



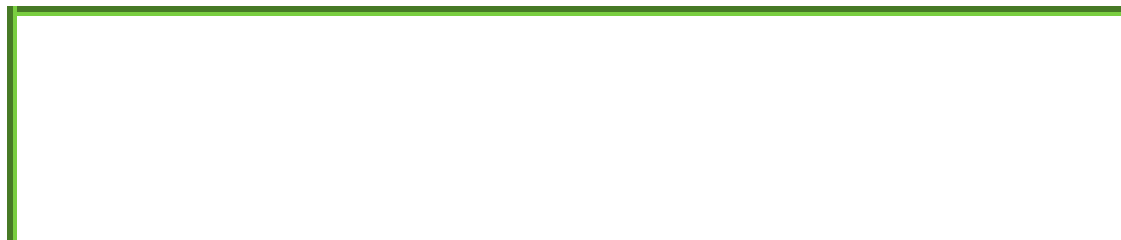
Protecting our rural environment by promoting citizen participation in sustainable land use planning since 2006

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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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
July 5, 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.

CPC Member Spotlight

Ralph Copeland

District 4 - Copperopolis



Ralph retired after 35 years in the waterworks industry as a pipeline material supplier and project manager. He supplied pipe, valves, and fittings for various SFPUC Hetch Hetchy projects including a 96" Crystal Springs pipeline expansion. He supplied the 108" sluice gate and associated piping at Woodward Reservoir. Ralph also supplied the water, fire, sewer, and storm piping material for the Town Square in Copperopolis.

He has been valuable in addressing water system issues, particularly in Copperopolis where Ralph lives. He has become our go-to person for most things Calaveras County Water District (CCWD) related. Ralph has been a phenomenal "watchdog," keeping up with all the CCWD meetings and project proposals. The comment letter CPC submitted regarding the Urban Water Management Plan was a collaborative effort, but Ralph's expertise and in-depth knowledge of the CCWD system informed many of the substantive aspects of the letter.

We cannot thank Ralph enough for his dedication and involvement with CCWD and the CPC!

BOS Regular Meeting Tuesday, July 13, 2021

[Agenda Upcoming](#)

Planning Commission Meeting July 8, 2021

[Agenda Upcoming](#)

Local News

Movie shot in Valley Springs featured in Sundance Film Fest

Giuseppe Ricapito / The Union Democrat / June 18, 2021

"First Date" will premiere at the Tower Theatre in Sacramento on July 2.

South Lake Tahoe resident Manuel Crosby said the movie he co-directed — a 2021 Sundance Film Festival selection that's set for theatrical release on July 2 — "felt like an alternate reality version of Valley Springs."

He would know: Crosby, 29, like co-director Darren Knapp, grew up in Valley Springs and used attributes of the Calaveras County town to guide his and Knapp's first first feature-length film, "First Date."

"It's Valley Springs, even though it's never named," Crosby said. "If you really know Valley Springs, it's not exactly geographically accurate, but we wanted it to feel that way."

Crosby described the film as, at its core, a movie about an "unlucky kid who has a problem that turns into much bigger problems."

A more typical synopsis is that the main character, Mike, is connected into buying a "shady '65 Chrysler" before his first date with the girl-next-door, Kelsey. Next, hijinks ensue in a "surreal misadventure": Mike is "targeted by criminals, cops and a crazy cat lady."

Viewers with a keen eye for Calaveras County will notice various familiar locales: Top Quality Insulation and Fireplaces on Main Street filmed from out front, the outside of the Valley Springs Market and Restaurant on California Street, a lumber mill in Calaveritas area, the Toyon Industrial Park and at Calaveras Public Access TV in San Andreas.

Other scenes were done inside homes in the Valley Springs area.

Crosby also described a shot at a scenic overlook that digitally-stitched a scene at a Burson property with a scene from near the elementary school and the locally-known Valley Springs cross.

But even though the film was shot in Valley Springs and inspired by the local childhoods of the co-directors, Crosby said it's "maybe even more universal than that at its core."

"It's about a kid that likes a girl and needs to find the courage to share his feelings with her and vice versa," he said. "I think that's something a lot of people can relate to."

Crosby grew up in Valley Springs and attended Jenny Lind Elementary School and Calaveras High School. He met Knapp during a summer break from University of Southern California Film School while they were both working at Calaveras Public Access TV in San Andreas.

Crosby was just 19 in 2011 when he and Knapp worked the Frog Jump and got to talking about cinema in the parking lot. They ended up speaking for hours. This led into working on short films and honing their skills on equipment while Crosby was on break from school. Eventually, the duo planned to make a feature film together.

The idea for the film came in March 2017, when Crosby was eating breakfast at Knapp's and going through car problems of his own.

"By the end of that breakfast, we had the basic outline for the entire story," Crosby said.

The script was finished just after New Year's Day in 2018. The first scene of the movie was filmed in July 2018 and slowly came together with actors, producers and funding. By mid-2019, the rough cut of the film was finished, Crosby said.

Editing lasted all the way through 2020 and before the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. They worked sound, music and color correction during the pandemic, which took "a little longer than expected," Crosby said.

The film was released on Jan. 31 at the 2021 Sundance Film Festival in the "NEXT" category, a grouping which "unites digital technology with the art of movie-making, with the promise of shaping a different future in the American cinema," the Sundance website said.

"It's definitely a rarity, it wasn't an expectation of us," Crosby said. "The real goal was to sell the movie to a distributor. When we got the message from Sundance that we got in, it was pretty unbelievable. It was never something that was planned for, but we were so grateful to be chosen."

The 2021 Sundance Film Festival was held in January and online due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Sundance also hosts a smaller festival in London, where the movie will be screened as well, Crosby said.

The film will premiere theatrically on July 2 at the Tower Theatre in Sacramento. It is currently unrated by the Motion Picture Association and runs 103 minutes.

Tyson Brown and Shelby Duclos play the leading roles as Mike and Kelsey, respectively.

Knapp, who was unavailable for interviews, lives in Valley Springs and has worked as an independent filmmaker for 22 years, with short film credits in cinematography, editing, writing, directing and producing.

Some of Knapp's collaborative projects include "Switches" (2002), the feature-length film "Living by The Gun" (2013) and, with Crosby, "Dead Man's Locket" (2017).

Crosby said he hoped the movie would act as an inspiration for filmmakers and other creatives in the town where he grew up.

"It feels great to represent Valley Springs. I hope it inspires other people like kids who are making movies, or whatever they're passionate about. You can achieve a lot if you put your mind to it and if you have a lot of help," he said. "In this, you see the value of having a community to help you achieve your goals and dreams."

Contact Giuseppe Ricapito at gricapito@uniondemocrat.net or (209) 588-4526.

Supervisors adopt budget, changes to cannabis ordinance, pay raises for elected officials

The Calaveras Enterprise / Noah Berner / Jun 24, 2021

The Calaveras County Board of Supervisors approved County Administrative Officer Christa Von Lotta’s recommended budget for fiscal year 2021-2022 at a meeting on Tuesday.

The recommended budget was discussed by the board during a public hearing on June 8, and characterized by Von Latta as “conservative” and “status quo.”

The budget maintains the 5.3% reduction in spending—budgeted as salary savings—for most general fund budget units enacted during the 2020-21 fiscal year.

“This is a general reduction, not intended to be a reduction in salaries and benefits, and this is the re-budget of the 5.3% cut that we were forced to make last year at this time in order to close the gap,” Von Latta said during the public hearing.

The budget includes salary savings of about \$2.2 million. Salary savings from the 2020-21 fiscal year are estimated at \$3 million.

For the 2020-21 fiscal year, budgeted general revenues were reduced substantially from the prior year due to expected impacts from COVID-19. Expected revenue from the Transient Occupancy Tax was reduced by 50%; sales tax and Proposition 172 revenues by 25%; and several other general revenues by 33%.

However, most general revenues did not suffer as a result of the pandemic, and adjustments were made for the 2021-22 budget.

Increases in budgeted revenue from the 2020-21 fiscal year to the 2021-22 fiscal year amount to about \$1.8 million for Measure C and G; \$1.4 million for sales and use taxes; \$700,000 for Proposition 172; and \$900,000 for Transient Occupancy Tax.

General reserves are set just above the board-approved policy level of at least 8%, and contingencies are right at the approved policy level of at least 2%.

Both budgeted revenues and budgeted expenditures increased from the 2020-21 fiscal year to the 2021-22 fiscal year. The largest increase in expenditures was due to increases in PERS

liability, natural salary progression and negotiated agreements.

A roughly \$9.4 million deficit was addressed with the use of one-time funds, including a Teeter transfer of about \$3.9 million.

“Year-over-year reliance on unexpected revenues or one-time monies, generally in the form of cash carry, is not sustainable or desirable,” Von Latta wrote in her budget message.

“Similar to last year, a Teeter transfer was budgeted to balance, which is an example of using one-time funds to balance the budget.”

Although a Teeter transfer of \$5.1 million was budgeted for the 2020-21 fiscal year, it is currently not expected to be needed to balance the budget due in part to revenue from the CARES Act.

“CARES Act funding was pivotal in our ability to get the budget over the finish line over this past fiscal year,” Von Latta said.

The projected general fund balance as of June 30 stands at \$7 million, up by \$4.8 million from a year earlier.

“The increase has primarily resulted from strong general revenues and CARES Act funding,” Von Latta’s budget message reads. “However, the county’s year-over-year structural deficit remains, and the majority of the increased projected fund balance has been absorbed into the CAO recommended budget.”

Von Latta said that it is unclear at this time how the county’s \$8.9 million in revenue from the American Rescue Plan Act will impact the budget.

“It remains to be seen whether we’ll be able to apply the American Rescue Plan funds to the general fund, so that is premature and we should not anticipate that to be the case at this point,” she said.

Von Latta advised the board to hold a study session in mid-August after year-end close of the fiscal year and before the adoption of the final budget in September.

The board voted 5-0 to approve the recommended budget.

Turning to the county’s cannabis program, the board adopted changes to the cannabis ordinance which provide a permitting process for four cannabis-related activities—limited distribution, general distribution, transport-only distribution and laboratory testing.

Local distribution and testing were previously barred, compelling local growers to rely on out-of-county businesses to provide these services.

The board directed staff to make modifications to the ordinance to allow for local distribution and testing at a meeting on Feb. 9. Proposed changes went before the planning commission first, which approved a draft of the ordinance in a 4-1 vote following three public hearings.

The limited distribution permit allows cultivation permittees to distribute only their own crops, while the general distribution permit allows businesses to service multiple cannabis cultivators and other state licensees. The total number of general distribution permits granted in the county will be limited to five at any one time.

“Allowing these activities in-county would remove inefficiencies in reaching market for local cannabis businesses,” the staff report included in the meeting packet reads. “The DCC anticipates that each of the above permit types would retain revenue locally and support the local economy. Each of the above activities would also generate general fund revenue in the form of Measure G tax.”

“The county is losing revenue to outside counties that would otherwise be kept in our county,” DCC Director Greg Wayland said at the meeting.

The transport-only distribution permit allows the transport of “multiple growers’ cannabis harvest to and from the cultivation site (or to and from an out-of-county manufacturing site), the lab, the (general) distribution facility, and the retailer,” while the general distribution permit allows “all of the above plus the additional storage, repackaging, labeling, arrangement for testing, quality control, and state taxation activities,” the staff report reads.

The ordinance allows limited distribution in zones A1 (general agriculture), AP (agriculture preserve), GF (general forest), U (unclassified), RA (residential agriculture) and CP (professional offices).

General distribution, transport-only distribution and laboratory testing are only allowed in zones M1 (light industrial), M2 (general industrial), and M4 (business park).

During the public comment period, Vicky Reinke, the president of Calaveras Residents Against Commercial Marijuana, voiced her opposition to the changes.

“This is the first time that you, the board of supervisors, have had an open discussion of the proposed ordinance,” she said. “This is a huge change to the 17.95 ordinance and should require more public review before any approval.”

Local grower Jennifer Smith said that she felt the changes are a step in a positive direction for the industry.

“We are one of the only counties that has cultivation and no way to distribute our product,” she said.

After making several revisions, the board adopted the modified ordinance in a 4-1 vote, with District 1 Supervisor Gary Tofanelli voting in opposition.

The board also adopted pay raises for four elected officials—the assessor, auditor-controller, clerk-recorder and treasurer-tax collector. The pay of all four positions was raised from \$54.87 an hour to \$68.15 an hour, an increase of about 24%.

“This is a conversation that the county has been having for several years regarding their salaries being so low and so compacted with their employees, as they are getting increases due to union increases,” Human Resources and Risk Management Director Judy Hawkins

said. "With the upcoming elections there are some big impacts if we do not make these changes."

Because the salaries for members of the board are set by local ordinance at 50% of the average salaries of the assessor, auditor-controller, clerk-recorder, treasurer-tax collector and sheriff, the salaries of the board members were raised as well.

The pay of the board chair was raised from \$36.58 an hour to \$41.89 an hour, while the pay of other members was raised from \$29.12 an hour to \$34.44 an hour.

The board voted 4-1 to approve the salary changes, with Board Chair Ben Stopper voting in opposition.

The raises go into effect 30 days after adoption, and the cost of the salary changes is about \$186,000 for the 2021-22 fiscal year.

In other business, the board authorized the board chair to sign a letter agreeing to enter into negotiations with Calaveras Unified School District (CUSD) on acquiring the former Rail Road Flat Elementary School.

The CUSD Board voted to close the school in 2020 due to low enrollment, and approved the sale of the property on May 18.

At a meeting on April 27, the parks and recreation commission brought forward a set of recommendations to the board of supervisors on projects to be funded with Proposition 68 Per Capita Grant funds, and the potential purchase of the property for use as a community recreation center was among the approved projects.

The board approved sending the letter in a 5-0 vote.

Transportation Commission allocates \$22 million for construction of the State Route 4 Wagon Trail Realignment project

The Calaveras Enterprise / June 24, 2021

The following press release was issued by the Calaveras County Administrative Office.

Calaveras County, in partnership with Caltrans and the Calaveras Council of Governments (CCOG), secured funding to construct a critical portion of the State Route 4 (SR 4) Wagon Trail Realignment project. On Wednesday, June 23, 2021, the California Transportation Commission (CTC) took the official action to allocate a total of \$22 million from various state

transportation programs needed for the County to move forward with construction of the Western Segment of the SR 4 Wagon Trail Project.

The SR 4 Wagon Trail project has been the region's highest priority for the past ten years. The Western Segment of the project consists of realigning approximately 3.2 miles between Bonanza Way and Appaloosa Road. Construction is anticipated to start in January 2022 and be complete by late 2023.

The County and CCOG are now working towards funding the remaining Eastern Segment of the SR 4 Wagon Trail project from the Cherokee Creek Bridge to Stockton Road near Angels Camp. With that goal in mind, the County and CCOG have collaborated with Caltrans to replace the bridge on SR 4 at Cherokee Creek just east of Appaloosa Road. The Caltrans Cherokee Creek bridge replacement project is approximately \$10 million and anticipated to start construction in 2023. Once completed, the entire Wagon Trail Realignment project will realign and reconstruct approximately 6.5 miles of SR 4 between Copperopolis and Angels Camp.

More information on the project can be found on the Caltrans website or at the following link: <https://calacog.org/project/wagon-trail-project/>.

It is time to try something new when it comes to implementing plans in Calaveras County

The Calaveras Enterprise / June 24, 2021

Editor

It is time to try something new when it comes to implementing plans in Calaveras County.

Calaveras County is preparing a plan to reduce greenhouse gas emissions countywide. This plan is being prepared through the Council of Governments with the help of the Sierra Business Council.

As we know from the debates of this issue during the General Plan update, some people here are going to think that this plan is a good idea, and some people are going to think that this plan is a bad idea. Some people are going to be in a hurry to implement the plan, and others will not. In the past, this infighting has led to standoffs and implementation failures. Some old timers may remember the long-promised-but-never-adopted Copperopolis Community Plan, the dark night sky ordinance, and the oak woodland ordinance. The 2019 General Plan is filled with over 100 such neglected implementation measures with no priority and no deadline for completion.

It is time that we put plan implementation in the hands of the willing, and leave those unwilling alone. The new greenhouse gas reduction plan should help interested people to directly secure the information, the local contractors, and the state funding needed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and to improve carbon sequestration at their homes, their businesses, their churches and their local organizations. Rather than dragging our feet while fighting over regulations that never see the light of day, let's get something done for a change.

If you are interested in reducing greenhouse gas emissions and improving carbon sequestration right now, you can learn how and maybe even get some funding at caclimateinvestments.ca.gov/funding-for-individuals.

For more ideas to fight climate change go to the CAP/CPC webpage on climate action at calaverascap.com.

Megan Fiske,

Outreach Coordinator

CAP/CPC

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Regional News

'Forever War' With Fire Has California Battling Forests Instead

Bloomberg / Brian K Sullivan and Mark Chediak / June 19, 2021

(Bloomberg) -- Acre by acre, tree by tree, branch by gnarly branch, a handful of 12-person crews, armed with little more than chainsaws and axes, is attempting to thin out the California forest.

It is a Sisyphean task. The state is home to some 33 million acres of woodland. An efficient crew, working with hand tools under ideal conditions, can get through a quarter of an acre a day, give or take.

And yet, after a succession of horrific, record-setting wildfire seasons, this is where the state now finds itself: So desperate to stem the tide and contain the losses -- of both lives and property -- that it's plunking down more than \$500 million this fiscal year alone for an effort

that includes clearing pines, firs and redwoods. Without all this fuel on the forest floor, California officials contend, blazes will be less likely to turn into the mega-fires that devour thousands of acres. Dousing them once they erupt can't be the lone strategy in a state already scarred by global warming, they say.

The question is whether this new push can be done at a pace and scale that'll actually make a difference. In a best-case scenario, Governor Gavin Newsom hopes state and federal crews will be thinning out one million acres annually by 2025. He's asking the state legislature to give him \$2 billion to accelerate efforts in the fiscal year starting July 1. But even if his goal is achieved, it'd still leave millions of acres, and the communities that surround them, vulnerable for decades. And with temperatures soaring and drought conditions worsening across the state, it's only a matter of time, scientists say, before the first of the big blazes of 2021 break out.

Global Power Grids Pushed to Limit by Hot Weather, Rising Demand

California's plan to thin woodland is the latest sign of the increasingly extreme steps that governments around the globe are taking to cope with the ravages of climate change. While it's a costly one, the state's effort is necessary to break the cycle of devastating blazes, according to Michael Wara, director of the Climate and Energy Policy Program at Stanford University. Simply fighting fires as they start is "a forever war," he said. "You don't win those. The solution is to change your strategy and really rethink what you are doing."

It's an approach not dissimilar to the one then-President Donald Trump proposed in 2018, when he said California should follow Finland's lead and spend more time "raking" the forest floor to prevent blazes -- a suggestion that promptly became fodder for memes and late-night television jokes. What Trump didn't mention is that the U.S. government owns about 58% of the state's land. As part of the new plan, state and federal government are joining forces. The California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, known as Cal Fire, is supplementing its own crews with outside organizations like the National Guard and the California Conservation Corps, a state department that puts young adults to work on environmental projects.

The push to thin California's forests is a race against time. Climate change has left the U.S. West hotter and drier, creating prime conditions for blazes. Last year, wildfires in California killed 33 people and charred a record 4.3 million acres, an area larger than Connecticut. Heading into peak fire season in the summer and fall, the entire state of California is gripped by drought conditions. Fire season in the West is running about a month ahead of schedule, with conditions normally seen in July emerging now because of the drought, according to U.S. government forecasters. Blazes will likely be more severe across the region this year, said Gina Palma, a fire meteorologist with the Department of Agriculture.

Drought Is the U.S. West's Next Big Climate Disaster

After years of mismanagement, many California forest lands are overcrowded stands of thirsty trees susceptible to insect infestation and disease. Suburban sprawl is reaching further into wooded areas in the most populous U.S. state, increasing the risk of wildfire fatalities. Last year, wildfires across California and the West cost the U.S. \$16.5 billion, according to the U.S. National Centers for Environmental Information.

The task of forest-clearing is a perilous one, said Alex Makela, one of a dozen-member crew from the Conservation Corps. On a typical day, Makela and his fellow workers hike into a tangled thicket of branches, lugging everything they need -- chainsaws, gasoline, food, rain

gear and a medical kit -- on their backs while they wipe sweaty brows and swat at mosquitoes. Crew members must be vigilant to stay out of the path of falling trees. In some areas, with debris piled as high as four feet deep, wood chippers and controlled burns are required. "Lack of awareness is most dangerous," said Makela, who slipped and cracked a rib a few weeks back. Because the goal of clearing 1 million acres is part of a joint project between California and the U.S. government, the state will only have to target 500,000 acres per year, said Christine McMorrow, a Cal Fire spokeswoman. Clearing done by private landowners, community groups and timber harvests may be counted toward that target, she said. The forest-management approach won't supplant the long-term strategy of attacking every fire over 10 acres in size.

Daunting Process

While not all of California's 101 million acres are wildlands, state fire officials admit that meeting the million-acre-per-year goal will be a daunting, never-ending process.

"As soon as you cut it down, it starts to regrow," said Steve Hawks, manager of the wildfire planning and engineering division at Cal Fire, which has firefighting responsibility for 31 million acres. "It is going to be a constant thing."

Still, it's a good investment, according to Robert Bailey, director of climate resilience at risk management and consulting firm Marsh McLennan. Governments fall into a "firefighting trap," spending their money each year on putting out fires and leaving little for clearing deadwood and debris, Bailey said.

"You get caught in this spiral of increasing costs and increasing fires," he said. "The governments have to break out of this spiral by doing more preventative measures." Views on forest management have shifted over time. In the U.S., forests were seen as a source of cheap building materials during the housing boom following World War II, then as a source of recreation in the decades that followed, leading to a strategy of aggressive firefighting. Some environmental groups support forest clearing in certain areas, while others have expressed opposition. The Natural Conservancy in California "has been and is very much involved in increasing efforts to reduce the risk of megafires through ecological thinning and controlled burns, particularly in the fire-adapted forests of the Sierra Nevada" mountain range along the state's eastern edge, according to spokesman Juvenio Guerra. But Bryant Baker, conservation director for Los Padres ForestWatch, said controlled burns in Southern California's national forests threaten native plant areas. "There are issues with just assuming this is some sort silver bullet in changing overall fires in the state," Baker said. "Prescribed fire is not going to be the thing that stops very large wind-driven fires that are occurring."

A century-long ban on burning by Native American groups, some of which had a tradition of thinning forest, has made woodlands even more susceptible to uncontrolled fires, Amy Cordalis, general counsel for California's Yurok Tribe, said last month at a hearing before Congress.

"We are facing an extremely elevated forest fire risk due to the drought and to the 100-year-long ban on cultural burning, which has lead to a massive buildup of exceedingly

flammable fuels,” Cordalis said. Other indigenous groups, however, have opposed government proposals to thin California forest land.

Lives Upended

The human toll of wildfires has been vast, with the blazes killing more than 100 people in California over the past five years and upending the lives of millions more. Residents of the state have endured blackouts as utilities periodically cut power in an attempt to prevent their equipment from sparking flames. In 2019, San Francisco utility giant PG&E Corp. was pushed into bankruptcy after it was found responsible for several large fires. Wildfires have also decimated air quality, spreading acrid, choking smoke throughout the state. The fires are only getting worse. Five of the state’s largest-ever blazes seared California last year, and 10 of the most expensive have happened since 2003, according to Cal Fire. The price tag for fire suppression surpassed \$100 million for the first time in the 1990s. In the 2020 to 2021 season, costs are estimated to have topped \$1 billion for the first time, according to Cal Fire.

Though it’s started off slowly so far, this fire season is expected to be an active one in the West, according to the National Interagency Fire Center. More than 88% of an area that includes 11 western states is under drought conditions, according to the U.S. Drought Monitor.

“The trend is pretty clear -- the wildfire problem is not what it was 15 years ago,” said Lou Gritz, vice president and manager of research at commercial insurer FM Global. “The fires are getting bigger.”

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Did you know ... California is the most biodiverse state in the US?

- California is a biodiversity hot spot because of its unique geography, climate, geologic history and size.
- California’s network of terrestrial protected lands covers 46% of the state.
- More than 30% of California’s species are threatened with extinction.
- California biodiversity supports ecosystem services that benefit people and the economy, including carbon sequestration, timber production, crop pollination, soil fertility, tourism and recreation.

- The value of the benefits generated by rich ecosystems and species diminishes as biodiversity is lost.
- Ecosystems with higher biodiversity are more stable and resilient to stressors and climate change.

From <https://wildlife.ca.gov/Biodiversity>



Great Egret (c) yosemitenorthphotography.com

California Water Use Threatens Biodiversity in the Long Term

Some ecosystems get a short-term boost but not long-term sustainability.

Treehugger / Olivia Rosane / June 25, 2021

The state of California contains more biodiversity than the rest of the U.S. and Canada put together, but that biodiversity has long been put at risk by human water use.

The diversion of water from the San Francisco Bay Delta, for example, is one of the forces famously driving the delta smelt to extinction. Now, a new study published in Proceedings of

the National Academy of Sciences this month shows another counterintuitive way in which human water use in California is putting its unique riverside woodlands at risk.

By diverting water in ways it would not otherwise flow, human management is providing some stream-side, or riparian, ecosystems with excess water that gives them a short-term boost, but undermines their long-term sustainability.

“Across California, many river ecosystems are effectively being irrigated by water management decisions,” lead study author Melissa Rohde, who is a Ph.D. candidate at the State University of New York College of Environmental Science and Forestry (CUNY-ESF) and a scientist with the Nature Conservancy of California, explains to Treehugger in an email. “This is resulting in a ‘live fast, die young’ phenomenon.”

Live Fast, Die Young

So what exactly does this mean?

Native species in California have adapted to a Mediterranean climate that alternates between a rainy season in the winter and spring and a dry season in the summer, an [ESF press release explained](#). Typically, riverside trees like willows, cottonwoods, and oaks would rely on groundwater during the dry months.

However, Rohde and her team looked at five years of data showing groundwater, streamflow, and satellite imagery of vegetation greenness from 2015 to 2020. This led to a surprising discovery. Many of the tree strands in the drier parts of the state, where natural water flow had been most altered by humans, stayed greener for longer and were less dependent on groundwater, as a [Cardiff University press release explained](#). This meant the human re-routing of water, whether redirected rivers, irrigation canals, or wastewater discharge, was giving these ecosystems an artificial boost.

“The riparian forests are not being harmed by the extra water,” study co-author Dr. Michael Singer, from Cardiff University’s School of Earth and Environmental Sciences, tells Treehugger in an email. “Quite the opposite. They are thriving.”

At least for now. The threat, Rohde explains, is to the longer-term survival and regeneration of these ecosystems. The artificial water boost puts that at risk for several key reasons.

1. Too Much Stability: The consistency of human-directed waterways disrupts the natural process by which trees use floodplains to release and disperse their seeds. This means the watered tree strands thrive momentarily but do not generate new saplings.
2. Too Much Competition: The traditional dry periods in the summer helped native trees outcompete invasive species, which are equally boosted by the extra water.
3. Too Much Growth: The fast growth fueled by the extra water actually means the trees grow in less dense forests, making them more vulnerable to drought, disease, and death.

“The issue is that riparian ecosystems have a lot of value ecologically and to society, and this may soon be lost for many miles along rivers and streams in California because these forests will not be replaced when they die,” Singer explains.

Why Does This Matter?

This “live fast, die young” phenomenon is occurring in a larger context of biodiversity loss and climate change and has the potential to make both problems worse.

Most of the impacted woodlands noted by the study are in the agricultural hub of California’s Central Valley, according to both press releases. This region lost 95% of its floodplain woodlands in the influx of human settlement beginning with the Gold Rush of the 1850s. That makes the few woodlands that do survive important havens for endangered and threatened species like salmon, steelhead, riparian brush rabbit, least bells vireo, and willow flycatcher, Rohde tells Treehugger. If the woodlands can not replenish themselves, the species they host are at greater risk.

Further, the phenomenon has the potential to interact with California’s intertwined struggle with drought, wildfires, and climate change.

“Climate change could accentuate the issue because increasingly common water shortages would support additional diversion of water for human consumption and agriculture,” Singer says. “This may create conditions for 'live faster, die younger' in these fragile ecosystems.”

Further, if the woodlands do not replenish themselves, this could worsen the climate crisis by depriving the state of one crucial means of carbon storage.

“[O]nly live trees can sequester carbon from the atmosphere,” Singer adds, “So untimely death of these trees will be unfavorable for the carbon budget.”

Finally, the situation could increase wildfire risk. Fires tend to travel quickly upstream, Singer explains, so if these trees die and are not replaced, they could ease that momentum. Further, Rohde notes, one of the non-native species that also thrives on the excess water—arundo—burns hotter than native plants. This risk would increase if the depletion of groundwater due to drought kills off trees like willows and cottonwoods, but leaves the weeds to thrive.

Groundwater Dependent Ecosystems

For Rohde, protecting these unique riverside woodlands goes hand in hand with sustainably managing California’s groundwater. The riparian woodlands are an example of a groundwater-dependent ecosystem (GDE).

“These ecosystems rely on groundwater in California’s semi-arid climate, especially during dry summers and periods of drought,” Nature-Conservancy-led partnership the Groundwater

[Resource Hub explained](#). “GDEs provide important benefits to California including habitat for animals, water supply, water purification, flood mitigation, erosion control, recreational opportunities and general enjoyment of California’s natural landscape.”

To this end, Rohde and her Nature Conservancy colleagues rely on the [Sustainable Groundwater Management Act](#). This act, which was passed by the California legislature in 2014, empowers groundwater sustainability agencies to make decisions about groundwater use in their area based on economic, social, and environmental concerns. As part of this work, they are supposed to investigate all GDEs in their area and make decisions consistent with their protection.

Beyond California, Rohde and Singer’s research is part of a broader, [\\$2.5 million collaboration](#) between SUNY ESF, the University of Cardiff and the University of California, Santa Barbara to understand the signs of water stress on arid riverside ecosystems in both France and the U.S. Southwest in the context of climate change and increased human water demand.

“We hope to develop a set of what we call 'water stress indicators (WSIs)', developed by multiple methods,” Singer explains. “These WSIs may provide land and water managers with [a] window into critical states in riparian ecosystems, even providing early warnings of ecosystem collapse.”

California approves clean energy proposal to help respond to extreme weather

Reuters / Scott DiSavino, David Gregorio / June 24, 2021

California regulators approved on Thursday a proposal that will require utilities to buy more clean power, a measure backed by environmental groups.

Under the proposal, utilities will have to buy at least 11,500 megawatts (MW) of capacity from zero-emitting or renewable resources between 2023 and 2026, which is enough to power about 2.5 million homes.

The order will allow the state to respond better to extreme weather events and replace capacity expected to be lost from the retirement of the Diablo Canyon nuclear plant in 2024-2025 and several natural gas plants in the middle of the decade.

This is the largest capacity procurement ordered at a single time by the California Public Utilities Commission (PUC) and the largest requiring only clean resources.

The latest proposal replaced earlier drafts that were opposed by environmental groups because they called for utilities to buy up to 1,500 MW of capacity from fossil-fired generation. Natural gas is the primary

fossil fuel used in California's power market.

Climate change is causing an extreme drought, record wildfires and heatwaves across the U.S. West, and has also destabilized California's electric grid along with the addition of intermittent, renewable wind and solar power in recent years.

Last summer, utilities in the Golden State imposed rotating blackouts that left over 400,000 homes and businesses without power for up to 2-1/2 hours when energy supplies ran short during a couple hot days in August.

That was just a sliver of California's nearly 40 million people, but could happen again this summer as utilities increasingly rely on renewable sources of energy as the state seeks to phase out power from carbon-emitting fuels by 2045.

Last week, the California ISO, which operates the power grid for much of the state, urged consumers to conserve energy to avoid rotating outages during a heatwave. [read more](#)

**How many more candles, slippers,
potted plants, or power drills do you
need?**



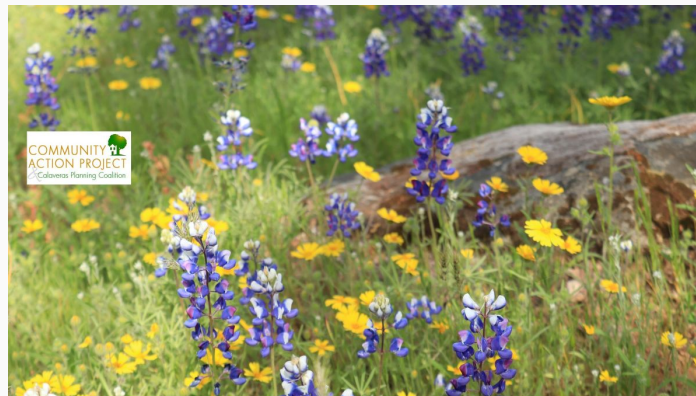
When your next birthday rolls around, ask your friends and family to make a

donation in your name to the Community Action Project/Calaveras Planning Coalition instead of giving you a toaster or a set of socket wrenches. Celebrate your birthday and a great cause at the same time. It's easy. Here are some tips.

1. Tell people about CAP/CPC and why our mission is important to you. Tell your story. That's what they want to hear.
2. Spread the word with Facebook, Twitter, or whatever platform you prefer. Reach out with personal emails, notes, texts, or let your birthday wishes be known in person.
3. Make your birthday the deadline for gift giving.
4. Ask everyone to be generous, but let them know that no gift is too small and all gifts will be greatly appreciated. You may also ask for a specific amount, \$5, \$10, \$25, \$50, \$100 or whatever is appropriate. You know your audience.
5. Please direct your birthday well-wishers to www.calaverascap.com. Ask them to click on "donate" or mail their birthday donation to CAP/CPC, PO Box 935, San Andreas, CA 95249.
6. Ask your birthday buddies to let CAP/CPC know they are donating in your honor.
7. Another option is to just ask guests to bring your gift to the big birthday bash you can't wait to have now that you've been vaccinated against Covid-19.

CAP/CPC will feature the most compelling stories in the ReCAP and on our website.
And many happy returns of the day!

Sierra Nevada
Conservancy
Funding
Opportunities
Newsletter for
June/July



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.



Moody river canyon (c) yosemiteearthphotography.com

THE SIMPLE TRUTH

By Philip Levine

I bought a dollar and a half's worth of small red potatoes,
took them home, boiled them in their jackets
and ate them for dinner with a little butter and salt.
Then I walked through the dried fields
on the edge of town. In middle June the light
hung on in the dark furrows at my feet,
and in the mountain oaks overhead the birds

were gathering for the night, the jays and mockers
squawking back and forth, the finches still darting
into the dusty light. The woman who sold me

the potatoes was from Poland; she was someone
out of my childhood in a pink spangled sweater and sunglasses
praising the perfection of all her fruits and vegetables
at the road-side stand and urging me to taste
even the pale, raw sweet corn trucked all the way,
she swore, from New Jersey. "Eat, eat" she said,
"Even if you don't I'll say you did."

Some things
you know all your life. They are so simple and true
they must be said without elegance, meter and rhyme,

they must be laid on the table beside the salt shaker,
the glass of water, the absence of light gathering
in the shadows of picture frames, they must be
naked and alone, they must stand for themselves.
My friend Henri and I arrived at this together in 1965
before I went away, before he began to kill himself,
and the two of us to betray our love. Can you taste
what I'm saying? It is onions or potatoes, a pinch
of simple salt, the wealth of melting butter, it is obvious,
it stays in the back of your throat like a truth
you never uttered because the time was always wrong,
it stays there for the rest of your life, unspoken,
made of that dirt we call earth, the metal we call salt,
in a form we have no words for, and you live on it.

Philip Levine's book, *The Simple Truth* (1994), was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for Poetry.
The Simple Truth Poem by Philip Levine - Poem Hunter



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