

## September Ranch project inches forward

By CHRIS COUNTS

LOCATED ON an iconic Carmel Valley property known as September Ranch, the One Carmel development — with 73 luxury homes, 22 affordable units and 89 acres of open space — was a hot-button topic in the early 2000s when local slow-growth advocates unsuccessfully rallied against it. Approved 15 years ago, the project has been inching forward ever since. With many locals curious about what’s happening there, project managers Ari Erfani and Katie Bipes gave The Pine Cone an update.

### Infrastructure

According to the pair, the work — at least for now — is focused on putting in roads, electricity, gas and water for 36 homes that are part of the project’s first phase. The contractor is the Don Chapin Company. Several videos posted on social media in the past year show workers digging trenches and installing water lines.

Erfani told the newspaper those projects should be done by early 2026.

Monterey County officials also offered

an update on the construction that’s been granted permits. According to spokesperson Maia Carroll, the builder is “working on an active grading permit for the roadways and utility trenching on Phase I of the subdivision and has

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PHOTO/DON CHAPIN CO.

Earthmoving equipment prepares roads at September Ranch, which has been approved for 73 luxury homes and 22 affordable units.

## Big Sur section of state coastal trail takes shape

By CHRIS COUNTS

THE LENGTHY effort to determine where the California Coastal Trail will go as it passes through Big Sur has been settled, and State Sen. John Laird is calling for action to keep the ambitious project moving. The senator spoke about it at the Big Sur Multi-Agency Council meeting last month, and he recently met with local groups and volunteers with a stake in the trail. Laird’s perspective is that during his last term in the senate — he’ll be term-limited out in 2028 — he wants to “make meaningful progress on the coastal trail,” his senior policy advisor, Kara Woodruff, told The Pine Cone.

### Border to border?

While the trail, which is intended to follow the California coastline from Oregon to Mexico, is still a long way from becoming reality, the alignment of its Big Sur segment has been agreed upon. Nearly the entire route will follow existing trails on public land. That decision comes after more than a decade of talks and planning, with more than 70 locals volunteering their time and energy.

According to several of those volunteers, it will only run directly along the coast near Pacific Valley about a dozen miles north of the Monterey/San Luis Obispo county

line. It will also veer toward the coast near Pfeiffer Big Sur State Park, giving hikers an opportunity to stock up on supplies in Big Sur Valley. But much of it will travel deep into the backcountry, where dozens of primitive campsites offer rustic places to rest for the evening, although several more will likely be needed along the northern section of the Big Sur route.

### Property conflicts

While state officials once lobbied to run the trail next to the highway, locals argued against it due to private-property conflicts and the complications of sharing a narrow and crowded transportation corridor with thousands of vehicles.

State officials also agreed to keep the route off the all-dirt Coast Ridge Road — which features great views and moderate grades — instead limiting it to trails that offer hikers a longer and more challenging journey.

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## Dems worry about gas prices, push back on clean-air regs

By CAITLIN CONRAD

DEMOCRATIC LAWMAKERS in Sacramento gave climate-change policymakers a grilling last week, bemoaning how industry regulations have impacted gas prices while doing little to solve the environmental crisis.

“I know what climate leadership looks like, and it isn’t



PHOTO/PINE CONE FILE

Prices at the pump have come down a bit this year, but drivers in California still pay more than in any other state — even Hawaii.

## Does the county protect illegals? Feds say yes.

### ■ ‘Welcoming’ vs. ‘sanctuary’

By KELLY NIX

MONTEREY COUNTY landed on a list of hundreds of “sanctuary” jurisdictions the federal government says obstruct immigration enforcement. The county maintains it’s not a haven for illegal immigrants but is merely “welcoming.”

Last week, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security included Monterey County and the City of Salinas on the sanctuary list of more than 100 California counties and cities and many other jurisdictions across the country that assist undocumented people and offer resources to help shield them from immigration agents.

“These sanctuary city politicians are endangering Americans and our law enforcement in order to protect violent criminal illegal aliens,” according to the U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

In response to President Donald Trump’s promise to deport mass numbers of illegal immigrants, the Monterey County Board of Supervisors in January reestablished the county as “welcoming” for “immigrants and refugees” and declared it “a place of trust and safety for immigrants.”

### Distinction or difference?

While there doesn’t seem to be a universal definition for “sanctuary” jurisdictions, District 1 county supervisor Luis Alejo offered the reason for the county’s “welcoming” title.

“Some cities and counties declare themselves sanctuaries,” Alejo said. “Monterey County is a welcoming county. Monterey County deeply values the contributions of our immigrant workers and families that strengthen our local communities and economy. We remain committed to being a welcoming and inclusive place for all.”

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## City might be in market for Scenic Road strip

By MARY SCHLEY

THE CITY of Carmel could be in competition to buy a strip of Scenic Road land being offered for \$100,000.

While the price sounds great for coveted real estate in one of the most beautiful places in the world, the small lot — and no one knows exactly how small — next to the Frank Lloyd Wright House can’t be developed, not even with a fence or a bench, according to deed restrictions recorded in April 1924.

Central Coast Properties broker Lance Monosoff is marketing the land as an “oceanfront Carmel lot for the person who has everything.”

“This lot is not buildable due to deed restrictions, size and other limitations,” his flier says. “However, this little piece of heaven could be yours forever — bring a folding chair and enjoy spectacular sunsets.”

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