

Weekly ReCAP for July 26, 2019

Next CPC meeting **4:30 to 6:30 pm, August 5, 2019, at the Volunteer Center, 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.

ATTENTION!

BOS Public Hearing for Final General Plan Update , posted dates July 30 & , possibly, July 31 & August 14, 2019.

The agenda and staff report for the General Plan adoption hearing Tuesday at the BOS is posted on the County website:

http://calaverascountyca.iqm2.com/Citizens/Detail_Meeting.aspx?ID=2215

Agenda item for July 30th meeting:

REGULAR AGENDA

Conduct a public hearing, deliberate and make a tentative decision regarding certifying the Environmental Impact Report and adopting the Calaveras County General Plan; Defer action
5. on a final decision and direct staff to prepare appropriate findings and resolution consistent with the tentative decision to be brought back at a subsequent meeting for final approval.

 Action Item Printout

SIGNED RES 2019-

a. 016 FOR RECOMMENDATION TO BOS ADOPTION GP EIR 6-27-19

b. BOS NOTICE OF A PUBLIC HEARING

c. FEIR Errata #1

d. FEIR Errata #2

Community residents encouraged to attend last public hearing to discuss General Plan update.

Submitted by Tom Infusino, Facilitator at the Calaveras Planning Coalition / The Calaveras Enterprise /Jul 25, 2019

Editor

After 13 years of the General Plan update process, the board of supervisors will hear from the people one last time at the public hearings starting July 30. What might people say about the General Plan update?

I hope people from Arnold, Murphys, Douglas Flat, Avery, Hathaway Pines and Valley Springs will speak up and say out loud that they want to keep their community plans, in order to maintain and enhance the character of their communities. The proposed General Plan update would eliminate those community plans.

I hope people will say that they want to achieve measurable improvements to fire safety in a timely manner rather than relying on General Plan update measures that may or may not be implemented at some unspecified time in the future.

I hope that people concerned about the loss of farmland, rangeland and timberland will say that they want the specific mitigation standards proposed by the Calaveras Agriculture Coalition in 2011 rather than the General Plan update proposal to amend the code at some unspecified time in the future.

The residents of Calaveras County are deeply committed to building a future that balances resource conservation with the need to provide jobs, housing, safety and services. It is time for their government to step up and show that same level of commitment.

We at the Calaveras Planning Coalition encourage you to make your voices heard. Attend the hearings. You can also contact your supervisors by sending an email to their clerk, Diane Severud, at DSeverud@co.calaveras.ca.us, by writing an email on the county website at calaverasgov.us/County-Feedback/Board-of-Supervisors, or by calling the clerk at 754-6370.

[CCWD Working to Address Discolored Water in Copperopolis Area](#)

by [Joel Metzger](#)

Calaveras County Water District is aware that customers in the greater Copperopolis area are experiencing discolored water, due to naturally occurring minerals in the water. The discolored water was caused by a significant increase in water usage by Copperopolis residents and a PG&E power failure that disrupted normal pumping operations earlier this week.

To address this issue, field crews will be flushing the system.

While the District does not want to diminish the community's concerns about the discolored water, this is an aesthetic issue and is not a threat to public health and safety.

Those with questions or concerns can contact the Customer Service Department at (209) 754-3543 or customerservice@ccwd.org.

Western Warming Warning

Climate change will worsen droughts, wildfires and die-offs in the region, a report says.

By Robert Lee Hotz, Times Staff Writer **October 6, 2006!**

Rising temperatures in the 11 Western states due to global warming will cause more prolonged droughts, more widespread wildfires, and extensive die-offs in regional plant, fish and game habitats, according to a report Thursday from the National Wildlife Federation.

'The American West is truly on the front line,' said Patty Glick, the federation's global warming specialist. 'The latest science is painting a bleak picture.'

To address climate change, the organization urged national limits on the greenhouse gases responsible for rising temperatures, such as carbon dioxide and methane. California recently adopted such limits.

The national appetite for energy, fed by carbon-rich coal, oil and natural gas, imposes a double penalty on the ecological well-being of the West, said the group, which has 1 million members. The search for more fossil fuels - drilling permits on public lands have tripled in six years - disrupts fragile habitats even as increasing carbon dioxide alters the regional climate in ways that will make it impossible for many species to survive.

The federation report, called "Fueling the Fire," brings a regional focus to climate research findings from federal agencies, academia and science journals.

The researchers cited growing evidence that rising regional temperatures had already caused warmer winters, earlier springs and less snow - increasing the likelihood of winter flooding and of diminished summer water supplies.

All told, the winter snowpack, which is the source of 75% of the West's water, has declined by up to a third in the northern Rocky Mountain region and more than 50% in parts of the Cascades since 1950, the federation reported.

Indeed, the West is in the middle of a prolonged drought that may be the worst since record-keeping began more than a century ago -the direct consequence of altered weather patterns caused by warmer temperatures in the Pacific and Indian oceans, other research groups have reported.

As the Western landscape becomes more desiccated, wildfires become more common, more widespread and harder to control, experts said.

This past wildfire season was the most severe on record, said ecologist Steven W. Running at the University of Montana College of Forestry and Conservation. More than 9.6 million acres burned over the summer - twice the seasonal average - and at \$1.5 billion, the expense to fight them was the greatest ever.

The warming trend we are under is clearly accelerating and expanding the wildfire activity," Running said.

"There is no reason we can see that it will reverse anytime soon."

(Newspaper article from CPC Response Document to the Mintier-Harnish Baseline Report-March 11, 2008)

Realtors Report Latest Local Home Sales Figures

By [Tori James](#) /MML / Jul 18, 2019

Sonora, CA – Home prices continue to rise in the Mother Lode as days on the market lengthen.

According to the latest figures through the second quarter of this year from the Tuolumne County Association of Realtors (TCAR), the median sales price of \$295,000 is up two percent from the same time last year when it was \$289,000. The average sales price rose five percent to \$328,900 from \$314,427 in Q2 2018.

However, average days on the market shot up 11 percent to 127 from 114. Total sales were down 22 percent from 531 in Q2 of last year to 415 through Q2 this year.

Of this year's sales through Q2, 97 percent were private and three percent REO or bank-owned. At the same time last year 95 percent were private sales. As for price points, approximately 15 percent or 61 home sales were in the \$200,000 and below category while last year at the same time 99, or 19 percent were in this market segment, which is a 38 percent decrease.

The high sales price came in this year at the end of Q2 at under \$1.3 million while last year through Q2 it was just over \$1 million. The respective low prices are \$60,000 and \$32,000.

TCAR's market snapshot taken July 8 reflects a current median list price of \$350,000 and average price of \$415,111 with 594 active listings, of which 98 percent are private sellers. Currently 21, or four percent of the homes for sale have a listing price at or under \$200,000. The high list price is nearly \$2 million while the lowest is \$79,000. TCAR officials note that the average rate of just over 69 monthly sales indicates about a six-month inventory.

June Statewide Sales Market Figures

Across the state, June home sales, which totaled 389,690, were down 4.2 percent from May's 406,960 units sold. It reflects a 5.1 percent decrease from last June's sales. The dip below the 400,000-benchmark figure, followed a May rebound. CAR officials point out that sales have been under the benchmark for 10 of the past 11 months.

June's statewide median home price of \$611,420 was virtually unchanged from May and up 1.4 percent from June 2018. Year-to-date statewide home sales were down 5.9 percent in June.

CAR officials say that active listings, which have been decelerating since December 2018, grew 2.4 percent from a year ago — the smallest increase since April 2018. The number of homes available for sale has moderated significantly, suggesting that the market is getting back toward being more balanced between supply and demand — but inventory remains relatively tight from a historical perspective.

The median number of days it took to sell a California single-family home increased in June. Time on market inched up from 18 days in May to 19 days in June. It took a median number of 15 days to sell a home in June 2018.

CAR reports that the 30-year, fixed-mortgage interest rate averaged 3.8 percent in June, down from 4.57 percent the same time last year, according to Freddie Mac. The five-year, adjustable mortgage interest rate was an average of 3.48 percent, compared to 3.82 percent in June 2018.

“With softer price growth and interest rates at the lowest levels in nearly three years, monthly mortgage payments on a median-priced home have fallen for four straight months. This allows homebuyers to save hundreds of dollars a month on the same home or to potentially consider a slightly more expensive home for the same monthly cost,” comments CAR President Jared

Martin. He adds, “Combined with the long-term benefits of homeownership on personal wealth and quality of life, 2019 is a good time to purchase a home for the long haul.”

RCRC- The Barbed Wire – July 19, 2019

Cannabis Banking Hearing

The Senate Banking Committee scheduled a hearing to examine legislation to address the legal prohibitions preventing banks from providing financial services to cannabis related businesses. Senate Banking Committee Chairman Mike Crapo (R-Idaho) and Ranking Member Sherrod Brown (D-Ohio) will lead the full committee hearing, scheduled for Tuesday, July 23, 2019.

Chairman Crapo and Ranking Member Brown will hear from two panels of witnesses. The first panel will feature Senators Cory Gardner (R-Colorado) and Jeff Merkley (D-Oregon), the original sponsors for the Senate version of the SAFE Banking Act, a legislative proposal that would lift the prohibition on cannabis banking. The second panel includes representatives from the cannabis and financial services industry who are expected to testify on the hazards and complications of denying the cannabis industry access to fundamental banking activities.

The hearing is a significant reversal from Chairman Crapo who was previously adamant the cannabis banking prohibition be resolved through federal legalization. Chairman Crapo has not come out in favor of cannabis banking legislation but holding a hearing is a significant step forward for the SAFE Banking Act.

Forest Service

The Trump Administration ended a long dispute with the State of California of the terms of the U.S. Forest Service’s reimbursement to state firefighting agencies for their assistance during the 2018 wildfire suppression efforts on federal lands. The U.S. Forest Service was disputing portions of a \$72 million reimbursement owed to California according to the California Fire Assistance Agreement (CFAA).

The U.S. Forest Service ultimately agreed to uphold the CFAA for the remainder of 2019 and complete a full reimbursement to California. CFAA took effect in 2015 and will expire in 2020, when California will have to renegotiate the terms of its agreement with the U.S. Forest Service for cooperative wildfire suppression activities on federal land. The announcement this week marks the end of a bitter feud between the Trump Administration and California that began with a series of comments from President Trump blaming recent wildfires on the states’ environmental and forest management laws.

Infrastructure

Last week, Senate Environment and Public Works Committee Chairman John Barrasso (R-Wyoming) held a hearing on an upcoming surface transportation infrastructure package that will

reauthorize critical federal funding for highway infrastructure and other surface transportation programs. The legislation is expected to focus on traditional “roads and bridges” infrastructure projects and will likely be the only significant infrastructure legislation to move through Congress in 2019.

PG&E asking for 6.4% rate increase to fund wildfire safety measures, liability insurance, equipment upgrades

[By Davis Harper](#) / The Calaveras Enterprise / Jul 19, 2019

Pacific Gas & Electric customers may see a \$10 increase in their bills starting in 2020, and an increase of \$20 over the next three years, based on the utility giant’s latest proposal to the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC).

More than half of PG&E’s requested \$1.058 billion in increased revenues from ratepayers in 2020 would “bolster wildfire prevention, risk monitoring and emergency response,” Robert Kenney, PG&E vice president of Regulatory Affairs, told CPUC judges at a July 17 public hearing in Stockton – the second of nine meetings to be held in PG&E’s service area. “It will also add and enhance new safety measures, it will increase vegetation management and it will harden our electric system to increase resiliency and to help further reduce the risk of wildfire.”

The rest of the increases would be used to cover liability insurance costs due to increased risks of wildfire (\$273 million), in addition to gas and electric equipment upgrades (\$205 million), according to a pamphlet passed out at the meeting.

None of the money will be allocated for executive compensation, and none of it will fund wildfire claims involved in the company’s Chapter 11 bankruptcy process, Kenney added.

The role of the assigned judges, Rafael Lirag and Elaine Lau, is to review PG&E’s application and, based on the evidence and testimony put forth in public hearings, propose a decision for the CPUC’s five commissioners.

“The purpose of today’s meeting is for us to listen to your comments,” Lau told the roughly 10 to 15 people in attendance at the California State Building in Downtown Stockton. “We want to hear about how PG&E’s application affects you, your family and your community.”

At the hearing, multiple speakers vocally opposed the rate hike, citing the strain it would put on low-income, elderly and disabled community members.

Constance Slider Pierre, organizing director of The Utility Reform Network (TURN), a San Francisco-based utility watchdog, encouraged those in attendance to speak up and share how the extra \$20 per month would impact them.

“Tell the commission how current energy costs affect you, what trade-offs you have been forced to make, what trade-offs you will be forced to make and what measures you will have to take to reduce costs and conserve energy,” Pierre said.

Stating TURN’s opposition to the rate increase, Pierre said that the proposal would grow PG&E’s revenues by 23% from 2019 rates and create a \$2 billion annual increase for the company by 2022. It also comes on top of “other taxpayer increases currently being proposed by PG&E that would authorize a 60% profit margin increase to shareholders while forcing ratepayers to pay billions for additional tree trimming and costs associated with wildfires caused by PG&E’s negligence,” Pierre added.

Pierre was referring to a cost-of-capital rate increase proposal, PG&E spokeswoman Brandi Merlo confirmed on July 18.

Stockton resident Sylvia Manteufel told judges the rate increases would compound the struggles many residents are already facing with rising costs of rent, among other expenses.

“I’m in my 70s, I don’t have much of a pension ... we just want to take care of what’s ours, and it doesn’t seem fair when we have to give and give and give ... I have no idea how much longer we are going to be able to take this,” Manteufel said.

Unreasonable requests for rate increases are nothing new for PG&E, according to TURN Communications Director Mindy Spatt.

“Every single time PG&E has a rate case, it comes to the PUC and customers and says, ‘this is how much money we need to provide you with safe and reliable service,’ and yet no matter how many times CPUC has agreed to these rate hikes, not only are we not getting safe and reliable service, we’re getting the least safe and reliable service in the U.S.A.,” Spatt said in a July 18 phone interview. “No matter how many times PG&E makes those promises, nothing seems to be getting better.”

The CPUC will make its decision on the rate hike in August.

Customers can submit written comments to public.advisor@cpuc.ca.gov.

Trump Tackles Wildfire Suppression

| [By Tracey Petersen](#) / MML / Jul 20, 201

Sonora, CA — Proposing what some are calling an ambitious plan, the Trump administration's goal is to slow Western wildfires by bulldozing, mowing or revegetating large swaths of land along 11,000 miles of terrain in the West, including California.

The plan involves creating fuel breaks on about 1,000 square miles of land managed by the U.S. Bureau of Land Management in an area known as the Great Basin, which includes parts of Idaho, Oregon, Washington, California, Nevada and Utah. The initial cost is estimated between \$55 million to \$192 million then up to \$107 million annually to maintain them.

Wildfire experts acknowledge the program could help slow fires, but say that it won't help with the most extreme fires that can jump these strips of land. They also comment that the breaks could fragment wildlife habitat, which is a major concern of the environmental group, Center for Biological Diversity. Its Nevada State Director, Patrick Donnelly, conveys that the plan is ill-conceived, expensive and lacks scientific backing.

“This seems like the Interior is trying to demonstrate they are doing something, and they want something that is impressive to people, like: ‘Look at us, we’ve bulldozed 11,000 miles of desert,’” Donnelly said. “Ultimately, this is a misguided effort.”

Noting that it could break up habitat for sage grouse, deer and the Pygmy rabbit, Donnelly adds that the money would be better spent planting native seed and sagebrush to get rid of non-native plants that make fires worst.

This proposal does not include U.S. National Forest Service lands. Currently, the plan is out for public comment and pending environmental review. If approved, some of the land could be cleared as soon as next year while other projects could take several years.

Update: Fires Popping Up Across Mother Lode Following Lightning Strikes

[By Tracey Petersen / MML / Jul 23, 2019](#)

Update at 4:15 p.m.: Cal Fire spokesperson Emily Kilgore reports that the lightning strike fire in the area of Mountain Ranch Road and Rocky Road in Calaveras County, titled the “1-1 Fire,” has been contained at one acre.

Update at 11:55am: Air attack has located a new fire in the area of Mountain Ranch Road and Rocky Road. It is approximately 1/2 acre. An engine and crew are responding to the scene.

Update at 11:25am: While there were four reports of vegetation fires, CAL Fire reports that only three were located. The fires in Copperopolis and in the North Fork of the Mokelumne

River drainage have been contained. The third incident, near the vicinity of Swiss Ranch Road, is being extinguished by arriving personnel.

Update at 10:47am: The CAL Fire Tuolumne-Calaveras Unit has initiated a lightning response plan for its northern region so that a reduced number of resources will go to each of the small lightning caused vegetation fires. It frees up engines and personnel to respond to other incidents. This way, instead of having several engines respond to a small tree fire, there will likely only be a single engine. If the initial responders see a need for more resources, additional engines will be dispatched.

Also, firefighters are now staffing the Blue Mountain Lookout in Calaveras County, and air attack continues to patrol the unit looking for new lightning caused incidents. As reported below, four small fires have been located to this point.

Update at 10:28am: A fourth fire has now been spotted in the North Fork of the Mokelumne River drainage, south of Highway 26, near West Point.

Original story posted at 10:18am: Mountain Ranch, CA — There are multiple small fires that CAL Fire is responding to after lightning and isolated rain showers passed through parts of the Mother Lode.

We reported earlier that crews are on the scene of a tree fire in the Christian Gulch area of Copperopolis. There are now similar type fires reported along Swiss Ranch Road near Mountain Ranch and between Highway 26 and Highway 88 near West Point.

CAL Fire reports that air attack will be up this morning patrolling for any additional fires that may emerge. None of the fires are currently threatening any homes or structures.

Calaveras Sheriff's Office Shares Midyear Stats On Illegal Cannabis Busts

[By **Tori James**](#) / MML / Jul 23, 2019

San Andreas, CA – Just over halfway through this year's illegal marijuana eradication efforts, Calaveras County officials say they have taken at least \$36 million in black market pot out of play.

As far as 2019 stats go, Sheriff's spokesperson Sgt. Greg Stark shares, "So far, year to date, the Calaveras County Marijuana Enforcement Team has seized just over 37,000 plants at 31 sites, and a total of 1.200 pounds of processed [marijuana]." He adds the MET also took out four butane honey oil (BHO) labs, made 17 arrests, and seized 21 guns.

While in the past, Clarke Broadcasting has used \$3,500 per plant and \$2,500 per pound of processed marijuana as variables to provide rough street values, Stark says the market values have changed over time.

He says current figures are more like between \$1,300 and \$2,000 per plant and half-pound of pot when from an indoor grow; plants and pot per pound yielding from greenhouses can be valued between \$1,000 and \$1,500; plants and processed pot per pound from outdoor operations might be estimated between \$700 to \$1,000.

Applying those figures to what the MET has eradicated so far this year, Stark estimates that a conservative rough value estimate might be between \$36 and \$37.5 million.

An Ongoing Cycle, Public's Help Appreciated

Although the MET is ramping up operations ahead of the fall outdoor harvest season, Stark maintains that marijuana growing and busting activities in Calaveras County are constant activities. "From the indoor grows during the wintertime to the outdoor and indoor ones year-round, we are busy year-round."

In addition to a recent warrant search and arrest in the 5000 block of Michel Road in Mountain Ranch [reported here](#), Stark shares that the MET served a search warrant for illegal marijuana cultivation at a residence in the 300 block of De Moss Lane.

At that site, the MET eradicated 1,074 marijuana plants from an outdoor grow. While the suspects were not at the location at the time of the warrant, evidence seized from the scene is still being examined and the investigation is ongoing.

"For weeks and/or months following a warrant, the investigation into each site continues. In some cases, charges are referred to the District Attorney later, pending the results of evidence testing, interviews, or follow up investigations," Stark explains.

As far as leads from the community, he comments, "We are receiving a significant amount of [Sheriff's Marijuana Tip Line] tips that help us tremendously when we investigate these issues." Currently, any outdoor growing is illegal in Calaveras County and there is a ban on commercial production.

Anyone with information on illegal marijuana cultivation sites or sites manufacturing concentrated cannabis is encouraged to call the anonymous tip line at 209 754-6870.

Monsoon thunder rattles the Mother Lode

[by Dakota Morlan](#) /The Calaveras Enterprise /Jul 23, 2019

Many residents awoke to lightning, thunder and showers Tuesday morning as a fast-moving, high-pressure system traveled northward through the Mother Lode.

According to National Weather Service Meteorologist Eric Kurth, the warm storm will likely pass by late morning and will bring triple-digit temperatures to the area later this week and throughout the weekend.

Although some locations within the Mother Lode experienced showers, the rainfall has been too localized to accurately measure, Kurth said.

The California Highway Patrol (CHP) in San Andreas reported one collision Tuesday morning, though it is undetermined if wet roadways were a contributing factor.

“The first rain in a while will cause the roads to be slick and drivers need to reduce their speed,” CHP officer Tobias Butzler told the Enterprise.

The California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (Cal Fire) responded to four small, single tree/spot fires in Calaveras County and a 1-acre fire near Mountain Ranch on Tuesday. The department initiated a lightning plan (LCA) for the northern portion of the county.

"Activation of the LCA includes the staffing of Blue Mountain Lookout and Air Attack 440 conducting recon for ignitions," stated a news release issued by the Cal Fire Tuolumne-Calaveras Unit.

According to Kurth, thunderstorms are typical within the region during the late summer months due to monsoonal moisture traveling northward from the Southeast.

“We do see this monsoon pattern set up. A lot of times, it’s more east into the High Sierra, but sometimes in the Mother Lode and even the San Joaquin Valley,” Kurth said. “High pressure centered over the Southwest brings moisture up from the Sea of Cortez, basically down by Mexico. There is a lot of warm, moist air over ocean down there, and when high pressure starts steering winds from the south, it can push it into our area.”

The High Sierra may experience additional thunderstorms on Thursday, Kurth said. However, the remainder of the Mother Lode will stay hot and dry once the storm passes, with temperatures not expected to dip into the mid-90s until early next week.

Update 7/23/19: This article was updated to include additional information from Cal Fire.

Union Democrat Newspaper Being Sold

[By B.J. Hansen](#) / MML / Jul 24, 2019

Sonora, CA — The Union Democrat newspaper in Sonora will soon have a new owner.

The paper reported in today's edition that that a bankruptcy judge in Oregon has approved the sale of the company, and its building in downtown Sonora, to the company Rhode Island Suburban Newspapers. The sale price is \$1.15-million. [We reported in January](#) that the Union Democrat's parent company, Western Communications, recently filed for bankruptcy protection for the second time in ten years. Rather than restructure, the parent company chose to liquidate its assets. The Union Democrat was founded in 1854 and purchased by Western Communications in 1998. The sale takes effect on July 31.

Rhode Island Suburban Newspapers is a privately held company based in West Warwick, Rhode Island, and it owns a handful of daily newspapers in Rhode Island, Arizona and California, as well as some weekly publications.

ATTENTION!

Caltrans Alerts Motorists To New 4-Way Stop At Hwys 49-26

[By Tori James](#) / MML / Jul 24, 2019

Mokelumne Hill, CA – Crossroads at a major Mother Lode highway intersection are about to become a four-way stop.

Caltrans officials say they have slated Saturday as the day when a crew will install of new stop signs on Highway 49 at Highway 26 in Mokelumne Hill. However, since they did not specify exactly what the work hours will be, motorists should be prepared for workers, equipment and trucks at and near the intersection.

Two new stop signs on Highway 49 will join the two existing ones on Highway 26 at the intersection. Also being posted are new "4-way stop" signs and red flashing beacons to alert motorists of the stop ahead.

The installation is described as an interim traffic safety measure to reduce the likelihood of broadside collisions as plans continue to determine long-range intersection improvements at the intersection. Officials say they plan to gather community input to help guide the long-term plan development.

For other traffic information provided by CalTrans traffic reports for Highway's 4, 49, 59, 108, and 120 and other Highways around the Mother Lode including Stockton and Valley Springs click on the "Traffic" tab or keyword: [traffic](#)

Tuolumne County braces for PG&E power shutoffs due to fire risk

By Alex MacLean / The Union Democrat / July 24, 2019

Tips from PG&E on how to prepare for power shutoffs

- Update contact information by visiting www.pge.com/mywildfirealerts, or calling 1-866-753-6589 during normal business hours.
- Plan for medical needs, such as medications that must be refrigerated or electrical devices.
- Identify backup charging methods for phones and keep written copies of emergency numbers.
- Build or resupply an emergency kit that contains flashlights, batteries, first aid supplies, food, water, radio, tools, utensils, medication and eyeglasses if needed, and cash.
- Know how to manually open your garage door.

For more information about the shutoffs, go to www.pge.com/wildfiresafety or www.prepareforpowerdown.com.

For more information about guidelines for installing backup generators, go to www.pge.com/generators.

It's the height of fire season with temperatures in the triple digits and Pacific Gas and Electric Co. just cut off the power to thousands of homes in Tuolumne County, possibly for days.

That's a scenario local public officials and PG&E representatives are urging people to prepare for like an inevitability at some point this summer, as the utility rolls out its new "public safety power shutoffs" when the threat of fire is extremely high.

"They (PG&E) have told us to expect that they will" shut off the power at some point, said Liz Peterson, Tuolumne County emergency services coordinator.

The embattled utility, which has been blamed for several catastrophic fires in recent years that have caused death and destruction, got approval to do the shutoffs from California regulators earlier this year.

About 22,600 PG&E customers in parts of Yolo, Solano, Napa, Butte and Yuba counties were the first to have their power shutoff on the night of June 8, though most had it restored by the next morning.

Factors that are considered before pulling the plug include red flag warnings from the National Weather Service, wind speeds, humidity levels, and on-the-ground observations by field employees, according to PG&E spokeswoman Brandi Merlo.

The first shutoff by PG&E for safety purposes lasted for about 24 hours in October and affected more than 60,000 customers in the Sierra foothills, including several thousand in Calaveras County.

Merlo said the company's goal is to restore power within 24 to 48 hours, though she encouraged customers to make preparations for up to five days without electricity.

"When we shut off for safety, we are required to inspect every foot of line before restoring power," she said of why it could take longer than 48 hours.

Wide swaths of Tuolumne and Calaveras counties would likely be without power if the company had to shut down transmission lines that connect the grid.

One way the company hopes to speed up the process this year is by mobilizing inspection crews to patrol lines in segments and restore power to them as they go along, Merlo added.

The company is also working with county officials throughout the state to identify locations for large tents that would be erected by PG&E in places where the power is shut off.

Merlo said the tents would be air conditioned and provide a place for people to go during the day to cool off or charge the batteries on their phones, though they likely will not be suitable as overnight shelters.

Customers will not have to pay for electricity during the shut off, but Merlo said the company will not be paying any claims because the purpose is for public safety and notifications will be issued in advance.

The company plans to give notice to customers within 48 hours of a shutoff, followed by another within 24 hours and a final one within one hour. A warning about the possibility of shutoffs was sent out by PG&E to all of its roughly 5 million customers in May.

Merlo said customers are encouraged to make sure their contact information is up to date by accessing their accounts online or calling 1-800-743-5000.

“It’s impossible to tell when, where and how often we would do this because weather conditions are constantly changing, but it’s something we are monitoring and always preparing for,” she said.

Public agencies and private citizens in the county are also taking steps to prepare.

Peterson said the County Administration Center, jail, and several other county-owned buildings are equipped with backup generators in case of an outage.

The county is working internally on a plan for where to place employees who work in buildings that don’t have generators so they could continue providing services. They are also looking for facilities that could be used as cooling shelters to see if they have any backup power.

“If there was a need, we would do what we could to fill that need,” she said.

Jason Terry, an administrative analyst for the county, said the state Office of Emergency Services is also reviewing a request for a \$145,000 grant to purchase two large generators that would provide backup power for the Animal Control building and Groveland Community Hall.

Terry said they anticipate hearing whether the request was approved within 60 to 90 days.

Sonora Police Chief Turu VanderWiel said the city also has backup generators to power its police and fire stations, but does not have the resources to provide any for the general public.

VanderWiel said his department anticipates an increased number of calls for medical assistance during a blackout from people who may have health concerns or electronic equipment. They are working with Adventist Health Sonora on a plan for those people.

The department also anticipates an increased number of calls from people asking about the outage, as they typically do when the power goes out, though VanderWiel urged people to contact PG&E and keep the lines clear for real emergencies.

Tuolumne Utilities District, meanwhile, has invested between \$80,000 and \$100,000 to purchase additional generators that are roughly \$20,000 to \$40,000 a piece, according to Ed Pattison, TUD general manager.

Pattison said the purchases were made in response to the likelihood of power shutoffs. The district also has 40-plus other generators to power critical water and sewer infrastructure, such as pumps, lift stations and treatment plants.

“People are going to be without power for a day or so, but they can’t be without water,” he said. “We also don’t want to spill wastewater everywhere if the lift stations go down, so we’re sure they’re protected as well.”

The district has inventoried all facilities, equipment that can be used to generate power, and educated field staff on what to do if a shutoff happens.

Pattison said they still need an additional 20 to 40 backup generators for powering the entire system, though it doesn't have enough money to purchase them. He's pushed for state Office of Emergency Services to purchase 100 or so that could be loaned out to utilities throughout the state.

"We've prepared as much as we can for an event," he said. "The only now is waiting for it to happen for the first time, but we're as ready as we can be."

Callie Stephens, assistant manager of Tractor Supply Co. in East Sonora, said sales of generators have been up since the news broke of PG&E's plans to do the shutoffs.

The store sells both portable and standby generators, though the latter they have to order.

Portable generators can range in price from about \$200 to nearly \$1,000 depending on wattage and features. They aren't built to power an entire home, but can be used to run basic appliances like refrigerators, coffee pots, lights, and smaller swamp coolers.

Stephens said one of the more popular portable generators is a high-end one that can be fueled by both gasoline and propane, because the gas pumps might not work without electricity.

"I have one on layaway because I want to be able to run my fridge and cooler," she said.

Renee Fuller, owner of Rez Solar and Electric Inc. on the Tuolumne Rancheria, said those with solar panels will likely also need a backup source of power like a generator because the panels won't function properly without a source.

The company is working to install standby generators for all of the homes on the reservation, said Fuller, a member of the Tuolumne Band of Me-Wuk Indians.

"We have quite a few elders out here and we don't want them to have issues in the high heat," she said.

She said her husband had to complete a three-day course to become licensed for installing generators. A standby generator that wasn't installed properly could backfeed electricity into de-energized PG&E lines and kill someone working on them.

Dennis Lafayette, of Lafayette Construction in Sonora, got into the business of installing generators earlier this year after hearing about PG&E's plans.

Lafayette has been a licensed electrician for 40 years and recently became a licensed dealer of generators manufactured by Generac Power System. Each generator typically costs between \$5,000 and \$10,000, though there are a lot of factors that can affect the price.

"We design the generator to the need that the home or business might require," he said. Installing generators was supposed to provide some work on the side for Lafayette, who also deals in real estate, but it has started to consume much of his time because of the high demand.

Lafayette said he's sold nearly 20 generators at homes in Tuolumne County since May. He's also gotten calls from people in Manteca, but he's sticking close to home.

Another electrician that Lafayette spoke to said he's sold about 40 generators this year.

"If you have an electrical license, your phone is probably ringing for generators," he said. "I personally took this on to supplement what I'm doing in real estate, but it's growing so big so fast it's like wow."

Lafayette said he's noticed a shift in the attitude of people calling him about generators since it started warming up over the past week.

Where as people earlier in the year were more calm and inquisitive, Lafayette said he can sense the anxiousness growing in some of his more recent clients.

"I'm seeing anxiety, people wanting to get them now," he said. "I'm getting calls from people who I can tell are emotionally invested. They are upset."

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California Will Use Clean Air Funds For Water Efforts

By [B.J. Hansen](#) / MML / Jul 25, 2019

Sacramento, CA — Governor Gavin Newsom visited the central valley to sign a bill setting aside \$130-million in greenhouse gas emission funding for clean water projects.

The Associated Press reports that some environmental groups raised concerns about the legislation because it takes away funding that was earmarked to reduce carbon emissions in the air. The Governor argues that disadvantaged communities are most impacted by climate change and it is a "moral disgrace" that over one million Californians lack access to clean drinking water.

Newsom says, "Parents shouldn't have to worry about their kids drinking from the water fountain at school, and families shouldn't have to dump water over their heads to shower every day. This funding is critically important to addressing California's long-standing safe drinking water issues."

Newsom signed and spoke about the legislation, SB 200, while visiting the community of Sanger yesterday, where he says many families receive five 8-gallon jugs of water every two weeks through a grant program, which they use for drinking and cooking.

Supervisors approve housing for homeless

By [Noah Berner noah@calaverasenterprise.com](mailto:noah@calaverasenterprise.com) / July 25, 2019

The Calaveras County Board of Supervisors on Tuesday approved the use of a portion Government Center property in San Andreas for a “scattered site” emergency shelter pilot project. During their meeting, supervisors also authorized the board chair to execute an agreement with the Gordian Group Inc. for job order contracting services over the next three years.

A portion of Government Center land at 891 Mountain Ranch Road, between the Behavioral Health Clinic and the library, will be used as one of two sites in the shelter project.

The other site is on property owned by the Blue Mountain Coalition for Youth and Families at 174 Spink Road, West Point.

The Calaveras County Homeless Task Force is spearheading the project, which aims to help community members who lack stable housing by building approximately 10 tiny houses equipped with showers, bathrooms, sinks and small kitchen areas for use as emergency shelters.

The program also includes intensive case management for those temporarily placed in the shelters.

Approximately \$1.2 million in one-time funding has been secured through the state’s Homeless Emergency Aid Program (HEAP), in partnership with the four-county Central Sierra Continuum of Care, in order to address the immediate emergency needs of homeless individuals and those at imminent risk of homelessness in the county.

Calaveras County’s portion of the HEAP funding is \$302,412.

The Homeless Task Force plans on building between three to six units at each location for the “scattered site” shelter project. The units will be portable, allowing them to be moved to different locations depending on community needs.

“Scattered-site” refers to the development of publicly funded, affordable housing units throughout diverse, middle-class neighborhoods, rather than concentrating shelters in one neighborhood.

County staff and community partners will collaborate on case management and oversight.

“I really want to emphasize the point that this is a pilot project,” Director of Health and Human Services Kristin Stranger said at the meeting. “We know that this is going to be a learning experience. We know that other jurisdictions are much further along in terms of addressing emergency needs, but we’re confident that this well-developed, collaboratively developed pilot could be something that would be really beneficial to our community.”

District 3 Supervisor Merita Callaway thanked Stranger for her work on addressing the issue of homelessness.

“I need to really thank you and the task force,” Callaway said. “It’s been very embarrassing as a county to not have anything, to have not done anything, for all these many years, and the issue has been here, and our adjoining counties have had shelters in place, whatever format that looks like, so I’m really ... proud of the county, and you and your task force, for stepping up and providing this.”

The board also authorized an agreement with the Gordian Group Inc. for job contracting services in an amount not to exceed \$600,000 over a three-year period from July 24, 2019, to June 30, 2022.

Director of Public Works Joshua Pack delivered a presentation to the board on the benefits of utilizing job contracting services in public projects.

According to Pack, the current public contract code limits the flexibility of government agencies when it comes to carrying out projects and creates a large procedural burden even on smaller projects. This has led to difficulty in delivering projects in a timely manner.

Currently, the design-bid-build process is used for many public projects in Calaveras County. This process entails significant administrative efforts and costs, and is generally accepted as the slowest method of project delivery, Pack said.

While it generally takes over five months for construction to begin under the design-bid-build process, with job order contracting, construction can begin “within weeks, or potentially days,” Pack said.

Job order contracting is ideal for small and medium projects that are repetitive in nature and involve maintenance, repair, renovation and improvement, he said. It isn’t ideal for large projects, and it can’t be used for new construction.

“We view this as a tool in the toolbox,” Pack said. “It’s not a tool to replace our traditional processes; it’s a tool to be used for those small and moderate projects that need to be delivered quickly.”

Job order contracting will allow contractors to carry out various individual projects under a single bid using competitively bid, preset prices, which will save time and money, Pack said.

The Gordian Group will prepare an annual task catalog comprised of construction tasks and unit prices. The prices will be based on local wage, material and equipment costs. Contractors will bid on likely projects beforehand, so possible contracts will be in place before needed projects arise.

The task catalogue will contain “thousands if not tens of thousands of individual items that could be delivered, or asked for by the county from the contractor community,” Pack said.

Pack compared the process to having on-call contractors, only with preset prices. It will also provide more opportunities for local contractors than the design-bid-build process, he said.

Gordian will charge no initial upfront cost, and will be paid a 5.06% fee for the value of the work done by the county.

Pack said that Public Works alone has a minimum of \$17.8 million worth of projects eligible for job order contracting, and that he believed his department could save upward of \$900,000 over the next three years in administrative costs through the contract with Gordian.

Neighboring counties have been employing job order contracting successfully for years, Pack said.

“I hope to have this in place by early 2020,” Pack said. “The county as a whole can take advantage of this.”

District 4 Supervisor Dennis Mills spoke in favor of authorizing the contract.

“I don’t see any downsides to it,” he said.

In other business:

The board adopted a proclamation recognizing August 2019 as Child Support Awareness Month in Calaveras County.

The board chair was authorized to carry out an agreement with The Resource Connection of Amador and Calaveras Counties, Inc. for CalWORKS Stage 1 child care services for the period of July 1, 2019, through June 30, 2020, in an amount not to exceed \$200,000.

A county abatement and assessment lien was authorized for the recovery of costs of abatement pursuant to a citation issued to Karen M. Piper at 2101 Gold Strike Road, San Andreas.

The Public Works Department was authorized to purchase two 2020 Mack Granite 42FR Chassis 10-foot Dump Body trucks for an amount not to exceed \$305,385, and a 2020 Mack Granite 64FR Chassis 15-foot Dump Body truck in an amount not to exceed \$187,325, from the National Auto Fleet Group in Watsonville.

The board also adopted plans and specifications for the 2017 Winter Storms Hawver Road Project, the O'Byrnes Ferry Road Left Turn Lane Project, and the 2019 Annual Striping Program.

Comment period on sustainable groundwater plan closes Aug. 25

By [Davis Harper davis@calaverasenterprise.com](mailto:davis@calaverasenterprise.com) /Jul 25, 2019

The deadline for Calaveras County residents in the northwest part of the county to comment on the Eastern San Joaquin Groundwater Authority's (ESJGA) Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP) is Aug. 25.

For Calaveras County, the plan pertains to about 500 combined residents between Wallace Lake Estates and Valley Springs that rely on groundwater, according to Calaveras County Water District (CCWD) Water Resources Program Manager Peter Martin. Impacts from future activities would mostly be for large water users, like farmers or municipalities, he added.

Passed in 2014 by former Gov. Jerry Brown in the face of one of the most severe droughts in state history, the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) kicked off a five-year process to provide a framework for improved groundwater management by local agencies across the state through 2040. Boundaries were divided by groundwater subbasins across the state, and several "groundwater sustainability agencies" (cities, counties and water and irrigation districts, mostly) within those subbasins were tasked with producing their own plans to be submitted in one overall plan.

The 70-square-mile Eastern San Joaquin Groundwater Subbasin is bounded by the Sierra Nevada foothills to the east, San Joaquin River to the west, Dry Creek to the north, and the Stanislaus River to the south. It's one of 21 basins and subbasins identified by the California Department of Water Resources (DWR) as being in a state of critical overdraft. Over-drafting means that more water is pumped from a groundwater basin than is replaced through sources like rainfall, irrigation water, streams fed by mountain runoff and intentional recharge efforts (spreading surface water to feed into the basin).

Current analysis indicates that the entire basin is over-drafted by 78,000 acre-feet (the volume of 1 acre of surface area to a depth of 1 foot) annually, according to the plan. After the framework is laid out, various projects and management actions will help the basin reach a balance between inputs (rivers, rainfall, etc.) and outputs (pumping for irrigation, drinking water, etc.). Those might include groundwater recharge efforts or pumping restrictions on local water districts that are reliant on groundwater, for instance.

The northwest portion of Calaveras County falls within the East Side San Joaquin GSA, a partnership among Calaveras County, CCWD, Rock Creek Water District and Stanislaus County.

From the south end, this section of the basin sits beneath the Salt Springs Valley to New Hogan Reservoir, through Valley Springs and up to the Mokelumne River.

In the next six months, those partners – along with 15 other GSAs – have to work together to finalize a long-term framework for managing groundwater use across the entire subbasin, including portions of Stanislaus and San Joaquin counties. That’s due to the state by Jan. 31, 2020. The 16 agencies have been developing the plan since late 2017.

The state designated six undesirable impacts related to groundwater use to mitigate, including chronic lowering of groundwater levels, reduction in groundwater storage, seawater intrusion, degraded water quality, land subsidence and depletion of interconnected surface water.

Chronic lowering of groundwater levels is the most concerning for not only Calaveras County, but the entire basin, according to Joel Metzger, CCWD’s manager of external affairs.

“Based on the Draft Plan, this will be the linchpin for measuring the success of meeting objectives long-term,” he said in a July 24 email.

The “interconnected surface water” impact is also of concern in Calaveras County, Martin said. That refers to the interactions between surface water (streams, rivers and lakes) and aquifers, or underground bodies of rock that store large volumes of groundwater. If the water table adjacent to a river or stream decreases in elevation as a result of groundwater pumping, the river or stream may lose water to the underlying aquifer, thereby impacting fisheries, water quality and water rights of users downstream.

Beyond the state-designated impacts, Martin said the largest challenge that remains is a lack of reliable data on groundwater use, especially in Calaveras County.

Projections of future groundwater storage are based on hydrological models that attempt to quantify the subbasin’s intake of water versus how much is pumped out, but these have limitations, Martin said.

“It’s too complex of a system to really know,” Martin said. “That’s part of the reason why monitoring is important, so you don’t end up spending millions on projects that may not be necessary.”

Martin said the first five years of the plan will be gaining a better understanding of the basin through investing in monitoring wells, since Calaveras County doesn’t have a long record of measured groundwater data. Whereas many areas in the San Joaquin Valley have 40 to 60 years of data, many of the monitoring wells in Calaveras County were installed in the past decade under CCWD’s Groundwater Monitoring Program.

A landmark bill, SGMA was crafted with the intent of shifting traditional views of groundwater use from the current siloed approach to one that’s more collaborative and regional in scope, according to Walt Ward, water resources manager for Stanislaus County and a retired hydrologist.

“It breaks down these institutional walls so that cities, counties and irrigation districts are all working together with common goals and purposes while retaining their local control,” he said at a meeting in Stockton. “Not stepping on anybody’s water rights, or interfering with anybody’s local operations, but trying to change the mindset and the view toward a more regional collaborative process.”

The plan will have to take into account land-use projections and development goals of local governments as they may apply to groundwater use, Ward said.

For example, a big issue in eastern Stanislaus County is a rising water demand due to an influx of almond and walnut growers, according to Ward. Landowners will have to work with their local irrigation districts to balance groundwater use with water use from other sources, such as reservoirs, potentially. That could require developing the proper infrastructure to move water from upstream reservoirs, or looking to other sources, such as stormwater to recharge aquifers.

“We’re just trying to get to the go line; it’s the implementation over the decades ahead of us that matters,” Ward said of the plan. “The point is everyone can’t be completely reliant on groundwater. So we’re trying to shift to conjunctive use,” using groundwater and other water sources together.

These are the kinds of issues that the GSP will have to address.

“We want the public to make sure they feel there’s something meaningful is being done to protect their water sources,” Martin said. “We encourage them to review the plan and become informed.”

Visit esjgroundwater.org to view the Eastern San Joaquin Groundwater Authority’s Groundwater Sustainability Plan. Comments must be emailed to info@esjgroundwater.org by Aug. 25.
