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RESEARCHER: VALUABLE REDWOODS WERE 'STOLEN'

By CHRIS COUNTS

A WOMAN who lives next door to the Mill Creek Redwood Preserve in Big Sur is accusing a private contractor of cutting down and hauling away dozens of healthy redwoods from the 1,500-acre property.

Located near the end of Palo Colorado Road, the preserve was closed shortly after the Soberanes Fire began July 22, 2016. About three weeks later — while firefighters continued to battle the blaze, and many residents had evacuated — one local who stayed, Kerri Frangioso, said she was shocked to discover “a large number of redwoods piled up on the side of the road.”

A researcher for UC Davis whose focus is Sudden Oak Death, Frangioso said it was clear to her that the redwoods in the pile were not killed by the fire — even if some were charred by it. And since the stumps show they were standing upright when cut, it’s hard to imagine what threat they posed to the road.

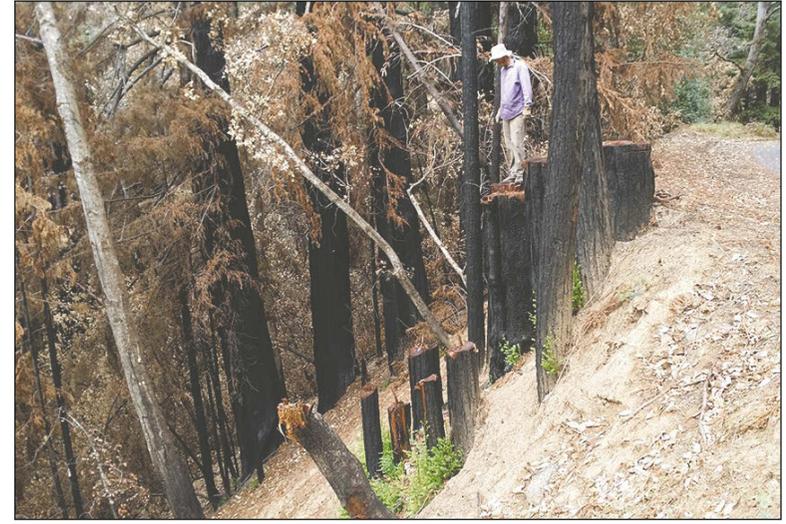
Frangioso speculated the trees were cut down for someone’s financial gain. “Everybody knows redwoods are super valuable and everybody knows that most redwoods don’t die in fires,” she said.

Frangioso said she believes the heavy equip-

ment that was used for the job — which she photographed — confirms the contractor meant to steal the trees.

“The type and size of the machines that the contractor

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PHOTO/COURTESY KERRI FRANGIOSI

A Palo Colorado Canyon resident examines redwood stumps along Palo Colorado Road. Another resident wants to know why the trees were cut down, and where they went. County officials, meanwhile, say they are looking into the incident.

Mayors say ‘quality of life at risk’ from water activists

By KELLY NIX

THE MONTEREY Peninsula’s mayors have rejected a water activist group’s claims that California American Water’s proposed desalination plant in Marina is based on “poor science” and that the utility has “no water rights” to operate it.

In a March letter to the mayors, Peninsula city councils and numerous state and local agencies, Cal Am critic George Riley and his advocacy group, Public Water Now, outlined their concerns about the company’s desal proposal, pointing to two “alarming deficiencies” with the project.

Fighting claims that desal plan has ‘alarming deficiencies’

Among Riley’s longstanding grievances with the desal plant is what he claims is “poor science” around the feasibility of slant wells — the technology that Cal Am was forced by state regulators to implement to draw seawater for its desal operation.

His complaints come despite Cal Am’s lengthy testing of the slant wells and numerous declarations from engineers that they’re working.

“There are no completed, successful slant wells operating for ocean desalination intake anywhere in the United States or the world,” Riley claimed.

‘No merit’

However, in an April 13 response to Riley, the Monterey Peninsula Regional Water Authority — composed of the six mayors — said he “misrepresents the current situation, specifically with the test well and the topic of water rights.”

The response, signed by Pacific Grove Mayor Bill Kampe, goes further, accusing the activist group of trying to logjam the water project.

See MCGUIRE page 14A

See QUALITY page 12A

MORE COMPLAINTS PILE UP AGAINST MCGUIRE

By MARY SCHLEY

THE FORMER Pebble Beach woman accused of bilking tenants, refusing to pay rent, and racking up multiple small-claims cases against her is also being accused of not paying employees at her restaurant, cheating a wedding photographer and an escrow agent, and trying to hijack the sale of a house.

But Donna McGuire, also known by her married name, Donna Amadeo, says she is the one who has been wronged, with the photographer refusing to provide the photos, the landlords renting out substandard houses, and the restaurant being someone else’s responsibility. McGuire conducts business under several different corporation names, including Monopoly Real Estate and Bella Donna’s.

When she was sued in February for not paying rent at a home near the Monterey Peninsula Country Club, even as

she took deposits and rent from people to whom she was renting rooms (a violation of her lease), McGuire responded with complaints about mold, which she alleged made the home unlivable.

But last month, a judge ruled against her in that case, ordering her to pay a little more than \$22,000 in back rent and other fees, according to homeowner David Compton’s attorney, Michael Lykken. She moved out before the end of February and has not paid the judgment, he said.

Lykken said he’s not surprised McGuire hasn’t paid Compton, but he said two attorneys have contacted him on her behalf, including one who threatened legal action.

“So far, there’s been nothing further from either one, and I don’t expect anything, since she has no money to pay people,” he said.

See MCGUIRE page 14A

Stevenson alumni asked about sex abuse

Former employee named in report from Choate school

By KELLY NIX

A FORMER teacher and coach at Stevenson School is one of a dozen adults who have been implicated in a child sexual abuse scandal at a posh East Coast boarding school that has rattled the private education system and prompted Stevenson’s headmaster this week to ask alumni if they’d received “inappropriate attention” from the man while he was a teacher here.

Adam Hardej, who was a teacher and coached two sports at Stevenson School from 1985 to 1988, had an ongoing sexual relationship with a 16-year-old girl at his previous job at Choate Rosemary Hall, according to an independent investigation into allegations of abuse at the Connecticut college-prep school.

The female student “would sneak out of her dorm and join Hardej in his apartment, where they would have sexual intercourse and oral sex,” according to a portion of an investigator’s report

detailing the teacher’s alleged behavior at Choate.

The report also indicates that in 1986, after Hardej left Choate and was about a year into his teaching job at Stevenson School, he sent the same female student a sexually explicit letter in an RLS envelope that he boasted he penned during a faculty meeting.

Hardej — who has not been charged with any crimes related to the allegations — was a Latin and math teacher and a coach at Choate.

Raises concerns

In an email message to alumni Monday under the heading, “Important Message to Stevenson Community,” Stevenson head Dr. Kevin M. Hicks indicated that there is no record of any sexual misconduct by Hardej during his time at the Pebble Beach private school.

“Nonetheless, his alleged behavior at Choate unavoidably raises concerns about his conduct here, in part because we know that the avenues for students to report such behavior 30 years ago

See TEACHER page 11A

Summer fog, and fun, are on the way



PHOTO/THOMAS GIBSON

All aboard! Although summer here sometimes hides in a fogbank, that didn’t stop CSUMB’s Sea Lab campers from whale watching. For more fun — in or out of the sun — see our special section, starting on page 29A.