

# The Carmel Pine Cone

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## ONE STEP AT A TIME, VOLUNTEERS TAKE INVENTORY OF BIG SUR WILDERNESS

By CHRIS COUNTS

WHILE IT may not be as difficult as finding a needle in a haystack, creating an inventory of every recreational site in the Big Sur backcountry is certainly no easy challenge.

But that isn't stopping a team of six volunteers from trying to accomplish the task, which involves navigating about 300 miles of trails on steep terrain and visiting about 50 different backcountry campsites. The effort was orga-

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PHOTO/MIKE SPLAIN (ABOVE), BRYCE WINTER

Ventana Wilderness Alliance volunteers Sam Ellis and Bryce Winter (above) take a break at a Big Sur backcountry campsite they surveyed. Among the little known scenic wonders they will visit are Lost Valley (top right) and an idyllic swimming hole along Higgins Creek (right).

## Preliminary hearing is more bad news for Collins

■ Fraudulent billing charges worse than conflict of interest

By KELLY NIX

FORMER COUNTY water director Stephen Collins' troubles go far beyond a possible conflict of interest over his participation in developing a new water supply for the Monterey Peninsula.

According to testimony this week in a Salinas courtroom, Collins committed fraud against a former employer by submitting invoices for meetings he never actually attended — even asking to be paid \$75 an hour for a meeting in Salinas that happened while he was in Washington, D.C. — according to testimony by a Monterey County District Attorney's Office investigator Thursday.

During Collins' preliminary hearing, investigator Heather Hardee outlined the prosecution's case against Collins, who faces charges of more than 30 felonies and misdemeanors, mostly related to phony bills for consulting services with Ocean Mist Farms, a Castroville artichoke grower.

In responding to questions from Monterey County Assistant District Attorney Stephanie Hulsey, Hardee testified Thursday morning that Ocean Mist Farms' CEO Ed Boutonnet told her he believed Collins was overbilling the company.

"He said that in 2006, when Mr. Collins went from a fixed contract to an hourly rate," Hardee said, "that he had suspected Mr. Collins had been padding his log."

Hardee outlined scores of invoices Collins submitted to Ocean Mist in which she said Collins billed the company for numerous meetings he never attended.

"There are a number of meetings you determined did not occur?" Hulsey asked.

"That's correct," Hardee responded.

### Phantom meetings

According to Hulsey, Collins sometimes double- and triple-billed. In March 2010, for instance, Collins billed for a Monterey County Board of Supervisors meeting when he was thousands of miles away doing busi-

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## Del Piero backers gave LandWatch even more

By KELLY NIX

THE NORTH County activist group that bankrolled Marc Del Piero's unsuccessful campaign for supervisor has also been a bonanza to the county's most high-profile environmental activist group.

In a big-money effort to unseat incumbent 5th District Supervisor Dave Potter, the North Salinas Valley Fund for Responsible Growth gave Del Piero a total of \$132,500, a colossal amount for a county election.

But the North Salinas group has also been a huge contributor to LandWatch Monterey County this year, donating a huge \$197,600 to the development-wary organization. In fact, the contribution from the North Salinas group exceeded LandWatch's total donations in 2010 by nearly \$50,000, according to its most recent 990 tax form.

LandWatch executive director Amy White said the group's bounty has been and will be used to pursue LandWatch's goals, which include helping implement the county's general plan and battling Ferrini Ranch, a proposed 866-acre subdivision off of Highway 68, and Whispering Oaks, the proposed Monterey-Salinas Transit operations facility on the former Fort Ord.

"Whatever money LandWatch receives," White told The Pine Cone, "we use it to work on projects to achieve our mission."

The North Salinas group's big contribution to LandWatch

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## Farr: 'No plan to tear down Los Padres dam'

By CHRIS COUNTS

THE IDEA came from a federal agency, but Congressman Sam Farr said this week "there currently is no plan to remove Los Padres Dam."

The National Marine Fisheries Service has made public a plan to help the Carmel River's population of steelhead trout by removing the San Clemente and Los Padres dams.

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## Salinas urology practice accused of giving patients unnecessary radiation treatments

■ Profit motive, not patient welfare

By PAUL MILLER

AN ADVANCED radiation therapy center in Salinas, in which two Monterey Peninsula urologists have a financial stake, has been bombarding patients with radiation treatments they don't need because there's so much money to be made from the procedure, according to an investigation published last week by Bloomberg News Service.

Salinas Valley Urology Associates — owned by Aytac Apaydin and Steven Worsham, and used for referrals and

treatments by Monterey urologists Anthony Shaheen and David Flemming — has treated prostate cancer patients with its \$2 million IMRT accelerator, even though other therapies would have been just as good or better and cost much less, according to reporter Peter Waldman.

And the reason the doctors do it is to make money — lots of money, Waldman reported. Medicare reimburses up to \$40,000 for a course of radiation therapy, and private insurance pays even more, he said. The doctors who own SVUA and physicians who refer patients there can earn more than \$1 million a year, Waldman reported.

See **RADIATION** page 23A

## Burnett says order is key to success as mayor

By MARY SCHLEY

COMING OFF the resounding approval of a ballot measure to boost the sales tax rate by 1 percent, and with the city's recent AA+ rating from Standard & Poor's, Carmel Mayor Jason Burnett is "feeling really good" about his job as the city's top elected official. But since he took office in April, he's had to learn a few lessons about the complexities and demands of his new role the hard way.

"You don't have time to do everything as well as you would like, so you have to prioritize," he said. "It really helps me, and I think it really helps the city council, to have the discipline of laying out key projects at the beginning of the year and then keeping that focus."

Major goals for this year, for instance, included passing the budget, getting approval of the hospitality improvement district to raise more money for marketing the city to visitors and convention groups, and convincing voters to decide in favor of Measure D, which will help the city refinance some \$6 million in retirement debt. All of those have been accomplished.

The smaller things are important, too, especially when constituents are always bringing up this or that, but it's important to not get sidetracked, Burnett said. The trick is acknowledging the importance of various



Jason Burnett

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