

Weekly ReCAP for February 22, 2019

Next CPC meeting- March 4, 2019, 1:30 pm. Main Library in San Andreas

Next BOS meeting February 26th

Next PC meeting February 28th

Important Meeting Notice!

County seeking feedback on housing issues

- Enterprise report
- Feb 8, 2019

The Calaveras County Planning Department will be hosting a workshop in several locations geared toward improving housing opportunities within the county's updated General Plan.

Within the General Plan, "the Housing Element establishes goals, policies and implementation measures to guide the development of housing in unincorporated Calaveras County. Community input will be used in developing new Housing Element policies and programs and to modify existing policies," according to the planning department.

"The state is facing a huge housing shortage, and the cost of housing has skyrocketed," Calaveras County Planning Director Peter Maurer told the Enterprise. "Although we aren't facing the same cost issues here as some areas, we have our own unique problems. We are hoping to hear from people working on housing issues, or that have concerns about housing needs in their communities, so that we can work on finding solutions to those issues here in Calaveras County."

The schedule for the for the upcoming workshops is as follows:

San Andreas

Monday, Feb. 25, 3:00 p.m.

Calaveras County Government Center, Dept. 1 (Old courtroom next to Board chambers) 891 Mountain Ranch Road

Murphys

Monday, Feb. 25, 6:00 p.m.

Faith Lutheran Church, Fellowship Hall, 65 Mitchler Ave.

Mountain Ranch

Tuesday, Feb. 26, 6:00 p.m.

Mountain Ranch Community Center, 8049 Washington St.

EPFW's Love the Forest Concert

One of EPFW's most popular events, the annual Love the Forest concert, will be held Saturday March 9 at the Vida Buena Farm 3286 Vallecito Bypass Road in Vallecito. Doors open at 6:30pm, the program featuring Michela Macfarlane and Cantamos begins at 7pm. No host bar, snacks and a raffle.

Tickets Now available:

Tickets are \$20 at the door or \$15 in advance

From one of the following outlets:

In Angels Camp: Manzanita Arts Emporium; In Arnold: SNAC;

In Murphys: Sustenance Books, SNAC & Murphys Music Company

RCRC - The Barbed Wire - February 15, 2019

Cannabis Banking Update

This week, the House Financial Services Subcommittee on Consumer Protection and Financial Institutions held a hearing entitled “Challenges and Solutions: Access to Banking Services for Cannabis-Related Businesses.” The hearing examined the Secure and Fair Enforcement Banking Act of 2019 (SAFE Banking Act), introduced by Representatives Ed Perlmutter (D-Colorado) and Denny Heck (D-Washington).

Cannabis remains illegal under the federal Controlled Substances Act, despite decriminalization and legalization in some form in at least 47 states and the District of Columbia. Due to the federal statute, financial institutions turn away legitimate marijuana businesses to avoid the risk of federal prosecution and the loss of assets within a financial institution. The legislation would lift the federal prohibition on cannabis-related businesses for the financial services industry.

The SAFE Act is a long sought after priority for Representatives Perlmutter, Heck, and states where medical and adult uses of marijuana have been legalized. The Subcommittee examined a draft version of the bill but the final legislation is expected to be formally submitted by the end of February.

Last Congress, the bill was endorsed by the Independent Community Bankers of America, the Credit Union National Associations and 19 State Attorneys General. The bill has enough support from Democrats to clear the House but its passage would be uncertain in the Senate.

The issue is a legislative priority for rural California, and will be one of the topics that RCRC’s senior leadership will address when visiting the nation’s Capital later this month. RCRC issued a [letter of support](#) to the sponsors of the SAFE Banking Act on behalf of its member counties.

Federal Forest Management Update

The Office of the Secretary of the Interior issued an order this week to accelerate timber cuts and other forest management activities. The order sets out a timeline for the Interior Department to “identify and remove” environmental regulatory hurdles for forest management projects and initiate new measures to reduce wildfire risks.

The new initiative is intended to increase active management of federal forests to the greatest extent possible under Interior’s existing authority. The order is a direct response to an Executive Order issued by President Trump on December 21, 2018, directing federal agencies to promote forest resiliency to

protect at-risk communities. The order was signed on January 2, 2019, but was only just now posted to the Department's website, possibly due to the government shutdown. Crews clean up roads in anticipation of weekend rainstorms

Crews clean up roads in anticipation of weekend rainstorms

Update on power outages; storm impacts on fuel reduction work

- [Enterprise report by Davis Harper](#)
- Feb 15, 2019 Updated Feb 15, 2019

Over the past two days, heavy rainfall and strong winds have closed roadways across Calaveras County. Road crews have been busy cleaning up sections of road that were blocked off due to flooding, downed trees and utility wires and rock and mudslides.

The National Weather Service's Zone area forecast for the Motherlode predicts rain and snow showers for tonight and this weekend, with no snow accumulation at lower elevations and two to eight inches at higher elevations.

A flood warning is in effect until 7:30 p.m. tonight.

Road clean-ups

As of 2 p.m., Highway 4 was closed 1.6 miles east of Camp Connell at Meko Drive to a half-mile east of the junction of Highway 207 and the Mt. Reba Turnoff in Alpine County due to snow, according to California Department of Transportation District 10 Public Information Officer Rick Estrada.

Additionally, a 2.5-mile stretch of Highway 26 is closed from Deardorf Road to WoodHouse Mine Road near Glencoe and Sandy Gulch due to a mudslide. Motorists are advised to alternative routes. Opening the road back up will depend on the weather over the weekend, Estrada said.

"Thursday was (about) battling the storm as it continued," Estrada said. "We didn't wait for the weather to end before we got in there. It was still raining, still flooded, but we were in there trying to reclaim our highways as soon as possible. The emphasis today has been on continuing that cleanup, because we're trying to get these roads open and safe. We know there's more (hazardous) weather coming in this weekend."

At one point Thursday, there were three separate weather-related closures along a few miles of Hwy 26 between Glencoe and Highway 88, including flooding, a mudslide and a downed tree, Estrada said.

"We had a number of highways that had so much rain coming down so fast on the (already-saturated) ground," Estrada said. "Like we tell people, turn around, don't drown."

Refer to the [CHP San Andreas page](#) on Facebook for up-to-date road closures and hazards throughout the county.

Power outages

As of 2:45 p.m., there were 36 power outages affecting 1,153 Pacific Gas & Electric customers across the county, the majority of which (874) were in Arnold, according to PG&E spokesperson Brandi Merlo.

“We continue to have access issues due to ongoing weather, low snow, flooding, mudslides and down trees,” Merlo told the Enterprise. “We are working to restore customers as soon as we are able to access, assess and make repairs. (A) majority of the customers currently without power lost power yesterday through today. We are working to restore as many as possible by tonight, pending ongoing weather issues.”

For more information about outages and ways to prepare and stay safe during the storm, visit pge.com/stormsafety.

If outages occur, customers can find details and information on restoration at pge.com/outages and signing up for outage alerts via text, email or phone.

Call 9-1-1 immediately to report the location of a downed line. After reporting the downed line, call PG&E at 1-800-743-5000.

Those affected by outages can also call PG&E’s outage information line at 1-800-743-5002.

Storm impacts on fuel reduction work

Calaveras Healthy Impact Product Solutions (CHIPS), a local nonprofit that works on fuel reduction and forest restoration has seen severe delays in operations due to the recent storms.

Adverse weather conditions and road closures have left all of its 42 employees out of work over the past week-and-a-half.

“This is the first time in 10 years we’ve had this kind of sustained weather and conditions that put people out of work,” CHIPS founder Steve Wilensky told the Enterprise in a phone interview. “It’s just too slippery and there’s too much snow in a lot of areas. There’s too much mud to work with chainsaws on (steep) slopes. Even our low-elevation stuff is muddied out.”

Even if conditions were deemed safe for work, Hwy 26 and Hwy 88 – the “two main arteries” for drivers to access pick-up points and job sites – are closed, Wilensky said.

Wilensky emphasized that transportation is already strenuous enough for CHIPS employees, estimating that 45 percent of its personnel don’t have driver’s licenses and more than that don’t possess reliable vehicles.

Additionally, crews have already been roadblocked on prescribed burning operations due to the federal government shutdown, and now after the heavy rainfall, “nothing can light up under these (wet) conditions,” Wilensky said.

Surviving solely off of an end-of-the-year bonus and community donations, crews are applying for unemployment for the current work period, Wilensky said.

Record Breaking Number Rely On MyMotherLode For Winter News

[02/18/2019 6:00 am PST](#)

Sabrina Biehl, MML News Reporter

January and February have been record winter months for myMotherLode.com. The community has requested and we have been able to provide more information than ever. With pageviews of

myMotherLode in February double what they were at this time last year. Total pageviews this year are at more than 3,590,000 as of February 15th. Since the beginning of the year we have served more than 129,760 pageviews in just our weather section. The weather section offers an image loop of radar pictures taken every 15 minutes as well as detailed daily and 10 day [forecasts here](#).

The multiple storms have not only driven traffic to our weather information but parents and students are depending on our School Delays page. A total of 90,400 pageviews of our School Delays page confirmed their school's status in Tuolumne and Calaveras. Current closures, delays and reminders that busses are on adverse weather routes are posted now on the [school delays page here](#).

From our coverage of the blizzard warning on [February 5th](#) to the issues with [roads yesterday](#), trees and [power outage updates](#) the newsroom posts the info quickly and accurately.

News updates are broadcast on KVML AM 1450 and 102.7 FM, KKBN 93.5 FM and Star 92.7 FM

'I can't get out'

Storm leaves lasting damage, some trapped in homes

[Enterprise report by Dakota Morlan / February 20, 2019](#)

The county is declaring a local emergency after last week's storm, with debris and structural damage shutting down Highway 26 between Glencoe and West Point, in addition to damage to county infrastructure that will likely cost in the hundreds of thousands of dollars, officials said. Meanwhile, citizens have reported being trapped in their homes with washed-out driveways and no means to make repairs.

According to Public Works Director Josh Pack, a major problem area within county jurisdiction is a series of mudslides at Railroad Flat Road and Highway 26, which obstructed the roadway with 2,000 cubic yards of debris. The process of hiring a contractor and removing the material could take weeks, Pack said.

Residual debris and erosion from the 2015 Butte Fire have exacerbated the effects of the storm, Pack added, with county workers stretched thin and a lower response rate in snowed-in areas.

"Between snow and emergencies that affect public safety, we need to deal with public safety. Snow removal is not our highest priority," said Pack, who recommended that snowed-in individuals contact a local plowing service.

Another factor that has hindered the cleanup process are visitors coming from outside the area to enjoy the snow, Pack said. He recommends that tourists stay home in the coming days and refrain from putting an added burden on county infrastructure.

Pack also encourages locals to report road safety issues to Public Works, the Sheriff's Office or fire services instead of relying on social media.

"Folks seem to use social media in lieu of reporting to people who can actually fix problems," Pack said. "When you see an emergency, call us. We're the ones who need to know, and we don't monitor

Facebook.”

Caltrans District 10 Public Information Officer Warren Alford told the Enterprise that Highway 26 between Deardorff Road and Woodhouse Mine Road, which experienced over a dozen mudslides and structural damage, will likely remain closed for several weeks with one-way traffic control in effect for an indefinite amount of time after.

He added that during the repair process, workers will be able to get a head start on a slope stabilization project that was planned for that stretch of road in coming years.

“Over the last three or four years, we’ve had big events and damage,” Alford said. “But fortunately, we’ve been able to take care of it and get roads open as quickly as possible.”

Statewide, the storm has taken a significant toll on infrastructure, but Alford said Caltrans makes efforts to prepare for such emergencies.

“It’s California, so we are ready for issues that come up,” he said. “It certainly causes maintenance crews a lot of work, but we work in advance to clear culverts. The work that we do in advance heads off a lot of problems.”

There are alternate routes existing for all of the damaged areas, Pack said, though the concern remains with fire and emergency access.

Additionally, the amount of damage that was inflicted on private properties is unknown. West Point resident James Edlund, 67, told the Enterprise via phone that he has been trapped in his home off of Highway 26 since his driveway collapsed into a creek five days ago.

Without flood insurance, he can’t afford to repair the only access point to his property, he said. He has electricity, food and water, but will soon run out of kerosene to heat his home.

“I have no one to stay with, and I can’t get out,” Edlund said. “With the survival blankets I have, I might just live the next two weeks in bed.”

According to county officials, there is no assistance available for damage on private properties. However, if an individual is trapped in their home, they should call emergency services to help them evacuate.

Pack recommended reaching out to local contractors for assistance or contacting a senior, nonprofit or faith-based group.

“We have no resource to point you to specifically, but we’d be happy to facilitate some sort of service,” said Kris Perez, an administrative assistant at the Resource Connection.

Calaveras County Office of Emergency Services Director Michelle Patterson told the Enterprise that she has not heard any reports of individuals trapped in their homes, and she does not know what services are going to be made available by the local state of emergency at this time.

To contact the Resource Connection, call 209-754-2000.

Supervisors mull commercial cannabis

Supervisors’ meeting erupts in controversy over cultivation topic

[Enterprise report by Davis Harper](#) / February 20, 2019

The Calaveras County Board of Supervisors voiced majority support for regulating commercial cannabis cultivation in the county during a lengthy study session Tuesday, which became contentious at times during public comment.

After hearing from multiple county department heads and fire districts for a recap on the successes and failures of the 2016 Urgency Ordinance (UO), the board instructed Planning Director Peter Maurer to return with a list of refined questions for another study session on how to proceed with drafting a new ordinance. District 1 Supervisor Gary Tofanelli was absent.

District 4 Supervisor Dennis Mills was in opposition, arguing that staff would be too overburdened, and that a social/economic study would be necessary to assess potential impacts to county operations and the environment.

Based on deliberations between planning staff and the board, Maurer's questions will seek input on a myriad of requirements. Maurer and supervisors discussed rezoning grow sites on unclassified parcels, minimum operation size, allowing indoor, outdoor and/or mixed light, dwelling and residence requirements, permitting (grading, encroachment, building, etc.), transferability of a business, and whether to follow state regulations, and if so, which aspects.

The ordinance would likely not be completed in time for this year's grow season, as it could take until July to be adopted, Maurer told the board.

Given the pressing time constraints of completing the General Plan, Maurer estimated that he could have his questions submitted to the board by April for further direction on the new set of regulations.

If adopted, registration will be prioritized for a cohort of about 100 previously registered state-licensed farmers that were already in good standing with the county, meaning they had paid their fees and taxes and were in full compliance with county code.

District 2 Supervisor Jack Garamendi recommended that staff send a letter to that group to get a count of those still living in the county informing them of the developments.

Presentations from Planning, Public Works, Code Compliance, the Building Department and others indicated that the county would have to take a more diligent approach in regulating cannabis than in the past.

Staff input

Maurer started the meeting with a brief history of how the UO came into existence and the lack of preparedness of county staff to take on such a project.

At the conclusion of the regulatory program, the county had denied 335 applications, issued 194 registrations and was still reviewing 73 applications, with 60 withdrawn for a variety of reasons.

Citing the impossible task of trying to process over 700 applications, Maurer said that for any future ordinance, the Planning Department would realistically have to cut that number down to 25 applications at a time – a proposal that many other department heads voiced approval for.

"We were trying to put (regulations) together at the same time as trying to run the program," Auditor-Controller Rebecca Callen recalled. "It was this enormous wave of activity that came in that none of us were prepared to deal with. If you want this to move forward, be mindful that we're all still learning how this is supposed to operate, and find what's in the best interest for our entire constituency."

Senior Code Enforcement Officer Sabrina Cable said that Code Compliance officers were unprepared to issue code violations on numerous properties and walk property owners through paths to compliance at the same time. To compound the issue, appeals court delays for code violations were abused by

growers who continued to cultivate and sell their crop.

Through the process, communication and data sharing between the various departments improved vastly.

Fire district chiefs prioritized accessibility to grow sites, regular inspections, tight regulations on fire hazards associated with grow activities and adopting a county fire marshal.

“Most new industries present steep learning curves when driven by innovation and enormous profit,” said Copperopolis Fire Chief Joel Schwartz. “Marijuana cultivation is an industry loaded with landmines that could result in serious injuries or deaths in fire workers, (since it) relies on using hazardous and explosive substances to create better quality products.”

District 5 Supervisor Ben Stopper pointed out that many issues mentioned are more prevalent in illegal grows.

“We keeping bringing up illegal grows,” Stopper said. “If we put through this plan, only the legal actors are going to be the ones held to it. Roads, access, this is an issue throughout the county. It doesn’t matter what business, home, if you’re going to start holding one industry to a certain level, then you need to hold everyone to the same level.”

Community input

Board chambers were packed from wall to wall with pro-regulation and pro-ban members of the public for the highly anticipated meeting, with several others watching the video from the Government Center lobby.

In disapproval of the board considering regulations, one man slammed his fist on the podium in anger at the beginning of the meeting. Later on in public comment, he told the board he had been calling in illegal grows before the ban, and used racial epithets against Southeast Asians and Mexicans.

Garamendi was quick to discipline the behavior with a warning, and eventually kicked the man out of the meeting.

During public comment, many voiced concerns with cannabis impacts on adolescents and the environment, increase in crime and illegal activity, and accountability for regulatory program costs.

One woman said that in the months after the UO went into effect, she would hear gunshots from neighboring grow sites when she would go feed her horses, and her family was too afraid to visit her.

Will Moore, a District 5 resident, said he was against regulation because he feared that small growers would not be able to afford a potential 20-acre requirement that was mentioned in board discussion.

Mountain Ranch resident Terry McBride argued that the cannabis cultivation the board is referring to is organic, and “better than what’s in your food.”

During a break, former District 2 resident and registered grower Beth Wittke told the Enterprise that everyone in “good standing should have the opportunity to work,” especially those that lost homes in the Butte Fire.

Calaveras Cannabis Alliance Executive Director Trevor Wittke said he was glad to see the board reintroducing the discussion about cultivation.

“I think they took what the voters said in the last election to heart,” Wittke said, referring to District 3 and District 5 constituents that voted in pro-cannabis-regulation supervisors. “(The board) is looking to do it in a controlled slow rollout, which makes sense.”

Still, Wittke was concerned with some of staff's recommendations, one of which included a residency or dwelling mandate on farms.

The restriction would delay application processes for many farms that were in full compliance but didn't have a home on their grow sites, Wittke said.

Wittke said that current state regulations should address any security concerns, including a requirement that farmers be on site as long as a grow is in operation, in addition to 24-hour surveillance and fencing.

“People in our industry need to get a clear direction on what’s going to happen so they can start planning,” Wittke said. “We just want to get back to work.”

Storm Damaged HWY 26 Closure Could Last A Month

[02/20/2019 6:22 pm PST](#)

Tracey Petersen , MML News Reporter

West Point, CA – Calling it the “Valentine’s Day Deluge” that swamped Calaveras County on February 14th, Caltrans is signaling that extensive damage to a section of Highway 26 will force a longer closure.

As earlier reported [here](#), several sections of the highway were closed during the torrential rains that brought trees crashed down on the highway and a total of 12 rockslides. Crews were able to clear most of these blockages during the storm, except for one. A fairly significant slide near the south fork of the Mokelumne River Bridge caused significant damage forcing the closure east of Glencoe between Dearnorff and Woodhouse Mine roads in the northeastern part of Calaveras County. Caltrans spokesperson Warren Alford adds that the destruction was worse than first believed. He details, “Things fell down from up above and slid out from down below. So, we are cleaning off the rocks, boulders and debris that fell down and then we have to rebuild the road sections that slid out.”

The extensive damage is forcing a longer shut down of that span, Alford relays, “We’re looking at about two to three weeks for the full closure while the repairs are being done on an emergency basis. After that we will try to have one-way traffic control while the repairs are finished and we don’t know how long that will be at this point.”

A total of \$2.4 million has been budgeted for emergency repairs, but Alford says that figure could climb depending on the scope of the work that is needed to make the roadway safe for future public travel.

Coalition presses board to fix General Plan Update

The Valley Springs News / February 20, 2019

Five representatives of the Calaveras Planning Coalition listed specific changes needed in the Draft General Plan Update to improve the consistency, clarity, and comprehensiveness during the Feb. 12 Board of Supervisors meeting.

The General Plan Update has been in the works for more than a dozen years and has cost taxpayers more than \$2 million to prepare.

The coalition recommended changes to both the introduction and the Land Use Element: the first two parts of the General Plan Update. For each problem the group noted in the Draft General Plan Update, they proposed one or more solutions.

Tom Griffing began noting that the stated purpose of the plan was too narrowly focused on private interests and economic development. He recommended that the purpose of the plan should be more comprehensive, and mention the plan's public interest aspects including conservation, open space, and public safety.

Expressing the virtue of general plan clarity, Marti Crane said, "The objective of a land use element is to set forth a pattern of land use that is coherent and predictable. It should be detailed enough so that all users of the plan can reach the same conclusion of the appropriate use of any parcel of land."

She pointed out that the general plan chart indicating which zoning categories would be allowed in which land use designations needed greater clarity to avoid bad consequences and unintended interpretations.

Joyce Techel suggested that the "public institution" land use designation needed to be split into subcategories so people purchasing property adjacent to public parcels could determine if they were moving near a future school, government office, sheriff sub-station, or solid waste dump.

"These public land uses, while all beneficial, are hardly interchangeable," she said.

Neil McKeown concluded by expressing his concerns that the plan did not comprehensively deal with key local issues including the protection of historic structures and development on steep slopes. He encouraged supervisors to follow the general plan consultant's prior recommendations to develop standards for the safe development of steep slopes. He also encouraged supervisors to follow local expert Julia Costello's recommendations regarding historic preservation.

This was the third such presentation by the CPC to the board in the past month. On Jan. 15, the board denied the cpc's request for a study session on the General Plan Update. Undaunted, the CPC listed improvements needed in the General Plan Update's environmental impact report during the board's next public comment period on Jan. 22. In an email to the Board of Supervisors on Jan. 21, the CPC indicated supervisors have more work to do on the General Plan Update than will fit in, "A last minute hearing, at the end of the approval process."

State Analysts Weigh In On Forest Management Changes, Funding

[02/20/2019 4:28 pm PST](#)

Tori James, MML News Reporter

Sacramento, CA – Mechanical thinning, prescribed burns, and meadow restoration are among necessary practices lawmakers are hearing about during budget allocations.

This past week, the State Legislative Analyst's Office (LAO) briefed members of the Assembly Budget Subcommittee on Resources and Transportation and the Committee on Natural Resources on combinations of activities that have reached a broad consensus as essential to improve conditions.

While the state and local governments own three percent of California's forests, the federal government and private entities respectively own 57 percent and 39 percent of the forestlands, the LAO stressed the importance of collaborative management efforts.

Acknowledging critical statewide benefits that forests provide with regard to water supply, climate change mitigation, and wildlife habitat, the LAO pointed out that most are in an unhealthy condition due to excessive density and unprecedented tree mortality levels. It also noted a trend: that the majority of California's largest and most destructive wildfires occurred in recent years.

Analyst's Office Recommends Alternate Lead Agency

Among its other recommendations to lawmakers were to improve and increase coordination of funding processes, and provide more options for using and disposing of woody biomass.

It also suggested revising certain state policies and practices, such as designating the California Natural Resources Agency (CNRA) rather than CAL Fire as lead agency in charge of overseeing proactive funding and initiatives for forest and watershed health. It additionally called for more management oversight to ensure that funded projects are meeting promised target goals.

The proposed 2019-20 budget of \$244 million for forest health and fire prevention augmentations currently earmarks \$165 million for CAL Fire/CCC for various forest health, fire prevention and fuels reduction programs; \$35 million for CAL Fire prescribed fire crews, and \$44 million for various other activities. It lists no funds under this category for CNRA.

This year's total allocation is nearly 16 percent less than was provided the 2018-19 budget, which contained more than 22 percent more than the previous fiscal year's augmentation of \$236 million. The current fiscal year's funding also includes more agencies and provides \$20 million to CNRA. The allocations in recent years dwarf the \$61 million in funding designated in the 2016-17 budget for forest health and fire prevention as the state began its recovery from a devastating five-year drought.
