

# The Carmel Pine Cone

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## In battle to make neighborhoods fire safe, state takes off gloves

By CHRIS COUNTS

AS PART of Gov. Gavin Newsom's push to speed up fire prevention efforts on an emergency basis to combat the increased threat of wildfire throughout the state, Cal Fire is launching three ambitious vegetation-reduction projects in Monterey County, including one this week.

The effort even includes mobilizing the National Guard.

The scale of the work is far beyond anything that's ever been attempted here — or would have been allowed by state law before the Camp Fire destroyed more than 18,000 structures and killed 85 people five months ago. In response to the Camp Fire and other destructive wildfires — as well as public sentiment — Newsom declared an emergency and issued an executive order in January to fast-track what have been deemed the state's most important fire prevention projects.

Thirty-five projects have been prioritized, including three in Monterey County that will reduce vegetation along more than 100 miles of ridges and roads. Work is set to begin Monday on the first of the three, the Palo Corona-White Rock Fire Roads Project. Two others — the Palo Colorado Fuel Modification Project and the Laurel Springs Fuel Modification Project in Upper Carmel Valley — could start as early as May.

The bulk of the work involves creating wide fuelbreaks, where much of the vegetation is cut until it's just a couple

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## 'My plan was to attract people who had money to invest'

In 1915, Samuel F.B. Morse began liquidating the Pacific Improvement Company's vast real estate holdings. While he continued working for that company for decades, he also took a personal interest in the property the company owned in Monterey County and in 1919, at age 33, he formed Del Monte Properties Company and purchased the nearly 20,000 acres for \$1.3 million. While his employment kept him based in San Francisco until 1924, he immediately brought new management and vision to the Monterey holdings centered around Hotel Del Monte, which had been unprofitable for several years. He also began thinking of ways to make the best use of the beautiful real estate we now call Pebble Beach ....

### PART IV

VERY EARLY in my association with the Pacific Improvement Company and my study of the Monterey Peninsula, I determined that the hotel business was essential to the proper development of the region, and the ultimate objective was the development of the real estate in the area. The hotel was a big one and a delicate operation at best — and we had to make it profitable. However, the main objective always was to bring the right kind of people to

## The Morse memoirs

the Peninsula, and then to interest them in living here.

Mr. H.R. Warner was the manager of Hotel Del Monte. Immediately after I took charge, I went with Mr. Warner through all of the various departments of the hotel. I made one suggestion after another, and it was obvious that none of them appealed to Mr. Warner. When we went back to his office I said, "Mr. Warner, my job is either to make the properties that we own profitable, or to dispose of them." I added, "Apparently you are completely satisfied with this operation. I have either got to close the hotel and tear it down, or sell, if it is possible

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## Commission favors ban on vacation rentals

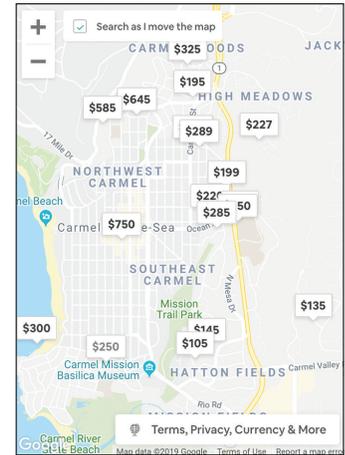
### ■ Expiration date on existing permits?

By MARY SCHLEY

THE PLANNING commission took the predictable step Wednesday of recommending the city council adopt an ordinance banning short-term rentals downtown and in apartment buildings. Renting out single-family homes for less than 30



An upstairs apartment on Dolores Street south of Ocean Avenue (left) is beautiful inside and out — and rents for several hundred dollars a night to vacationers, a practice that may end soon. An Airbnb map shows short-term rentals available in and around town later this month.



days at a time has been illegal in the city for 30 years, but no restrictions exist in the commercial and multifamily-residential districts.

In fact, many property owners didn't even realize short-term rentals were legal downtown until the city started cracking down on illegal rentals and trying to collect business license taxes and transient occupancy taxes from the legal ones. Over the last 14 months, the planning department approved

24 permits for 33 short-term rentals, planning director Marc Wiener told the commission April 10 — many of them in the past few months.

In March, the city council decided vacation rentals downtown are bad for the city, because they can replace long-term rentals, which bring in far less money and can therefore be more affordable for people who live and work in town. Wiener

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## BEACH FIRES TARGETED FOR EVEN MORE RESTRICTIONS

By MARY SCHLEY

WOOD FIRES on Carmel Beach — a century-old tradition allowed with few restrictions until three years ago — may be going the way of the dinosaurs. On Wednesday, the planning commission voted 4-1 to recommend that the city council forbid them altogether and allow only propane-fueled fires for a year.

Following a busy summer in 2015 when hundreds of wood fires filled the beach and generated smoke many found intolerable, the city council banned wood fires except in a handful of city-owned pits south of 10th Avenue. The council also decided to allow propane fires as long as they're 25 feet from the bluffs. The program was implemented in 2016 and later extended to 2020.

But at this week's hearing, the usual anti-beach-fire crowd lined up to testify and also sent letters asking for a ban on wood fires. While aesthetics are no longer an issue, since the sand is white again with the elimination of burning directly on the ground, they said wood smoke still threatens the health and safety of nearby residents and those who visit the beach.

In his April 10 report, planning director Marc Wiener said results from three air monitors installed near the beach show

the average amounts of particulate matter in the air from wood fires are well below what's considered dangerous.

But any smoke at all could be deadly, according to Scenic Road resident Christy Hollenbeck. "The fine particulates and toxins we are being forced to breathe are well known to raise blood pressure, trigger heart attacks, stroke, asthma attacks, breathing problems, headaches, premature aging, cancer, birth

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PHOTO/KATHY BANG

Charcoal, burned soda cans — and even a fire extinguisher — littered the beach in 2015, when unlimited wood fires were allowed. Planning commissioners want only propane fires used there now.

## Two more arrested in murder of doctor

### ■ Model faces new criminal charge

By KELLY NIX

TWO ADDITIONAL suspects, including a former Caesars Palace casino worker, have been charged with killing Community Hospital of the Monterey Peninsula psychiatrist Thomas Burchard, whose body was found stuffed in trunk of a Mercedes on the outskirts of Las Vegas last month. He was beaten to death.

On March 7, Las Vegas Metropolitan Police officers investigating an abandoned vehicle discovered the body of Burchard, 71, in a 2017 Mercedes C300 owned by former Salinas resident Kelsey Turner, 25, a model Burchard was helping financially.

Two weeks later, Turner was arrested in Stockton and charged by Nevada prosecutors with murder.

Police now say Turner had help. On April 5, Clark County, Nevada authorities issued arrest warrants for Diana Nicole

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## Guilty plea in DUI death

By MARY SCHLEY

THE CARMEL teenager who drove drunk and crashed on Carmel Valley Road last July, killing her 16-year-old passenger and seriously injuring the woman driving the car she hit, pleaded guilty in a Salinas courtroom Tuesday to one count of vehicular manslaughter while under the influence and one count of driving under the influence causing injury, according to Monterey County deputy district attorney Meredith Sillman. Margot McNally, 18, will be sentenced next month to an agreed-upon four years in state prison.

In front of Monterey County Superior Court Judge Carrie Panetta April 9, McNally admitted to killing Carmel High classmate Anabelle Vandenbroucke and causing serious injury to Carmel Valley resident Sarah Coleman.

On July 12, 2018, Sillman said, McNally and Vanden-

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