



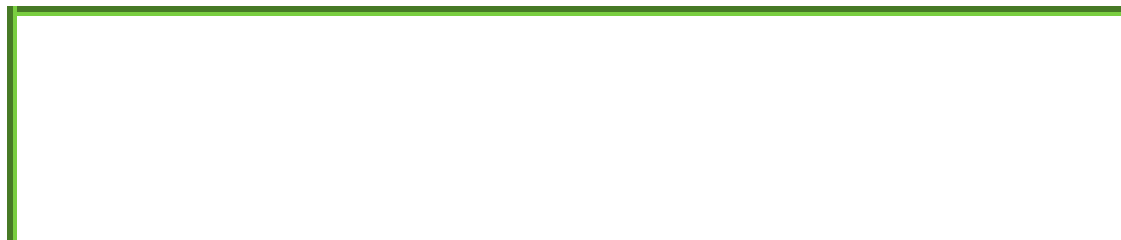
Protecting our rural environment by promoting citizen participation in sustainable land use planning since 2006

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.

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Join Us!

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

Next Calaveras Planning Coalition Meeting

August 2, 2021 3 P.M. - 5 P.M.

New Members Welcome at CPC Meetings

Organizations, groups, and individuals (known as associate members) may join the Calaveras Planning Coalition (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 Community Action Project/Calaveras Planning Coalition. Visitors and prospective members will, by necessity, be excluded from attorney/client privileged discussions.

If you are interested in 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 and CPC meetings will be held online via Zoom until restrictions are lifted by the Public Health Department.

BOS Regular Meeting Tuesday, July 13, 2021

Agenda Upcoming

Planning Commission Meeting July 22, 2021

Agenda Upcoming

Local News

Proposed city ordinance would set new rules for Sonora short-term rentals

Alex MacLean / Union Democrat / July 1, 2021

New and existing operators of Airbnb-style short-term rentals in Sonora would be subject to new rules under a proposed ordinance being sent to the city's Planning Commission for review and recommendations.

The Sonora City Council was briefed at a public meeting Monday night on the changes the ordinance would impose to the process of obtaining a permit for operating such rentals, which are defined as any home or dwelling unit being rented out for less than 30 days at a time.

It was the fourth public meeting where the council has discussed the topic since approving a temporary moratorium for processing new permits on March 16 in response to concerns that such rentals have been exacerbating a lack of available long-term housing within the city.

Any new short-term rental would have to be the primary residence of the owner under the proposed ordinance, while people who currently have permits from the city for renting out secondary homes would be exempt from that specific provision.

There is also a provision for any new permittees to offer up their homes as unhosted short-term rentals while they are away for up to 120 days per year, which is meant for people who may leave the area for parts of the year, like seniors who go elsewhere in the summer.

All other rules in the proposed ordinance would apply to both existing and new short-term rentals, including that they could not host special events or commercial functions, they have to provide on-site parking for guests (hosts would be allowed to park on the street), there must be a designated local contact person who can respond to any issues that arise, they must undergo the same regular fire-safety inspections as hotels and other lodging businesses and follow the same requirements, and they must obtain garbage-collection service through Cal Sierra Waste Management.

The current ordinance for short-term rentals also does not provide a way for the city to enforce violations, but the proposed one would allow it to fine those operating unpermitted or breaking the rules by up to \$500 per day for the first offense and \$1,000 per day for any after that.

Both tenants and operators of the rentals would be subject to being fined for violating the ordinance.

There are currently 36 permitted short-term rentals operating within the city, in addition to 10 others

without permits that city officials are aware of by monitoring websites such as Airbnb and VRBO.

City Administrator Mary Rose Rutikanga said the city sends letters to the unpermitted short-term rental owners each year telling them they are in violation and ordering them to stop operating to no avail.

An analysis presented to the council during a study session at a public meeting on May 3 found that out of the 36 permitted short-term rentals in the city, only nine were the host's primary residence, 72% were for the entire home, and 92% were single-family homes.

Each of the 36 rentals also provided an average of about \$12,200 per year in earnings for the hosts.

City staff also conducted an analysis of long-term rental availability at the end of March and found no units on the market at the time, with most having waiting lists of up to two years.

Stricter rules on short-term rentals have been enacted in recent years by cities throughout California, the United States and world as the practice has become more commonplace and been blamed for housing shortages in those areas.

Rutikanga said the city received six applications between the time the moratorium was first discussed on March 15 and officially enacted on April 5, of which one was a city resident who lived at the place they would renting, one was from someone who resides in Castro Valley, one from someone who resides in Copperopolis, and three were from the same person who resides in Tuolumne County outside of the city limits.

The council discussed the possibility of moving the moratorium cutoff date up to April 5 so the six who submitted applications between then and March 16 could still be processed under the existing rules, with Mayor Matt Hawkins and Mayor Pro-tem Mark Plummer indicating they were in favor, but there was a lack of consensus because councilmembers Ann Segerstrom, Jim Garaventa, and Colette Such were opposed because they felt it would be unfair.

Community Development Director Rachelle Kellogg said she also received calls from a woman in Southern California who had purchased two properties in the city with the intent of turning them into short-term rentals prior to the moratorium and had yet to submit an application.

There were several other property investors in the same boat, including Tuolumne County resident Matt Zelinsky who has spoken out against the proposed regulations and did so again Monday night.

The proposed ordinance will go to the city Planning Commission on July 12 for a review and recommendations to the council, which will then consider approving it at a meeting after that.

At the end of Monday's meeting, Rutikanga also announced the council would be welcoming back the public to City Hall for in-person meetings beginning at the next regularly scheduled one on July 6.

People who wish to comment at future meetings will have to attend in person, but the city is working on a way to livestream the meetings for those wishing to observe them from home. It will be the first time the

public will be allowed back in the council's chambers since the COVID-19 pandemic began early last year.

Contact Alex MacLean at amaclean@uniondemocrat.com or (209) 768-5175.

Drought 2021- How bad is it? Part I

By Jan Hovey / The Valley Springs News / July 7, 2021

We all know Calaveras County, the Sierra Nevada Foothills, the State of California and many of the states in the southwest are in a drought. But, just how bad is it and what might we expect this summer?

The different stages of drought are: D-0 – Abnormally Dry, D-1 – Moderate Drought, D-2 – Severe Drought, D-3 – Extreme Drought and D-4 v- Exceptional Drought. While counties northeast and southwest of Calaveras County are classified in the D-4 category, Calaveras, for the most part, remains in the D-3 extreme drought category.

According to the California Department of Water Resources, “As we approach summer, California is experiencing a heatwave that will set new temperature records in some areas. Warm temperatures are affecting drought impacts. Runoff this year in key mountain watersheds remains on a par with that of 2014 and 2015, the two warmest and driest years of California's last drought, despite this year's statewide April 1 snowpack being at 59 percent. The decrease in runoff efficiency is a troubling yet expected outcome of a warming climate.”

“Outcomes of this shift in conditions were seen earlier in the spring when forecasted Sierra Nevada runoff failed to materialize, triggering the May 10 expansion of the governor's drought emergency proclamation to cover Central Valley watersheds in response to needs for water rights administration actions to preserve reservoir storage.”

Somehow much of the water from melted snow that California was relying on to break the drought never made it to the reservoirs. So where did the snow go?

“I really think this is largely to do with the role of the unprecedented, record-breaking heat,” said Daniel Swain, University of California drought and bushfire scientist. “Extreme heat essentially means there is more evaporation than there would be in the absence of extreme heat.”

In addition to the high evaporation rate, back-to-back dry winters left the soil so dry and the plant-life so thirsty that most of the snowmelt went into saturating the soil instead of running off into streams and reservoirs.

“Water Year 2020 was California's 13th driest based on statewide precipitation and 5th driest based on statewide runoff,” Swain said. “It is likely that the present water year will end up being drier, possibly coming in at second driest for runoff (behind 1977) for some parts of the state.. Above-average precipitation would be needed to achieve average runoff.”

Currently the water level at New Melones Lake is 976 feet and dropping at a rate of about six inches per day. At this time last year the lake level was 1,025 feet and 1,075 the year before.

Even at the end of March, the state's drought situation was severe and widespread, but only a small area was rated as being in exceptional drought. Then in April something very strange happened that caught water experts by surprise.

"This year on April 1 for California we were anywhere from 60 to 80 percent of normal (snow levels)" US Desert Research Institute climatologist Daniel McEvoy said. "We were concerned, but it didn't look as bad as 2015, when there was no snow on April 1."

"Within a month we went from around 70 percent of normal down to around 30 or 40 percent of normal," he added. "What was interesting was just how fast it happened after April 1."

By mid-June, most of the state was declared to be in extreme drought, up from less than a third in late March. A third of California was declared to be in the worst category, exceptional.

"The extreme temperatures have played a big role in just really sucking the moisture out of the soil – but it's not the only thing that contributes to snowmelt," Dr. McEvoy said. "Solar radiation is a big one, and where you have bare soils, it's going to dry those soils out faster and it's going to stress the vegetation more."

The sudden escalation of drought in California has parallels with so-called "flash droughts," according to Ailie Gallant from Monash University.

"A flash drought is where evaporation plays much more of a prominent role than it usually does in a drought, and because of that, you descend into drought quite quickly," she said. "So, areas can go from being a bit dry to really severe drought in a matter of weeks or months."

Water officials across California have watched the dry weather nervously and have begun to plan for water conservation, and in some cases, possible mandatory water restrictions.

According to the Center for Climate and Energy Solutions, across the globe, hot days are getting hotter and more frequent, while we're experiencing fewer cold days. Over the past decade, daily record temperatures have occurred twice as often as record lows across the continental United States. Heat waves are becoming more common, and intense heatwaves are more frequent in the U.S. West, although in many parts of the country the 1930s still holds the record for number of heatwaves (caused by the Dust Bowl and other factors).

Although we just hit summer, we should be planning ahead for responding to continued dry conditions. In Part II of Drought 2021, we'll explore what county officials have to say.

Images from space show California's forests and lakes drying out in a record mega-drought

Morgan McFall Johnsen / Business Insider / July 2, 2021

The climate crisis is bearing down hard on the western US.

Historic drought and heat are converging on western states to create the perfect storm for depleted reservoirs, strained power grids, and rampant wildfires later this summer. The effects are so stark, you can see them from space.

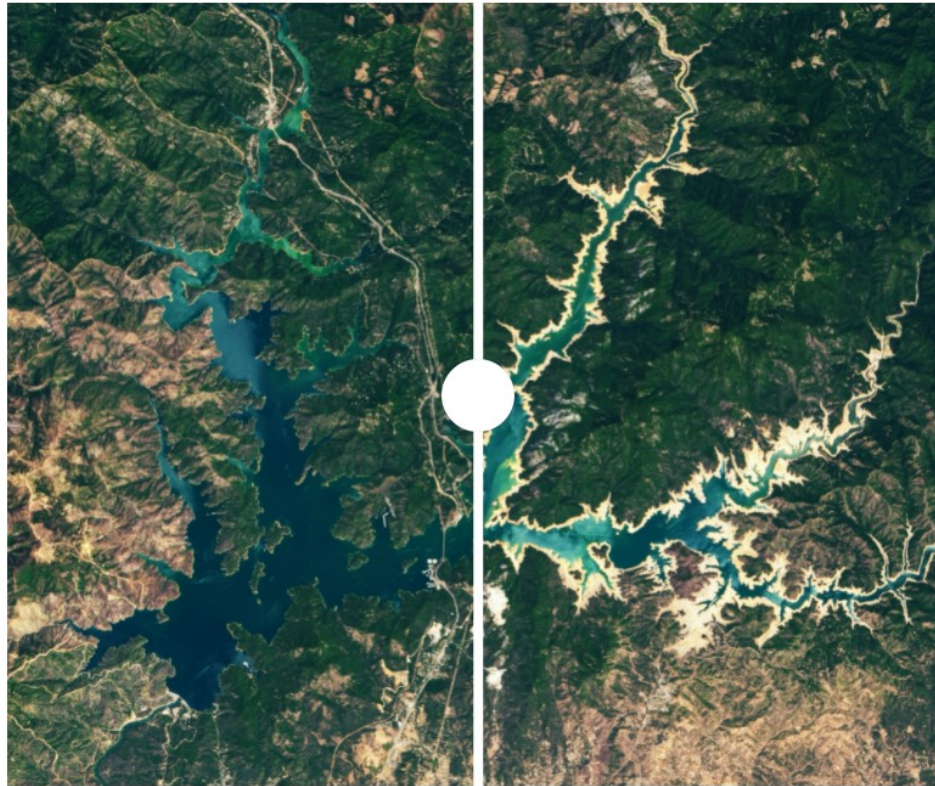
Satellite images show that the hills outside Los Angeles are significantly more parched, brown, and dry than they were this time last year. Drag the slider back and forth on the below image to see the difference.

"I'm worried about this summer," Kathleen Johnson, a paleoclimatologist at the University of California, Irvine, told [The Guardian](#). "This current drought is potentially on track to become the worst that we've seen in at least 1,200 years. And the reason is linked directly to human-caused climate change."

In the US Drought Monitor's 20-year history of tracking drought, the West and Southwest are drier than they've ever been. California Gov. Gavin Newsom has now declared drought emergencies in 41 of the state's 58 counties, encompassing 30% of California's population.

Shasta Lake is the largest reservoir in California and, like many western lakes, it has receded significantly over the past few months. NASA satellite images below show a bathtub ring — white layers of calcium carbonate and other minerals exposed when the water level drops — along the lake's shorelines.

Shasta Lake in July 2019 (left) and June 2021 (right)



Source: NASA Earth Observatory/USGS/Lauren Dauphin

The reservoir is at just 38% of its full capacity — 48% of the historical average, according to [California's Department of Water Resources](#).

California's second-largest reservoir, Lake Oroville, has fallen to historically low levels, too. Normally, the lake's water pumps through the Edward Hyatt Power Plant to generate electricity for 800,000 homes. But officials told [CNN](#) that they expect the low water levels will force the plant to close in late summer.

"A lot of the slack in our system has already been used up," Roger Pulwarty, a senior scientist in the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), told [The Guardian](#).

A climate emergency is raising temperatures, straining power grids, and sparking fires

An ever-growing body of research shows that drought events are becoming more common and more severe as human activity fills the atmosphere with heat-trapping pollutants like carbon dioxide and methane.

Rising global temperatures are changing the western US profoundly: Warmer air causes more moisture to evaporate, drying out soil. That raises the risk of drought and leaves forests full of tinder-dry foliage, primed for wildfires.

Heat waves only make the situation worse. They're occurring three times more often and lasting about a day longer than they did in the 1960s, according to [records](#) of such waves across 50 US cities. They also start earlier and continue later into the year — the heat-wave season is 47 days longer than it was in the 1960s.

Two record-shattering heat waves struck western states in June. The first one washed over the Southwest and [strained California's power grid](#). Temperatures reached 116 degrees Fahrenheit in Las Vegas, Nevada; 115 degrees in Phoenix, Arizona; and topped 110 degrees for eight days straight in Tucson, Arizona.

The [most recent heat wave](#) rolled over the Pacific Northwest last weekend and sat there for several days.

Many of the cities that were hit hardest, including Seattle and Portland, have never experienced such temperatures — in some cases breaking their previous records by double digits. Temperatures in Lytton, a town in British Columbia, hit 116 degrees Fahrenheit — the highest temperature ever recorded in Canada. The town broke that record the following day, when temperatures climbed to 118 degrees.

It's not yet clear how many people [died from heat-related illness](#) during the Pacific Northwest heat wave, but [the Associated Press reported](#) that the death toll is likely in the hundreds.

"Much of the western United States will continue the trend of hot and dry weather, much like the summer of 2020," Brandon Buckingham, a meteorologist at AccuWeather, [told Insider last month](#). "Each and every

western heat wave throughout the summer will only heighten wildfire risks."

Heat waves also prompt people to crank up air conditioners, causing energy demand to spike. This can strain the power grid and lead to rolling blackouts.

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Regional News

California's Highest COVID-19 Infection Rates Shift to Rural Counties

By Phillip Reese / US News / July 7, 2021

Most of us are familiar with the good news: In recent weeks, rates of COVID-19 infection and death have plummeted in [California](#), falling to levels not seen since the early days of the pandemic. The average number of new COVID infections reported each day dropped by an astounding 98% from December to June, according to figures from the California Department of Public Health.

And bolstering that trend, nearly 70% of Californians 12 and older are partially or fully vaccinated.

But state health officials are still reporting [nearly 1,000 new COVID cases](#) and more than two dozen COVID-related deaths per day. So, where does COVID continue to simmer in California? And why?

An analysis of state data shows some clear patterns at this stage of the pandemic: As vaccination rates rose across the state, the overall numbers of cases and deaths plunged. But within that broader trend are pronounced regional discrepancies. Counties with relatively low rates of vaccination reported much higher rates of COVID infections and deaths in May and June than counties with high vaccination rates.

There were about 182 new COVID infections per 100,000 residents from May 1 to June 18 in California counties where fewer than half of residents age 12 and older had received at least one vaccine dose, CDPH data shows. By comparison, there were about 102 COVID infections per 100,000 residents in counties where more than two-thirds of residents 12 and up had gotten at least one dose.

"If you live in an area that has low vaccination rates and you have a few people who start to develop a disease, it's going to spread quickly among those who aren't vaccinated," said [Rita Burke](#), assistant professor of clinical preventive medicine at the [University of Southern California's Keck School of Medicine](#). Burke noted that the highly contagious delta variant of the coronavirus now circulating in California amplifies the threat of serious outbreaks in areas with low vaccination rates.

The regional discrepancies in COVID-related deaths are also striking. There were about 3.2 COVID-related deaths per 100,000 residents from May 1 to June 18 in counties where first-dose vaccination rates were below 50%. That is almost twice as high as the death rate in counties where more than two-thirds of residents had at least one dose.

While the pattern is clear, there are exceptions. A couple of sparsely populated mountain counties with low vaccination rates — [Trinity](#) and [Mariposa](#) — also had relatively low rates of new infections in May and June. Likewise, a few suburban counties with high vaccination rates — among them [Sonoma](#) and [Contra Costa](#) — had relatively high rates of new infections.

"There are three things that are going on," said [Dr. George Rutherford](#), a professor of epidemiology and biostatistics at the [University of California-San Francisco](#). "One is the vaccine — very important, but not the whole story. One is naturally acquired immunity, which is huge in some places." A third, he said, is people still managing to evade infection, whether by taking precautions or simply by living in areas with few infections.

As of June 18, about 67% of Californians age 12 and older had received at least one dose of COVID vaccine, according to the state health department. But that masks a wide variance among the state's 58 counties. In 14 counties, for example, fewer than half of residents 12 and older had received a shot. In 19 counties, more than two-thirds had.

The counties with low vaccination rates are largely rugged and rural. Nearly all are politically conservative. In January, about 6% of the state's COVID infections were in the 23 counties where a majority of voters cast ballots for President Donald Trump in November. By May and June, that figure had risen to 11%.

While surveys indicate politics plays a role in vaccine hesitancy in many communities, access also remains an issue in many of California's rural outposts. It can be hard, or at least inconvenient, for people who live far from the nearest medical facility to get two shots a month apart.

If you have to drive 30 minutes out to the nearest vaccination site, you may not be as inclined to do that versus if it's five minutes from your house," Burke said. "And so we, the public health community, recognize that and have really made a concerted effort in order to eliminate or alleviate that access issue."

Many of the counties with low vaccination rates had relatively low infection rates in the early months of the pandemic, largely thanks to their remoteness. But, as COVID reaches those communities, that lack of prior exposure and acquired immunity magnifies their vulnerability, Rutherford said. "We're going to see cases where people are unvaccinated or where there's not been a big background level of immunity already," Rutherford said.

As it becomes clearer that new infections will be disproportionately concentrated in areas with low vaccination rates, state officials are working to persuade hesitant Californians to get a vaccine, even [introducing a vaccine lottery](#).

But most persuasive are friends and family members who can help counter the disinformation rampant in some communities, said [Lorena Garcia](#), an associate professor of epidemiology at the [University of California-Davis](#). Belittling people for their hesitancy or getting into a political argument likely won't work.

When talking to her own skeptical relatives, Garcia avoided politics: "I just explained any questions that they had."

"Vaccines are a good part of our life," she said. "It's something that we've done since we were babies. So, it's just something we're going to do again."

Phillip Reese is a data reporting specialist and an assistant professor of journalism at [California State University-Sacramento](#).

This story was produced by [Kaiser Health News](#), which publishes [California Healthline](#), an editorially independent service of the [California Health Care Foundation](#).

What Life Looks Like in One of the Capital Region's Least-Vaccinated Counties

Dakota Morlan / Comstock's Magazine / July 5, 2021

On a glorious afternoon in late June, Main Street Sutter Creek vibrates with the summertime energy of vacationers, bachelorette parties and wine connoisseurs looking to let loose somewhere far away from home. In this timeless setting in the Sierra Nevada foothills, with its frontier storefronts turned tasting rooms and freshly-painted inns, it is easy to forget the perils of the past 15 months.

Guests smile freely as they order hearty plates at Hotel Sutter, some seated inside the bustling dining rooms while others spill out onto makeshift patios built into the street. The rough lumber stalls, hammered up with desperate hands in 2020, now stand as sole reminders that the past year ever happened.

When California reopened June 15, ending physical distancing, the county tier system and capacity limits on businesses, Amador County was already "heading in that direction," says Joey Guidi, CEO of the Amador County Chamber of Commerce. The subsequent end to face mask enforcement for vaccinated individuals at the county's two casinos (both are owned by Native American tribes and not subject to state orders) and other popular venues has further fueled the post-pandemic zeitgeist, and perhaps also a false sense of safety for the unvaccinated.

Currently, Amador County has the second-lowest vaccination rate in the 10-county Capital Region (and the lowest number of vaccines administered), with about [39 percent of its 40,000 residents fully vaccinated against COVID-19](#). A historically red county that voted for Donald Trump during the 2020 presidential election, Amador handled the pandemic differently than its more urbanized neighbors.

The county took a "self-regulating" approach to dealing with business compliance during peak COVID months, Guidi says, with the county Environmental Health Department responsible for fielding complaints, an approach that allowed several bars along Main Street in Jackson to remain open throughout. A nuanced dynamic continues today as businesses navigate the new waters of COVID-19 without rules.

A Cautious Revival

For Khamel “K.C.” Brown, chef and partner at the Jackson restaurant Bistro49 Culinary Laboratory, the pandemic will never be quite over. Brown and his four business partners met the challenges that 2020 threw their way, but the scars from the experience will endure. “If three to six months from now a variant comes or something like that, I have to keep that in mind and be able to manage staffing. So, if we do have to go back (to previous restrictions), it’s not a big deal,” Brown says.

During the worst months of the pandemic, Brown did everything he could to “put a dollar in the machine,” making use of the drive-thru window and reconfiguring the small dining room while business partner Christopher Floyd hurriedly built a 400-square-foot deck for outdoor seating.

As three months turned into six and then became a year, Brown laid off and rehired employees twice and received two rounds of Paycheck Protection Program loans. During the panicked days of the first stay-at-home order, he sold groceries out of the restaurant, vacuum sealing cuts of meat and selling individual rolls of toilet paper, which were “hot sellers.”

It was a far cry from the dream he and his partners made reality just over one year before the stay-at-home order. Bistro49 opened in February 2019 as an understated gourmet experience; “fine dining in flip-flops,” says Floyd. Brown speaks wistfully of menu-burning parties and interacting with patrons across the kitchen counter.

There are now signs that these customs will soon return. At lunch on a recent Friday, guests dine happily both inside and outside, taking advantage of the expanded seating while a line forms at the door. Brown says that business is up by 100 percent since the onset of the pandemic, and he and his partners are already cooking up plans for expansion. Expansion with caution, that is.

“I don’t think it’s over for restaurants,” he says. “Right now, everyone is seeing an influx. That’s great, but what do you do about that tax bill that’s been there for the past year or the amount of revenue that was lost? It’s not like you can hit ‘reset’ and grab the revenue. It’s gone.”

New Ways of Working

Bistro49 partner Floyd owns a second business in Jackson, EDEX Information Systems, a provider of workers’ compensation court data, case tracking, electronic court form filing and legal document mailing in California. The company was hit hard when court systems across the state shut down, and Floyd had to lay off nearly half of his 15 employees.

But a well-timed pivot changed everything. Floyd and staff pioneered a new document mailing engine for attorneys and businesses and now serve clients nationwide. Most employees have been rehired, but the way EDEX does business is forever altered.

Since March 2020, when employees were sent home, none have returned to the office except for print days. “From an owner’s perspective, we always thought businesses should be in an office, (but) we realized pretty quickly that we can actually get better work at different hours of the day when it’s actually more convenient,” Floyd says.

[Water Street Antiques & Interiors](#) is one of few antique vendors in Amador County that was not devastated by the pandemic. The business’ shop on Main Street in Sutter Creek was shuttered for several months due to state COVID-19 restrictions on retail, but the warehouse location on Highway 88 remained open

due to its status as a manufacturing workshop. Capacity limits didn't mean much to the business, either, with its ample amount of space at three separate warehouses.

Consequently, Water Street found a niche among those itching to redecorate their homes during the pandemic, with customers driving great lengths to shop at one of the few furniture stores in the region that was still open. After almost 50 years in business, Water Street saw some of its highest sales ever in 2020 and 2021.

"I think, month after month, we've kept saying, 'When is this going to fall off of the cliff?'" says Kevin O'Neill, vice president of sales and marketing for the business. "Like, during the 2008 recession, we learned from that not to expand too fast or to get outside of what you know, and I'd say that's still pretty true. You kind of take it day by day and just be really grateful for what you have."

A Safe Place

Across town, on Jackson's Main Street, some old favorites are coming back to life. Rosebud's Cafe is a 30-year-old family-run establishment that has gained a reputation over the years for its locally-sourced ingredients and housemade pies; a colorful, quirky hub for the arts and LGBTQ community.

During the pandemic, the restaurant also became known as one of the most proactive implementers of COVID-19 guidance in Amador County, remaining closed for several months in 2020 and moving slowly to change each time guidelines were relaxed. "(We wanted) to have a sense that we were choosing for ourselves what was right for our patrons and our family," says Tyx Pulkamp, a second-generation partner at Rosebud's. Today, the Pulkamps continue to go above and beyond, wearing masks inside regardless of vaccine status and taking orders at the front of the restaurant to limit contact.

"It's been a really traumatic experience, and we're all kind of re-entering society at our own comfort zone. The folks at Rosebud's are so excited to be here," Pulkamp says. "They're relieved that we aren't just packing folks in. It's not about that for us. ... We want to be a safe place for people, and the reality is, in the foothills, not everyone feels safe."



Neighborhood bobcat (c) yosemitenorthphotography.com

Did you know ... California has 58 counties and Calaveras is considered the 17th most rural county in the state, and neighboring Alpine County is the most rural.

The Most Rural Counties in California [Most rural counties in California \(msn.com\)](http://msn.com)

A surprising number of U.S. counties have 100% rural land-702, in fact. [Stacker](http://stacker.com) compiled a list of the most rural counties in California using data from the [U.S. Census Bureau](http://census.gov). Counties are ranked by the percent of land area that is rural, as of the 2010 Census, with ties broken by residents per square mile, according to 2019 5-year population estimates.

According to the Census Bureau, rural land encompasses any land that isn't an

urban area. To be considered an urban area, a place has to have a densely settled core of census tracts or blocks and count at least 2,500 people, at least 1,500 of whom must be residents of non-institutional buildings. Areas with 50,000 people or more are considered urbanized areas, while areas with between 2,500 and 50,000 people are considered urban clusters.

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Sierra Nevada Conservancy Funding Opportunities Newsletter for July/August



This is an electronic newsletter published every two months containing information on upcoming grant and funding opportunities for the Sierra Nevada region. The newsletter includes federal, state, and private foundation funders as well as additional resources and information related to grant funding. The Sierra Nevada Conservancy provides the Funding Opportunities Newsletter as a free resource under its Sierra Nevada Watershed Improvement Program.

No, L.A. Isn't a Desert. But We Are Getting There.

Editorial Board / LA Times / July 5, 2021

One of the standard tropes we hear from outsiders about Los Angeles is that it is located in a desert — a

dry biome that cannot sustain our millions of people without importing water from somewhere (and someone) else.

And the standard retort from folks like us on the Los Angeles Times editorial board is that, no, it's explicitly not a desert. To get to the desert, we have to leave town. The difference in climate, flora and terrain between L.A. and, say, Palm Springs or Las Vegas is profound. Deserts get less than 10 inches of rain a year. Las Vegas gets just over four. Los Angeles gets nearly 15.

We're not a desert. We have a Mediterranean climate, like, say, the South of France. That's our story and we're sticking to it.

But there are a few caveats that we Southern Californians should discuss, just among ourselves.

The first is that, sure, we have a Mediterranean climate, but it more closely resembles what you'd find in the Med's drier southern coasts than the lush parts of Italy or France. Think Alexandria rather than Rome or Barcelona. So if we were going to adjust our water consumption to correlate to our rainfall, we'd be even stingier with our landscapes and showers than we currently are.

The second is that as the globe warms, southern climate patterns are creeping northward. So L.A.'s climate may come to more closely resemble northern Baja California's: hotter and drier.

The third is that, yes, we import much of our water from wetter places like the Sierra Nevada and the Rockies, via rivers, dams and aqueducts. The engineering, construction and operations expertise that keep us from going dry are marvels and should be the subject of our pride and awe, despite the scolding we sometimes get from our Northern California neighbors. We should also be proud of the fact that as our population has grown over the last 30 years, our water consumption has not. And we should be pleased that our local reservoirs will keep us in good shape through the dry summer and into what we hope will be a wetter winter.

But those wetter places that help quench our thirst are changing too. The Rocky Mountain snowmelt that feeds the Colorado River and once filled Lake Powell behind Glen Canyon Dam in Arizona has diminished since the start of the 21st century, coinciding with the end of an unusually wet period in history. Further downstream, Lake Mead behind Hoover Dam on the Nevada-Arizona border reached its lowest level in history last month, both because of the drying Colorado River watershed and competing uses in increasingly populous Western states.

The Sierra snowcap was a small fraction of its historic size last winter. Much of Northern California is in severe drought. And just last month, a deadly heat storm struck those parts of the West that have always been considered the wettest — Washington, Oregon, British Columbia.

So the issue is no longer whether L.A. is a desert — whether it's too dry to support itself with water. The question should be whether all those areas from which Southern California has drawn so much of its water over the last three-quarters of a century will be too dry to support themselves, let alone those of us in L.A.

Many great civilizations, including the Maya and Khmer empires, arose during wet periods in their history and thrived because of ingenious engineering and management feats that created steady, reliable water supplies. And it is widely believed that the fall of those empires coincided with climate changes that no longer accommodated the structures and systems they had built.

Like the rest of the globe, Southern California now faces a far more profound change in climate — one that could cut off Los Angeles from the water supplies that created it. To survive, and to thrive, we will have to use, clean and use again the water we have locally and be more parsimonious with the less-abundant water that we import. Otherwise, Los Angeles just might become a desert after all.

Letter to America

By Ho-Ming So Denduangrudee / JUNE 22, 2021 / [Letter to America](#) | [Terrain.org](#)

Hey baby, Miss Cold,

There's a Chinese temple in Oroville, somewhere in the foothills of the Sierra Nevada, the boonies, which I mixed up with the goonies for a long, long time. We came to California in a pack, a whole gang of us pressing on, which is not what a press gang is, and not what we were or are. We wanted to avoid winter and unpleasant ways to die, so we brought it all with us, the warung, the bodega, the encampment, little villages everywhere, entire worlds.

In the end it appeared the point was to be jazzy, carefree, to let it all go, not cling, not need to belong, just be. No language barriers, no need to hold on, no need to judge, man, we're all one, we're all the same, man. On behalf of my ancestors, the recent ones, the ones I'm still trying to belong to, I'm chasing this letting go, still, this American dream. I'm moving away to be released from it all, to a smaller town, to the mountains, me and all the city people who are living and letting live, who are finally letting go, who are just being.

This is 2020, or is it 2021, merging into the same, all of us surviving the great yeast and trampoline and bicycle and toilet paper shortages, when we were missing everything but still have so much stuff and not enough time, and we didn't buy books or typewriters or notebooks or help each other or reflect. If COVID didn't kill us, it gave us perspective and opportunities, and somehow that's fair because the people it was unfair to are largely dead, or suffering even more, working even more jobs to make ends meet, too much to have time to complain, not that they had time to complain anyway. And then some other people it didn't kill, they just want to keep this small town to themselves. They found themselves already and don't want my or your discoveries undermining theirs.

Our ancestors, the ones who are alive, the ones I'm still trying to belong to, they haven't let go. They don't want us to leave, either. They carry all of the old world with them, and where are they going to put it? Who are they going to give it to if we go? It wasn't meant for those lazy smalltowners, those limited imaginations, those places trying to stay frozen in time.

Our ancestors, they say, "Oh, don't go there. They don't want you there."

I tell them no one wants anyone anywhere. That's our common humanity. We are all grouches.

"Not true," they say. "Grouchiness is un-American."

I'm worried for sure, about loss, mostly of anonymity. It's hard to pick your nose at stoplights if you're so easily identifiable. It's hard to pick your nose at stoplights if there's only one stoplight, or even

four. Somewhere, there are more than a billion stoplights and you can't tell me from a billion others. Is it better to be special? We only came to hope, and that's what we all live for, anyway. It doesn't have to be real.

A few miles out of town, there's a meadow with an old Basque brick oven at the end of a dusty road. Those Old World sheepherders really knew how to live. If you were really from here, man, if you were really local, you'd know if this grove is sugar or ponderosa or lodgepole, all sweet, all contested. This guy's family has picnicked under that tree for three generations. How dare you suggest we cull anything so that we don't all go up in flames, you heartless tradition killer. What is the greater good, anyway.

Every time we camp there and people ask how our weekend was, I tell them it was beautiful, the stars, the sky, just being.

"Where did you go again?" they'll ask.

"The Khyber Pass," I'll say. "Just past the meadow. We made pizza there."

I have trouble remembering names, and can't remember exactly where that Chinese temple is, but seven people have already told me about it, and I'll remember eventually. I've also been told about the railway, forced labor, and the plaque that commemorates the Chinese camp being set on fire. I think (hope?) it's full of regrets, but I haven't seen it yet. There's still a China Camp Road. The local daily runs a headline, "Life for Chinese not easy in 1870," on a random November day. Small town news cycles transcend time.

I think people are too embarrassed to tell me about Wong's, the local Chinese place, and they just assume I hate Panda Express (it's delicious). When I interviewed at the wonderful local bookstore (I did not get the job), they asked me how I would deal with the occasional racist or xenophobic comment. I said something about perspective and genocide, this not being close to it, but, really, what do we normally do about it, everyday, anyway? Don't we just do that normal everyday thing about it, which is, nothing? Feel bad? This, too, shall pass? Live and let live, man.

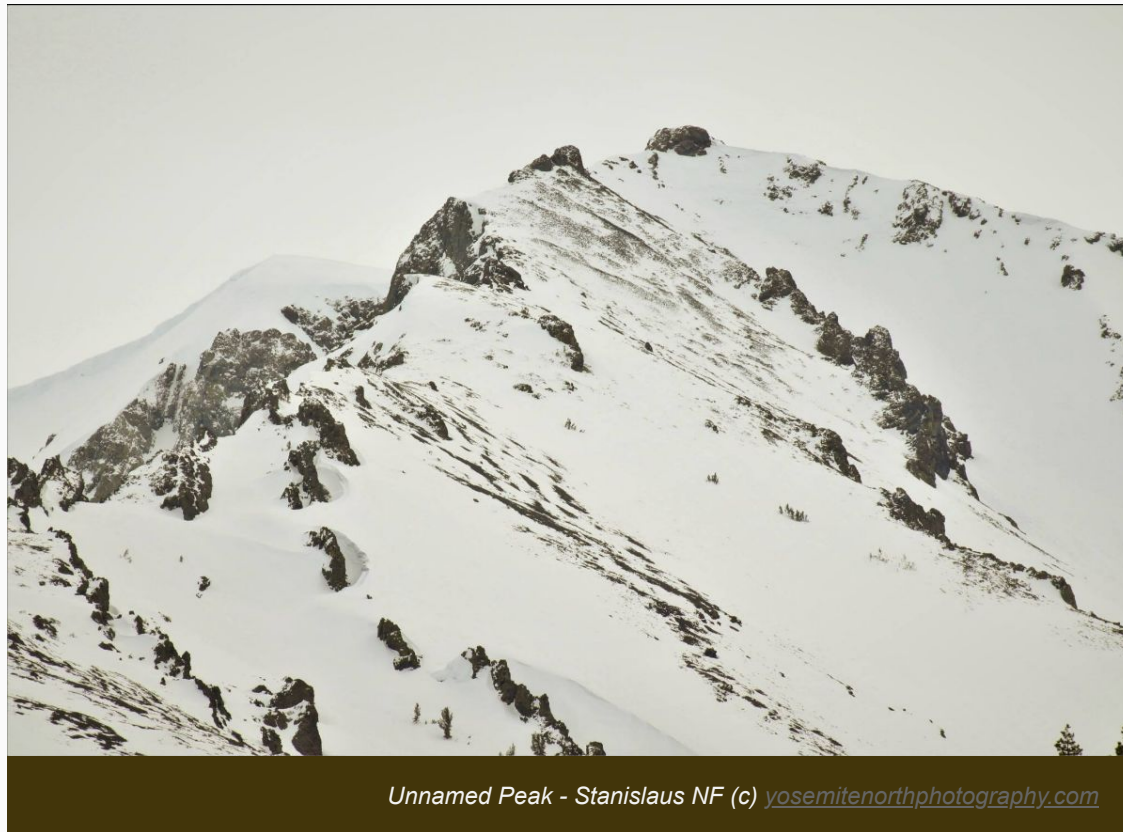
One day, I want to open a Chinese restaurant here and name it Fong Lee. I'll try to learn to cook, first. According to the local daily, Fong Lee was the most successful Chinese trader of those days of yore. They said he was a redhead, which seems improbable, and they called him Slobbermouth. Fong Lee is a better name for a restaurant than 10,000 Lost or Dead, but Slobbermouth may be the best name.

One person told me there's a Chinese lady in Oroville whose family has been here for a hundred years or something. When you have time, we can go to this weird temple and ferret out this hopefully very grumpy auntie who doesn't speak any Chinese and doesn't want us there or anywhere and is a little bit racist against everyone. That's how we will know we can all belong.

Thanks for having us, or, speaking for myself, thanks for having me.

Warm regards,

Ho-Ming So Denduangrudee lives in Truckee, California.



Unnamed Peak - Stanislaus NF (c) yosemitenorthphotography.com

Our Valley

By Philip Levine - 1928-2015

We don't see the ocean, not ever, but in July and August
when the worst heat seems to rise from the hard clay
of this valley, you could be walking through a fig orchard
when suddenly the wind cools and for a moment
you get a whiff of salt, and in that moment you can almost
believe something is waiting beyond the Pacheco Pass,

something massive, irrational, and so powerful even
the mountains that rise east of here have no word for it.
You probably think I'm nuts saying the mountains
have no word for ocean, but if you live here
you begin to believe they know everything.
They maintain that huge silence we think of as divine,
a silence that grows in autumn when snow falls
slowly between the pines and the wind dies
to less than a whisper and you can barely catch
your breath because you're thrilled and terrified.
You have to remember this isn't your land.
It belongs to no one, like the sea you once lived beside
and thought was yours. Remember the small boats
that bobbed out as the waves rode in, and the men
who carved a living from it only to find themselves
carved down to nothing. Now you say this is home,
so go ahead, worship the mountains as they dissolve in dust,
wait on the wind, catch a scent of salt, call it our life.

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Last week's poem, "His Eye on The Sparrow," BY AIREA D. MATTHEWS is from Orion Magazine, <https://orionmagazine.org/>, and may be found here: Orion Magazine: <https://www.orionmagazine.org/poetry/his-eye-on-the-sparrow/>



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