

Village Christmas Craft Faire Draws Shoppers with Handmade Gifts

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We Wish Our Readers A Happy Thanksgiving

RIVER VALLEY TIMES

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COYOTE CK. SOLAR SETTLEMENTS PROTECT OAKS, UNCERTAIN FUTURE



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MAKE OLD SAC YOUR HOLIDAY DESTINATION



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A Shifting Race for CSD

Updated ballot counts reshape results

Story and photos by Gail Bullen



Dia Utterback deposits her mail-in ballot in the official Sacramento County ballot drop box at the Rancho Murieta Vote Center on Election Day, Nov. 3.

RANCHO MURIETA, CA (MPG) - The outcome of the Rancho Murieta Community Services District Board of Directors election remained unofficial as additional ballots were counted, with the standings in the races for four board seats changing.

The latest results available before the River Valley Times' print deadline, released Tuesday, Nov. 10, showed Michael Martel moving ahead of John Van Doren in the closely contested race for a two-year term, while Tom Shewchuk continued to lead the race for three four-year terms.

Martel had 1,474 votes to Van Doren's 1,402, a lead of 72 votes. The reversal came after Van Doren led by 28 votes in the initial Nov. 4 count and 23 votes in the Nov. 6 update.

In the race for three four-year terms, Shewchuk widened his lead with 1,501 votes. Catherine Silvera moved into second place with 1,254 votes, narrowly ahead of Maria Caudill with 1,246.

Jeffrey Berkheimer was fourth with 1,065 votes, trailing Caudill by 181 votes for the third seat. Incumbent William Gere followed with 991 votes, former director Stephen Booth with 985, Peter Reagan with 644 and Tim

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New Backhoe Purchase Approved



A new 2025 Caterpillar backhoe loader joins the Rancho Murieta Community Services District's equipment fleet. The board approved its acquisition at a special board meeting Oct. 27. Courtesy photo

By Gail Bullen

RANCHO MURIETA, CA (MPG) - The Rancho Murieta Community Services District board of directors approved the acquisition of a new backhoe at a special meeting Oct. 27, using funds originally budgeted for a sewer/vactor truck that cannot be purchased until labor issues are resolved.

The board voted 3-0 to acquire a 2025 Caterpillar 420-07 backhoe loader from Holt of California through a lease-purchase agreement. The purchase was recommended by the district's Improvements Committee in September.

The new backhoe will replace a 2010 model that has cost the district more than $50,000 in repairs and rental equipment over the past two years. An additional $22,000 in repairs has been recommended.

At the request of Cecilia Min, director of finance and administration, the board selected a lease-purchase arrangement rather than an outright purchase to keep this year's expenditure within the $141,000 transferred from the sewer/vactor truck project in the 2026-27 budget.

The agreement calls for two annual payments of $98,615.97 at a fixed interest rate of 4.99%, plus a final payment of $101 in 2028-29. Including a separately purchased bucket, the total cost will be about $200,134, compared with $185,748 for an outright purchase.

The lease will require additional funding in the 2027-28 and 2028-29 budgets.

The sewer/vactor truck purchase has been postponed because of pending labor negotiations involving job specifications and licensing. The truck will be considered for funding in a future budget once those issues are resolved.

Utility Supervisor Corey Carskaddon told directors the existing backhoe had broken down on a job site during his first week with the district. Staff plans to continue using the aging machine at the wastewater treatment plant as long as it remains operational.

Directors Linda Butler and Tim Maybee joined Board President John Merchant in approving the purchase. ★

Honoring Our Heroes

Rancho Murieta Celebrates Veterans



Veterans and VFW Auxiliary members enjoy coffee, doughnuts and conversation around one of the patriotically decorated tables before the Veterans Day program begins.

Story and photos by Gail Bullen

RANCHO MURIETA, CA (MPG) - Veterans arriving at the Rancho Murieta Association Building on Nov. 11 received a warm welcome from about 30 adults and children, including Scouts and Cub Scouts, who lined the walkway to thank them for their military service.

Inside, dozens more gathered for the annual Veterans Day celebration hosted by the Auxiliary of Rancho Murieta Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 12215.

Veterans settled around patriotically decorated tables, enjoying coffee and doughnuts while sharing stories and memories with fellow veterans, family members and friends before the program began.

The gathering combined a tribute to military service with an opportunity for veterans to renew friendships and enjoy the appreciation of their community.

The room was decorated with patriotic centerpieces and military-themed displays. A slideshow assembled by RMA staff member Matt Mattice featured photographs provided by veterans and their families.

Two tables displayed handmade cards created by students at Cosumnes River Elementary School and The Ranch Preschool, twice the space needed for the cards last year.

Another attraction was the large assortment of raffle prizes donated by local businesses and assembled into gift baskets by Auxiliary volunteers. Each veteran received a complimentary raffle ticket.

The formal program opened with members of Scout Troop 233 presenting the colors and leading the Pledge of Allegiance. Bugler Tai Wieler stood outside the building's entrance and played the national anthem.

VFW Post Chaplain Don Craig offered the opening prayer, thanking veterans for their service and remembering those who lost their lives defending the country.

"We are grateful for their dedication and commitment, and the countless selfless acts they have performed, and the sacrifices of their families, so that we might continue to enjoy freedom," Craig said.

Post Commander Dave Walters thanked the Auxiliary for organizing the celebration and expressed appreciation for the Scouts who participated.

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Honoring Our Heroes



Veteran Ted Ryon reads a handmade thank-you card created by a local student. Children from Cosumnes River Elementary School and The Ranch Preschool made cards honoring veterans.



Maggie and Henry McPherson interview veterans Dave Walters, left, and Jay Solomon during the Veterans Day gathering. Walters is commander of Rancho Murieta Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 12215.



Veterans Jerry Robison, Mike Walker and Tim Villareal, from left, share stories beneath banners representing the branches of the U.S. military.

Continued from page 1

He also announced that the VFW post plans to sponsor Scout Troop 233 in 2027.

Junior Vice Commander Dan Pennington echoed Walters' appreciation for the young people.

"We really appreciate seeing that," Pennington said. "We need more support like that, and you're the future."

Pennington asked Purple Heart recipients to identify themselves, followed by veterans representing the various branches of the armed forces.

He also reminded those attending that military personnel remain deployed in dangerous assignments around the world.

"They're out there. They need your support," Pennington said. "We, the people, we put them there, whether we agree or not. They're there under our name, so we need to support them and bring them home safely."

Pennington described the celebration as a day of friendship and fellowship and encouraged veterans in need of assistance to contact the VFW.

Auxiliary President Sharyn Verdon also highlighted the organization's work supporting veterans beyond the annual celebration.



Rancho Murieta residents and Scouts welcome Navy veteran Charles Nellist to the RMA Building on Nov. 11 for a Veterans Day celebration honoring those who have served in the armed forces.

Verdon directed attendees to a table at the back of the room with information about the VFW's Rescue a Hero program, which supports veterans in need.

Verdon also reported that the Auxiliary delivered 42 bags of Thanksgiving food to the Mather VA Hospital food bank the previous week. Each bag included a $50 grocery gift card, and the donations will be distributed to veterans' families in need throughout the greater Sacramento area.

The project received support from local businesses, other VFW auxiliaries and residents of a Rancho Cordova retirement community.

Verdon also announced that Rancho Murieta's Bel Air supermarket was donating 20% of qualifying purchases made on Veterans Day by customers presenting a special coupon benefiting the Auxiliary.

Verdon also reminded attendees that the Auxiliary welcomes men as well as women.

"We are no longer a ladies' auxiliary. We are co-ed," she said, noting that the organization's male treasurer was traveling and unable to attend the celebration.

Following the remarks, Auxiliary member Norma Dawdy conducted the raffle drawings, calling out the names of veterans who had won gift baskets and other donated prizes.

The celebration concluded with a prayer by Craig and thanks from Verdon to the volunteers, businesses and community members who contributed to the event.

Verdon singled out event chair Norma Dowdy and Maggie Skaggs for their efforts.

"Norma Dowdy, who is the chair, just did an incredible job," Verdon said afterward. "Norma and Maggie Skaggs went to all the merchants and actually got all of the donations, and the merchants were just very, very generous."

Verdon said she was pleased with the event and the community's response.

"I think it went very well today," she said. "We had so many wonderful raffle prizes."

The Veterans Day gathering traces its roots to the "Been There, Done That Café," started by the Rancho Murieta Caregivers Support Group to honor local veterans. The VFW Auxiliary took over the annual celebration in 2024, continuing the tradition of bringing veterans together for coffee, conversation and recognition of their service.

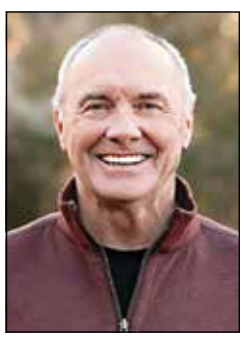
See more photos at therivervalleytimes.com or on Facebook. ★

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Rancho Murieta HOMES & LAND





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A Shifting Race for CSD



Sherrie Evpak waits for election worker Willi Thigpen to issue her a ballot for in-person voting Nov. 3 at the Rancho Murieta Vote Center in the CSD meeting room.

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Dec with 241.

The Nov. 10 tally showed 3,554 ballots counted among the district's 5,018 registered voters, representing a preliminary turnout of 70.83%. That was an increase of 1,156 ballots since the Nov. 6 update, when 2,398 ballots had been counted, and turnout stood at 47.79%.

The substantial increase suggested that many of the mail-in ballots deposited at the Rancho Murieta Vote Center on Election Day had been included. However, the county had not identified how many of those ballots were counted.

Election inspector Frank Donagher reported that five bags of mail-in ballots were collected at the Vote Center in the RMCSD meeting room Nov. 3. He estimated that as many as 500 ballots may have been deposited there. However, that was not an official count.

Donagher also reported that 171 people voted in person on Election Day. Another 32 voted during the preceding three days, bringing the four-day total to 203.

He described a busy Election Day, with voters were already lined up at 7:30 a.m. He also reported several first-time voters, including three young people who arrived consecutively Tuesday evening. The mothers of two took photographs to commemorate the occasion.

"It was a good time," Donagher said.

The election results remained unofficial, and additional ballots could change the standings, particularly in the two-year race.

Sacramento County's next scheduled update was Friday, Nov. 13, after the River Valley Times' deadline for this edition. An additional update was scheduled Monday, Nov. 16, when most ballots received within the legal deadlines were expected to be included, providing what should be a nearly complete unofficial count.

Updated results from Nov. 13 and Nov. 16 will be available at rivervalleytimes.com.

The county will continue updating results until certification, which cannot occur before Dec. 1.

This story is online at therivervalleytime.com and on Facebook. ★

County Sandbag Locations Open



Due to the growing concern of what El Nino may bring to the area, residents who believe their property will be in danger of potential flooding are encouraged to get sandbags now before rain falls. Photo courtesy of Sacramento County

Sacramento County News Release

SACRAMENTO COUNTY, CA (MPG) - The Sacramento County Department of Water Resources (DWR) has opened three sandbag locations for residents in the unincorporated areas. County DWR continues its annual winter operation to help residents Be Aware and Be Prepared in the event of flooding in their neighborhoods.

Due to the growing concern of what El Nino may bring to the area, residents who believe their property will be in danger of potential flooding are encouraged to get sandbags now before rain falls.

As in previous years, three main locations are now open including Branch Center, 3847 Branch Center Rd.; Orangevale Community Center, 6826 Hazel Ave.; Sacramento Metropolitan Fire Station #116, 7995 Elwyn Ave.

Last year, 308 tons of sand were scooped up and placed into 23,000 bags by Sacramento County residents between the various sandbag locations. During a storm event, if the conditions worsen and flooding become a larger concern, the department can deliver sand to six more sandbag locations that are on standby around the unincorporated parts of the County.

Do you have old sandbags from last winter? Get rid of them and get new bags. The older ones have deteriorated due to sitting out in the summer sun and won't provide the best protection. Get new bags to make sure you are prepared this winter.

Before the rain falls, residents are also encouraged to clear storm drains of trash and debris to reduce the chance of street flooding. During the storm, residents living near creeks and streams can use the County ALERT system to monitor rising streams in the unincorporated areas.

County DWR supplies the sand and bags, paid for by stormwater utility fees, but residents will need to bring a shovel. There is a 20-bag limit per visit. Residents not living in the unincorporated areas of the County will need to check with their cities for sandbag information. The public can visit www.stormready.org for more information on locations and other flood related topics. ★

VFW-Led Cleanup Draws Volunteers to Rancho Murieta Reservoirs



Jay Solomon (left) and Jerry Robison, members of the Veterans of Foreign Wars Rancho Murieta Post, collect trash along Lake Clementia on Oct. 31 during a community cleanup organized by the post. Solomon said 15 volunteers, most of them VFW members, turned out, allowing him to send some to clean up shorelines at the community's other two reservoirs. The trash collected filled half the bed of his pickup truck. The Rancho Murieta Association provided trash bags and grabbers, while The Local Bean Cafe donated doughnuts. 'It was a great response, but not overkill,' Solomon said. 'If you get too many people, they bump into each other.' Photo by Gail Bullen

Recruitment for the 2027-28 Sac County Civil Grand Jury Opens Soon

Sacramento County Grand Jury News Release

SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG) - The Civil Grand Jury is appointed to provide oversight of Sacramento County, its cities, public schools, including community colleges and special district agencies and operations. The Grand Jury also investigates complaints submitted by the public and issues reports of its findings. Past Grand Jury reports and government responses can be found online at https://sacgrandjury.org/reports.aspx.

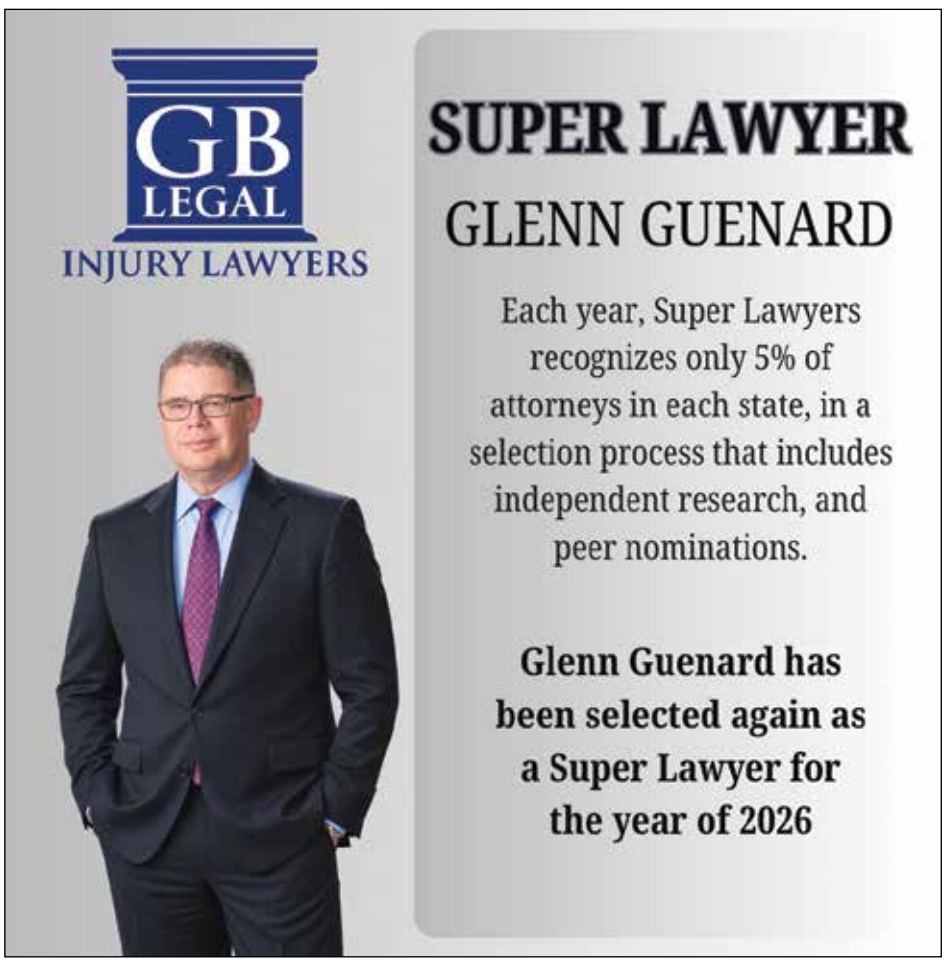
The Civil Grand Jury is also authorized to hear criminal indictments as needed, and is tasked with visiting regional detention facilities, along with the Sacramento County District Attorney's Office Crime Lab and the Sacramento County Coroner's Office. Nineteen Sacramento County residents and 11 alternates will be selected from among qualified applicants. The one-year term for volunteer jurors runs from July 1, 2027, to June 30, 2028.

"Serving on the Grand Jury has been a fantastic experience. It gives you, as a County resident, an opportunity to review and investigate your local government, school and special district operations, and then provide recommendations to improve their service to your community," Dave Comerchero, Foreperson, 2026-27 County of Sacramento Grand Jury.

To serve on the Grand Jury, you must be a U.S. citizen 18 years of age or older, a resident of Sacramento County for at least one year and available for 20 to 30 hours a week. Applicants must also be able to speak, read and write the English language.

The application period opens Nov. 20 and the deadline to apply is Dec. 31 to be considered. The 2026-27 Grand Jury will be empaneled in June 2027. Grand Jurors receive a small stipend for their volunteer work.

For more information about the Sacramento County Grand Jury, applicant criteria and how to apply, visit https://sacgrandjury.org/apply.aspx. ★





Village Christmas Craft Faire Draws Shoppers with Handmade Gifts

Story and photos by Gail Bullen

RANCHO MURIETA, CA (MPG) - Shoppers searching for unique holiday gifts found plenty to admire at the annual Christmas Craft Faire and Bake Sale at the Murieta Village Clubhouse on Nov. 7, where handmade crafts, original artwork and holiday treats filled the clubhouse and spilled onto the patio.

Customer Michelle Jacobson was impressed by the size and variety of the event.

"It's beautiful. I didn't expect it to be this large," Jacobson said. "It's just pretty amazing. Very nice." And she hadn't even explored the outdoor booths. "A lot of work went into this, and the ladies did a fantastic job. I need to stay much longer to get it all in."

Village resident Tamsen Fox, who organized the Social Committee fundraiser for the sixth year, called the event a huge success.

Fox expanded the fair this year by inviting professional artists to exhibit outdoors. Five accepted, adding a new dimension to the show, which featured 22 vendor tables inside the clubhouse.

The $25 rental fee was particularly attractive to professional artists accustomed to paying $100 or more at other shows, Fox said. Several were so pleased with the experience that they promised to encourage fellow artists to participate next year.

"We may have a full patio," she said.

Fox said vendors reported successful sales and expressed interest in returning. One artist who sold three hand-carved bird sculptures told her he enjoyed the show so much that he planned to return regardless of how much he sold.

The selection ranged from handmade greeting cards, jewelry, clothing, and Christmas decorations to quilts, colorful rugs, paintings and other original artwork.

Among the distinctive offerings was felt artwork created by Stacey Pepper, who learned the technique in Scotland. Pepper makes her own felt from sheep's wool and silk fibers, transforming it into colorful landscapes, framed pictures and decorative pieces.

"Wasn't that gorgeous?" Fox said of Pepper's work.

Fox emphasized that the fair is intended to showcase items made by the artists and craftspeople selling them, giving shoppers an opportunity to meet the creators and learn about their techniques.

The bake sale in the clubhouse library and the hot dog lunch were also successful, Fox reported. Proceeds from those sales, along with vendor table rentals, support the Village Social Committee.

The committee uses the money to provide memorial services at the clubhouse for residents who have died, offering families a place to gather and remember their loved ones.

The fair also provided an opportunity to support the Sacramento Food Bank through the Village Crafters, a group whose members make knitted, crocheted and other handcrafted items for charity.

Sandy Weber, who helps organize the group's sales, said the Crafters raised more than $1,000 for the food bank last year through sales before, during and after the fair.

This year, she said, the need for assistance is especially great.

"We need generous people this year. We need generous people going forward," Weber said. "We need to help our neighbors because it's going to get tough." The group is in its fourth year of fundraising, but illness and the loss of one of its members have reduced the amount of merchandise available this year. Weber said all proceeds from the Crafters' sales go to the food bank.

For Fox, the work of organizing the event included recruiting vendors, preparing publicity, arranging exhibits and overseeing setup and cleanup.

Despite the considerable effort, she said the response from vendors and visitors made it worthwhile.

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



Mary Blackwood, left, admires handmade greeting cards created by Mayra Mireles-Tijero, center, and her daughter, Sienna



Vendor Nancy Darden, right, uses a UV flashlight to show Nicole Williams and her daughter, Genevieve, the composition of a hand-carved stone dragon's foot.



Colorful felt artwork handcrafted by Stacey Pepper from sheep's wool and silk fibers is among the items offered at the Christmas Craft Faire.



Vendor Lisa Ryan, left, adjusts the sleeve of a Christmas jacket that Karen Best is purchasing.



Craft fair organizer Tamsen Fox displays a sample of a custom dog portrait available for order at her booth.



Sue Yacoub, left, asks vendor Eleanor Hunter about an item for sale at the annual Christmas Craft Faire and Bake Sale on Nov. 7 at the Murieta Village Clubhouse.



Artist Dennyece Farrall creates custom portraits featuring customers' dogs alongside their favorite beverages.

SacRT Awarded State Funding for Transit Improvements

Sacramento Regional Transit News Release



The $87.6 million project represents a major investment in cleaner transportation, improved transit service and infrastructure modernization. Photo courtesy of SacRT

SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG) - The Sacramento Regional Transit District (SacRT) has been selected to receive approximately $57.7 million in state funding through the Transit and Intercity Rail Capital Program (TIRCP) Cycle 8 awards to advance its Northern Sacramento and Yolo I-80 Intercity Zero Emission and Transformative Project.

The $87.6 million project represents a major investment in cleaner transportation, improved transit service and infrastructure modernization. The funding will support the purchase of 21 zero-emission hydrogen fuel cell buses, upgrades to SacRT's McClellan Bus Maintenance Facility, construction of a hydrogen fueling station and additional transit improvements designed to enhance the rider experience. The remaining $29.8 million will come from other state and regional funding sources, including Senate Bill 125 Zero-Emission Transit Capital Program, California Clean Truck and Bus Voucher Incentive Project, SACOG State Transportation Improvement Program, California Energy Commission EnergIIZE Transit Set-Aside and Sacramento Metropolitan Air District Low Emission Vehicle and Infrastructure Program.

The 21 hydrogen fuel cell buses will support expanded zero-emission service on three key corridors, bus routes 30, 81 and 138. The Causeway Connection (Route 138), which connects UC Davis Medical Center in Sacramento with UC Davis in Davis. As well as bus routes 30 (J Street) and 81 (Florin Road) provide access to employment, educational and medical destinations throughout the region.

These improvements will strengthen regional connections to Sacramento Valley Station, California's third-busiest train station and the region's busiest station, providing important connections to Capitol Corridor, Altamont Corridor Express (ACE) and Caltrain services.

The project includes several additional improvements designed to make bus service more reliable, accessible and comfortable. Cloud-based transit signal priority will be deployed at 30 intersections along bus routes 30 and 81 to help buses move more efficiently through traffic and reduce delays.

To improve connections between transportation modes, 10 BikeLink smart bike parking stations will be installed at UC Davis and four at SacRT's University/65th Street Station. Two heat-resilient bus shelters will also be installed at UC Davis Medical Center along bus routes 137 and 138, providing passengers with greater comfort and protection during extreme heat.

A major component of the project is transforming SacRT's 14-acre McClellan Bus Maintenance Facility (BMF-2) into a state-of-the-art zero-emission bus operations and maintenance hub. The project includes a hydrogen fueling station with potential public access.

The hydrogen fueling station will include a 25,000-gallon liquid hydrogen storage system with the capacity to fuel up to 100 hydrogen fuel cell buses. These investments will provide the infrastructure needed to support the long-term expansion of SacRT's zero-emission fleet and strengthen operational reliability throughout the northern service area.

The project also includes a workforce development partnership with American River College to train, place and retain individuals from underrepresented communities in careers supporting zero-emission vehicle operations and maintenance. The Center for Transportation and the Environment will provide technical assistance and project implementation support.

"This significant investment is an important step forward in modernizing public transportation and creating a cleaner, more efficient transit system for our region," said SacRT General Manager/CEO Henry Li. "With the support of the State of California, we can continue investing in zero-emission technology, improving service frequency and reliability, and building the infrastructure and workforce needed to support the future of public transportation."

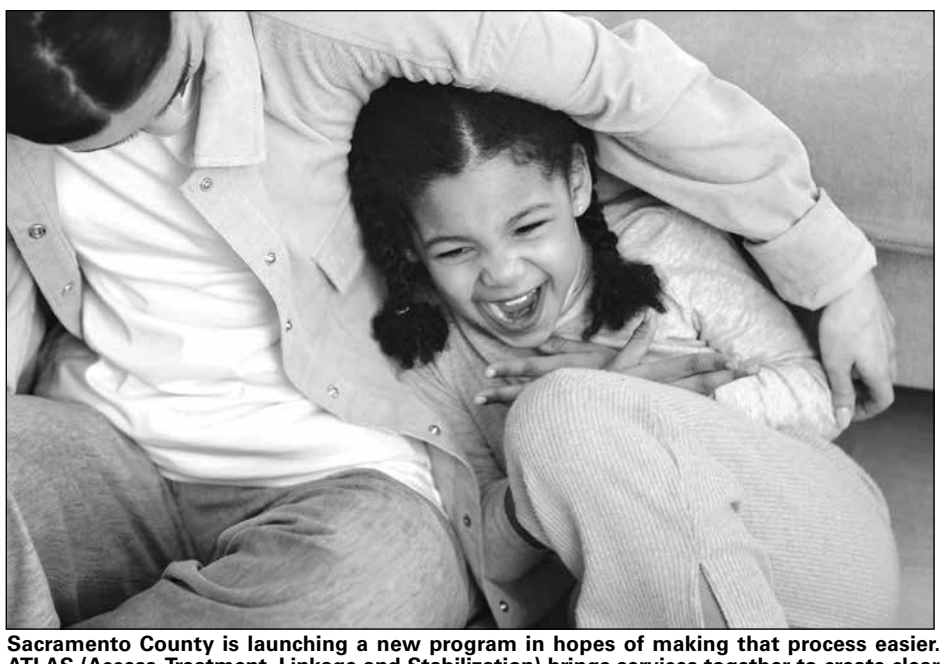
"This award represents an exciting opportunity to make meaningful improvements for SacRT riders and the communities we serve," said SacRT Board Chair and Elk Grove Mayor Bobbie Singh-Allen. "From more frequent bus service and improved regional connections to investments in zero-emission technology and modernized facilities, this project reflects our commitment to building a more accessible, reliable and sustainable transit system."

The improvements are projected to increase ridership by approximately 1.8 million passenger trips and deliver substantial environmental benefits. Benefits include reducing greenhouse gas emissions by approximately 116,037 metric tons, displacing more than 91.4 million passenger vehicle miles traveled, reducing fossil fuel consumption by approximately 10.1 million gallons and preventing an estimated 43,677 pounds of nitrogen oxide (NOx) emissions and 7,477 pounds of fine particulate matter (PM2.5) emissions.

These investments create an integrated transportation strategy that improves transit performance, expands access to sustainable transportation options and advances California's climate and clean air goals. Project completion is expected by 2030. ★

Sacramento County Mapping a Clearer Path to Behavioral Health Support for Youth and Families

Sacramento County News Release



Sacramento County is launching a new program in hopes of making that process easier. ATLAS (Access, Treatment, Linkage and Stabilization) brings services together to create clear direction and help families find the support they need before challenges become a crisis. Photo designed by Magnific

SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG) - When a child is experiencing behavioral health challenges, parents, caregivers and loved ones may find themselves trapped in a maze as they navigate different systems, programs and providers OR buried under a pile of information unsure of where to start. That's why Sacramento County is launching a new program in hopes of making that process easier. ATLAS (Access, Treatment, Linkage and Stabilization) brings services together to create clear direction and help families find the support they need before challenges become a crisis.

ATLAS connects five children's behavioral health service components under one coordinated system. Rather than requiring families to figure out which program to contact, ATLAS is designed to create a clearer path from early support and outreach to mental health treatment and stabilization services, including support for children and youth experiencing co-occurring mental health and substance use concerns.

"Families shouldn't have to know how the behavioral health system works to get their child the help they need," said Jessica Stockton, Sacramento County Behavioral Health Program planner. "ATLAS brings services together so we can better connect families with the right support, make it easier to navigate available resources and help children get care earlier."

The five core components in ATLAS include:

Children's Outpatient Specialty Mental Health Services: Provides behavioral health assessments, counseling and other specialty mental health treatment, including support for youth with co-occurring mental health and substance use concerns.

Therapeutic Behavioral Services (TBS): Provides individualized behavioral support to help children and youth develop skills and address challenging behaviors.

Outreach and Engagement: Connects with children, youth and families to help them understand available services and get connected to care.

Early Intervention: Provides early support and helps connect children, youth and families to appropriate behavioral health services and resources when concerns first emerge, before needs become more serious.

Flexible Stabilization Supports: Offers support to help children and families maintain stability and overcome barriers to care, including those related to homelessness and housing instability.

ATLAS will bring these services together through 10 selected community-based providers sited throughout the county. This will help children and families access appropriate services and receive continued support as their needs change. The County estimates ATLAS will serve approximately 9,200 children and youth through June 2027.

ATLAS will also focus on improving access in communities with greater identified needs. The County used multiple data sources to identify ZIP codes where additional attention and coordinated services can make a difference. This approach helps bring support closer to the families who may benefit most while allowing the County to monitor referrals, provider capacity and service use as the program gets underway.

Families may be connected to ATLAS through schools, community-based organizations, other behavioral health providers, child welfare and probation partners, community outreach activities or Sacramento County behavioral health access points. Families may also be able to refer themselves.

To learn more about ATLAS and find out whether the services may be right for your family, visit the Sacramento County Behavioral Health website. ★

Statewide Testing Confirms High Safety Levels in California Produce



Nearly 97% of fresh fruits and vegetables tested in California either contained no pesticide residues or had levels below federal limits set to protect human health. Photo designed by Magnific

California Department of Pesticide Regulation

SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG) - Nearly 97% of fresh fruits and vegetables tested in California either contained no pesticide residues or had levels below federal limits set to protect human health, according to the latest annual pesticide residue monitoring report released today by the California Department of Pesticide Regulation (DPR), underscoring the state's continued commitment to ensuring a safe food supply.

In 2024, DPR collected and tested 3,032 produce samples for more than 500 types of pesticides and breakdown products.

The results consisted of 1,195 (39.4%) - Zero residues detected; 1,740 (57.4%) - Residues within the legal pesticide residue tolerances set by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency; and 97 (3.2%) - Illegal residues detected.

These findings reflect consistent trends over the past decade, with the vast majority of residue levels within safe limits.

"Californians should feel confident in eating the fruits and vegetables both grown and sold in the state," DPR Director Karen Morrison said. "Our rigorous requirements, statewide monitoring program and follow-up enforcement on violators keep the food families eat safe."

For the full report, please visit our website. ★

Kings Korner

By V.G. Harris

Three Things

By V.G. Harris

Do the Sacramento Kings fans want to see a winning team? Of course they do, but most think that this season is already a lost one. That is not true and if the Kings can cure three things expect a turnaround.

Number one: A change in leadership and culture has to happen as soon as possible. The offense is old and predicable and opposing teams are taking advantage of it every night. The players are putting forth a diligent effort, but the mission is not one everyone understands, and that is essential to having a winning team.

Number two: The 3-point shot is a miscarriage of justice on both ends of the court. On offense the Kings don't get nearly enough open looks and as a result don't shoot as many 3's as the competition on a nightly basis. On the defensive end the Kings simply don't know how to guard the 3-point line and the combination of these two glaring faults is a recipe for disaster.

Number three: Sacramento must develop a culture of winning, or they are in jeopardy of mishandling Darius Acuff Jr.'s rookie season. Yes, Darius is doing well in most respects, but when asked by reporters about the difference between college and NBA ball, Darius replied it was the losing. He has been used to a culture of winning from the time he was in high school, and for the first time he's faced with something he doesn't know how to fix.

Coach Christie has had a preseason and a dozen games to find a combination of FIVE players that can work as a team and compliment each other, and all the Sacramento fans see are different lineups every night. Combine that with lack of a culture or a collective effort in how to plant the flag, and it's no wonder the Kings have managed one win to date.

It's obvious to everyone in the arena that something has to change, and in witnessing last nights contest against the mighty Oklahoma City Thunder, it was hard to watch a normally controlled Domantas Sabonis losing his composure and nearly getting a technical foul for language. I can't remember a time that I've seen Domantas so upset, and it's a direct result of the constant losing.

Many pundits and fans alike have said the Kings don't have the horses, but there is more than enough talent on this team to get the job done.

Do they need to add more talent? Of course they do, and I have no doubt that GM Scott Perry will do exactly that.

In the meantime, is it possible for the organization to not broadcast to the entire world what they are trying to do. By now the NBA has clearly got the message that due to expensive contracts the Kings would like to move both Domantas Sabonis and Zach Lavine. Stop it!

Successful trades happen when you play your cards close to the vest, and that is not something that the Kings are good at doing.

How about celebrating the virtues of Domantas and Zach and picturing them for the leaders and all-stars that they are. Both are playing well and are legitimate leaders on this team.

Zach was out in Sunday's game against the Thunder due to an illness, but his 3-point shooting has been an asset, and he is expected back soon.

Sunday's game saw Nique Clifford on the floor but not in a Sacramento Kings uniform. Traded to the Thunder just days ago for two second round draft choices, the Kings brought an end to a project that never took off.

Sadly, the 24th pick in the 2025 draft never gave the Sacramento Kings what they were looking for, and I give Scott Perry recognition for finally realizing that and making room for players with a future on this team.

Maxime Renauld will be back from injury soon, but with the acquisition of seven-foot Mason Plumlee, it is likely his playing time will be impacted. Like Nique Clifford, Renauld has had a tepid impact overall, and his future lies in all probability in a back up role, whether on the Kings roster or elsewhere.

Pay attention Kings fans to the three things the Kings need to accomplish and post your thoughts on my website at thekingskorner.com.

All the best! ★

By Emptying Death Row, Newsom Broke a Promise and Disregarded the Will of Voters



By Dan Walters, CALMatters.org

Gov. Gavin Newsom's decision to commute the death sentences of 548 inmates just weeks before he leaves office is the latest episode in California's 70-year-long political, legal and philosophical debate over capital punishment.

It also adds complexity, because Newsom's unilateral efforts to stop executions violate promises he made while running for governor to honor voters' support of the death penalty.

While Newsom's actions might bolster his standing among center-left Democratic voters in a potential presidential campaign, a Pew Research Center poll in August found 68% of Americans see the death penalty as justified for those who commit murder. That's 6 percentage points higher than the support in a 2021 poll.

A little history: California adopted capital punishment about when it became a state in 1850, but initially executions were done by counties. The state took over in 1893, and since then 514 people have been put to death, according to state records.

Serious efforts to abolish California's death penalty date from the 1950s, when Caryl Chessman, dubbed the "Red Light Bandit," faced execution for a series of robberies and sexual assaults — but no murders — in the 1940s and became a symbol for death penalty opponents.

Chessman's fate finally landed with Democratic Gov. Pat Brown, who personally opposed capital punishment. In 1960, on the eve of Chessman's execution, Brown's 21-year-old son, Jerry, pleaded for a reprieve and urged him to seek legislative repeal. The elder Brown agreed but the Legislature balked, and Chessman was executed on May 2, 1960.

During the 1970s, California's death penalty underwent a dizzying series of legal and political moves — sometimes in effect, sometimes not, depending on the latest decree from the state Supreme Court, action by the Legislature or ballot measure.

Voters had the last word in a 1978 pro-death-penalty ballot measure. However, Jerry Brown, who had become governor, appointed several members of the Supreme Court, led by Chief Justice Rose Bird, who consistently rejected death sentences. Voters ousted Bird and two other justices in 1986.

Executions resumed in the 1990s, and there have been 13 since. The last was triple murderer Clarence Ray Allen in 2006.

In 2012 and again in 2016, voters rejected ballot measures to repeal the death penalty while passing a 2016 measure aimed at speeding up capital punishment appeals.

Enter Newsom, who was elected lieutenant governor in 2010 and obviously wanted to become governor. In 2016, when asked about the death penalty by the Modesto Bee, Newsom said he would "be accountable to the will of the voters" if elected governor.

"I would not get my personal opinions in the way of the public's right to make a determination of where they want to take us," he said.

While campaigning in 2018, Newsom said he didn't "want to get ahead of the will of the voters" and wanted to "give the voters a chance to reconsider."

However, shortly after inauguration in 2019, Newsom issued a moratorium on executions but ducked questions about asking voters to repeal capital punishment, which would have been the honorable way to proceed. Instead he waited until the final weeks of his governorship to commute death sentences, subject to state Supreme Court ratification of some cases.

"I take this action because I firmly believe that state-sanctioned killing is incompatible with California's values, undermines the foundation of our legal system, and diminishes each of us," Newsom said in an open letter. "I know we cannot execute people in our imperfect legal system and remain true to our core values, first among them justice and human decency."

Newsom insists he respects voters, "but the constitution also gave every governor clemency authority, and that power exists for moments when law as applied cannot be squared with justice. For me, this is that moment."

The authority he cites was aimed at righting perceived injustices on a case-by-case basis.

Newsom's blanket clemency distorts that process, thumbs his nose at California voters and dishonors victims of horrendous crimes and their grieving families.

We'll learn whether it also impacts his presumed presidential ambitions.

Dan Walters is one of the most decorated and widely syndicated columnists in California history, authoring a column four times a week that offers his view and analysis of the state's political, economic, social and demographic trends. ★

Social Security Matters

I Got an Overpayment Notice from Social Security; What Should I Do?



By Russell Gloor, AMAC Certified Social Security Advisor

Dear Rusty: I received a letter from Social Security saying they overpaid me $12,703 in SS benefits. The letter said "We reduce Social Security benefits if you receive a government pension. We reduce benefits by two-thirds of the amount of your pension. Your benefit is less than two-thirds of the pension. For this reason, we cannot pay you."

FYI, I do receive a pension based on work not covered by Social Security taxes. My problem is that I don't fully understand this. This could be correct, but it doesn't seem right to come back wanting money I didn't ask for. I appreciate your time in getting back and letting me know if there is anything else I could be doing, or if they are entitled to go ahead and get the SS payments back. Thanks. ***Signed: Confused about Owing Social Security***

Dear Confused: From what you have shared, it appears that Social Security has determined that you were subject to a rule called the "Government Pension Offset" (GPO). FYI, the GPO was a provision which reduced Social Security spousal and/or survivor benefits for anyone who had a "non-covered" government pension (that is, a pension earned without contributing to Social Security). It's likely that SS paid you full benefits, but that the GPO should have reduced (or eliminated) the benefits they paid, had they known about your "uncovered" government pension. And that is likely the source of the $12,300 overpayment notice you received.

However, the GPO rule was repealed in January 2025 and no longer applies. In other words, those who have a "non-covered" government pension (a pension earned without contributing to SS) are now no longer subjected to reduced benefits under the GPO. The repeal legislation also provided for retroactivity back to January 2024, so the notice you received from Social Security was probably referring to SS benefits you received prior to 2024. If that is the case, then the notice you received is likely accurate and would need to be repaid. However, if the notice is referring to spousal or survivor benefits you received after December 2023, then it would be in error.

The best way to find out would be for you to file an appeal to Social Security, e.g., a "Request for Reconsideration" (form SSA-561), which will cause an independent review within Social Security to see if you are, indeed, required to repay those SS benefits, or whether you should pay something less (or nothing at all). Just remember that when you actually received the SS benefits in question is the key factor – if you had a non-covered government pension while receiving SS spouse or survivor benefits before 2024, then the overpayment notice you received is likely valid. If not, an appeal as I described above should resolve the issue for you.

This article is intended for information purposes only and does not represent legal or financial guidance. It presents the opinions and interpretations of the AMAC Foundation's staff, trained and accredited by the National Social Security Association (NSSA). NSSA and the AMAC Foundation and its staff are not affiliated with or endorsed by the Social Security Administration or any other governmental entity. To submit a question, visit our website (http://amacfoundation.org/services) or email us at ssadvisor@amacfoundation.org). ★



Britain owes no one an apology

When is the Muslim world going to apologize for its slave raids in Central and Eastern Europe that made off with millions of captives? Not any time soon, we can assume, since no one is asking it to apologize, and presumably no one ever will.

The same isn't true in the U.K., where there is a hot debate over whether the country should apologize for its participation in the trans-Atlantic slave trade in what would be a stark expression of double standards and Western guilt.

Prime Minister Andy Burnham, whose contemporary Labour Party has a taste for self-abasement, wants to have "difficult conversations" over such an apology, and says that it's "the patriotic thing to do." He is "offering a structured dialogue with those affected by the trans-Atlantic slave trade," never mind that Britain abolished the trade more than two centuries ago.

It's perverse for the U.K. -- pressured by Caribbean countries within the Commonwealth -- to consider a formal apology, given that slavery was a universal phenomenon and Britain had an honored role in snuffing it out.

The ancient Egyptians embraced slavery, and so did the Greeks and Romans. Often, enslavement was the price of military defeat in the ancient world. After the fall of the Roman Empire in the West, the Byzantines, the Vikings and Central Asian societies all relied on slave labor.

They weren't alone; the institution spanned every type of society. Historian Stewart Gordon notes that Ethiopia's legal code in the mid-13th century "recognized slaves as central to the economy and defined the acquisition and holding of slaves as the natural order of things." In the 16th century, he writes, Ethiopia "was a full slave society."

The trans-Atlantic slave trade couldn't have operated without the participation of West African rulers, who took slavery for granted before European slavers showed up and continued the practice after they left.

Something that's almost never mentioned in the debate over accountability for slavery is that North African slave traders enslaved enormous numbers of white Europeans between the 16th and 18th centuries.

Also inconvenient to an anti-Western narrative is that, as James Walvin writes in his "A Short History of Slavery," "Islamic societies were characterized by the widespread and generally unchallenged use of slavery. Indeed, slavery was commonplace throughout Arabia well before the rise of Islam. But as Islam spread between the eighth and 15th centuries, and especially to black Africa, it extended and confirmed the commonplace use of slavery and slave trading."

As part of the so-called Arab slave trade, more than a million slaves were taken from East Africa in the 19th century, and the flow continued apace into the 20th century. According to Gordon, "Perhaps the last large-scale movement of East African slaves to the Middle East was in the 1920s."

As for Britain, beginning in earnest in the 17th century, it became a central cog in the trans-Atlantic slave trade, an industrial-scale enterprise of stomach-turning cruelty. Its ships transported millions of slaves, while the plantation economies of its Caribbean possessions depended on slave labor.

Then, in an extraordinary triumph of morality over unjust profit-making, William Wilberforce and his fellow abolitionists convinced British society to abolish the slave trade and eventually slavery itself. If the institution of slavery was very old, the influence of this Christian-driven attitude to human rights was new. The British went further than simply turning their back on slavery, and used their navy to suppress the slave trade and their diplomatic sway to push other countries to give up the trade as well.

At considerable cost to itself in terms of military effort and financial resources (it paid off Spain, for instance), the U.K. did much more than its share to make abolition the international norm, on top of its other outsized contributions to the creation of the modern world. Rather than contemplating a groveling apology, the attitude of the U.K. should be: "A simple 'thank you' will suffice."

Rich Lowry is editor of the National Review.

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Make Old Sacramento Waterfront Your Holiday Destination

The historic district has something for everyone this season



Kick off the holiday season with the annual Holiday Tree Lighting Ceremony on Wednesday, Nov. 25, at 5:30 p.m. Photo courtesy of Downtown Sacramento Partnership

Downtown Sacramento Partnership News Release

SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG) - This year, Old Sacramento Waterfront invites visitors to make the most of the most wonderful time of the year. Guests can look forward to the return of the beloved Holiday Tree Lighting Ceremony and Theatre of Lights performances, as well as the chance to be rewarded for shopping small with Small Business Spree Bingo and explore a pedestrian-friendly district during Holidays on K. There are plenty of ways to celebrate the season, with holiday traditions, unique gift finds and festive sights and sounds around every corner.

Kick off the holiday season with the annual Holiday Tree Lighting Ceremony on Wednesday, Nov. 25, at 5:30 p.m. Enjoy performances from community groups before the district's 60-foot Holiday Tree illuminates the waterfront with nearly 24,000 lights, followed by the first Theatre of Lights performance of the season.

Produced by the Downtown Sacramento Partnership, a longtime Sacramento tradition, Theatre of Lights returns for its 18th year, transforming the historic district's balconies into a holiday stage. This free immersive performance is a family-friendly production that blends a retelling of 'Twas the Night Before Christmas with stories from Sacramento's history, narrated by Disney voice legend Bill Farmer (Goofy) and created by Stage 9 Exhibitions' Troy Carlson. Performances run Fridays and Saturdays at 6:30 and 7:30 p.m. and Sundays at 6:30 p.m., Nov. 27 through December 20, with special performances Dec. 23 at 6:30 and 7:30 p.m. and Dec. 24 at 6:30 p.m.

New this year, rotating coffee partners Blueprint Coffee, Pittador Brews and Steamers will serve beverages throughout the season, adding a little extra holiday cheer. To help make the experience accessible to more visitors, American Sign Language (ASL) interpretation will also be present for the Tree Lighting Ceremony, Saturday showings, and the final show on Dec. 24.

Make a day of holiday shopping with Small Business Spree Bingo! With more than 150 small businesses throughout the district, visitors can explore unique shops, restaurants and attractions, check off their bingo squares, and play to win exciting prizes, all in one visit. Complete the bingo challenge and submit an entry to receive a guaranteed prize, with additional opportunities to win even bigger rewards. Prizes include a $100 parking voucher, a family four-pack of tickets to the Downtown Sacramento Ice Rink, a museum membership, the chance to guest star as a Mama or Papa in Theatre of Lights, and more. For participation instructions and FAQs, visit https://www.oldsacramento.com/seasonal-activity/small-business-spree-bingo/.

Enjoy a little extra holiday magic along K Street as it transforms into a pedestrian-friendly gathering place with family-friendly fun, including live music, outdoor seating and games. Come down each weekend to experience something new with events curated by the local businesses in Old Sacramento Waterfront. Holidays on K takes place Saturdays and Sundays, Nov. 28 through Dec. 20, from noon to 4:30 p.m. along K Street in Old Sacramento Waterfront.

For more information about Old Sacramento Waterfront and its holiday events, visit www.oldsacramento.com. ★

COMMUNITY BRIEFS

Thanksgiving Turkey Trot Slated

Rancho Murieta residents are invited to start Thanksgiving Day with a run, trot or walk at the annual Turkey Trot on Nov. 26, at the gazebo near the North Gate. The event begins with music at 7:15 a.m., followed by the run at 8 a.m. Families, friends and friendly dogs are welcome. Prizes will be awarded in several categories, including fastest time and best costume. Organizers Carole and Don Thames also hope to offer a small obstacle course for children, weather permitting.

Participants are encouraged to bring donations for three charities. Tunnels to Towers will accept cash or checks; Wilton Animal Rescue will accept cash, checks or unopened dog and cat food or treats; and the Elk Grove Food Bank will accept nonperishable food items. The event is sponsored by Team Thames Real Estate.

Christmas Tree Lighting Nov. 27

The Rancho Murieta Association Recreation Committee will present the annual Christmas Tree Lighting at Stonehouse Park at 5:30 p.m., Nov. 27. After Santa Claus leads the countdown, he will sit on his chair so children can share their Christmas lists and parents can take pictures. Hot cocoa, hot cider, and cookies will be served.

Murieta Dance Slates Performances

Mystery, humor and dance will take center stage when Murieta Dance Company presents its annual recital, "Clue," Dec. 12-13 at Rosemont High School, 9594 Kiefer Blvd., Sacramento. The family-friendly production promises a humorous murder mystery featuring familiar characters from the classic board game, including Miss Scarlet, Colonel Mustard, Mrs. Peacock and Professor Plum. Performances are scheduled for 5 p.m., Dec. 12, and 2 p.m., Dec. 13. Tickets are $15 for general admission and $25 for VIP seating in the first seven rows. Tickets are available through Murieta Dance Company. For more information, call 916-296-6503. ★



Publisher,
Paul V. Scholl

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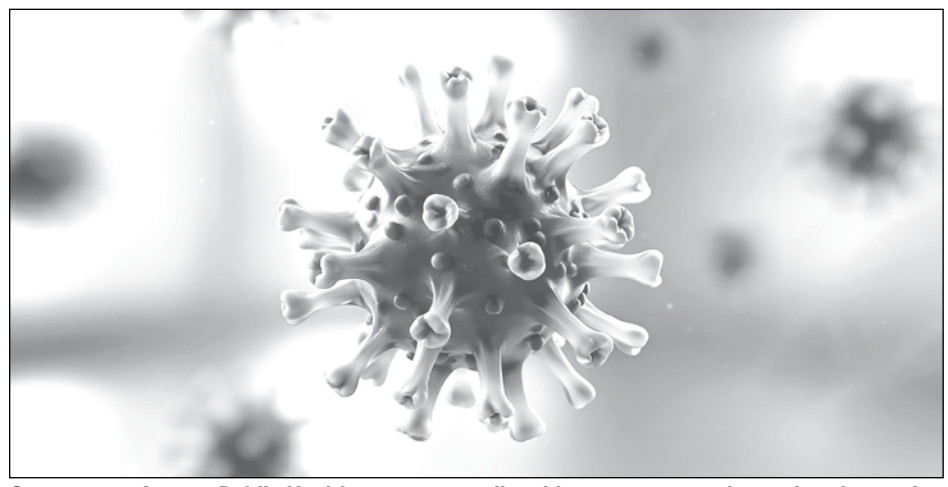
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Season's First Flu Death



Sacramento County Public Health encourages all residents to protect themselves by getting vaccinated this fall. Photo designed by Magnific

Sacramento County News Release, edited for publication

SACRAMENTO COUNTY, CA (MPG) - Sacramento County Public Health on Nov. 4 confirmed the first flu-related death of the 2026-27 flu season. The death involved a woman in her 50s with underlying chronic medical conditions who was not vaccinated against the flu.

"This is a stark reminder that the flu can cause serious illness and even death, but vaccination remains our best defense," said Sacramento County Public Health Officer Dr. Phuong Luu. "Everyone aged 6 months and older should get vaccinated for influenza now, especially with flu circulating very high in California currently."

The woman developed respiratory symptoms in mid-October and was diagnosed with Influenza A (Flu A). She was hospitalized a few days later and died shortly after.

This season's report of the first flu-related death comes about a month earlier than last year's, which was reported in late November 2025.

Sacramento County Public Health encourages all residents to protect themselves by getting vaccinated this fall. Vaccines are key in preventing and protecting against respiratory viruses including flu, Covid-19 and respiratory syncytial virus (RSV).

People can get vaccinated by dropping into one of the SCPH 2026-2027 free flu vaccine clinics. Use the HealthMap Vaccine Finder to find a clinic nearby. Contact the SCPH Immunization Assistance Program for more information.

An annual flu shot is recommended for everyone six months of age and older who is able to get vaccinated safely. It takes two weeks for the body to build up protection after getting the vaccine, so early vaccination is advised.

Dr. Luu recommends getting vaccinated for the flu now, as flu is circulating high in our community and will continue to increase as we enter the holiday season and families start to gather together indoors.

Covid-19 vaccines are available for everyone age 6 months and older and RSV vaccines are recommended for specific high-risk groups.

SCPH offers the following tips to stay healthy.

Encourage a person to stay at home if the person is sick. If a person has symptoms of respiratory illness, staying home helps prevent the spread of viruses.

Test for COVID-19 and flu if symptoms occur. Contact a healthcare provider promptly if the test is positive, especially if someone is at high risk for severe illness.

Practice good hygiene. Wash hands frequently with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or use hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol. Always cover coughs and sneezes. Use a tissue to cover the mouth and nose or the upper sleeve of a shirt if a tissue is unavailable.

Ventilate indoor spaces. Ensure good airflow by opening windows and doors when possible.

Consider wearing a mask. Wearing a high-quality mask in crowded or indoor spaces can reduce transmission, especially if someone is feeling unwell or has a preexisting illness that affects the body's immune system. ★

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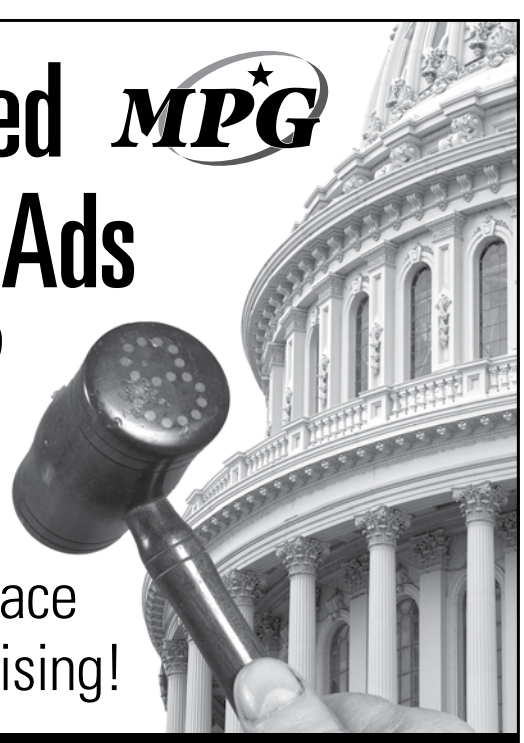
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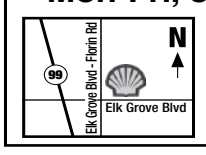
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SECURITY LOGS

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

Oct. 26

8:30 p.m., Suspicious vehicle on Reynosa Drive; vehicle parked in front of a resident's house. It was unoccupied. The same vehicle was reported several weeks earlier for suspected illegal encampment after the driver was observed sleeping inside it in the Riverview development.

10:40 p.m., Bel Air market, manager reported a woman was sleeping in front of the store. Patrol found her inside a sleeping bag and asked that she leave. She became confrontational and refused to leave. Patrol asked dispatch to notify the sheriff's office. The log didn't say what happened to her.

Oct. 27

4:14 p.m., resident complaint on the north side of Stonehouse Road, at the bottom of the cell phone hill. Transient moving belongings across a fence onto RMA property.

6:34 p.m., welfare check, Murieta Parkway. Resident heard a child screaming for help on the golf course behind the residence. Patrol located a family playing in a backyard adjacent to the golf course. The children were playing and running, without any indication of distress.

9:35 p.m., safety advised, Guadalupe and Pera drives. Patrol observed a Tesla that failed to stop at the intersection. Patrol followed the driver and determined he was an Amazon delivery contractor. After he stopped to make a delivery on Anillo Way, patrol contacted the driver and explained the violation. The driver said he didn't see the stop sign. Due to a language barrier, patrol provided a safety advisory in Russian, the driver's native language.

Oct. 28

5:24 p.m., lost child, Guadalupe Drive, resident reported a 5-year-old crying in her front yard. Patrol and RMA compliance responded. The child couldn't provide his last name, address, or his parents' names. During the investigation, his mother arrived in a golf cart.

9 p.m., follow-up: RMA Compliance asked patrol for assistance with multiple parking complaints involving a red Chevrolet Astro Van on Reynosa Drive. The registration reportedly expired in 2015. Previous complaints involved the driver sleeping overnight in the vehicle in RMA common areas, potentially violating guest and illegal encampment regulations. At 7:30 p.m., the van and a resident on a motorcycle entered Rancho Murieta South. Patrol and compliance advised the resident about the complaints. Patrol asked the van driver for insurance and registration. He said his 2026 registration had been stolen and that he hadn't registered the vehicle since purchasing it. He said he would register it as soon as it was financially possible.

Oct. 29

5:10 p.m., Domingo Drive, golf cart accident, RMA Compliance forwarded a report of a golf cart accident that had occurred at about 5 a.m. The cart was traveling from De La Cruz Drive toward Domingo Drive when it continued through a backyard hedge and struck a patio chair. The driver left the scene but came back 45 minutes later and provided his name and phone number. The damage was estimated at $100 for the chair and $500 for the landscaping. Patrol identified him through the ABDI database and contacted him at his home on De La Cruz Drive. He told patrol he may have had a seizure causing the collision. He also told patrol he would compensate the Domingo Drive resident.

7:59 p.m., miscellaneous, South Gate, the dispatcher reported an unidentified drone hovering above the dispatch building and notified patrol. The drone then traveled north toward Murieta South, and when patrol arrived, it was departing the area. The drone had flashing red and white lights. It didn't return.

Oct. 30

11:16 p.m., noise complaint, Colbert Drive. Patrol observed guests in the backyard and loud music. The homeowner stated she was unaware of the 10 p.m. noise ordinance and agreed to move the gathering indoors and to reduce the volume. Parol remained in the area to confirm compliance.

Oct. 31

1:07 a.m., grassy area next to the fire station, food-vending activity. Parol contacted a male associated with the operation and requested a copy of his vending permit. He responded: "No English." The vending operation remained active. Patrol couldn't determine ownership and authorization to conduct the business at that location.

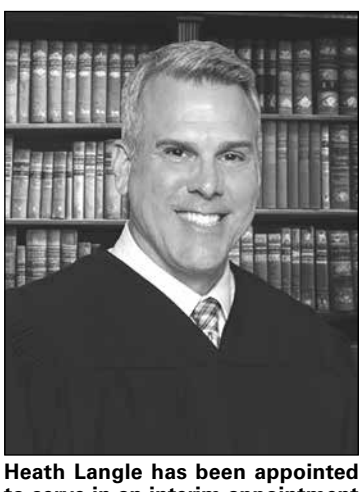
Nov. 2

9:59 a.m., Jurata Court, Murieta Village, vandalism, homeowner reported someone damaged three Lemon Cypress trees in her backyard between Oct. 31 and the morning of Nov. 2. She estimated the damage at $1,000. She also reported the vandalism to the sheriff's office.

Nov. 5

7:05 p.m., intoxicated person, Domingo Drive, reporting party said a white Subaru nearly collided with her golf cart while she was merging onto Guadalupe Drive from Terreno Drive. She said it was traveling at a high rate of speed. She followed it to an address on Domingo Drive. When the driver exited the vehicle, he was unsteady on his feet and had slurred speech. He was a white male in his mid-20s wearing dark pants and a dark shirt. Patrol attempted contact at the home. A white male answered the door and said the driver wasn't home. He refused to identify himself and closed the door. He appeared intoxicated. Patrol was unable to locate the reported driver. ★

Newsom Announces Five Appointments to Sacramento Superior Court



Heath Langle has been appointed to serve in an interim appointment as a Judge.



Alicia Hartley has served as a Commissioner at the Sacramento County Superior Court since 2022.



Matthew Lee has served as a Deputy Legal Affairs Secretary in the Office of Governor Newsom since 2024.



Jasmine Turner-Bond has served as a Deputy Legal Affairs Secretary at the Office of Governor Newsom since 2019.



Michele Beckwith has served as a Deputy Legal Affairs Secretary at the Office of Governor Newsom since 2025.

Sacramento Superior Court News Release

SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG) - Gov. Gavin Newsom announced five appointments to the Sacramento Superior Court bench on Wednesday Nov. 4.

The appointments included: Michele Beckwith of Yolo County; Jasmine Turner-Bond of Placer County; Matthew Lee of Sacramento County; Alicia Hartley of Sacramento County; and Heath Langle of Placer County.

These appointments fill five existing judicial vacancies on the Sacramento County Superior Court bench as of Oct. 2026.

"We are grateful to Governor Newsom for his appointment of these judicial officers to the Sacramento County bench," said Presiding Judge Lawrence G. Brown. "We welcome our newest judicial officers and look forward to the contributions they will make to the court and the people of Sacramento County."

Michele Beckwith has served as a Deputy Legal Affairs Secretary at the Office of Governor Newsom since 2025. She served in various roles at the U.S. Attorney's Office, including as a First Assistant U.S. Attorney from 2022 to 2025, as the Criminal Division Chief from 2019 to 2022, as an Executive Assistant U.S. Attorney from 2016 to 2019 and as an Assistant U.S. Attorney from 2010 to 2016. Beckwith served as a Law Clerk in the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit from 2008 to 2010 and in the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of California from 2006 to 2008. Beckwith worked as an Associate at Downey Brand from 2005 to 2006. She worked as an Associate at Baker Hostetler from 2003 to 2004. Beckwith received a Juris Doctor Degree from the Ohio State University, Moritz College of Law. She fills the vacancy created by the elevation of Judge Lauri Damrell to the Court of Appeal.

Jasmine Turner-Bond has served as a Deputy Legal Affairs Secretary at the Office of Governor Newsom since 2019. Turner-Bond served as a Deputy Legal Affairs Secretary at the Office of Governor Jerry Brown from 2018 to 2019. She served as a Hearing Officer and Staff Attorney at the California Victim Compensation Board from 2014 to 2018. Turner-Bond worked as a panel attorney at the Appellate Defender's Inc. from 2013 to 2017. Turner-Bond received a Juris Doctor degree from the University of the Pacific, McGeorge School of Law. She fills the vacancy created by the retirement of Judge Donald J. Currier.

Matthew Lee has served as a Deputy Legal Affairs Secretary in the Office of Governor Newsom since 2024. He served as General Counsel for the California Department of Cannabis Control from 2021 to 2024. Lee served as a Deputy Legal Affairs Secretary at the Office of Governor Gavin Newsom from 2019 to 2021. He served as a Deputy City Attorney at the San Francisco City Attorney's Office from 2016 to 2019. Lee served as a Law Clerk in various courts, including the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of California from 2015 to 2016 and the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit from 2013 to 2015. Lee received a Juris Doctor Degree from Yale Law School. He fills the vacancy created by the retirement of Judge Maryanne G. Gillard.

Alicia Hartley has served as a Commissioner at the Sacramento County Superior Court since 2022. She served as an Assistant Public Defender at the Sacramento Public Defender's Office from 2004 to 2022. Hartley received a Juris Doctor degree from the University of the Pacific, McGeorge School of Law. She fills the vacancy created by the retirement of Judge Delbert Oros.

Heath Langle has been appointed to serve in an interim appointment as a Judge, allowing him to immediately assume the position he was otherwise elected to begin in Jan. 2027. Langle has served as a Commissioner at the Sacramento Superior Court since 2023. He worked as an Attorney at Bold, Polisner, Maddow, Nelson, & Judson from 2021 to 2023. He also worked as an Attorney at Hackard Law from 2020 to 2021. Langle worked as a Sole Practitioner at the Law Office of Heath T. Langle from 2014 to 2020. He worked as an Associate at various firms including at Wagner, Kirkman, Blaine, Klomparens, and Youmans from 2013 to 2014, at La Follette, Johnson, DeHaas, Fesler, & Ames from 2011 to 2012 and at Porter Scott from 2008 to 2010. He was the owner at the Law Office of Heath T. Langle from 2006 to 2008. He fills the vacancy created by the retirement of Judge James McFetridge. ★



Popp Talk

With Mary Jane Popp

Thanksgiving Fact or Fiction

Let's take a look at some of the stories we hear about the Pilgrims, like who they were and how they lived. First of all, they didn't call themselves Pilgrims. They called themselves "Saints" and "First Comers." Of the 102 people on the Mayflower, only 50 were so-called Pilgrims. The others were members of the Church of England who had signed on simply as laborers, soldiers, or those who were looking to gain property in the "New World."

MYTH In pictures and pageants we see them in black and white clothing with buckled shoes and top hats. **FACT**. They didn't wear buckled shoes. The myth that they dressed like this stems from the popular clothing style of the day in England. They didn't wear buckled hats either. They simply wore much cheaper leather laces to tie up their shoes and hold up their pants. They also didn't wear only black and white. Their common garb was quite colorful. They only wore black and gray on Sundays. The rest of the time they wore heavily dyed clothing in many colors that could be achieved with natural dyes. Here's an example, a Pilgrim by the name of Brewster left his clothing in his will to someone. Here's what he left… "one blew cloth suit, green drawers, a violet clothe coat, black silk stockings, sky blew garters, red grosgrain suit, red waistcoat, tawny colored suit with silver buttons." Seems pretty bright to me.

Then came the meal both Pilgrims and Native Americans ate. Turkey and all the fixins' right? **MYTH**. Yes, wild turkey was on the menu but what about mashed potatoes? **FACT**. Dream on. At the time that first Thanksgiving happened, most Europeans had never even seen a potato. Same goes for the Native Americans. Corn was likely on the menu, but mushy, turned into a thick porridge that you can slurp down with a spoon. **MYTH**. It was all turkey and corn. **FACT**. Turkey, venison, lots of lobsters and other seafood even eels and mussels, and all the vegetables that they had planted from onions, beans, spinach, lettuce and other greens was on the menu. **MYTH**. Had to have pumpkin pies. **FACT**. Pilgrims liked pumpkins. But they hollowed them out, filled them with milk and honey to make a custard, and then roasted the orange orbs in hot ashes. No pies! They were out of luck because you need butter and wheat flour. They didn't have much of either.

MYTH. They loved cranberry sauce. **FACT**. By fall of 1621, Pilgrims were essentially out of sugar. So, no cranberry sauce. It was a new little berry to them. Native Americans made dyes out of cranberries. **MYTH**. It was called Thanksgiving. **FACT**. That first get together was in fact a harvest festival celebrated in October not November. They were just grateful to be alive as half of their company died during the first bleak winter.

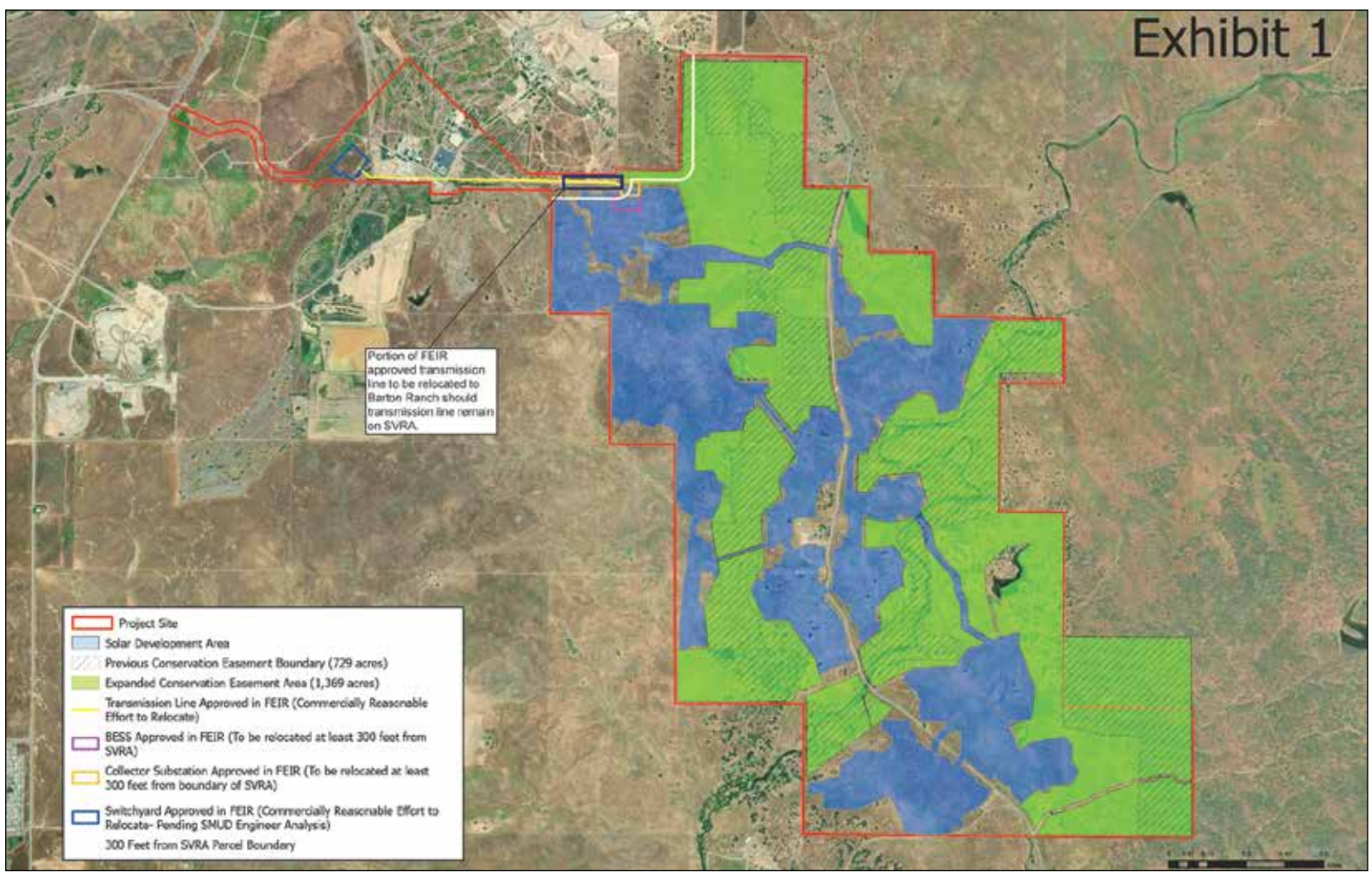
Let's face it, we have so much to be thankful for…family and friends, good eats and lots of football. ★

HAPPY THANKSGIVING AND BLESSINGS TO ALL!

Find Back Issues at TheRiverValleyTimes.com

Coyote Creek Solar Settlements Protect Oaks, Project's Future Remains Uncertain

By Gail Bullen



A revised map of the proposed Coyote Creek Agrivoltaic Ranch along Scott Road shows the reduced solar development area in blue and 1,369 acres designated for permanent conservation in green. The changes are part of a settlement agreement resolving two lawsuits challenging Sacramento County's approval of the project. Photo courtesy of ECOS

SACRAMENTO COUNTY, CA (MPG) - Two of the three lawsuits challenging Sacramento County's approval of the controversial Coyote Creek Agrivoltaic Ranch have been settled, resulting in major changes intended to protect thousands of mature oak trees, wildlife habitat and the neighboring Prairie City State Vehicular Recreation Area.

The agreements with Sacramento Valley Energy Center LLC, an affiliate of New York-based renewable energy developer DESRI, will reduce the proposed solar facility's development footprint by about 20% and limit the removal of mature oak trees from approximately 3,500 to no more than 200.

The settlement also establishes permanent conservation protections for approximately 1,369 acres of the 2,704-acre Barton Ranch property along Scott Road near Rancho Murieta.

However, Sacramento County has not received revised plans, and the project's future remains uncertain following the Sacramento Municipal Utility District's January decision to terminate its agreement to purchase electricity from the facility.

"The County is not a party to and has not seen the agreement," county Public Information Manager Ken Casparis said in a Nov. 9 email. "We have not received any information about the proposed revisions to the project."

Casparis said the county also has not received revised site plans, leaving unanswered whether the changes will require additional review or approval by the county Planning Commission or Board of Supervisors.

The settlement requires the developer to submit the modifications for county approval. The conservation easements are subject to conditions, including county approval without requiring a supplemental environmental impact report or additional discretionary approval by the Board of Supervisors.



Blue oak (Quercus douglasii) woodlands in Coyote Creek. Image courtesy of CNPS

Thousands of Oak Trees Protected

The California Native Plant Society, Environmental Council of Sacramento (ECOS) and Sierra Club announced their settlement Oct. 16 and subsequently filed to dismiss their lawsuit challenging the project's environmental impact report.

Heather Fargo, ECOS president and former Sacramento mayor, confirmed in a Nov. 11 email that the development footprint will shrink by approximately 20%.

She said newer solar panels may allow the project to generate up to 175 megawatts of electricity, compared with the 200 megawatts originally approved.

Although the project will occupy less land, Fargo said the amount of land protected through mitigation will increase by 200 to 300 acres.

Most of the property outside the revised development area will be protected by permanent conservation easements that prohibit future expansion of the solar facility, she said.

The settlement specifies approximately 1,369 acres of conservation easements, which would be held by the California Rangeland Trust or another organization approved by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife. The state agency would have authority to enforce the permanent protections.

Fargo said the easements also will protect the remaining oak trees from removal.

The agreement limits removal to 200 living oak trees with a trunk diameter of at least 6 inches. Trees within 50 feet of the construction footprint are considered to have been removed.

The agreement also allows the developer to increase the battery energy storage system from the originally approved 100 megawatts and 400 megawatt-hours to 250 megawatts and 1,000 megawatt-hours. The larger system must remain within the revised development area, at least 300 feet from Prairie City's boundary and outside designated aquatic areas.

The organizations agreed not to oppose the larger battery system if those conditions are met, although the settlement does not require the expansion.

Other provisions require additional oversight of oak tree replanting, prohibit rodenticides on the project site and provide $200,000 to a nonprofit selected by the California Native Plant Society to improve habitat and propagate rare plants in the Sacramento region.

The environmental organizations had argued that the county's review inadequately addressed impacts on oak woodlands, rare plants, wildlife, groundwater and other resources.

Fargo emphasized the importance of protecting mature trees as part of efforts to address climate change. "We want the public to know that conservation itself is a climate solution," Fargo said in the Oct. 16 announcement. "A single oak, like those in this project, can trap vast amounts of carbon per year, making oaks what we call a 'nature-based solution.'"

Prairie City Protections

The same settlement agreement resolves a separate lawsuit filed by the California Four Wheel Drive Association, BlueRibbon Coalition and American Sand Association over potential impacts on Prairie City State Vehicular Recreation Area.

The agreement requires DESRI to make commercially reasonable efforts to relocate the proposed electrical switchyard and transmission line outside the recreation area, at least 300 feet from the recreation area's boundary.

If the entire transmission line cannot be relocated, the developer must move approximately 1,300 feet onto Barton Ranch. If either the line or switchyard remains within the park, DESRI must provide $1 million for each facility to benefit Prairie City or other state off-highway vehicle recreation areas.

The settlement also establishes setbacks for other electrical infrastructure, restrictions on construction traffic and measures to control dust and solar panel glare.

Construction within the recreation area would be limited to weekdays and prohibited during specified major events. Other construction traffic must use Scott Road.

The organizations filed to dismiss their lawsuits on Oct. 16. Casparis confirmed on Nov. 9 that both cases had been dismissed.

Wilton Rancheria Lawsuit Remains Pending

The third lawsuit, filed by Wilton Rancheria in December 2025, remains pending in Sacramento County Superior Court.

The tribe alleges that the county violated the California Environmental Quality Act by approving a project that would harm tribal cultural resources and improperly terminating government-to-government consultation required under state law.

However, a Nov. 2 court filing indicates that Wilton Rancheria and Sacramento Valley Energy Center are making substantial progress toward a settlement resolving all claims.

The parties requested additional time to complete negotiations, proposing a Dec. 4 deadline for the tribe's opening brief and postponement of a court hearing from Feb. 4 to April 1, 2027.

The court record showed no subsequent action on the request, and no settlement has been announced.

County Approval, SMUD withdrawal

The Sacramento County Board of Supervisors unanimously approved the project Nov. 18, 2025, despite strong opposition from environmental organizations, off-road recreation groups and tribal representatives.

The six-hour hearing drew an overflow crowd, with most of the approximately 130 speakers opposing the project.

As originally approved, the project called for developing approximately 1,412 acres of Barton Ranch with a 200-megawatt solar array, a 100-megawatt battery storage system capable of delivering electricity for up to four hours and seasonal sheep grazing beneath the panels.

Supporters cited renewable energy production, union-wage construction jobs, increased property tax revenue and continued agricultural use. Opponents warned of irreversible damage to oak woodlands, wildlife habitat and tribal cultural resources.

Three lawsuits followed in December.

The project's future became uncertain Jan. 5, when SMUD terminated its agreement to purchase electricity, citing construction delays, rising costs, tariffs, environmental concerns and pending litigation.

DESRI subsequently said it intended to proceed despite losing its contracted electricity purchaser.

Fargo said Nov. 11 that she was unaware of any replacement buyer. "We are not aware that anyone else has stepped forward to purchase the power," she said.

The River Valley Times requested an update from DESRI on the project's status and construction schedule but had not received a response.

With two lawsuits settled, a third still pending and the county awaiting revised plans, questions remain about the project's final design, construction schedule and financial viability.

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



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