

TOP OF THE NEWS

World/Nation

► **Iraq violence:** At least 61 people are killed in coordinated bombings. **A2**  
 ► **Drug war:** Drug cartel is suspected in massacre of 72 migrants. **A4**  
 ► **Alaska primary:** GOP Sen. Lisa Murkowski is on the verge of becoming the seventh member of Congress ousted this year. **A8**

Sporting Green

► **College football preview:** A look at the prospects for Stanford and Cal in 2010. **B1**

Bay Area

► **Costly episode:** BART's financial costs in the Oscar Grant shooting exceed \$6 million. **C1**  
 ► **Justice approved:** A state panel backs the governor's nominee to lead the state judiciary. **C1**

Business

► **Energized:** State panel OKs first big "solar thermal" power plant in 20 years. **D1**  
 ► **Net Worth:** Poor repayment rate on federal student loans. **D1**

Datebook

► **Oakland vibe:** East Bay culinary movement embraces "scrappy" restaurant design. **E1**

Ovation

► **Rare interview:** Prolific saxophonist John Zorn discusses his craft — sort of. **F1**

96 Hours

► **No fear:** Melissa Etheridge's new album is a fitting backdrop to the same-sex marriage fight. **Page 4**



Lee Suzuki / The Chronicle

Comeback not quite big enough

Andres Torres celebrates after scoring during a six-run eighth inning that lifted the Giants out of a onetime 10-1 hole to an 11-10 lead, but the Reds tied it in the ninth and won it in the 12th. **Sports, B1**

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	R
Reds	4	0	4	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	12
Giants	0	1	0	0	2	2	0	6	0	0	0	0	11

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# San Francisco Chronicle

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WETLANDS RESTORATION



Photos by Lacy Atkins / The Chronicle

Pelicans swim in the central division of the Napa-Sonoma Marshes Wildlife Area, which is vital for wildlife.

## Marsh life begins anew

Salt ponds flooded to bring water to Napa-Sonoma site

By Kelly Zito  
CHRONICLE STAFF WRITER

Scooping up a heaping load of black mud, an excavator ripped through a 100-year old earthen barrier between the Napa River and a 1,400-acre swath of former salt ponds Wednesday afternoon, marking the final step in one of the largest wetlands restoration projects in U.S. history.

Several years from now, migratory birds, native grasses, salmon and steelhead are expected to ply the briny marshes, along with human visitors drawn to its hiking trails, duck stands and boating channels, experts say.

On Wednesday, scores of planners, politicians, environmentalists and biologists gathered on a

*Wetlands continues on A14*



Amphibious excavators breach the levees to bring the Napa River flowing into the large salt pond near American Canyon.

## S.F. couple accused of bilking schools

Fraudulent bills for autism care allegedly \$400,000

By Jaxon Van Derbeken  
CHRONICLE STAFF WRITER

A former partner at a well-known law firm and his marketing consultant wife were arrested Wednesday on felony charges of bilking the San Francisco school district and private insurers out of about \$400,000 via fraudulent bills for treatment of their autistic son, officials say.

The San Francisco couple, Jonathan S. Dickstein and Barclay J. Lynn, both 43, surrendered Wednesday and are expected to appear in court this morning for arraignment on 30 counts of fraud, theft and conspiracy, authorities say.

They were briefly jailed Wednesday on \$100,000 bail each but were released on bond.

"This was an elaborate  
*Lawyer continues on A10*

"The parents weren't allowing the district personnel to talk to the service providers."

Gentle Blythe,  
S.F. school district spokeswoman

CAMPAIGN 2010 Governor's Race

## Brown moves from the phones to microphones

By Carla Marinucci and Joe Garofoli  
CHRONICLE POLITICAL WRITERS

SANTA ROSA — After months of sparse appearances and skinflint spending, Democrat Jerry Brown was in Santa Rosa for a campaign rally Wednesday, even as GOP candidate Meg Whitman suggested that President Obama's recent endorsement of the state attorney general means that the president is "very worried about what's going to happen in California."

Brown, who is locked in a dead heat with Whitman, visited Santa Rosa on Wednesday for the rally and two fundraisers, signaling that he is preparing to go to the mat in what is expected to be a combative and expensive finale to the governor's race.

TELECOMMUNICATIONS

## Google offers Gmail-linked phone calls

By James Temple  
CHRONICLE STAFF WRITER

Google Inc. offered consumers another reason to ditch their traditional landlines Wednesday by unveiling a service that lets them make free phone calls through its popular e-mail program.

The Mountain View search giant is allowing U.S. consumers to make free phone calls through

How the service works

Google's new unnamed service allows users to initiate telephone calls within Gmail, the company's Web-based e-mail program.

► Calls are initiated by clicking the "Call phone" option within Gmail's chat tool.

► A pop-up dial box allows

► Communications go through the computer's microphone and speaker.

► Voice mails can be transcribed as e-mails and texts.

FROM THE COVER



Lacy Atkins / The Chronicle

Sandpipers dine in the central division of the Napa Sonoma Marshes Wildlife Area near American Canyon, site of one of the largest wetlands restoration jobs.

# Marsh restoration comes full-circle

Wetlands from page A1

hillock near American Canyon to christen the last piece of the Napa-Sonoma Marshes Wildlife Area Restoration Project, a \$25 million, decadeslong effort to re-establish a thriving tidal plain amid what had been vast salt evaporation facilities operated by agri-business giant Cargill.

Since the early 1990s, about 5,000 acres has been restored under the auspices of the California Department of Fish and Game, Ducks Unlimited, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, and other groups.

**The last piece**

Work now begins on the remaining 1,400 acres — a series of shallow, ashy pits near Route 29 that stretch west to the Napa River.

“We will have this wonderful mosaic of wildlife areas for both state and federally listed species — and it’s a refuge for people,” Chuck Armor, regional manager with the California Department of Fish and Game, said Wednesday. “The generations that follow us will be very grateful for what we have done here.”

Wetlands around the country are resuming their natural contours, thanks to a surge in federal restoration funds and a growing understanding of their importance to ecosystems. Not only do marshes provide a lush habitat for fish and fowl, they act as natural water filtration systems and create buffer zones against rising seas.

They also offer an economic



**Wetlands restoration**

On Wednesday, engineers broke through a levee on the 1,400-acre Green Island, allowing the Napa River to flood former salt ponds. It was the final phase of a \$25 million project to restore more than 6,000 acres of wetlands.

Sources: Ducks Unlimited; ESRI

Todd Trumbull / The Chronicle

boost in the form of hunting, fishing, kayaking, bird-watching and other recreational activities.

“Our coasts are incredibly important to our nation’s bottom line,” said Larry Robinson, deputy administrator for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. “By protecting the health of the coast, we project jobs.”

The 1,400-acre chunk of land near the confluence of San Pablo Bay and the Napa River — also known as Green Island — has now come full-circle.

Originally a tidal wetland

teeming with life, it was sectioned off and cultivated by hay and oat farmers beginning in the Gold Rush days. In the 1950s, the Leslie Salt Co. acquired the land, along with 10,000 acres on the west side of the river. Cargill, of Minneapolis, later purchased Leslie Salt. For decades, the company produced a quarter-million tons of low-grade salt there annually for chemical companies and, later, for road de-icing operations in Canada.

Regulatory pressures and changes in the salt business prompted the company to transfer the 10,000 acres on the



Ducks Unlimited regional engineer Austin Payne inspects the project, which has been aided by a surge in federal funds.

west side of the river to the state in the 1990s; it decided Green Island to California in 2003. All told, the company has handed over about 40,000 acres in the region to various communities and resource agencies. Its remaining Bay Area salt operation employs 250 and covers 12,000 acres in Newark.

**The final push**

After Cargill’s donation of the Napa River land, conservation groups, private foundations, and state and federal agencies joined forces to raise funds for its rehabilitation. But it wasn’t until an infusion of stimulus money from the Obama administration that the project pushed into its final phase.

Wednesday’s levee breach added a dramatic flourish to the project’s progress. In coming weeks, engineers will breach the levee in two other spots, and scientists will monitor how

quickly the river waters dissolve the salt flats. The Napa River eventually will swamp many of the levees, quietly burying the chalky salt beds and carving new channels through the reeds. Within a year or two, officials say, the public will be permitted to wander the wetland’s waterways and byways.

The restoration reverses just a tiny portion of the 92 percent of Bay Area wetlands lost to development and industry, according to Rep. Mike Thompson, D-St. Helena. But it is something.

“We can’t unring the bell, but we can make some important improvements,” Thompson said. “With climate change upon us, our efforts have never been as important as they are now.”

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# Brown campaign moves from phones to microphones

Brown from page A1

since the Democratic primary in June. Until the past week, when he doubled the number, he had done five fundraisers. On Thursday, he will tour a biofuels facility in San Diego. He has spent most of his summer on the phone, trying to raise money from donors to be able to compete with the \$104 million Whitman has donated to her campaign.

Wednesday evening, there was the feeling of a community festival, with hundreds of people lining up to get in an hour

been around the bend, but he’s for the people.”

During the rally, Brown used humor and took some pointed political jabs at Whitman, who has dropped an avalanche of attack ads on him in recent weeks.

“I’m not going to point a finger,” he said, “but ever since I left the governorship, we’ve been having trouble in this state.”

**Experience is golden**

Brown argued that Whitman’s plans are empty and that because of his long experience

behalf.

The California Nurses Association and a number of labor groups plan a big rally in Sacramento today, which they say could be the largest of the state’s election season. They promise to bring 3,000 people to the Capitol to needle Whitman on the 90th anniversary of the enactment of the 19th Amendment, which gave women the right to vote. The Republican candidate has described her own voting record as “atrocious.” Whitman has acknowledged voting only rarely in the

peal underscores the importance the White House attaches to the race. A win by Whitman, the former CEO of eBay, would not only be a blow to Democrats in blue-leaning California, where they control both houses of the state Legislature, but it would complicate enormously the 2012 presidential election map for Obama by forcing him to spend more time and resources here.

Whitman, in an interview with television station KTVU on Wednesday, said Obama’s fundraising for Brown signals

she said.

Whitman campaign spokeswoman Andrea Jones Rivera said Brown’s decision to emerge on the campaign trail could have an impact.

“Because he hasn’t done anything in public, he hasn’t had to answer questions about what he feels about the Democrats’ tax proposals in the Legislature, or the Bush tax cuts and the repealing of the estate tax ... and he still hasn’t released documents relating to his state pension,” Jones Rivera said. “He keeps calling for hon-