

Suggested Title: Keep it Wild Calaveras

Calaveras County is a beautiful place year round, but this year's wildflower super bloom showcased some of the best we have to offer. As you drove through the lower elevations of the County, fields of white popcorn flower and bright orange poppy covered the rolling hills. The yellow curling fiddleneck flower provided splashes of yellow even in an empty lot right in town in San Andreas. Even now, the late blooming Ithuriel's Spear and Mariposa Lilies are out in abundance, and the Farewell-to-Spring are sure to be blooming soon.

It is hard not to appreciate the beauty of spring and the vibrant colors it brings to the foothills. The ways in which these views are being protected so they can be enjoyed by generations to come is not always obvious. True, some of these glorious wildflower displays are on public lands like those surrounding New Hogan Reservoir and along the Mokelumne River on Electra Road. However, many of the scenic vistas we enjoy should be recognized as privately owned open space such as agricultural lands for grazing, many thousands of acres of which are protected in perpetuity with conservation easements.

While pressure for more housing and development certainly exists, it is those rural ranchers and farmers who are helping preserve the wildflower studded oak woodlands by keeping the land in agricultural production and thus as open space. They support our economy by producing valuable goods here but also by maintaining the rural charm and character of Calaveras County.

Most people come to Calaveras County for the slower pace, the sweeping views and open spaces, the sense of community, and everything that means in Calaveras County. While the gorgeous wildflower displays may be hard to miss this year, it is easy to miss the reasons why these open spaces exist and what it takes to ensure they continue to exist. To see some photos of Calaveras beauty and learn more about conservation easements and open space, visit calaverascap.com.

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