



HEALTHYLifestyles

From “Dad bods” to eczema, not to mention your best friend’s skin, we’ve got something to scratch your itch ... Inside this week!



The Carmel Pine Cone

Volume 111 No. 30

<https://carmelpinecone.com>

July 25-31, 2025

TRUSTED BY LOCALS AND LOVED BY VISITORS SINCE 1915

Volunteers seek and destroy illegal fires



PHOTO/BIG SUR SOUTH COAST FIRE FOUNDATION

Volunteers drive the backroads of Big Sur’s South Coast in search of illegal campfires. See page 8A.

Railway homeless camp to be removed

■ Make way for busway

By KELLY NIX

GROUPS OF homeless people living at an encampment off Highway 1 in Seaside have been told they have to leave the property to make way for construction of a \$100 million bus project.

The makeshift campground, just north of the Fremont Boulevard exit along an old railroad line, will be cleared to allow crews to start work on the Surf Busway Bus Rapid Transit project, a 5-mile lane from Marina to Sand City and Seaside parallel to Highway 1.

‘Trespassing’

Monterey-Salinas Transit’s Surf project will allow its buses to bypass traffic congestion on Highway 1 to improve the service’s speed. Work on the project is expected to start next month, and it will be ready for passengers by spring 2027.

On Monday, in preparation for the work, MST posted a “notice to vacate illegal campsite” at the entrance to the area, which was last cleared in September 2023 during a crackdown by Caltrans and

other government agencies. The land has long been used by homeless people who set up makeshift living spaces.

“Every person who camps or lodges or stores property on public or private property without permission of the owner is guilty of a misdemeanor violation under California law,” according to the notice, which warns occupants “You are trespassing” and gives them until 8 a.m. Aug. 4



PHOTO/KELLY NIX

Residents of this campsite off Highway 1 near Sand City and Seaside have been told they’ll have to find somewhere else to live by Aug. 4 so crews can break ground on a bus project.

Barmel sues landlord over lease, maintenance

By MARY SCHLEY

THE PROPRIETOR of a popular downtown bar and restaurant is suing his landlord for unlawfully terminating his leases, as well as interfering with his attempts to sell his business, letting the property fall into disrepair, depriving customers and staff of their use of restrooms, and numerous other allegations, according to a complaint filed in Monterey County Superior Court this month.

Gabe Georis, son of late restaurateur Gaston Georis and longtime owner of the restaurant and bar on San Carlos northeast of Seventh, is suing Johanna White, better known as Jo Jo, and others for alleged breach of contract, “intentional interference with economic relations” and other wrongs, according to a July 8 lawsuit drafted by Carmel attorney Mark O’Connor.

Georis opened a Spanish restaurant, Mundaka, in the Carmel Square space in 2009 and took over the bar next door, then called Ody’s, in 2013, subsequently renaming

Refusal to extend leases, ‘stealing food’ from the kitchen

it Barmel. He later replaced Mundaka with a Mexican restaurant, Pescadero, in 2017, and then morphed it into the Barmel Supper Club. Georis’ establishments offered 10 outdoor seats and had an overflow spot in another Carmel Square unit that had previously been a sewing shop.

Unfair rents, neglect

While the lawsuit was filed several weeks after White issued a 60-day notice of termination in June, Georis alleges she repeatedly violated the lease terms over the

See **BARMEL** page 18A

Forester proposes linking fines to property values

■ Says current penalties aren’t high enough to influence rich people

By MARY SCHLEY

TO DETER people from illegally pruning or cutting down trees to improve their views or accommodate construction, the Carmel Forest and Beach Commission wants the city to drastically increase the fines levied on wrongdoers. Otherwise, commissioners suggested, people who are wealthy enough to own homes in Carmel might be willing to commit the crimes and write the checks.

“We’ve had issues in the past where we’ve had egregious damage to trees from construction,” city forester Justin Ono said at the July 10 meeting, and high per-square-foot property values are driving property owners and developers to get every bit of space they can.

Expensive

He said online research suggests the average value of property in the city is \$2,100 per square foot, which he described as “just insane.”

“It really pushes anybody who’s developing to maximize square footage, especially for developers,” he said. “That’s an extra problem, because if you’re not tied to the property and you’re just going to turn it and burn it, that tree in front could just be in the way of maximizing the building footprint.”

Senior planner Evan Kort attended the meeting at Ono’s request and said he has “seen numerous instances of construction impacts on trees,” including trees dying after the work is finished, whether due to roots being cut or soil being compacted too close to the trunk.

to leave and take their belongings with them.

Transportation Agency for Monterey County senior engineer Laurie Williamson said that MST will take over maintenance responsibilities for that portion of the railroad right of way.

MST deputy CEO Lisa Rheinheimer said that contractors will start work on the busway in a few weeks.

“Contractors may start as early as mid-August on the Fifth Street area in Marina,” Rheinheimer explained. “Initial activities will include establishing a staging area and

See **HOMELESS** page 16A

Caltrans finally gets slide to stop moving

By CHRIS COUNTS

THE INSTALLATION of 2,000 steel rods at Regents Slide in Big Sur — which required almost 23 miles of steel and 900 tons of cement — is complete, Caltrans said Thursday.

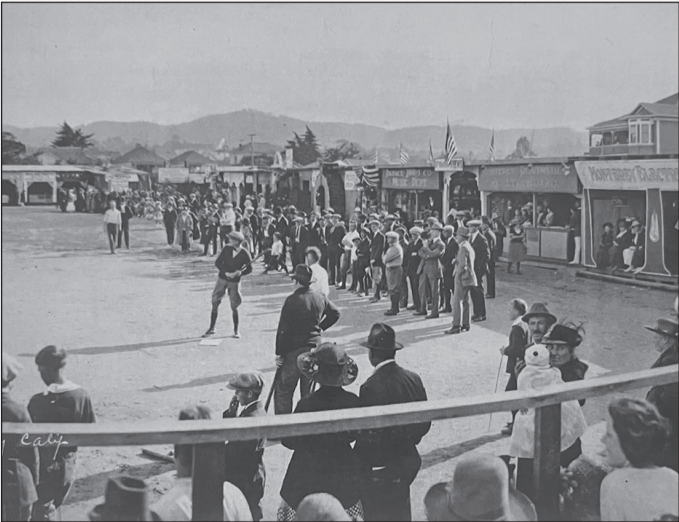
The work enables crews to resume “full-scale excavation activities,” the road agency said, making it possible to complete repairs and potentially reopen the long-closed highway from Carmel to Cambria in a few months.

According to Kevin Drabinski of Caltrans, the installation of the 60-foot-long rods, also called shear dowels, “is having the intended effect of mitigating further slide activity.” Located about 5 miles south of Esalen Institute, the site has been plagued by instability since wet weather triggered the slide in February 2024.

The world-famous scenic highway has been closed to

See **SLIDE** page 22A

Historic ballpark needs \$500K in repairs, upgrades



PHOTO/COURTESY A.C. HEIDRICK

This image captures a baseball game at Jacks Park in Monterey in 1922 — when home plate was where center field is today. See page 14A.