COALINGA — Harris Ranch Beef Holding Co., California’s largest cattle-raising operation, is being sold.

The company’s 800-acre Central Valley feedlot, which can hold up to 250,000 cattle, and its slaughterhouse and processing facilities are being sold to Hanford-based Central Valley Meat Co. but will operate independently under the combined ownership of Central Valley Meat Holding Co., according to an announcement made last week and reported Monday by The Fresno Bee.

The price and other details weren’t released.

The beef operations are part of Harris Farms, Inc. Founded in 1937, the family-owned agribusiness also has a thriving farming operation that produces more than 30 crops ranging from lettuce and garlic to pistachios and wine grapes; breeds thoroughbred horses and runs a popular inn and restaurant, according to the company website. The business has more than $400 million a year in sales.

Difficulties in recent Years

Only its cattle operations are being sold.

“The Central Valley has long served as the home of some of the finest beef sold around the world. Today’s announcement cements a future for two family-owned beef operations to continue to thrive,” Harris Farms owner John Harris said in the April 9 sale announcement.

Central Valley Meat Co. was founded in 1993 and markets beef to retailers and to food-service companies. The company has faced some difficulties recent years, including a 2013 recall of more than 29 tons of ground beef destined for school lunches because of concerns that it might contain plastic pieces, the Fresno Bee reported. The processing plant also was briefly closed by federal regulators in 2014 for unsanitary conditions, the paper said.
The heavy rains and snow falling on California this year are enabling the Bureau of Reclamation to boost water deliveries to growers on the west side of Fresno County. The Bureau of Reclamation announced Wednesday that it will supply South-of-Delta growers with 65% of their contracted water total.

“This has been a great year for California’s water supply,” said Mid-Pacific Regional Director Ernest Conant. “The increased precipitation has allowed us to increase the amount of water we allocate to our South-of-Delta contractors.” The allocation amount, however, left Westlands Water District General Manager Thomas Birmingham wondering how deep the Sierra snowpack would have to be for west-growers to receive a full allocation.

“This announcement begs the question, what has to happen before south-of-Delta farmers served by the Central Valley Project can get a full supply?” Birmingham said. “Notwithstanding the restrictions imposed by the biological opinions, Westlands firmly believes that there is sufficient water to allocate to south-of-Delta agricultural water-service contractors 100%. Today’s announcement by Reclamation is disappointing for every south-of-Delta farmer served by the CVP, and we hope Reclamation will increase the allocation quickly to enable farmers to quit pumping groundwater.”

Costa: Allocation could Hit 100%, But It Will Be Too Late
Rep. Jim Costa (D-Fresno), who is a grower and one of the top water policy experts in Congress, said that he expected the initial west-side allocation in February to be 50%, followed by a 75% revision. “I am frustrated, to say the least,” he said. “We’ve done some (water) modeling on our own, which showed, at a minimum a 75% allocation by now. They may get to 100% by June, but that won’t be in time or this crop year.”

A Farmer’s View: Late Allocations don’t Help Aquifer
Mark Borba, president of Riverdale-based Borba Farms, said that the Bureau’s late allocations hurt farmers and create more aquifer overdraft. “We are told repeatedly farmers should cease groundwater pumping when surface water is plentiful, but Borba said. “The concept of conjunctive use...”

April 16, 2019 | Myles Barker

The impatient local law enforcement officials are wearing thin as they continue to wait for a new first-responder training facility to be built. Fresno City College’s fire and police academies have served as the primary training facilities for Central Valley public safety agencies for years. Both have outgrown their existing facilities.

Kingsburg Police Chief Neil Dadian said he’s been waiting decades for State Center Community College District to deliver on its promise of a new training center. The facilities cadets train in now are shameful, he said. “You would never allow for conditions where a student-athlete was to change in a parking lot and then attend class for the remainder of the day without the opportunity to shower,” said Dadian, who has taught at the police academy for over 20 years. “Our police cadets endure this humiliation very day.” However, FCC President Carole Goldsmith said Dadian’s depiction...
NEWSOM WON’T BLOCK BUILDING IN HIGH-FIRE AREAS

April 16, 2019 | AP News

SACRAMENTO — A desire to live near nature is embedded in California’s ethos, Gov. Gavin Newsom said Monday as he explained why he doesn’t want to block home building near forested areas at high risk for wildfi e es.

“There’s something that is truly Californian about the wilderness and the wild and pioneering spirit,” Newsom said in an interview with The Associated Press. “I’m not advocating, or no (building).” Newsom on Friday re-leased a report outlining the challenges of California’s growing wildfi e threat that suggested local government “de-emphasize” building in high-risk areas around forests. But he told the AP it was a loose suggestion aimed at starting a debate about how Californians can build smarter and closer to urban centers and economic hubs. More than 2.7 mil- lion Californians live in ar-eas state official officials y are at a very high hazard for wildfi es, according to an AP analysis of census data and state fi e maps. Nearly 180 cities and owns are in those very high hazard areas. The recently re-tired head of the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, en Pimlott, said last year that government should consider blocking construction in high-risk a- eas, given the devastating loss of property and lives. But Newsom said he’s never seen a realistic proposal for how to do it. “I’ve never seen a deep analysis,” he said. “And I think one has to be cautious about that.”

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The Town’s History Dating o the 1800s Is Too Deep to Walk Away

A wildfi e that ripped through the Northern California town of Paradise last November, destroying 19,000 buildings and killing 85 people, served as a wake-up call on the need for immediate action as the climate warms and fi es worsen. The town was considered at severe risk for wildfi e. Newsom suggested the town’s history dating o the 1800s is too deep to simply walk away. Instead he said Paradise should be rebuilt under more modern building codes and with a greater focus on suffici ent evacuation outes and shelter-in-place plans. California has the nation’s most robust building requirement programs for new homes in fi e-prone areas, and a recent analysis by McClatchy showed that a higher percentage of homes built a er new building codes took e ect in 2008 survived the fi e than those built before. Newsom’s father, a former state appeals court judge, lived in Dutch Flat, a commu-nity on the edge of the Sierra Nevada range. “There’s a frontier as-pect, a historic com-ponent,” Newsom said, referencing the phrase “Go West, young man” that is o en attribu ed to author Horace Greeley, an advocate of westward expansion.

Related Story: Millions Live in Parts of California Threat-ened by Wildfi es

The concept of local control is also deeply embedded in California’s ethos and Newsom, a former mayor of San Francisco, said he doesn’t want to take away land-use planning power from local governments. He also suggests expanding housing in urban areas that have be-er access to transportation and jobs. Cali omia fac-es a crisis over housing a-ordability that has pushed more people beyond urban areas. “When I say de-empha-stizing, it’s loose,” he said. “It’s about considering your environment literally and not just figuratively, and beginning to be more strategic about the planning.”

When I say de-emphasi-sting, it’s loose. It’s about considering your environment literally and not just figuratively, and beginning to be more strategic about the planning.

— Gov. Gavin Newsom

When any of Newsom’s ideas, such as encouraging local planners to include fi e safety concerns in their...
This summer, Tom Gray will lose his home.

A slim man with hunched shoulders and a halting voice, Gray, 72, has schizophrenia. Before he landed in Carmen Palarca’s board-and-care home 11 years ago, he spent 20 years living on the streets, many of them huddled in a doorway across from a San Francisco Whole Foods.

“I feel kind of sad and worried a little bit” Gray said quietly, sitting in the home’s small kitchen one recent afternoon. He hadn’t yet received official time from Palarca of her plans to close, but knew it was likely. She had, in fact, sent a letter to the city a few days earlier outlining her intent to shutter the home. The planned closure of yet another board-and-care home—this one nestled near Golden Gate Park—reflects a broader trend affecting thousands of low-income Californians with serious mental illness. While housing values soar and minimum-wage increases drive up staffing costs, state reimbursement rates to board-and-cares have remained stagnant.

The result: more facilities are shutting their doors. There are no reliable statewide data on the decrease of homes serving this specific population. But since 2012, San Francisco has...
Despite President Donald Trump’s efforts to derail Special Counsel Robert Mueller’s investigation into Russian interference with the 2016 election, Mueller could not conclusively determine that Trump had committed criminal obstruction of justice.

The Justice Department posted a redacted version of the report online Thursday morning, 90 minutes after Attorney General William Barr offered his own final assessment of the report’s findings. The two-volume, 448-page report recounts how Trump repeatedly sought to take control of the Russia probe.

**Explored 10 Possible Obstruction Episodes**

Mueller evaluated 10 episodes for possible obstruction of justice, including Trump’s firing of FBI Director James Comey, the president’s direct order to subordinates to have Mueller fired, and efforts to encourage witnesses not to cooperate. The president’s lawyers have said Trump’s conduct fell within his constitutional powers, but Mueller’s team deemed the episodes deserving of criminal scrutiny. Mueller reported that Trump had been agitated at the special counsel probe from its earliest days, reacting to Mueller’s appointment by saying it was the “end of his presidency.”

As for the question of whether the Trump campaign had colluded with Russia during the 2016 presidential campaign, Mueller wrote, “While the investigation identified numerous links between individuals with ties to the Russian government and individuals associated with the Trump Campaign, the evidence was not sufficient to support criminal charges.” Mueller also said there wasn’t sufficient evidence to charge any campaign official with working as an unregistered foreign agent of Russia.
CALIFORNIA DISPUTE THREATENS PLAN TO PROTECT COLORADO RIVER

FLAGSTAFF, Ariz. — A dispute between two major California water agencies is threatening to derail a hard-won agreement designed to protect a river that serves 40 million people in the U.S. West.

The Imperial Irrigation District, the largest single recipient of Colorado River water, on Tuesday sued a Los Angeles water utility that agreed to contribute most of California's share of water to a key reservoir under a multistate drought contingency plan. The action came the same day President Donald Trump approved federal legislation to implement the plan, which Arizona, California, Colorado, Nevada, New Mexico, Utah and Wyoming spent years negotiating. The agreement is meant to keep the country's two largest reservoirs on the Colorado River from dropping so low they cannot deliver water or produce hydropower amid prolonged drought and climate change.

The Imperial Irrigation District said it wouldn't join the drought plan unless it secured $200 million in federal funding to address health and environmental hazards at the Salton Sea, a massive, briny lake southeast of Los Angeles...

HARRIS, BOOKER MISS MOST VOTES OF SENATORS RUNNING IN 2020

WASHINGTON — Kamala Harris and Cory Booker have each missed more than one-fifth of the Senate's votes so far this year as they campaign for president, according to an Associated Press analysis of congressional data. With 16 missed votes of the 77 that the Republican-controlled Senate has held in 2019, Harris and Booker far outpace the number missed by their fellow senators also vying for the Democratic presidential nomination.

Sen. Bernie Sanders has missed seven votes so far this year, while Sens. Kirsten Gillibrand and Amy Klobuchar have each missed three and Sen. Elizabeth Warren has missed one vote, AP found. Seeking the presidency as a sitting member of Congress requires a logistical juggling act that often results in candidates taking hits for missed votes as the pace of campaign season picks up to a whirlwind. Perhaps the most notable recent example is Florida Sen. Marco Rubio, who...
PARIS — Notre Dame Cathedral would have burned to the ground in a "chain-reaction collapse" had firefighters not moved as rapidly as they did to battle the blaze racing through the beloved landmark building, a French government official said Wednesday. The firefighters acted aggressively to protect wooden supports in the twin medieval bell towers from the flames, averting a bigger catastrophe, said José Vaz de Matos, a fire expert with France's Culture Ministry.

"If the fire reached this wooden structure, the bell tower would have been lost," de Matos said at a news conference. "From the moment we lose the war of the bell towers, we lose the cathedral, because it's a chain-reaction collapse."

Monday's fire destroyed most of the lead roof of the 950-year-old architectural treasure and caused its spire, which was added in the 19th century, to collapse. An initial fire alert was sounded at 6:20 p.m., as a Mass was underway in the cathedral, but no fire was found. The second alert was sounded at 6:43 p.m., and the blaze was discovered on the roof. No one was killed in the fire, as firefighters and church officials speedily evacuated those inside.

Firefighters acted bravely and as fast as they could to save the cathedral, said senior firefighter Philippe Demay, denying that there was any delay in their response.

"The end of the fire doesn't mean the edifice is totally saved. The stone can deteriorate when it is exposed to high temperatures and change its mineral composition and fracture inside."

— French conservation architect Pierluigi Pericolo

Cathedral is Being Monitored Closely by Firefighters Despite extensive damage, many of the cathedral's treasures were saved, including Notre Dame's famous rose windows, although they are not out of danger. Paris Firefighters' spokesman Lt.-Col. Gabriel Plus said that even though they are "in good condition ... the risk for the gables that are no longer supported by the frame." Firefighters removed statues inside the gables, or support walls, above the rose windows to protect them, and took care not to spray water too hard on the delicate stained glass, Plus said. Olding erected for a renovation of the spire and roof that was already underway must be properly removed because of its weight and because it is now "structurally deformed," he added.

The cathedral is still being monitored closely by firefighters and experts to determine how much damage the structure suffered and what needs to be dismantled to avoid collapse. "The experts are scrutinizing the whole of the cathedral, part by part, to identify what is weakened, what will need to be dismantled or consolidated," Plus said.

Nearly $1 billion has pledged for the restoration, while a vow by French President Emmanuel Macron to finish it in five years has been challenged as being wildly off track. He said the renovations would be completed in time for the 2024 Olympics in Paris.

Macron's Ambitious Goal Appears Insufficient "We will rebuild the cathedral to be even more beautiful, and I want it to be finished within five years," Macron said. Experts have said, however, that Macron's ambitious goal appears insufficient for such a massive operation. Even Prime Minister Edouard Philippe, while supporting the government's line, acknowledged Wednesday that it would be difficult. "This is obviously an immense challenge, a historic responsibility," Philippe said in an address. Prominent French conservation architect Pierluigi Pericolo told Le Monde magazine it...
TRUMP VETOES MEASURE TO END US INVOLVEMENT IN YEMEN WAR

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump on Tuesday vetoed a bill passed by Congress to end U.S. military assistance in Saudi Arabia’s war in Yemen. In a break with the president, Congress voted for the first time earlier this month to invoke the War Powers Resolution to try to stop U.S. involvement in a foreign conflict. The veto — the second in Trump’s presidency — was expected. Congress lacks the votes to override him. “This resolution is an unnecessary, dangerous attempt to weaken my constitutional authorities, endangering the lives of American citizens and brave service members, both today and in the future,” Trump wrote in explaining his veto.

Congress Uneasy With Saudi Arabia Relationship

Congress has grown uneasy with Trump’s close relationship with Saudi Arabia as he tries to further isolate Iran, a regional rival. Many lawmakers also criticized the president for not condemning Saudi Arabia for the killing of Jamal Khashoggi, a Saudi who lived in the United States and had written critically about the kingdom. Khashoggi went into the Saudi consulate in Istanbul last October and never came out...

N. KOREA TESTED NEW WEAPON, WANTS POMPEO OUT OF TALKS

SEOUL, South Korea — North Korea said Thursday that it had test-fired a new type of “tactical guided weapon,” its first such test in nearly half a year, and demanded that Washington remove Secretary of State Mike Pompeo from nuclear negotiations. The test, which didn’t appear to be of a banned mid- or long-range ballistic missile that could scuttle talks, was to show its people it is pushing ahead with weapons development while also reassuring domestic military officials worried that diplomacy with Washington signals weakness.

Separately, the North Korean Foreign Ministry accused Pompeo of playing down the significance of comments by leader Kim Jong Un, who said last week that Washington has until the end of the year to offer mutually acceptable terms for an agreement to salvage the high-stakes nuclear diplomacy. Both the demand for Pompeo’s removal from the talks and the weapon test point to North Korea’s displeasure...

Joshua Yuengard

PRO-EQUALITY GROUP: ISRAEL QUESTIONS US ACTIVIST AT AIRPORT

JERUSALEM — Israeli authorities extensively interrogated a Jewish American activist living the country about her work with a non-profit organization, the group said Tuesday. Israel has come under scrutiny in the past for detaining and interrogating pro-Palestinian activists and prominent critics of its borders, but the Abraham Initiatives called this the first time an advocate of “shared society” between Arabs and Jews inside Israel had been targeted.

The Abraham Initiatives activist Laura Mandel was arriving home to San Francisco after a conference for the group when security officers at Israel’s Ben Gurion Airport pulled her aside for questioning about her involvement with the organization, which aims to advance the rights of Israel’s Arab citizens and work closely with state agencies and government ministries. Mandel was, by her account, asked about her...