

# The Carmel Pine Cone

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## Getting ready for food, golf fans



Several enormous tents (left) are under construction at the Equestrian Center in Pebble Beach in preparation for the April 8-11 Pebble Beach Food & Wine (details begin on page 24A). And just a stone's throw away, bulldozers are turning the Peter Hay Golf Course into the grand entrance for June's U.S. Open golf championship (see below). Despite the Great Recession, both events are expected to draw enthusiastic crowds.

PHOTOS/PAUL MILLER



## Tiger's return adds to Open anticipation

By MARY BROWNFIELD

EXCITEMENT IS building and earth is moving in anticipation of the U.S. Open at Pebble Beach slated for June 14-20. Following Tiger Woods' announcement this week he would return to the professional golf scene in the Masters at Augusta, Ga., next month, fans rushed to buy Open tickets, according to RJ Harper, vice president of golf for the Pebble Beach Co. and chairman of the 2010 U.S. Open. Meanwhile, a bulldozer ripped up Peter Hay Golf Course to make way for the U.S. Open Championship Village.

"I'm surprised Tiger didn't come back earlier, because he usually likes to sharpen up his game before the Masters," Pebble Beach cad-

die and avid golfer David Brownfield said. "It means he's going to play here. He's by far the best player in the world, and it just wouldn't be the same tournament — and it never is the same tournament — if he's not in it."

Harper said Woods is not confirmed to play at Pebble Beach in June, "although you could deduce from his mentions of readying for major championships that the U.S. Open is on his radar screen. It just makes it that much more special with Tiger in the field, and he's our defending champion."

Woods blew away the competition during the 2000 U.S. Open here.

"We saw a real boost in ticket sales after his

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## City loses Flanders court fight — again

■ Judge overturns 62 percent majority vote

By MARY BROWNFIELD

FOR THE second time in five years, a Monterey County Superior Court judge has stymied the City of Carmel's efforts to sell the historic Flanders Mansion, which taxpayers bought almost four decades ago, have never used, and resoundingly decided last November to sell.

In a 37-page decision released Tuesday, Judge Kay Kingsley sided with Melanie Billig and the Flanders Foundation, ruling the city should have more thoroughly considered future uses of Flanders Mansion if it were to be purchased by another government agency.

Kingsley's ruling invalidates the city's extensive environmental impact report, and therefore overturns all the decisions based on it, including the public's Nov. 3 vote to sell the old home, which is located on the edge of Mission Trail park. The judge's ruling came more than a month after the Feb. 10 court hearing on the case.

In its June 2009 lawsuit, the Flanders Foundation, headed by Billig, asked the

court to find the EIR inadequate for numerous reasons.

And while Kingsley ruled against most of the suit's allegations, she agreed with two.

"The court finds that the city did not comply with the California Environmental Quality Act, because the city failed to analyze the potential environmental impacts of selling or leasing the mansion [to another government agency], and in responding to comments," she wrote. "In all other respects, the court finds that the city complied with CEQA," including the city's economic analysis of selling or leasing Flanders, and the conclusion that leasing it wouldn't be feasible.

**Restrictions might not apply**

So far, no government agency has expressed any interest in buying Flanders Mansion and turning it into a museum, offices, a homeless shelter, affordable housing or anything else.

But, because state law requires a city to offer parkland to public agencies at market rate before selling it to a private buyer, the foundation argued the EIR failed to "provide an analysis of the envi-

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## Sierra Club's concerns threaten Big Sur fire plan

CHRIS COUNTS

FOR MANY residents of Big Sur and Upper Carmel Valley — who watched the devastating fires of 2008 threaten their homes and scorch thousands of acres of wilderness — the Monterey County Community Wildfire Protection Plan is a breakthrough that could dramatically improve the way their communities prepare for natural disasters while protecting the environment they all love.

"The plan is well thought out," said Frank Pinney, a retired Big Sur Volunteer Fire Brigade chief. "It will help keep

wilderness safe from development, and development safe from wildfire."

But the local chapter of the Sierra Club sees things very differently. While its authors insist the plan is only a series of recommendations, the conservation group believes it actually "calls for changes in the law" that would enable the government and residents to destroy critical vegetation without environmental oversight.

"We think wildfire management is very important, but this plan goes far beyond that," said Julie Engell, a member

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## C.V. Road to get underpass for trail

By CHRIS COUNTS

IF YOU'RE not yet aware of the Carmel River Parkway project, you soon will be.

Construction begins this month on two very visible bicycle and pedestrian trail projects — including a particularly ambitious one that features an underpass beneath Carmel Valley Road.

The projects are part of the Carmel River Parkway project, which comprises an extensive network of trails in Carmel and Carmel Valley.

Beginning next week, the Transportation Agency for Monterey County will start work on the underpass, which the agency hopes to complete before Memorial Day.

For about six weeks in April and May, the four lanes of traffic along Carmel Valley Road

between Highway 1 and Carmel Rancho Road will be reduced to two lanes — an idea that will strike fear in the hearts of motorists who remember the miserable traffic jams that were commonplace before the climbing lane opened in 2002.

TAMC project manager Todd Muck, however, said delays will be "very minimal."

In addition to the underpass, TAMC will build a section of trail that travels from just north of Carmel Valley Road to Rio Road. Muck estimated the entire project will be completed by August.

Taxpayers will fund the \$1.2 million cost of the project, which will be paid for with federal

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## When the star cancels, start calling the ticket holders!

By CHRIS COUNTS

THE DAY before he was set to appear at Sunset Center, Hal Holbrook was forced to postpone his sold-out performance March 13 due to emergency. The show, which pays tribute to Mark Twain, has been rescheduled for Friday, April 30.

"In 56 years of performing, he's never canceled a show," Sunset Center executive director Peter Lesnik

observed.

On very short notice, Lesnik and his entire staff worked fast in an attempt to reach every ticket holder by phone or email and notify each one that the performance was postponed. They even located two groups of ticket holders in Southern California who were preparing to depart for Carmel.

Unfortunately, a third group of tick-

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