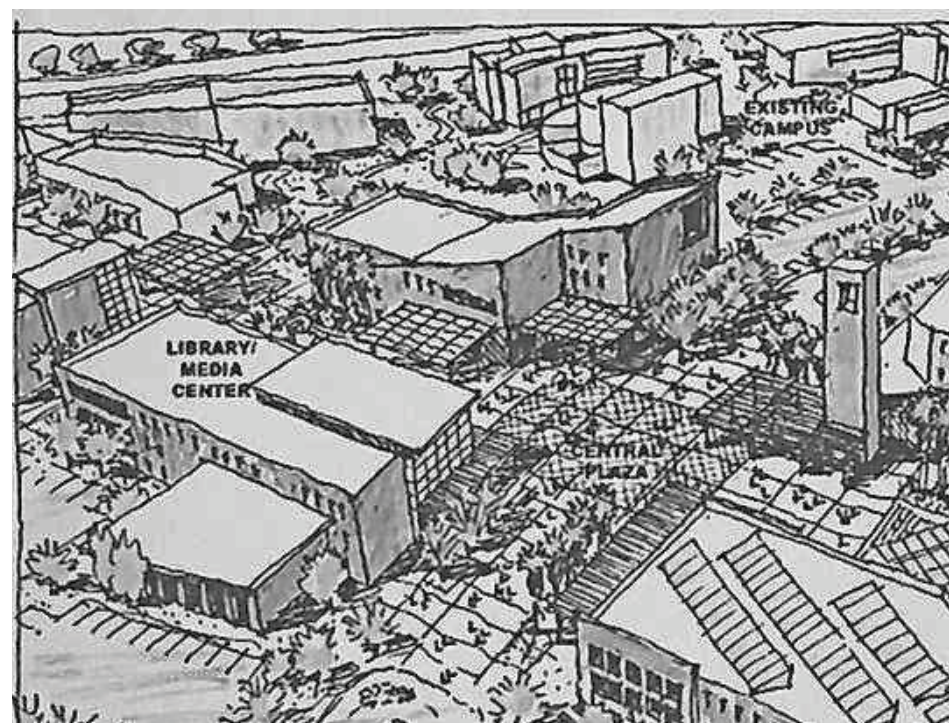
The independent study found that Palm Desert offered a variety of advantages over other proposed sites, including that it is build-ready.

Opened in 1986, the satellite campus has three academic buildings and a 300-seat theater and infrastructure in place for complete build-out – much of it funded by philanthropic dollars, another advantage for Palm Desert given that it could help meet the more than \$100 million needed for construction of a full campus, the 2020 site study found.

The Coachella Valley’s only community college – College of the Desert – and a University of California at Riverside satellite campus are also located in Palm Desert.

The closest independent four-year campuses to the Coachella Valley, UC Redlands – a private university – and CSU San Bernardino’s home campus in San Bernardino, are at least 40 miles away, a drive many can’t make, officials have said.

So, having a local independent CSU



The master plan unveiled by Cal State University San Bernardino Palm Desert campus in June 2016 looked to expand the campus capacity to 10,000 students. ROSALIE MURPHY/THE DESERT SUN

campus would mean a greater ability to serve historically under-represented minorities, low-income students and first-generation students than the other proposed locations where other campuses are close by.

Following the visit from the site inspection committee, the city created a nonprofit, “Priority One Coachella Valley” in conjunction with the Coachella Valley Economic Partnership.

It was seeded with \$150,000 from the city’s economic development reserve funds plus \$30,000 donated by the Greater Palm Springs Convention and Visitors Bureau.

The goal is to make sure Palm Desert tops the list of sites when the state is ready to build its 28th state university campus.

“We fared well in the consultants’ study and it appears that of the five (locations) that were considered, we are one of the top two,” along with Stockton, said Joe Wallace, CVEP CEO and chief innovation officer and chairman of the seven-member Priority One Coachella Valley board.

The pandemic, however, pushed the idea of a new campus off the priority list for CSU and the governor.

Update from Sacramento

Wallace on Thursday presented the City Council with an update on what the nonprofit has accomplished so far and what comes next. He was joined by Sacramento-based Greg Hayes of Strategies 360, the consulting firm hired by Priority One Coachella Valley – PICV – for up to \$65,000.

Hayes’ job: to make sure the decision-makers in Sacramento know Palm Desert and the Coachella Valley and keep PICV apprised of what is happening at the state capital.

“The current governor’s budget does not include funding for a new CSU campus,” Hayes said. “It’s unclear where it stands on his agenda. He favors it but clearly has a few things on his immediate agenda” with the COVID-19 pandemic.

“But, I’ll say, one thing that is absolutely in our favor is campuses are an economic and jobs development investment. We do know that that is still important to him (Newsom),” Hayes said.

The pandemic, however, has changed the vision for what a new university would look like, Hayes said. “Our meetings with (CSU and state)

budget staff, legislative staff, administrative staff, etcetera, (in Sacramento) has told us that an entirely new brick-and-mortar campus similar to ones that have been built in the last 25 years ... is probably out,” Hayes said.

“We have many, many, technology innovations plus we have enough lessons learned from this pandemic that mean the next campus is likely to be somewhat of a hybrid campus ...,” Hayes said, which would be a mix of in-person and virtual learning options.

Palm Desert Mayor Kathleen Kelly suggested that Hayes and his team work with the staff at the CSU campus in Palm Desert, who have tried to improve virtual classrooms during the pandemic.

“It’s another example of why the state won’t have to build from scratch in Palm Desert, because the building blocks are there,” she said.

Councilmember Sabby Jonathan drove home the need for in-person learning as well as virtual classes.

“For the past year, school closures have emphasized how important and valuable emotionally and mentally in-person learning is. So, hybrid is just that, hybrid. One of the benefits of going to college is the experience outside the classroom,” Jonathan said. “So, we are not losing sight of that, we don’t want to create a 100% virtual campus because then we’re talking ourselves out of a Palm Desert campus.”

Bringing a dream to fruition

Building an independent four-year CSU campus has been the vision of valley officials, educators and philanthropists for nearly 40 years.

Councilmember Karina Quintanilla said she remembered hearing “the rumbles that we would one day have a four-year campus” when she was in elementary school.

“That was, I think, in 1991, so this has been a community project that has been invested in for so long in the planning and the concept and now it’s getting elevated ... it’s very exciting to see,” Quintanilla said.

Desert Sun reporter Sherry Barkas covers the cities of La Quinta, Indian Wells, Rancho Mirage and Palm Desert. She can be reached at sherry.barkas@thedesertsun.com. Follow her on Twitter @TDSsherryBarkas

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