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BETHANY MOLLENKOF Los Angeles Times

RENE HENERY, of Trout Unlimited, front, and Matt Bigelow, of the state Department of Fish and Wildlife, spot a wild spawning salmon. Hundreds of thousands of salmon spawned in the river 60 years ago.

And then there was one

A chinook spawns in a once-dry stretch of the San Joaquin River, a sign of hope waterway's restoration will succeed

BY BETTINA BOXALL

FRIANT, Calif. — About 10 miles downstream from Friant Dam, two men gently guided their drift boat toward a spot where the riverbed gravel looked as if it had been swept clean.

There, in about a foot of water, they spied something that had vanished from the San Joaquin River more than 60 years ago: a spawning chinook salmon.

"How sweet," said Matt Bigelow, an environmental scientist with the California Department of Fish and Wildlife. "I put in a lot of work to get to

this point."

It was a small victory in a tortuous effort: to revive one of California's most abused rivers by restoring a portion of its long-lost water and salmon runs.

The San Joaquin's spring-run chinook once numbered in the hundreds of thousands. The salmon were so plentiful that farmers fed them to hogs. Settlers were kept awake at night by splashing fish as they struggled upstream to their spawning grounds.

The run dwindled as San Joaquin Valley agriculture sucked more and more water from the river system and hydropower dams blocked salm-

on from upstream passage. Then, in the 1940s, the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation erected Friant Dam as part of the Central Valley Project, a massive irrigation system.

Most of the upper river flow was sent into two giant canals that fed irrigation ditches up and down the east side of the San Joaquin Valley. Sixty miles of the San Joaquin — the state's second-biggest river — died, its bed turning to a ribbon of dry sand.

The spring-run chinook disappeared. Hatchery releases sustained a small population of fall-run chinook that spawn in the San Joaquin's [See Salmon, A8]

Iran appears the victor in postwar Iraq

Its influence on its neighbor is growing, while the political sway of the U.S. has largely disappeared.

BY NED PARKER

BAGHDAD — Ten years after the U.S.-led invasion to oust Iraqi President Saddam Hussein, the geopolitical winner of the war appears to be their common enemy: Iran.

American military forces are long gone, and Iraqi officials say Washington's political influence in Baghdad is now virtually nonexistent. Hussein is dead.

But Iran has become an indispensable broker among Baghdad's new Shiite elite, and its influence continues to grow.

The signs are evident at public celebrations, in the prominence of pro-Iran militias on the streets and in the faces of some of those now in the halls of power, men such as Abu Mehdi Mohandis, an Iraqi with a long history of anti-American activity and deep ties to Iran.

During the occupation, U.S. officials accused Mohandis of arranging a supply of Iranian-made bombs to be used against U.S. troops. But now Iraqi officials say Mohandis speaks for Iran here, and Prime Minister Nouri Maliki recently entrusted him with a sensitive

domestic political mission.

Iran's role reinforces its strategic position at a time when the world looks increasingly hostile to Tehran, the capital. It faces tough international sanctions for its disputed nuclear program and fears losing long-time ally Syria to an insurgency backed by regional Sunni Muslim rivals.

Western diplomats and Iraqi politicians say they are concerned that the Islamic Republic will be tempted to use proxies in Iraq to strike at its enemies, as it has done with Lebanon-based Hezbollah.

American officials say they remain vital players in Iraq and have worked to defuse tension between Maliki and his foes.

During a visit to Baghdad on Sunday, however, Secretary of State John F. Kerry was unable to persuade Ma-

[See Iraq, A6]

HEALTH COSTS TO RISE 30% FOR SOME

BY CHAD TERHUNE

About 5 million Californians got a first glimpse at what they might pay next year under the federal healthcare law. For many, that coverage will come with a hefty price tag.

Compared with what individual policies cost now, premiums are expected to rise an average of 30% for many middle-income residents who don't get their insurance through their employers.

Alternatively, lower-income consumers will reap the biggest savings and are projected to save as much as 84% off their coverage thanks to federal subsidies.

The figures were released Thursday by Covered California, the state agency charged with implementing the federal Affordable Care Act. They underscore the harsh reality that costs for some consumers will have to rise in order to carry out the biggest healthcare expansion in half a century.

"It's hard to design any change of this scale where everybody is a winner and no one is worse off," said Gerald Kominski, director of the UCLA Center for Health Policy Research and an expert on health insurance. "Some people will feel they are being unfairly targeted or penalized."

The threat of higher costs could alienate many of the policyholders the state needs to keep in the fold in order to offset the increased costs of covering sicker, poorer people who have been shut out of the system for years.

According to the state, [See Healthcare, A10]

On the front lines of firearms debate

Bloomberg is spending millions to back stiffer laws. NRA welcomes the challenge, calling him a 'nanny in chief.'

BY MELANIE MASON

WASHINGTON — The fate of gun control proposals in Congress this year may depend on who is more potent: Michael R. Bloomberg the billionaire or Michael R. Bloomberg the boogeyman.

With signs that momentum for stiffer gun laws has begun to flag on Capitol Hill, the White House and gun control proponents are increasingly turning to the mogul mayor of New York to carry the fight into key congressional districts. He has bankrolled a high-profile campaign to counter the political might of the National Rifle Assn. His latest volley: a blitz of TV ads in 13 states urging lawmakers

to approve expanded background check requirements.

But as the emerging voice for gun restrictions, it's not clear whether Bloomberg will help or hurt. Many gun rights advocates believe he may be their perfect foil. They have ridiculed his effort as the latest excess from a "nanny in chief" who has forced chain restaurants in New York to post calorie counts, and who has waged fierce crusades against smoking, trans fats, salt and sugary beverages.

The White House has no qualms about Bloomberg's role. Vice President Joe Biden has met with him twice in the last month, and President Obama offered impassioned support at the White House on Thursday for a "national day of action" called by Mayors Against Illegal Guns, a coalition that Bloomberg co-chairs.

To mark the day, the group sponsored nearly 140 events in 29 states, from a [See Bloomberg, A10]



WALLY SKALIJ Los Angeles Times

"BELOVED FATHER" reads one of many tombstones knocked over at Mount Zion, which opened in East L.A. in 1916 to provide burial sites for poor Jews.

COLUMN ONE

Graves of disquiet

In a weedy corner of East L.A., a forgotten Jewish cemetery holds the remains that a city left behind.

BY HECTOR BECERRA

The black gates of Mount Zion are chained. A sign stamped on a wall of bright bougainvillea on Downey Road asks visitors to call a neighboring graveyard if they want to go in. The phone number doesn't

exist anymore.

Robert Adler-Peckerar stood at the entrance of the Jewish cemetery in East L.A., the downtown skyline behind him, the rush of the 710 and 5 freeways around him. It was a Sunday, and he was on a quest to find the grave of a man born on that day more than 100 years before.

He tracked down a caretaker next door who led him through a fence into Mount Zion. Once inside, he saw dozens of children's graves closely spaced. Tiny and delicate, several headstones had been knocked down.

Walking down a winding

asphalt road scabbed with dirt, weeds and a shag carpet of dried cypress leaves, the 38-year-old saw that hundreds of tombstones were on the ground, some lying like small, toppled Stonehenges.

On one tomb, a vandit scrawled a cryptic graffiti: "Here lies Horse. RIP."

An hour later, he finally found what he was looking for: the grave of Lamed Shapiro, a writer of gruesomely dark stories of pogroms in Eastern Europe who died a pauper in Los Angeles in 1948.

Shapiro's tombstone, in [See Cemetery, A11]

S&P sets all-time closing high

The broad stock index is one of the last major market gauges to recoup its losses from the 2008 global financial crisis. **BUSINESS, B1**

Complete Index AA2

Weather

Low clouds, some sun. L.A. Basin: 72/56. **AA6**

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