

# The Carmel Pine Cone

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## 34 homes destroyed, one killed as vast fire ravages Big Sur

By MARY SCHLEY and KELLY NIX

A FIREFIGHTER died, nearly three dozen homes have burned, and hundreds of residents have been displaced in a raging wildfire that started Friday morning in Garrapata State Park and was still only 10 percent contained at more than 27,300 acres Thursday. The blaze prompted Gov. Jerry Brown to declare a state of emergency, and all of the state parks along the Big Sur Coast, including popular Point Lobos, are closed. Caltrans has suspended all roadwork along Highway 1, which remains open as more than 3,500 firefighters work on the ground, on bulldozers and in aircraft. The cause of the fire is under investigation.

While early in the week fire officials were anticipating containment as early as Aug. 5, they changed that target Wednesday morning to Aug. 31, as winds, low humidity and high heat drove the fire farther into the wildlands toward several mountainside Carmel Valley communities.

### 'Extremely remote and rugged'

"Fire activity remained active overnight, making uphill runs. Extremely remote and rugged terrain with limited access, coupled with hot and dry weather, continues to be a challenge in controlling the fire," Cal Fire officials said in an update Thursday. Even though crews have been successfully building fire lines with bulldozers and hand tools in an effort to confine the blaze, it has stubbornly spread, resulting in "the containment percentage remaining the same."

Fog and smoke also hampered critical air operations that were being conducted by the 14 helicopters and six air tankers committed to the fire.

As of Thursday morning, the fire had covered 27,326

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## Some fire evacuees getting plenty of creature comforts

By ELAINE HESSER

WITH THEIR homes either on fire or in danger of becoming that way, 37 pets have taken refuge at the SPCA for Monterey County — a number spokesperson Beth Brookhouser said includes three horses, a king snake, four baby turkeys, two parakeets, six dogs, 19 cats, a leopard gecko and a tarantula.

As their owners evacuated homes in the path of the Soberanes fire, the animals were checked in at the SPCA HQ on Highway 68, or at Carmel Middle School. The SPCA can also pick up pets that need help.

"We'll be available wherever we're needed," Brookhouser said, adding that the organization will be available at all community meetings about the fire with pet supplies.

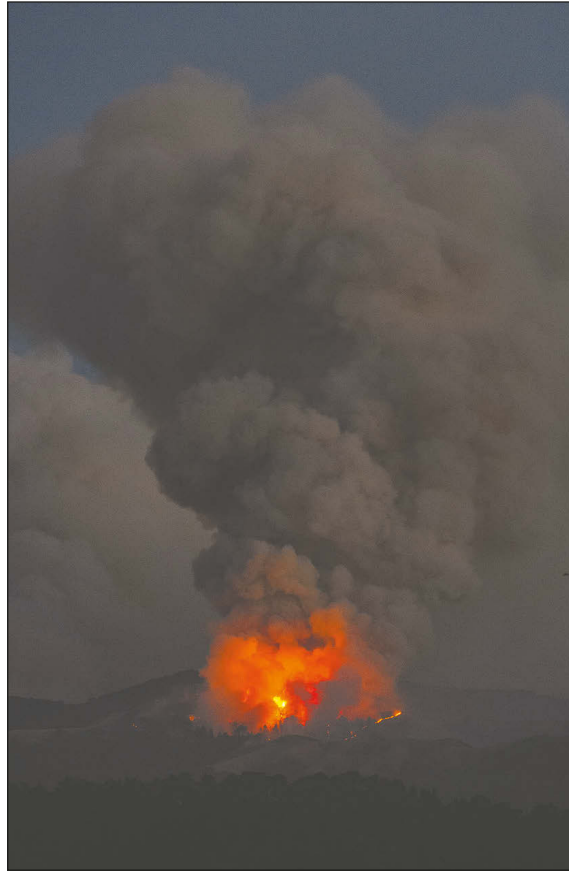
SPCA director of operations Lisa Hoefler said that in addition to the animals the SPCA has taken in, there were

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PHOTO/COURTESY SPCA

Meet Cali, a kitty who's spending time at the SPCA while her owners deal with the Soberanes Fire. She's commandeered the office of Ashley Fessenden, the shelter's animal care supervisor.



PHOTOS/(LOWER LEFT) COURTESY BLU WHALEN, (EVERYTHING ELSE) MICHAEL TROUTMAN, DMT IMAGING

(Clockwise from top left) Striving to maintain a critical fire line, a DC-10 dumps retardant on Dani Ridge, while backfires to help control the spread create a dramatic nighttime scene near Carmel Valley. A firefighter turns his hose on flames in Palo Colorado, the area suffering the most damage so far — including a home utterly destroyed on Long Ridge Road. Meanwhile, dozers cut a break on a ridge near Rancho San Carlos.

## Coastal commission rejects beach fire appeal

By MARY SCHLEY

A LAST-MINUTE effort to block the city council's plan to allow a few wood fires on Carmel Beach abruptly failed this week when the California Coastal Commission decided

## WRIGHT HOUSE SEAWALL FACES CHALLENGE

By MARY SCHLEY

CLAIMING THAT the city did a poor job of evaluating a proposal to install a seawall below the Frank Lloyd Wright house on Carmel Point — and questioning whether the wall is even needed — two California Coastal Commissioners have called the city's permit for the shoreline project up for review in front of the full commission.

The commission is set to discuss the project at its Aug. 10 meeting in Santa Cruz, and coastal planners have recommended the wall, which received unanimous approval from the city's historic resources board and the planning commission, be denied.

The project calls for the installation of an 8-foot-tall, 63-

Richard Flower — the resident who was trying to stop the fires — wasn't allowed to ask the coastal commission to intervene.

Flower submitted the required documents opposing all wood fires on the beach to the coastal commission's office eight minutes before the appeal period closed last Wednesday, but on July 27, the Central Coast District Office issued a letter telling him his appeal was invalid because he didn't speak at public hearings on the fire plan before the council approved it July 30.

"As a result, the city's action on this project is now final," coastal planner Mike Watson wrote.

The program approved June 30 allows wood fires in up to a dozen city-provided fire pits — of which there are now four — on the beach south of Eighth Avenue between the hours of 4 and 10 p.m. daily. Propane fires are allowed on the sand, too, as long as they are at least 25 feet from the bluffs.

After receiving the appeal, which ran a dozen pages and condemned the city council for allowing any wood fires on the beach, coastal planners set about reviewing recordings and documents from the city meetings to determine whether Flower had made his objections known in city hall.

"To qualify as an aggrieved person, you must have participated or made your views known as an individual in some manner during the city's local process," Watson explained in the letter. "In this case, although you edited an informational

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