

The Carmel Pine Cone

Volume 99 No. 47

On the Internet: www.carmelpinecone.com

November 22-28, 2013

TRUSTED BY LOCALS AND LOVED BY VISITORS SINCE 1915

A hit with hikers, underfunded loop trail is crumbling

By CHRIS COUNTS

ONE OF Big Sur's most popular hiking trails is badly in need of a makeover, but there's no money to fix it.

About seven miles south of Carmel along Highway 1 at Garrapata State Park, the Rocky Ridge and Soberanes

Canyon trails merge to create a seven-mile loop that's become a magnet for hikers.

But gravity and the elements have taken a toll on the path, which in many places is simply too steep. As a result, erosion has created conditions some say are dangerous.

According to Austin Keegan — who heads up an informal group of park volunteers who call themselves Friends of Garrapata — the trail saw a dramatic increase in use after the 2009 Basin Complex Fire closed much of the Big Sur backcountry to hikers. He estimates it receives three times the number of hikers today as it did before the fire.

"But there's been no maintenance on the trail and it's falling apart," he told The Pine Cone.

A park official agrees the trail is in rough shape — and at the same time, is getting more attention from the public than ever.

"The trail is the elephant in the room when it comes to safety, popularity and funding," said Matt Fuzie, Monterey district superintendent for California State Parks. "It's not safe and we don't have the ability to make it safe."

Fuzie said fixing the entire trail would be "a multi-million dollar project."

See **TRAIL** page 12A

Hundreds rally to fight outbreak of burglaries in C.V.

By MARY SCHLEY

PEOPLE STOOD four deep at the back and spilled out the doors of the Tularcitos School gym at a community meeting Wednesday night, hoping to learn from Monterey County Sheriff Scott Miller about how to stop an unprecedented outbreak of break-ins that has seen 29 homes and cars burglarized in Carmel Valley since Oct. 1.

Many of the break-ins have involved unlocked doors or open windows, and have occurred during the daytime hours, with thieves stealing electronics, jewelry and other valuables. A Paso Cresta resident returned home Wednesday evening to find her computers had been stolen, and another on Brookdale reported an iPad was taken. Thieves smashed a sliding-glass door to a home near Bernardus late last month during the daytime hours and stole jewelry.

See **CRIME** page 25A

Family aims to honor entrepreneur's vision

By CHRIS COUNTS

BEFORE HE died four months ago, Scot McKay put his individual stamp on four prominent local businesses, and today his family says it will continue to run those businesses in a way that honors his vision for each of them.

McKay — who died July 10 at 59 from brain cancer — purchased the radio station KRML, the Carmel Valley Athletic Club and Gardener Ranch after he moved to Carmel Valley in 2003. He also opened Refuge spa at the athletic club. Together, the four businesses employ more than 100 people.

Adam Tight, who served as the entrepreneur's "right-hand man" for nine years, told The Pine Cone the businesses are now owned by a series of trusts controlled by the family. While McKay's widow, Heidi, has a role in overseeing the businesses, and several of his children are employed by them,

See **McKAY** page 26A

Despite lack of rain, water use continues to decline

By KELLY NIX

ALTHOUGH 2013 is shaping up to be the driest year on record on the Monterey Peninsula, water use among residents and businesses has been below target, according to the Monterey Peninsula Water Management District.

Including the storm that hit this week, the City of Monterey has only had 4.18 inches of rain since Jan. 1, according to the National Weather Service, which collects rainfall totals from a city resident who monitors precipitation. That's compared to 8.95 inches of rain for all of 1953, previously the driest on record.

"So far, we are on track for the driest year," Austin Cross, a meteorologist for the National Weather Service in Monterey, told The Pine Cone Wednesday.

Monterey rainfall records date to 1949, not nearly as long ago as the beginning of record keeping in cities such as San Francisco, which began tracking totals more than 160 years

ago. That city has also received just a little more than four inches of rain to date this year.

The dry weather this year has worried California fire officials, who have fought thousands more fires than usual throughout the state, according to the California Department of Forestry.

If there's any good news, the Monterey Peninsula Water Management District reported this week that water usage for the Peninsula is less than had been expected for the beginning of the new water year, which runs Oct. 1 through Sept. 30, 2014.

The district anticipated that the Peninsula would use about 1,260 acre-feet, or about 411 million gallons, in October. But total use amounted to only 1,045 acre-feet, or 341 million gallons, for the month.

Consumption for the 2012/2013 water year that conclud-

See **WATER** page 24A

P.G. council backs residents' concerns about P.B. housing project

By KELLY NIX

THE PACIFIC Grove City Council Wednesday night voted to side with residents in the Del Monte Park area who oppose the Pebble Beach Co.'s proposal to build affordable housing near that neighborhood.

The council unanimously decided to send a letter written by councilmen Ken Cuneo and Dan Miller to the P.B. Co. asking the company to put forward a list of other sites it had considered for the project and disclose why the Del Monte Park neighborhood was the preferred location. They will also meet with P.B. Co. officials.

"We are concerned that the project will have a harmful impact upon a significant number of our citizens," Cuneo and Miller wrote.

They also indicated they believe "at least 25 percent" of the residents of Pacific Grove would be damaged by the proposed development — a number Miller claimed was justified because of the apartment buildings in the area.

The letter, which will also be sent to the Monterey County Board of Supervisors and the county planning commission, echoes concerns by some residents and a group called Del

Monte Neighbors United, which submitted a letter to the city saying the project should not be built in their backyards.

Their worries are that the 24-unit apartment complex will increase traffic and noise and cause property values to drop.

The Monterey County Board of Supervisors, when it approved the Pebble Beach Co.'s overall development plan in 2012, recommended the affordable housing project be built inside Del Monte Forest. But the group contends the 24-unit project is inappropriate for the area and that the company should have chosen another site within the forest.

Pebble Beach "is proposing a high-density apartment complex in an area zoned medium density residential — four units per acre," according to the group's letter.

While some Pacific Grove residents are opposed to the affordable housing plan, it has also received support from several environmental groups, such as LandWatch Monterey County and the League of Women Voters of Monterey County. It's also garnered endorsements by major newspapers on the Monterey

See **PROJECT** page 24A

Dramatic fire closes restaurant

A POT bubbled over at Peppers Mexicali Cafe in Pacific Grove Saturday morning, catching the stovetop on fire and spreading into the hood and flue, according to Monterey Fire inspector David Reade. "The pot over-boiled with butter and oil, and the stove caught on fire, which caused a flue fire," he said. "There was very little damage to the interior." But since the fire got up into the flue, firefighters had to cut a hole in it in order to extinguish it, according to Reade. "There was no structural damage," he said Wednesday. "They were just cleaning it up yesterday. They have to replace all of the equipment."

PHOTO/COURTESY DAVID READE

