

# The Carmel Pine Cone

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## Land trust buys Highway 68 ranch for \$14M

■ Was slated for housing project

By CHRIS COUNTS

ONCE PROPOSED as a site for 185 luxury homes and long targeted by environmentalists for conservation, 866 acres of the Ferrini Ranch on Highway 68 between Monterey and Salinas have been purchased by the Trust for Public Land and Big Sur Land Trust for \$14 million, the trust announced Dec. 19.

For now, the property will be set aside as open space, but public access could one day be offered. The Trust for Public Land plans to sell the land to Big Sur Land Trust once funding is acquired, and the two groups are working together to explore obtaining taxpayers' grants and private donations.

The deal prevents more than 80 percent of the ranch's 1,062 acres from being developed. Conservation easements were previously placed on 180 acres.

### Patchwork of properties

Located south of Highway 68 between San Benancio and River roads, the ranch features grazing land for cattle, a 68-acre strawberry farm and several buildings, along with many acres of oaks, grasslands and chaparral. Just as they have done for several generations, the Violini family will continue to graze cattle on the land, and

strawberries will still be grown.

The purchase of the ranch is just the latest move in an effort by environmental groups to preserve a patchwork of properties that allow for the safe movement of wildlife through natural or man-made corridors. In fact, the only

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PHOTO/TERESA FRAHM

Trust for Public Land and Big Sur Land Trust officials go for a hike at the Ferrini Ranch. The two groups are working together to conserve the land.

## Shovels deployed to breach Carmel River sandbar

By CHRIS COUNTS

TO LOWER the risk of homes flooding around the Carmel River Lagoon, county workers used shovels Tuesday to reestablish a pilot channel through the lagoon sandbar, making it easier for the rising water to flow out to sea. They created a channel just like it two days earlier, but heavy surf undid their efforts.

"High tides closed up the channel over the last few days," the county reported Tuesday. "Crews had to wait out the dangerous surf this morning before hand-digging the channel again so the river can flow to the ocean."

County spokesperson Maia Carroll told The Pine Cone Thursday morning that the channel was holding up fine, and water was flowing out to sea.

The county had sent out word warning of "very

hazardous beach conditions" through Tuesday. To prepare for the threat, the county and the City of Carmel temporarily closed Scenic Road from Santa Lucia Avenue around Carmel Point to Carmel River State Beach, along with several other nearby streets.

### 30-foot waves

The National Weather Service issued high surf and coastal flood warnings last weekend. Another storm is expected to arrive Friday, with heavy rain and high surf predicted through Sunday.

"Satellite observations and wave models continue to suggest the swell will be roughly 15 feet high with a 15-

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## Disaster averted when home fire puts itself out

By CAITLIN CONRAD and KELLY NIX

AN ALERT on a Pacific Grove homeowner's phone, quick responses from a neighbor and firefighters, and good insulation prevented what could have been more extensive damage to a home that suffered a fire the day after Christmas.

On Thursday at about 7 a.m., Frank Raymond, who owns a house on 18th and Spruce but was in San Jose, got an alert on his phone that an alarm had been triggered at his residence. Raymond called neighbor Nancy Spade, who checked on the home.

"When I walked over, the windows were blackened," Spade, who has a key to Raymond's house, told a Pine Cone reporter.

Because of the possibility of a fire, Spade called her son-in-law to help check on the house.

### No more oxygen

When the firefighters opened the door, "smoke came out but there were no flames," Spade said, adding that the inside of the house was black and reeked of smoke.

After a call to 911, Monterey Fire arrived and took control. The fire was apparently started by an appliance in a bathroom.

"It's such a well-sealed house, with new windows and everything, the fire literally burned up

## New council ready to get to business

■ Special meeting agenda includes police station rebuild, budget

By MARY SCHLEY

GETTING RIGHT down to business five days after city hall reopens after the holidays, the newly installed Carmel City Council will hold a special meeting Jan. 7 to receive reports on the midyear budget and the seemingly never-ending discussion about what to do with the aging police station. Members will also decide which of them should serve on which ad hoc committees and represent the city in various regional agencies and organizations.

Typically scheduled for the second Monday and Tuesday in January due to the holidays, the council's regular meetings will still take place Jan. 13 and 14.

The first order of business will be for Mayor Dale Byrne to appoint his vice mayor — a position held by former city councilman Bobby Richards under Dave Potter — after which the council will discuss appointments to ad hoc committees. Those comprise two council members apiece and can conduct business without following Brown Act rules for open meetings.

Past councils have created 10 that remain active to research and make recommendations on ambulance and fire services, police building renovation, housing, outdoor wine tasting, Flanders Mansion, underground utilities/Rule 20A, street addresses, Flock security cameras and the Mills Act. An ad hoc on board and commission training is staffed by the city attorney and the city clerk, but no members of the council.

### AMBAG and TAMC

Similarly, the mayor and council represent the city in various regional agencies, and a proposal to confirm assignments for 2025 will be put forward for approval. The organizations involved include the Association of Monterey Bay Area Governments, Central Coast Community Energy policy board (alternate seat), Community Human Services, Illegal Dumping and Litter Abatement Task Force (Monterey County Health), Monterey Regional Taxi Authority, Monterey-Salinas Transit, ReGen Monterey (the waste management district), Transportation Agency

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## Kids learn about cow biz



PHOTO/CHRIS EVANS

A student from Rancho San Juan High in Salinas who is learning about the cattle industry, Hailey McVay cares for a young calf. See page 11A.



PHOTO/CAITLIN CONRAD

Monterey firefighters enter a home on 18th and Spruce in Pacific Grove where a fire broke out in a bathroom Thursday morning.