



The Carmel Pine Cone

Volume 101 No. 15

On the Internet: www.carmelpinecone.com

April 10-16, 2015

TRUSTED BY LOCALS AND LOVED BY VISITORS SINCE 1915

SLANT WELL SALINITY NOT THERE YET

■ But it's moving in the right direction, Cal Am says

By KELLY NIX

A WEEK after California American Water said its desalination test well in Marina was producing the volume of water it was intended to, the company said Thursday that the facility has completed an important five-day continuous operation of the well, with promising results.

During the test at the Marina site, groundwater levels and salinity values were recorded and collected in each of the project's monitoring wells positioned around the test well, Cal Am said.

"The well ran continuously 24 hours per day at 2,000 gallons per minute for the five days and was flawless in terms of pump and motor performance, well performance, electrical reliability and overall operation," according to a Cal Am press release.

At one of the monitoring wells, Cal Am said the drop in groundwater levels and salinity changes were much better than limits set by the California Coastal Commission. The goal of the roughly \$4 million test well is to produce as much saltwater as possible and to avoid pumping fresh water from inland wells used by farmers and residents of the Salinas Valley.

During the test, the salinity of the shallow monitoring well located between the ocean and the test slant well increased from about 26,000 parts of dissolved minerals per million parts of water to nearly 30,000 parts. Ocean water is about 35,000 parts.

Similarly, Cal Am said, the salinity of the water from the test well itself increased from 23,000 parts before the test, to 26,000 parts at the conclusion of the five-day run.

"Given the large volume of water located within the shallow dunes sand and the relatively small pump volume," the company reported, "these two trends are very positive and

See **DESAL** page 10A

Concours Week events capped at two

By MARY SCHLEY

WITH THE decision of the Pacific Grove Auto Rally to bypass the city rather than pay \$12,386.65 for a permit to drive through town, major Concours Week events held in downtown Carmel dropped to two. And on Monday night, the city council decided it should stay that way.

"Two events in this town during Car Week is enough — I suggest we put a cap on it," councilman Ken Talmage said during the evening's discussion of the city's busiest week of the year, when thousands of people converge on the town's one square mile for the Concours on the Avenue and the Pebble Beach Tour d'Elegance.

At the April 6 meeting, the council also directed Carmel Police Cmdr. Paul Tomasi and community services director

Janet Cabbage to implement several recommendations they and members of the community activities and cultural commission made to improve operations during Concours Week each August.

Specifically, council members decided city staff should:

- identify choke points where parking affects traffic and restrict parking to one side of the street in those areas;

- fence off the Ocean Avenue median so people don't climb through it, and rope off the center median on Junipero, so people don't park in it;

- shuttle downtown workers and spectators to and from the Mission and Larson Field parking lots, which the Diocese of Monterey agreed to make available for a nominal fee;

See **CARS** page 35A

Fire ring plan gets another crucial OK

By MARY SCHLEY

THE PLAN to limit fires on Carmel Beach received official approval Wednesday, when the planning commission OK'd it on a 4-0 vote.

Installation of 26 fire rings on the beach between 10th Avenue and Martin Way — including various designs to see which works best — will now begin next month, according to public services director Sharon Friedrichsen, assuming no one appeals the April 8 vote. The change will end the tradition of casual, spontaneous (and unlimited) fires on Carmel Beach — a tradition that goes back to the city's founding.

While in the past the fire-ring program had been described as a one-year experiment, the plan approved this week will run three to five years.

Friedrichsen said a multiyear approach would allow city staff to evaluate the program and make any necessary adjustments. It would also spread out the costs of the fire rings, estimated at \$800 to \$1,200 apiece.

See **FIRES** page 26A



An example of a metal fire ring being considered for Carmel Beach. Chair not included.

NOAA closes fisheries office

By KELLY NIX

ABOUT FIVE years after the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration installed a set of expensive and controversial light poles in the parking lot of its oceanfront office in Pacific Grove, the building has been vacated.

Beginning last fall, NOAA closed its Southwest Fisheries Science Center laboratory at 1352 Lighthouse Ave. where it has operated for more than 20 years. The last of the NOAA employees recently left the building and have been relocated to offices in Monterey and Santa Cruz. President Barack Obama in February 2012 proposed closing the fisheries office and others to help trim the federal budget.

Now that NOAA is no longer using the structure — which offers scenic views of the Pacific Ocean, the city's golf course and its historic lighthouse — it has teamed up with another federal agency to find new occupants.

"NOAA is now working with the General Services Administration on the next step of transferring the building to a new occupant," NOAA spokesman Michael Milstein told The Pine Cone this week.

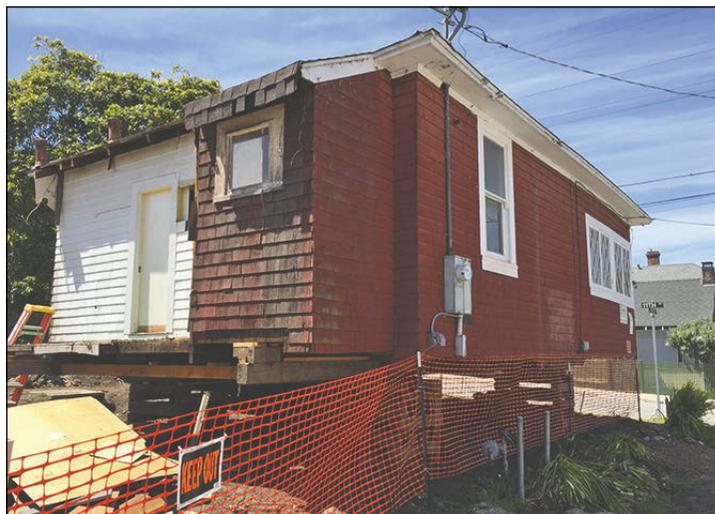
Senior Pacific Grove planner Anastazia Aziz said the city has requested to be on the list of parties interested in using the building. However, P.G. won't have first dibs, since there's a pecking order that the GSA recognizes in deciding who should occupy "surplus" government buildings. In fact, the city may be the last on the list of those considered.

See **NOAA** page 36A

Anger over demolition of Steinbeck's 'writing room'

By KELLY NIX

A LARGE piece of the Pacific Grove house where author John Steinbeck wrote "Of Mice and Men," "Tortilla



PHOTO/KELLY NIX

John Steinbeck's house at 11th Street and Ricketts Row in Pacific Grove is being remodeled, but some residents are upset that the city allowed a portion of the historically important structure to be demolished.

Flat," and numerous other novels and stories has been demolished, and local historians and preservationists are crying foul.

When Steinbeck and his wife, Carol, lived at the modest home at 147 11th St. from 1930 to 1936, he penned those two famous novels and others, such as "In Dubious Battle," "To a God Unknown," and many other stories, according to a historic assessment. The author's father built the house, and both men renovated it throughout the years.

"The house was critical to the inspiration of his work," according to an Oct. 24, 2012, historic report of the home prepared by Pacific Grove architect Elizabeth Moore, who detailed Steinbeck's ties to the house.

So when a group of Steinbeck enthusiasts recently caught wind that the owners of the house — Steinbeck's descendants — demolished nearly 30 percent of the home, and maybe even the very room in which the author wrote some of his best known stories, they were not pleased.

"By allowing the writing room addition to be torn down," P.G. resident and architectural preservationist Sally Aberg told The Pine Cone, "they lost a big piece of the literature tourism potential of Pacific Grove."

See **STEINBECK** page 27A