

Weekly ReCAP for February 28, 2020

Next CPC meeting March 2, 2020, now starting at 3:00 p.m. (to avoid night driving) at the Volunteer Center, San Andreas. **New members are welcome, and members only will be able to participate in any closed session.**

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.

Newsom Issues Potential Emergency Homeless Shelter Site List

By [Tori James](#) / MML / Feb 21, 2020

Sacramento, CA – California Governor Gavin Newsom’s newly released list of state-owned properties available for local governments to use for local homelessness solutions includes two in the Mother Lode.

The list comes on the heels of Newsom’s meetings with regional officials working on the front lines across the state to combat homeless issues and his State of the State address, which referred to the impending release of the list and called for all levels of government to step up.

Included on the Governor’s Executive Order N-23-20 list of sites are one each in Calaveras and Tuolumne counties. In both cases, the properties are owned by Caltrans. They are located in Valley Springs near Warren Road in the 9800-block of Highway 26 and in East Sonora at 785 Mono Way, flanked by Greenley and Sanguinetti roads

Clarke Broadcasting reached out to Caltrans District 10 officials for any details as to what they may have received in the way of logistical directions by the Governor’s Office and have not yet heard back.

Newsom states he wants local leaders to review the available state-owned sites in their areas and work with the state towards developing housing and shelter proposals that help move people off the streets.

Under his plan, the state is offering local governments one-dollar leases to use the identified properties and the ability for qualifying projects to tap into some \$650 million in State Emergency Homeless Aid and technical assistance for building out the sites.

Emergency Shelter Actions Outlined

In Wednesday's address, the Governor outlined a five-part approach; reducing street homelessness quickly and humanely through emergency actions; a laser focus on getting the mentally ill out of tents and into treatment; providing stable funding to get sustainable results; tackling the underproduction of affordable housing; and doing it all with real accountability and consequences.

"As a former mayor I get that localism is determinative and that all levels of government must work together to get Californians off the street and into housing and supportive services," Newsom states. "The state is stepping up by making land available to cities and counties willing to meet this moment head-on. I invite local leaders to use this land on what works for their community's homeless needs so that we can begin to make meaningful progress to help individuals experiencing homelessness."

While there are numerous organizations that are addressing local homelessness issues, and Tuolumne County recently approved to create a dedicated staff coordinator position, the largest entity, the Central Sierra Continuum of Care (COC), encompasses a significant portion of collaborating partners.

The COC is a four-county planning body for service providers and others serving the homeless communities in Amador, Calaveras, Mariposa, and Tuolumne. It shares responsibilities, governance, and structures along with systems operations planning to provide services across county lines.

While the collaborative has been in existence for about a decade, the expanding funding pipeline to address regional homelessness challenges and some major grant awards it has won has elevated its profile over the past two years.

Clarke Broadcasting reached out to COC officials for a comment and is awaiting a callback.

California's Agriculture Industry Notably Impacted By Dry Winte

[By B.J. Hansen](#) / MML/ Published Feb 25, 2020

Sacramento, CA — The lack of rain and snowpack in the Sierra Nevada will have a negative impact on the amount of water Central Valley farmers and water contractors will receive.

Today the US Bureau of Reclamation announced the initial 2020 water supply allocation projections for those that receive water through the state's Central Valley Project.

California received heavy snow to kick off the water year in late 2019, but precipitation has been minimal since January 1st. Officials are hoping for a wet March because the Sierra Nevada snowpack is only measuring 41-percent of the April 1st average.

For example, the Bureau of Reclamation says agricultural water service contractors north of the Delta can expect receive about 50-percent of their contract supply due to the dry winter. Municipal water contractors, like cities, north of the Delta, will receive 75-percent of the historic use.

Meanwhile, it is more dire for agricultural contractors south of the Delta who will only receive 15-percent of their contract supply. Southern municipal districts are planning to receive 65-percent of the historic use.

It is noted that things can change over the coming months if more precipitation arrives across California.

Calaveras County Losing Longtime Leader

[By B.J. Hansen](#) / MML / Feb 25, 2020

San Andreas, CA — A pair of Calaveras County government leaders were recognized today in honor of their upcoming retirements.

Brian Moss spent 29 years serving the county, starting with the Department of Environmental Health in 1992, later becoming Environmental Health Director, and serving as Assistant CAO since 2015.

He was a leader who took on many tasks in response to the 2015 Butte Fire, including serving as the liaison with FEMA and CAL OES. He also served as the initial lead representative for the county's Tree Mortality Task Force. In addition to those efforts, he was praised by the supervisors for being instrumental in securing land for a new animal shelter in the county, and his work on developing plans for groundwater.

The county also bid farewell and thanked Kevin Wright for his 13 years with the Agricultural Commissioner's Office, including the final seven years as the Agricultural Commissioner. He was praised for his balanced management approach that encourages staff growth. He was also thanked for securing numerous grants and his open-door approach of meeting with local residents who had any concerns.

Low snowpack, dry weather spark wildfire concerns, experts say

[By Davis Harper](#) / The Calaveras Enterprise / Feb 26, 2020

Low snowpack levels and unusually warm, dry February weather have many concerned that another drought is on the horizon. Fire season may start early this year if dry conditions persist, local officials say.

The Central Sierra snowpack is at 48% of normal for this time of year.

Since Oct. 1, the beginning of the water year, Calaveras County has received 9.15 inches of precipitation – 48% of normal – none of which fell this month, National Weather Service (NWS) meteorologist Craig Shoemaker told the Enterprise Monday.

“Right now we’re thinking it’s going to be a completely dry February,” Shoemaker said.

The NWS is forecasting a slight chance of rain showers for the Mother Lode Saturday, the last day of February.

Shoemaker said temperatures for the county have been running two degrees above normal as well.

Wildfire risks

Dry winters and low snowpack levels marked the start of some of the most intensive fire seasons over the past decade, California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection Tuolumne-Calaveras Unit Chief Josh White told the Enterprise in a phone interview Monday.

The unit’s prescribed burns in high-elevation areas that are normally covered in snow this time of year are carrying unusually well, White said.

That’s productive for a controlled burn, “but not what we would expect to see in February,” White said. “We’re still holding out hope for late spring rains to come in and mitigate some of the dry conditions. What we’re seeing south in Tuolumne is grasses are already starting to turn on south- and west-facing slopes. For us to see grass turning in February is very concerning. We could anticipate an early start to fire season, as well as a significant potential threat later in the season because those fuels will be cured.”

Homeowners should take advantage of the short time they have left to clear hazardous fuels around their homes, White said. But be cautious: a number of burns have escaped on homeowners recently.

“Right now is the best time to get out and do any burning of debris piles. Get defensive space clearance done now, burn (tree) limbs, and stay in attendance,” White said. “What we’re seeing in the last week is people aren’t watching their fires, and it gets away. Keep grass mowed short around the house and only mow when it’s green.”

White said the agency may issue a burn suspension soon if dry conditions continue, and he warned that residents should be prepared for another “significant fire season.”

“Without spring rains, we’re just staying ready,” White said. “It was really nice to have that season last year to reset, but with what we’re seeing, this could potentially be another significant fire season.”

Shorter ski season?

Not likely, if current weather patterns keep.

Although there's a shortage in fresh powder, favorable temperatures have done well to preserve the snow on the ground at Skyline Bear Valley Mountain Resort.

Bear Valley reported average depths of 54 inches on Feb. 21, with temperatures regularly dropping into the 20s at night.

"Temperatures have been cooperative, cold at night, hot in the day," said Mark Silverstone, public relations manager for Bear Valley. "We're not seeing the sticky spring slushy snow that you'll get in April, because the sun is still low in the sky ... and most of our terrain is north-facing, so we have great exposure to hold onto the snow."

Silverstone said Presidents' Day Weekend, in particular, drew record-setting crowds to the slopes, but the public perception of low snow levels may have made for a relatively light season otherwise.

The resort plans to stay open until April 19, around the same time it closed last year.

"We are 100% open and plan to stay that way," Silverstone said. "We've had a great season. People are still coming in spite of the lack of fresh snow. There's plenty of snow, the weather's nice, and it's a great time to learn how to ski, (since) crowds are light."

Challenging the perception that this year's ski season may have been a bust, Sierra Nevada Adventure Co. (SNAC) owner Shawn Seale said this winter has been "record-breaking" for the business, which offers ski and snowboard rentals in Arnold.

"By a big percentage and I'm even comparing to last year," Seale said. "We've been buried alive in customers."

The Highway 4 corridor normally sees a rush of out-of-towners observing "ski week," which kicks off after Presidents' Day Weekend for several Bay Area school districts.

George Washington's birthday week was busier than usual this year, though, and Seale thinks that could be due to Tahoe regulars heading to Bear Valley instead.

"The No. 1 thing we're seeing is a lot of people coming up this highway instead of going to Tahoe," said Seale, who has been in the business for 24 years. "Bear Valley has had better snowfall than Tahoe, but I don't necessarily think that's why they're coming. I think we've seen that as a trend. What this corridor offers is a lot less hassle" – smaller crowds, less congested traffic, shorter lift lines, cheaper lift tickets and reasonably priced accommodations.

Seale said wet winter storms in early December saturated and compressed the initial snow that fell around Thanksgiving, and the long cold snap that followed helped reinforce optimal skiing conditions.

With "the last big holiday of ski season" over and zero snow in the forecast, however, Seale worries that less people will make the trip.

For SNAC, that could mean transitioning to spring and summer activities earlier, which some canoe- and kayak-renters are already embracing.

"This weather's got everybody thinking about summer," Seale said.

Past wet seasons to absorb dry spell

The good news, for now, is that past wet seasons have kept water levels in a healthy range for most local reservoirs.

“Current snowpack conditions leave much to be desired, but California has seen even drier years,” said Randy Bowersox, a hydroelectric manager with the Northern California Power Agency. “And since two out of the last three prior winters have been very strong, most California reservoirs, including New Spicer Meadow, are in a good position to absorb a dry year.”

The agency maintains the 6-megawatt hydroelectric plant at the base of the New Spicer Meadow dam, in addition to up to 253 MW of electricity from the Collierville powerhouse downstream. Calaveras County Water District (CCWD) owns the dam, and the reservoir supplies water for consumptive use, irrigation, recreation, environmental purposes and power generation.

“At this time, CCWD has no water conservation restrictions in place,” said CCWD General Manager Michael Minkler in a statement Wednesday. “Customers may continue using water normally, while always being mindful not to waste this precious resource.”

At 81% capacity, water storage at New Melones Reservoir, which is part of the federal Central Valley Project, is down more than 30,000 acre-feet from the beginning of the month, according to Todd Plain, a spokesman for the Bureau of Reclamation, the agency that oversees the reservoir. That’s still 129% of its 15-year average for this time of year.

Releases to the Stanislaus River are higher than average “due to increased Delta requirements, since things have been extremely dry,” Plain said Monday.

Located below Tulloch Dam, Goodwin Dam, the diversion point to various Central Valley communities, is releasing 2,000 cubic feet per second (CFS). That’s 500 CFS higher than releases this time last year, which were above average as well, but that was due to flood-space requirements.

As for reservoirs fed by the Mokelumne River, Camanche Reservoir is at 69% of capacity, and releasing about 330 CFS, Andrea Pook, East Bay Municipal Utility District spokeswoman told the Enterprise Monday.

This time last year, the reservoir was releasing 2,800 CFS for flood control.

Eastward, Pardee Reservoir, which provides drinking water for East Bay residents, is at 89% capacity and releasing about 500 CFS, Pook said.

Although the Mokelumne basin’s precipitation levels are verging on historically low for February, “We still have March and some of April to see where we are for the season, and we have a healthy supply leftover from last year,” Pook said. “We started this year pretty high ... It takes more than one bad year for us to call for conservation.”

This story was updated on Feb. 27 to clarify that Pardee Reservoir provides drinking water for East Bay residents.

Cannabis cash still frozen after mid-year budget adjustments

[By Davis Harper](#) / The Calaveras Enterprise /Feb 26, 2020

Transfers of \$197,991 from county departments made in December to fund the county's cannabis program were not reimbursed when the Calaveras County Board of Supervisors were given the option Tuesday.

After the item failed to garner the necessary four votes, the board cut the request from its approved list of mid-year budget adjustments.

As of Wednesday, the unapproved budget for the commercial cannabis cultivation regulatory program, which consists of registration fees from prospective growers, contained \$351,708, according to officials at the cannabis control office. Restricted to covering staff and equipment costs of processing applications, those funds can't be spent until four of five county supervisors authorize a budget transfer. District 1 Supervisor Gary Tofanelli and District 4 Supervisor Dennis Mills have remained opposed since November, when the operating budget and special fees budget were first brought to the board for approval. That was a few weeks after the board adopted a cultivation ordinance and associated background ordinance on 3-2 votes, which both supervisors voted against.

"This whole thing has not been right from the beginning," Tofanelli said in the meeting Tuesday.

The county hasn't seen the response it anticipated from cultivation applicants, Tofanelli said, citing initial revenue projections of \$2.9 million in registration fees that haven't been met.

Tofanelli said he didn't feel confident "at this time" to support the reimbursements, but that that could change if a substantial amount of revenues come in by June budget discussions.

After his first motion to approve budget adjustments was shot down, District 2 Supervisor Jack Garamendi made a motion to approve adjustments without the reimbursements included.

"I don't think it's fair or responsible to make every citizen of this county pay for regulation that the people who are being regulated (have) already paid for," Garamendi said. "I'm very disappointed that this fight continues, however the business of the county has to go forward."

Mid-year budget adjustment requests passed on a 4-0 vote, with District 5 Supervisor Ben Stopper absent.

The Sheriff's Office, in particular, received \$336,740 in transfers, the largest adjustment of any department. The funding will allow the office to hire two new deputies for the Marijuana Enforcement Team (MET) and to cover the costs of outfitting patrol vehicles and replacing a Ford F-150 that was totaled in September.

That was an additional \$171,000 from what administrative staff were recommending in the mid-year budget report.

Salary savings for the department has dropped substantially, with new hires to come onboard next month, Sheriff Rick DiBasilio told supervisors.

“On March 23 of this year, I will be fully staffed with the amount of patrol personnel that you have allotted me,” DiBasilio said. “That’s the first time in a long, long time.”

But it’s still not enough, according to DiBasilio, who said the department is still about nine people short from pre-recession staff levels.

The two new MET deputies will join the current five-person team, which eradicated 76 illegal grow sites last year, DiBasilio said.

“I believe it’s imperative that we enforce the illegal side so that the legal side (doesn't) get overrun like we did in 2016,” DiBasilio said.

Other requests supervisors approved included a \$58,013 transfer to Animal Control Services to account for expenses incurred for unanticipated horse rescues in 2019 and a shortfall in dog license fees.

The Board of Supervisors’ budget was granted an additional \$16,194 due to a shortage in monies for insurance that resulted from an error in personnel forecasting data.

The Butte Tree public budget received an additional \$5,530 for incorrectly posted mutual aid costs in 2016.

In September, the board adopted its final budget with appropriations of \$187.4 million and revenues of \$166.4 million. The General Fund appropriation for the adopted budget was \$73,669,977, with revenues of \$61,469,252. The General Fund reserve was \$5,311,806. General fund contingencies (funds for unexpected emergencies or revenue shortfalls) were established at \$1,500,882 – about 2% of General Fund appropriations. After adjustments, contingencies are now at \$1,092,199, according to Deputy County Administrative Officer Christa Von Latta.

The mid-year budget analysis includes numbers as of Dec. 31, 2019, the halfway point of the fiscal year.

As of that time, actual expenditures were tracking 15.2% below budgeted estimates for mid-year. Main cost drivers were employee salaries and benefits and supplies, which, respectively make up 44.3% and 30.9% of the budget.

The county had spent 35.8% of its total budgeted expenditures, about one point higher than this point last year.

Tracking closely with expenditures, revenue collection was at 37.7% of budgeted revenues.

Revenues were up \$3,519,552 from last year because of an increase in tax revenues; an increase in operating transfers due to a \$925,000 transfer into the Butte Road Recovery budget from Pacific Gas &

Electric Co. settlement funds; and an increase in state revenues, the bulk of which was a \$1.3 million increase in reimbursements to the tree mortality budget over the same period last year.

A prior version of this article stated that Tofanelli said revenues for registration fees were projected to reach \$29 million. The story was corrected to reflect that he said \$2.9 million.
