

WEEKLY ReCAP

March 19, 2021

A Sampling of News and Views



P.O. Box 935, San Andreas, CA, 95249 • (209) 772-1463

Protecting our rural environment by promoting citizen participation in sustainable land use planning since 2006

The Community Action Project (CAP) administers the Calaveras Planning Coalition (CPC), which is comprised of regional and local organizations, community groups, and concerned individuals who promote public participation in land use and resource planning to ensure a healthy human, natural, and economic environment now and in the future.

Learn more at www.calaverascap.com.

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Please accept our apologies for the delay in the ReCAP.

You may have also noticed that our website has been down for about a week due to

technical difficulties, but all is resolved.

Onward!

Join Us!

***Get a glimpse into what CPC membership is like by attending a meeting.
There is no committment, just show up and listen in!***

NEXT CALAVERAS PLANNING COALITION MEETING:

April 5, 2021, 3:00 P.M. TO 5:00 P.M. VIA ZOOM

NEW MEMBERS WELCOME AT CPC MEETINGS

Organizations, groups, and individuals may join the CPC. Prospective members may attend two consecutive meetings before making a final decision on membership in the Coalition. The membership form is a pledge to support and advocate for the Coalition's eleven Land Use and Development Principles, which you will find on our website: www.calaverascap.com. There is no membership fee. However, members are encouraged to donate to the CAP/CPC. Visitors and prospective members will, by necessity, be excluded from attorney/client privileged discussions.

If you are interested in CPC membership, please email CPC Facilitator Tom Infusino, tomi@volcano.net, to receive a membership form, agenda, and the Zoom meeting connection.

To help prevent the spread of Covid-19 in our county, all CAP/CPC meetings will be held online via Zoom until restrictions are lifted by the Public Health Department.

Learn about more ways to get involved with CAP/CPC here!

Board of Supervisors Meeting March 23, 2021

View the Agenda Here

Planning Commission – March 25, 2021

View the Agenda Here

You can find current agendas and agenda packets, as well as previous agendas on the County page here

Interested in learning more about the General Plan Update? Click Here

Shop for CAP!

If you shop at select grocery stores, such as Sierra Hills Market in Murphys, MAR-VAL, and Angels Food Market ([click here for the full list](#)) *you could be earning CAP/CPC money!!*

Participating grocery stores contribute a percentage of your spending to CAP/CPC when you sign up and use your Escrip card.

[Click here for more information and to sign up!](#)



Calaveras Public Health transitions to 'My Turn' for COVID-19 vaccinations as county vaccinations surpass 12,000

Mar 8, 2021 / The Calaveras Enterprise

The following press release was issued by Calaveras County Public Health.

Over 12,000 doses of COVID-19 vaccine have been administered across Calaveras County. Calaveras Public Health is working to ensure that eligible residents and workers have increased access to vaccines. This week Calaveras Public Health will launch the first COVID-19 vaccination clinic using California's My Turn platform. To find out if you're eligible to be vaccinated sign up at myturn.ca.gov.

If you're eligible and vaccine appointments are available through My Turn, you can schedule one. If it's not your turn yet or appointments are not available, you can register to be notified when you're eligible or when appointments open up. The first clinic using the new platform is scheduled this Thursday, March 11, 2021 at Frogtown. Frogtown is located at 2465 Gun Club Road in Angels Camp. Those with appointments must use the Frogtown Road entrance. The clinic will be first dose only.

Vaccinations are available for certain sectors and age groups who live or work in Calaveras County:

- If you live in Calaveras County and are 65 or older, bring a photo ID.
- If you are a healthcare worker, please bring a set of the following forms of identification when you arrive your appointment:
 - o Active healthcare worker employee badge with photo or
 - o Professional license AND a photo ID or
 - o Payment stub from healthcare provider with your name AND a photo ID
- If you belong to a sector that is open to receive vaccination, please bring a set of the following forms of identification when you arrive your appointment:
 - o Recent payment stub with photo ID or
 - o Work ID/Badge or
 - o Letter on company letterhead indicating employment.

Healthcare workers and people 65 and older in Tier 1A remain eligible. Tier 1B is also eligible. That tier includes those who work in:

- Agriculture and food
- Education and childcare
- Emergency services

People who do not have an email address or mobile phone should call the CA COVID 19 Hotline at 1-833-422-4255, Monday through Friday 8AM-8PM and Saturday through Sunday. Calaveras Public Health will be adding more appointments as COVID-19 vaccination efforts continue to expand. People with appointments should expect the following:

- Arrive to your appointment at your scheduled time (not any earlier).
- You must prove eligibility (by age or sector)
- This must be your first dose of the COVID-19 vaccine.
- If you had COVID-19 in the last 90 days a medical provider note is needed to get the vaccine. Please fax your medical note to Calaveras Public Health 209-754-1709.
- A mask covering your nose and mouth is required.
- Wear loose clothing to show upper arm.
- Do not attend the clinic if you are feeling unwell or experiencing COVID-19 symptoms.

People will be turned away if they do not meet the requirements listed above (even if you have scheduled an appointment).

While people currently not eligible for the COVID-19 vaccine wait their turn, Calaveras Public Health continues to urge the public to assume widespread transmission of COVID-19 within our county and take the recommended prevention measures seriously to protect their family and friends from this pandemic.

Protect yourself and others from COVID-19. The best way to prevent illness is to avoid being exposed to the virus:

- Wear a face mask that covers your nose and mouth when you leave home, including public places and anywhere you will be around people who do not live with you.

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or use hand sanitizer. Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.
- Stay at least 6 feet away from other people.
- Stay home if you are sick.
- Avoid gatherings.

Everyone is at risk for COVID-19 and should take precautions to avoid getting exposed to the virus. Older adults and people with underlying medical conditions are at increased risk for severe illness and death from COVID-19. This means that they may be hospitalized, require a ventilator to help them breathe, or may even be fatal. COVID-19 can be very serious and Calaveras Public Health asks that you follow the safety guidelines. Symptoms can appear 2-14 days after exposure to the virus. The symptoms of COVID 19 include:

- Fever or chills
- Cough
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing · Fatigue
- Muscle or body aches
- Headache
- New loss of taste or smell · Sore throat
- Congestion or runny nose · Nausea or vomiting · Diarrhea

Look for emergency warning signs for COVID-19. If someone is showing signs, seek emergency care immediately:

- Trouble breathing
- New confusion or weakness · Bluish lips or face
- Persistent pain or pressure in the chest · Inability to wake or stay awake

To receive information and resources related to COVID-19 visit the Calaveras County COVID-19 website.

Calaveras County schools won't likely reopen fully this semester

Dakota Morlan/ Mar 9, 2021 / The Calaveras Enterprise

With Calaveras County entering a less-restrictive COVID-19 monitoring tier this week, roughly 700 local educators vaccinated, and Gov. Gavin Newsom striking a deal to reopen California schools, it appears that the

community has turned a corner in its gradual emergence from the pandemic.

However, some of those hit hardest by the impacts of COVID-19—the children—will not see life return to “normal” quite yet. Due to ongoing demands on schools by the state to adhere to [strict social distancing guidance](#), most county educators, administrators and school board members have instead pinned their hopes on the coming fall semester to bring students fully back to campuses.

With the exception of Vallecito Union School District (VUSD), which [was able to reopen fully in late September 2020](#) due to its small number of students and roomy facilities, public school districts in Calaveras County have adhered to various hybrid instruction models, with most students dividing their time between on-campus and distance learning since fall of 2020.

Yet local schools are ahead of the curve compared to many public schools in California, which are now being coaxed to reopen for hybrid learning with \$2 billion in state funds, allocated by Assembly Bill 86, which was signed into law by Newsom on March 5.

“The incentives don’t really apply to us,” county Superintendent of Schools Scott Nanik said of the new bill. “Since our schools are open under the (state’s) definition of ‘open,’ we’re really not doing anything differently than what we’re doing.”

According to Nanik, until the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) issues new guidance relaxing the four-feet minimum social distancing requirements in classrooms, most schools will not be able to reopen fully without hiring additional teachers or risking liability.

In a Feb. 26 letter to county educators, county Interim Public Health Officer Dr. Paul Beatty warned of the dangers of reopening schools fully.

“Any intention of returning to a full in-person instruction model should be tied to a phased reentry plan that includes continued adherence to COVID-19 safety measures. Schools providing in-person instruction must abide by all applicable state requirements including social distancing, case investigations and contact tracing,” Beatty states. “Please note that failure to comply with California Department of Public Health directives, executive orders and public health orders places students, staff and community members at risk. A violation of these orders can jeopardize current relations with the Tuolumne Joint Powers Authority, pose a threat to staff and school credentials, and potentially disrupt future funding.”

These factors have prevented the county’s largest school district, Calaveras Unified (CUSD), from voting on the matter, Superintendent Mark Campbell told the Enterprise. The CUSD school board recently considered bringing senior high schoolers back to campus 100% but ultimately decided against it due to the potential risks.

"We have everything else handled in terms of protocols and guidelines (but) there is no way around that for us, no way we can entertain bringing back students at 100%," Campbell said. "The feeling I get from staff and our leadership is that they want to ride this out through the end of the year and focus on coming back in July or August on-site."

When students do return fully to the classroom, it is undetermined how many will attend. Like most school districts, CUSD's enrollment has decreased significantly—by about 5%—since the onset of the pandemic. While the loss cannot be entirely attributed to COVID-19, the number of students who have chosen to remain in distance learning-only is roughly 38%.

These numbers are concerning to administrators, who are anticipating an eventual budgetary fallout resulting from the dramatic drop in public school enrollment. The state's "hold harmless" policy of freezing attendance-based funding at what it was before the pandemic is set to expire during the 2022/23 school year, Campbell said, and school districts are "operating very cautiously."

Although AB86 allocates more than \$4.5 billion in COVID-19 relief funds to California schools, Nanik said it is undetermined how much money Calaveras County schools will receive.

Despite the many obstacles, some county school districts have continued to debate the full return to campuses. On March 4, the Mark Twain Union Elementary School District (MTUESD) school board voted 4-1 to maintain the current hybrid model after fielding survey responses from parents and staff, one of whom reportedly said they would consider retiring if their campus reopened fully.

"We couldn't guarantee students would stay with the same teacher. That's really, really hard on the little ones," said board member Christy Miro. "I think parents at this point realize the upheaval it would have to cause their kids."

Miro said she was in favor of reopening fully until she realized the effort could not be safely achieved with less than 60 days left in the school year.

"If we would have voted to do it, it was setting up our entire district for failure. My personal opinions don't outweigh my duty as a board member," she said. "I don't think you'll find anybody, whether it's our board or our teachers or administrators, who don't want their kids back in the classroom."

MTUESD board president Jenny Eltringham, who has served more than 30 years on the school board, cast the only dissenting vote, though it was primarily symbolic.

"I'm realistic. I understand fully why the rest of the board said, 'Put it off,'" Eltringham said. "I'm very happy with the bold move that this board made to get them back in school when they did, even at partial time. But the more I see it drag on, the more I can see these children are getting hurt through this whole thing."

Eltringham said she was hopeful that all local educators who wanted the COVID-19 vaccine getting vaccinated would change the situation, though so far, it hasn't. She also cited data suggesting that [children are not super-spreaders of the novel coronavirus](#).

At Bret Harte Union High School District (BHUHSD), board members might vote on a full return in the coming weeks, though, again, the effort would be largely symbolic, Superintendent Mike Chimento said.

"It could be an action item in the future to publicly say, 'If we could, we would.' ... Public Health is going to dictate what we can and can't do," Chimento said.

He added that the biggest issues he observed with returning full time were the state's social distancing requirements on busses and on campus, causing the potential for an entire class to be quarantined for at least 10 days if one student tests positive for COVID-19.

"When you place more kids on campus, you run a higher risk of a case," Chimento said. "I didn't want to yo-yo."

While class sizes at BHUHSD schools may accommodate the social distancing requirements, Chimento said bussing students to and from school while adhering to CDPH guidance would be a difficult feat.

At Tuesday's board of supervisors meeting, county Health and Human Services Agency Interim Director Sam Leach said that entering the less-restrictive red tier in the state's COVID-19 monitoring system might allow more freedom in schools, particularly in sports, though "we have to play by the state's rules."

"We want the kids in-person. We want the kids to be able to play sports. We want the kids to be able to do the other extracurricular activities," Leach said. "The reality is we still have to make sure that everybody's safe and we don't take things so far that we end up having outbreaks that compromise the progress we've already made. One week of a large spike of cases, and we're right back in the purple tier for several weeks."



A Burned Forest Reflected in Sap Photo (c) Megan Fiske yosemitenorthphotography.com

Living With Fire: What California Can Learn From Native Burns

Megan Botel / March 9 2021 / HuffPost & The GroundTruth Project
This story is co-published with [The GroundTruth Project](#).

MARIPOSA, Calif. — Rain falls on the 300-year-old oaks on a cold midwinter morning as a group of nearly 60 gathers here on what was once southern Sierra Miwok land.

Some have returned year after year. Others are here for the first time, eager to learn what California's oldest residents have long known about land management after the most destructive fire season in the state's recorded history.

"We are here to make an offering to the land," said Ron Goode, the North Fork Mono's tribal chairman, who organized the event. "Mother Earth

supports us. By putting fire on the ground, we support her.”

Rakes, clippers, shovels and chainsaws in hand, the group heads out to assemble the dead vegetation into burn piles. Using drip torches — red tin canisters with mixtures of diesel and gasoline — they delicately light the piles on fire in slow, deliberate motions, painting the land in strokes of orange and red.

It is the year’s first cultural burn for the North Fork Mono. For more than 10,000 years, tribes used small, controlled fires to open pasture lands and clear out underbrush, promoting new plant growth and reducing the risk of large, dangerous fires.

But when Western settlers took over Native American lands in the 18th and 19th centuries, they began barring many traditional practices, including cultural burning. In 1850, the U.S. government passed the Act for the Government and Protection of Indians, which prohibited intentional burning. After over a century of this strategy left the nation’s forests choked with dry underbrush, California’s fire officials are now beginning to reimagine fire and land management, drawing upon Native American tradition and perspective.

North Fork Mono tribal members are teaching the group of university students, ecologists, journalists and, notably, officials from the U.S. Forest Service and the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (Cal Fire) how it might help curb the state’s fire crisis by clearing out highly flammable vegetation before the dry, hot summer.

Goode, a state-certified “burn boss,” runs several burns a year to rehabilitate meadows across California. This 369-acre property became an unofficial educational site when he opened it up to university students nearly two decades ago, and for the past six years he’s invited the greater public. Interest surged within the past three years, he said, attracting hundreds of participants at each burn, including a growing number of officials from Cal Fire and the Forest Service. (Due to the pandemic, those numbers are currently limited.)

“People are interested in what’s happening,” Goode said. “But it takes disasters for people to start waking up.”

In 2020, wildfires [ravaged](#) 4.2 million acres of California, including Big Basin in Santa Cruz, the oldest and one of the most beloved state parks in

California. Over the past decade, the state known for its lush forests and rich natural resources has seen hundreds of lives lost and tens of thousands of structures destroyed, entering, as fire historian Stephen Pyne put it, the “fire equivalent of an ice age.”

The disaster has awakened California’s land managers, who, after a century of promoting fire suppression and rejecting Native American controlled burn techniques, are now trying to figure out what to do with the abundance of dried shrub and brush that, along with a warming climate, fueled the current fire emergency.

On this February morning, Goode’s 11-year-old nephew, Harlon, uses a chainsaw for the first time to take down a dying white oak. He watched it fall in awe.

“One day, I’m going to take over for my uncle and be the burn boss,” Harlon said.

The event took months of meticulous planning, including permits, funding and accommodating the pandemic restrictions. But they could not plan for the weather, and the forecast was for near-constant rain.

“Whether we get much burning done or not, I am fulfilled,” said Goode, gesturing toward the group huddled under tents to keep dry. “Look at all of you.”

So is Jonathan Long, a research ecologist for the U.S. Forest Service who attended the burn.

“There’s some really bad history of labeling Native people as ignorant or superstitious, of actively arresting people and putting them in jail if they were trying to carry out traditional practices like cultural burning,” Long said. “Most people would now say: ‘Yes, if we kept burning in the frequency, in the ways Native Americans burned, we wouldn’t have the fires we are having now.’”

History Of Suppression

For most of the last century, the Forest Service pushed a vigorous campaign of fire suppression, rooted in the belief that fire threatened commercial timber. In 1910, five years after the Forest Service was established, a series of fires known as the "Big Blowup" burned 3 million acres across Montana, Idaho and Washington, convincing lawmakers, Forest Service administrators and the general public that the solution to fires was more staff and equipment to prevent and suppress them.

Through the Weeks Act of 1911, the Forest Service offered financial incentives to states to fight fires, which dominated the national strategy. In 1935, it impl