

RURAL COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT REPORT

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The purpose of this report is to describe recent community engagement efforts completed for the CDP Management of the Rural Constituency. This report will provide a brief overview of meetings and conferences since the CDP Organizing Convention of this year including the following:

- **8th Annual San Joaquin Valley Affordable Housing Summit – Visalia**

The San Joaquin Valley has long suffered as the epicenter of the nation's housing crisis. Unemployment rates in Madera County and in Merced County, are well above state and national averages. Poverty rates are also some of the highest in the nation. Additionally, several valley cities have consistently ranked in the top five hardest hit foreclosure areas in the nation with 1 in every 140 housing units in San Joaquin County in foreclosure. ~~These already sizable challenges have been exacerbated by the loss of redevelopment agencies and consistent budgetary uncertainty among local agencies.~~

- **California State Board of Food and Agriculture: public comment session on California's Water Future – Fresno**

State agencies asked Californians to help shape a roadmap for meeting future water needs and ensuring environmental and economic resilience through the 21st century.

This effort sought to broaden California's approach on water in the face of a range of existing challenges, including unsafe drinking water, major flood risks that threaten public safety, severely depleted groundwater aquifers, agricultural communities coping with uncertain water supplies and native fish populations threatened with extinction.

Input from the public will help the Natural Resources Agency, California Environmental Protection Agency, and Department of Food and Agriculture craft recommendations to Governor Gavin Newsom to fulfill his April 29 executive order calling for a suite of actions to build a climate-resilient water system and ensure healthy waterways.

~~The agencies wanted ideas for actions needed now to help California cope with more extreme droughts and floods, rising temperatures, year-round wildfires, species declines, aging infrastructure, contaminated water supplies and changing demands for water. The input will help determine priorities and identify complementary actions to ensure safe and dependable water supplies, flood protection and healthy waterways for the state's communities, economy and environment.~~

Please note testimony was provided regarding impact preparedness for farmers and their fallowed fields – SIGMA related. Special thanks to Mike Smith and Joy Sterling for their contribution. Joy will be providing follow up information on the current status of this effort and the CDFA.

- **2019 Rural Council Representatives of California Annual Meeting – Lake Tahoe**

RCRC works with its 37 member counties to advocate on behalf of rural issues in the legislative and regulatory arenas at both the state and federal level. RCRC represents the rural county perspective on a myriad of issues such as land use, water and natural resources, housing, transportation, wildfire protection policies, and health and human services, among others. ~~The core of RCRC's mission is to improve the ability of small, rural California county government to provide services by reducing the burden of state and federal mandates and promoting a greater understanding among policy makers about the unique challenges that face California's small population counties.~~

Update

Earlier this week, RCRC Chair and Inyo County Supervisor Matt Kingsley sent a letter to the California Senate Energy, Utilities & Communications Committee outlining suggested changes to minimize impacts from utility Public Safety Power Shutoff (PSPS) events. The letter includes 29 specific recommendations within seven categories to address the current notification and execution of PSPS events that endanger lives and property, and the operation of critical infrastructure.

~~“Rural areas are hardest hit by PSPS events and often lack the resources to fully mitigate impacts on critical infrastructure and sensitive populations,” said Kingsley. “Our communities are home to a higher percentage of elderly and low-income individuals who are least able to bear the impacts of PSPS events.”~~

● 2019 California Economic Summit – Fresno

Governor Gavin Newsom – Keynote Speaker

The Summit's broad and diverse network of business, equity, environmental, and civic organizations came together in early November to craft strategies to take on California's challenges in housing, cradle-to-career education, workforce development, water quality and sustainability, forest resiliency, broadband access and more. **Joy will be providing an update on broadband relating to this summit etc.**

A copy of this report along with references and informational links will be provided on the Rural Caucus website and in our upcoming newsletter.

As the past CDP Director of Community Engagement and Rural Constituency Manager it has been an honor to serve the rural constituency and collaborate with the Rural Caucus. I would like to acknowledge and thank the past administrations of the CDP which provided funding for community engagement efforts this last year. This includes my well-traveled 27,000 miles starting in Election 2018, and concluding with recent efforts, some of which are described in this report. I wish the current administration my very best. The Community Engagement program has sunsetted but the efforts of outreach into rural communities across the state, will and without stall, continue to be reported in the future.

Happy Holidays to one and all - here's to VICTORY in 2020!

All my best-

Patty Hughes