

Coastal commission OKs county’s rules for STRs

By CHRIS COUNTS

TACKLING A subject that has been hotly debated for more than a decade, the California Coastal Commission voted 6-2 Aug. 13 to approve Monterey County’s short-term-rental rules in the unincorporated communities of Big Sur, Carmel Highlands and Pebble Beach, effectively banning vacation rentals in residential neighborhoods in the Highlands and Big Sur unless a host is living on site, while allowing hosted and unhosted stays in Pebble Beach, but only with a permit.

The vote was a surprise to some. The Coastal Act requires the commission to promote visitor access to the coast, and many commissioners have supported short-term rentals because they increase public access.

Arguments about affordable visitor access go unheeded

For more than three hours before the vote, a parade of speakers commented for and against vacation rentals. In general, proponents argued that short-term stays are needed because they provide coastal access for people of all income levels, while opponents contended they bring too much traffic and noise to residential neighborhoods and decrease the availability of long-term rentals. They also argued that there is no such thing as an affordable short-term rental in the county’s pricey coastal communities.

Coastal access

Dick Matthews of the Monterey County Vacation Rental Alliance urged the commission to reject the county’s rules.

“Unhosted commercial short-term rentals are the most sought-after form of visitor lodging,” Matthews said. “Visitors don’t want a stranger in the house when they stay there. Yet this ordinance will permit unhosted short-term rentals along only 6 miles of the county’s 100-mile coastline. This ordinance will deny access to the coast for vast numbers of people.”

Annee Martin also pushed back against the new rules. Martin owns Sanctuary Vacation Rentals, which manages 50 homes in the coastal area and employs a staff of 35.

“Banning short-term rentals in Big Sur and Carmel Highlands goes against everything the coastal commission stands for and is supposed to protect,” Martin said.

She also suggested that some consideration should be given to those who have followed the rules.

“Responsible owners who have paid their taxes should be grandfathered and allowed to continue,” she said.

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SEA LION DIE-OFF POSES THREAT TO BEACH DOGS

By MARY SCHLEY

AN UNPRECEDENTED disease outbreak that’s sickening and killing California sea lions up and down the California coast could account for the number of dead and



PHOTO/MARINE MAMMAL CENTER

Veterinary staff at the Sausalito-based Marine Mammal Center hospital examine a California sea lion under anesthesia for leptospirosis, a deadly bacterial infection.

Vandalism, arrests, sideshows mar Car Week

■ 100,000 said to attend, and most of them behaved

By MARY SCHLEY

A TORPEDO-BODIED 1924 Hispano-Suiza won Best of Show at the Pebble Beach Concours d’Elegance, a Ferrari 250 GT California Spider Competizione sold for \$25.3 million at the Gooding Christie’s auction, several



(Clockwise from above) Huge Car Week crowds took over the In-N-Out parking lot in Seaside. Fisticuffs ensued in the Highlands after a fender bender involving a Rolls-Royce. A McLaren was vandalized in downtown Carmel. And the CHP busted numerous speeders in fancy sports cars.



racing legends drove at Laguna Seca, millions of dollars were raised for charity — and law enforcement all over the Monterey Peninsula seemed busier than ever during this year’s Car Week, especially dealing with unruly crowds that staged impromptu sideshows.

August’s automotive events have grown to span 10 days and number more than three dozen — most of them well organized and professionally managed — and an estimated \$130 million is spent on food, lodging, events and goods while they’re going on, tourism officials have said.

But with them come the traffic, the crowds, and the reckless and drunk drivers, vandals, petty criminals and others who keep local cops busy.

In Carmel, between Aug. 9 and Aug. 18, officers

stopped 137 drivers, issued 70 citations, arrested seven people, towed a dozen cars and wrote 320 parking tickets, according to Acting Police Chief Todd Trayer, who had just experienced his first Car Week.

Topping Carmel P.D.’s greatest hits was the arrest Tuesday morning of a 30-year-old Pacific Grove man suspected of smashing the windshields of two McLarens parked downtown near the Pine Inn early in the morning of Aug. 15. The British-built sports cars command six-to-seven-digit prices.



PHOTOS/SOCIAL MEDIA AND OTHER SOURCES

Investigating officers tracked down the suspect, Samuel Shaffer, through video provided by a witness and identifying his vehicle through Carmel’s and Pacific Grove’s license-plate-reading cameras, according to Trayer.

“They developed a solid lead, they looked for the guy for a couple of days, and they found him early this morning in Pacific Grove,” Trayer said Tuesday. “We wouldn’t have been able to solve this like we did without that

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Sacramento Dems OK gerrymander plan

CALIFORNIA DEMOCRATS put the pedal to the metal this week to revamp the state’s congressional districts and give their party an advantage in the 2026 midterms. Lawmakers returned from summer recess on Monday, giving them just days to bang out a process that would normally take months, including authorizing a constitutional amendment, replacing the existing congressional district map and passing a statute calling for a special election in November.

The rush job came at the behest of Gov. Gavin Newsom,

Capitol Access

By CAITLIN CONRAD

who is leading the charge in a congressional arms race between California and Texas.

On Wednesday, GOP lawmakers in the Texas House of Representatives approved a new district map, with lines rigged to send five additional Republicans to Congress after the 2026 midterms. The Lone Star State has been on a mission during the last few weeks to protect the Republican majority in the House of Representatives, with the outspoken support of President Donald Trump.

Newsom plans to cancel out any potential gains made in Texas with a new map in California, and Thursday afternoon he signed legislation put the plan in motion.

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