

**Community Action Project**  
PO Box 2633,  
Murphys, CA 95247  
telephone: (209) 728-0710  
email: CAP@goldrush.com  
www.CalaverasCAP.com

# CAP/CPC Newsletter

Community Action Project / Calaveras Planning Coalition

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### Calaveras Planning Coalition Members

- Calaveras Child Care Council
- Central Sierra Environmental Resource Center
- Citizens for San Andreas
- CAP
- Ebbetts Pass Forest Watch
- FOCUS
- Foothill Conservancy
- Keep It Rural, Calaveras
- Mountain Ranch Community Club
- Murphys Homeowners Protection Alliance
- MyValleySprings.com
- Paloma Community Group
- Wallace Citizens Serving Residents

#### Associate Members

- Frank Meyer

*Supervisors Get Updated on General Plan Update...*

## General Plan Alternatives to Be Unveiled

Plan to Offer Individual Landowner's Input Proposed by Coalition Facilitator Tom Infusino

IN a nearly packed Study Session Feb. 2, Calaveras County Supervisors learned that the three alternative scenarios for future growth in Calaveras County that are part of the General Plan Update (GPU) process are about to be made public.

Rik Keller of Mintier & Harnish, accompanied by Larry Mintier and County Planning Director George White, told the Supervisors that the Alternatives "present a comparative evaluation of land use alternatives for Calaveras County out to the year 2035." Saying that the technical aspects of preparing the Alternatives were "pretty much done," Keller indicated that release of the draft Alternatives was imminent, and that a third set of public workshops to discuss them would be conducted in March.

Keller said that following the selection of the Preferred Alternative would be the preparation of the draft Policy Document, which would then be reviewed during another round of public workshops. Keller indicated that the overall schedule called for the entire General Plan update process to be concluded by February 2011. The presentation notes, which include the entire current

revised schedule and other important information about the GPU, are available on the CAP/CPC website (<http://www.CalaverasCAP.com>). Video of the entire Study Session is also available on the CAP/CPC website.

Issues related to the inclusion of the various community based planning and visioning efforts, including those communities in the Calaveras Planning Coalition, were raised. Some citizens voiced concerns that the consultant's efforts to standardize the Community Plans would jeopardize the separate and distinct visions as expressed by various communities. Larry Mintier then took the microphone

*Continued on page 2*

### Friends of John Trinkl Look Forward to His Recovery

John Trinkl, Co-Chair of the Community Action Project and President of Ebbetts Pass Forest Watch, is recovering from a heart attack suffered late last month.

All of us involved with CAP/CPC send him and his family our warmest best wishes, and pray for his continued recovery.

## Progress in Wallace

by Pat Bailey, President, WCSD  
Board of Directors

In 2005 my neighbor, Jackie Neill and I became concerned about our community. We were concerned about the huge development planned for our neighborhood, we were concerned about water availability, and we were especially concerned about the way our water/sewer district was being run. Eventually, through a fellow resident my friend got in touch with Bob Dean and he pointed the way to the Calaveras Planning Coalition. We joined the CPC and found a voice for our concerns and also many other citizens from many places in the county with similar woes.

The Calaveras Planning Coalition is an organization that facilitates, with an emphasis on democracy, ways to empower communities by providing support and assistance helping citizens to help themselves. We received education and support and we lent a hand to others in Calaveras County.

The result of first contact with Bob Dean is now evident in Wallace. Last year we mounted an energetic campaign to take back our community. We went door-to-door, we sent out mailers, and we posted signs. Come election day our slate of officers were swept into office by a landslide. The residents of Wallace Lake Estates voted to take back their District. We ran our campaign on "reining in expenses", therefore our first move was to go to Bob Dean and inquire about assistance from CCWD.

CCWD stepped up and is now running the facilities in Wallace. No, they did not gobble up a smaller district, what they did do is provide the expertise and manpower to bring our plants into compliance and get

the operation running smoothly and cost-effectively. They are doing this for much less than the old Board was paying for the prior operator and we are confident they have the know-how to do it right.

This is not the end of our struggles but a significant step forward. We owe a debt of gratitude to the Community Action Project and all the members of the Calaveras Planning Coalition. They listened to us, they advised us and they supported our efforts. The residents of Wallace Lake Estates owe CCWD a special thanks for seeing our need and agreeing to help with nothing to gain except the knowledge that they are helping fellow Calaveras County citizens.

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### Coalition Thanks

#### Supervisors for AB 811 Steps

(text of letter from Tom Infusino, Facilitator of  
the Calaveras Planning Coalition)

January, 2010

Dear Supervisors;

My name is Tom Infusino, and I am writing to you on behalf of the Calaveras Planning Coalition. The Coalition is a group of community organizations and individuals who want a healthy and sustainable future for Calaveras County. We believe that public participation is critical to a successful planning process. United behind eleven land use and development principles, we seek to balance the conservation of local agricultural, natural and historic resources, with the need to provide jobs, housing, safety, and services.

We are very pleased that you are taking the preliminary steps toward implementing AB 811 in Calaveras County. We feel the program has the potential to improve local energy conservation, and reduce consumers' energy costs during peak periods and

seasons.

We also think the program will provide new work for local contractors. As you know, the residents of Calaveras County are fortunate to be served by the members of the Central Sierra Ecological Business Association (CSEBA), who have the ability to install energy conservation improvements.

It was very encouraging to learn that a number of smaller jurisdictions will be working together to reduce the administrative costs implementing AB 811. This may be part of a trend toward such cost effective consolidation to help us weather these fiscally challenging times.

We also would like to thank you for pursuing AB 811 implementation, since it was one of the areas of agreement during the construction industry breakout session of the Economic Summit II, held by the Chamber of Commerce last year. As a County we will continue to make progress as we move our focus to implementing the things we agree on, rather than fighting over the things we do not.

Sincerely,  
Tom Infusino, Facilitator  
Calaveras Planning Coalition

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#### General Plan ... (continued)

and explained that while the General plan that contained the Community Plans would have common chapter headings, the separate communities would have separate sections within the General Plan with their own visions, goals, and map.

Comments and questions from both Supervisors and citizens concerned nearly every geographic area of the County.

One area that has drawn the most interest lately is Valley Springs, and

*General Plan (continued)*

the process now under way there to update the woefully outdated Valley Springs Community Plan (VSCP). Here, unlike anywhere else in the County, the process is being underwritten by a grant and is being conducted by separate consultants through the auspices of the Calaveras County Council of Governments (CCOG). This

to bat for their various communities – Mokelumne Hill, Mountain Ranch, Murphys, Douglas Flat, Copperopolis, and Arnold all had their advocates during the Study Session (as an incorporated city Angels Camp has its own General Plan).

Another perspective, however, was offered by Tom Infusino, Facilitator of the Calaveras Planning

received from Amador landowners, some of whom made proposals that already conformed to the draft General Plan.

District 2 Supervisor Steve Wilensky was “intrigued” by the idea, saying it would further democratize the process. During his remarks Planning Director White said that “he wasn’t sure they’d thought about it before,” but “wasn’t adverse to the idea.” White indicated that it was too late however, to initiate the process until after the draft EIR was prepared.

Infusino, graciously given another chance to speak by Board Chair Merita Callaway, explained that experience had shown that waiting until after the EIR was drafted was too late for the landowner’s input to be efficiently evaluated. “Waiting until the end (to get the landowner’s input),” said Infusino “was likely to delay the process with further environmental review.”

Be sure to check in with the [CAP/CPC website](#) often for updates, video, and other resources pertaining to the Calaveras County General Plan update.



Calaveras Board of Supervisors left: Tom Tryon, D4; Steve Wilensky, D2; Gary Tofanelli, D1; Merita Callaway, D3; Russ Thomas, D5

separate process, citizen driven out of necessity when the County would not provide assistance to any community plan process, drew criticism at the Study Session from Supervisor Tom Tryon, long a political foe of the CCOG.

The VSCP update process also drew criticism from some residents of Rancho Calaveras, a 3600 lot aging subdivision that is on the southern border of the current VSCP with its own Special Plan, a form of community plan. While sometimes obscured by *ad hominem* argument, the citizens of Rancho Calaveras seem to be primarily concerned that protections against certain types of land uses currently in the Special Plan will be weakened if Rancho Calaveras is included within the planning area of the VSCP.

In addition to Valley Springs, citizens and Supervisors alike went

Coalition, who offered up a plan that would offer each individual County landowner an opportunity to have input. Infusino explained how a process used successfully in Amador County could offer each Calaveras County landowner the chance to present a proposal for the future development of their property to the Planning Department to be included in the General Plan.

Infusino explained that in Amador County, after the land use alternatives were developed and a proposed map was prepared, landowners were given the opportunity to fill out a form detailing their plans. The Planning Department then looked at each landowner’s proposal to see if it conflicted with the draft General Plan, and made a recommendation to the Amador Board of Supervisors who had the final say. Infusino said that around 40 proposals were

**County Board of Supervisors**

**The Calaveras County Board of Supervisors** meets Tuesdays at 9:00 am in the Supervisors Chambers at Government Center, 891 Mountain Ranch Road, San Andreas. Agendas are available on the County’s website <http://co.calaveras.ca.us/cc/Departments/Supervisors/SupervisorsAgendaMinutes.aspx>

**Calaveras Planning Commission**

**The Calaveras County Planning Commission** meets every other Thursday at 9:00 am in the Supervisors Chambers at Government Center, 891 Mountain Ranch Road, San Andreas. Agendas are available on the County’s website <http://co.calaveras.ca.us/cc/Departments/Supervisors/SupervisorsAgendaMinutes.aspx>

Commentary

## Looking Forward

by Ward La Valley

& Mickey Williamson

The year 2010 is promising to be an important year for Calaveras County, as the process to update the County's General Plan heads into the meatiest and final phases. As such, it might be useful to look back briefly at where the CAP and the Coalition has been, and where we're going.

CAP, the Community Action Project, was formed in 2005 by Ebbetts Pass Forest Watch in part to promote greater citizen involvement in local government by encouraging public participation in an update to the General Plan. We reached out to elected officials and existing community groups, and as we learned more it soon became evident that Calaveras County was heading for trouble.

At that time the County was being bombarded with applications for more and more development, and, after already seeing the population nearly double during the previous ten years, there was widespread concern that the County could not afford to continue down the same path.

During these boom times, County government failed to plan for the future. Moreover, for years it appeared as if it was failing to plan for the future *on purpose*.

Today our concerns have unfortunately turned out to be well founded. Regardless of whether it was through neglect or deliberate policy, not planning for the future turned out to be a very bad idea.

In 2010 Calaveras County finds itself in a particularly bad situation. Some estimate that it would cost a billion dollars to bring the County's infrastructure up to where it should be right now, let alone to a place where

it can accommodate any real growth. And because our economy was based on an unsustainable housing bubble, unemployment is higher here than almost anywhere else.

It has been four years since CAP and the Calaveras Planning Coalition respectfully asked the Board of Supervisors to undertake a comprehensive update of the General Plan with meaningful public participation. During those four years the County's response has become more receptive. In every election campaign for Supervisor since 2006, almost every candidate said that updating the General Plan was a high priority, and today a clear majority of the Supervisors have made it clear they place the highest priority on updating the General Plan.

CAP believes in public participation. CAP advocates active public participation in all aspects of government, and through organizing the Calaveras Planning Coalition CAP has promoted active public participation in the General Plan update process. CAP believes that communities have the right to decide for themselves how, and how much, they choose to grow. CAP, as facilitator and member of the Calaveras Planning Coalition, supports the eleven [Land Use and Development Principles](#) that have been adopted by numerous other community groups including the Amador Board of Realtors.

As part of CAP and the Coalition's commitment to public participation, we endorse the idea of offering to each and every Calaveras landowner the opportunity to submit their plans for the development of their property, if any, for consideration and possible inclusion as part of the General Plan.

Successfully undertaken in Amador County a few years ago, this process

*Continued on page 5*

Commentary

## Valley Springs: Where's the "Community" in Community Plan Update

by Muriel Zeller

*"Neither the country nor the society we built out of it can be healthy until we stop raiding and running, and learn to be quiet part of the time, and acquire the sense not of ownership but of belonging."*

*– Wallace Stegner*

I am a placed person, intimately tied to the landscape of the Central Sierra Nevada foothills. My intimacy comes from working cattle for nearly forty years, which caused me to love the land and its inhabitants, domestic and wild, human and nonhuman. I am, and will always be, rural at heart. I belong to the land.

My sense of belonging prompted me to volunteer for MyValleySprings.com (MVS), a local non-profit organization, whose mission is "to promote responsible growth and development through public participation in community planning in order to preserve the quality of rural life in the greater Valley Springs area" located in the foothills of western Calaveras County. Since 2005, the intent of MVS has been to create a public process with broad-based participation that would lead to a community planning document that truly represented the community as a whole.

To obtain \$250,000 in Caltrans grant and matching funds to update the Valley Springs Community Plan (VSCP), MVS partnered with the Calaveras Council of Governments, the regional transportation planning agency, the Calaveras County Planning Department, and the Local Government Commission, a private non-profit based in Sacramento which developed the smart growth Ahwahnee Principles, a set of guidelines designed to provide local

*Continued on page 5*

*Looking Forward (continued)*

involves informing landowners of their opportunity to fill out a form, detail their proposal, and submit it to the Planning Department as part of the Alternatives evaluation phase of the General Plan update.

This idea is fundamentally democratic, and offers individual landowners the opportunity to articulate their own personal vision for their property. In Amador County, this process was seen to be effective in short-circuiting some of the anger and confusion that always accompanies changes in land use priorities and designations. And as it turned out, of the approximately 40 landowners who filled out the form and submitted their proposals, many were already in conformance with the new guidelines.

Calaveras County, similar to Amador County in many ways, should learn from this example.

Finally, CAP understands that active public participation always carries with it active public debate. Citizens of various viewpoints and levels of understanding will sometimes disagree over issues. This is unavoidable.

But what we *must* avoid are the deliberate misrepresentations and guilt by association fallacies that have occurred in Valley Springs.

For those that are curious, neither CAP nor the member groups of the Calaveras Planning Coalition have any hidden agendas or alliances. CAP is not associated with anything having to do with the United Nations. We are no more socialist than anybody else who supports public safety, good roads, excellent schools, and a safe and adequate water supply.

It is within this context that CAP and the Coalition are hopeful that

differences between citizens of good will can be discussed and resolved respectfully. We understand that there are a very few that reject cooperation, reject compromise, reject community planning, reject progress, reject even hope, and these few voices often seek to drown out the voices of the majority. CAP urges citizens not to be intimidated by that small minority, and to celebrate the American values of democracy and civil discourse by helping in planning for a better future in Calaveras County.

In the year ahead CAP will continue to respectfully encourage Calaveras County to update the General Plan, we will continue to advocate for the Land Use and Development Principles, and we will continue working to bring about the widest possible public participation in the process.

*Where's the Community? (continued)*

elected officials everywhere with a vision for an alternative to urban sprawl and a means to implement that vision. The update process began in late 2008.

“Rural towns are at the very frontier of tomorrow’s sprawling development,”<sup>1</sup> particularly towns, like Valley Springs, which is within commuting distance of large urban areas in the Central Valley. The grant project was titled, *Rural Smart Growth: A Community-Based Plan for Valley Springs*. MVS supports the application of smart growth and sustainable development principles in our rural, unincorporated community insofar as their application is practical and relevant.

Basically, these principles promote a condensation of development in town centers with mixed uses and a gradually decreasing level of density radiating from the centers

to maximize the effectiveness of infrastructure such as roads, water delivery systems, and public services (which saves taxpayer dollars) and to minimize the loss of open space with its wealth of ecological and biological assets such as watershed protection, species habitat, and food production. Open space is crucial to retaining rural character.

Smart growth, while a change in the approach to planning since World War II, is actually a return to “towns of the type built earlier in this century – those compact, walkable communities where you could walk to the store and kids could walk to school, where there was a variety of housing types from housing over stores to single-family units with front porches facing tree-lined, narrow streets – these towns provided a life style that now seems far preferable to today’s neighborhoods.”<sup>2</sup> The original Valley Springs 18-block grid laid out in 1884 was an example of a traditional town, with high-density development concentrated in a community center that served the vast working landscapes surrounding it. But a return to tradition is being attacked in Valley Springs.

Opponents of the VSCP update insist that smart growth and sustainability are “buzz” terms that “refer to a political agenda, rather than an objectively sustainable form of development.”<sup>3</sup> They are taking their cues from a slick brochure prepared by a group called Freedom Advocates, who insist, “Sustainable Development is a plan for global control, using land and resource restriction, social transformation through education, and other programs to accomplish this end.”<sup>4</sup> Instead of engaging in civil discourse, opponents have become shrill, offensive, and their arguments

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**Where's the Community? (continued)**

have deteriorated into ranting. One has even compared the VSCP update process to the rise of Hitler and Nazi Germany, while suggesting that the Ahwahnee Principles “sounds like something out of Africa.”<sup>5</sup>

After an August 27, 2009 workshop at which the preferred boundary alternative was selected, attacks on the VSCP process intensified. It was alleged to be unrepresentative and conspiratorial with a pre-determined outcome, even though the project partners conducted an outreach campaign unprecedented in Calaveras County which included direct mailings, press releases (and subsequent news articles), a webpage, email alerts, flyers, posters, road signs, and the creation of a Stakeholders Advisory Committee. Opponents claimed there was insufficient notification that the community plan was being updated. (The general plan update has been underway since 2006 and includes community plans).

Opponents have called for a “vote of the people” on the preferred boundary alternative (which substantially expanded the existing boundary), in particular because it includes the largest subdivision in the area, Rancho Calaveras, in which land use is governed by a Special Plan that prohibits commercial development and multi-family housing.

Rancho has 3,615 lots ranging from one-half to three acres—low-density living. Despite repeated assurances to the contrary from project partners and County staff, the opponents continue to insist that inclusion of Rancho Calaveras in the community plan boundaries will mean the end of its Special Plan.

Many of those who oppose the plan live outside of Rancho Calaveras (and some even live outside the proposed boundary alternative), but appear to

be using Rancho as a stalking horse to advance their political agenda, which seeks to undermine the very notion of planning, especially as embodied by land use designation and zoning. They want to elevate private property rights above all others instead of working together to achieve a balance between the rights of the individual and the right of the community to determine its character, which was confirmed by the Supreme Court in *Village of Euclid, Ohio versus Ambler Realty Company* in 1926.

Opponents claim to know the “facts,” like a new vision for the community would increase taxes and create new assessment districts, even though the community will pay for increases in infrastructure and services with or without an updated plan, and new assessment districts require a two-thirds majority vote of those being assessed. They completely overlooked the fact that an updated community plan has the potential to maximize the efficiency of infrastructure and services and, ultimately, reduce the cost to taxpayers. A well-planned community also has the potential to attract retail and commercial business and facilitate development with clear guidelines and balance development with the retention of rural character.

Opponents say they want to preserve rural character, which, apparently, means more low-density development like Rancho Calaveras, but if the entire west county is covered with “ranchettes,” it will no longer be ranches. A concentration of rooftops in community centers is far preferable to sprawling low-density development that consumes true open space.

What remains to be seen is whether those opposed to the Valley Springs Community Plan update are representative of the larger

community or just the small group of radicals they appear to be. Along with the opposition, there has always been support, but the supporters have been less vocal.

What is still most important is that the community takes an interest in itself, and there is broad and civil participation, so the process is not dominated by whoever yells the loudest. I'd like to see a lot more people acting like they *belong* to this community and this place--to be, as Wallace Stegner said, the “lovers of known earth, known weathers, and known neighbors both human and nonhuman.”

(Notes)

<sup>1</sup> Wells, Barbara, Smart Growth at the Frontier: Strategies and Resources for Rural Communities, p. 3, Northeast-Midwest Institute, 2002. <sup>2</sup> Corbett, Judith and Velasquez, Joe, “The Ahwahnee Principles: Toward More Livable Communities,” Western City Magazine, September 1994 <sup>3</sup> Understanding Sustainable Development—Agenda 21, p. 4, prepared by Freedom Advocates, revised 2007. <sup>4</sup> *Ibid*, p. 1.

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## Did You Know?

Video of the most recent Planning Commission meeting is available on the CAP/CPC website as well as archives going back to May 2009?

In addition, video of meetings of the Board of Supervisors pertaining to the General Plan update is also available. [Check it out!](#)

The CAP/CPC Newsletter is produced by the Community Action Project, whose fiscal sponsor is [Ebbetts Pass Forest Watch](#). For more information please contact CAP@goldrush.com. Thank you.

# Sierra Green Days

Vibrant Health, Homes and Community

March 19 - 21, 2010, Ironstone Vineyards, Murphys CA

<http://www.foothillsustainability.org/PUBLICITY/GreenDays.html>

**Sierra Green Days** is a three-day sequence of events sponsored by the Health and Wellness and CSEBA (Central Sierra Ecological Building Association) seed groups of Focus (Foothill Collaborative for Sustainability).

The three days highlight the diversity of goods and services in our central Sierra Nevada region focused on sustainable health care, eating and growing green, building and buying green.

***Come join the fun in a festival atmosphere with music, speakers, booths, free demonstrations, kid's activities, raffle prizes, a dinner and more!***

-> Friday, March 19 - Green Health: An Educational and Experiential Health and Wellness Symposium – “It Isn’t Either/or” – The Synergy of Both: Bridging Holistic Health Care and Western Medicine

- 1-5 pm: A Health and Wellness seed group event with stimulating topics for educational panels and opportunities to meet local practitioners in a fun and interactive venue. Panel topics include: Holistic View of Wellness, and Natural Approaches to Nourishment – Nature, Movement and Food.
- 5:30-7:30 pm: – Sierra Green Days Kick-Off Event: Reception with entertainment.

-> Saturday, March 20 and Sunday March 21 – Green health, home and lifestyle

- 10am-4pm both days: The Central Sierra Ecological Building Association (CSEBA), will host two days featuring businesses and services that include healthy green design, building and products, energy efficiency, solar energy, gardening and more.

-> Saturday Only, 6 PM – Fund Raising Dinner to Support the Sierra Green Movement

- Local and seasonal menu with local presenters and a special keynote speaker on local and regional transitions to the new energy economy.

-> Sunday, March 21 – Green Community: A Day of Celebration – The Soul and Spirit of Community

- 10am-4pm: An all day Spring Equinox event of rebirth and renewal, including a community circle, tree planting, seed planting, theatre, art, music, kid activities and a special World Spirit Celebration with representatives from the major world spiritual traditions. The focus is on bringing together diverse community groups and individuals to celebrate our common ground, literally, the Earth.
- Local musicians include ***Still Bill*** and more.