



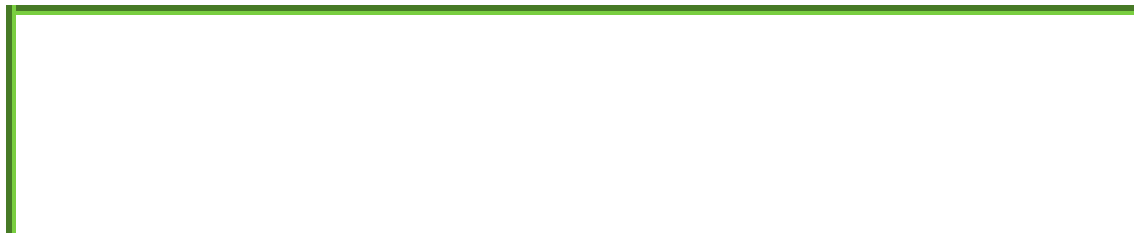
***Protecting our rural environment by promoting citizen participation in sustainable land use planning since 2006***

*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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### **In this edition of the ReCAP...**

1. [Next CPC Meeting](#)
2. [BOS & PC Meetings](#)
3. [Subdivision developers sue Jamestown sanitary district, consultant](#)
4. [Sonora City council moves toward approving proposed regulations for short-term rentals](#)
5. [Conservation groups call for more aggressive forest management](#)
6. [New railroad terminal in Stockton to bring renewable fuels to NorCal](#)
7. [Sierra Nevada Conservancy Funding Opportunities](#)
8. [DYK: Tuolumne and Calaveras Counties may have a prescribed fire association soon!](#)
9. ['The fire moved around it': success story in Oregon fuels calls for prescribed burns](#)
10. [Climate change is leading many Americans to look for new places to live](#)
11. [A striking US Census map shows how much rural America has shrunk in the last decade](#)
12. [American government is headed for a climate-induced legitimacy crisis](#)

### **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**  
**September 13, 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](http://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](mailto: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 Special Meeting Tuesday, August, 17 2021**

[Agenda](#)

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**Planning Commission Meeting August 26, 2021**

[Agenda Upcoming](#)

## Subdivision developers sue Jamestown sanitary district, consultant

*Giuseppe Ricapito / Union Democrat/ August 3, 2021*

The development group behind a 230-home subdivision on Golf Links Road is suing the Jamestown Sanitary District and its contracted engineering consultant, Black Water Consulting Engineers, for providing them with what it claims was a false and overstated available capacity for new residential hookups before it planned construction.

"They didn't plan for adequate capacity, that was threatening to derail the whole project," Valley Vista developer Krag Brotby said. "We invested a great deal of time and money based on that assertion."

There are currently four model homes erected at the site of the planned subdivision, which is dubbed Valley Vista Village.

"Valley Vista features charming traditional homes that bring quality and affordability to a delightful foothill community," a website for the subdivision states. "Factory built to exacting standards, these affordable Valley Vista homes are offered at prices substantially below comparable homes in the area."

In a third amended complaint filed on July 2, plaintiff Valley Vista Property Investments claimed that the Jamestown Sanitary District (JSD) and Black Water were negligent in 2014 when they estimated that the district would support 492 additional residential connections at the proposed development site.

After Valley Vista bought a portion of the property in 2018, it was contacted by the JSD and notified the district could only support a maximum of 83 units.

Scott Ward, of the Sonora-based law firm Young, Ward and Lothert, which is representing Valley Vista Property Investments, characterized the litigation on Wednesday as at the "very, very beginning."

They claim that a will-serve letter from the JSD, or a written commitment to provide service, was not required to prove negligence because the originally provided information was erroneous and predicated investment into the project based on false information.

Sarah Ornelas, of Borton Petrini, LLP, a law office in Modesto representing the JSD, could not be reached for comment on Wednesday.

Patricia Ingalls, manager and finance officer at JSD, said in an email to The Union Democrat that the district does not comment on ongoing litigation.

The capacity estimates were based on a new wastewater treatment plant that was not in operation at that time.

In 2019, the JSD announced that a new \$13.73 million wastewater treatment facility on Karlee Lane was planned to be open by September this year.

The district broke ground on the new facility in June 2019, with Auburn Constructors, LLC, as the general contractor. The 8.6-acre facility would replace the 3.5-acre plant off Highway 108 near Woods Creek in operation since 1952, a press release on the JSD website stated.

About half of the project costs were paid by a \$6 million grant from the State Water Resources Control Board's Clean Water Revolving Fund.

John D. Broghammer, an attorney for the Roseville based law firm Sims, Lawrence & Arruti, which is representing Black Water, said he planned to file a demurrer, or an objection to the plaintiff's filing, on the grounds that it is invalid for a suit.

Broghammer said that Black Water provided a "technical answer to a technical question" asked by the JSD, which hired them on a wide-reaching engineering contract in 2012. Whether the calculation was correct was a moot point, he said.

"Black Water owed no duty of care to anybody but the district," he said. "It didn't have any obligation to Valley View or anyone else. And you don't want an outside consultant to have to serve two masters, we only serve one, and that's the district."

He pointed out that Valley Vista and Black Water had no contract with each other and noted that the JSD did not have a will-serve letter, or a commitment to services, with Valley View.

The complaint states that Valley View is requesting at least \$236,000 in damages related to obtaining permits, engineering studies and other costs based on the Black Water conclusion that the JSD had more than sufficient available capacity.

The plaintiffs negligence against Black Water and JSD, as well as negligent misrepresentation and breach of intended creditor beneficiary contract for only Black Water.

The court documents outline a development process at the site that was years in the making and preceded 2014. The owner of the property at the time, Ron Robinson, decided to sell it for residential development and hired David Ragland, of Ragland Engineering, to assist in the viability of that goal.

Ragland was responsible for communicating with the JSD on the initial inquiry to determine how many additional residential connections the district was capable of serving and providing that information with potential purchasers.

The plaintiffs have claimed that the JSD had a duty to provide Robinson, and by extension future owners of the property, with reliable information which could have been passed on to potential purchasers.

The plaintiffs further claim in the lawsuit that the incorrect value provided to them, from Black Water to the JSD to Robinson, constituted negligence that held them liable for damages.

"In fact, Robinson and his successors in interest were actually and logically indifferent to the precise figure, as long as it was accurate," the lawsuit states. "There can be no conflict of loyalty if all parties expect nothing aside from accuracy."

Black Water, an engineering consulting service based in Modesto, was tasked with calculating the precise residential capacity of the JSD as its district engineer, for which they had a contract dating back to 2012.

The plaintiffs argue that they bought a portion of the property in July 2018 under the pretense that the JSD had sufficient capacity to provide sanitation services for the 230 units they planned to build there.

In 2019, Valley View and its engineering consultant, Mid-Valley Engineering, began working with Black Water to plan the connection.

The "plaintiff spent hundreds of thousands of dollars over the next eight months in detrimental reliance on the accuracy of Black Water's calculation," the complaint said.

A document dated June 17 this year assigns the rights of Robinson and his wife in any claims to Valley Vista.

On Sept. 25, 2019, the JSD contacted Valley View and explained that it had available capacity for just 83 new residential units, explaining the reduced capacity resulted from its commitment to provide service for existing customers and maintain a 10% reserve.

The value is ascertained based on the capacity of the new wastewater treatment plant that was at that time, and remains, under construction. The capacity was identified as 230,000 gallons per day, with an average daily water flow of 187,000 gallons. After limits of the 10% reserve and subtracting other reserved capacity, only 9,500 gallons per day remained.

"Since available capacity is merely the difference between total capacity and the current commitments, current commitments [are] half of the crux calculation," the complaint states. "Failing to consider that would be patently negligent."

The plaintiffs claim that the failure to provide accurate information was due to a failure by the JSD to provide Black Water with accurate or complete information on customers or capacity, or that Black Water failed to consider JSD's current commitments when making its calculation, or both.

The complaint includes scans of apparently original documentation regarding the agreement, including the contract between JSD and Black Water; a report letter from Black Water to JSD regarding the 492 additional connections that the district was estimated to be able to support; the assignment of legal rights to Valley Vista Property Investments from Ron and Lesley Robinson; and a letter from the JSD to Valley Vista on the limited capacity.

Brotby said Valley Vista was waiting on final permits to begin the grading process at the residential site, which he expected to be issued within 30 to 60 days.

Quincy Yaley, county community development director, said the project was approved in 2010 by the Board of Supervisors, but proposed changes under new ownership will require a

public hearing and consideration by the board.

Yaley said the Valley View application at this time is incomplete and on hold. Once the necessary materials were submitted, the public review process would be initiated to consider the project changes, she said.

Brotby indicated the changes were on the plan to connect the subdivision to Tuolumne Utilities District's sewer system and for modifications to its oak tree mitigation plan.

Lisa Westbrook, spokeswoman for TUD, confirmed Valley Vista is paying to construct a new sewer lift station that will pump to the district's Mill Villa sewer lift station and ultimately be transferred to its treatment plant.

The TUD board has approved developer agreements to provide water and sewer service to the project, with the developer paying for the infrastructure.

"Once the facilities are completed and accepted by TUD, we will maintain them," she said in an email. "The monthly utility charges from the new connections at the development will cover our costs to maintain the new facilities."

Valley Vista will pay capacity fees on a lot-by-lot basis to TUD and will also construct a water storage tank at the project site.

"Having a second tank gives the district storage redundancy, which would be useful when tanks need to be rehabbed, decreases chances or impact of system wide outages, and improves fire flow," Westbrook said.

Brotby said the project is a "much longer run" than the one originally planned with the JSD, and will cost about \$500,000 more than planned.

In 2019, Brotby told The Union Democrat that 45 people have bought into the community. The homes will be prefabricated and are expected to be sent 95% complete from Portland, Oregon, with interior work like carpeting and electrical being finished on site.

The homes at Valley Vista are planned to each range from 1,300 to 3,000 square feet, with buyers able to choose from six models and nine floor plans.

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

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## Sonora City Council moves toward approving proposed regulations for short-term rentals

*Alex MacLean / Union Democrat / August 5, 2021*

The Sonora City Council took a big step Monday night toward passing a proposed ordinance that would place new regulations on existing and future short-term rentals, including Airbnbs and VRBOs.

Four of the five council members voted to approve the ordinance at the first of two required public hearings, with Mayor Matt Hawkins opposed. A final vote is anticipated at the council's next meeting on Aug. 16.

"It's not a perfect ordinance," Councilman Jim Garaventa said, "but when your vacancy rate for rental housing is nearing zero, you have a problem."

All of the council members agreed that finding solutions to the lack of rental and workforce housing was a priority and to take a deeper look at the city's policies with regard to that in the coming months.

It was the council's sixth public meeting on the topic since approving a temporary moratorium on permits for new short-term rentals in mid-March, after an analysis by city staff suggested they were contributing to the lack of available long-term rentals.

The analysis presented to the council at a study session 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.

At the time of the analysis, it was noted that city staff could not find a single advertised vacancy for a long-term rental. City Administrator Mary Rose Rutikanga noted they've noticed four vacancies since that time, with prices ranging from \$900 to \$2,400 for a one-bedroom apartment.

There are also 10 unpermitted short-term rentals that city officials are aware of by monitoring home-renting websites like Airbnb and VRBO, though they currently don't have a way to penalize them other than sending a letter telling them to stop.

The proposed ordinance would also establish fines of up to \$1,000 per day for short-term rental operators who are operating without permits or not following the city's rules.

If the ordinance is approved, no new short-term rentals would be allowed to operate in the city that aren't also the renter's primary residence. That would not apply to existing permittees who are currently renting out a secondary home.

New permittees could also rent out their home unhosted for up to 120 days per year while they aren't there.

Requirements that would apply to both existing and new short-term rental operators include providing off-street parking for guests, having a designated contact person if they are not home, undergoing regular fire-safety inspections, and paying for garbage-collection service.

Councilman Mark Plummer previously indicated that he wouldn't support such an ordinance, but voted in favor on Monday. He asked that it be brought back to the council within two years to see whether it's had the intended effect of improving long-term rental availability.

Hawkins said at the meeting that he supported much of what was in the ordinance, with the exception of a provision that doesn't allow someone to rent out part of their home as a long-term rental and another part as a short-term rental.



In addition, Hawkins said after the meeting that he had spoken to roughly 20 residents over the phone and on the street who all were opposed to the ordinance and felt they should be represented.

Two people spoke at the meeting who were opposed to the ordinance, including one current Airbnb operator and a former planning commissioner. One person spoke in favor of the ordinance.

The city would be the latest community both in California and elsewhere to impose limits on the popular practice, with Placer County recently issuing a moratorium on future short-term rentals amid a housing crisis in Tahoe that's forcing out local employees.

**Contact Alex MacLean at [amaclean@uniondemocrat.net](mailto:amaclean@uniondemocrat.net) or (209) 768-5175.**

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## Conservation groups call for more aggressive forest management

*Noah Berner / Calaveras Enterprise / August 6, 2021*

With the increase in massive wildfires and extreme drought in recent years, conservation organizations are increasingly calling for more aggressive forest management practices.

Fifteen conservation organizations recently signed an open letter to U.S. Forest Service Chief Randy Moore urging a significant increase in the pace and scale of for treatments on federal forests.

"With this letter, we urge you—as the new Chief—to apply your leadership so that the Forest Service ramps up the pace and scale of needed actions to effectively address the pressing challenges of high-severity wildfires, climate change and loss of biodiversity," the letter reads. "We are eager to work with you and your team to develop strategies and policies that significantly increase landscape resiliency, reduce surface and ladder fuels, restore fire as a beneficial disturbance process, and promote science-based forest thinning in appropriate locations."

The Central Sierra Environmental Resource Center (CSERC), a nonprofit based in Twain Harte founded in 1991 to protect water, wildlife and wild places across the region, is among the conservation organizations that signed the letter.

CSERC Executive Director John Buckley has been involved in forest and fire issues in the local region for over four decades, first as a wildland firefighter and later in his role with CSERC.

"With this letter, 15 conservation organizations that are actively involved in forest issues collectively agreed it is essential for the forest service to do more of three key kinds of forest treatments: Thinning selective logging to open up dense overstock forest; biomass removal

to take the branches and the tops of logged trees and fallen trees that have fallen all over in many parts of the forest and to get that material out where possible to use it as wood chips, to go to cogeneration plants, or to help use it in other products; and to do a higher level of prescribed burning under cool, moist, safe times of year when you can burn without fires getting away,” Buckley said.

While CSERC has been calling for more aggressive forest treatments for over 20 years, many conservation groups have been reluctant to follow suit, Buckley said.

“There’s been this reluctance from a key influence on the forest service,” he said. “But over the last three years in particular, as massive wildfires have not only burned up communities, killed people and destroyed key values, but have also wiped out many precious forest areas including old growth trees, important watersheds and critical habitat for rare wildlife, everyone has come to the awareness that the status quo is not working. There needs to be more proactive, aggressive forest treatments that get the forest back in a healthier, more resilient condition. ... For many of the groups that signed on to this letter, this is one of their first public position statements that they support even more thinning logging and biomass treatments than the forest service is already doing.”

Buckley said that lack of funding has inhibited much-needed forest treatments.

“The single main barrier is not enough funding from Congress year after year that has also resulted in a forest service with less employees than it had 20 years ago and more work needed than it had 20 years ago,” he said. “It’s the combination of not enough funding to pay for projects, and not enough funding to hire enough forest service employees to do the amount of work that’s essential to do.”

Increasing public support for more aggressive actions is also important, Buckley said.

“There are also the challenges of getting the public to support prescribed burning in a cool time of year that does create some smoke, but far, far less than wildfires,” he said. “And it’s important for our center and others to convince members of the public that science-based thinning logging can be done without harming wildlife, and without harming soil and water values, and so it’s trying to get the forest service to do the projects that can build the trust of the public in really turning the corner on so much risk, not just from wildfires, but also from drought. ... Getting going is essential, because as we can see, we’re not preventing massive, harmful wildfires, or keeping forests resilient to drought. The evidence is all around us that more needs to be done.”

Buckley said that some promising developments in increasing funding are on the horizon, including the potential passage of the \$1 trillion infrastructure bill, which includes funding for fighting and preventing wildfires.

“Congress is looking at a number of legislative proposals that would increase funding for treating forest fuels, for getting more fire crews hired, etc.,” Buckley said. “There’s the potential for important, positive actions.”

Before Moore’s recent appointment to lead the forest service, he served for 14 years as regional forester for Region 5, which includes California and Hawaii.

"Many of us have a very strong connection to Randy, and we know that he will listen when we share," Buckley said. "(He) already knows that we support that broad range of efforts, but it is important for Congress and the public to know we don't just support prescribed burning, we also strongly support thinning logging and biomass removal—the full range of treatments to help get the forest back in a healthy condition."

While forest treatments are expensive, suppressing wildfires is even more costly, Buckley said.

"Taxpayers can either pay huge amounts—hundreds of millions of dollars a year—for fire suppression in California, or they can pay hundreds of millions of dollars to get ahead of wildfire risks, and over time to greatly reduce how much is spent on fire suppression as forests become healthier, more resilient, more watersheds are protected, more spectacular recreation destinations are protected, and there's less of a need in the future to have aggressive retardant drops, and helicopters, and all the things that get poured into fire fighting at this time. So, you pay now, or you pay in the future."

The forest service estimates that 6-9 million acres of the 20 million acres it manages in California is in need of restoration.

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## New railroad terminal in Stockton to bring renewable fuels to NorCal

*Aaron Leathley / The Record / August 5, 2021*

Stockton's railroad has a new terminal that will specialize in distributing renewable fuels in Northern California.

Demand for renewable fuel in California is high — largely because of rules like the Low Carbon Fuel Standard aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions, according to Jeff Hymas, a spokesperson for the infrastructure company Savage Services Corp. in Midvale, Utah.

Interest among consumers and businesses in doing business more sustainably has also grown, he said.

Savage is leasing property from the [Stockton Terminal and Eastern Railroad](#) to operate a transload terminal, the company said in a statement released Tuesday.

A transload terminal is a special facility for moving goods from a train car onto a truck, said Thomas Osmond, senior associate for business development at Savage.

There are not yet many pipelines for moving renewable diesel and biodiesel, often produced in the Gulf Coast and U.S. interior regions, into the state, Hymas said. Much of

it has to be transported by train.

Then, in order to reach the fuel stations, transportation companies, and other businesses buying the fuel, it has to be put onto trucks.

That's where Stockton's new terminal comes in, Osmond said.

When a train carrying fuel arrives at Stockton's transload terminal, a device called a transfer rack will park beside the train car and pump the fuel into trucks, Osmond said.

Stockton's terminal will act as "a gateway for the distribution of renewable fuels into the state of California," Hymas said.

The fuel will be shipped to markets within 75-100 miles of Stockton, Osmond said.

Big rigs like those Stocktonians have become accustomed to seeing on Highway 99 and Interstate 5 typically use petroleum diesel, Osmond said. The state and many businesses are aiming to transition those trucks toward using renewable fuels.

### **Community benefits**

The renewable diesel and biodiesel that will be routed through Stockton is "a great way to reduce the carbon intensity of truck" transport in California, Hymas said.

Renewable diesel is made from renewable sources such as corn stalks, while biodiesel is made by recycling non-renewable materials like grease and used oil from restaurants, said Linda Urata, coordinator for the San Joaquin Valley Clean Cities Coalition.

"In the realm of emissions, there's good, better and best. Biodiesel would be good," Urata said.

Practically speaking, the best fuel for reducing emissions is the one that people will actually use, Urata said.

While battery electric vehicles might be the best in theory, biodiesel is a more accessible way for businesses to reduce emissions because it can be used in a regular diesel engine with no expensive modifications, Urata explained. A switch to biodiesel means "you can reduce your emissions tomorrow," she said.

Reducing emissions is critical for communities with high rates of chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and heart disease, Urata said.

Biodiesel reduces greenhouse gas emissions by nearly 86%, hydrocarbon emissions by nearly 70% and particulate matter and carbon monoxide by nearly 50% each when compared to petroleum diesel, she said.

### **Why Stockton?**

Savage chose Stockton for its new terminal because of its high concentration of rail lines and its proximity to the Bay Area and Sacramento, Osmond said.

"There was some unique infrastructure there that already existed," Osmond said. "It was kind of a plug and play property."

The Stockton Terminal and Eastern Railroad connects to the Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) line and the Union Pacific Railroad.

Stockton's new terminal is equipped to transport goods other than fuel, too, so local businesses will be able to use it to put rail shipments onto trucks, Hymas said.

"We are excited that Savage chose Stockton for their new facility, bringing new investment, jobs, and tax revenue to our community," said Timm Quinn, interim CEO of the Greater Stockton Chamber of Commerce, in a statement.

Record reporter Aaron Leathley covers business, housing, and land use. She can be reached at [aleathley@recordnet.com](mailto:aleathley@recordnet.com) or on Twitter [@LeathleyAaron](https://twitter.com/LeathleyAaron). Support local news, subscribe to The Stockton Record at <https://www.recordnet.com/subscribe>.

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## Sierra Nevada Conservancy Funding Opportunities Newsletter for August/Sep tember



*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.*

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[Back to Top](#)

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## **Did you know ... residents in Tuolumne and Calaveras counties are working to form a prescribed fire association?**

An in-person meeting was held at Columbia College on August 11th, covering the following meeting topics:

- Looking at areas recently burned with prescribed fire at Columbia College
- Burn planning and permitting
- Tools and personal protective equipment
- Next steps for forming a PBA

The effort is being coordinated by UC Cooperative Extension Central Sierra Forestry Advisor Susie Kocher.

**For more information:**

Please contact Susie Kocher, [sdkocher@ucanr.edu](mailto:sdkocher@ucanr.edu)

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## **Regional News**

### **'The fire moved around it': success story in Oregon fuels calls for prescribed burns**

*Maanvi Singh / The Guardian / August 12, 2021*

The Bootleg fire stampeded through southern Oregon so fiercely that it spit up thunderclouds. But when the flames approached the Sycan Marsh Preserve, a 30,000-acre wetland thick with ponderosa pines, something incredible happened.

The flames weakened and the fire slowed down, allowing firefighters to move in and steer the blaze away from a critical research station.

That land belongs to the Nature Conservancy, an environmental nonprofit that has worked with the local Klamath Tribes to bring back pre-colonial forest management techniques such as prescribed fire – small, controlled burns that clear out fire-fueling vegetation, renew the soil and prevent bigger, runaway blazes.

Pete Caligiuri, the group's forest program director, credits those efforts with saving the research center, suggesting that the ancient forest management tools can have a dramatic impact.

"That's exactly what we had hypothesized and hoped would happen," said Caligiuri. "The research station is completely unimpacted, unharmed by the fire – the fire moved all the way around it."

A similar phenomenon occurred in the Black Hills Ecosystem Restoration Project, another area where the Klamath Tribes had worked with the US Forest Service to thin young trees and apply prescribed burning. When the Bootleg fire finally swept through, the forest was far less damaged than other areas that were not treated, the forest service said, noting that deer were even seen grazing on a "green island" preserved by the treatment.

The weeks-long battle against the Bootleg fire, one of the largest burning in the US, has offered new evidence that Indigenous land management techniques and prescribed burns can change how megafires behave. Tribal experts and ecologists told the Guardian that, with enough investment, the application of "good fire" throughout the US west could make a big difference in defending ourselves against increasingly fierce and destructive fire seasons.

Hundreds of tribes across the west used prescribed burns for thousands of years until European settlers outlawed the practice. After years of resisting the idea of fighting fire with fire, state and federal agencies have begun increasingly embracing the strategy, said Don Hankins, a pyrogeographer and Plains Miwok fire expert at California State University, Chico.

"These hopeful stories from the Bootleg fire – there are lots of stories like that," Hankins added. Last year, when the explosive Creek Fire hit the town of Shaver Lake, where the landscape had been treated with prescribed fire over the past two decades, the inferno calmed. Two decades ago, when the Cone Fire approached the Blacks Mountain experimental forest in north-eastern California, foresters reported that the flames fell to the ground and in some cases fizzled out when they reached areas that had been thinned and treated with fire.

Still, despite decades of scientific evidence and centuries of cultural understanding that prescribed fire is crucial to averting catastrophe in California's wildlands, the current levels of funding and institutional support for the practice are insufficient, said Hankins.

This week, the US Forest Service chief, Randy Moore, said that with thousands of firefighters struggling to contain blazes across the US west, the agency would cease its use of good fire. "We are in a 'triage mode' where our primary focus must be on fires that threaten communities and infrastructure," Moore said in a letter announcing the new policy. "When western fire activity abates, we will resume using all the tools in our toolbox." Dozens of scientists sent a letter asking the agency to reconsider, as did retired fire managers for the Forest Service.

As severe drought and increasingly frequent heatwaves exacerbated by the climate crisis fuel more dangerous fires, investment and support for cultural burns are needed now more than ever, Hankins said. Prescribed burning “doesn’t necessarily stop fires per se, but it changes the fire’s behavior”, he said. “To really make a difference, the amount of land that’s treated with fire can’t be a postage stamp. We need to really scale it up.”

For example, the North Complex fire, 2020’s deadliest wildfire, initially simmered slowly around the Plumas national forest – which foresters said was to be expected, because the area had been treated with fire. But fanned by fierce winds, the fire zipped through untreated land to the south, destroying the small town of Berry Creek. Experts have suggested that using more “good fire” to clear out the shrubs and dried vegetation in the areas surrounding the town could have saved it.

A look back in time offers further evidence that regular burns – natural and prescribed – can temper the most damaging blazes. During a severe drought in 1918, 200,000 acres burned in the same region the Bootleg fire is torching now – but back then, “almost all the forest canopy survived”, said Keala Hagmann, a research ecologist at the University of Washington who published a 2019 [study](#) of tree rings that chronicled the history of fires in the area. Centuries-old trees survived droughts and fires back then, before the US government began aggressively suppressing wildfires and shunned prescribed burns.

As the Bootleg fire raged through southern Oregon, it burned through 25% of the Klamath Tribes’ federally recognized territory, said Don Gentry, the Klamath Tribes chairman. “But that means 75% is still at risk for catastrophic fires.”

That is why the tribe has sought to work with nonprofits like the Nature Conservancy and state and federal agencies, to steward and restore their historical landscape, Gentry said. Before European settlers arrived, “we lived with fire. It was as common as a summer thunder shower,” he said. Now, as the region enters an era of megafires incited by global heating, Indigenous fire practitioners, scientists and local governments need to help the public embrace the idea that “fire is a treatment for fire”.

“Looking around, I can already see that the Klamath Tribes have lost massive areas of hunting grounds, valuable cultural plants and probably some archaeological sites,” said Steve Rondeau, the natural resources director for the Klamath Tribes, who has been driving through some of the areas the Bootleg fire seared. “But, at the same time, I feel we’ve gained a lot as well.” The fire, he said, has helped validate the decades of work Indigenous practitioners of prescribed fire have put into the land.

“The tribes have a saying: ‘Heal the land, heal the people,’” Rondeau said. “And our lands around here need a lot of work, and a lot of hands coming together to heal them.”

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## Climate change is leading many Americans to



# look for new places to live

*David Knowles and Andrew Romano / Yahoo News / August 12, 2021*

In a year of mounting [extreme weather disasters](#) linked to [climate change](#), more and more Americans say they are experiencing the adverse consequences of global warming and are looking to move to find relief.

For Leslie Woz, who has lived with her husband in New Smyrna Beach, Fla., for the past nine years and endured three hurricanes, the steady erosion of the coastal dunes because of rising sea levels and storm frequency has become a concern.

"The talk of rising seas is true, and we see the sea encroaching more each year," Woz told Yahoo News. "As a result, we are very happy that we chose to rent and not buy on the beach. We would like to move to an area that would not have as much risk, but quite frankly, looking at the options across the country — with tornadoes, drought, wildfires, ice storms — we just are not sure where to go."

As rising global temperatures increase the risks of drought and wildfires across the West, severe hurricanes along much of the coastal South and East, and [widespread deadly heat waves](#), a significant number of U.S. residents have begun to contemplate moving to escape worsening living conditions due to climate change.

A Yahoo News/YouGov poll conducted between July 30 and Aug. 2 found that a clear majority of Americans (55 percent) say they have noticed more extreme weather events where they live (heat waves, fires, storms, etc.), while just 37 percent say they have not. Of those who have noticed extreme weather in their area, a full 15 percent say they are considering the drastic step of moving elsewhere because of it.

"I feel like I'm going to just die; it's so hot, I don't think I'm going to make it through this one. Every summer is worse — hotter than the last," Tombstone, Ariz., resident Chapo Thomas told Yahoo News, adding, "Last summer my family and I took a vacation to Las Vegas, and even though it's not much cooler there than here, it just seems a lot better. I'm not sure how seriously I'm planning to move, but I think about moving to Las Vegas all the time."

Nikki Erickson, who lives in Los Angeles's San Fernando Valley, said rising temperatures are also affecting her bottom line.

"The Southern California summers are getting hotter, the winters are getting dryer, fires are more frequent, and I have been evacuated from my home before, and it is not fun," Erickson said. "The electric bills are going up as a result of these extreme temperatures. The water bills are going up because there is no rain."

The average surface temperature in the lower 48 U.S. states has risen by an average of 0.16 degrees Fahrenheit per decade since 1901, according to data from the Environmental

Protection Agency, but the rate of that warming has sped up dramatically since the late 1970s.

"The last seven years have been the warmest seven years on record, typifying the ongoing and dramatic warming trend," said Gavin Schmidt, director of NASA's Goddard Institute for Space Studies. "Whether one year is a record or not is not really that important — the important things are the long-term trends."

As the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's most recent assessment laid bare, the window of opportunity for humanity to slow the rise of global temperatures and avert the worst consequences of climate change is quickly closing, and United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres called the situation "code red for humanity."

"The alarm bells are deafening, and the evidence is irrefutable: Greenhouse gas emissions from fossil fuel burning and deforestation are choking our planet and putting billions of people at immediate risk. Global heating is affecting every region on Earth, with many of the changes becoming irreversible," Guterres said in a statement. "The internationally agreed threshold of 1.5 degrees Celsius is perilously close."

Since the dawn of the industrial age, average global temperatures have risen 1.2 degrees Celsius (2.7 degrees Fahrenheit), and while that may not seem like much, it has already had a profound impact on extreme weather events worldwide. This summer's extreme weather in the U.S. has proved to be a wake-up call for many Americans, and there is virtually no part of the country now where climate migration hasn't become a topic of conversation.

"It is much hotter here than it used to be. We had 100-degree temperatures earlier in the summer than we usually have," Karen Gale of Wichita, Kan., told Yahoo News. "Now that I am 65, I definitely am more bothered by the heat, and that curtails outdoor yard work."

But like many people lucky enough to have the means to be able to consider relocating, Gale is also at a loss about where she should go.

"I would love to move to a coastal town when my husband retires, but I am concerned high-water storms and hurricanes will ruin property values wherever we would go," she said. "Our son is in Alexandria, Va., and his basement has flooded three times in two summers — waist deep! My sister in Ft. Myers [Fla.] had fish in her street a few years ago, two weeks before a hurricane, and the rainstorm caused more trouble than the hurricane."

Utah resident Alex Sousa said the new weather patterns that climate scientists have linked to rising temperatures have made him consider relocating to the New England area.

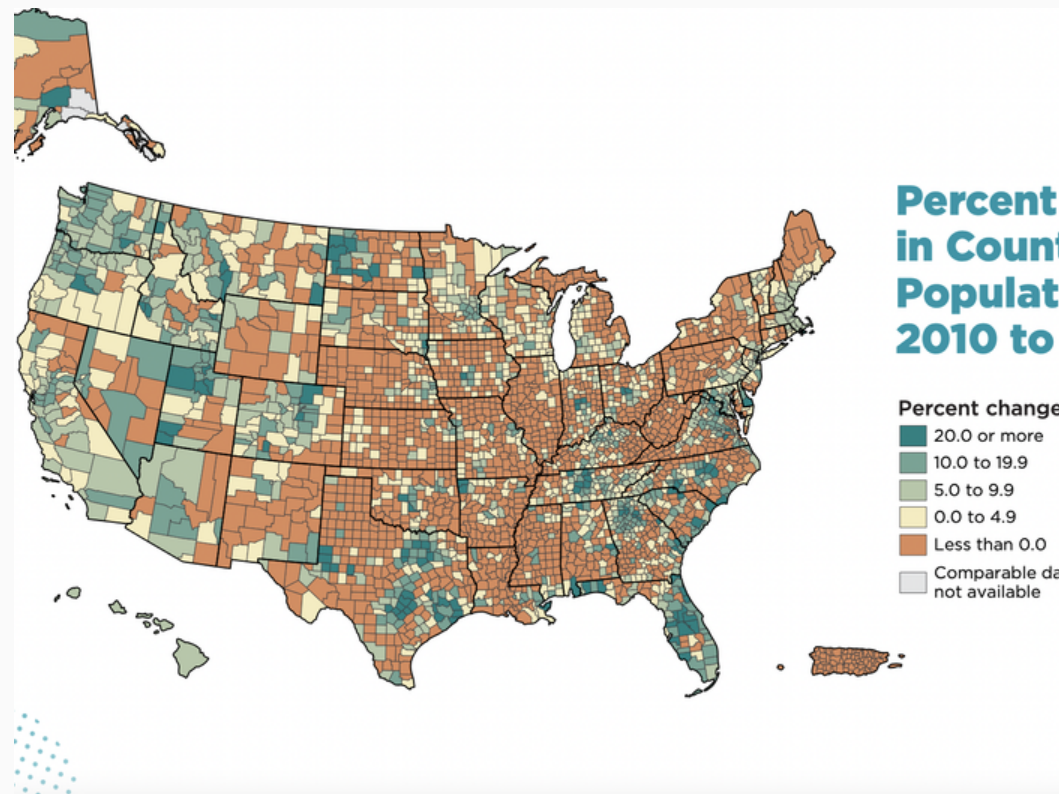
"In the last 10 or 15 years, it has just been getting hotter. It's a desert anyway, so we always had hot summers, but it has just been getting worse," Sousa told Yahoo News. "We used to get thunderstorms that would help break the heat, but for years we haven't had any decent ones. Now we just get forest fires. We've been in a drought for close to a decade."

Even for those who can afford it, moving to try to outrun climate change isn't an easy decision for many people.

"Each summer here seems to get hotter and hotter, with less rain as well. It's now rare to see more than a few inches of snow when it gets cold. It has been replaced by rain and even colder winters," said Riley Wright of Mount Vernon, Wash. "I have thought about moving somewhere else with a more consistent and comfortable climate with less extreme events, but I have not put too much thought into it. I love the beautiful area where I live and the Pacific Northwest. It's my home, and I don't want to leave it."

## A striking US Census map shows how much rural American has shrunk in the last decade

*Natalie Musameci and Madison Hoff / Business Insider / August 12, 2021*



A map released Thursday by the US Census Bureau shows how widespread the population declines in rural areas have become over the last decade.

Massive swaths of Middle America have seen a decrease in population growth since 2010, according to results from the 2020 Census.

The areas - including large sections of South Dakota, Nebraska, Kansas, Missouri, Mississippi - have seen declines in their population since 2010, the data shows.

Large chunks of Texas, New Mexico, Louisiana and Illinois saw the same results. According to the US Census Bureau, the country became more urbanized from 2010 to 2020, with 86.3% of Americans living in metropolitan areas of more than 50,000 people.

It confirms the growing divide between rural and urban America that was starkly illustrated by the 2020 election, as [Insider's Nick Lichtenberg and Hillary Hoffower](#) reported. Per a Brookings study, Joe Biden won more densely populated counties that made up 71% of America's GDP while Donald Trump won counties representing just 29%. Hillary Clinton had won 64% of GDP versus 36% for Trump in 2016.

Mark Muro, senior fellow and policy director of Brookings' Metropolitan Program and one of the report's authors, told Insider at the time that America has two "different economic worlds," and the census confirms that the rural one is shrinking. Muro said this economic divide has been sharpening since 2000 and accelerated in the last decade.

The Census Bureau noted just how populations have changed over the decade in a recent press release.

"Many counties within metro areas saw growth, especially those in the south and west. However, as we've been seeing in our annual population estimates, our nation is growing slower than it used to," Marc Perry, a senior demographer at the Census Bureau, said in a [press release](#).

He added "This decline is evident at the local level where around 52% of the counties in the United States saw their 2020 Census populations decrease from their 2010 Census populations."

At the metro area level, most of the 384 metro areas saw their populations grow. The Census Bureau noted 312 of the 384 grew in size over the decade, especially The Villages in Florida. This metro area increased its population by 39%, the fastest-growth in just 10 years among metro areas.

Will Wilkinson, who researched population density and related political allegiance, told Insider in November 2020 that the example of a car dealership owner in a poorer, rural area sums up the economic reality. "There's kind of a sense of malaise" there, even if the dealership owner is making a decent living, so there's a sense that things are "kind of falling apart." Now we know that the economy of rural America was a smaller and smaller one over the past decade.

Read the original article on [Business Insider](#)

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## American government is heading for a

# climate-induced legitimacy crisis

*Ryan Cooper / The Week / August 11, 2021*

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, probably the largest scientific collaboration in human history, has produced its [Sixth Assessment Report](#) on climate change. The science is complicated and the pile of evidence is immense, but the basic conclusion is fairly straightforward: Scientists are ever more certain that the global temperature is rising, that it is caused by humans, and that all manner of extreme weather events are connected to this warming. As a pseudonymous physicist [summarized](#), "It's real, it's us, there's strong agreement amongst relevant experts, the impacts could be really severe, we can still do things to limit the impact."

The threat is dire. Every part of the United States will be harmed by unchecked global warming — some are getting hit worse than others, but nowhere is immune — while poorer countries will have it worse still. With just one degree Celsius of warming, America has experienced a summer of rolling climate disasters. At 1.5 degrees and beyond, the damage will be much, much worse.

And yet there is no sign that the American political system is taking this threat at all seriously. It raises the question of whether climate change will be the thing that finally topples the already creaking American constitutional system.

In Washington, nearly the whole summer has been eaten up with negotiations around a bipartisan infrastructure that includes [little climate policy](#). Democrats are hoping to pass a separate reconciliation bill with about \$3.5 trillion in additional spending over 10 years (or roughly 1 percent of GDP, a modest bill), but even if that was entirely climate stuff (only a small part is), it is maybe a fifth the size of what a [serious attack](#) on climate change would be.

Progress is being made, but it just is not anywhere near the scale of the problem. Then, because Democrats will likely lose control of the House of Representatives at least next year, and Republicans don't believe in doing anything about the climate problem, that will probably be it for climate policy for the rest of the decade, if not longer. If conservatives succeed in their plot to destroy fair elections at all levels of government and set up one-party rule, that will be it for the indefinite future.

Traditionally, when a government fails to address a giant, looming threat, it raises the chance of revolution. Now, such an event is quite scary, and both conservative and moderate forces have spent generations whipping up fear of Jacobins and guillotines. This leads to a common misconception, though — that revolutions are the result of people deciding to overthrow the government. As listeners of historian Mike Duncan's excellent [Revolutions podcast](#) can tell you, this gets the causality (mostly) backwards. Actions from revolutionaries of course do matter, but the primary causal factor in virtually every revolution in history has been the rottenness and incompetence of the status quo political regime. If a government

can ensure a modicum of economic prosperity and keep a solid grip on the armed forces, revolutions almost never have a chance.

For instance, by the end of his reign, Tsar Nicholas II's record of constant failure was so appalling that nearly the entire Russian political spectrum, from communists to ultra-conservative monarchists, was united against him. His horrifying misrule convinced even die-hard autocrats that the country could not survive with an incompetent dolt at the apex of power.

Economist John Kenneth Galbraith made a similar observation about the failure of the elite in Ancien Régime France to head off revolution:

In 1774 [Turgot] became comptroller-general of France, and his immediate task was to curb the expenditures of the French court. He failed. A firm rule operated against him: People of privilege almost always prefer to risk ... total destruction rather than surrender any part of their privileges. Intellectual myopia, often called stupidity, is a reason. There's also the invariable feeling that privilege, however egregious, is a basic right. The sensitivity of the poor to injustice is a small thing as compared with that of the rich. And so it was in the Ancien Régime ... when reform from above became impossible, then revolution from below became inevitable. [The Age of Uncertainty.]

It follows that if one fears revolution, then by far the most important thing to do is to make the extant political system function. This was one of Franklin Roosevelt's main motivations for the New Deal — as historian Eric Rauchway writes in his book Winter War, FDR worried that if the Great Depression was not cured somehow, then either fascists or communists might topple the government. "The millions who are in want will not stand by silently forever while the things to satisfy their needs are within easy reach," he said in a 1932 campaign speech.

Now, I would be a fool to predict that a revolution is definitely going to happen, much less when. But it's also impossible to deny that Galbraith's scheme could be plausibly applied to America's total failure to pursue climate policy at anything like a reasonable scale. The Democratic Party is not pursuing vigorous climate policy because America's archaic constitutional system was deliberately designed to make it nearly impossible to do anything, and because doing so would infuriate a lot of well-heeled interest groups the party is in bed with. Republicans, meanwhile, are doing their absolute utmost to increase greenhouse gas emissions and make everything worse.

Like most people, I suspect, I find it very hard to imagine conditions getting so bad in the U.S. that people rise up and overthrow the basic structure of government. But I also suspect that few have really reckoned with how the coming years are going to inflame unrest and discredit the status quo.

Climate disasters are regularly hammering almost every state. California is suffering its second-largest wildfire in recorded history (and the record was set just last year), and its reservoirs are nearly out of water. Something like 40 percent of the country is in serious drought conditions, yet again. It's gotten bad enough that major stories fly under the radar

— for instance, I wasn't aware of the [flooding in Omaha a few days ago](#) until I started writing this article.

And all that is just a tiny taste of what Americans are going to experience over coming decades. When people are suffering horribly and their government is doing little to help them, it tends to fuel radicalization and extremism (like [eco-terrorism](#)). Revolution is a frightening prospect, to be sure — I would not be that confident that a better government would be the result, instead of chaos and war. But if the American elite make that the only option available to have a prayer of saving the planet, some may decide it's a chance worth taking.



*A rainbow breaks through the storm and smoke (c) [yosemitenorthphotography.com](http://yosemitenorthphotography.com)*



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