

Weekly ReCAP for June 7, 2019

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.

Action Alert!

New dates added to Planning Commission Hearings

In addition to the hearings taking place this week, the Calaveras Planning Commission has added June 13, 27, and 28 to their scheduled General Plan Update hearings. CPC members have already spoken at last month's hearings and we got a small win when the Planning Commission allowed five minutes for speeches rather than three. The CPC still has more to say than we have speakers to say it.

The County needs to include community plans in its Community Planning Element

So far, the community plans have been left out of the General Plan entirely. For years, our argument at the CPC has been that unique communities have unique planning needs that need to be met by the County. We will be speaking to the Planning Commission on the diversity in Calaveras County communities and presenting a short video to showcase these different communities and really drive the point to the importance of these community plans.

If you can help by delivering a speech on one of these days...

Please email CPC facilitator, Tom Infusino at tomi@volcano.net as soon as possible and he will provide you with the information you need. You can also visit our [our website](#) for talking

points and hearing schedules. Please be sure to check back often, as additional information is added regularly.

The CPC has been advocating for General Plan improvements since the update process began in 2006. Please join us at the Planning Commission hearings.

The CPC is a group of community organizations and individuals who want a healthy and sustainable future for Calaveras County. We believe that public participation is critical to a successful planning process. United behind eleven land use and development principles, we seek to balance the conservation of local agricultural, natural and historic resources with the need to provide jobs, housing, and services to our citizens. Our work is impossible without the generous contributions of our donors. To make a tax deductible monetary donation in support of your work, please click [HERE](#) .

Governor Calls For Better Planning And Collaboration Ahead Of Fire Season

[By B.J. Hansen](#) / MML / Jun 3, 2019

Sacramento, CA — First responders from across the state are meeting today in Sacramento at an emergency management preparedness summit focused on large scale disasters.

During the opening remarks, Governor Gavin Newsom urged everyone to put politics aside ahead of the upcoming fire season, stating, “I thank each and every one of you, every right wing conservative, and left wing Democrat, thank you for giving a damn about your community, about your family, and about your neighbors.”

Newsom stated that there were 16,600 fires between 2017 and 2018, 139 lives were lost, and 2.8 million acres were destroyed.

He argued, “The state can’t take 2018 again, and it can’t do 2017 or 2015, again.”

He added, “There are 971 million reasons that we are in a better position this year than last year. That is the incremental increase in this year’s budget.”

Newsom says it includes an upgrade to the 911 system, repositioning resources when it comes to engines and personnel, outfitting C130’s, upgrading Black Hawk Helicopters to fly at night, adding better satellite technology, fuel thinning, property hardening, and focusing on socioeconomic issues, like helping at-need, and at-risk residents, who may not have a vehicle to evacuate.

He also stated that his earlier emergency declaration has helped move thinning projects forward, reducing some individualized CEQA requirements for projects in areas of extreme risk. He also called for continuing to support and invest in climate initiatives.

He concluded by saying it will take “more resources, and a more resourceful mindset,” to curb wildfires in the state.

California’s Sierra Snowpack At 202-Percent Of Average

By [B.J. Hansen](#) / MML / Jun 3, 2019

Sonora, CA — In 2017, the heavy snowpack helped pull the state out of a multi-year drought, and this year’s amount is even higher.

Effective the end of May, the Sierra Nevada snowpack was estimated to be 202-percent of the historical average. At this time during 2017, the figure was 190-percent. The northern Sierra was around 211-percent, the central Sierra was 212-percent (includes Mother Lode) and the southern Sierra was close to 178-percent.

The numbers were boosted by a series of winter and spring storms. The Sierra Nevada snowpack supplies about 30-percent of state water needs. We reported earlier that the heavy snow delayed the opening of Highway 108 Sonora Pass and Highway 4 Ebbetts Pass until after Memorial Day weekend. While both of those highways are open, Highway 120 Tioga Pass still remains closed indefinitely.

California Receiving Help From Pentagon To Fight Fires

By [B.J. Hansen](#) / MML / Jun 4, 2019

Sacramento, CA — Technology from the Department of Defense will aid California firefighters over the coming months.

The Associated Press reports that a Cold War era military satellite will be utilized to help officials identify new fires. It will hopefully help spot small wildfires before they grow larger. In addition, Acting Defense Secretary Patrick Shanahan has granted the California National Guard trial run blanket approval until the end of the year to use unmanned drones to spot survivors, map fires and count destroyed homes.

Newsom calls the developments between the state and the Defense Department as “a breakthrough” as the state prepares for the busy summer fire season.

California and the federal government have had a strained relationship over the past couple of years because of legal disputes and disagreements over several policy decisions.

New Cameras And Weather Stations To Aid In Fire Fight

By [B.J. Hansen](#) / MML / Jun 5, 2019

Sonora, CA — PG&E has a new high definition camera installed in Calaveras County, and plans to have multiple weather stations across both Calaveras and Tuolumne counties.

Company spokesperson Brandi Merlo says it is part of the new Community Wildfire Safety Program. The camera in the West Point area is one of 100 planned for this year, statewide. Merlo says, “They allow firefighters, first responders and PG&E to confirm and monitor potential wildfires. This can increase the response time and lessen the destruction of the fire.”

The cameras are part of the ALERTWildfire Camera Network, which was developed by UC San Diego, the University of Nevada and the University of Oregon. Calaveras is one of the early areas to receive a camera, and there is an eventual goal of having 600 installed in the state by the year 2022.

PG&E is also planning to have 600 weather stations in place by the end of this year. They will help identify high risk fire weather conditions. PG&E has earlier indicated its intentions to de-energize power lines in times of extreme risk. The weather data will also be shared with agencies like CAL Fire to help firefighters strategize. There will be 15 stations throughout Calaveras County this year and 14 in Tuolumne County.

To read an earlier story about a PG&E open house planned for this evening, related to fire, where you can ask questions, [click here](#).

Poll Shows Desire For Action On Housing, Homelessness And Vaccinations

By [B.J. Hansen](#) Last updated Jun 6, 2019 09:45 am

Sacramento, CA — A new Public Policy Institute Of California Poll shows support for actions designed to increase housing in California.

When asked if the state should reduce CEQA regulations, 47-percent were in favor, 30-opposed and 24-percent didn't know. On the topic of Governor Gavin Newsom's proposal to require local governments to approve new housing projects before receiving new transportation funding, 61-percent were in favor, 31-percent opposed and 8-percent didn't know. On the matter of requiring

local governments to allow apartments buildings to be allowed in single family zoning areas, if it is near a transit hub or job center, 62-percent were in favor, 30-percent opposed and 8-percent didn't know.

In addition, 52-percent stated that housing costs place a financial strain on their family.

Other findings from the poll include that 73-percent feel that childhood vaccinations should be required, 74-percent approve of Governor Newsom's plan to spend \$1-billion to address homelessness and 41-percent are afraid of rising electricity bills due to do wildfire damage costs.

Asked about general approval of Governor Newsom, 45-percent feel he is doing a good job, 29-percent disapprove of his performance and 26-percent don't know.

Tree markings, tree removals, power shutdowns are top questions at PG&E event

Guy McCarthy / The Union Democrat / June 6, 2019

The most-asked questions at a Pacific Gas and Electric community wildfire safety open house in Sonora this week focused on marking trees and removing trees near power lines, and when, where, how long, and how often the utility will do public safety power shutoffs.

About 150 people came to the open house for Tuolumne County customers of PG&E in the Oak Glen Room at Best Western Sonora Oaks Hotel and Conference Center off Hess Avenue in East Sonora. The session was more like a meet-and-greet rather than a formal meeting.

Ron Kopf, a Sonora resident, developer, and an elected member of the Tuolumne Utilities District board, said he and others at TUD were interested in learning more about how proactive power shutdowns will work because not all of TUD's facilities have backup generators on-site.

"We hope to have a sit-down and talk with them about it and figure how to mitigate impacts on our paying customers," he said.

Kopf said he understands the need for power shutdowns when there are high winds and heightened fire danger. But TUD wants to be prepared. Kopf said he also came, as a resident, to make sure PG&E has his cell phone numbers so they can notify him when blackouts happen.

Ray Cablayan, a resident of Twain Harte and Calaveras District ranger for the Stanislaus National Forest, said he wanted to get clarification from PG&E people in person about tree markings and tree removals in his neighborhood that started last year.

"Back then they were saying or implying they would take trees within 12 feet of power lines," Cablayan said. "Are they taking all trees out or just dead and dying trees? They clarified they are taking all trees within four feet of power lines, and dead or dying trees within 12 feet. My

concern is the healthy trees within 12 feet of lines. They also assured me they will speak to property owners before they remove any trees.”

Jason Kuiken, the Stanislaus National Forest supervisor, said as a member of the public he wanted to know if he will lose power at his house and at his government office locations, and if so, how long those power shutdowns will last.

“They have a difficult issue,” Kuiken said. “They have good solutions, too. They’re trying to do the best they can.”

Jody and Robert Perry, who live up near the top of Phoenix Lake Road, said they came to ask PG&E when trees that were marked beginning back in August 2018 will be removed or trimmed.

“We did get some answers,” Robert Perry said. “I got the answers I was hoping to get. We tried twice on the phone and we got conflicting answers. This was worth the time and effort coming here tonight.”

Chuck Sloan, a semiconductor and biotech industries consultant and contractor from the Bay Area, said he recently bought some undeveloped land off Tuolumne Road. He said he came to the open house expecting a talk and he found the open house format a bit disappointing.

Sloan also said he believes people who blame Pacific Gas and Electric for starting fires and for its current bankruptcy are misguided.

“We’re going to have to pay for the bankruptcies if we use power,” Sloan said. “You can’t let the government control it because the government can’t manage its way out of a box. You can’t blame PG&E, for all these fires, for when the wind blows hard. Who’s going to pay for it? Cutting down trees and new infrastructure? We’re going to pay for it through our bills. The public should become educated on PG&E issues rather than blaming them for everything, and be prepared to pay for it.”

Alisha Lomeli with PG&E vegetation management said she was approached by about 25 people with questions about tree markings and tree removals. Brandi Merlo with PG&E marketing and communications said she was approached by 12 to 15 different people who asked when, where, how often, and how long public safety power shutoffs will happen.

Merlo said it’s impossible to predict when and where the shutoffs will be necessary. She said communities already identified in Tier 2 and Tier 3 fire threat areas -- for elevated fire threats and extreme fire threats -- these communities are certainly more likely to be included in public safety power shutoffs. The shutoff program began last year and new for this year is inclusion of the need for shutting down the utility’s massive transmission lines when high winds and fire dangers are critical.

Merlo said PG&E has made efforts to identify every single electric customer statewide, a total of more than 5 million customers, letting each customer know they could be without power for two to five days when shutoffs are deemed necessary.

Deirdre Walke, Americans with Disabilities Act coordinator for Pacific Gas and Electric, said she got a lot of questions from people like, “What do I do when the power’s off? I have a lot of medical equipment.”

They need to make plans in advance of future public safety power shutoffs, Walke said.

“They’ll need a standby generator or some other source of power. They need to determine what size generator they need, based on the medical equipment they need to run,” she said.

People with power-related medical needs and questions should call PG&E customer service at 1 (800) 743-5000, and make sure they are signed up for the utility’s Medical Baseline Customer Outreach, Walke said.

Pacific Gas and Electric is in the midst of bankruptcy reorganization and Cal Fire investigators in early May determined the Camp Fire, which burned 239 square miles, destroyed 18,800 structures and resulted in 85 civilian fatalities, was caused by electrical transmission lines owned and operated by PG&E. It was the deadliest fire in state records.

In recent filings, Pacific Gas and Electric estimates it has liabilities, in respect to total wildfire-related claims, of \$14.21 billion. Most of that total – \$10.5 billion – stems from the 2018 Camp Fire that devastated the Paradise area and killed more than 80 people in Butte County, about 175 miles north of Sonora.

The utility is hosting more than a dozen wildfire safety open house events in June and July, including Thursday in Amador County and June 17 at Mariposa County Fairgrounds in Mariposa.

Wildfire safety meetings are also planned June 11 in Redding, June 12 in Chico, June 13 in Chester, and June 20 in San Luis Obispo. More meetings are planned in Napa, Santa Rosa, Oakland and Walnut Creek.
