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Calaveras Planning Coalition Alerts Agencies to General Plan Challenge

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For Immediate Release

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San Andreas. In a notice sent by the Calaveras Planning Coalition (CPC) to 18 state and local agencies on January 7 regarding its lawsuit challenging the recently adopted Calaveras County General Plan Update, the CPC stressed, “This case is about saving the lives of Californians.” The notice states, “Indefinitely deferring fire safety efforts, delaying emergency response funding, and making fire safety measures optional in new development threatens lives.” The notice concludes, “These threats are all part of the 2019 Calaveras County General Plan Update.”

The CPC is a program of the Community Action Project (CAP) whose mission is to protect and improve the natural and built environments in Calaveras County by empowering people to claim their rights and participate in local government. CAP Governing Committee member Muriel Zeller said, “I don’t think enough people recognize the extent to which our local General Plan impacts our lives each and every day.”

For example, Zeller explained that the General Plan directly affects the condition of our roads, how safe we are in our homes, the quality and quantity of our water, the conditions under which plant and animal life must try and survive, and what kind of view we will have when we look out the window. “The General Plan is critical to our quality of life,” she said. “That is why the Planning Coalition has been compelled to challenge an unsafe and legally deficient General Plan.”

The notice asks state and local agencies to encourage the California Attorney General to get involved in the case against the Calaveras County Board of Supervisors filed by the CPC on December 9, 2019. In the notice, the CPC asks, “How many more fires must scorch California communities and how many more lives must be lost before the Attorney General will take action?”

The notice explains that most families in Calaveras County have to live in homes they can afford regardless of the fire risks. According to the CPC, “It is especially for the health and safety of these families that the County must establish a foundation of fire safe building and zoning codes upon which all legitimate development is based. This is more than a matter of public safety; it is a matter of human decency.”

The CPC recognizes, “Calaveras County is blessed with a wealth of natural resources.” The CPC notice also alerts agencies to the significant negative impacts that the General Plan Update is expected to have on these resources including agricultural lands, fish and wildlife habitat, and air quality. The notice concludes that these resource impacts are expected. To wit, “The County rejected measures to mitigate these impacts that are routinely applied in other jurisdictions throughout California.”

The notice to agencies is required when a party files a case under the California Environmental Quality Act, which is commonly known as CEQA. The CPC sent a similar required notice to the California Attorney General in December 2019. A required settlement conference in the case is scheduled for January 15 but will be limited to a telephone discussion among the litigants’ attorneys.