

Weekly ReCAP April 29, 2021



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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Fire season is here, 6 weeks early!
Please be careful out there!

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**

May 3, 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.

Board of Supervisors Meeting
May 11, 2021 - [Agenda Upcoming](#)
Planning Commission Meeting
May 13, 2021 [Agenda](#)

Donate Now

[Calaveras County spent 13 years updating its General Plan](#)

By Megan Fiske / Calaveras Enterprise / April 22, 2021

Editor

Calaveras County spent 13 years updating its General Plan. The update was supposed to take just two years. Not surprisingly, the tortured and wearisome result is mostly empty promises. The Calaveras County General Plan adopted by the board of supervisors in November 2019 is hardly a plan at all.

A county's General Plan is intended to help communities be prepared for wildfires; ensure we have adequate evacuation routes and enough firefighters; keep manufacturing plants and their pollution away from low-income housing developments and schools; make sure new subdivisions will have water, sewer and adequate emergency services; improve emergency response

times; and more. A General Plan should serve the citizens by sustaining our environment, both natural and built.

A plan that addresses the aforementioned issues promptly and thoroughly should be obvious, don't you think? Unfortunately, for years county officials actively ignored requests from the public to address these issues and ultimately adopted a General Plan that defers their resolution indefinitely. How will I get out of my neighborhood during a fire? We'll figure it out later. Will there be enough firefighters when the next Butte fire happens? We'll find out while the fire burns.

Even after witnessing the devastation of the Butte fire, the county still won't prioritize identification of evacuation routes or funding more firefighters or hiring more law enforcement or improving emergency response times. What kind of plan says, "We'll deal with it later," to over 120 critical issues?

When it comes to something like evacuation routes, which could mean life or death, we deserve more than a plan to make a plan. Not only does the General Plan fail to address these issues, it does not even make a commitment as to when it will address these issues. It could be tomorrow or 20 years from now.

There are unique challenges and unique rewards to living in Calaveras County. We deserve a plan that protects us, our families and our ways of life. We deserve a plan that says something of substance, a plan that does more than kick the can of worms down the road.

Megan Fiske,
Outreach Coordinator

From dust bowl to California drought: a climate scientist on the lessons we still haven't learned

Maanvi Singh in San Francisco / The Guardian / Thu, April 29, 2021

California is once again in a drought, just four years after the last dry spell decimated ecosystems, fueled megafires and left many rural communities without well water.

Droughts are a natural part of the landscape in the American west, and the region has in many ways been shaped by its history of drought. But the climate scientist Peter Gleick argues that the droughts California is facing now are different than the ones that have historically cycled through the Golden State.

"These are not accidental, strange dry periods," said Gleick, the co-founder of the Pacific Institute, a global thinktank that has become a leading voice on water issues in California and around the world. "They're increasingly the norm."

Gleick this week spoke with the Guardian about the history of drought in the west, and the urgency of reshaping our relationship to water. The interview has been edited for length and clarity.

The California governor has declared a drought emergency in two counties, a few years after the state faced its last major drought from 2011-2017. Are more frequent dry periods part of a new normal?

The last drought was a wake up call to the effects of climate change. For the first time, the public began to make the connection that humans were impacting the climate and the water cycle – affecting the intensity and severity of our droughts.

Since that drought, we have learned some lessons about improving water efficiency, and reducing waste. We had serious conversations about things like getting rid of grass lawns for example. But we still haven't learned the fundamental message: that these are not accidental, strange dry periods. They're increasingly the norm.

We better start to assume that the sooner we put in place policies to save water, the better off we are. We don't seem to have learned that there still is enormous untapped potential for conservation and efficiency despite our past improvements.

If the last drought helped people wake up to a worsening climate crisis, how did other defining droughts reshape our understanding of water in the region?

There were the dust bowl years of the 1930s, when thousands and thousands of people were dislocated from their homes in the western US because of severe drought that decimated agriculture and triggered deadly dust storms.

After drought in the 50s, we started building big water infrastructure like dams and aqueducts in California, in part because we knew that populations were growing in the coastal areas very rapidly and that we had to expand access to water supply. That infrastructure brought enormous benefits, but it came

with massive costs that we didn't appreciate at the time. In particular, it really started to disrupt our ecology.

Following the dust bowl, probably the worst drought we experienced in California was the 1976-1977 drought, which is considered the state's worst two-year drought on record. That drought really, really showed us, OK, we're vulnerable to extreme dry weather, despite having built these dams and the aqueducts to help store, conserve and distribute water. It showed us that massive population and economic growth has put new pressures on our water resources. I'd say that was our first real wake up call.

Of course, climate change wasn't a contributor to the dust bowl in the 1930s. But it seems there are some major lessons we could learn from that period about how badly designed policies can really intensify natural disaster. Back then, it was farmers' decision to plow up millions of acres of native grassland, and plant water-intensive crops that caused the soil to erode and stirred up the deadly, devastating dust storms that we associate with that drought.

The way we've decided to use water in the west has a long, complicated history. Going back to the dust bowl era, until now – at least on paper – agriculture and other industries have far greater rights than anyone else. And that has put an enormous stress on our system, economically.

Sure, during the dust bowl, settlers didn't really understand some crucial things about soil management that we now understand. And we have learned how to make more food with less water. But we never had a rethink of our system of water rights, and how

much of our limited water we should be spending on agriculture versus leaving in the natural ecosystem.

Those were lessons we should have learned during the dust bowl, and, frankly we are still having to learn.

Going back to the dust bowl era, until now – at least on paper – agriculture and other industries have far greater rights than anyone else

During the last drought, we saw the death of about 163m trees, and that dead vegetation helped fuel some of the worst fires in the state's history. Even though research has found that conditions during the last drought were actually worse than the dust bowl – a lot of people in the west who lived through it wouldn't describe it as being so bad.

Good infrastructure has insulated a lot of Californians from really feeling the impacts of drought. In the US, most of us don't directly experience the consequences of drought the way people in other parts of the world do.

How do you measure 100m dead trees and the risk to forest fires that could be attributed to that drought? How do you measure the death of 95% of the Chinook salmon? How do you measure the impact on poor communities who were left without water? We don't put dollar values on these things, and so we don't directly see or feel the impact.

I don't want to minimize the impact of the last drought on particular farmers. But the systems that we've built mean that even if some fields have to fallow, we can still keep growing

during drought years. Even during a severe drought I can turn the water on my tap and, you know, incredibly cheap, pure water comes out.

But that's not the case for many disadvantaged communities in the Central Valley, who couldn't turn on the tap and get water. They're the ones suffering most directly from the impacts of extreme drought, but they're largely invisible to many other Californians. And that's not the case for our ecosystems and fisheries and forests, which are dying out.

Conservation in California

Your voice is needed!

Let the great state of California know what Conservation means to you! In support of the 30x30 initiative to save 30% of our lands and waters by 2030, the state is seeking input from stakeholders about what **we** want conservation to look like in California.

[All you have to do is take the short 15 question survey found here!](#)

This process has incredible potential for protecting precious lands in California. How would YOU conserve 30% of California's lands by 2030?

Effective Strategies so far include:

Conservation Plans

Laws & Regulations

Challenges include:

Competing Land Uses

Resource Limitations

Success Looks Like:

Protecting Biodiversity

Resilience to Climate Change

Supporting rural economies

Reducing risks to people and places

Prioritizing Grassland, Forests and Shrubland

Challenges to Climate Smart in CA:

Croplands (inefficient water use high consumption)

Forests and Shrublands (burning)

Policy, Public investments, private investments

[You can view the action alert here for more details, including CAP's priorities for conservation through the 30x30 initiative.](#)



Wildflowers along Camp 9 Road Photo by Megan Fiske (c) yosemitenorthphotography.com

Board modifies pot rules to satisfy citizen group's lawsuit

The Valley Springs News / April 28, 2021

Calaveras County's ordinance governing commercial marijuana cultivation was "reluctantly" modified April 13 by the Board of Supervisors.

The modifications were prompted by a settlement of litigation against the county brought by Calaveras Residents Against Commercial Marijuana.

District 3 Supervisor Merita Callaway said she was “reluctantly” making the motion to approve the changes. The motion was seconded by District1 Supervisor Gary Tofanelli and passed on a unanimous vote of the board.

The ordinance revisions limit environmental harm from marijuana operations by establishing a “sunset” date for future grow permit applications and requiring additional testing of wells to ensure adequate groundwater supplies. The settlement also requires the county to create an independent working group to address residents’ ongoing concerns about the impacts of commercial growing and expressly acknowledges the county’s commitment to proper implementation and enforcement of the ordinance.

“This settlement gives residents a clear voice in dealing with odors, groundwater depletion, pesticides, and safety concerns related to widespread marijuana growing,” said Susan Morse, one of citizen group’s co-founders. “Our lawsuit put a spotlight on the many negative effects of marijuana cultivation, and we think it was critical in keeping the county honest. But after months of negotiations, we think it’s time for the community to come together and find a path forward.”

“We just want the county to follow the law, keep our air and water clean, and protect our residents’ health and safety,” said Vickie Reinke, the group’s president. “It’s time for our Board of Supervisors to start working on behalf of the whole community. We believe this settlement is a good first step in that direction.”

The citizen group’s represent a large and broad group of concerned community members, many of whom are directly affected by the adverse environmental effects of marijuana

growing. When the county first proposed an ordinance allowing commercial growing in 2019, the group submitted extensive comments challenging the county's failure to address impacts on the community and the environment from pesticides, water usage, odors, armed guards, and other side effects of widespread cultivation.

The settlement ends the litigation, but it also maps out a path forward for the county. The group believes Calaveras residents must be able to have discussion about the impacts of commercial cultivation on neighbors, scarce water supplies, and the environment.

The settlement establishes an independent resident/county working group that will provide a forum to work through these issues and make recommendations to the county about regulation and enforcement. The ordinance amendments adopted by the board also establish a sunset date for new permit applications, require additional water well testing, and require public disclosure of ground-water well reports and pesticide management plans.

District 2 Supervisor Jack Garamendi voiced his displeasure with the testing provisions at the April 13 meeting.

"I understand why we're doing this," he said. "I have to admit that adding the seventh year for the well test is a bit capricious and I just don't think it's necessary. I think we're just adding more regulation to business just because. So if there was any interest in changing what's before us I'd drop that, but if there is no interest this isn't the hill I'm going to die on."

District 4 Supervisor Amanda Folendorf said she agreed with Garamendi's comments.

Changes to the ordinance passed without any comments.

Changes to the ordinance passed without any comments from the public at the April 13 hearing.

Finally, the settlement clearly states the county is committed to proper implementation and enforcement of the cultivation ordinance.

While the settlement brings this lawsuit to an end, leaders of the citizen's group said they will remain a strong voice for community members affected by commercial cultivation activities and continue to watch over the county's strict enforcement of the ordinance.

Calaveras Residents Against Commercial Marijuana is a non-profit, public benefit organization dedicated to furthering the public good and general welfare of the residents of Calaveras County through education and advocacy to protect residents against pollution and the adverse effects of marijuana cultivation. The group was represented in the litigation and settlement proceedings by Shute, Mihaly & Weinberger LLP.

Did you know ...
Grasslands may be more reliable than forests as carbon sinks?

"When wildfires cause trees to go up in flames, the burned carbon they formerly stored is released back to the atmosphere. When fire burns grasslands, however, the carbon fixed underground tends to stay in the roots and soil, making them more adaptive to climate change... The study does not suggest that grasslands should replace forests on the landscape or diminish the many other benefits of trees."

[Read how CAP uses science like this to advocate for protection of open space as rangeland through the development of Calaveras County's Greenhouse Gas Baseline Reduction Plan.](#)

Kiss the Ground is an inspirational documentary about how reinvigorating agricultural soils can reduce global climate change, enrich farmers and ranchers, save our federal government billions of dollars, and improve the nutrient content of our food supply. **Watch the preview below or watch the full film on Netflix.**



Low inventory, high demand stoke real estate prices locally

By Dakota Morlan and Noah Berner / The Calaveras Enterprise / April 28, 2021

California's real estate market hit record numbers last month, according to an April 16 report from the California Association of Realtors (CAR). In Calaveras County, the median price of existing single-family homes increased from \$352,000 in March of 2020 to \$436,000 in March of 2021, a rise of 23.8%. While sales increased by 19.7% from February, sales declined by 9% year-over-year.

Yet the local market is still in the midst of the pandemic boom, according to President of the Calaveras County Realtors Association John Friend.

On June 1, 2020, demand for real estate in Calaveras and Tuolumne counties exploded with families looking to escape the city and work from home. The trend hasn't stopped, but sales have slowed in the first quarter of 2021 due to low inventory.

Last January, Calaveras County tied with Mariposa County for the highest year-to-year percentage increase in sales of existing single-family homes in the state, with a 69.2% increase. Last December, the county ranked second to only Tuolumne County, and last August, Calaveras County had the largest year-over-year increase in the state.

For Friend, who owns real estate offices in Calaveras and Tuolumne counties, 2020 was a great year for business.

"It's the best year that I've had as a broker," he said. "The trend I see is that people from the Bay Area and the Valley are wanting to move up here. The population is less dense and you can have

more land for your money. The people up here are moving to Idaho and Oregon.”

The biggest hotspot for sales in the county remains in Arnold, where mountain cabins and vacation homes fly off the market within days.

“People put a house on the market on Thursday and take offers until Monday. They just pick the highest offer,” Friend said.

Other in-demand areas with low inventory are situated along the Highway 4 corridor: Copperopolis, Angels Camp and Murphys. However, Friend says he has noticed a more recent uptick in homes coming on the market with the rising prices.

It is also a good time to sell land in Calaveras County, with legal marijuana growers eagerly buying up properties over 20 acres.

Similarly, across the state, high demand and low inventory continue to fuel rising real estate prices.

“Fierce competition drove California’s median home price to reach a new record high in March, while the state’s housing market continued its momentum with sales remaining solid heading into the spring homebuying season,” a press release from CAR reads. “Every major region set a new record-high median price in March and continued to increase from last year by double digits.”

The statewide median price for existing single-family homes reached an all-time high of \$759,000 in March, up 8.6% from February and up 23.9% from March of last year. The year-over-year gain was the largest since October of 2013, and the eighth

straight month that the year-over-year median price saw a double-digit gain.

Median time on the market was only eight days last month, the lowest value on record, and down from 15 days in March of 2020. In addition, the sales-to-list-price ratio hit a record high at 102.2%. The ratio is calculated by dividing the final sales price of a property by its last list price. A percentage of 100% or above suggests that the home sold for more than the list price, while a percentage below 100% suggests that the home sold for below the list price.

CAR reported that about two-thirds of homes sold above their list price in March. "A lack of homes for sale is creating unprecedented market competition, leading to a record share of homes selling above asking price," CAR President Dave Walsh said.

Sales of existing single-family homes numbered 446,000 in March on a seasonally adjusted annualized rate, down by 3.5% from February but up 19.7% from March of last year. The seasonally adjusted annualized rate is a calculation of the total number of homes that would be sold during 2021 if the rate of homes sold last month is maintained over the course of the year.

"While still solid, the monthly sales decline was the third in a row, and the sales pace was the lowest since last July," the CAR release reads. "The near-20% sales gain can be attributed partly to weak home sales a year ago as the coronavirus outbreak abruptly halted the real estate market and economy."

Though prices and sales have increased year-over-year, active listings have declined.

"Active listings fell 51.1% in March from last year—the third consecutive month that listings declined more than 50%," the CAR release reads. "Forty-nine of the 51 counties reported by CAR recorded a decline in active listings on a year-over-year basis in March, and 30 of them dropped more than half of what they had a year ago. Yuba had the biggest drop in March, with active listings plunging 77.9% from last year. Calaveras (-73.5%) and Amador (-71.6%) were the other two counties with more than a 70% decline in for sale properties at the end of the first quarter."

[Sierra Nevada Conservancy Funding Opportunities Newsletter for April/May](#)

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.

Cataclysm

BY JANE HIRSHFIELD

It begins subtly:
the maple
withdraws an inch from the birch tree.

The porcupine
wants nothing to do with the skink.

Fish unschool,
sheep unflock to separately graze.

Clouds meanwhile
declare to the sky
they have nothing to do with the sky,
which is not visible as they are,

nor knows the trick of turning
into infant, tumbling pterodactyls.

The turtles and moonlight?
Their long arrangement is over.

As for the humans.
Let us not speak of the humans.
Let us speak of their language.

The first person singular
condemns the second person plural
for betrayals neither has words left to name.

The fed consider the hungry
and stay silent.

Orion Magazine: <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poets/jane-hirshfield>

Jane Hirshfield's ninth poetry collection, Ledger, a book centered on the environmental crisis and issues of social justice, appeared from Knopf in March 2020. Named by The Washington Post as "among the modern masters," in 2017 Hirshfield founded Poets For Science. She is also the author of two now-classic books of essays, Nine Gates and Ten Windows, and the editor/co-translator of four books presenting world poets from the deep past. Her most recent book of poetry

is The Beauty, long-listed for the 2015 National Book Award. A former chancellor of The Academy of American Poets, Hirshfield was elected in 2019 to the American Academy of Arts & Sciences.



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