

TESTIMONY BEFORE THE JOINT MEETING OF THE CCWD BOARD AND THE
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS 8-5-08
REGRADING A WATER ELEMENT FOR THE GENERAL PLAN

Good afternoon. My name is Tom Infusino, and I am facilitator of the Calaveras Planning Coalition. The Coalition is an association of individuals and community groups active in land use issues in Calaveras County. The Coalition's mission is to promote public participation in land use and resource planning to ensure a healthy human, natural, and economic environment now and in the future. The Coalition encourages the County to comprehensively address water issues in the General Plan Update.

Water has so many uses that it regularly permeates our daily lives. Biologists tell us that water is essential to all life, plant or animal, tame or wild, and thus we consume it to quench our thirst, and to produce our food. Chemists call water the universal solvent, and so we use it to clean almost every surface around us, including ourselves. Water is literally that which "floats our boats", and thus we recreate in it, and travel on its surface. Water has the power to flood our neighborhoods, and so we try to control its path with clear channels, massive dams, and sturdy levies. Water constantly challenges the limits of our infrastructure to store it, to move it, to purify it, and to reuse it. Water, cycles from storms, through soils, down streams, and to seas, ceaselessly. Water, generates the electricity that turns our darkness into light. Water, is the medium in which we are baptized, into an eternal relationship with the Almighty.

Yesterday I stood at the summit of Round Top peak, and viewed from 10,000 feet above sea level the Crystal Range that is the headwaters of the American River, the forested hills of the Cosumnes River watershed, the steep canyons of the Mokelumne River watershed, and the distant mountains that are the headwaters of the Stanislaus River. These watersheds, like baffles in bellows, concentrate fluid and force into these mighty rivers that rush to the sea. However, when one gets closer to the ground, one sees that the watersheds are changing over time: changes in forest composition through fire, through tree disease, through timber harvesting practices and through road and residential development; changes in water diversions, and changes in snowfall.

Given these watershed changes, without proper planning and without coordination among agencies, our multiple uses of water can conflict, resulting in harmful and expensive consequences. The Coalition feels that by better coordinating water and land use planning, we can avoid these harmful and expensive consequences in the future. On behalf of the Coalition, I would like to thank the Calaveras County and CCWD Boards for holding this hearing today to continue the dialogue on planning and coordination.

In preparation for this hearing I first reviewed how other cities and counties have dealt with water issues in their general plans. According to the 2007 California Planners' Book of Lists, 17 Counties and 28 cities in California have optional water sections in their general plans. This list includes six Sierra Nevada counties. Some counties, like

Nevada County, have an entire chapter in their General Plan devoted to water issues, while others have a water section in their Conservation Element.

Next, I looked at how the current Calaveras County General Plan deals with water issues, and compared that to how other cities and counties have treated water issues in their general plans.

The existing Calaveras County General Plan:

- has 2 water policies regarding the Single Family Residential land use designation and 3 policies dealing with sewage treatment in the Land Use Element,
- has 2 water policies discussing in-county water projects and cooperation among water supply providers in the Conservation Element,
- has 2 policies regarding water-related recreation in the Open Space Element,
- and has 2 policies regarding flooding in the Safety Element.

None of these related water policies is cross-referenced to the others. These 11 policies are in contrast to the number of water policies in the general plans of other Sierra Nevada counties: Nevada 17 policies, El Dorado 18 policies, and Mono 30 policies.

In addition, general plans from other Sierra Nevada counties deal with a broader spectrum of water issues. The top ten issues treated in the water section of other general plans include: water supply, water conservation, water reclamation, groundwater management, flooding, pollution prevention, run-off control, building setbacks from waterways, data collection (e.g. well data, septic failure, water supply, water demand), and intergovernmental cooperation. Not surprisingly, those first five issues were also raised by the public here in Calaveras County during the general plan workshops. Also, eight of the top ten issues are discussed in the fine general plan Issues and Opportunities report you will be discussing later this afternoon.

Finally, some counties provide specific implementation programs for water issues. For example, both Nevada and Placer counties implement their general plan provisions through comprehensive surface and groundwater management programs.

The conclusion I drew from this review is that it would make sense to include a detailed water section in the updated Calaveras County General Plan. Such a section would deal with the issues addressed in the current general plan. Such a section would deal with the five issues raised by public comments during the General Plan workshops. Such a section would deal with the additional issues raised in the general plan Issues and Opportunities Report. Such a section would place the Calaveras County General Plan back in the mainstream with other Sierra Nevada counties facing similar water related challenges.

Thank you and may God bless.