



VERN FISHER — MONTEREY HERALD

A man walks on Del Monte State Beach in Monterey during a rain shower on Tuesday. The area had received about a half inch of rain by Tuesday afternoon with showers expected to continue through Wednesday. Another storm is expected to hit Thursday or Friday, according to the National Weather Service, and last through Saturday. After a brief respite on Sunday, yet another storm is expected early next week.

ENVIRONMENT

When a Facebook event goes otterly bad

Small event blows up in popularity inadvertently

By Nicoletta Lanese
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MOSSLANDING » When Kevin Wagter created a Facebook event entitled “Kayaking with Baby Otters,” he intended to arrange a leisurely afternoon in Moss Landing with just a few friends.

Not 273 of them. “I’ve been doing this for years and years. I essentially have between eight and 12 people that join me,” said Wagter, an Oakland resident. This year, someone who wasn’t connected to him on Facebook was interested in accessing the event, so Wagter made it public. “One of the things I didn’t conceive of is that public in your neighborhood is different than public on the internet.”

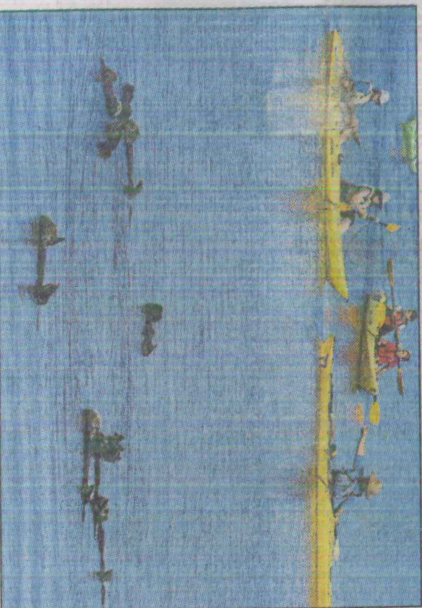
The event went viral and kicked up some controversy. After being up for about two weeks, the event page blew up this past weekend.

Suddenly, the “discussion” was breached by people outside Wagter’s social circle, and those people tagged their friends. By 6 p.m. Monday, over 7,000 had marked themselves as “Interested” in the event, and 273 actually clicked “Going.”

A friend called Wagter on Sunday, and that’s when he first found out the event had caught some attention. “On Saturday and Sunday, it seemed to have just gone ballistic,” he said. Wagter last posted to the page on Monday evening, but in the interim, the discussion had exploded with excited kayakers and concerned environmentalists. Wagter briefly explained the situation and apologized for the confusion. He said he shut down the public event Monday and put up a new, private event.

And so the epic drama concluded — assuming hundreds don’t show up for the canceled event later this month.

To anyone who clicked on the event page on Monday, it appeared that hundreds of people might descend on Moss Landing on March 31,



VERN FISHER — MONTEREY HERALD FILE

People kayak past a raft of sea otters in the Moss Landing Harbor.

many renting boats from Monterey Bay Kayaks or Kayak Connection, as suggested in the description. The idea of a flotilla of kayaks, 273-strong, beelining toward vulnerable sea otters and their pups in Elkhorn Slough for the last 20 years. That said, she says she knows how to get the shot without disturbing the photogenic critters.

“There’s hardly anything cuter than a baby sea otter, but they’re also incredibly fragile and vulnerable,” Otters » PAGE 4

CALIFORNIA

Panel rejects state-run health care

The lawmakers instead released a report recommending a variety of ways to lower health care costs. PAGE A6



SCHOOLS

Teacher accidentally fires gun in classroom

Seaside High instructor was a reserve Sand City officer talking on safety; one student injured by debris. PAGE A3

BUSINESS

Dow Jones 25,007.03 (-171.58)

S&P 500 2765.31 (-17.71)

Nasdaq 7511.01 (-77.31)

EDUCATION

Local schools ready for National Walk Out Day

Bay View Academy students to march to Monterey City Hall, deliver letters of concern to mayor. PAGE A2

INDEX Classified B6 | Sports..... B1 | Obituaries A6 | Opinion A8 | Puzzles/TV B8 | Weather B10 | Volume 96, Issue 293 |

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2017

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"These are the children and some are snuggled on to that we need to be protect the children of our he-

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Obituaries

Place your notice at www.baycreekobits.com

In Loving Memory



Paul Lucido

March 1, 1945 - December 26, 2017

A celebration of life for Paul Lucido will be held on Sunday March 18th at 2pm at the Bayonet and Black Horse Golf Club. Located at 1 McClure Way, Seaside, ca 93995.

For those of you who are able to and would like to come and say good bye to him, we would love to see you there.

Charles Kenneth Allford

Marina, California

"The light of our lives, Charles Allford, has decided to relinquish his presence and go on to eternal sleep. Family and friends do miss him terribly." The Allfords



Martin Grayson Moss
July 21, 1934 - March 5, 2018

Salinas

Martin G. Moss, a native of San Francisco, passed away at his home. He served in the US Air Force and was a property manager for many years.

Martin is survived by his wife, Rita Moss; his daughter, Michelle; his granddaughter, Lea, and his nephew, Brett. His brother, Thomas, preceded him in death in 2016.

Graveside service with military honors will take place this Thursday, March 15 at 11:00 at San Carlos Cemetery in Monterey. To sign Martin's guest book and leave messages for his family, please visit www.thepaulmortuary.com.



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The lawmakers instead released a report recommending a variety of ways to lower health care costs and reduce the ranks of the uninsured. It said creating government-run health care would be a long-term endeavor requiring new money and legislative staff and that such a plan would likely require approval from California voters and Congress.

Single-payer health care has become a rallying cry

Oters

FROM PAGE 1

she said. "This is an endangered species. We still only have 3,000 left."

Eszterhas takes her photos with a long lens from the Elkhorn Slough Safari boat. She said, to avoid harassing otters, you need to keep your distance and keep the number in your party down. Being close to the water, kayakers have a tendency to get too close to otters, she said, and having 273 out at once was a "recipe for disaster."

Eszterhas alerted the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service about the "Kayaking with Baby Otters" event. Otters are protected under the Marine Mammal Protection Act, and those caught harassing them can be subject to citations, fines and potentially jail time.

But what does it actually mean to "harass" a sea otter? Gena Bental, the program coordinator for Sea Otter Savvy, a group that aims to reduce human-caused disturbances to sea otters, took to the event page to make sure people knew. She said she has spoken up about big otter-viewing excursions before.

"Anybody can go any time...they don't need this kind of organized event to come down to Moss Landing" and see otters, she said. "There is no way, no matter how good their behavior is, they're going to go out in a group that large and not disturb wildlife — it's not physically possible given the layout of the slough."

On weekends, and especially holiday weekends, otters can be disturbed over

ple. It's poised to be a flashpoint in the race for governor among the Democratic candidates.

The report was prepared by two University of California professors and a private consultant at the best of an Assembly committee created last year by Rendon under pressure from critics after he chided the single-payer bill for lacking a way to cover the \$400 billion cost.

In the short-term, the report suggests creating a publicly run option for low-income patients on Medi-Cal, extending Medi-Cal to

access and affordability," Assemblyman Joaquin Arambula, a Fresno Democrat who was the committee's co-chairman, said in a statement. "This will allow us to make some immediate changes to expand coverage while we pursue long-term solutions."

The report angered the California Nurses Association, which developed SB562 and led protests of Rendon at the Capitol. Executive Director Bonnie Castillo called the report a "public disservice" and said the solutions it proposes "do nothing to address the

health care funds, payroll taxes and a sales tax.

Researchers noted several obstacles to advancing single-payer at the state level. California would need federal waivers — potentially including an act of Congress — to use Medicaid and Medi-Cal funds. State voters would need to approve tax hikes to get around a requirement nearly half of state revenue goes to education. And because the state can't run deficits, the system would need robust reserves to cover cost spikes or revenue shortfalls.



VERN FISHER — MONTEREY HERALD FILE

A sea otter floats in the Moss Landing Harbor.

20 times a day, she said. Kayakers should travel in groups of 10 or fewer, avoid circling otters or approaching them head on, and stay alert for changes in otter behavior. Above all, each kayaker must keep their distance — at least 100 feet (roughly five kayak lengths) from the closest otter.

Mathew Hoff from Kayak Connection piped up online to press these points as well. Anyone renting from the store receives this information a number of times before ever getting in a boat, he said.

Bental encouraged those on the event page to visit <https://www.seaottersavvy.org/viewing-guidelines> to similarly prep themselves. However, she soon found that posts from Sea Otter Savvy were blocked on the page, and so took to her own personal account to spread the word via the comments. Bental said she was frustrated that the organization was blocked from sharing information with those who

might need it. When asked, Wagter said, "I didn't block anybody."

Even mild disturbances to otters can wreak havoc on their health, which is why Eszterhas, Bental and various locals voiced concern. Since sea otters have no blubber, they consume about 25 percent of their body weight each day to stoke their metabolism and stay warm. It takes a lot of energy to eat all those urchins. Sea otter moms expend twice as much energy hunting enough food to nurse and share with their pups. When they're not hunting, eating, or grooming themselves, otters sleep to build up their energy to start all over again. When kayakers wake up an otter with a splashing paddle or click of their camera, they are stealing the sleep it needs to survive.

Though it may have been a false scare, Eszterhas said she was glad to see locals rally to protect their

beloved wildlife. "What's personally been very lovely for me is just the amount of awareness our community has," she said. "The community is really coming together to make sure these other pups are not harassed, which is awesome. I love that."

Meanwhile, Wagter reflected on the unexpected outcry.

"It's amusing - I'm not super Facebook literate," he said. He usually marks events private by default and was unaware of might come of going public. "A friend of mine was like, 'People in China can see this,'" he laughed. Following the social media clapback, Wagter realized the cover photo he chose might have been just too cute for people to resist. It featured a mother otter floating on her back, nuzzling her fuzzy pup to sleep on her stomach.

"I'm fairly certain, if I hadn't put the picture, it wouldn't have gone viral."