

Weekly ReCAP for March 1, 2019

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

New addition to the Calaveras Cap website:

Hi all,

Here is the link to what I've named "The 2019 Comprehensive General Plan Guide" and it has all our documents in one place. Check it out!

(you will need to paste & copy - jt)

<http://calaverascap.com/2019-general-plan-comprehensive-guide/>

Thanks,
Jenny

Important information from Colleen (Thanks!)

Housing Element Update. If you are interested in housing in Calaveras County, but were unable to attend Housing Element Community Workshops Feb. 25 and 26, check out the County's Housing Element page* and the Community Workshop Housing Presentation** posted online.

Highlights from the Presentation

Calaveras County Housing Stock:

- 62% of the Housing Stock is 30 years or older
- 79% Owner occupied; 21% renter occupied
- **81% of the Housing Stock is "seasonal, recreational or occasional use"**
- 88% of Calaveras County housing units are Single Family Detached homes

Housing Cost Burden

"Overpayment" = paying more than 30% of income for housing (some pay more than 50%)

47% of all Calaveras households are overpaying for their housing!

- **56.5% of low-income owner households are overpaying**
- **62.8% of low-income rental households are overpaying**

2019 Point-in-time count:

220 Homeless individuals in Calaveras County

Housing Element Update Project Schedule

Milestones

Estimated Date

Stakeholder Meeting February 25th and 26th

Public Review Draft Housing Element (Available 2 weeks prior to HCD submittal) March

HCD Review of Draft Housing Element April - May

Planning Commission Adoption Hearing June

Board of Supervisors Adoption Hearing July

Submit to HCD for Certification July – September

* <http://planning.calaverasgov.us/Gen-Plan-Zoning/Housing-Element>

** <http://planning.calaverasgov.us/Portals/Planning/Documents/Housing%20Element/Community%20Outreach%20Meeting%20Presentation.pdf>

From CPC member EPFW:

“LOVE THE FOREST” ROCKS VALLECITO!

Mark your calendars for the 17th annual Love the Forest Concert at our New Location at the Vida Buena Farms in Vallecito, Saturday, March 9th, beginning at 6pm.

Cantamos with Michela Macfarlane: Michela and Cantamos highlight their musical dexterity by moving from arias, traditional Latin songs, and musicals, to contemporary favorites. Their music moves seamlessly from English to Italian, Spanish to French, Portuguese to Hawaiian and back again. Michela Macfarlane spent ten years steeped exclusively in baroque music. To expand her singing world she moved to the realms of jazz, pop, and Latin sounds. Michela is still true to her operatic roots and has grown as a performer. Michela is backed by Ron Schaner on (Bass and vocals), Gunther Huse (Keyboards, Trumpet, and vocal), and Ray Price (Drums), Ras Beeken Dan: Sax, Clarinet & Flute, Brandon Broholm: Trombone and Special Guest Fred Treece (Guitar and vocals).

When: Saturday, March 9th at 6:00pm

Where: **Vida Buena Farms** ~ 3286 Vallecito Bypass Rd, Vallecito, CA 95251

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*** (1211 S Main St, Angels Camp);

In Arnold: ***SNAC*** (2293 HWY 4, Arnold);

In Murphys: ***Sustenance Books*** (416 Main St, Murphys), ***SNAC*** (448 Main St., Murphys), & ***Murphys Music Company*** (88 HWY4, Murphys).

FUNdraiser for: Ebbetts Pass Forest Watch [501c (3)]

<http://www.forestwatchers.org> or visit our Facebook page

The mission of Ebbetts Pass Forest Watch is to protect, promote and restore healthy forest and watersheds to maintain the quality of life in the Sierra Nevada.

Mother Lode Region No Longer Facing Drought Conditions

[02/22/2019 6:47 am PST](#)

BJ Hansen, MML News Director

Sonora, CA — The US Drought Monitor has released a new report showing that only 34-percent of California remains in a moderate to severe state of drought.

Three months ago, three-quarters of the state was in the drought category, but conditions are much more favorable following the heavy rain and snow received. We reported earlier this week that the Sierra Nevada snowpack was about 145-percent of average for this time of year.

The remaining drought impacted areas are confined to the far northern end of the state, and parts of southern California. It is noted that the next chance for precipitation is late this weekend and early next week.

The US Drought monitor makes its drought determination based on precipitation received and soil conditions.

Board plows ahead on bringing commercial pot back

By Nick Baptista / The Valley Springs News / February 22, 2019

A majority of Calaveras County supervisors favor working toward re-establishing commercial cannabis cultivation, but concede such regulations will not be finalized in time for this growing season.

The board held a lengthy study session Tuesday receiving input from staff and the public before discussing how to proceed. In the end, the board decided it needed another study session before a proposed regulation ordinance moves forward.

Date of the subsequent study session was not determined at Tuesday's meeting.

County Planning Director Peter Maurer posed a lengthy series of questions and issues the board needed to decide before a regulation ordinance can be drafted.

Maurer informed the board that the earliest they could expect to consider a proposed commercial cannabis ordinance would be in late July. The 30-day waiting period for enactment of such an ordinance would push the approval date into August and there is also a 60-day waiting period before any fees could take effect, all of which would be well after the growing season begins.

While Supervisors Merita Callaway, Jack Garamendi and Ben Stopper were in favor of directing staff to prepare a regulation ordinance for board consideration, Mills was in opposition and District 1 Supervisor was absent.

Mills said the board was moving too quickly on the issue and urged his colleagues to have a social and economic study prepared before considering a new regulation ordinance.

“You can't put a bike trail in this county without a study,” he said.

Mills, Tofanelli and Clyde Clapp last year voted to ban commercial cannabis production in the county, discontinuing a two-year-old urgency ordinance approved by a prior board allowing

commercial cultivation.

Shortcomings of the 2016 urgency ordinance were outlined by staff at Tuesday's meeting along with their suggestions to improve the process.

To avoid another "Green Rush" of growers into the county and overburden on staff, Callaway, Garamendi and Stopper looked at limiting the program to about 200 growers who had been approved and were in compliance with the urgency ordinance.

To get an idea of what the interest would be, Garamendi suggested sending letters to those growers informing them it would not be until 2020 before new regulations could be established and asking whether they would still be interested in pursuing permits. [Rural Broadband Update](#)

RCRC- The Barbed Wire / February 22, 2019

Rural Broadband Update

Federal Communications Commission (FCC) Chairman Ajit Pai has circulated a draft version of the [2019 Broadband Deployment Report](#). The annual report provides a detailed analysis on the state of the digital divide between rural and urban America. According to the draft report, the digital divide between rural and urban Americans has narrowed substantially.

The report shows that, since the 2018 edition, the number of users lacking access to the minimum standard for high-speed internet has dropped by 25 percent. Approximately 5.6 million rural Americans obtained a high-speed broadband connection in 2018, which the report attributes to regulatory changes from the FCC that incentivize more investment in broadband deployment projects.

The figures used by the FCC rely on a 25/3 Mbps standard for minimum internet speeds. Democratic FCC Commissioner Jessica Rosenworcel argues this standard for minimum broadband should be raised, and that Chairman Pai's draft report is not an accurate depiction of the state of broadband deployment. The report will be controversial among members of Congress from rural areas where broadband deployment is a major issue. The FCC's rural coverage data is often a major target for rural broadband advocates who argue the Commission's data overestimates high-speed internet access in rural areas.

Bill To Tap Wastewater Reduction Into Ocean

[02/23/2019 12:31 pm PST](#)

Tracey Petersen , MML News Reporter

Sonora, CA — A new bill would require a 50 percent curtailment in the amount of wastewater allowed to flow into the ocean by 2030, which would reduce the drag on the Sierra snowpack.

Most California communities use water once then dispose of it, at a tremendous environmental and economic cost, according to SB 332 co-author, State Senate Majority Leader Bob Hertzberg (D-Van Nuys). Calling it a "pump and dump" approach, Hertzberg adds that nearly 400 billion gallons of treated water are "wastefully" discharged into the ocean or California estuaries annually. He adds that as climate change creates hotter, drier conditions and reduces the storage capacity of the Sierra snowpack, the need to prevent water waste is more critical than ever.

Senator Hertzberg argues, “The reality of climate change has led our society to shift toward sustainable and renewable electricity; we must rethink our water policy with the same view toward sustainability.”

SB 332 would require wastewater treatment facilities to reduce the volume of treated wastewater discharged into the ocean on an annual basis with the goal to reach 95% by 2040. The responsibility to develop the needed infrastructure to meet this target would be on both dischargers of wastewater and local water suppliers through a combination of improved water conservation along with efficiency and recycling.

Proponents of the bill include the Natural Resources Defense Council, which is a sponsor of the bill, and the California Coastkeeper Alliance.

Disaster fallout in Calaveras includes mismanagement of \$1M in grant funds

Guy McCarthy / The Union Democrat / February 26, 2019

Calaveras County owes the Federal Emergency Management Agency \$1 million or more in disaster recovery grant funding for the 2015 Butte Fire due to bad record-keeping, the county auditor-controller told the Board of Supervisors on Tuesday in San Andreas.

The Department of Homeland Security Office of the Inspector General will likely audit the county’s spending for tree and debris removal, Rebecca Callen, the county auditor-controller, told the Board of Supervisors.

Missing documentation for how federal monies were spent include basics like time records, photographs, geotags, and destinations for where post-fire debris was transported to, Callen said.

The auditors will likely scrutinize and review a sampling of tree-by-tree and parcel-by-parcel data, and “if there wasn’t proper documentation, if we can’t find the time records, if we didn’t do the proper federal procurement requirements, if we didn’t take the pictures appropriately, if we didn’t geotag every single tree that was removed, didn’t document where the debris went, those are all going to be pain points,” Callen said.

The million-dollar bombshell Callen dropped came during discussion of a board agenda item that was not scheduled to be discussed: a request to extend a contract with Tetra Tech, Inc. for recovery of homeowners insurance revenue associated with right-of-entry debris removals.

District 4 Supervisor Dennis Mills pulled the item for discussion.

“I do have some concerns as to whether or not we’re going to be impacted by an audit in the future for these moneys,” Mills said. “And that if there’s a possibility that we may have some of these charges disallowed, that it will be something that we will in essence be having to take out of some other funds in other locations.”

District 2 Supervisor Jack Garamendi, the board chair, said, “Let’s assess the risk.”

District 5 Supervisor Ben Stopper asked Callen, “This project’s been passed around between

multiple heads by now, and none of this is the fault of the current project manager, right? The fact that things weren't documented properly in the past?"

Callen answered that poor documentation of emergency expenditures has been a problem for Calaveras County staff over the years.

In October 2016, the Department of Homeland Security questioned Calaveras County's ability to handle an \$11 million Butte Fire grant. Callen said Tuesday that was a different audit for different purposes. But that previous audit highlighted shortcomings in the county Department of Public Works, as debris removals took precedence over tree removals, and fire-damaged roads limited how much work could be done despite state and federal grant parameters.

"It's part of the issue we've had historically, there's been a lack of county-wide training, and so when the emergency happened, nobody was, three-quarters of the people, didn't know where the emergency operations plan was," Rebecca Callen, the county auditor-controller, told the Board of Supervisors.

The quarter of county staff who did know where the emergency operations plan was were not familiar with it, Callen said. There had not been county-wide training. There weren't county-wide forms to fill out, and so when the emergency was happening, and everyone was scrambling to ensure the public was safe, and people were trying to protect everyone that's out there, as well as county staff, while Callen was sitting there saying "You need to take a moment and document," the response she got back most of the time was "We're in an emergency, we don't have time for that."

The way Callen explained it, the roughly \$1 million in emergency spending that was mishandled by the county was funding spent and reimbursed by FEMA to the county. Problems will arise when federal auditors come to Calaveras County because the money was spent without adequate documentation.

"The million dollars is what I know for sure that is going to be a problem," Callen told the board. "Because they were activities that while the board may have approved them, they weren't allowable under the terms of the grant program. So those are going to be an issue. And these are conversations I've had with the current CAO, the former CAO, the CAO before that."

Callen is one of the Calaveras County department heads who have been on the job since before the Butte Fire, which broke out in early September 2015. She said she knew about the lack of documentation for some county spending of federal assistance funding from the outset as the terrifying Butte Fire blew up, burned up more than 110 square miles, destroyed 921 structures, including 549 homes, 368 outbuildings and four commercial properties, damaged 44 structures, and resulted in two civilian fatalities.

"I've said all along that documentation is really our responsibility as a county," Callen told the board. "And I do know that there were times where proper documentation didn't happen, and so I've never been shy about stating this to the board, saying this publicly, there will be disallowances by the OIG."

She said in a phone interview Tuesday afternoon the timing for the audit can be one year to five years following the end of the grant program, and when it does happen, the county has about a million dollars set aside to cover that, Callen said.

Callen indicated that county negotiators took those foreseeable, disallowable expenditures into account when they were in settlement talks with Pacific Gas and Electric Co., the utility giant that was found at fault for igniting the Butte Fire. So that roughly one million dollars is covered for now.

The Calaveras County Board of Supervisors accepted a \$25.4 million settlement from Pacific Gas and Electric in November 2018 for damages incurred by the county in the Butte Fire, and more than \$5 million of that settlement will go to the legal firm contracted by the county to secure the settlement.

Department heads and staff across all county government departments are going to require comprehensive training to ensure this kind of fiscal mismanagement doesn't happen again, Callen said.

Ultimately, the board voted unanimously to approve extending an existing contract with Tetra Tech, Inc. for recovery of homeowners insurance revenue associated with Cal Recycle right-of-entry debris removal operations in the wake of the Butte Fire for an amount not to exceed \$854,656, from August 2018 through June 2019.

Fixing the emergency grant-spending problem in Calaveras County is going to require across-the-board, county government-wide focus on policies, procedures and training by the county Office of Emergency Services for all other county departments, Callen said. County OES staff will have to provide all that training and documentation to other county departments "so they're prepared for the next emergency," Callen said.

In other business Tuesday, the board voted unanimously to dispense with competitive bidding requirements and authorize a purchasing agent to piggyback on a federal contract for the purchase of a 22-foot Fastwater Aluminum Boat for \$101,930 from Rogue Jet Boatworks of White City, Oregon, for use by the Sheriff's Office Marine Safety Program.

More than a third of the items that went before the Board of Supervisors on Tuesday had to do with the Butte Fire, hazardous tree removal, debris removal, and local states of emergency stemming from the Butte Fire, tree mortality, winter storm damage in January and February 2017, and winter storm damage this month.

Three of those items dealt with contracts and spending on Butte Fire hazard trees, Butte Fire debris removal, and tree mortality mitigation totaling more than \$11.9 million.

Calaveras Supervisors To Ratify Local State of Emergency

[02/26/2019 7:54 am PST](#)

BJ Hansen, MML News Director

San Andreas, CA — The Calaveras County Supervisors are planning to approve a local state of emergency declaration following the flooding, extreme wind, and mudslides that occurred starting February 12.

The amount of damage from the storm is still being calculated, but declaring a local state of emergency opens the door for potential state funding. There were failed culverts, power outages, flood damage and downed trees. Highway 26 near Glencoe remains closed due to storm impacts.

Also today, the supervisors will hear an annual update on tourism from the Calaveras County Visitors Bureau, and receive a mid-year budget report. The regular session portion of the meeting starts at 9am at the Government Center in San Andreas.

Calaveras Sheriff Welcomes New Hires

[02/26/2019 6:26 pm PST](#)

Tracey Petersen, MML News Reporter

San Andreas, CA – A long line of uniformed men and women stood at attention as Calaveras County Sheriff Rick DiBasilio saluted the new hires and those being promoted within his office.

The “Promotional/Hiring/Affirmation of Office Ceremony” was held outside the sheriff’s office located at 1045 Jeff Tuttle Drive in San Andreas on Monday at 9 a.m. The same building that houses the Calaveras County Jail. The line of 26 uniformed deputies and correctional officers were all smiles as family members and friends, beaming with pride, clapped and cheered as the sheriff read the oath and welcomed the new members to his team.

The sheriff’s office provided this list of new hires:

- DEPUTY SHERIFF MICHAEL JERICOFF
- DEPUTY SHERIFF JOSHUA VOGT
- DEPUTY SHERIFF NICHOLAS RIVIERA
- DEPUTY SHERIFF MICHAEL FENTON
- DEPUTY SHERIFF COLE WAITE
- DEPUTY SHERIFF SYDNE ELAM
- DEPUTY SHERIFF JESSICA RADER
- DEPUTY SHERIFF NICHOLAS STEWART
- DEPUTY SHERIFF AMRITPAL NIJJAR
- CORRECTIONAL OFFICER SALLY JOHNS
- CORRECTIONAL OFFICER SARA WHITFORD
- CORRECTIONAL OFFICER KAITLYN WILLS
- CORRECTIONAL OFFICER IAN CHRISTENSEN
- CORRECTIONAL OFFICER MATT CASHARA
- CORRECTIONAL OFFICER MONTI WILSON
- CORRECTIONAL OFFICER JAMES BAILEY
- CORRECTIONAL OFFICER CHRISTA GILUO
- CORRECTIONAL OFFICER MICHAEL HARTMAN
- X-HIRE CORRECTIONAL OFFICER BRANDON REYNOLDS
- CORRECTIONAL OFFICER BRITTANEY WILSON

- CORRECTIONAL TECHNICIAN CHERYL WILLARD
- CORRECTIONAL TECHNICIAN ERIC COSS
- SHERIFF SERVICE TECHNICIAN MARIA ADAMS
- X-HIRE SHERIFF SERVICE TECHNICIAN LORA TORANGO
- INTERN COLIN PRESTON
- SENIOR ANALYST OSCAR FLAMENCO

Connectivity Plan schedules March meeting

The Valley Springs News / February 27, 2019

The Valley Springs Town Center Connectivity Plan will be hosting the second public meeting as part of the project's public engagement process. The focus of the second public meeting will be to provide a summary of the survey responses held after the first public meeting, to present plans that show where improvements are needed within the project area, and to gain feedback on proposed alternative treatments to various streets typologies throughout the projected area.

In 2016, the Calaveras Council of Governments (CCOG) submitted an application to Caltrans for a Sustainable Transportation Planning Grant to fund the Valley Springs Complete Streets Capital Infrastructure Plan. In December 2017, Caltrans notified CCOG that the plan had been selected for funding in Fiscal Year 2017/2018. In 2018, CCOG in partnership with Calaveras County and Caltrans, selected GHD, in partnership with Design Workshop, to complete the plan.

The project will work with the Valley Springs community, Calaveras County, and Caltrans to identify infrastructure projects that enhance bicycle, pedestrian, and vehicular connectivity in the Town Center. The Valley Springs Town Center Connectivity Plan will identify and prioritize projects that provide safe connectivity within the Town Center and between Valley Springs Elementary School, residential uses, commercial services, and retail destinations along the State Route 12 and State Route 26 corridors. This project is dedicated to the enhancing multi-modal mobility, accessibility and connectivity to enhance community identity and quality of life.

Valley Springs Town Center Connectivity Plan

www.valleyspringstowncenter.com

Public Meeting:

Monday, March 11th

6:00-8:00 pm

Location: Valley Springs

Elementary School, Multi-Purpose Room

Increasing Tourism In Calaveras County

[02/27/2019 12:19 pm PST](#)

BJ Hansen, MML News Director

San Andreas, CA — Tourism is up in Calaveras County, according to the latest statistics released by the local visitor's bureau.

Calaveras County Visitor's Bureau Executive Director Lisa Boulton gave her annual report to the Board of Supervisors this week, and noted that visitor spending in 2017 was \$193-million, an increase of 2.4-percent from 2016.

Calaveras continues to be a growing region when it comes to many things like winter snow activities, fun on the water during the summer, and year-round wine tasting.

Parsing the numbers, the food service industry accounted for \$55.7-million in visitor spending, Lodging was \$45.2-million, Entertainment/Recreation was \$28.6-million, Gas/Transportation was \$23.9-million, Retail was \$17.8-million and Grocery spending was \$13.6-million.

When it comes to people that have stopped by the Visitor's Center in Angels Camp to sign the guest book, most domestic tourists are from California, followed by Oregon, Washington, Nevada, Texas, Florida, Arizona and Colorado. The most international guests are arriving from Canada, United Kingdom, Germany, Australia and France.

Website visitation also increased 29-percent from the previous fiscal year, with most viewers in the 25-44 age range, and seeing slightly more women than men.

This was Boulton's final annual report to the supervisors, [as we reported earlier](#), she will be exiting the position this summer. Supervisor Gary Tofanelli thanked her for her efforts, stating, "You've done outstanding work over the course of the years."

The Visitor's Bureau is currently in the process of searching for Boulton's replacement.

Could PG&E bankruptcy halt biomass projects?

- [By Davis Harper](#)
- Feb 27, 2019 Updated 6 hrs ago

Pacific Gas & Electric Co.'s bankruptcy may delay a local biomass project, and could jeopardize funding for similar projects across the state.

Senate Bill 1122 required PG&E to purchase 47 megawatts of biomass or biogas power using byproducts of sustainable forest management as part of the Bioenergy Market Adjusting Tariff (BioMAT) program.

The utility's existing SB 1122 contracts remain in effect, according to PG&E spokeswoman Brandi Merlo.

"PG&E has engaged with the California Public Utilities Commission on changes to the BioMAT standard contract that would allow PG&E to execute additional SB 1122 contracts in the future," Merlo said.

The company expects the Chapter 11 cases to take about two years.

"It is our intent to move through this process as expeditiously as possible," Merlo said. "We will provide updates as we move forward."

Wind, geothermal, biomass, solar and small hydro currently make up 33 percent of PG&E's purchased energy, according to the utility's site. Just over 10 percent of its renewable energy is sourced from biopower, based on a 2018 CPUC report.

PG&E was set to chip away at the required 47 megawatts of biomass power with a power purchase agreement (PPA) with Calaveras Healthy Impact Product Solutions (CHIPS), a local nonprofit that performs forest restoration and fuel reduction work in the Sierra Nevada and foothills.

CHIPS is planning on constructing a biomass "cogeneration" plant in Wilseyville, and a commitment to a PPA from PG&E is one of the last roadblocks to getting started, CHIPS founder Steve Wilensky said in a Feb. 15 phone interview.

Wilensky has said in the past that the plant will generate enough energy to power the surrounding Blue Mountain communities of Glencoe, Rail Road Flat, West Point and Wilseyville, and potentially secure jobs for 65 to 85 people.

CHIPS reached an agreement with PG&E at a rate of 19.72 cents per kilowatt for 20 years before its Chapter 11 filing in late January, according to Wilensky.

While the timely "informal" sign-off was good news for CHIPS, the nonprofit has been in negotiations with banks and individual funders that want to see a "legal commitment" from PG&E before investing in the multimillion dollar project, Wilensky said.

"Anybody who would be investing millions of dollars will want to know that the power purchase agreement is not going to be renegotiated," Wilensky said. "(Investors) need to know that we are exempted from (PG&E's) bankruptcy."

Wilensky said he has been in regular communication with PG&E since the filing, and anticipates a legal commitment by the end of the month.

Updates for other biomass projects in the Central Sierra Foothills

A similar project is in development in Camptonville, a small town in the Yuba County foothills and Tahoe Forest.

The Camptonville Biomass Project's planned biomass facility will produce 3 megawatts, or enough energy to power up to 2,700 households, according to the project website.

Awarded a nearly \$5 million grant from the California Energy Commission last year to cover equipment costs, the Camptonville Community Partnership and other partnering agencies are relying on an agreement with PG&E as well, and have been watching the utility's bankruptcy proceedings closely.

Willie Whittlesey, a Yuba Water Agency project manager involved with the plan, said that funding may be in jeopardy, depending on how and when PG&E's bankruptcy is resolved.

"The California Energy Commission is definitely questioning the viability of the project," Whittlesey said in a Jan. 26 phone interview. "They don't want to invest in something that doesn't have a chance of being constructed."

The Yuba Water Agency has granted the project hundreds of thousands of dollars, and "definitely has an interest in moving it forward," Whittlesey said.

As of now, "We don't really know if or how (the bankruptcy) may have an impact," Whittlesey added. "We're still thinking we've got to keep moving forward until someone says SB 1122 is dead."

In Mariposa County, a plan for a 2.4 megawatt biomass facility has been delayed, in part, by the utility's Chapter 11 filing as well, according to an update on the project's website.

"We are confident that when this bankruptcy is resolved the utility will be bound by the same law to purchase the electricity we produce," the update reads. "However, until the situation is resolved no new contracts or PPAs are being signed by PG&E ..."

Like Camptonville, the Mariposa County Biomass Project received almost \$5 million in grant monies from the California Energy Commission in 2017 – funding that for now, will stay on hold.

Butte Fire Recovery Documentation Could Cost Calaveras Over \$1-Million

[02/28/2019 10:52 am PST](#)

BJ Hansen, MML News Director

San Andreas, CA — Some of the federal dollars Calaveras County received in the aftermath of the Butte Fire, while under a federal disaster declaration, will likely have to be returned to FEMA.

The county is preparing for an audit by the Inspector General in relation to funding received from the feds to remove dead and dying trees. The money has already been spent.

At this week's supervisors meeting, Auditor-Controller Rebecca Callen stated, "I've said all along that documentation is really our responsibility as a county, and I do know that there were times where proper documentation didn't happen.... There will be dis-allowances by the OIG. I would estimate that it is probably going to be a million dollars, if not a little bit more, and that's just the reality."

She further elaborated, "If we can't find the time records, if we didn't do the proper federal procurement requirements, if we didn't take the pictures appropriately, if we didn't geotag every single tree that was removed, or didn't document where the debris went, those are all going to be pain points."

The county's Office of Emergency Services is working to create a better, and more detailed, plan, moving forward, to document the spending. Callen added, "Part of the issue that we've had historically is that there has been a lack of county wide training. When the emergency (Butte Fire) happened, three quarters of the people didn't know where the emergency operations plan was, and the quarter that did know, were not familiar with it."

The roughly \$1-million in revenue, which the county will likely owe FEMA, is expected to come out of the \$24-million Butte Fire settlement that was agreed upon between Calaveras County and PG&E.
