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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

EBMUD Okays Controversial Plan for New Pardee Dam

by Tom Infusino
Facilitator, Calaveras Planning Coalition

Despite a wave of public support to maintain the free flowing sections Mokelumne River, on the evening of October 13 a sharply divided Board of Directors for the East Bay Municipal Utility District voted 4 to 2 to approve a plan to build a new Pardee Dam.

The dam could inundate part of the popular Electra Recreation Area of the Mokelumne River up to 1000 feet upstream from the Highway 49 Bridge. To add insult to injury for the dozens of up-country residents and public officials who expressed their support to maintain the free flowing sections of the river, two EBMUD directors said that they needed to keep the dam in the plan to meet the needs of up-country water agencies who have failed to plan well for their future water needs.

Evidently those EBMUD Board members had not read their own environmental impact report that clearly stated that the 2040 Water Supply Management Plan "is not intended to address water supply or infrastructure needs in Amador and Calaveras Counties."

The new dam is one of many project components in EBMUD's plan to ensure that it can meet 90% of the water demands of its customers even in the harshest and most prolonged drought conditions. Planning, design, and environmental review for the dam could begin in 2015, the final construction decisions are expected in 2023, and the dam could be operational by 2030.

Depending on the final configuration of the new dam, it could inundate the historic Middle Bar Bridge, turn the Electra and Middle Bar whitewater runs into a lake, preclude body contact recreation along those reaches, scower the wildflower-covered

river banks leaving behind a barren "bathtub ring," and drown the sites used by Native Americans for gathering willow shoots and medicinal plants.

Prior motions to remove the dam project from the 2040 Water Supply Management Plan, and to increase Pardee Reservoir capacity without raising the water level, deadlocked on votes of 3 to 3. EBMUD Board President Doug Linney spoke forcefully in support of his motion to keep the new Pardee dam out of the water supply management plan. He said the Pardee Expansion is "Out of synch with the times we're in now and where we will be to 30 years." "It will be an albatross around our neck, a symbol of everything the East Bay Municipal Utility District is not. Taking it off the table forces us to focus on the other solutions. This is about who we are as an organization."

In a last minute effort to soften the blow, the EBMUD Board voted 6 to 0 to work to achieve Wild and Scenic Designation for "segments" of the Mokelumne River. The effect of that resolution is still unclear, since Congressional approval of the BLM recommended designation would prevent EBMUD from carrying out its plan to flood the river canyon.

Despite the heavy rains, demonstrators had gathered early that morning outside the EBMUD headquarters in downtown Oakland to express their point of view with signs and chants to EBMUD and to the media. They chanted, "Fish gotta swim, rivers gotta flow, new Pardee, just say no!" The story was reported on the evening news by both the CBS and ABC TV News stations in the Bay Area.

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EBMUD (continued)

Upcountry river advocates were not alone. 16 of the people who spoke in favor of maintaining the free flowing sections of the Mokelumne River during the EBMUD Board meeting identified themselves as EBMUD customers.

They provided a laundry list of other water supply enhancement and demand reduction alternatives that EBMUD could pursue instead of the Pardee expansion. This group included one woman who earlier in the day had climbed up the exterior of the EBMUD office building, and placed a red slash across its oval Pardee Dam insignia. "We flush fresh Mokelumne River water literally down the toilet, while there are salmon ceasing to breathe," she said.

During public testimony, Calaveras Planning Coalition facilitator Tom Infusino spoke at the request of the Foothill Conservancy, a member of the Coalition. "This EIR was doomed from the start. It's a simple case of garbage in, garbage out," he said, after delivering a binder full of evidence for the record.

Infusino concluded by saying, "You should have followed the advice in the editorials in the Times and the Tribune. You should have taken a break to listen to your opponents, and to resolve your differences with them, before you made this decision. In the years to come I will remind you that you had that opportunity, and you will regret having let it slip through your fingers today."

As reported in a prior issue of this newsletter, public hearings on the dam proposal in Amador and Calaveras County last spring were packed with a wide range of supporters for maintaining the free flow sections of the river. On March 30, over 186 people crowded the San Andreas Town Hall to object to the East Bay MUD dam proposal. Those people included local

public officials, parents and grandparents, Native Americans, conservation advocates, and people opposed to the condemnation of private property by the government. On that night over 30 people spoke in favor of maintaining the free flowing sections of the river and its picturesque canyon.



The dam proposal also garnered the attention of numerous public entities and officials who sent letters expressing great concerns or outright opposition to the dam proposal. This diverse group of officials includes Dan Lungren (R-Gold River), Assemblymember Alyson Huber (D-Lodi), Assembly Natural Resource Committee Chair Nancy Skinner (D-Berkeley), and Senator Loni Hancock (D-Berkeley).

Public entities expressing great concern or opposition include the County of Amador, the City of Richmond, the City of Jackson, the City of Ione, the City of Plymouth, the City of Sutter Creek, the Amador Water Agency, the Amador County Recreation Agency, the U.S. Bureau of Land Management, and the National Marine Fisheries Service.

Calaveras County District 2 Supervisor Steve Wilensky, an opponent of the Pardee expansion dam that would be located in his district, responded when told about the decision. "The EBMUD board has shown ... disregard for the people of this region, and their promises for future collaboration ring hollow in light of their actions yesterday."

Foothill Conservancy Executive Director Chris Wright said "We're clearly unhappy with the Pardee result," Wright said. "EBMUD ignored overwhelming opposition from its own constituents as well as local, state and federal elected officials, organizations, and businesses in approving a plan that could destroy miles of the Mokelumne River."

For more information please visit www.foothillconservancy.org

Hurry Up & Wait...

In a Hurry, Supervisors Vote to Send Draft Housing Element to State

But First, Citizen Concerns over Mistakes Prompt County Review

At their November 3, 2009 meeting in San Andreas, Calaveras County Supervisors voted 3-1-1 to send a draft update of the County's Housing Element to the State of California's Dept. of Housing for review. First District Supervisor Gary Tofanelli was absent. Voting in the majority were Supervisors Callaway, Thomas, and Wilensky. Fourth District Supervisor Tom Tryon voted 'no'.

The Housing Element is the only General Plan element that requires specific approval by a State agency, and Calaveras County is out of compliance with the normal deadlines for review and update of its Housing Element.

The Housing Element is reviewed by the State for its goals and policies in promoting an adequate supply of housing for persons of different income levels. The goals are based on a Regional Housing Needs Plan (RHNP), which is prepared by the Central Sierra Planning Council. According to the Background Report,

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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>

Housing Element (continued)

“... State law requires that the RHNP (Regional Housing Needs Plan) promote the following objectives: increase the housing supply and the mix of housing types, tenure, and affordability; promote infill development and socioeconomic equity; protect environmental and agricultural resources; encourage efficient development patterns; promote an improved intraregional balance between jobs and housing; and balance the distribution of households by income category....”

“The Central Sierra Planning Council (CSPC) adopted the 2007-2014 Regional Housing Needs Plan for Local Governments of Central Sierra Counties of Alpine, Amador, Calaveras and Tuolumne in October 2008. State law requires that the RHNP quantifies each jurisdiction’s share of the regional housing need through the Regional Housing Need Allocation (RHNA)....”

“The core of the RHNA is a series of tables that indicate for each jurisdiction the distribution of housing needs for each of four household income groups (i.e., very low, low, moderate, and above moderate).”

-- *Public Review Draft of Housing Element, Background Report, Section 5-4 “Future Needs Assessment”, page 51*

The Supervisor’s meeting was highlighted by both a withering critique of the Background report by Diane Keane of San Andreas, and an enlightening discussion on whether the Housing Element should include a study of “inclusionary housing”.

Referring to a letter she had written to the State, the Planning Commission, and the Supervisors, Ms. Keane said she had conducted a comprehensive review of the Background Report and had identified many glaring errors and omissions. These included dozens of parcels listed as vacant that in fact either already had buildings on them, or were otherwise already in use, for instance, as cemeteries. In addition, Ms. Keane asked the Supervisors when they intended to comply with various State laws related to housing, and “get serious” about doing something to meet the housing needs of moderate to lower income levels.

The “inclusionary housing” discussion related to the section of the draft wherein the County, as part of its overall strategy to meet its goals to provide affordable housing, is promising to commission a

study in the “2012 - 2013 timeframe”. It should be noted that the language calling for the study, Program H-2.7 in the Policy Document, was changed shortly before the meeting and the change was characterized as intended to address the concerns of developers.

Paul Stein, a former District 2 Supervisor who now represents the interests of mega developer Castle & Cooke, told the Supervisors that although he appreciated the Planning Director’s watering down the language related to the study, he was still adamantly opposed to any “inclusionary” policies affecting developers other than a comprehensive fee on all residential building permits.

During the Supervisor’s discussion prior to voting, twenty-five year incumbent Supervisor Tom Tryon objected to the entire process of preparing the Housing Element, describing it as a “subsidization scheme” and saying that “government doesn’t owe everybody a home.”

Supervisor Wilensky thanked the public and others who had worked hard on the document, describing it as an “integrated set of strategies.” Wilensky said that economic development was being held back in the County by an insufficient supply of “workforce housing.” Wilensky said he agreed with Tryon that government “shouldn’t be responsible” for providing affordable housing, but that “the role of government is to identify policies that benefit the public.”

Supervisor Thomas said that while he was probably against “inclusionary housing,” he nevertheless supported sending the document along to the State, and said that he wanted to see the results of the study before finally making up his mind on the issue.

Regarding the Inclusionary Housing study, long time Supervisor Merita Callaway indicated she would rather the Board decide the issue now, and not wait years for “another study.” Callaway told the Supervisors “... if we as a County are saying we don’t want to do this, let’s just say we don’t want to because we don’t want Paul Stein coming in front of us.” Despite expressing these and other misgivings, because of the interests of time Callaway voted to submit the document.

But Wait....

When asked two days later at a meeting of the Planning Commission, Planning Director White informed the Commission

and the public that the Draft Housing Element had not, in fact been hustled off to the State. Generally referring to “questions” that had come up from “the public”, White told the Commissioners that the Draft was undergoing revisions.

White was not asked whether this revised draft would be available for public review, or whether the revisions would prompt another hearing by the Supervisors before transmittal to the State for review.

Economic Element Report Highlighted at Chamber Econ Summit 2.0

The current process of updating the Calaveras County General Plan took another small step forward last October 15th, as the Chamber of Commerce played host to the second Economic Summit at Calaveras High School in San Andreas.

The day long event of speeches, breakout groups, and lunch was highlighted by a review of the Economic Background Study conducted by Applied Development Economics (ADE), a consulting firm drafting the Economic Element that is likely to be included in the General Plan update.

CAO Reports

The review of the Background Study was preceded by a sobering review of County Government’s fiscal situation by Chief Administrative Officer Bob Lawton. Lawton, who surprised many by announcing his resignation two days earlier (see Updates, page 6), told the approximately 75 persons in attendance that the County’s unemployment rate (as measured by the Federal Government) was a staggering 14.4 percent, the worst since 1993, and worse than neighboring counties Amador (12.3%) and Tuolumne (12.9%).

Lawton said that at precisely the time that demand for virtually all County services was increasing, General Fund revenues were declining due to the burst of the housing bubble and steep declines in real estate values. Lawton observed that today’s constraints on basic services – including public safety, public health, and planning – inhibit growth.

While predicting that the tax roles would decline by 5% in 2009, Lawton said that revenues from the TOT (Transient

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Economic Summit (continued)

Occupancy Tax) tax on tourists, while just a fraction of the total, were the one revenue source that was holding up during the downturn.

Lawton concluded his remarks by giving two pieces of advice to the Summit. First, he said, Calaveras County should strive for a more diverse economy that is less vulnerable to volatility in the economy.

Secondly, Lawton said, the Supervisors must not (again) fail to build adequate reserves when times get better.

Economic Background Report

The Summit was guided through the Economic Background report by Trish Kelly of ADE. Ms. Kelly told the Summit that the purpose of the Economic Element was to define the strategies, goals, and policies for economic development, and that a key goal was a more diversified economy for Calaveras County. Among the highlights of the Report were:

1. While the rate of population growth has declined since 2006, Calaveras County's population has more than doubled since 1980 from around 20,000 to around 46,000 today. The migration consists mainly of retirees, but also a surprising number of younger professionals who are attracted by the natural beauty of the County. The report indicates that Calaveras County has, in addition to lots of laid off construction workers, commuters, and retirees, some 3,637 self-employed entrepreneurs. The report suggests that 65% of the potential labor force is employed.

2. Incomes in Calaveras County today are lower by 25% to 33% than State averages across the employment spectrum, and poverty rates are relatively higher also.

3. The Travel & Leisure industry accounted for \$153 million in "direct spending" in Calaveras County. Travel & Leisure is the largest non-governmental sector of the Calaveras economy measured in jobs. Many new jobs in the T&L sector are relatively higher wage. Special events play an important role in attracting visitors and building the travel & leisure industry.

4. The category Natural Resource Industries, which includes agriculture, forestry, fishing, and mining, is "in transition due to changing demographics, regional population growth, weather conditions including drought, changes in commodities markets, the housing downturn, interest in value-added products and services, and

linkage with the Travel & Leisure sector of the economy." In 2008, the total value of agricultural production in County was around \$20 million, down 6% from 2007.

5. Gaps in the retail spectrum in Calaveras County and large numbers of workers commuting to work outside Calaveras County result in loss of taxable sales; total taxable retail sales are declining, but evidence points to taxable retail sales by visitors holding more steady.

6. Between 2000 and 2007, Calaveras County issued almost double the number of residential building permits than neighboring Amador and Tuolumne counties; Ninety percent (90%) of construction valuation was for residential; nineteen percent (19%) of this new housing stock was estimated to be affordable by lower income households. Indicating severe supply and demand imbalances, the median sales price of a single family residence dropped by 1/3 from \$378,000 in 2006 to \$250,000 in late 2008.

7. issues inhibiting economic development include:

- a) availability / adequacy of water and waste water infrastructure; fragmentation
- b) "insufficient clarity" in permit process
- c) backlog of development applications submitted during 2000 to 2007
- d) lack of workforce housing – even with price drop many including nurses, teachers, and firefighters cannot afford housing in Calaveras
- e) Calaveras County does not currently meet air quality attainment standards and will need to implement measures to do so
- f) gaps in availability of high speed internet inhibit entrepreneurship
- g) there is "... insufficient funding for transportation improvements to accommodate growth"

8. New opportunities for economic collaboration exist, specifically in the areas of travel & leisure and value-added agriculture. Opportunities also exist to take advantage of "new policy initiatives and market trends for sustainability and clean technologies across all industries..."

9. Calaveras County is in a "good position to benefit from State and national programs."

Representatives of ADE indicated they did not know when the draft of the Economic Element will be finalized and made available to the public for review.

Among the speakers were 2nd District Supervisor Steve Wilensky, who reported to the group on his work on the Amador-Calaveras Consensus group, a project aiming to generate local jobs and reduce fire danger by clearing forest underbrush, and utilizing the by-products in a number of productive ways.

Later, the Summiteers separated into working groups, each tackling a different economic sector, for the first of two "breakout sessions". Each group was under instruction to absorb what had been said thus far, brainstorm together, and then agree on three to five specific recommendations or suggestions that would highlight issues and encourage economic growth in that sector.

Rico Oller Gives Keynote

After lunch and between breakout sessions, the group heard a Keynote speech from Rico Oller. Mr. Oller, a former State Senator, State Assemblyman, and Republican candidate for Congress, is also a San Andreas businessman. Mr. Oller gave a direct and upbeat speech during which he asked the audience "how many of you were afraid this time last year?", alluding to the financial crises that dominated the news in October of 2008. Oller said that he certainly was frightened then, but wasn't frightened anymore.

Although Oller later criticized the Federal government's Troubled Asset Relief Program (TARP), a program some economists credit for restoring confidence to the country's credit markets and avoiding a comprehensive world-wide financial meltdown in October of 2008, Mr. Oller told the Summit an anecdote the point of which was that when things aren't working it sometimes pays to make changes, and if the changes start working then it probably isn't a good idea to go back to doing the things that weren't working.

Breakout Groups Report

Supervisor Gary Tofanelli presiding, the Summit concluded in the afternoon with presentations of each groups' action items.

The Agriculture & Forestry group identified as action items the lack of water distribution systems and other infrastructure, and the need for better coordination between water districts.. The group said there was a need to define the Chamber's role (if any) in water issues and that there was need for more coordination between water agencies, County government, and the private sector.

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Economic Summit (continued)

Encouraged by several representatives from Sierra Pacific Industries, the dominant logging firm in the Sierras, the group expressed the need for “recognition” of traditional extraction industries like logging and mining.

The Manufacturing group identified the need to bring the small manufacturing component of Calaveras County’s economy more into sharper focus. They found that there may be possibilities for County manufacturing firms to buy some of their raw materials from local providers. They recommended that representatives from manufacturing firms organize and provide input into the General Plan update. Possible partners include the Calaveras Winegrape Alliance, Columbia College, and the Calaveras Consensus group.

The Retail Services & Healthcare group had an extensive list of items centered around retail. First, the group recommended the creation of a County-wide Retail Merchant’s Association to better represent the retail sector. One of the first tasks of this Association would be compiling a census of existing retail services with a view to identifying gaps in the spectrum of goods and services provided locally. Using this census, the group would initiate a host of programs, including encouraging local businesses to fill the gaps, mentoring and educating in a “business adopts business” approach. The group advocated creating a County Economic Development Department with paid staff to be funded by an increase in the tourism-based TOT (Transient Occupancy Tax). Finally, the group boldly advocated setting up re-development agencies, long a contentious issue in Calaveras County.

The Travel & Leisure group focused on emphasizing development of the County’s abundant natural resources in the area of outdoor recreation. Specifically, the group advocated an increase in the TOT tax with a view to investing the revenue in developing the tourism industry locally. The group, agreeing with the findings of the Chamber’s first Economic Summit last year, recommended the County adopt policies to preserve the historic and natural resources of Calaveras County. Citing a promise to invest substantially in developing the resource by OARS (a leading travel and adventure rafting company headquartered in Calaveras County), the group recommended that the County take the lead in securing support for

white water rafting on the Mokelumne River in Calaveras County.

Also, citing statistics that indicate there are some 60 million owners of mountain bikes in the US, and looking at the economic successes of the city of Downieville, CA as an example in this area, the group recommended that efforts be made to develop biking trails in Calaveras County. Finally, the group advocated that more and better signage be developed and deployed to aid travelers driving from one County venue to another.

The Construction & Development group settled on three areas that “warrant movement”. The first was related to the backlog of development applications that arose during the housing bubble, and the group suggested that the Planning Department “triage” the processing of existing applications according to some undefined economic standards. Secondly the group advocated setting up a “work group” to work with the County and City of Angels Camp to look for grant money, especially in the area of “green” and environmentally conscious building. In this vein the group suggested hiring a lobbyist. Finally, the group advocated adopting a Master Plan for developing the County’s infrastructure, while at the same time emphasizing the need to continue processing development projects while the General Plan is being updated. Although not necessarily a consensus view of the group, Acting County Assessor Leslie Davis, speaking for the group, said that the County should update the General Plan as quickly as possible, and then go back and correct any mistakes that may be made later.

Conclusions

1. It’s Really Hard But We Have to Change to Diversify our Economy

Several conclusions emerged from the wealth of words and ideas produced by the Summit. The dominant theme was the interlocking conclusions of the need for change, in both process and outcomes, and the need for a more diversified economy. Calaveras County needs to look at doing things in new ways.

Since no one denies the benefits of a diversified economy that is less vulnerable to the cycle of quick booms and long busts that have plagued Calaveras County from the beginning, this should be easy. But of course it isn’t. Change is hard, and changes in attitudes and changes in how we approach land use decisions are especially hard. It

means putting energy and ideas into all areas of the economy, including manufacturing as well as tourism, and not continuing along unsustainable economic models based solely on residential development and resource extraction. It will require a commitment to community planning that has been absent from County government for over a generation.

2. It’s Really *Really* Hard, But We Have To Cooperate

Secondly, really moving forward on the majority of the identified “action items” will require a whole lot of cooperation. We’re talking about an unprecedented and comprehensive, amount of across-the-board cooperation between County, State, and Federal governments, plus a raft of State, regional, and local districts and public agencies. Added to this will be the need for cooperation from the private interests, including 4th generation large landowners, big-time developers, and organized citizens’ groups like CAP/CPC, the Ag Coalition, and the Chamber of Commerce.

And finally, an obvious conclusion coming from the Summit was that the single best way to build on the ideas generated by the Summit was through the General Plan update. This means Calaveras County needs to avoid making the mistakes of the past and take the time, do the studies, listen to the people, and get it right this time.

3. It’s a No-Brainer

As the Background Study and breakout sessions make clear, there is an obvious symbiotic relationship between the County, the travel, leisure, and recreation interests, and the value-added agricultural interests, including but not limited to the wine industry in Calaveras County.

Not insignificantly, we learned from both the CAO and the Economic Study that TOT taxes, paid by tourists, are an increasingly important revenue source for the County. This is not necessarily because of the raw amount currently collected, but because of the future potential and the fact that the TOT is immune (so far) from confiscation by the State, and appears to be relatively recession resistant compared to other County revenue sources.

Over and over again visitors indicate that the natural beauty, open spaces, and relaxed rural lifestyle of Calaveras County influenced their choice to visit here. And

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Economic Summit (continued)

over and over again residents of Calaveras County have indicated that these are exactly the same things they want to preserve. If we, through neglect, ignorance, or misdirected greed lose these things by continuing to develop as we have been, then we lose more than trees and habitat and pretty landscapes. We also lose real assets that have real value to the biggest private sector of our economy. This one is a no-brainer.

The ideas and conclusions stemming from Economic Summit 2.0 may or may not prove to be a significant step along the way to a more sustainable Calaveras economy. But, as dim as the prospects are for the kinds of changes discussed to come about, the Summit did produce and re-emphasize ideas and opportunities that could, with a commitment to change, economic diversity, and cooperation, build a more sustainable economic future for tomorrow.

News Updates...

Trinitas

After five grueling hours of public discussion by lawyers, bankers, non-profit environmental groups, neighbors, citizens, Staff, and the project's owners, the Calaveras County Board of Supervisors voted 3 to 2 on October 6th to deny a final appeal by notorious golf course The Ridge at Trinitas that commercial golfing be allowed to continue as "agri-tourism".

The very next day, Wednesday, facing foreclosure, the owners of Trinitas filed for Bankruptcy.

The next day, Thursday October 8, Trinitas attorney Ken Foley told the Union Democrat "We're golfing," indicating he considers it legal for the owners to continue to operate as a commercial golf course while bankruptcy proceedings were in process.

Then on Tuesday, November 3rd, Foley filed suit against Calaveras County seeking "unlimited" damages on behalf of Trinitas.

Listing unpaid creditors, the Bankruptcy papers verified earlier rumors that a public relations firm had been retained by Trinitas to attack critics of the golf course. The firm, KPA Strategies, is owned and operated by Dan Kramer. Before starting KPA, Kramer worked for Eric Dezenhall, who was featured in a Business Week article as the "Pit Bull of Public Relations," and suggesting that Dezenhall's secret client list includes disgraced Enron executive Jeffrey Skilling, and drug giant Eli Lilly.

KPA's website says "*Clients choose our firm when they want a no-holds barred response to assaults from competitors, activists, and other attackers attempting to harm their interests... we put adversaries on the defensive... we never reveal our clients... our clients include corporations, law firms, trade associations, lobbyists, and prominent individuals in the business and political world.*"

CAO, Planner Resignations Take Many by Surprise

On Tuesday October 13th, County Chief Administrative Officer Bob Lawton informed Supervisors he was resigning effective next January. Lawton said that with the Board of Supervisors having successfully made budget reforms and re-organized the Planning & Building Departments, this was a good time for him to move on.

County Auditor Linda Churches was quoted in the Calaveras Enterprise as saying she felt the County "is ready for another change, another point of view."

Lawton had drawn the ire of some County departments and labor organizations during California's recent budget meltdown, as the County's budget targets and projections were caught up in the confusion. Later, many involved complained that the County gave mixed signals during negotiations.

Then on November 2, Planner III Shaelyn Strattan also resigned from an already understaffed Planning Department. Strattan, who had earned praise just weeks earlier from several Supervisors for her work on Trinitas, also found herself the target of a lawsuit by Trinitas.

In an "open response" published on ThePineTree.net, Strattan said that despite rumors, the reasons for her resignation were "private" and would remain so. She said that there was no connection between her work for the County on the Trinitas project, nor the lawsuit, and her decision to return to work for the State of California. Strattan concluded her statement by saying that "obviously there is nothing I can do to stop the vicious and unwarranted attacks on my personal and professional integrity. Unfortunately there are always those for whom the truth is irrelevant."

Sierra Nevada Alliance Holds Annual Conference

The Truckee based environmental advocacy group Sierra Nevada Alliance held its 16th Annual Conference at Kings Beach, Lake Tahoe October 17th and 18th.

Featuring workshops, nature walks, and speeches by environmental experts, the Conference drew over 200 participants.

Calaveras County was well represented, with several CAP and CPC members attending. Calaveras County 2nd District Supervisor Steve Wilensky was a panelist at two of the workshops.

Comprehensive Water Bills Signed

Thursday, November 4, after a 22 hour session, the California State Legislature passed comprehensive legislation that is intended to address the State's acute water problems. The package includes an \$11 billion bond measure that faces an uncertain future before voters in the November 2010 election.

Governor Schwarzenegger has signed all five policy bills, (SBX7-1, 7-2, 7-5, 7-6, and 7-7), saying "... I am so proud that the legislature, Democrats and Republicans, came together and tackled one of the most complicated issues in our State's history. This comprehensive water package is an historic achievement."

The water deal includes a Natural Community Conservation Plan, a Delta Water Master Plan and a Delta Conservancy to manage ecosystem restoration in the Delta; as well as groundwater monitoring. It sets a goal of reducing consumption of water by the year 2020, and provides funds to crack down on illegal water diversions. The package is designed to accommodate 50 million Californians over the next 20 years.

CA Assembly Speaker Karen Bass said of the legislation "This is a responsible plan - no one is getting 100 percent of what they want... It is the only way to balance the many different individual interests for the overall greater good...of California."

Critics have pointed to the bond as both too high and ill-timed, given the State's deepening financial woes.

Others, like Sierra Club Advocate Jim Metropulos have said "It's sad...that we have to continue to discuss whether expensive, cumbersome dams and canals are the right solution for California's water troubles. We don't need 19th-century solutions to today's problems."

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.