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Baby otter rescued at Carmel Beach

By CHRIS COUNTS

A 4-WEEK-OLD baby sea otter that was discovered alone Jan. 6 on Carmel Beach is now in an intensive care unit at the Monterey Bay Aquarium.

A passerby found the otter on the sand near the foot of Ninth Avenue about 1:30 p.m. and called the City of Carmel's animal control officer to report the sighting. A short time later, the aquarium's Sea Otter Program team responded to the scene, where they encountered high surf and storm conditions.

The rescue team first tried to reunite the otter with her mother by taking her to a rocky area south of the beach. While some otters were seen nearby, none responded to the pup's cries.

Next, the young otter was taken to the aquarium and given a physical exam. "She's now in an intensive care unit, where

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PHOTO/COURTESY MONTEREY BAY AQUARIUM

Karl Mayer, animal care coordinator for the Monterey Bay Aquarium, holds a 4-week-old sea female otter, which is now in an intensive care unit at the aquarium.

Palo Colorado hit hardest by storms

■ Peninsula gets only a hint of what may be in store

By CHRIS COUNTS

WHILE THIS week's storms brought heavy rains but did little damage to the Monterey Peninsula, Big Sur was hit with several mudslides and rockslides, and in Palo Colorado Canyon Wednesday, one slide damaged a private road along Upper Rocky Creek that provides access to numerous homes.

Cheryl Goetz, the chief of the Mid-Coast Volunteer Fire Brigade, said only small trucks can now get past the treacherous slide, "which took about four feet of road down to the creek below," she told The Pine Cone.

Another troubled spot in the canyon is a clogged culvert that passes under Garrapatos Road near its intersection with Palo Colorado Road. "It's creating a mini sink hole that's undermining Palo Colorado Road," Goetz said. A sandbagging effort is under way.

Complicating matters is the dense forest that surrounds nearly every home in the area.

"Trees have also begun falling, and we expect more to come down as the ground saturation continues with rain anticipated to last through next week," Goetz warned.

During the last significant El Niño event in 1998, many residents were not only stranded for

weeks, but faced shortages of just about everything, from fuel and batteries, to prescription drugs and dog food, creating an assortment of challenges. With the memory of that year's storms still fresh in her mind, Goetz is urging her neighbors to prepare themselves. One of the most useful things people can do is place sandbags in areas where

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PHOTO/COURTESY CHERYL GOETZ

This mudslide on a private road in Palo Colorado Canyon Wednesday could be a preview of what's coming, if forecasters who have predicted powerful storms this winter are correct.

Council set to reveal city administrator candidate

By MARY SCHLEY

RATHER THAN hiring a firm to conduct a nationwide search for a new city administrator — a process that would take months and could lead to a final candidate who looks good on paper but doesn't know the town, as happened with former city administrator Jason Stilwell — the Carmel City Council voted Tuesday to continue its pursuit of a single candidate who had been mentioned while Doug Schmitz was city administrator.

Schmitz originally planned to reenter retirement sometime this summer and had been in the process of considering who might take his place when he changed course and abruptly ended his contract with the city on Halloween.

Subsequently, the council held several closed sessions to talk about how to replace Schmitz.

"Doug was in the middle of the process of looking at an individual who could be brought in," Mayor Jason Burnett explained at the Jan. 5 meeting, so the council decided to meet with the person — whom no one would name at the meeting — to see if he was interested.

"And he was, so we've been going through our due diligence," he said, including hiring the Ralph Andersen firm

to conduct extensive background and reference checks.

"The candidate came back with very high marks," Burnett said, including feedback from 18 different references who surprised the search firm and others with their fervent support. "He certainly has the connection and knows Carmel and has long ties to the Peninsula."

"The headhunter was highly skeptical but proceeded, and after checking his references, he came back to the council and said he was wrong and this was the right guy," councilman Ken Talmage said.

Burnett proposed organizing a meeting for city employees and the candidate, followed by a meet and greet with the public, including board members and commissioners, later this month. A formal contract with the new administrator could be considered by the council at its Feb. 2 meeting, and Burnett said he asked council members Ken Talmage and Steve Dallas to work on the agreement with the candidate and the city's outside labor counsel, Sam Zutler.

"And if that doesn't result in the hiring of a new city administrator, at that point, you can do the full headhunt-

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'Indefatigable' Marian Leidig dies at 102

By MARY SCHLEY

SHE LIVED until the city's centennial year, which was fitting, considering she was so much a part of its fabric.

Marian Leidig, born in Oregon on Dec. 30, 1913 — two years before Carmel became a city — died two days after her 102nd birthday, on New Year's Day.

She had made Carmel her home with her late husband, Glenn, since 1938, and had operated her Carmel Preschool here for three decades. The two were college sweethearts who met at Oregon State University and had their first date on Halloween in 1932. They were married for three-quarters of a century before he died on Feb. 13, 2010, at the age of 98.

"She was the matriarch of the city," commented former Mayor Sue McCloud, noting that while founding fathers Frank Powers and J. Franklin

Devendorf provided the structural foundation of the town when they started their Carmel Development Co. in 1902, "Marian and her preschool provided the character development for the youngsters who today are elected officials and business leaders."

Among them are former city council member Paula Hazdovac, councilman Steve Dallas, and realtor Tim Allen, McCloud said.

"It's like a who's who of Carmel," she said. "That would be my main thing about Marian as a person."

At Tuesday's council meeting, Dallas recalled attending her preschool at Santa Fe and Third, and he mentioned executive assistant Leslie Fenton and city forester Mike Branson did, too.

"She always was so positive," he said, adding that she continued to love her students long after they left her little school. "She taught many people, and we have a lot of good values because of them. I'll

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PHOTO/COURTESY KRISTIN LEIDIG-SEARS

Glenn and Marian Leidig in about 2005, surrounded by daughter-in-law Dwan, granddaughter Kristin Leidig-Sears and son Don.