A Sign of Things to Come?

December rains brought the County a foreshadowing of what’s expected from El Nino as we head into the winter season. The much-needed rainfall was also a reminder to residents to prepare, as Corcoran Lagoon (above) flooded, the Pajaro River had to be breached, trees came down and minor landslides were reported throughout the county.

Did you know?
The County has put together a handy guide to El Nino preparedness. Find it at www.santacruzcounty.us/elnino.

“Our crews have been out for months getting ready for winter. We’ve done everything we’ve can to prepare, and we’ll be there if and when residents need us.”

- Public Works Director John Presleigh

Illegal dumping impacts many rural areas. In November, the Board of Supervisors passed a new law that begins to address the problem, and the County is looking at further steps.
So long, and good luck

The end of the year has us saying goodbye to some familiar and beloved faces, as generations of collective experience get set to retire from County service. The wave began in late November when Terry Dorsey, the longtime analyst for the Board of Supervisors, called it a career after 40 years.

Auditor-Controller-Treasurer-Tax Collector Mary Jo Walker (above right) retired at the end of the year after nine years as a department head, after overseeing the merger of two County departments. Agricultural Commissioner Mary Lou Nicoletti hung up her boots — for the second time! — after being hired in 1981.

It’s unfair to call it a grey wave — our retirees have years of productivity left, and we hope to see them around in the future. But the loss is undeniable. A partial list of employees leaving County service includes:

Senior Departmental Analyst Paula Pelot, TK years; Assistant County Counsel Marie Costa, 33 years; Elections Program Coordinator Margaret Morrison, 20 years; Associate Personnel Analyst Mary McAllister, 18 years; Fleet Manager Tom Hambleton, 9 years; Fleet Clerk III Michael Derosa, 8 years; Building Maintenance Worker II Michael Derrigan, 12 years; Custodian Pedro Rubio, 14 years; Custodian Maria Barros, 19 years; Assessment Technician Holly Rice, 13 years; Senior Departmental Information Systems Analyst Gulla Gisladottir, 20 years; Legal Document Examiner Leslie Harris, 41 years;

New Auditor-Controller-Treasurer-Tax Collector Edith Driscoll, center, was sworn in Thursday, Dec. 17. Driscoll was the Chief Deputy Auditor-Controller under Mary Jo Walker, right, who is retiring after nine years in office. Supervisor Bruce McPherson administered the oath of office in a small ceremony attended by family, friends and coworkers.

New parks dedicated

Continuing to create new parks at an unprecedented pace, the County of Santa Cruz dedicated its second and third new parks of 2015 during the fall.

More than a decade in the making, Seacliff Village Park is the first neighborhood park in the vibrant Seacliff Village neighborhood, and the first in Aptos in more than a generation. Once designated for commercial development, the 1.25-acre site now features a lighthouse-themed playground, public art by local artist Kathleen Crocetti and more. It is located at Sea Ridge Road and State Park Drive.

“This park has been a dream of the community for a long time,” Supervisor Zach Friend said. “To see it come to fruition is a testament to what can happen when a neighborhood comes together to leave a great legacy for the next generation.”

At Soquel’s Farm Park, visitors can celebrate one of the birthplaces of the farm-to-table movement with a community garden and natural landscaping on the site of a famed local restaurant. The Farm Park is located at Soquel Drive and Cunnison Lane.

To learn more about county parks, go to www.scparks.com.
Solving veteran homelessness, one vet at a time

A coalition of groups, including the County, have come together to end homelessness for a significant segment of the homeless population—veterans.

On Veteran’s Day, the groups announced a push to end homelessness for 193 local vets, primarily using a federal program that provides housing vouchers with services tailored to each veteran.

Despite the challenges of Santa Cruz County’s housing crisis, the groups met their 2015 goal for housing veterans. They hope to house all veterans by the end of 2016.

More help is needed. Landlords able to “House a Hero,” volunteers willing to work as housing navigators and ordinary people who can donate money or essential household items should call the Veterans Resource Center at 831-477-7873.

In addition, the County hired its first Homeless Services Coordinator in Rayne Marr. Congratulations, Rayne!

Small Business Success Story

On Nov. 28, more than 800 local businesses participated in Small Business Saturday, either by signing up themselves or through the County, local cities, and local business groups. PG&E and the County contributed full-page newspaper ads to promote the event. We hope this year’s success is a sign of good things to come.

County picks economic development manager

The County of Santa Cruz hired its first economic development manager, nabbing Kenneth “Andy” Constable from the City of San Jose.

Formerly San Jose’s Real Estate Development Manager, Constable has a background in real estate development, developing business opportunities, marketing and negotiating commercial lease and sale agreements. He is also adept at working with communities to assure projects meet the goals of local government and neighborhoods.

“Santa Cruz County is a special place with unique economic development opportunities. I look forward to meeting the challenges and furthering the implementation of the County’s Economic Development Vision and Strategy, including the key priorities identified by the County Board of Supervisors...,” Constable said.

Constable leads a newly created division that reports directly to the County Administrative Office. It is tasked with servicing existing businesses, creating jobs and increasing the county's tax base. While in San Jose, Constable helped attract private development to the downtown area, helped implement the City’s retail strategy, and worked with neighboring governments to coordinate economic development.

We've updated our app to include restaurant inspections, voter registration and more, all at the touch of a finger. Download Citizen Connect for iTunes and Google Play.
Garbage time for County Board

Who said the county Board of Supervisors never gets its hands dirty?

This fall, the Board passed two laws to help clean up the environment. The first addresses the problem of illegal dumping by requiring residents in the unincorporated area to have garbage hauling services (believe it or not, that wasn’t a requirement). The second law improves the collection of sharps and unused pharmaceutical companies to take more responsibility for the collection and disposal of their products.

The so-called “Universal Service” ordinance addresses the problem of dumping in someone else’s bins, as well as the number of illegal dumps that proliferate throughout the county.

“Illegal dumping is among the most common complaints from neighbors,” said Tim Goncharoff, resource planner for the County of Santa Cruz. “This won’t eliminate the problem completely, but we really do believe this is going to help with some of the unauthorized use and illegal dumping issues.”

The season of giving...

ANNUAL TRADITION: County supervisors and staff visited Second Harvest Food Bank on Dec. 16 to help sort food for the needy.