MEMORANDUM

DATE: December 6, 2010

TO: Board of Supervisors

FROM: Lew C. Bauman
County Administrative Officer

SUBJECT: County Administrative Officer’s Report for the week of December 6, 2010

This is the weekly report by the County Administrative Officer.

This Week’s Topics: Monterey County Park lands grow by 624 acres, the District Attorney’s office works with state inspectors to safeguard consumers and workers, and the Library’s Homework Help program makes the grade.

Parks
The Monterey County Parks Department has closed the deal on the purchase of 624 acres of Marks Ranch (near Toro Park) from the Big Sur Land Trust. But the department may not be done shopping for acres there, thanks to residual grant monies.

The acquisition of the land came thanks to a grant from the state Wildlife Conservation Board with the aim of expanding the park’s backcountry trail network. Escrow closed on the transaction for the 624 acres west of Salinas on November 23rd.

The $2.2 million sale price was less than the grant monies provided due to dropping land prices, so Parks staff is back in discussion with the Big Sur Land Trust to purchase another 100 acres of land nearby. The additional acres will provide more direct access for residents to this historic property.
Right now, in order to see this spectacular property, residents must use some challenging and rigorous hiking trails.

The land includes oak woodland, native grassland, and seasonal wetlands as well as a critical wildlife corridor that connects the Ventana Wilderness with Fort Ord habitats. When opened, the site has the potential to become a destination point for hikers with its panoramic view of the City of Salinas, the Valley, and the Monterey Bay coastline.

**District Attorney**
News from the District Attorney’s office last week about a sting operation in Monterey County targeting non-licensed contractors. The sting netted 38 people who have all been arraigned on charges of contracting without a valid license.

The DA’s Workman’s Compensation Unit worked with state investigators looking into complaints that these unlicensed contractors asked for excessive deposits, did not get workers compensation insurance for employees, bid on work that required a licensed contractor and unlawful use of another contractor’s license.

The District Attorney’s office has advice to the public about non-licensed contractors and explains why it participated in the sting operation: “The public needs to be aware of the dangers in dealing with unlicensed contractors. Often the bid may be lower than licensed contractors; however that can be a ploy to get the job and owners find the actual cost escalating with no recourse but to pay or get someone else to complete the job. Unlicensed contractors will complete work that is not up to code and when violations are discovered, inspectors can order the homeowner to remove the work that has been done to make sure the work is in compliance and not dangerous. Additionally, when contractors are not properly licensed and have workers with them who do not have workers’ compensation insurance coverage the property owner may have increased liability exposure if someone should get injured on their property.”

**Libraries**
The Libraries free, online Homework Help program is a service to students of all ages, and the numbers show students are indeed logging in and getting help.

During the first three months of the school year, more than 200 local students logged in for tutoring. Homework Help offers real one-on-one homework help with a real tutor online, and is available until Midnight every day.

Usage reports on the program show the average tutoring session is about 21 minutes. The number one subject students logged in for help about was Algebra II, followed by Algebra, Trigonometry and Calculus. The online tutors are able to use a white board program in the tutoring system, to help students with problems and concepts.
11th graders made up nearly a third of all Homework Help users, but the service is not limited to students in elementary, middle and high schools. Homework Help serves all ages including those studying advanced subjects.

The only requirement you need for Homework Help is a Monterey County Free Library card. To find out more about the program, check the Library website at: http://www.montereycountyfreelibraries.org/

################