For better or worse, Big Sur recovers its solitude

■ Thanks to shuttle and trail, an ‘island’ is just a day trip away

By CHRIS COUNTS

WHEN A popular stretch of Big Sur reopened last week to visitors from the north who were willing to ride a shuttle bus and hike a mile-long trail, I couldn’t resist doing the same.

The trail was built so locals and workers could walk around the site where a new bridge is being constructed along Highway 1 at Pfeiffer Creek. The bridge was demolished in March after the ground below it failed — and since then, the public has been unable to visit Nepenthe restaurant, Esalen, Post Ranch, Ventana Inn and several other Big Sur landmarks.

But that changed July 1 when a shuttle service was launched and tourists were allowed to use a trail that leads around the bridge site, enabling them to gain access to a part of Big Sur that locals have dubbed, “The Island.”

See ISLAND page 19A

■ Mud Creek Slide fix still uncertain

By CHRIS COUNTS

SEVEN WEEKS after Big Sur’s Mud Creek Slide went from bad to really bad — and Highway 1 was buried by an estimated 5 million cubic yards of rock, dirt and debris — officials still can’t say how they plan to clear the scenic route.

The big slide happened May 5, but “we still need several weeks of assessment to come up with the best solution,” Caltrans spokeswoman Susana Cruz told The Pine Cone this week.

The slide, which moved a colossal amount of rock and soil from the mountains to the sea, and added 13 to 15 acres to the California coastline, is located about eight miles north of the San Luis Obispo County line.

For now, Caltrans engineers are using drones, soil samples and even motion-sensing radar to determine if the massive pile of earth is stable.

See SLIDE page 18A

Panetta: Kate’s Law imposes overly harsh penalties

By KEELY NIX

HOURS AFTER Democratic Congressman Jimmy Panetta welcomed 150 immigrants as new United States citizens at a ceremony at CSUMB Monday, he explained why he voted against a GOP bill that imposes harsher penalties for criminal immigrants who continue to cross the border unlawfully.

All but one Republican and two dozen Democrats in the House of Representatives on June 29 voted to approve H.R. 3044, or Kate’s Law, which would punish criminal illegal aliens caught crossing the border after being deported.

But Panetta — a former Monterey County prosecutor who worked to put gang members in prison — voted against the bill.

On Monday, Panetta told The Pine Cone he rejected the legislation because he considers the punishments it would impose for repeatedly breaking the law too extreme.

“I am all for keeping our streets safe and keeping criminals out of our country,” Panetta said at the CSUMB University Center. “But the fact is, if you look at the sentences that range anywhere from two years to 25 years — just for crossing the border — I don’t think it is an appropriate type of law.”

While Panetta explained that “horrific crimes,” like some gang crimes, deserve tough sentences, he said “as an American,” he doesn’t necessarily agree with harsh penalties just for crossing the border.

“Essentially, that’s what that law does,” he said.

Kate’s Law, as written, would fine and/or imprison an immigrant for up to two years if he has previously been deported or denied entry.

The bill calls for up to 10 years in prison and fines or imprisonment for criminal immigrants who continue to cross the border unlawfully.

See PENNETTA page 18A

Mozingo picked to be city attorney

By MARY SCHLEY

AFTER REVIEWING 16 applications and identifying a handful of finalists, council members Carolyn Hardy and Jan Reimers are recommending the city council hire Glen Mozingo as the next city attorney. The two women were put in charge of the picking the new attorney by the rest of the council in February, and the full council is set to vote on their recommendation at its July 11 meeting.

Mozingo emerged as “the preferred candidate that possessed the desired qualifications and experience, and has a track record of being an approachable problem-solver in a variety of environments,” Hardy and Reimers said in the report they jointly prepared for the upcoming meeting.

To arrive at that conclusion, the two analyzed the applicants for their understanding of what the council wants in a city attorney, the person’s accessibility, and whether any potential conflicts of interest would interfere with the attorney’s ability to serve the council. The position is one of the four directly appointed by the council, rather than hired by the city administrator. (The others are city administrator, city treasurer and city engineer.)

Three finalists were invited to speak to the whole council during closed-session meetings, and “the council also determined that Mr. Mozingo had the interpersonal and solution-oriented skill set desired, and extensive experience in the scope of services that will be required by the city,” according to Reimers and Hardy. They did not identify the other finalists.

A resident of Carmel Woods for 27 years and a practicing attorney, Mozingo picked to be city attorney.

See ATTORNEY page 14A

Rescued seal pup dies

By MARY SCHLEY

‘FUREST,’ the Guadalupe fur seal pup rescued from the rocks at Carmel Point last month, died not long after she was picked up by volunteers from the Marine Mammal Center and taken to the nonprofit’s hospital in Sausalito for rehabilitation.

Laura Sherr told The Pine Cone this week. “She was a 10-month-old female, and was extremely emaciated and tiny,” Sherr said. “We’re still waiting for final necropsy results, but it looks like unfortunately the extreme and prolonged emaciation will be the final cause of death.”

Every animal that doesn’t survive to be released back into the wild undergoes a full necropsy at the mammal center, so veterinarians and scientists can learn about the cause and effects of death.

See PUP page 17A

The baby Guadalupe fur seal called Furest failed to recover from “extreme and prolonged emaciation,” and died not long after being rescued last month.

See ISLAND page 19A

The baby Guadalupe fur seal called Furest failed to recover from “extreme and prolonged emaciation,” and died not long after being rescued last month.