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Business briefs

12/06/07 22:19:29

Hotel formerly Hilton set to open as Holiday Inn after renovation

The former Hilton Hotel in downtown Fresno is set to reopen March 1 as a Holiday Inn after a \$5.5 million renovation, managers of the project said Thursday.

The renovation includes a refit of the building's infrastructure, new furniture and amenities for the hotel's 200 rooms and a renovation of the 1,600-square-foot Skyroom, said Michael Goldstein, president and chief executive of San Diego-based Packard Hospitality Group.

"We've taken this wonderfully constructed building and tried to maintain its integrity, but we've brought it up to Holiday Inn's 2008 standards," Goldstein said.

The nine-story hotel at 1055 Van Ness Ave. was bought by New York-based McSam Hotel Group last year for about \$5.5 million.

Parlier power plant under review

The California Energy Commission will begin examining whether to license a power plant near Parlier.

The 12-month review process was approved by the commission Wednesday when members determined there was enough information to move ahead with a licensing review.

Part of the process will be to ensure that the plant will meet California Environmental Quality Act requirements.

The review will trigger public hearings beginning in 2008 to examine whether the plant should be approved and under what conditions it should operate if it is supported by commission members.

Fresno Co. rancher award finalist

Jack Varian, who raises cattle in Monterey and Fresno counties, was among finalists for this year's Leopold Conservation Award from the Sand County Foundation, California Farm Bureau Federation and Sustainable Conservation.

Winner was Craig McNamara, who has a diversified farming operation in Yolo County. The awards honor environmental stewardship.

Varian and his family have been raising cattle on 17,000 acres of his V6 ranch for nearly 50 years.

To prevent erosion and support wildlife, he planted hundreds of willow and cottonwood trees along the creek that runs through the ranch.

His system of rotating cattle through 50 pastures keeps the grass and the cattle healthy. To share their passion and expertise, Varian and his wife, Zera, hold public cattle drives, roundups and ecological tours.

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