



PRESIDENT'S LETTER



Making Your Summer Fire-Safer the Whole Year Round

Making your summer fire-safer is a year-round activity, because wildfires don't take vacations.

Two of the most recent fires, the Colorado Fire in January and the Coastal Fire in May, show that fires are year-round visitors. Timing what to do when can be confusing while juggling changing regulations, planning how to complete defensible space projects, and avoiding adverse impacts to nesting birds and native plants when reducing fuel loads.

CVA caught up with Monterey County Regional Fire District's Division Chief/Fire Marshal, Kevin Kamnikar, to help us take the guesswork out of the process with some straight talk on getting fire safe.

Know What You Can Control and Know the Rules

Chief Kamnikar says, "Wildfires are driven by three things: weather, fuel, and topography. Out of these three things, the one thing that we can control is the fuel that surrounds our home."

But, before you get started, you need to know what regulations apply where you live. "If you live in what is called the State Responsibility Area (SRA), you have a responsibility and are required to maintain your property to a certain level," says Chief Kamnikar. "Requirements fall under PRC 4291, and at a minimum you are required to maintain a 100-foot defensible space that includes a 30-foot lean, clean, and green zone, and 70 feet of fuel reduction where trees are limbed up six feet, brush is thinned out, and annual grasses are mowed down to a maximum of four inches. You are also required to remove tree branches from within ten feet of a chimney or stove pipe, remove all leaves and needles from the roof

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PALO CORONA RACING COURSE RAISES CONCERNS

by Scott Hennessy

Visitors to Palo Corona Regional Park will find that something new has been added: a permanent hardened-surfaced cross-country racing course venue nearly three miles long and ranging from 15 to 30 feet wide, in the midst of an established wildlife corridor. The purpose of the running venue is to hold a minimum of six events per year for regional high schools, without limitations on additional events and training sessions. How did this track come about?

The Monterey Peninsula Regional Park District (MPRPD) received a tax payer-funded ten-million-dollar gift and nearly \$500,000 private foundation gift consisting of the former Rancho Canada Golf Course to become the Palo Corona Regional Park. The Trust for Public Land also granted additional funds to help create office space for the district headquarters at the park. In return for this gift, the district made certain commitments to the state granting agencies for protection and future restoration/enhancement of sensitive species habitat, including the floodplain and the 1000-foot-wide wildlife corridor that was dedicated between Carmel Valley Road and beyond the Carmel River. The primary purpose of the acquisition of the property for public use was to provide low impact access to the property and across the river to the

The district held meetings assisted by a consultant to ascertain the public's desire for the use of the property. At the meeting held at the district headquarters a number of Carmel Valley Association members were present along with other residents of the MPRPD. An intensive polling of the participating audience was conducted, and the results presented at that time clearly indicated that restoration of the former golf course to natural habitat and non-traffic-generating use of the park ranked at the top. A fenced-in dog park was also considered as a potential use with community support. The MPRPD also committed to development of a park master plan for the former golf course and a Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) integrated with the adjacent Palo Corona Regional Park.

So what happened? Just recently with little public review and before the completion of the park master plan and the HCP and without completion of environmental review as required by the California Environmental Quality Act, the district in collaboration with the Big Sur International Marathon organization has constructed the cross-country racing course through the flood plain, heavily impacting the wildlife corridor and sensitive species habitat. This running course venue was not considered in the

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Grading and wetland area where red-legged frogs have been documented to exist, photo by Christy Fisher

HIDDEN VALLEY MUSIC SEMINARS

104 W. Carmel Valley Rd

MASTERS' CONCERTS

Mark Kosower,
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Tuesday August 9th • 7:30 pm

Robert Walters,
English Horn

Tuesday August 16th • 7:30 pm



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Saturday, September 10
Carmel Valley



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President's Letter, continued from Pg. 1

and roof gutters, and remove all dead limbs away from the home. In addition, starting January 2023 for new homes and 2024 for existing homes, there will be a new zone where no combustibles will be allowed and only fire resistant plants and materials will be allowed within the first five feet of your home."

When doing fuel management, the recommendation is to start early and not clear your property of vegetation but thin, trim, and prune the brush to break up the continuity of the fuel. Where necessary, cut the brush at the ground and leave the roots intact to maintain stability of the soil and to prevent erosion.

In the case of the particularly stubborn and fire-promoting non-native invasive genista, CVA board member Paola Berthoin recommends the following protocol: "It is best to remove genista early to late spring to prevent spreading. If you are unable to attend to the removal of all invasive plants before seeds set, cut the parts of the plant that have seeds and bag them. Then pull the plants out. According to the California Invasive Plant Council, in the case of genista plants on a steep hillside, an effective approach is to cut the plant two inches above the soil line and spot treat with herbicide right after cutting. This will kill the plant with the root intact to hold the soil, while also allowing the native plants to get re-established without competition from genista. It will also reduce the work necessary to keep invasive plants in check. Monitor the site every year to remove new invasive plants." [For more removal methods, consult the CAL-IPC Weed Workers Handbook at: cal-ipc.org/resources/library/publications/wwh/

There are Regulations Addressing Other Conservation Considerations, Too!

Birds are protected by federal and California state law, and it can be tricky to time meeting the PRC 4291 requirements for those living in an SRA without disturbing native and migratory birds during their nesting periods. Paola Berthoin provides some guidance: "With regard to the health of coast live oaks and nesting birds, if you have not been able to attend to limbing them up at the right time of year (September and October), then take extra care to make sure no birds are nesting, and change the time when you attend to limbing up the following year. Birds also nest on the ground and in

bushes. So when cutting brush, to protect native and migratory birds, it is best to conduct this fuel management outside of the bird nesting season, which is February through August. If you have not been able to do this fuel management at the right time of year, it is recommended to have a biologist survey your site carefully for any bird activity and nests before doing the work. Nests should be avoided within a standard buffer zone of 50-75 feet, depending on the type of songbirds, according to PG&E guidelines. See link below for details.

ia.cpuc.ca.gov/environment/info/panoramaenv/Fulton-Fitch/Application/Appendix_E_Birds.pdf

As we move into summer, CVA joins Chief Kamnikar in urging residents to remember to start vegetation management early in the year and continue to maintain your defensible space throughout the year while paying attention to the needs of wildlife. When it comes to defensible space, it is meant for average weather and it serves two purposes: it will slow the fire spread toward your home, and it will also give that added protection for firefighters and give them a fighting chance to protect your home in the event of a wildfire.

From the Monterey County Regional Fire District and Carmel Valley Association, have a fun and very safe summer.

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CARMEL VALLEY FIESTA RETURNS IN FULL FORCE

by Andy Sudol

photos courtesy of CV Kiwanis



One of the largest and most festive annual gatherings of Carmel Valley residents is almost here! On August 5-7, the Carmel Valley Fiesta takes place near Carmel Valley Village. This community celebration, hosted by the Carmel Valley Kiwanis Foundation, started in 1989 by local residents to commemorate the centennial of the opening of the local post office and has since grown to feature live music with a variety of mostly local artists, a dog show, a car show, horseshoe tournaments, pancake breakfasts, refreshments and BBQ, craft booths, tables staffed by local non-profits, including our very own Carmel Valley Association, and much, much more.



**CARMEL VALLEY
FIESTA**

On Friday evening, August 5, the HOOPLA BBQ takes place at the Carmel Valley Trail and Saddle Club, where local favorite, The Money Band, will entertain with songs that will get you up and out on the dance floor. Dinner includes BBQ chicken, tri-tip steak, chili, corn, bread, and dessert. Doors open at 5:00. Be prepared to bid on silent auction items to help the scholarship

fund! Tickets are \$45 (pre-teens: \$20) and may be purchased at Murphy's Hardware, Kasey's Market, or Valley Chevron in advance. Proceeds will go toward funding scholarships for local students attending college and other activities for local youth and seniors.

Both Saturday and Sunday begin with a scrumptious pancake breakfast at 8:00 hosted by the Carmel Valley Community Youth Center.

Saturday's schedule at Carmel Valley Community Park features the Larry Barber Memorial Run to the Sun and the annual Classic Car Show. See shiny, vintage vehicles and meet their dedicated owners!

Sunday's unique attraction is the Dog Show at noon with registration at 10:30. The show has six categories: Cutest Puppy, Cutest Senior, Best Groomed, Best Costume, Best Look-Alike, and Best Trick. Come see our local canine friends and their proud human companions. Join the fun and bring your pup!

The extensive musical entertainment will go like this:

SATURDAY

10:00 - 12:00 KATE & CHRIS
12:30 - 3:00 60 EAST BAND
3:30 - 6:00 HAYLEY JANE

SUNDAY

10:00 - 11:30 TONY BURCIAGA
12:00 - 1:30 TBA
2:00 - 4:00 MONTEREY COUNTY LINE

Do you feel lucky? The Fiesta Raffle Grand Prize winner will be announced at the park main stage at 3:00 on Sunday. The winner gets a one-week stay at a 5-bedroom / 4-bathroom casa that sleeps 14 in Costa Rica, plus \$1,500 towards travel expenses. All this could be yours for purchasing a \$1 ticket!

For all the juicy details, visit cvkclub.org. See you there!



Right, Lydia, a Rippling Resident, shows off some creations that will be on sale to patrons of their Residents Association table at the Fiesta. Residents participated in an arts and crafts workshop taught by Deborah Smith, and purchases go to their events fund. Photo by Irene Elisabeth.



CVA TAKING ACTIVE ROLE IN VACATION RENTAL PROCESS

What's happening with vacation rentals in our area? We know of about 163 currently operating in Carmel Valley. Where can you turn if the house next door suddenly turns into a small hotel in your neighborhood? CVA can help.

The Monterey County Board of Supervisors authorized the Housing & Community Development Department (HCD) to hire new compliance officers and an office aide to help with all code compliance in the county, not just vacation rentals. We should soon see some stepped-up enforcement of existing vacation rentals rules in the Carmel Valley Master Plan area.

For now, complaints sent in to the county via the Host Compliance online form <https://hostcompliance.com/tips> or by telephone at (831) 900-4441 are dealt with at the lowest priority, so documenting specific code violations and reporting them takes time.

CVA has established a Vacation Rentals Task Force as a subcommittee of the standing CVA Land Use Committee. We monitor vacation rental properties in the Valley and work closely with the county's HCD office to promote code compliance. CVA encourages people to use our complaint form on our website for all issues, including houses being used for special events or parties, excessive noise or traffic issues, lighting, or any other problems stemming from vacation or short-term rentals in our Valley neighborhoods. Once you fill out the form, CVA can help to facilitate action from the county. Here's the link: carmelvalleyassociation.org/complaints.

Let's face it, many people from surrounding areas are attracted to the beauty of Carmel Valley besides those of us who live here. The vineyards and wine tasting, restaurants, walkable parks, and rural nature continue to inspire people to visit in ever-increasing numbers. Many of these visitors like vacation rentals for their accommodations.

Some vacation rentals are run legitimately: they are permitted for that use, have a business license, and pay Transient Occupancy Tax (TOT) regularly to the county, as do motels and hotels in the Valley that have been in business a long time. Unfortunately, many commercial interests and some homeowners are operating vacation rentals without

by John Heyl

following the county rules. The county will begin monitoring these more closely with a priority on the ones that are not paying TOT or that have generated multiple complaints.



Party house goes wild, image from the web.

Going forward, CVA will take an active role in the environmental impact report (EIR) public hearings on the draft Vacation Rental Ordinance. The draft ordinance gives priority to commercial operators while limiting homeowners. We hope to use the EIR process to create alternatives that would better represent our residential zoning and preserve the rural nature of the Valley.

CVA believes the new ordinance should move away from providing limited or commercial use permits that permanently change the land use permitted status of a particular assessor's parcel number (APN) to a vacation rental property; such an ordinance could be changing zoning code without proper planning commission review.

We'd like to see a streamlined permit renewed yearly that would allow homeowners to rent a room or two but not permanently change the land use on that parcel. This has been done in Pacific Grove very successfully in their Home Stay Program. We'd also like to see a cap on vacation rentals set well below the Board of Supervisors' current recommendation, and we'd like vacation rental stays recognized as the visitor-serving units that they are, which are already capped under the Carmel Valley Master Plan.

A dedicated group of CVA board members are working hard on this issue. Please get in touch if you are experiencing problems in your neighborhood, or if you'd like to join our efforts.

Palo Corona, continued from Pg. 1
draft master plan. Without the proper environmental review, the traffic, natural resource, and other impacts are unknown. In addition, alternative locations and venue designs have not been properly addressed.

The development also partially destroyed four years of volunteer effort to restore habitat in the wildlife corridor, by removing several hundred young live oak and buckeye trees planted by Carmel Valley residents, students, and an Eagle Scout crew.

The road is open to public access, and you may take a walk in the beautiful space and consider whether you think this is the proper use of the wildlife corridor, and whether the district has lived up to its commitments to protect habitat and provide low impact access to the property. Is the current development of Palo Corona Regional Park consistent with the district residents' request for the return of natural habitat at the former golf course without creating an event venue?



Top, graded road through wildlife corridor, photo by Christy Fisher. Below, approximately 40 young oaks and buckeye trees were destroyed here, photo by Scott Hennessy.



Mid-Valley Developer Pledges to Work with CVA

by Larry Bacon

In a recent hearing, the Board of Supervisors denied listing the Mid-Valley Shopping Center as historic. Although disappointed, CVA will continue to work to protect the essential elements of Olof Dahlstrand's architectural design. The supervisors chose to ignore the recommendation from the County's Historic Resources Review Board and sided with the developer. The vote was 3-2 with Mary Adams, our district supervisor, supporting CVA's position.

The center was acquired in 2019 by a development partnership led by Russel Stanley, principal of The Stanley Group, Campbell, CA. The group owns other office and shopping centers, mostly in San Jose. The design changes initially proposed for the center were met with strong community disapproval.

The supervisors' meeting dealt only with the issue of historic listing, not the developer's contested design plans for the center. After the meeting, Stanley surprisingly announced that the project's design application would be withdrawn from the county. CVA also learned that submission of a new design application would be postponed indefinitely. Instead, Stanley proposed to go forward only with painting the center, pledging to work with the community on the plan.

The developer followed up by inviting CVA to meet, and President C.S. Noel, Pris Walton, and Larry Bacon sat down recently with Stanley, his son, and his architect. The discussion could be described, in diplomatic terms, as a constructive opening effort. We expect another meeting to review paint colors and hear whether the white paint will be removed from the columns, restoring the natural aggregate finish.

The center suffers from a number of vacancies, and all parties acknowledged that the center needs updating if it is to become a vibrant, fully occupied shopping center with services for the Carmel Valley community.



2019 Mid Valley business sign.
Photo by Luana Conley

DARK SKY PROGRAM UPDATE

by John Heyl

Did you see the Milky Way the other night when the marine layer receded to reveal a new moon? It was lovely. Hopefully, the lighting in your neighborhood still allows you to enjoy the night sky in Carmel Valley.

Meredith Nole, a lighting expert and LED specialist, has been working with the CVA board to take a closer look at existing lighting along Carmel Valley Road. She and board president C.S. Noel took a ride together one evening in late April, and Ms. Noel provided some recommendations for reduced lighting, particularly in the village and toward the western end of the Valley. Her recommendations are available for any interested parties; just send an email to our website for a copy: president@carmelvalleyassociation.org

The county has lighting codes that require downlighting fixtures, particularly for any new construction, but the Housing and Community Development enforcement team is challenged to address every neighborhood issue. If your night sky is impacted by bright lighting, please feel free to send a complaint form (available on our website) so CVA can take action on it.

Last January an article in this newsletter called for interested parties to email to carmelvalleydarkskygroup@gmail.com if interested in pursuing an International Dark Sky Place recognition for our area. There was great response. It is heartwarming to know how many people in and around Carmel Valley want to preserve the view of the stars from our decks, patios, and parks.

Stay tuned in the near future for a Zoom link from the dark sky group to meet and discuss next steps.



Look for the logo on outdoor lighting fixtures. More info at darksky.org/.

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Banner page one photo at the mouth of the river, shared by local photographer Ron Pierce. He reports " An enormous gathering of over 100 pelicans was resting peacefully, along with some seagulls."

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