



King City Rustler

\$1 | KING CITY, CALIFORNIA

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DOLAN FIRE



GLOOMY SKIES Smoke from the Dolan Fire in the nearby Santa Lucia Mountains causes an orange overcast above King City's north side on Sept. 9. The fire has burned 119,488 acres and destroyed 19 structures as of Tuesday.

Air quality degrades as wildfire spreads

EMERGENCY SUPPORT INCREASES FOR DOLAN FIRE EVACUEES

BY RYAN CRONK
MANAGING EDITOR

Air quality in the Salinas Valley diminished over the past week as the Dolan Fire continues to spread through Los Padres National Forest's Ventana Wilderness and northern areas of Fort Hunter Liggett.

According to the U.S. Forest Service, conditions have degraded to "unhealthy" levels.

"A high pressure system remains in place over the fire, with a marine layer along the coast that spreads

→ See DOLAN FIRE, A8



Firefighters from San Diego gather for breakfast Tuesday morning at the Salinas Valley Fairgrounds parking lot in King City before heading out to fight the Dolan Fire.

COMMUNITY

Crab Feed on track with changes

BY SEAN RONEY
STAFF REPORTER

KING CITY — King City Rotary Club's 2020 Crab Feed is tentatively set to take place on Nov. 20, with slight adjustments due to Covid-19 health concerns.

The date would put the annual event on the Friday before Thanksgiving.

Oscar Avalos, president of King City Rotary, made the announcement during the club's Sept. 9 meeting.

"It will not be an all-you-can-eat crab feed," Avalos said about the changes to the way this year's crab

feed will work. "It will be a drive-up. Your ticket would have 'X' amount of pounds of crab. You would drive into the (Salinas Valley) Fairgrounds, we would see how many tickets you have."

To reduce contact and the potential for spreading the coronavirus, Avalos said Crab Feed staff might place markers on vehicle windshields as to how many pounds of crab a person purchased tickets for when they show up to the event. Then, that person would drive through and other event staff would load the noted amount of crab into

their trunk based on their ticket amount.

"It would be drive into the fair and drive out," Avalos said. "So there would be very minimal contact, if any at all."

Avalos said the club needs to confirm the date with the Salinas Valley Fairgrounds, but that plans were set for the late November event.

In addition to the crab feed, Avalos said the club is looking into another community-wide event, and commented on plans in the works for a drive-in movie night to be hosted somewhere in town.

COVID-19

County numbers improve

RESTRICTIONS COULD EASE IF DOWNWARD TREND REMAINS

BY SEAN RONEY
STAFF REPORTER

MONTEREY COUNTY — The latest assessment by the California Department of Public Health, issued Sept. 8, continues to have Monterey County in Tier I, known as the Purple Tier, which has the most restrictions on businesses.

In order to move to Tier II, the Red Tier, the county must meet required test positivity rate criteria for two consecutive weeks. The county does not currently meet that criteria, but the collected data so far has shown a downward trend countywide.

Monterey County's case rate for the week of Aug. 11 was 20.7 per 100,000 residents. The county's newest adjusted case rate for the week of Aug. 25 is 15.9. The case rate threshold to move to Red Tier is seven per 100,000 residents. The county's testing positivity rate has also declined from 12.5% to 9.9%.

→ See COVID, A6

LOCAL

City awarded \$3.5 million for repairs to sidewalks

TENACITY IN GRANT PROCESS LEADS TO FUNDING APPROVAL

BY SEAN RONEY
STAFF REPORTER

KING CITY — California Department of Housing and Community Development has awarded King City with \$3.5 million for sidewalk repairs and improvements, which was applied for as part of a competitive Community Development Block Grant program.

The funding, which comes from the federal government, is administered by the state to assist low- and moderate-income families or aid in the prevention or elimination of slums or blight.

"The grant funding will be instrumental in improving pedestrian accessibility and public safety throughout the community and is a great example of persistence," said Steve Adams, city manager for King City. "This is the fourth application submitted by the City after the first three were unsuccessful. The City refused to give up because sidewalk repairs are greatly needed, and the City does not have the necessary funding available within its budget."

The city's sidewalk system has deteriorated due to a lack of adequate funding over the years, Adams said.

→ See GRANT, A8

INSIDE

Classified Ads	A7	Obituaries	A3
Community News	A2-3	Opinion	A4
Legal Notices	A7	Police Reports	A5
Moments in Time	A4	Record	A5
News Tidbits	A3	Weather	A2

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WEATHER

Sunny

Tonight will be mostly clear

Thursday will be partly sunny

Today's high: 93

Today's low: 57

→ Forecast on page A2

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DOLAN FIRE

Continued from A1

up the Salinas Valley,” the Forest Service said in its smoke outlook Tuesday. “Expect limited visibility along the Coast Hwy, Salinas Valley, and low lying areas where smoke and fog mix — especially during dusk, dawn and overnight.”

Cal Fire issued a smoke advisory Tuesday for Monterey County due to the ongoing fires throughout the state.

“Winds from the south will push much of the smoke produced from the Dolan Fire into parts of Monterey County,” Cal Fire said. “As a result, many inland areas will see heavier smoke. Smoke from other wildfires burning throughout the state, in combination with Dolan Fire smoke, may also produce a light haze in the area. Poor air quality will continue due to the lingering smoke in the atmosphere and will dissipate with time.”

Smoke from remnant heat in the River Fire, which has been fully contained south of Salinas, dropped to Gonzales last week, the Forest Service reported. In addition, smoke from the Dolan Fire burnout operations near Fort

Hunter Liggett flowed into Soledad and King City as well.

Fire containment continues

The Dolan Fire, which originated about 10 miles south of Big Sur off Highway 1, has burned 119,488 acres and destroyed 19 structures. It is 40% contained as of Tuesday morning.

More than 800 personnel have been assigned to the wildfire, which is now under unified command with Cal Fire and Fort Hunter Liggett.

“This will improve coordination and add personnel to suppression efforts across the fire,” the Forest Service said.

Since much of the fire activity has shifted east and southeast, an incident command base has been set up at the Salinas Valley Fairgrounds in King City, which will “reduce travel and put support personnel closer to firefighters on the line,” according to the Forest Service.

Southwest winds were expected to challenge firefighters again Tuesday, pushing fire into the Arroyo Seco drainage. The Forest Service said resources from Cal Fire would add capacity to the structure protection



Kent Remmey/USFS

Firefighters work to secure the Dolan Fire line along Nacimiento-Fergusson Road last Friday.

work in Arroyo Seco as well as assist with the construction of containment lines on the east side of the fire.

“Structure protection work continues in the Arroyo Seco area with both federal forces and Cal Fire preparing those structures in case fire pushes into the Arroyo Seco drainage. Helicopters will cool hot spots as smoke conditions allow,” the Forest Service said Tuesday. “Firefighters will continue working to keep fire south and east of the river. There are no plans for a burnout operation from Arroyo Seco at this time unless wind and weather conditions push fire managers to execute a contingency plan to burnout around that area for the safety of the public and to protect private property.”

Dozers from Cal Fire and Fort Hunter Liggett are continuing the construction of a fire line from Arroyo Seco, along the base of Pine

Canyon, and using the 2008 Indian Fire scar as a control feature.

“These fire lines will eventually be used as the perimeter of a large burnout operation to prevent the fire from moving farther east into Pine Canyon,” the Forest Service said.

Fire activity over the weekend remained “minimal,” the Forest Service reported, due to cooler temperatures and higher relative humidity levels, but there was more moderate behavior around Nacimiento Campground.

“Firefighters made good progress constructing fire line between Prewitt Ridge along McKern and Nacimiento-Fergusson roads yesterday,” the Forest Service said Tuesday. “The critical piece of ground connects the existing black contained fire perimeter along roads to Highway 1 in preparation for a burnout operation that is

intended to prevent the fire from moving south.”

Evacuation center expands

An evacuation center set up at the King City Library has expanded its schedule to provide resources and other assistance for residents who are evacuating from the Dolan Fire.

“Monterey County is expanding its support for Dolan Fire evacuees as potentially new and existing emergency notifications could be in place for some time,” said Maia Carroll, the county’s communications coordinator.

Monterey County opened the center last week as multiple evacuation orders and warnings were issued for areas west of Greenfield and King City due to the wildfire’s increased activity in the Santa Lucia Mountains. Those orders and warnings remain in effect this week.

The library, 402

Broadway St., is now serving as a Temporary Evacuation Point, in addition to its role as an evacuation center. Staffing has increased to allow the center to be open during the daytime, from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. daily.

The center had been open 24 hours a day beginning last Thursday but was scaled back on Saturday. Evacuees who need assistance outside of those hours should call 831-385-3677.

For those leaving the fire zones, the center offers housing assistance, such as hotel accommodations or vouchers for evacuees who plan to shelter in their RVs. There are RV parking spaces at the fairgrounds in King City or Laguna Seca Recreation Area in Salinas, depending on availability and preference.

Monterey County offers an interactive fire map for residents to find which zone they live in at co.monterey.ca.us/2020Fires.

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GRANT

Continued from A1

The City of King prepared a citywide Americans with Disabilities Act pedestrian walkway assessment plan in 2016, which was updated in 2019. It addressed sidewalk replacement, as well as missing sidewalk segments and curb ramps.

The grant will fund the first phase of that plan.

“It’s definitely a big improvement in the city, so that’s why we haven’t given up, we have a lot of sidewalk work that we need to do,” Adams said.

Adams explained the citywide project will mostly focus on

residential areas.

“The initial focus is not on one area, but will include most of the oldest residential areas where the sidewalks are most deteriorated,” he said.

Final designs and preparation of bid documents will begin immediately, according to Adams. Construction is projected to begin in spring 2021.

Adams said the project will be carried out by contractors that specialize in sidewalk construction. He noted the city has an overall plan that has identified the improvements needed.

Since the grant will not cover all improvements, the city has to determine which areas need to be

prioritized with the grant funding. Adams said the amount of the repairs and new sidewalk completed will depend on the bids received for the work.

Once the grant project is completed, the city plans to budget additional ongoing funds for an annual repair program to address any deficiencies not funded through the grant.

While the grant will enable the city to fix a large portion of sidewalks, it will fall short of addressing all the needs that exist. When the project is complete, the city aims to have budgeted the annual funding to continue sidewalk improvement programs to address the remaining needs.

SALINAS VALLEY

Senior meal program continues

BY SEAN RONEY
STAFF REPORTER

SALINAS VALLEY — The Great Plates Delivered program was extended through Oct. 9 and has increased its ability to help 300 seniors in need during the pandemic, up from the 200 limit when it first began in May.

The program operates as a public assistance effort funded by FEMA.

“Currently we’re serving 220 seniors and we have contracted with eight restaurants to provide meals,” said Diana Jimenez, a deputy director with Monterey County

Social Services. “We will add more businesses to meet the growing need of the seniors that will be served through this program.”

Since the program has expanded to serve meals to an additional 100 seniors, new applications are being accepted. Those interested can contact the United Way’s 2-1-1 number for screening.

Jimenez described the program’s two goals.

“The first one is to help seniors 60 and over who are at risk of contracting Covid-19 to stay home and stay healthy by delivering nutritious meals,” Jimenez said.

“The second goal is to provide essential economic stimulus to local businesses who are struggling to stay afloat during this pandemic.”

Participating seniors receive three meals a day, seven days a week. Jimenez said the program serves seniors in North and South Monterey County, the Peninsula, Marina, Salinas and Spreckels. She added, “The selected businesses for this program are geographically spread out across the county.”

Of the businesses involved in the program, two are from South County — Linda’s Taqueria in Gonzales and The Cork & Plough in King City.



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