

# Weekly ReCAP for June 14, 2019

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## Notices:

**Next CPC meeting on July 1, 2019 4:30 to 6:30 p.m., location-  
Volunteer Center in San Andreas (directions below)**

The address for the Volunteer Center is 255 Lewis Avenue, San Andreas, CA (P.O.Box 196, San Andreas, CA 95249)

We share the same address as the San Andreas Elementary School, but we are located on the lower terrace, just down from the school office.

In San Andreas at the blinking light in town, take Main Street (old Hwy 49) past the Metropolitan, across the little bridge and turn right on Lewis Avenue. After about one block, Lewis Ave turns into a one-way street and our driveway is at the bottom of the *steep* hill, at the end of the chain link fence.

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**Next BOS meeting June 25 at 9:00 a.m.**

**Next PC meeting June 27 at 9:00 a.m., final General Plan Update PC meeting, expect this meeting to have vote to send GPU recommendation on to the BOS.**

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## Volunteer Water Report Offers Real Solutions to CA's Water Issues

*By Brandon Dawson / Sierra Club California / Capitol Voice June 2019*

The discussion around California's approach to water policy has finally shifted away from trying to justify or debunk the need/costs for the Delta twin tunnels project for the first time in over a decade.

A recent executive order from Governor Gavin Newsom established this refreshing shift.

And Sierra Club California activists quickly responded with an important paper that outlines how California's water policy can now be shaped to promote sustainability and regional resilience.

The paper, [The Smart Alternative to Tunnel\(s\): A Sensible Water Management Portfolio](#), was researched and written by a team of volunteer leaders on Sierra Club California's Water Committee who have expertise in water policy.

The paper calls for a sustainable portfolio approach as a solution to the many water challenges that California faces such as climate change, over-allocation and over-pumping of critical groundwater basins.

The report proposes practices that affect different water-using sectors and can be employed across the state.

For the agricultural industry, the document suggests investing in and managing new irrigation technology and techniques that will increase water use efficiency, as well as better enforcement in assessing and managing water transfers.

The report notes that within urban communities, fixing old water pipes and systems and investing in rainwater capture techniques that provide a recharge benefit to underlying groundwater aquifers could result in saving substantial amounts of water per year.

The report provides reasonable and feasible alternatives to the long-simmering twin tunnels project that would have moved water through two enormous tunnels from rivers north of the San Francisco Bay Delta to farms and communities south of the Delta and diverted fresh water away from the Delta.

Days after Governor Newsom signed an executive order to build a climate-resilient water system, he formally rejected the twin tunnels project and ordered the Department of Water Resources to start planning for a single tunnel.

But even a single tunnel would be costly and unnecessary. There are numerous alternatives, as the report illustrates, to building just one tunnel that are less expensive, less energy-intensive and more environmentally prudent.

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## **Safety cameras installed to help prevent spread of fires**

[By Davis Harper](#) / The Calaveras Enterprise / Jun 12, 2019

The first of many wildfire safety cameras to be installed in Calaveras County was secured on a Volcano Telephone Co. communications tower in West Point a few weeks ago.

Designed by ALERTWildfire, a partnership between the University of Nevada, Reno (UNR), University of California, San Diego (UCSD), and the University of Oregon (UO), the camera will provide firefighters and first responders a watchful eye over a heavily wooded area along West Point Pioneer Road.

Dr. Graham M. Kent, the director of the Nevada Seismological Laboratory and a professor in the Department of Geological Sciences and Engineering at UNR, spearheaded the pilot project in Tahoe in 2015. The effort, which saw the construction of a microwave network of 15 pan-tilt-zoom (PTZ) cameras around Lake Tahoe, has since expanded into California, Idaho, Oregon and Washington. As of June 6, the consortium had about 220 cameras in operation.

In a phone interview, Kent said the extensive network has already played a vital role in fire protection strategies in San Diego County.

The conditions that allow massive wildfires to spark have occurred more and more frequently over the past 20 to 30 years, Kent said.

He referenced the Berkeley Fire of 1923, which destroyed hundreds of homes in hillside neighborhoods north of the UC Berkeley campus, as an example of a fire where a combination of dry and windy weather opened up a window for a devastating blaze.

“All the cards or planets aligned to produce a dry diablo (wind) and sparks, and there was a really bad series of events. What climate change is really doing is allowing those bad windows to be much more frequent,” Kent said. “That’s why we have to gain every minute’s advantage.”

With eyes on high fire-risk areas on a 24/7 basis, the cameras can help catch ignitions early on before a fire gets out of control.

Kent said he has been able to watch the spread of large wildfires from over 100 miles away in some cases. He clarified, however, that even with that wide of a range possible, the cameras are best utilized to detect ignitions from up to about 20 miles away before they become large wildland blazes. At that distance, viewers would be able to see individual trees burning.

“The old lookouts in the Sierra are about 17 to 20 miles apart,” Kent said. “The cameras, if they replaced that granularity of observations, are well outperforming the lookout towers, but the caveat is that we want to get on fires when they’re even smaller. So we’re very happy with that number, but once a fire gets going, then we can see way beyond those 20 miles, sometimes (150-plus miles) at night.”

Even after detecting the initial ignition, they continue to play a role throughout containment.

The constant monitoring can help incident commanders determine how to allocate fire resources appropriately and in a timely manner, display fire behavior as firefighters are containing it, help agencies strategize for evacuations if necessary, and ensure that contained fires are monitored appropriately until fully suppressed.

Cris Serra, a California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (Cal Fire) battalion chief, said the agency will use the cameras to enhance quick detection and intelligence-gathering for Tuolumne and Calaveras counties.

Providing new images every 20 to 30 seconds, the system will “give us a view of what a fire is doing before the units get there, will help reduce reaction time and allow us to adjust our response, add resources and make preliminary notifications to our (cooperating agencies) such as CHP and the Sheriff’s Department,” she said.

The images are also shared publicly on the company’s cloud-based website.

Utilizing existing towers

To bring prices down and speed up the operation, the group decided to take advantage of existing third-party microwave networks in early 2018.

Kent said the installations can cost about \$5,000 each, including the cost of the camera, when building on an existing tower. Starting from scratch, however, can run the bill up to \$40,000.

In addition to the West Point camera, an Eldorado National Forest-funded camera was installed along the south rim of Mokelumne Gorge last year.

Frank Leschinsky, the public sector manager at Volcano Telephone Co., said the growing network will be a “game changer” for the community.

“I’ve been in the industry for a while, and this is a game changer as far as the value to the community,” said Leschinsky, a West Point resident. “A majority of wildfires are called in by cell phone or landline, and the problem is verifying whether they’re a real threat or a control burn. These cameras allow for immediate detection and triangulation from various cameras to locate where the smoke appears. That information is immediately available to Cal Fire, and they can evaluate in real time how to go after it.”

The photos may also present a tourism opportunity for the county, since they could offer anyone with an internet connection a real-time view of weather conditions in the foothills and Sierra, he added.

Conifer Communications, another local internet service provider, is working with ALERTWildfire to have 16 cameras installed on its towers before July, the first two of which will be secured in Groveland next week, according to Sonja Harris, a spokeswoman for the company. The company’s service area stretches from San Andreas south to Mariposa, and covers several Highway 4 corridor communities from Copperopolis east to Arnold.

Pacific Gas & Electric Co. provided the funding for the West Point camera. Under its community wildfire safety program, the utility aims to fund the installation of 100 high-definition cameras in high fire-threat areas by the end of the year, and 600 in total by 2022 as part of the ALERTWildfire Camera Network.

Based on discussions in early January, Gov. Gavin Newsom is seeking funding from the state Legislature for the installation of about 100 cameras in fire-prone areas across the state. The state budget will be adopted in September.

“At the end of the day, it’s about building these relationships with local service providers to (expand the network),” Kent said. “These local businesses can help make the area more secure quickly, and still be able to get paid for the services.”

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## California Lawmakers To Approve \$213-Billion Budget

By [B.J. Hansen](#) / MML / Jun 13, 2019

Sacramento, CA — State lawmakers today are planning to approve a spending plan that addresses fire safety, homelessness, housing, healthcare and water.

The \$213-billion budget was negotiated between Governor Gavin Newsom and legislative leaders this past weekend, and a vote is scheduled for today. Leading Republicans have been critical that it includes a new tax on anyone choosing not to purchase health insurance, and it allows people in the country illegally to apply for low income state funded health insurance.

Related to new funding for fire prevention, it provides \$40-million for CAL Fire to purchase 13 new engines and hire 131 people to operate them. \$10.6 million will go to hire 34 heavy equipment operators so that all of the agency’s 58 bulldozers can be staffed at a single time. \$13.1 million will be spent on maintaining and operating seven C-130 used air tankers being donated by the federal government. In addition, \$4.5 million will be spent to hire 13 people to gather intelligence for decision makers at larger wildfires.

Related to clean water, \$100-million in new revenue will be allocated to help distressed systems. The state estimates that over a million Californians do not have access to safe drinking water.

\$2.4-billion will be spent on homeless and affordable housing efforts. Of that, the state says it will give \$650-million to local governments.

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