

**Community Action Project and Calaveras Planning Coalition
Accomplishments In the Past Two Years Include:**

- June 2007 CAP and CPC members promoted and actively participated in the first round of Community Workshops on the General Plan held by the county.
- The Coalition presented two volumes of detailed input on the General Plan Baseline Report to the County and its Consultants. Comments and documents were submitted for preservation of open spaces, oak preservation, wilderness protection, preservation of natural habitat, and other areas.
- July The CPC facilitator and volunteers rallied to aid a CPC member organization to protect resources during the General Plan Update process. Community groups countywide unified in response to the concerns of an individual group.
- August The Coalition assisted the group Keep It Rural Calaveras in preparing a three-inch binder of comments on the Trinitas Golf Course Draft Environmental Impact Report. The CPC helped train the group and helped bring them up to speed in the land use process. (See appendix A, Letter from Keep It Rural, Calaveras.)
- The CPC facilitator led a group of more than 20 speakers (2/3 of all speakers) who spoke in favor of concurrently updating the Community Plans during the General Plan Update. The Board of Supervisors agreed (1) to have the Planning Department provide limited technical assistance to communities developing plans, (2) that Community Plans completed prior to the initiation of the General Plan EIR will be included in the General Plan Update, (3) that further assistance will be provided if the county receives grant funding, so that other communities can be prepared to adopt their community plans.
- September The Coalition got good press coverage after Supervisor Tom Tryon publicly attacked the CPC in the opinion page of the Calaveras Enterprise.
- Coalition representatives spoke on a Chamber of Commerce panel on growth and development.
- The Coalition started circulating a one page checklist and timeline to groups working on Community Plan Updates.
- October At a Board of Supervisors workshop on the General Plan vision the Planning Department expressed support for the Awahnee Principles: town-centered development, open space, surface-water supplied developments, balancing growth with infrastructure capacity, mixed use development, regions should be bounded by and provide a continuous system of greenbelt/wildlife corridors to be determined by natural conditions, and other smart growth principles even before CPC representatives spoke. The Calaveras Enterprise newspaper headline read, "A New vision for Calaveras: No more sprawl."
- November Mickey Williamson was hired by CAP as Coordinator, responsible for the day-to-day workings of the CPC. One of her first acts was to send out a letter to the county that successfully secured release of the Baseline Report prior to the next round of community workshops giving citizens more time to comment.
- CAP gathered members of the Coalition, Central Sierra Environmental Resource

Center, and Ebbetts Pass Forest Watch to begin drafting a Conservation Element.

December CAP held a retreat to develop better strategies to meet the organization's objectives and grant responsibilities. Among the areas prioritized were outreach, events, General Plan input, and education.

Coalition members publicized and participated in county-sponsored community visioning workshops for the General Plan update.

2008

February Keep It Rural Calaveras joined the Coalition. This is an important group fighting the development of a large golf course/resort in the western part of the county, which had flouted the most basic planning and conservation rules.

The Coalition and the Murphys Homeowners Association sponsored a scoping meeting in Murphys so that local citizens could voice their concerns regarding the Rocky Hills development project. Empowered local citizens held a field trip in March, and later composed a detailed scoping letter that was sent to the county, and to the relevant state agencies.

CAP/CPC Sent a letter to the Planning Commission urging them to develop better procedures to promote public participation in the development review process. This led to the formation of a committee that reviewed and adopted some improved procedures.

March In response to a Coalition request, the Board of Supervisors began posting documents related to agendas online so the public is better informed before meetings.

Submitted an approximately 100-page document (including attachments) of comments on the General Plan Draft Baseline Report to help to correct errors and to add documentation not included in the Report. Among the issues addressed were Land Use, Rural Landscapes, Natural Resources, and the importance of preserving forest lands as a key attraction of the county.

April Distributed General Plan surveys and questions for County Supervisor candidates from our booth at Earth Day in Angels Camp. CPC Facilitator Tom Infusino was the lunch hour speaker on the topic "Planning for the Future." A similar information booth was set up at the county Home and Garden show.

May CAP sent out a General Plan survey to some 1500 second homeowners in the county. This constituency owns property and pays taxes in the county, yet has few mechanisms to express their views on the future of the county. The survey showed that what matters most to these part-time residents are the same things that full-time residents value: the beauty of this foothill county, the open spaces, the rural feel, and the rich Gold Rush history.

Sent out a letter on the Ventana Development Project to Calaveras County Planning. In addition to raising substantive concerns regarding wastewater, parks, traffic, air quality, flooding, and global climate change, the letter suggested better ways to involve the public early in the planning process, so that such concerns can be addressed in a timely fashion.

June 2008 to June 2009

During this period, the prior two years of effort in organizing, educating, strategizing, public speaking, outreaching, coalition building, media relations, and fundraising began to pay major dividends.

CAP/CPC staff and volunteers improved inter-group communications through web site modifications, newsletters, and through weekly CPC e-mails of important news and upcoming events. CPC staff increased the knowledge base of member groups through a series of luncheon meetings with planning and government officials. CAP/CPC staff developed a good working relationship with the local media. Member groups relied less on CPC technical staff to lead work projects, freeing up staff to provide technical support to a broader range of activities. CPC staff and member groups garnered the attention of outside agencies with jurisdiction over local resources.

As a result, the combination of media attention, skilled advocacy, and outside agency support helped us to make great progress in local land use issues and conservation.

June Coalition participants began to take larger roles in local government. Three participants are on a Citizen's Committee for Municipal Service Reviews.

The Coalition completed a planning document outlining its mission, goals, objectives, and action steps. Among the Land Use Principles adopted are: that project design should work with the contour of the land, preserve physical features and protect important wildlife habitat; and that plans should protect key wildlife habitat, visual quality, agricultural lands and open space resources.

Key ranchers in the county presented to the CPC a draft of an Agricultural Element for the General Plan. There is a good deal of overlap between the concerns and positions of the ranchers and those of the Coalition and an important basis for working together as allies has been established.

July About 15 CAP and Coalition members attended the Calaveras Economic Revitalization Summit. Members helped shape the positions and priorities taken at the conference on several of the main issues, including Agriculture and Natural Resources.

The Planning Commission adopted new policies for conducting their meetings, reflecting suggestions for balanced and detailed debate that the Coalition and its members have been making.

In response to very strong attacks by the development community, leading to the firing of the Community Development Director, Coalition Members took the high ground in letters to the editor, speeches to the Board of Supervisors, and a paid advertisement calling for a return to civil discourse, public processes, and land use planning that benefits everyone. Ultimately, the editor of the Calaveras Enterprise echoed these themes and wrote his own editorial in support of land use planning and good government. In the months that followed, the increasing public attention on planning issues began to change county actions for the better. This was a key turning point.

August After written and verbal comments from both the CPC and the county water district, the Board of Supervisors approved the public development of a Water

Element for the General Plan Update. This began a seven-month public process that led to the completion of the Water Element. Both CPC staff and members were active in this process.

After two rounds of public workshops in which CPC members actively participated, the general plan consultants released a very good report that reflected our input: the Issues & Opportunities Report, the Draft Vision Statement and Guiding Principles. The text of some the Guiding Principles was a paraphrase of the CPC's smart growth development principles.

CPC member group MyValleySprings.com gave an excellent workshop on Conservation Easements and the Williamson Act. This was another step in the effort to build good relations with the agricultural community.

The Planning Commission voted down the proposal for three new billboards in Valley Springs on a 4 to 1 vote, against staff recommendation for project approval. This was the first in a series of controversial projects for which the Planning Commission and the Board of Supervisors would respond to thorough, well researched, passionate, and well presented public testimony, well covered by the media.

September As a result of excellent communications by CPC member MyValleySprings.com, Caltrans appealed the Planning Commission's approval of a commercial project in Valley Springs that included the relocation of a State Highway. This was significant because it indicated that there are outside agencies with jurisdiction that are going to weigh in on bad county planning processes that ignore their sound recommendations.

The CAP website was revised providing a format that allowed the CPC to provide regular updates of its work, and to archive its comment letters to the county on planning issues.

CPC members began to attend and participate in the Water Element Public Workshops. Without their participation, the smart growth perspective would not have been broadly represented.

CPC member Keep It Rural Calaveras submitted voluminous comments on the Trinitas Revised EIR. Tom Infusino inserted the legal citations. KIRC assembled the final document for submission. The comments were specific, detailed, and accurate in their criticism of the EIR and the project, and the county simply had no response to the bulk of the comments. Because construction of this golf-course-centered residential development was begun before the developer even applied to for the necessary government approvals and also resulted in well problems for his farming and ranching neighbors, and because of the unpermitted destruction of wetlands and wildlife habitat, this project became a symbol of what was wrong with the county's old "hands off" attitude toward land use planning.

November The November CPC meeting hosted members of the Agricultural Coalition and provided input on their draft Agricultural Element for the General Plan. This was an important outreach effort. They saw how much we shared their concerns.

December The huge Ponte Ranch development in Valley Springs withdrew its application

after the landowner refused to renew the developer's option on the land. This was a major victory for CPC member MyValleySprings.com that has been actively working for an improved community plan for Valley Springs.

- Jan 2009 CPC member Wallace Citizens Serving Residents was successful in exposing problems with the processing of a proposed subdivision. The issues of habitat loss for the tiger salamander and uncertain water rights convinced the Board of Supervisors to require an environmental impact report for the project. The developers withdrew their application.
- Coalition members grouped their detailed comments on the draft Water Element, submitted them, and issued a press release about the comments.
- February CAP staff and CPC members testified before the Board of Supervisors in support of the Draft Agricultural Element presented by the Agricultural Coalition. The Agricultural Coalition greatly appreciated our support.
- CPC staff sent in a letter of support for the draft Water Element, expressing hope that it would be improved by future staff, consultant, public, and environmental review.
- March The draft San Andreas Mobility Plan was unveiled. CPC member Citizens for San Andreas participated in this planning process to create a more walkable and attractive downtown.
- Ward LaValley, the main founder of the CPC returned as CAP organizer and took over responsibilities for the CAP/CPC Newsletter. (<http://www.calaverascap.com/julynewsletter.pdf>). His energy, research skills and sense of local politics has helped reinvigorate the Board.
- East Bay Municipal Utility District held a hearing in San Andreas on its proposal to raise Pardee Dam which would eliminate a local historic bridge over the Mokelumne River and flood the Electra recreation area (popular for fishing, rafting, kayaking, and wildflower viewing). As a result of a coordinated effort of CPC member group the Foothill Conservancy and other groups and the communities in Supervisorial District 2, 185 people attended and 30 spoke in opposition to Pardee expansion. CAP Co-Chair John Trinkl testified at an EBMUD hearing in Oakland against the proposed reservoir expansion.
- April CPC staff provided member groups with requested educational materials including an overview of California water law and materials used to train Planning Commissioners.
- After hearing a full afternoon of testimony on the Trinitas project April 14, on April 28 the BOS voted 3 to 2 to direct staff to prepare the paperwork for denial of the Trinitas project in its entirety. The 3 supervisors justified their votes on three different grounds: 1) the development was and would conflict with neighboring agricultural uses and therefore was not appropriate for the agricultural zone, 2) the project's economic benefits did not outweigh its significant environmental harm, and 3) everybody must follow the same development rules, and those that ignore the rules up front should not benefit from that, and cannot be trusted to follow the rules in the future. This was unprecedented. The formal vote denying the project was taken on May 5. This

was a major victory. If the project had been approved, it would have set a very dangerous precedent for planning and for the future of the county.

May

CAP/CPC staff sent in a letter on the East Bay MUD 2040 Plan DEIR, discouraging their plan to raise Pardee Dam and to divert more water from the Mokelumne River, and encouraging them to invest in water conservation in Calaveras County to enhance their supply.

CPC staff sent a letter to the BOS, and CPC members testified before the BOS, to encourage them to coordinate transportation funding efforts with the update of the General Plan, and to use smart growth land use principles to reduce the need for expensive road expansions. This was an important opportunity to demonstrate that smart growth results in lower public works costs for infrastructure. The fiscal benefits of a good general plan will be a key theme in our future efforts.

June

After the problems processing with the Wallace Lake Estates and Trinitas projects, the County Planning Department is now telling project applicants with endangered species habitat issues to go the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and work out project design and mitigation issues up front.