

Suggested Title: A Lot To Be Grateful For

Dear Editor,

As we approach Thanksgiving, the members of the Calaveras Planning Coalition are thankful for fat cattle grazing on rangeland, for wine grapes that hang like clusters of grace on the vine, and for olive trees that thrive in hardscrabble soil. We are thankful for our open landscapes, our historic communities, and our good and generous people.

We are thankful for the Planning Commission as they work to draft and recommend a Greenhouse Gas Reduction Plan to the Board of Supervisors. We ask that they seize this opportunity to recommend the preservation of resource production lands with conservation easements so those protected lands can remain as open space carbon sinks that will clean our air.

According to California's Climate Change Scoping Plan, natural and working lands "hold the ultimate solution to addressing climate change and its impacts," but "action must begin now to restore and conserve these lands." We can't afford to wait.

As the United States Department of Agriculture notes, "It is estimated that over 25 million metric tons of CO₂ can be sequestered annually on natural and working lands in California by 2045. For reference, 1 million metric tons is equivalent to removing over 215,000 cars from the road each year."

As the cap and trade market grows, Calaveras landowners could have the opportunity to sell carbon offsets that result from sequestration. Additional environmental benefits achieved with conservation easements include habitat conservation, sediment retention, water purification, recreation, and support for traditional ranching. That's a lot to be thankful for.

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