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Farr says 'No on O'

By KELLY NIX

THOUGH HE seldom weighs in on local water issues, Congressman Sam Farr issued a strong message this week opposing a June 3 ballot measure that ultimately seeks a government takeover of the Monterey Peninsula's water system.

In a commentary in the Monterey Herald this week, Farr outlined his concerns with Measure O, which would require the Monterey Peninsula Water Management District to study a Cal Am takeover and then carry out the takeover if the study determined it would lower customers' water bills. In the 415-word opinion piece, Farr called Measure O an unnecessary "diversionary tactic" that has been successful in shifting attention away from a new water supply project that's desperately needed for the Peninsula.

Measure O "asks a publicly elected water management board to study public acquisition of a private water utility company (Cal Am)," Farr said. "You don't need an election to have the water board study this proposal. They have the legal authority to do that."

The study called for by Measure O would likely cost Peninsula water customers between \$400,000 to \$600,000, according to water district general manager Dave Stoldt. In 2005, voters soundly rejected a ballot measure also seeking a buy-out Cal Am, and in 2011 water district board voted against pursuing a takeover on its own.

'A delay tactic'

In the commentary, Farr said it's taken local politicians 36 years — since the creation of the Monterey Peninsula Water Management District in 1978 — to agree to a multifaceted water plan.

"This is great news," he said. However, "Measure O is a delay tactic to stop that agreement."

Farr joins Carmel Mayor Jason Burnett and the five other Peninsula mayors, four Monterey County supervisors and numerous groups, organizations and other elected officials in opposing the measure. They contend its passage could derail development of a proposed water project for the Peninsula that includes a Marina desalination plant, water storage facil-

CHARGES AWAIT LAB TESTS IN C.V. PEDESTRIAN FATAL

By MARY SCHLEY

THE CARMEL Valley woman arrested March 8 on suspicion of drunk driving and killing her friend, Kate Thomas, who was walking on Esquiline Road in the middle of the night, has yet to be charged with any crime. Breezie Snyder, 28 at the time of her arrest, and 25-year-old Thomas had both been drinking at the Running Iron earlier that night, authorities said at the time, and Thomas was walking home around 2 a.m. when Snyder, driving a Toyota Highlander, struck her.

"We're still waiting on toxicology from the Department of Justice," Monterey County Managing Deputy District Attorney Ed Hazel told The Pine Cone Monday. While investigators already have information regarding the woman's blood-alcohol content, they are waiting to see if she had drugs in her system. The victim's toxicology tests are also pending.

"It's basically for a number of different items — prescription and nonprescription stuff," he said. "And depending on the workload at the lab in Sacramento, that takes awhile."

Hazel said the California Highway Patrol is still investigating the collision, including undertaking basic accident reconstruction. At the time, CHP public information officer Jaime Rios reported there was no sign of braking on the road, and officers were unsure where Thomas was walking when she was hit.

In addition, interviews with witnesses are still under way, according to Hazel, who said the district attorney's DUI inves-

PLUMBING WORK LEADS TO HOUSE FIRE



PHOTO/DIANE SINGER

Firefighters cut through the roof of a home at Monte Verde and Ninth Wednesday night to battle the flames. "This is very dangerous work that these men made look easy," said Monterey Fire Division Chief Stewart Roth. See the story on page 10A.

ities and a recycled water project.

Sen. Bill Monning, who helped author public financing legislation to lower the cost of Cal Am's proposed desal plant by as much as \$90 million, will not be taking a stance on Measure O, according to spokesman Bruce Van Allen.

"He feels it's up to the local voters to decide on Measure O," Van Allen said.

Public Water Now leader Ron Cohen told The Pine Cone Thursday that the group is disappointed in Farr's commen-

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tigator, Terri Edwards, is handling the case.

"There are also some witnesses that are out there that probably don't know what we're looking into," he said. "We're trying to schedule some surprise interviews."

Meanwhile, Snyder is out on bail and has yet to be arraigned, since no formal charges have been brought against her.

"I can't say a whole lot, because it's still under investigation," he said, speculating that a decision about how to proceed with the case could be forthcoming in a month or so.

Regarding the time it takes to file formal charges in such

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Loved by some, hated by others, beavers are back

By CHRIS COUNTS

ACCORDING TO those who extoll their virtues, beavers and the dams they build offer rivers drought protection, improve water quality, reduce the risk of flooding, maintain flows, support biodiversity and even benefit steelhead. And, as an added bonus, they're undeniably cute. So why isn't anybody lobbying to bring beavers to the coastal watersheds of Monterey County, where they may have once thrived?

In Oregon and Washington, government agencies are working with conservationists to reintroduce beavers in an effort to boost populations of coho salmon. In Utah, a similar partnership has returned beavers to many streams. But in California — a state famous for its strict environmental policies — beavers are treated more like pests than the heroes their supporters say

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Collins sentenced to jail, probation

By KELLY NIX

BEFORE A judge sentenced former county water board director Steve Collins to 270 days in jail Thursday for overbilling a Castroville artichoke grower and for illegal conflicts of interest over the regional water project, he told Collins that even "good people do illegal things."

Monterey County Superior Court Judge Robert O'Farrell sentenced Collins to jail, three years' probation and ordered him to pay nearly \$90,000 to his former employer, Ocean Mist Farms. Collins must surrender to law enforcement officials in about six weeks, though he may apply for home confinement through the county probation department in lieu of jail.

Though O'Farrell cited Collins' lack of criminal record and the positive letters he received about Collins' character from his family and friends, O'Farrell told Collins, "You have made some mistakes here, that's for sure." He also said that "Even basically good people do illegal things. That's not that novel."

On March 18, Collins pleaded no contest — the same as a guilty plea — to a felony count of violating government code section 1090, which precludes public officials from being financially interested in any contract made by them in their official capacity, and a felony count of grand theft by false pretenses for overbilling Ocean Mist Farms more than \$89,000 for meetings he did not attend or which did not even take place. Collins had originally been charged with more than 40 criminal counts.

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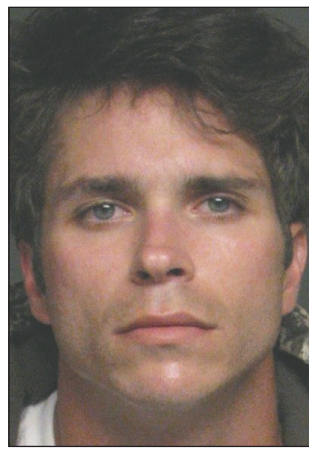
Burglary suspect still in jail as cops sort through loot

By MARY SCHLEY

RYAN SCULLY, the 27-year-old Fisher Place resident arrested earlier this month on suspicion of possessing heroin and committing multiple burglaries in the City of Carmel and throughout the Monterey Peninsula, was set to appear in court this week. But his preliminary hearing was delayed to June 26, and investigators with the Monterey County Sheriff's Office and Carmel P.D. are still working to determine which break-ins he committed among the dozens that have occurred in recent months.

At the time of his arrest, Scully was suspected of breaking into eight homes in Carmel and three outside the city limits, though those numbers could climb after officers finish combing through hundreds of stolen items found at the house he shares with his mother, Tammy Argust. Police said Scully entered the victims' homes through unlocked doors or windows and took things he could carry, such as jewelry and money.

"Scully has been linked to four of our burglaries, through either property possession or his own admission. We are still working with the DA's office on several more burglaries that we believe he may be responsible for," CPD Cmdr. Paul Tomasi said Wednesday. "We have had some victims come forward and identify their property that the sheriff's department took possession of at the res-



Ryan Scully

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Kate Thomas