

# The Carmel Pine Cone

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## CAL AM STRIKES DEAL ON SALINAS VALLEY AQUIFER

By KELLY NIX

A MAJOR obstacle to Cal Am's proposed desalination plant in Marina was removed this week when the water company agreed to sell a portion of the freshwater output of the desal facility to the Castroville water district, which not only helps that city, but frees up water used by farmers in the Salinas Valley.

The agreement, forged between California American Water and the Castroville Community Services District, will allow the agency to purchase as much as 261 million gallons (800 acre-feet) of desalinated water from Cal Am per year for its 2,000 residential, commercial, and industrial customers.

Cal Am's proposed \$400 million desal plant in North Marina will mostly draw seawater, but will also take a small amount from Salinas Valley groundwater — water which must be "made good" to avoid harming the aquifer. To return that water, Cal Am will sell water to Castroville — which has long dealt with saltwater intrusion — at a deeply reduced price. The agreement frees up Salinas Valley groundwater that Castroville pumps for its own water supply.

"We have long recognized that the resolving the return

See **DESAL** page 20A

## Lawsuit charges short-term rental 'discrimination'

### ■ P.B. homeowners challenge county rule

By KELLY NIX

THE OWNERS of a home overlooking the Pebble Beach Golf Links have filed a lawsuit against the county over rules that bar them from using their multimillion-dollar house for short-term rentals.

William and Duncan Lewis say that for years they have rented out their six-bedroom, seven-bath, house on 17 Mile Drive overlooking the 14th Tee of the Pebble Beach Golf Links. A weeklong stay at the 5,600-square-foot house, which offers "breathhtaking panoramic ocean views from every room and every window," costs \$10,850, according to a listing on a rental website.

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## Council taps Rerig for city administrator as two more join race for city council

By MARY SCHLEY

THE CONTRACT isn't written, yet, but the city this week announced the council's top choice for its next head administrator: Chip Rerig, who worked in Carmel's planning department from 1997 to 2003, when he left to be principal planner, and then chief of planning, engineering, and environmental compliance, for the City of Monterey. Rerig will have meetings with employees and the general public this month, and the council is set to consider his contract Feb. 2.

"It's an amazing opportunity, and I am so humbled and honored by it," Rerig told The Pine Cone this week. "It's like coming home."

Affable and approachable, Rerig is passionate about his work, and about serving a community that's been close to his heart ever since he arrived on the Peninsula after obtaining his master's degree in environmental land use planning from Cal Poly San Luis Obispo in 1997. Prior to that, he worked for The Nature Conservancy in Washington, D.C., from 1988 to 1993, and operated a small environmental consulting firm in Santa Barbara from 1993 to 1995.

"I know the Carmel way," he said. "I understand the people in this community, and the importance of the built and natural environments."

Rerig first started talking to city officials about taking on the lead job when former city administrator Doug Schmitz approached him to gauge his interest.

"He asked if I was interested in administration, and I said, 'I love what I do. I love what I do in Monterey,'" he recalled. But the two continued talking, and after Schmitz abruptly retired last October, Mayor Jason Burnett picked up the conversation where it had left off.

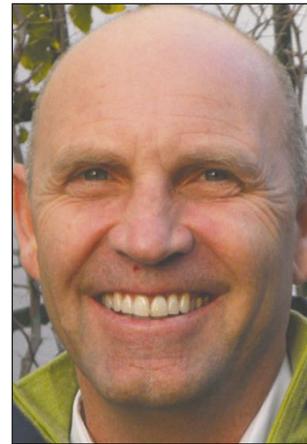
"From there, he thought the rest of the council would like to meet with me, and I met with them individually," Rerig said.

Over the course of several closed-session meetings, the council and Rerig discussed the post, and headhunting firm Ralph Andersen conducted an extensive background check



Chip Rerig

TWO RESIDENTS who are active in the community, operate businesses here and make a point of participating in local government — hotel operator Bobby Richards and gallery owner Richard Kreitman — have entered the race for city council.



Bobby Richards



Richard Kreitman

With their announcements this week, the field grows to five people vying for two council seats, while two councilmen are running for mayor. The election is April 12.

Richards, who works alongside well known businessman Denny LeVett on residential and hotel projects, including as co-owner of the Forest Lodge, is a longtime Monterey Peninsula resident who attended Pacific Grove High School and serves on the city's community activities and cultural commission. Richards said he decided to run for council after receiving encouragement from current and former council members, including Sue McCloud, Paula Hazdovac, Karen Sharp and Gerard Rose.

"These people I really respect — for them to want me to be a leader on the council — I thought maybe I should give back to this community that I love so much," Richards said.

Kreitman, a native of New York, moved to Carmel with his wife, Barbara, from the San Francisco Bay Area 15 years ago, raised two sons here, and is a frequent participant in city government, contributing information and ideas at public meetings.

"By now, though I still feel like a newcomer, I understand what makes us so unique," Kreitman said. "I've attended a lot

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See **COUNCIL** page 18A

## Another year, another emergency — sandbar breached to avert flooding

By CHRIS COUNTS

FOR THE first time since last spring, the Carmel River flowed to the ocean Sunday evening — with a little help from recent rains and Monterey County Public Works.

Just as they have done in for many years, county officials declared an emergency, and with light rain falling, a bulldozer from the public works department cut a channel at the south end of the sandbar Saturday morning. At the time, the water level in the lagoon reached about 11 feet above sea

level.

Late last week, officials said they believed they had four or five days to prepare for the work, but swollen tributaries poured more water into the main stem of the Carmel River than they anticipated, causing minor flooding in the low-lying neighborhood on the north side of the lagoon.

"It caught us a little off guard," said Melanie Beretti, the county's special project manager.

While steelhead advocates prefer the channel to be cut near the north end of the beach, previous attempts to do this have resulted in erosion that has threatened Scenic Road and the parking lot at Carmel River State Beach.

To protect the road and the parking lot, public works usually cuts the channel through the south end of the sandbar and then angles the cut through the beach to the south to make the channel longer so the water will flow more slowly and fewer steelhead will be swept out to sea before they are mature enough to survive in salt water.

But Saturday, public works was forced to

See **LAGOON** page 19A



PHOTOS/CHRIS COUNTS (LEFT), KERRY BELSER (ABOVE)

A bulldozer (left) cuts a channel at the south end of the Carmel River Lagoon sandbar Saturday morning to help the river flow to the sea and protect nearby homes from flooding. When bulldozers cut the channel, the rising water in the lagoon (right) was filling streets and getting close to those homes.

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