



RIVER VALLEY TIMES

42ND YEAR • ISSUE 3

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FEBRUARY 13, 2026

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The steps required to convert Lake Clementia into an emergency water supply are discussed at the Rancho Murieta Community Services District Board meeting Jan. 21. File photo by Gail Bullen

**By Gail Bullen
River Valley Times
Reporter**

RANCHO MURIETA, CA (MPG) - The Rancho Murieta Community Services District Board on Jan. 21 held a wide-ranging discussion on what it would take to convert Lake Clementia into a drinking

water source, revealing both the regulatory complexity of the process and differences over whether the effort is worth pursuing at all.

Lake Clementia

District counsel Patrick Enright opened the discussion by outlining a five-step framework for

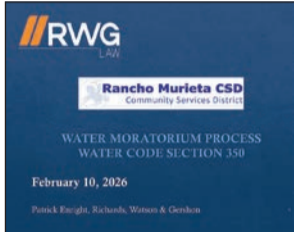
moving forward. He said the district is beginning conversations with the Department of Water Resources (DWR) to understand permitting requirements, which could vary depending on when the district has more than 3,000 water connections. Enright cautioned that even with legislative approval,

exemptions granted to similar reservoirs elsewhere in the state came with extensive conditions.

Enright suggested the district explore limiting potable use of Lake Clementia to drought periods only, potentially preserving recreational use in normal years. He also

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Water Shortage Emergency Coverage Online



This PowerPoint slide is part of a presentation prepared for the Feb. 10 Water Shortage Emergency hearing by counsel for the Rancho Murieta Community Services District. Courtesy photo

**By Gail Bullen
River Valley Times
Reporter**

RANCHO MURIETA, CA (MPG) - Because of press deadlines, this issue of the River Valley Times is unable to include coverage of the Water Shortage Emergency meeting held Tuesday, Feb. 10.

However, the meeting has been posted online at therivervalleytimes.com. Coverage will appear in print in the Feb. 27 edition.

Although the decision was not unanimous, the Rancho Murieta Community Services District Board voted at its Dec. 17 meeting to hold a public hearing to consider declaring a water shortage emergency. The hearing was scheduled for Jan. 27 and postponed to Feb. 10.

A public hearing is required by state law before the board may declare a water shortage emergency. Such a declaration would temporarily halt new water connections for development.

A statement on the district's website explains the reasoning behind considering a moratorium on new development. It reads:

"The district underwent significant transitions in 2025, with water sustainability and community development becoming our primary areas of focus. As new construction continues, we must address critical questions regarding our capacity to serve existing residents while accommodating future growth.

"While we historically relied on studies indicating sufficient supply from the Cosumnes River and our reservoir system, the draft 2024 Integrated Water Master Plan has provided a necessary course correction: it clarifies that RMCSD lacks adequate water to sustain the community during drought conditions.

"... A moratorium would provide the window necessary to evaluate supply augmentation. Our team is currently investigating new wells, water banking, use of Clementia reservoir and the potential conversion of recycled water for potable use."

A 428-page board meeting packet has been posted on the district's website. ★

Full Plates, Full House at Kiwanis Crab Feed



Server Jasmine Brower juggles two trays of crab at the 12th annual Kiwanis Crab Feed held at St. Vincent de Paul Church on Jan. 31. Brower is a member of the Sheldon High School Key Club.

**Story and photos
by Gail Bullen
River Valley Times Reporter**

RANCHO MURIETA, CA (MPG) - A sell-out crowd cracked crab, cheered teen servers and raised money for youth programs at the 12th Annual Crab Feed presented by the Rancho

Murieta Kiwanis Club on Jan. 31 at St. Vincent de Paul Catholic Church. Nearly 300 tickets were sold for the popular fundraiser, which traditionally sells out quickly. Ticket chair Jeanette Edwards said 296 tickets were sold, with about 90 released locally after sponsor allocations. "We were sold out in two hours,"

she said, noting that a line formed before sales even began. "We have such a supportive community. Everyone looks forward to the crab feed."

In welcoming remarks, Kiwanis President Joanne Brandt thanked the Knights of Columbus and St.

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CSD Board Debates Groundwater Numbers

By Gail Bullen
River Valley Times Reporter

RANCHO MURIETA, CA (MPG) - A long-running debate over Rancho Murieta's water future shifted to groundwater wells at the Jan. 21 meeting of the Rancho Murieta Community Services District board, as directors and advisers wrestled with a fundamental question: how much well water the community actually needs, and how confidently that number can be determined before millions of dollars are spent.

WSC Siting Report

The discussion centered on recent work by the Ad Hoc Water Working Group, chaired by Director Randy Jenco, which has been exploring potential groundwater sites as part of the district's broader water-supply planning. Besides Jenco, the group includes Travis Bohannon, CSD chief plant operator; Rod Hart, Rancho Murieta Association general manager; Jeff Pearson, project manager for Rancho Murieta Properties; and Tom Shewchuk, representing the Rancho Murieta Country Club.

Jenco opened the agenda item by reporting that the district had received a final siting report from Water Systems Consulting on Jan. 12. The firm identified six potential test-well locations, with the working group adding a seventh. Jenco said three of the sites appear promising, and three do not, and emphasized that the district would not re-drill a location that had already been tested in earlier work by Dunn Engineering.

Need Questioned

However, Jenco flagged what quickly became the central point of contention: The WSC report references that roughly 3,000 acre-feet per year of groundwater production is needed. Jenco said the water group does not agree with that number, does not consider it reliable and could not reconcile it with past studies. According to Jenco, WSC said the figure came from earlier staff or board discussions and declined to remove it from its report.

Dunn Testing Cited

Shewchuk said WSC's findings were generally consistent with historic data, particularly for wells south of Highway 16. He noted that WSC's estimated yields at the equestrian center site aligned with

Dunn test results from the 1980s near the church and airport. Using rough calculations, Shewchuk said three wells producing about 300 gallons per minute each, running continuously, would generate roughly 1,500 acre-feet per year: close to the district's recent annual usage of about 1,600 acre-feet.

Shewchuk agreed that the community does not need 3,000 acre-feet per year from wells. In his view, 500 to 1,000 acre-feet per year could be sufficient during drought conditions when combined with conservation measures.

Historical Context

Pearson placed the current debate in a historical context. He cited a 1994 study tied to the Anderson Ranch that estimated roughly 1,700 acre-feet would be needed for full buildout plans larger than those currently proposed. Later, Dunn Engineering, between 2012 and 2018, with a Proposition 84 grant, concluded that only about 300 acre-feet of supplemental water was needed for a moderate buildout. That number was later doubled to 600 acre-feet to add resiliency.

Those earlier engineering figures, Pearson said, are dramatically lower than the 3,000 acre-feet now being discussed. He also questioned why the district terminated the prior well program in 2018 and said he could not find a clear explanation. Pearson said he was uncomfortable moving forward with a large and costly well program without a current, professional engineering analysis that clearly establishes how much groundwater is actually required.

Pearson emphasized that potential new water tanks have been designed with detailed engineering, and wells should be no different. He said designing a system around an inflated target, such as 3,000 acre-feet per year, could unnecessarily limit viable well sites and significantly increase costs. Any reconciliation of those numbers, he said, must be done by hydrogeologists and engineers, not the working group.

Figure Source

Audience member Jim Farrell, who participated in an earlier working group that analyzed the draft IWMP, traced the origin of the 3,000-acre-feet figure to an IWMP table prepared by engineer Lisa Maddaus. He pointed to a table in the draft showing

that meeting historic drought needs for existing residents would require about 1,200 gallons per minute, or roughly 1,936 acre-feet per year. A separate scenario – historic drought at full buildout without Lake Clementia – assumed 2,000 gallons per minute, equating to about 3,226 acre-feet per year.

Farrell said the 3,000 acre-foot figure is at least traceable to the Maddaus draft, but he emphasized that the IWMP was only a draft, was never adopted and was based on older buildout assumptions. He urged the board to develop a comprehensive, up-to-date plan and to carefully assess the relative costs of the options. Depending on what the new well work shows, he suggested, it might prove more cost effective to add another well rather than pursue an expensive Lake Clementia conversion.

Draft Unreliable

Board President John Merchant echoed concerns about relying on the draft IWMP, noting that multiple prior Maddaus studies and water supply assessments dating back to 2006 consistently concluded the district had adequate water. The recent draft, he said, abruptly shifted to showing shortages affecting existing residents, the two entitled subdivisions, and future development during an extreme drought (as occurred in 1977-1978).

Merchant noted that, under the draft Maddaus/IWMP, the district would already be in Stage 5 emergency by the second month of 2023 and essentially stay there, which he said made the mitigation framework unusable. He argued that only the core supply-and-demand and reservoir-volume chapter of the draft is worth salvaging. Before handing anything to a new consultant, the district should adjust the recycled water number, remove the roughly 450 acre-feet "industrial" category and update the buildout assumptions.

Merchant emphasized that recent actual water plant production numbers – about 1,750 acre-feet per year over the past five years – provide a critical real-world check. He also noted that Senate Bill 552, requiring that small water districts have a backup water supply, focuses on average daily demand, making actual production data especially important. Before committing to major construction, he said, the district should first reconcile supply and demand, then separately design how to meet that need.

Returning to the discussion, Jenco said the IWMP was a draft for a reason and that many of his questions were never answered before Maddaus was dismissed. He said it relied on full buildout and pre-reduction development assumptions that no longer apply, and he no longer has confidence in using it. In the near term, he said, the district plans to proceed with test wells at accessible sites and adjust designs based on what is actually found underground.

Ownership Concerns

Director Bill Gere raised legal and practical concerns, particularly if wells are drilled near the Cosumnes River. He questioned whether state regulators would approve such wells and said that the issue must be clarified in advance. Gere also warned that many promising sites are on private land and said the district must secure ironclad agreements ensuring access, ownership and control of any wells and water produced.

Idea Rejected

Gere also floated a simpler approach. He suggested that the landowner with hundreds of lots at stake could fund and drill a well, have an independent geologist confirm the yield, and, if sufficient water is found, the district could proceed with development permits.

"Just write a check; drill a well. If there's water there, we'll give you your permit," Gere said.

Pearson immediately pushed back, saying the process is far more complex than that.

Merchant also rejected the idea, noting that the district faces multiple shortages – for existing residents, approved projects and future buildout – and must determine who gets water first. Given the amount of money involved, land ownership and easement issues, he said the issue cannot be reduced to a "drill a well and build" approach. Instead, these issues require legal guidance and professional engineering.

By the end of the discussion, there appeared to be broad agreement that the 3,000 acre-feet figure cited in recent documents is not yet defensible and must be re-examined by qualified professionals.

This story is at therivervalleytimes.com and on Facebook. ★

Speaker Brings Humor, Soil Science, Camellia Expertise to Garden Club

Story and photos by Gail Bullen River Valley Times Reporter

RANCHO MURIETA, CA (MPG) - Greg Gayton of Green Acres Nursery & Supply returned as a popular guest speaker at the River Valley Garden Club's Jan. 27 meeting, delivering an hour-long, question-driven talk that ranged from camellias and fertilizer to deer pressure, fog-related diseases and the challenges of growing plants in Rancho Murieta's notoriously poor soil.

Before the evening's featured presentation, the club paused to recognize a community member through its Penny Pines program, presenting a memorial certificate to the late John Davis, of Rancho Murieta Hardware.

It Starts With Soil

Gayton was introduced by Club Vice President Margaret Watson Hopkins, who said his enthusiasm and generosity are what keep members eager for his return.

"He loves to share his expertise and his love of plants," Watson Hopkins said. "He makes everybody else want to just get out and start planting stuff."

A certified nursery professional, Gayton has worked for Green Acres for 47 years, including 31 years as the manager of the Jackson Road store, helping Rancho Murieta residents since the community's early development. (Green Acres bought Matsuda's retail and wholesale nursery operations in 2008 and 2014.)

Now part of the company's marketing and



Greg Gayton of Green Acres Nursery & Supply speaks at the Jan. 27 meeting of the River Valley Garden Club. He explains that the "Queen's Tears" bromeliad can be planted outdoors.

education team, he hosts Green Acres' gardening podcast, answers online plant questions and regularly speaks to garden clubs throughout Northern California.

Early in his talk, Gayton challenged how gardeners think about soil.

"Dirt is what's in the corner that you clean up with your vacuum," he said. "Soil is living."

He acknowledged that Rancho Murieta's native soil presents difficulties but said it can be improved.

"Your soil does not have a good reputation," he told the group, drawing laughter.

Gayton emphasized organic gardening practices, explaining that synthetic fertilizers can damage beneficial soil organisms. He described mycorrhizal fungi as underground partners that help plants absorb nutrients and water, strengthening root systems and improving drought tolerance.

"When you fertilize, the most important part of the plant isn't what you see," he said. "It's the root system."

Throughout the evening, Gayton handed out plants, organic fertilizers and Green Acres gift cards to members who asked questions. Among the plants he brought were camellias, a dwarf blackberry suited for containers, and an outdoor bromeliad commonly known as Queen's Tears.

Much of the discussion focused on camellias, which Gayton described as well-adapted to Sacramento's Mediterranean climate. He explained the difference between *Camellia japonica*, which blooms from winter into spring, and *Camellia sasanqua*, which flowers earlier in fall and early winter.

"The only time you prune a camellia is after it finishes blooming," Gayton said. "If you cut it any other time, you're cutting off next year's flowers."

He encouraged thinning dense shrubs for air circulation and said camellias can also be trained flat against walls or fences. "You can espalier any camellia," he said. "Just give it morning sun and afternoon shade."



Ellison Cowles is ecstatic after Gayton rewards her with a camellia for asking a question.

Members asked about deer, a persistent challenge in Rancho Murieta. Gayton said there is no such thing as a truly deer-proof plant.

"If deer are hungry, they're going to eat anything," he said, adding that deer behavior varies widely by region.

Weather also factored into the discussion. Gayton said prolonged winter fog can contribute to fungal diseases, particularly for roses and camellias. "Fog helps spores spread," he said. "We're going to see more disease problems when we have heavy fog."

One member raised concerns about roses affected by black spot. Gayton advised focusing on overall plant health rather than relying on chemical treatments.

"Black spot isn't like powdery mildew where heat fixes everything," he said. "The goal is to keep the plant healthy so it pushes out clean, new growth."

He recommended improving air circulation, ensuring six hours of sunlight, pruning properly and regularly amending soil with organic matter.

"You can never give Rancho Murieta soil too much organic matter,"

Gayton said.

Gayton also cautioned against overwatering established camellias, calling it one of the most common causes of plant failure. "They're more drought-tolerant than people think," he said. "Once they're established, they don't need that much water."

Gayton closed by urging gardeners to rethink their reliance on synthetic products and focus on building healthy soil over time.

"If the one thing I want to let everybody know before I leave is please go to organic fertilizers," Gayton said. "That's the main thing."

He encouraged members to view camellias and other long-lived shrubs not only as ornamental plants, but as part of an ecological landscape that supports birds and beneficial insects.

"They provide shelter for birds," Gayton said. "And birds are the ones that eat aphids and other pests. Everything works together."

Gayton encouraged members to rely on Green Acres staff for hands-on, local expertise rather than generic apps or guesswork. He noted that he personally answers questions through the company's

online "Plant Advice" service, and invited members to call him directly at 916-597-4751.

Penny Pines Award

Earlier in the meeting, Marianna Hashorva, chair of the club's Penny Pines program, presented a memorial certificate to Julie Davis.

She explained the statewide Penny Pines program allows garden clubs to fund reforestation projects through small donations collected at meetings. Once \$68 is raised, the club's board selects an individual to be honored or remembered. Each donation funds the planting of approximately 300 tree seedlings in California forests damaged by wildfire, and a certificate is issued to mark the dedication.

In this case, the club chose to honor Davis and her late husband, John Davis, the longtime owners of Rancho Murieta Hardware. Hashorva said the certificate recognized both his many kindnesses and ongoing support of the community, as well as Davis' close connection to the garden club.

See more photos at therivervalleytimes.com and on Facebook. ★

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RMA Board Tackles Gate Traffic, E-Bike Rules, GM Search

By Gail Bullen
River Valley Times Reporter

RANCHO MURIETA, CA (MPG) - The Rancho Murieta Association board spent much of its Jan. 20 meeting focused on access and enforcement issues, approving changes to gate-pass procedures, advancing barcode controls and tabling a proposed e-bike rule that directors agreed needed more work.

Barcodes

General Manager Rod Hart explained that the Compliance Committee is working on several barcode-related changes to improve traffic flow and safety. First, they will implement distinctly colored non-member barcodes for Rancho Murieta Country Club members, limiting their use to a direct route from the highway to the country club and helping staff identify when non-members are elsewhere in the community. They also plan to require the country club to post a deposit, which RMA can draw on to assess fines for road-rule violations by those non-member drivers, with the club then pursuing reimbursement from its members.

Hart added that they are discussing expanding the system to allow members' permanent guests to receive their own different-colored barcodes, issued when a member signs for them. These guests would still be required to remain with the sponsoring member anywhere in the community, but the separate barcode would let them bypass long gate lines – especially during busy weekday or holiday periods – while still giving RMA better control and monitoring of who is in the community and where.

Holiday Passes

Hart described plans to manage holiday traffic backups at the North Gate by expanding the advance pass system currently used for July 4. For any future holidays when they expect large numbers of visitors, RMA will hand out visitor passes in advance, similar to the existing July 4 process.

The goal is to move vehicles through the gate more quickly, reduce long lines and prevent dangerous backups onto the highway in both directions. He presented this as a short-term solution for all high-visitor holidays, not just July 4.

GM Search

The board briefly discussed the search for a new general manager. Director Scott Adams reported that the GM Search Committee met the previous Friday and will publish a job advertisement and begin recruiting candidates. The ad will run for at least 30 days, and possibly longer, to collect a solid pool of applicants before bringing candidates to the board.

Adams noted that Hart's last day will be May 1, and the goal is to get ahead of that date. He then moved to appoint Director Ernie Cowles as co-chair of the GM Search ad hoc committee. The motion was seconded, discussed briefly and approved, formally making Director Cowles co-chair of the search effort.

E-Bike Rule

The e bike discussion centered on how Rancho Murieta should respond to rapidly changing laws and technology while addressing safety and resident concerns.

Director Scott Adams explained that the proposed e bike rule had been under development for months, had undergone public review and had generated dozens of comments. Its goals are to protect riders and residents, reduce collisions and manage the growing number of e bikes. He noted a new state law (AB 544) requiring rear red reflectors or lights to be used at all times and allowing citations for minors or their parents; he had updated the draft rule to comply with that requirement.

Acknowledging strong opinions on both sides, Adams said, "Whatever the decision is, some people aren't going to be happy about it" and that the rule would likely be "an evolving situation."

The board then worked through practical enforcement and access questions. Adams stressed that RMA could not enforce the rules alone and would need resident help: If people witness kids misusing e bikes, they will want to be involved, and he suggested it may be better to get a video of what is happening so compliance can follow up.

Compliance Supervisor Chris Smith cautioned that some residents are currently chasing kids on e bikes across bridges, roads, and paths – "residents are actually chasing the kids, and we don't want that" – and agreed that photos or video, not pursuit, are the right way to support enforcement, especially since compliance already knows many of the riders.

They also examined where e bikes would be allowed under the draft rule. Scott read that e bikes would be permitted only on RMA paved and gravel roads and surfaces around the lakes, and on the cart path over the wooden bridge connecting North and South. This led to a broader discussion of unpaved and dirt roads and what RMA does and does not control.

Director Chris Childs emphasized that RMA does not own much, if any, of the dirt trails in the community and that, for example, the dirt roads around Calero are private property owned by others; RMA's rules can only apply to what RMA owns.

Hart clarified that RMA owns most of the service road around Chesbro and the dirt trail on top of the dam, although not the land beyond the outside edge of that road. Because the draft rule explicitly allows e bikes on RMA paved and gravel roads but separately bans them from "dirt or rough surfaces," a rider could legally continue on RMA owned paved or gravel segments yet would be in violation if they proceeded onto an RMA owned dirt portion, which is why Childs said such a rider would technically have to turn around.

Some directors questioned whether that approach to RMA owned dirt made sense, especially given the confusion between association owned roads and other dirt roads controlled by developers or private owners. Childs also noted that the draft's earbud restriction may be stricter than California law, which allows a single earbud for drivers and motorcycle riders.

Recognizing that these issues – enforcement, resident involvement, paved/gravel vs. dirt access, and alignment with state law – were too complex to finalize on the spot, Director John Van Doren moved to table the e bike rule until the next meeting, and the board agreed this would be taken up again at the Feb. 17 regular board meeting. Board President Pat O'Hern cautioned that "we can't just table everything to talk about it again next month" and urged directors to carefully review the draft and send Adams specific wording changes and reasons in advance, saying that if they had a question or comment, they should contact him directly.

Adams agreed and committed to bringing back a color coded, annotated version of the rule showing any proposed edits side by side with the existing language. The board voted to table the rule, with the understanding that the e bike policy will be treated as a living document that will continue to evolve.

Other business

The board appointed community residents to the following board committees: Architectural Review, Compliance, Finance, Governing Documents, Maintenance and Recreation.

Director Van Doren reported the Architectural Review Committee had reviewed 239 projects in 2025.

Director Tom Reimers, who chairs the Compliance Committee, reported that RMA compliance issued 1,681 citations in 2025 compared to 133 issues by Rancho Murieta Community Service District security officers.

The board's next meeting will be at 6:30 p.m. Feb. 17.

This story is at therivervalleytimes.com and on Facebook. ★

MEMORIAL

LISA KELLY HARRIS • 12/14/1958 - 01/04/2026

Lisa Kelly Harris, of Rancho Murieta, CA, went to Heaven on January 4, 2026. Kelly was born December 14, 1958 on a beautiful Sunday afternoon in Canoga Park, California, to Kenneth and Nellie Goodman, both deceased. She was married to her true love and partner in life, Jay, on February 10, 1996. The wedding was the best and most memorable celebration known to many and Kelly always said it was when her life truly began.



Jay and Kelly shared three children. Paul Parsons of Newcastle, Oklahoma, Kathryn Harris of Sacramento, Ca, (partner John Donaldson) and Matt Harris (wife Angela) of Boise Idaho.

Kelly had five grandchildren. Noah Harris, Lillian Harris, Daniel Harris, Luke Harris, and Rosalie Harris all of Boise, Idaho.

Kelly had two sisters, Rita Clift (deceased) of Phoenix Arizona, and Cyndie Hatchel of Edmond, Oklahoma.

Kelly was born an aunt. It was her natural nurturing way. Many nieces and nephews were by blood and many were chosen by the Lord to be in her life and she loved them as though they were her own.

Kelly graduated from Guthrie High School in 1976 where her favorite subject was math, and she played volleyball and basketball. For spending money during highschool she enjoyed tearoom modeling for several boutiques.

Kelly earned an Associate Degree in Business, was a licensed cosmetologist, and a licensed Christian Coach.

Kelly's professional career was primarily in the oil and gas industry however her career also included managing a Red Lobster restaurant, cosmetology, and Christian Coaching. Kelly eventually returned to the oil and gas industry for the past 25 years of her career specializing in natural gas pipeline balancing and reservoir engineering where she created and analyzed massive spreadsheets tracking the history of thousands of wells. Kelly said her massive spreadsheets brought her a weird sense of joy only an engineer would

appreciate.

Kelly was a member of the Rancho Murieta Community Church in Rancho Murieta, California. When in Oklahoma her home church was Lakeside United Methodist Church.

Kelly had a love for learning and new experiences and she and Jay had a wanderlust that took them to many corners of the world.

Even when Kelly and Jay traveled, having a home church was on the to-do list. They had a love for what they called their island, Curacao, where the sweet brothers and sisters of Victory Outreach Curacao welcomed them each time they came to the island making sure they were included in the service.

Kelly told everyone her heaven on earth would look like Sedona, AZ on one side, then turn around to see Curacao on the other side.

Kelly spent time in community services such as Habitat for Humanity, Christmas in April, and the Law Enforcement Chaplaincy. However, her love for service was seen most in the church she attended, where the Lord had her using her wonderful gifts.

Kelly loved quilting and when she heard a family member was having a baby it was time to start creating a quilt unique to them.

Running was a love/hate relationship Kelly would always say however it was mostly love as evidenced by the hundreds of running numbers. Kelly also learned to swim in order to enter a triathlon, however she despised bicycling.

Scuba diving with the


love of her life, Jay, created so many wonderful adventures. For those who dive know it is another beautiful creation our Creator gave us to experience.

Later in life hiking became a great love. Hand Kelly her hat and sticks and try to keep up with her. Ask her about a Camino de Santiago and her eyes would light up with a smile. The caminos were a tremendous highlight of her life and she felt so blessed she was given those opportunities to share them through her blogs. To understand her love for travel read a blog or two from "ayearwithjayandkelly.com" blog website.

Kelly's love of food included many trips to Per Se and The Kitchen. And she took much joy in creating and packaging her Christmas fudge to give to friends and family.

Kelly's favorite song of all time was Jesus Loves Me. And her favorite bible verses were "A friend loves at all times" Proverbs 17:17 (Life Verse) and "From His abundance we have all received one gracious blessing after another" John 1:16 (NLT)

Kelly's greatest accomplishment was serving the Lord as He would call. Kelly said serving on the board of the church was something she did not plan to do, however was very thankful for the pastor who recognized her abilities and provided that opportunity. She said it was her most favorite calling and the best learning experience ever as she grew in the Lord more during those years. She would say that "you can't do it without your eyes fixed on Jesus"




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Community Donors Step Up at Blood Drive

Donor Elizabeth Myers and Vitalant nurse Kristen Graves help supply badly needed blood during the Rancho Murieta Women's Club quarterly blood drive at St. Vincent de Paul Church on Jan. 26. The drive collected 45 whole blood donations and six Power Red donations, totaling 56 pints. Although 57 people made appointments, 10 were no-shows, offset by 10 walk-ins. Photo by Gail Bullen

CSD Moratorium Debate Heats Up Ahead of Feb. 10 Hearing

Story and photos by Gail Bullen
River Valley Times Reporter

RANCHO MURIETA, CA (MPG) - Although not on the agenda, a potential development moratorium dominated public comment at the Rancho Murieta Community Services District Board meeting on Jan. 21.

The issue has taken on new urgency ahead of a public hearing on whether to declare a water shortage emergency. The hearing is scheduled for 6 p.m. Feb. 10 at the Rancho Murieta Country Club, where a decision could be made. It was originally scheduled for Jan. 27 but had to be postponed.

Only members of the audience raised moratorium-related concerns at the Jan. 21 meeting, and the board did not address those comments.

Developer Response

Speakers at the meeting included three representatives of Rancho Murieta Properties, which owns the proposed 561-lot Rancho North subdivision. Rancho North would be the only development affected by a moratorium.

Partner Carol Anderson Ward said her family and Rancho Murieta Properties have long sought to help address the community's water challenges, including offering wells for water augmentation in 1994 and again in 2018. She said the district ultimately did not use a \$500,000 Proposition 84 grant that had been intended for well development.

Ward said her partnership has invested about \$5 million in the water treatment plant upgrade and augmentation efforts. (This was under a 2014 Facilities Service Agreement with the district, which developers could argue contractually guarantees water service in exchange for their contribution toward water infrastructure.)

The partnership cut the number of planned lots in half to reduce community impacts and developed a hotel, shopping center and other improvements to strengthen Rancho Murieta.

Ward said she wants developers, the district and the Rancho Murieta Association to work cooperatively on water solutions and said board approval of a moratorium would hurt Rancho Murieta residents.

"We don't want to have to sue this board or the CSD to get what we deserve," Ward said.

Rancho Murieta Properties partner Tim deRegt said residents need clear answers about how a water moratorium could affect property values, home financing, water rates and who would ultimately bear the costs before the board considers such action. He said many people he speaks with are either unaware of the proposal or do not understand its implications.

DeRegt said a recent letter and online commentary from Destination Rancho Murieta point to the same conclusion: The community needs a fuller discussion and better information. He said it is appropriate to discuss a moratorium now, but not to move forward with a vote yet.

Rancho Murieta Properties project manager Jeff Pearson said he was reinforcing Ward's point that the district hasn't reached out to the developers to collaborate on water solutions.

"There really is a pathway," he said.

Resident Comments

Longtime community advocate Janis Eckard supported declaring a water emergency and development moratorium, saying the action is not "rushed." She said about 2,000 residents petitioned for it more than a year ago, but no action has been taken since.

For the past 36 years, Eckard said, the



Carol Prinzo emphasizes that all of the stakeholders must work together to solve the water problems.



Carol Anderson Ward urges the Rancho Murieta Community Services Board not to enact a water shortage emergency that would affect the proposed Rancho North development. She was speaking at the Jan. 21 board meeting.

Community Services District has relied on unachievable assumptions and inaccurate data in its studies, creating the appearance that Rancho Murieta has an adequate water supply to fully build out, despite what she said the district has known since the 1976-77 drought.

"From my perspective, running the community out of water is what's truly risky, particularly considering the fact that Rancho Murieta is a designated wildfire area with limited evacuation options," she said.

Tom Shewchuk urged the board not to rush into a vote, but to instead use the Feb. 10 hearing to gather opinions and then take a few months to decide.

Carol Prinzo said that water shortfall issues in a drought and the lack of a secondary water source should be solved by a collaborative effort of the district, the developers and the Rancho Murieta Association.

"I've been asking since day one, 'Why can't we all sit down together?'"

Mike Martel asked the board to examine how a moratorium could affect bank lending and home sales in the community.

Maria Caudill was concerned that homeowners don't clearly understand how a possible water moratorium would affect them personally, especially for "really tangible things" like bank loans and selling homes. She urged the board to present a concrete, step-by-step plan for what it will do after the moratorium meeting in either outcome, so people can regain confidence.

A letter included in the board meeting packet from resident Nellie Bloom also addressed the possibility of a moratorium. She urged the board to pause any decision, citing the lack of permanent leadership, unanswered questions about property values and costs, and the need for more information and public discussion before taking such a consequential step.

Anonymous Group Raises Concerns

Destination Rancho Murieta is an anonymous group that has posted online



Janis Eckard, a longtime community advocate, expresses her support for a moratorium.

warnings about a potential moratorium. It has said that members are residents who remain unnamed out of fear of reprisals. A Jan. 20 post listed "5 critical questions RMCS D should answer before implementing a water Moratorium."

Because the group's online posts raised concerns similar to those expressed by Rancho Murieta Properties, the River Valley Times approached three RMP representatives outside the CSD board meeting.

When asked who was writing the Destination Rancho Murieta posts, all three said they did not know.

"We would like to know ourselves," deRegt added.

Earlier in the meeting, Eckard criticized online statements circulated by Destination Rancho Murieta, calling them misleading and intended to undermine the proposed water emergency.

"In my opinion, the document that has been circulated has been disingenuous and solely intended to defeat the water emergency measure," she said.

Eckard argued that the costs and impacts associated with declaring a water emergency were significantly exaggerated, while the time and expense required to pursue land acquisition as an alternative were understated.

She also questioned the group's approach, saying that if the proposal were a sincere attempt to resolve water-shortfall issues, it should have been brought first to CSD, the Rancho Murieta Association and other stakeholders rather than being broadly distributed to the community.

Legal and planning background

For more on the proposed moratorium, see the Jan. 23 issue of the River Valley Times.

Two directors, Randy Jenco and Tim Maybee, opposed considering a moratorium, but they were outvoted by Board President John Merchant and Directors Linda Butler and Bill Gere.

A notice on the district's website states that the board is considering a water emergency declaration based on analysis in a draft Integrated Water Master Plan



Maria Caudill asks how a moratorium would affect residents and asks the board to make a plan.

evaluating water supply under drought conditions. The draft includes modeling of a worst-case scenario comparable to the 1977-78 drought and identifies potential supply constraints under those conditions.

Under that worst-case model, the district would have little margin to serve existing customers and would face a severe shortfall at full buildout. The document does not conclude that the district would run out of water under normal conditions or during droughts comparable to the four statewide droughts declared since the historic drought. The district has never had a secondary water supply.

The board's website notice also states, "If the Board determines that current demands threaten supplies needed for human consumption, sanitation and fire protection, a water emergency will be declared."

State water law generally ties emergency declarations to actual or imminent supply constraints, and declarations based primarily on planning models rather than documented shortages may face closer scrutiny.

Relying on the draft 2024 Integrated Water Master Plan, which has not been approved by the board, could also pose legal risks if the district is sued after enacting a moratorium.

Maybe, who opposes a moratorium, raised that concern at the Dec. 21 board meeting. He said that unless the board formally adopts the draft IWMP, it must continue relying on the 2010 plan for its water supply figures.

The 2010 plan, along with a 2016 Water Supply Assessment, both concluded that the district had sufficient water for full buildout.

District Counsel Patrick Enright said Maybee had a point.

"We should at least have accepted the numbers, even if we do not accept all of the conclusions and recommendations," Enright said. "That would give us current figures rather than relying on those from 2010 or 2016."

This story is at therivervalleytimes.com and on Facebook.

RD 800 Receives FEMA Funds, Advances Flood Planning

By Gail Bullen
River Valley Times
Reporter

RANCHO MURIETA, CA (MPG)

- Three years after the January 2023 Cosumnes River floods upended its finances, Reclamation District 800 is finally beginning to see relief while still confronting the limits of a small assessment district responsible for aging levees.

In recent meetings, the district reported that millions of dollars in Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and state reimbursements are now being applied to debt, completed another emergency levee repair, and advanced several critical planning efforts, including a review of an Army Corps of Engineers levee study, development of a formal Emergency Action Plan, and revised flood-warning thresholds tied to the Michigan Bar river gauge.

Reclamation District 800 maintains and repairs 34 miles of privately owned, mostly earthen levees along the Cosumnes River, extending from Rancho Murieta to Freeman Road off Dillard Road in Wilton and Freeman Road off Grant Line Road in the Sheldon area.

The levees provide approximately 10-year flood protection and are funded through an assessment district that generates just over \$550,000 annually. After the January 2023 storms, the district borrowed about \$6.5 million to fund emergency levee repairs and currently owes approximately \$7.9 million to the Bank of Stockton.

FEMA Money Reduces Storm Debt

For the first time since the January 2023 floods forced RD 800 to borrow heavily for emergency levee repairs, FEMA reimbursements are now being applied to reduce the district's debt.

At the Jan. 15 meeting, district engineer Patrick Ervin reported that more than \$4.37 million in FEMA funding was deposited into the district's Sacramento County levee fund for RD 800 in late December, followed by a California Office of Emergency Services (Cal OES) payment of about \$264,000 in early January.

Perla Tzintzun-Garabay, the district's contract accountant, explained that once the FEMA and Cal OES funds are received, the county treasurer automatically notifies Bank of Stockton and calls in outstanding warrants, starting with the oldest debt first. The district does not control how the money is applied; repayment occurs automatically as funds become available.

Additional reimbursements are still pending. Ervin said Cal OES approved a local cost-share waiver for a second FEMA claim, meaning the state will cover the remaining 25 percent – about \$320,000 – that otherwise would have been the district's responsibility. He also reported that the district has submitted a FEMA management cost claim of approximately \$191,000 for administrative and staff time related to the flood response, though FEMA is behind on processing those claims.

The FEMA and Cal

OES reimbursements stem from extensive emergency and post-storm repairs following the January 2023 atmospheric river event, which caused multiple levee breaches, widespread erosion and prolonged flooding along the Cosumnes River. RD 800 borrowed about \$6.5 million to fund emergency response and repairs during and after the storm, contributing to the district's current debt load.

In addition to FEMA and Cal OES funding, RD 800 has already received significant reimbursement through the federal Natural Resources Conservation Service. NRCS covered 75 percent of the cost – about \$2.5 million – for two fast-track levee repairs at Fig Road and Lee School House Road. Cal OES paid the remaining 25% local share for those projects, reducing the amount the district needed to finance for those emergency repairs.

Emergency Repair Completed after Heavy Rains

During the January meeting, Ervin updated the board on an emergency repair to address severe waterside erosion along approximately 200 feet of levee south of the Folsom Canal, on the Sheldon side of the river. Erosion near a waterside slope weakens the levee's ability to resist flood pressure, increasing the risk of slope failure or internal erosion during high water.

The board met briefly on Jan. 4 to declare an emergency. The trustees approved a not-to-exceed \$180,000 contract with Asta Construction, above the original \$145,000 estimate, to account for potential complications.

The contingency was needed because wet conditions and loaded rock trucks damaged the levee road, so crews had to bring in additional ballast rock to stabilize the road and keep trucks from getting stuck. The work took between Jan. 5 and Jan. 9.

The emergency declaration expired before the January meeting.

Corps Study Bolsters Funding Case

At the Dec. 18 meeting, Ervin presented an overview of the recently completed Army Corps of Engineers levee review, which he said largely confirmed what the district already knew about its system.

"It's a lot of stuff we already knew," Ervin told the board, citing sandy levees, persistent seepage and erosion issues, and multiple locations that overtop during large flood events.

He said the Corps' findings contained "no surprises" but carry significant weight because of the agency's role as the national authority on levee safety.

The Corps' primary recommendations include developing a flood-specific Emergency Action Plan, providing flood-fight training for staff and landowners, improving levee access and operations, and continuing targeted erosion repairs.

Ervin emphasized that having these deficiencies formally documented by the Corps gives RD 800 stronger leverage when seeking state funding from



Completed emergency repairs to a levee south of the Folsom South Canal on the Sheldon side of the Cosumnes River are shown after heavy rains in early January. Courtesy photos



Engineer Patrick Ervin, left, shows the board an example of an Emergency Action Plan from another district during the Reclamation District 800 board meeting on Jan. 15. At right, from left, are accountant Perla Tzintzun-Garabay, Board President Brian Takemori and secretary Marsha Homes.

the Department of Water Resources.

Emergency Action Plan

Discussion of a formal Emergency Action Plan featured prominently at both meetings, reflecting its status as the Corps' top recommendation.

In December, Ervin said the district needs an EAP that clearly defines triggers for actions such as levee patrols, emergency declarations and evacuations, tied largely to river stages at the Michigan Bar gauge and observed conditions. He acknowledged the difficulty of setting those triggers, noting that "meteorology isn't a perfect science," but said the district "really needs one of these" plans.

By January, the board took concrete steps toward implementation, approving work with Wagner & Bonsignore to develop the EAP, with consultant Brenna Howell (of Rancho Murieta) serving as a subconsultant.

The not-to-exceed \$30,000 contract will be funded from a state grant and is intended to improve coordination with

Sacramento County, Cal OES and local fire agencies during flood events.

Michigan Bar River Gauges

Both meetings also included extensive discussion of flood stage definitions at the Michigan Bar river gauge, a critical monitoring point for RD 800 and partner agencies along the Cosumnes River.

Ervin reported that Sacramento County and the California-Nevada River Forecast Center asked the district to review proposed flood stage thresholds and provide local input. The agencies' initial framework identified minor flooding at 12 feet, moderate flooding at 16 feet and major flooding at 18 feet.

Board members said those thresholds did not match real-world impacts. Based on recent flood history, particularly the January 2023 event, directors said flooding begins earlier. At about 10 feet, water begins moving toward Green Road and nearby fields.

By 12 feet, flooding becomes more widespread, and roads such as Green Road and portions of

Dillard Road can be overtopped. The January 2023 flood peaked at roughly 16.5 feet, a level the trustees described as clearly "major," with multiple regional road closures leaving Wilton and Rancho Murieta effectively landlocked.

The board agreed to recommend redefining flood stages as minor at 10 feet, moderate at 12 feet and major at 16 feet, with 18 feet and above considered catastrophic. Ervin said the agencies were receptive to revising the thresholds, which are expected to be incorporated into the district's Emergency Action Plan.

Topographic Survey

Both meetings also included a discussion of the need for a detailed topographic survey of the levee system, particularly along the North Levee.

Ervin explained that while the Corps study relied on LiDAR and limited ground checks, it did not produce a full ground-based survey with regular centerline elevations and cross-sections. A professional topographic survey would provide precise data

on low spots and weak sections, supporting future repairs, emergency response and long-term planning.

In January, Ervin said the district is working with NorthStar on a proposal to survey the North Levee. The work would be funded from state grant monies, which he cautioned are beginning to run low.

Niello-Secured Grant

All of the district's recent planning work has been funded through a \$500,000 state grant secured in 2023 with assistance from State Sen. Roger Niello. District officials said the grant paid for engineering time associated with the Army Corps of Engineers levee study and is now funding development of the Emergency Action Plan, the planned topographic survey of the levee system and other flood-preparedness and planning efforts, allowing RD 800 to advance long-term planning work without drawing on assessment revenues.

This story is at therivervalleytimes.com and on Facebook. ★

Kiwanis Club Collects 300 Toys for Holiday Drive

The Kiwanis Club of Rancho Murieta offers a belated thank-you to the community for its generous response to the Toys for Tots campaign. More than 300 new toys – filling seven boxes and six bags – were collected and donated to the Marine Toys for Tots program. The club also thanks local businesses that hosted collection boxes: Rancho Murieta Country Club, The Back Door Bar & Grill, The Local Bean Cafe, Rancho Murieta Hardware, El Gallo restaurant, and Rancho Murieta Homes & Land (Karen Hoberg). Photo courtesy of Patrick Rooney



SECURITY LOGS

Following is a summary of activity for the Rancho Murieta Community Services District Security Department for the following dates. Note: these log entries are condensed. For full security log details, go to the CSD website at rmcsd.com.

Jan. 19
7:33 p.m., North Gate arm incident: Patrol made contact with husband of the driver of the Ford Bronco that was involved in a gate arm collision. Driver left the scene before patrol was able to obtain any photos of the vehicle damage. Patrol did not make contact with driver. Husband stated that vehicle did not suffer any damage at the time of the collision. Patrol conducted gate arm inspection; gate not in working condition, unable to manually cycle the gate arm in open and close position (gate inspection requested).
North Gate traffic cameras footage review revealed: a Ford pickup arrived to the outer resident lane and successfully was able to pass through the gate. After Ford pickup left the gate, gate arm remained in open position. Shortly after, a Ford SUV arrived at the gate and proceeded toward the gate arm. As Ford SUV lined up with a gate, gate arm started to close and collided with an upper portion

of the windshield as Ford SUV traveled through the gate at higher speed than usual. When Ford SUV collided with a gate arm, vehicle knocked gate arm out of its bracket. Ford SUV stopped abruptly, and moments later continued to drive into Murieta North.

Jan. 20
5:45 p.m., Report of a disabled vehicle Murieta South Parkway inbound, approximately 50 yards from the South Gate. Driver was contacted and stated a towing service was en route. Patrol remained on scene to provide traffic control until the tow service arrived.

Jan. 25
Officer Perepelka was dispatched to a report of a suspicious vehicle at Stableford Way. The reporting party stated that two subjects exited a red Mercedes-Benz C-Class and walked away in an unknown direction. Vehicle information was provided as California license plate with last registration activity noted in August 2019. An area search was conducted. During the search, Mercedes C-Class with three adult male occupants arrived at the location and Officer Pereplka contacted the driver, an adult male who verbally identified himself as a resident of Colbert Drive. He stated the vehicle was being sold

and had run out of fuel during a test drive.

Jan. 26
12:37 p.m., Reporting party located an elderly male who appeared to be lost and wandering. Units Adam-1 and Charles-1 responded. Sacramento Sheriff's Department was notified and posted to Facebook. The individual was successfully reunited with family.

Jan. 29
2:15 p.m., Soliciting Complaint, Reynosa Drive: Subject located and advised that soliciting is not permitted on Rancho Murieta properties. Subject complied and left the area without incident. Area clear.

3:36 p.m., Safety Advisory: South Gate officer reported a vehicle traveling inbound through the outbound lane into Murieta South after registering at the South Gate. The vehicle was identified as a late-model Nissan Altima, operated by a contractor with Granite Transformation. Patrol located the vehicle in front of Reynosa Drive. The driver was contacted and stated he was following GPS navigation and was unaware he had driven against the flow of traffic. The driver was advised to observe posted road signs while inside the community. The driver remained

at the residence upon patrol departure.

Jan. 30
4:04 p.m., Officer Passer was advised by multiple residents of a male subject unconscious behind the wheel of a black pickup at the intersection of Lago Drive and Pera Drive. Upon arrival, Officer Passer located the subject vehicle, a black Ram TRX, parked in front of Lindero Drive with the engine running and the vehicle shifted into reverse. Officer Passer made contact with the driver, identified as a guest, observed unconscious behind the wheel with the driver's window down. Officer Passer attempted verbal contact with no response and then lightly shook the driver's left arm, successfully waking him. Upon contact, driver displayed slurred speech and confusion; admitted to consuming approximately two beers two to three hours prior to driving into Rancho Murieta. Due to the observations, Officer Passer requested CHP respond for a possible DUI investigation. Driver requested to leave and was advised that Officer Passer is not a peace officer and did not have authority to detain him further. Driver departed the area southbound on Lindero Drive, westbound onto Lago Drive, exited the Lago gate

and continued eastbound on Jackson Road/Highway 16 toward Sloughhouse. CHP was advised of the vehicle description and direction of travel.

Feb. 4
8:34 a.m., Dispatch advised of a gate arm strike at the North Gate entrance. Gate Officer Hessler contacted the involved party, identified as a resident of Carmella Drive. The subject stated the gate arm lowered while entering after attempting to scan her barcode. Officer Hessler believed the subject was tailgating and the barcode failed to scan. Involved vehicle was a tan Club Car golf cart with RM registration. The subject left the area at approximately 8:49 a.m. Officer Passer arrived at approximately 8:51, documented the incident, inspected the gate arm, and cleared the scene at approximately 8:59 a.m.

Feb. 6
11:06 a.m., Officer Arino made contact with a vendor soliciting pest control services while servicing contracted residences near Wadkins Court. The subject was advised of RMA rules and was instructed to cease activity.

6:36 p.m., Officer Passer responded to a report of a suspicious substance located near Ventana Drive and Guadalupe Drive. The reporting party identified

the location of the substance. Upon investigation, the substance was identified as a desiccant and determined to be harmless. Officer Passer disposed of the package and cleared the scene.

7:17 p.m., Security responded to an alarm at Topspin Way. The residence was found filled with smoke due to a pot left on the stovetop. No damage or injuries were reported. The scene was cleared.

Feb. 8
10:29 a.m., Officer Passer made contact with a golf cart operating unlawfully on Highway 16 near Jackson Road. The driver, identified as resident of Verona Drive, was advised that golf cart operation on the highway is unsafe and unlawful. Driver stated she had made a wrong turn and apologized. Officer Passer escorted the subject off the highway and onto Murieta Drive, where golf cart operation is permitted.

10:36 a.m., Officer Passer responded to a report of three male juveniles suspected of fishing without residency authorization. Contact was made and it was determined the subjects were not residents. The subjects were advised that non-resident fishing is not permitted. All subjects were compliant and departed the community without incident. ★

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COMMUNITY BRIEFS

Spring Into Giving Bingo Set for March 25

The Rancho Murieta Women's Club will host its second annual Spring Into Giving Bingo on Wednesday, March 25 at the Rancho Murieta Country Club, combining bingo, lunch and charitable giving in support of the Sacramento Wellspring Women's Center. The menu includes Caesar salad, breadsticks, meat or vegetarian gluten-free lasagna, and a vanilla ice cream sundae for dessert. Spring-themed bingo prizes will be awarded during the event.

The cost is \$35 for club members and \$40 for non-members. Reservations are required and must be submitted by 5 p.m. Friday, March 13. Payments may be mailed to the Rancho Murieta Women's Club at P.O. Box 527, Rancho Murieta 95683, or dropped off at 14963 Reynosa Drive.

Attendees are encouraged to bring optional donations of new, non-perishable food or personal care items for the Sacramento Wellspring Women's Center, which provides meals, support services and a safe gathering place for vulnerable

women and children. A preferred donation list includes pantry staples, hygiene items, baby supplies and select wellness and art materials.

For more information, contact Barbara Armstrong at 916-541-1884.

ETC Announces 2026 Concert Lineup

Entertainment, Theatre & Culture for Rancho Murieta has announced its concert lineup for 2026 when the organization will be celebrating its 25th anniversary. The ETC kick-off will be held from 3 to 5 p.m. May 17 at the Rancho Murieta Country Club. Five concerts are slated: June 20, The Blockbusters; July 11, Billy Joel 2 Elton – Face to Face; Aug. 1, Titans of Rock, Aug. 22, Hip Service; and Sept. 5, Rhinestone Rodeo.

Composting Featured at Feb. 24 Garden Club Meeting

The Rancho Murieta Garden Club's Feb. 24 member meeting will focus on "Composting for Success" with guest speaker Susan Muckey, a University of California master gardener. She will share her secrets on

enriching soils for a healthier garden. Guests are welcome, and the first meeting is free for new attendees. Doors open at 6 p.m. for a social hour, refreshments and a raffle, with the program beginning at 7 p.m. The meeting takes place at the RMA Building

Scouts Slate Shredding Event

Got a pile of paperwork ready to go? Scout Troop 633 invites the community to a secure paper-shredding event from 9 a.m. to noon May 2 at the RMA Building parking lot.

It's an easy way to declutter, safeguard your information, and support local Scouts. The suggested donation is \$15 per banker's box, reflecting increased truck and fuel costs this year.

Wilton Bingo Set for March 7

The next bingo will be on Saturday, March 7 in the Wilton Community Center, 9717 Colony Road at Dillard Road, Wilton

Doors open at 5 p.m. with food available for sale and bingo starts at 6 p.m. All proceeds go to two nonprofits: the local Park Council and the Wilton History Group. ★

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CSD Discusses Repairs to Gate Arms, Culverts, Lift Station

By Gail Bullen
River Valley Times Reporter

RANCHO MURIETA, CA (MPG) - Although the agenda appeared light, the Rancho Murieta Community Services District Board discussed a range of issues at its Jan. 21 meeting, including repairs to a lift station and gate arms, as well as the need to update the district's water conservation plan in the event of a drought.

The board also heard public concerns about the upcoming Feb. 10 moratorium meeting, considered what would be involved in converting Lake Clementia into a drinking water source, and discussed efforts to identify potential groundwater options. (See three separate stories in this issue.)

Gates

During staff reports, the board returned to the long running problem of malfunctioning entry gates. Interim General Manager Amelia Wilder said security staff have been working to repair the gates but are "waiting on parts," adding that the supply situation "feels a lot like COVID."

Even with those efforts, Director Bill Gere pressed staff on why the issues had persisted for roughly six months, describing "musical, broken gates" at the north entrance and a very slow opening gate at the south. He asked who, specifically, was responsible for fixing the gates and questioned whether the district was overcomplicating the problem, saying he'd talked to a former state security gate manager who "just went to Grainger and bought the parts off the shelf." Gere said he found it hard to accept that parts could really be unavailable for that long.

Wilder responded that the main constraint is budget, not just parts: The district cannot simply buy all new gates because the money is not in the current budget, so staff is "limping" along with the old equipment.

Director Linda Butler, who chairs the Security Committee, added that the gates are very old and have been discussed repeatedly at committee meetings. She said staff have been moving components from one gate to another to keep as many lanes functioning as possible, that one gate remains out of service, and that her committee has now developed a three year capital improvements plan to replace all of

the gates, which must be placed on the CIP list and worked into the budget.

Despite resident frustration, Butler said she has "utmost confidence" in Security Sgt. Brandon Arino's efforts to manage the aging system within those financial limits.

Equestrian Center Culverts

The board voted to move forward with preliminary engineering work for culvert repairs at the Equestrian Center, approving a \$42,000 contract with the district engineer to begin design and permitting. The action authorizes hydraulic modeling of the outfall channel, environmental review under CEQA, permit preparation, topographic survey, and final design for replacing the aging culverts, following a recommendation from the district's Improvements Committee.

During the discussion, staff emphasized that the committee selected the least expensive repair option after earlier concepts – including a much more complex rail-car bridge installation – were estimated at more than \$600,000. The approved approach would replace the existing culverts with four 60-inch corrugated metal pipe culverts, each about 50 feet long, at an estimated construction cost of roughly \$284,000. The ditch banks also will be secured with riprap.

Staff said the culverts must be replaced this year due to their deteriorating condition, and Jeff Pearson, representing the Equestrian Center, said he would restore the road surface once the drainage work is complete.

"So it's a collaborative effort, and we appreciate that," Wilder said.

Lift Station 6B

Wilder told the board that the utilities crew had "done an awesome job" resolving the Lift Station 6B emergency and that the station is now functioning properly. She said the agenda item was to end the emergency repair status and reported that the total outside costs were about \$119,000, excluding internal labor.

The station suffered a mechanical and control failure during heavy rain on Nov. 14 that could have led to a sewage spill into the Cosumnes River. The station is located near the wooden bridge. Utility supervisor Corey Carskaddon said crews installed Jim caps on cleanouts in The Retreats subdivision and poured concrete

to seal pipes, sharply reducing inflow and infiltration. Crews also cut off an illegal connection at a manhole and repaired another with inflow problems, allowing the station to keep up with flows again.

Later, Travis Bohannon confirmed the lift station is operating normally and said remaining work includes backfilling trenches near the yellow bridge and Lift Station 6B and placing stakes to mark line locations, in case the district later needs to connect an existing 10-inch line to the lift station.

Oversight Committee

Gere and Board President John Merchant reported that their ad hoc Administrative Oversight committee has been meeting weekly with senior staff to restore regular staff meetings, untangle missing or outdated policies and procedures, and shift misplaced duties – such as payroll and paycheck liaison work – into the accounting department. Gere said key staff are effectively working seven days a week, concluding the district needs two or three more higher level employees to handle the workload.

Director Randy Jenco agreed the problems are serious but said the top priority must be hiring a permanent general manager. He said that many of the problems the ad hoc committee is uncovering will not truly be fixed until a permanent general manager is in place to lead and sustain the reforms.

Water Planning for Drought

District counsel Patrick Enright told the board that Senate Bill 552 requires the district to update its water shortage contingency planning and bring it into compliance with current state law. In a Jan. 5 letter, Enright noted that the district's existing plan was adopted in 2012 and has never been updated, even though SB 552 now requires small water systems to adopt an abridged water shortage contingency plan and update it every five years.

He recommended directing staff to update the plan now, while noting that once the district exceeds 3,000 connections, it will be required to adopt a more detailed plan as part of an Urban Water Management Plan.

Board members questioned how well state-mandated, multi-stage templates

fit Rancho Murieta's system. Merchant favored using standardized language from other agencies rather than starting from scratch, while Jenco argued that the district effectively operates with only two real conditions – whether winter pumping is possible or not – making percentage-based stages unrealistic. Merchant agreed the fit is imperfect but said state law requires a six-stage framework, leaving the district to adapt the template as best it can to local conditions.

Other Business

Butler, who chairs the Personnel Committee, reported that the committee has been actively working on the general manager job description and the broader framework for the position. She said the committee hoped to complete a draft at its Feb. 3 meeting.

The committee later approved the description and forwarded it to the board for discussion on Feb. 18.

The board agreed to reschedule a special security meeting originally set for Feb. 5. The meeting will focus on the "observe and report" role of patrol officers, finalizing the patrol officer job description and deciding what equipment they will carry.

Plant Operator Travis Bohannon reported that the district's water treatment plants produced about 512.8 million gallons of water in 2025, equivalent to 1,574 acre-feet.

The board considered – but ultimately rejected – a staff proposal to change the regular board meeting start time from 5 p.m. to 3 p.m.

The board approved a new organizational chart that consolidates operations under the interim general manager, making utilities, water/wastewater, IT and security report directly to Wilder, while keeping finance under Cecelia Min, director of Finance and Administration.

After briefly reviewing committee assignments, the board approved two changes. Gere will replace Merchant on the Improvements Committee, and Merchant will replace Gere on the Security Committee. All other committee assignments remain the same.

The board's next monthly meeting will be at 5 p.m. Feb. 18.

The story is also online at therivervalleytimes.com and on Facebook. ★

CSD Board Reviews Options for Lake Clementia, Recycled Water

Continued from page 1

recommended learning from other agencies, such as Modesto and El Dorado irrigation districts, that have secured exemptions, including whether lobbyists were used. Any effort, he said, would ultimately require evaluation of infrastructure upgrades needed to make the lake suitable for potable use.

Travis Bohannon, chief plant operator, reported on initial contacts with state drinking water regulators. He said Austin Peterson, a senior state regulator, advised the district not to proceed further until a formal permit application is submitted, adding that without one, the state would not allocate staff time to review the proposal. Peterson did provide a preliminary list of roughly 20 water quality tests. Bohannon estimated the cost at about \$10,000.

Bohannon said the testing could provide a baseline but warned much of it would likely have to be repeated once a permit application is filed. He added that without a rare exemption, Lake Clementia would have to become a "no body contact" reservoir to qualify for potable use.

Board member Linda Butler asked whether timing or season mattered for testing. Bohannon replied that contaminants such as Giardia, Cryptosporidium and E. coli do not disappear seasonally and would be present regardless of when testing occurs.

Board member Tim Maybee said the discussion

reinforced the need to fold Lake Clementia into the district's existing water working group, sometimes referred to as the "go find water" group. He argued that assigning responsibility to a standing group would prevent the issue from stalling between meetings and ensure coordination with other stakeholders, including the Rancho Murieta Association.

Director Randy Jenco agreed, saying the working group already includes the relevant parties and could serve as the conduit between staff and the board. Jenco chairs the working group, which also includes Bohannon, Rod Hart, Rancho Murieta Association general manager; Jeff Pearson, the project manager for Rancho Murieta Properties; and Tom Shewchuk, representing the Rancho Murieta Country Club.

Board member Bill Gere voiced concern about cost and timeline uncertainties, citing potential CEQA review and legislative action. He urged staff to first establish realistic timelines and cost ranges – whether the process would take years or decades, and whether it would cost \$1 million or \$10 million – before investing further effort.

Board President John Merchant raised the possibility that the district may need to retain a specialized water attorney to navigate the transition from a recreational license to potable and possibly irrigation uses. Merchant also

suggested adding irrigation use first, which would face fewer regulatory hurdles.

Recycled Water Uses

Merchant also proposed that the district consider recycled water as a central component of any Lake Clementia strategy, describing it as a potentially "game-changing" source.

Merchant said that under state law enacted in 2023, the district now has the right to pursue permits allowing indirect potable reuse of recycled wastewater.

Under this approach, treated recycled water could be conveyed to Lake Calero, blended with other surface water, processed through the district's water treatment plant and ultimately delivered as drinking water.

He said this method is already used at scale in places such as Orange County.

Merchant emphasized that recycled water represents a guaranteed and growing supply. He said the district already produces hundreds of acre-feet of recycled water annually, stored in ponds, and that volume increases as development continues. Rather than viewing recycled water as a disposal challenge, he argued it should be treated as a strategic asset that could reduce reliance on river diversions and groundwater pumping.

He said one option would be to move recycled water geographically – potentially via existing or modified infrastructure

– to Lake Calero, where it could be blended and treated for potable use. While acknowledging that additional testing, permitting, time and cost would be required, Merchant said the reliability of the supply could fundamentally change how the district manages drought risk.

Merchant also tied recycled water use to Lake Clementia, suggesting it could play a complementary role even if Clementia is not converted to potable use. He said recycled water could be used for irrigation – including the golf course – reducing demand for potable water during droughts. In emergency situations, Lake Clementia water could be reserved as a backup supply rather than a primary source.

He further noted that current water rights permit restrictions discourage use of Lake Clementia by limiting how much water can be stored there without reducing storage in Lake Calero.

Merchant said lifting or modifying that restriction could allow the district to refresh water in Lake Clementia with diverted river water while drawing older water out for irrigation use, potentially improving water quality over time.

Merchant said none of these options were meaningfully evaluated in the draft Integrated Water Master Plan, despite earlier discussions about recycled water dating back several years. He expressed frustration that the legislation enabling indirect potable

reuse was anticipated long before it was enacted but never incorporated into the district's planning framework.

"This goes hand in hand with the permitting discussion for Lake Clementia," Merchant said, arguing that recycled water permits and surface water permits should be considered together rather than in isolation.

Maybe said Merchant's comments further justified assigning the issue to the water working group, where recycled water, Lake Clementia and permitting issues could be evaluated together.

Jenco said his preference would be to reserve Lake Clementia as an emergency-only supply, possibly sending water to the golf course during severe droughts, while relying on recycled water distributed through purple pipe for irrigation in new developments. He questioned the need to pump water to the treatment plant at all.

Bohannon asked whether the board still wanted to proceed with baseline testing. Jenco responded that the working group should evaluate that question and said he was not inclined to proceed until necessary.

Merchant cautioned that the technical complexity of these ideas exceeds what residents or board members can handle themselves, and he said professional engineering firms would be needed.

He argued that a true urban water management plan should separate supply-and-demand reconciliation from engineering solutions.

Maybe agreed, saying the working group should refine options until clear cost and timeline thresholds are reached, then

return to the board for direction.

Jenco noted the district already has a costly proposal to redo the Integrated Water Master Plan and warned that engineering firms typically start from scratch rather than rely on prior studies.

Audience member Jim Farrell urged the board to wait for groundwater test-well results before pursuing conversion of Lake Clementia, saying its roughly 400-acre-foot yield should be weighed against potentially cheaper well alternatives. He cautioned that while initial testing costs are modest, CEQA review, permitting and legislative efforts could be substantial, and said productive wells that can be tied together by pipeline could deliver comparable supply without the regulatory complexity of certifying a recreational reservoir for potable use.

Audience member Jay Hannum, who is employed by another water district, raised concerns about recycled water quality, asking whether pharmaceuticals and other compounds are removed during treatment. Bohannon said the district treats recycled water to Title 22 standards and removes coliforms, but Hannum warned that introducing recycled water into a closed reservoir could cause long-term accumulation of contaminants.

The discussion concluded without formal action, with the board directing the water working group to further evaluate Lake Clementia, recycled water integration, regulatory pathways, costs and timelines before bringing recommendations back to the board.

This story is at therivervalleytimes.com and on Facebook. ★

Full Plates, Full House at Kiwanis Crab Feed

Continued from page 1

Vincent de Paul for use of the hall, recognized sponsors and volunteers, and singled out event co-chairs Bonnie Shewchuk and Dia Utterback for leading the effort.

Brandt also offered a special remembrance for longtime member Diann Swan, who recently died, assuring attendees that Swan's "Sweats for Vets" project will continue.

Special guests included Rosario Rodriguez, Sacramento County District 4 supervisor; and David Villanueva, the county's chief executive officer, who attended with his wife, Natalie Villanueva. Villanueva said the couple plans to move to Rancho Murieta.

For the second year, a team from the Elk Grove Lions Club catered the meal, cooking 1,100 pounds of crab and 900 pounds of shrimp.

"We are a nonprofit with cooking skills helping other nonprofits do what they want to do," said club administrator Jack Edwards, adding that all Lions cooks hold food-handler licenses.

The Knights of Columbus operated a no-host bar during the event, with proceeds benefiting Special Olympics of Northern California. John Slamkowski said they raised about \$1,600.

"We appreciate the partnership with the Kiwanis Club," he said. "We enjoy it. The cause is good, and we have always gotten good support from the people of Rancho Murieta."



Marty and Cindy Moreali get the scoop from server Desiree Ntal, a member of the Rancho Murieta Key Club.



Members of the Lions Club of Elk Grove catering the event are, from left, Jack Edward, Brian Croudh, Brad Pano and Lorene Fuhs.

Twenty-four Key Club members from the Rancho Murieta Key Club, Pleasant Grove Key Club and Sheldon Key Club served the tables, many for the first time.

"The kids did great," said supervisor Cookie Whalen, who worked alongside Patti Maffei. Attendees praised the teens' professionalism; their tips will support Key Club community projects, Whalen said.

The evening also

featured raffle baskets, a silent auction and a desert auction. Thirty-five cash donors contributed to the event. Final fundraising totals were not available as of press time and are expected after reconciliation in the coming weeks; last year's crab feed raised about \$38,000.

This year's Diamond Sponsor was Rancho Murieta Homes and Land (Karen Hoberg). Gold sponsors included Firecode Safety Equipment, Bobo

Construction, Town and Country Real Estate, Universal Custom Display and Supervisor Rodriguez.

Proceeds from the crab feed support Kiwanis programs that benefit local children and youth, continuing what Brandt described as the club's mission of "making our children stronger and our communities better."

See more photos at therivervalleytimes.com and on Facebook.



Special guests at the event are Sacramento County Board of Supervisors President Rosario Rodrigues, County Chief Executive David Villanueva and his wife Natalie Villanueva. The couple is moving to Rancho Murieta.



Whitney Alexander looks a little young to be cracking crab legs.



Melanie Adams prepares to dig in.

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