

Weekly ReCAP for April 24, 2020

Next CPC meeting May 4, 2020, now starting at 3:00 p.m. to 5 p.m. Until the COVID-19 is resolved in our community, the CPC meetings will be held remotely by ZOOM and/or conference calling. To participate please watch for connection information from Jenny. New members are welcome, and members only will be able to participate in any closed session

Two new COVID-19 cases confirmed in Calaveras County ‘outbreak’

- [by Dakota Morlan](#) / The Calaveras Enterprise / April 15, 2020

Two new COVID-19 cases have been confirmed in an adult male resident of Valley Springs and an older male resident of West Point.

Calaveras County Public Health announced on Wednesday that the first case in the Valley Springs man has been linked to another known case in the county. However, the source of the West Point man’s exposure to the novel coronavirus has yet to be determined.

“We should expect additional cases of novel coronavirus among Calaveras residents before the outbreak begins to subside. Please know that the actions you take today are the best way for us to slow the spread of COVID-19 into Calaveras communities,” Calaveras County Health Officer Dean Kelaita, MD, stated in a news release. “In order to keep our numbers low, it is important for people to limit interactions with those outside of their households.”

The new case in Valley Springs is the fourth to be identified within the town of 3,500. Community spread is suspected in two prior Valley Springs cases where the source of exposure could not be identified by Public Health.

The total number of confirmed cases in Calaveras County is now 11, though six of those cases have since recovered.

Copperopolis has seen the highest number of confirmed cases in the county, including three residents who contracted the virus several weeks ago aboard the Grand Princess cruise ship.

Dorrington has also experienced one confirmed case in an older woman who is believed to have been exposed outside of the county.

Amador County has reported seven confirmed cases as of Tuesday, while Tuolumne County reports two.

So far, there have been no COVID-19 related deaths reported in the Mother Lode region.

CCWD Awarded State Grant For Nearly \$5 Million

[By Tracey Petersen](#) / MML / Apr 18, 2020

Calaveras County, CA – The Calaveras County Water District (CCWD) is receiving a nearly \$5 million state grant and district officials say a rate hike passed two years ago helped them acquire it.

While CCWD’s grant proposal was drafted over several years that hard work paid off with a \$4.75 million grant awarded from the State Water Resources Control Board. The funds will be used to consolidate its West Point and Wilseyville wastewater treatment plants. District officials relay both facilities need upgrades and this construction project will “ensure reliable wastewater treatment in those communities for decades to come.”

The grant is welcome news as currently, the district is in the midst of a five-year rate hike plan passed in 2018 to cover rising operational costs. CCWD explains the increased rate revenues actually allowed the district to meet the state’s financial review requirements, making it eligible for this grant and possibly more in the future.

“We do everything we can to minimize costs, but with increasing regulatory compliance burdens along with aging infrastructure, sometimes it just doesn’t add up and difficult decisions have to be made,” said CCWD General Manager, Michael Minkler. “In this case, one of the direct benefits of the recent rate increase will be a major infrastructure project that does not burden our ratepayers.”

That is because the grant covers the entire cost of the project. Planning and design work will begin this year with construction expected to follow in 2021. Further information on the project can be found by clicking [here](#) and viewing item 4c.

RCRC – The Barbed Wire – April 22, 2020

[Federal Direct Funding to Small Counties Bill Introduced in Congress](#)

Last week, U.S. Senator Dianne Feinstein (D- California) introduced the [Coronavirus Community Relief Act \(Act\)](#) in response to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. The Act, which RCRC strongly supports, would provide \$250 billion in stabilization funds directly to counties and cities with a population of 500,000 or less that are struggling amidst the pandemic.

Most states, including California, mandate the implementation of public health and emergency response responsibilities to the county governments. While the recently-enacted [Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security \(CARES\) Act](#) provides direct monies to counties (and cities within) with populations in excess of 500,000, smaller counties are required to obtain allocations through the state. To date, RCRC has received nearly a dozen letters from member counties that provide first-hand accounts of the resulting hardship and fiscal strain this has caused for low-population counties.

RCRC expressed appreciation to Senator Feinstein in a [letter](#), for addressing what RCRC believes is an oversight in the CARES Act and for promoting relief funds to rural counties. RCRC further requested that any future legislation enacted in the coming weeks recognize that counties' front-line activities are greatly impacted by the pandemic; thus, the overwhelming share of any subsequent low-population funding should be forwarded directly to counties.

Senator Feinstein's bill is the latest in a series of actions taken by members of Congress to address the need for direct federal stabilization funds to local governments during the outbreak, and for the recovery that must follow. A week prior, Representative Joe Neguse (D-Colorado) introduced a similar effort, [H.R. 6467](#), the "Coronavirus Community Relief Act," which was strongly [supported](#) by RCRC. Earlier this month, RCRC urged direct stabilization funding in a [letter](#) to U.S. House of Representatives Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-San Francisco).

RCRC continues to closely monitor and advocate for legislation to provide direct federal funding to California's rural counties as they face the challenges of this pandemic. At the time of this writing, a second round of federal aid has been adopted by the U.S. Senate and is expected to pass the House of Representatives in the coming days; however, the focus of this effort is to further capitalize a small business loan/assistance program as well as assist hospitals with their funding needs. As such, a second round of direct federal aid to state and local governments is NOT contained in the new package.

[Counties Urge the Governor to Allocate Federal Funds Based on Responsibility for Pandemic Response](#)

Last Friday, RCRC joined a coalition of county stakeholders to urge Governor Newsom to allocate federal funding provided by the Coronavirus Relief Fund (CRF) based on direct service responsibilities for local pandemic response. Some cities are requesting that federal funds be diverted from critical county services to address significant city revenue losses (losses which counties are also experiencing). And, while all of local governments are currently struggling, counties cannot afford to move critical federal funding away from public health and social safety net programs.

The full letter from the coalition may be viewed [here](#).

County funding for coronavirus response is receiving a great deal of attention in state and federal relief efforts. While counties seek continued conversations with the Newsom Administration about how to

allocate the remaining amount of local government funding in the CRF, RCRC continues to pursue direct federal funding for counties below 500,000 in population in the upcoming relief package(s) being negotiated Washington D.C. An update on those efforts can also be found in this special edition of The Barbed Wire.

State Assembly Focuses on State Response to Coronavirus Pandemic

On Monday, the Assembly Budget Subcommittee on Budget Process, Oversight, and Program Evaluation convened to address the State of California's progress on addressing coronavirus (COVID-19). Chaired by Assembly Member Phil Ting (D-San Francisco), the subcommittee included several rural legislators - Jay Obernolte (R-Big Bear Lake), Joaquin Arambula (D-Fresno), Adam Gray (D-Merced), Devon Mathis (R-Visalia) and Dr. Jim Wood (D-Santa Rosa).

Similar to last week's Senate hearing, this subcommittee hearing was informational to receive updates from the Legislative Analyst Office, the Department of Finance (DOF), the Office of Emergency Services, and the Health and Human Services Agency related to COVID-19 with a particular focus on the Administration's expenditure of funds appropriated under Senate Bill 89, which was enacted several weeks ago. As noted in other reports, Members were particularly concerned about the contract with BYD (Personal Protective Equipment manufacturer) negotiated by the Newsom Administration for the acquisition of PPE.

RCRC extends special recognition and thanks to Assembly Member Wood and Assembly Member Gray for their comments addressing the concern that, with local government funding under the CARES Act restricted to those jurisdictions of 500,000 population or more, many areas are not eligible for federal assistance. In fact, NO jurisdiction in Dr. Wood's district is eligible and MOST jurisdictions in Mr. Gray's district are not eligible. Following that revelation, both Wood and Gray repeatedly questioned the DOF about how the Administration plans to meet the needs of small jurisdictions. Both also pressed about the need for support in these smaller jurisdictions, given the significant demand on local resources as a result of the pandemic. The DOF responded that it hopes Congress will make an adjustment in the next round of federal funding.

RCRC has joined with county partners to ensure that low-population counties receive appropriate funding as a result of actions by Congress and through implementation by the Newsom Administration. Updates on those advocacy efforts are contained in this special edition of The Barbed Wire.

Governor Announces Efforts to Address Distance Learning Issues

On Monday, Governor Newsom announced his latest efforts to support students and teachers continuing to struggle with distance learning amid COVID-19 school closures. The Governor's announcement outlined two distinct facets of the Administration's actions aimed at addressing the most severely impacted school districts in the state, utilizing both existing public funding, as well as new private resources.

Specifically, the Governor announced equipment donations by technology companies, including laptops, Chromebooks, tablets and mobile hotspots, as well as large monetary donations by individuals, businesses and organizations. In addition, several internet service providers committed to offering connectivity to students at discount rates. All donations will be managed by the private nonprofit Californians Dedicated to Education (CDE) Foundation and will be distributed to low-income and rural school districts.

The Governor also announced the availability of \$25 million from the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) Teleconnect Fund for rural, small, and medium school districts, to cover 50 percent of the cost for mobile hotspots and monthly internet service for student households. The Teleconnect Fund was created to provide qualifying K-12 schools, community colleges, libraries, hospitals, health clinics, and community-based organizations discounts for telecommunications services.

In addition to the Teleconnect Fund allocation, the Governor cited the availability of another \$5 million in funding from the CPUC California Advanced Services Fund (CASF) for computer equipment and mobile hotspots, to be expended by the California Department of Education in order to leverage bulk purchasing of equipment for distribution. RCRC has strongly advocated for the utilization of existing broadband funding to triage distance learning connectivity issues during the current crisis, while maintaining that such an investment is not in lieu of addressing the continued need for reliable, high quality fiber networks in rural communities. The CASF funding proposal will come before the CPUC on May 7, 2020 for a final decision. The CPUC Resolution can be found [here](#) and the RCRC comments submitted April 9th can be found [here](#).

The full text of the Governor's April 20, 2020 press release can be found [here](#).

[RCRC Supports Efforts to Expedite \\$19 million CARES Act/Community Development Block Grant Funding](#)

The Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) released [proposed changes](#) to its method to distribute approximately \$19 million in CARES Act Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds to cities with populations of less than 50,000 and counties with populations of less than 200,000. In place of the lengthy and cumbersome existing application process to access these funds, HCD is developing a formulaic disbursement method and streamlined process to quickly get CDBG funds out-the-door for certain COVID-19 related prevention, preparation, and response activities, as summarized [here](#). The public comment period on HCD's plan amendment closes today and RCRC's comments can be found [here](#). While RCRC is strongly supportive of many of HCD's proposed changes, RCRC suggested modifying the allocation formula to take into consideration the higher level of state mandates imposed on county governments to implement public health and emergency response programs. If HCD's changes are quickly approved, funds may be available by or before mid-May.

[CORONAVIRUS \(COVID-19\) ASSISTANCE](#)

[Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) County Resource Page Available](#)

The [California State Association of Counties \(CSAC\)](#), RCRC's local government partner, continues to provide excellent up-to-date state and federal information to counties on this ever-changing pandemic event. We encourage visiting [CSAC's COVID-19 resource page](#), which contains vital links to all CSAC COVID-19 advocacy letters and resources. CSAC's staff continues to work around the clock to update activities so that all of California's counties can remain properly informed.

Economic Development Resources for Communities and Businesses Impacted by the Coronavirus

The [California Association for Local Economic Development \(CALED\)](#) has assembled resources for communities and business impacted by the coronavirus (COVID-19). The page will be continually evolving as new resources become available. To go directly to the CALED resources, [click here](#).

Use of Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Funds for Infectious Disease Response

Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds may be used for a range of eligible activities that prevent and respond to the spread of infectious diseases such as the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19). Check out the [Quick Guide to CDBG Eligible Activities to Support Infectious Disease Response](#) for guidance and additional information.

Federal Disaster Loan Assistance Available from the Small Business Administration

Applications are now being accepted by the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) for federal disaster loans to help alleviate economic injury caused by the coronavirus (COVID-19). All fifty-eight (58) California counties are designated as eligible. To apply, please visit SBA's [Disaster Loan Assistance portal here](#).

More than 9,000 Mother Lode residents filed for unemployment between March 15 and April 11

- Alex MacLean / The Union Democrat / April 22, 2020

More than 2,000 people in four Mother Lode counties filed for unemployment during the week that ended April 11, down from the previous two weeks but still far exceeding the average in normal times. There were a total of 2,019 new unemployment insurance claims filed between April 5 and April 11 in Tuolumne, Calaveras, Amador and Mariposa counties, according to new data released this week by the California Employment Development Department.

The previous week ending on April 4 had 3,386 new claims filed, while the week ending on March 28 had 3,550 and week ending on March 21 had 352. The average weekly claims in the 11 weeks prior was 110.

The total number of people who have filed for unemployment over the four-week period represents about 14 percent of the four-county region's combined labor force of 66,093 people, about two-thirds of whom are residents of Tuolumne and Calaveras counties.

Weekly numbers of claims for each of the four counties individually is not available because they are reported to the state EDD on a regional basis as a designated "local workforce development area" called the Mother Lode Consortium.

Unemployment data released last week showed that the jobless rate for Tuolumne County in March rose to 6.2 percent from 5 percent in February, while Calaveras County's rate rose to 5.4 percent in March from 4.2 percent in February.

This comes after Gov. Gavin Newsom's March 19 stay-at-home order to slow the spread of the deadly novel coronavirus, part of which required businesses in California deemed as "non-essential" to temporarily shut their doors.

There have been 33,261 people in the state who have tested positive for the virus, with 1,268 death. The four counties in the Mother Lode Consortium have a combined total of 21 cases and no deaths, with 12 cases in Calaveras, 7 in Amador, two in Tuolumne and none in Mariposa.

April 23, 2020- Important information from Colleen:

I watched Dr. K's COVID-19 update to Tuesday's BOS meeting (on video). This is a big deal. "Potentially Relaxed Restrictions" *will not happen* easily or lightly. There are many nuances and qualifications to "relaxation"/opening here. A more substantive reporting of Dr. K's update to the BOS about COVID-19 can be found in the Calaveras Enterprise article, "Kelaita: some social distancing measures could be lifted by mid-summer" : http://www.calaverasenterprise.com/news/coronavirus_information/article_604de448-84dc-11ea-a943-a3863210538a.html

Alternately (and more accurately) folks can actually watch and listen to Dr. K talk at the BOS Tuesday on YouTube video. This is *way more informative*. Dr. K's local info for Calaveras County and the State of California is on par with Dr. Anthony Fauci nationally. The discussion Tuesday includes BOS/ public questions and answers...excellent. This is a very important discussion for Calaveras County and I wish everyone in Calaveras County would watch Dr. K's COVID-19 discussion on CCTV YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KJHv7cXNqW4>

(You can skip the first 8 minutes or so, Dr. K. starts talking about 8:20 in...)

Colleen
