

Chico Enterprise Record

7-9-2020

CAMP FIRE REBUILD

Butte Strong Fund announces more grants for development projects

Staff reports

The Butte Strong Fund committee has approved grant funding for several community development projects as part of its ongoing commitment to Camp Fire recovery — including several for projects in the Paradise and Concow areas.

The community development projects approved this month include \$250,000 for the effort to rebuild the Honey Run Covered Bridge, \$214,000 for the Gold Nugget Museum rebuilding, \$150,000 for Hope Plaza in Paradise, \$150,000 for Paradise Recreation and Park District projects and \$100,000 to update and remodel the Golden Feather Pool in Concow.

With 10 grants approved in a one-month span, the North Valley Community Foundation has awarded more than \$35 million for community recovery via the Butte Strong Fund, Camp Fire Relief Fund and donor-designated funds.

That includes \$14.3 million for direct assistance, \$6.7 million for housing, \$6 million for health and wellness, \$4 million for education, \$2.9 million for community development and \$1.3 million for economic recovery.

Other grants from the Butte Strong Fund this month include:

From the Ground Up Farms, Inc. (\$47,472): To begin improvements to Concow Campground near the lake. The owners of the campground have agreed to allow public use of the playground and bathrooms during daylight hours in good weather for free, as well as free use of facilities for community and nonprofit events. The campground has traditionally been a community gathering spot for many years.

Sol Sanctuary (\$25,000): For counseling and coaching for Camp Fire survivors.

Integrative Medical Clinic (\$36,842): To allow the Imagine You Project

to deliver online live training to staff and volunteers of community-based/faith-based organizations and agencies offering support across Butte County. In response to the COVID pandemic, Imagine You converted from existing classroom-based field-tested trainings into online live delivery modules in the social services sector, specifically second responders and volunteers working with all those directly impacted by the Camp Fire. Blue Room Theatre (\$7,500): Scholarships for Camp Fire survivors will provide 20 free Guild memberships, tuition for 15 children in the Fall Youth Theatre Program, and five spots per week for children in the Youth Theatre Summer Camp.

Adventist Health (\$15,229): For a generator at the health organization's Patient Services Center, which will prevent disruptions to this vital telecommunications hub.

The Butte Strong Fund is

a partnership of fundraising efforts led by NVCF, Sierra Nevada Brewing Co. and Aaron Rodgers, the Green Bay Packers quarterback and Chico native.

The Butte Strong Fund provides funding for eligible organizations or local government entities that are directly serving people affected by the Camp Fire. Individual assistance is handled through those organizations.

Organizations interested in applying for Butte Strong Fund grants can visit ButteStrongFund.org to determine if they qualify for funding. Those that do can submit a brief grant inquiry before being invited to submit a full application. Staff at NVCF will facilitate the application process.

The Butte Strong Fund is still receiving donations. Tax-deductible donations can be sent to Butte Strong Fund, 240 Main St., Suite 260, Chico, CA 95928 or by visiting www.buttestrongfund.org.

Chico Enterprise Record

7-29-2020

\$4.5 MILLION DEAL

California Indian tribe gets back Big Sur ancestral lands

The Associated Press

BIG SUR » A Native American tribe has reclaimed a small part of ancestral lands on California's scenic Big Sur coast that were lost to Spanish colonial settlement nearly 250 years ago.

The Esselen Tribe of Monterey County closed escrow on 1,199 acres about 5 miles inland from the ocean that was part of a \$4.5 million deal involving the state and the Western Rivers Conservancy, The Mercury News reported Monday.

It marks the first restoration of any lands to the tribe, which lost 90% of its approximately 1,000 members to disease and other causes by the early 1800s.

"It is beyond words for us, the highest honor," said Tom Little Bear Nason, chairman of the tribe. "The land is the most important thing to us. It is our homeland, the creation story of our lives. We are so elated and grateful."

The land lies on the north side of the Little Sur River, where endangered steelhead fish spawn, and encompasses old-growth redwoods, oak woodlands and meadows.

"The property is spectacular, and on top of that it repatriates land to a tribe that has had a really hard go of it over the

years," said Sue Doroff, president of the conservancy.

Known as Rancho Aguila, the property was put up for sale by the family of Axel Adler, a Swedish immigrant who bought it in the 1950s and died in 2004.

The Portland, Oregon-based Western Rivers Conservancy initially negotiated to purchase the property and transfer it to the U.S. Forest Service. But some area residents were concerned about potential increased use of the land by visitors and the agency's ability to care for the land.

The conservancy then started working with the Esselen Tribe and received a \$4.5 million grant from the California Natural Resources Agency to cover the \$4.35 million purchase price and pay for land studies.

The money came from a 2018 voter-approved parks and water bond that included \$60 million for competitive grants to acquire Native American natural, cultural and historic resources in California.

Nason said the tribe will build a sweat lodge and traditional village to conduct traditional ceremonies and teach the public about their culture. There will be no permanent homes or businesses on the land.

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7-31-2020

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AFI DOCS
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TRIBECA FESTIVAL 2020

NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC DOCUMENTARY FILMS PRESENTS

REBUILDING PARADISE

DIRECTED BY RON HOWARD

NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC DOCUMENTARY FILMS PRESENTS AN IMAGINE DOCUMENTARIES PRODUCTION "REBUILDING PARADISE"
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PG-13

"A SINCERE AND SKILLFULLY ASSEMBLED TRIBUTE TO A COMMUNITY'S FORTITUDE"
—THE HOLLYWOOD REPORTER

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IMAGINE DOCUMENTARIES
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CAMP FIRE

Ron Howard's 'Rebuilding Paradise' released today

By Carin Dorghalli
cdorghalli@chicoer.com

PARADISE » Soon after the Camp Fire sparked, Academy Award-winning director Ron Howard was in Paradise to craft a documentary about the historic blaze.

Today, "Rebuilding Paradise" was released in theaters nationwide — and is available for online viewing in California, where theaters remain closed.

The production team spent a year with Paradise residents, chronicling their rebuilding process.

Howard has some ties to the area, with his mother-in-law having lived in Paradise for about five years and relatives living in Redding.

Viewers are encouraged to watch it virtually in a local cinema as a way to support the local community.

The Pageant Theater is one of them. It will offer the documentary through its Virtual Cinema at pageantchico.com.

"The Pageant Theater is proud to be able to offer this important film to our community through our virtual cinema," it said in a press release.

The 95-minute film, rated PG-13, "is a moving story of resilience in the face of tragedy, as a community ravaged by disaster comes together to recover what was lost and begin the important task of rebuilding," National Geographic states on its website, nationalgeographic.com/rebuilding-paradise

The website provides a list of organizations providing direct assistance to Camp Fire survivors, including Paradise Rotary Foundation, Butte Strong Fund and Camp Fire Collaborative.

It also provides a list of organizations that provide recovery efforts after natural disasters including American Red Cross, Team Rubicon and Gary Sinise Foundation.

Lastly is an extensive list of mental health resources including Butte Hope, Butte County Behavioral Health and North Valley Talk Line.

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8-6-2020

PARADISE, CONCOW

Volunteers needed for garden box blitz

Volunteers are needed in preparation for the Victory Garden BLITZ on the Camp Fire burn scar planned for August, with installations from August 22-30. The project is sponsored by the Butte County Local Food Network. Volunteers will help build some boxes in advance and install the 4-by-4 foot planting boxes for 50 to 58 applicants on the ridge and Concow.

COVID-19 safe teams of three or four will also help residents with their "Victory Gardens." Boxes include a 4-by-4 wood box, soil, six plants, mulch, hardware cloth and a chicken wire cage creation for critter control.

To sign up to volunteer, for garden boxes or for questions, go to bclocal-food.org/victory-gardens.

Delivered from hunger

LOCAL ORGANIZATIONS RALLY TO DISTRIBUTE 22,000 POUNDS OF FRESH FOOD TO FAMILIES



Wallace Clark, Maple Gramps and Joe Nelson (from left to right), of the Konkow Valley Band of Maidu Indians, loaded boxes of food for tribe members. (Photo by Ashiah Scharaga)

Jenny Lowrey couldn't contain her excitement when the semi pulled into Yankee Hill Hardware on July 31.

"Oh my god. Seventeen-hundred families are going to get free food today," she said. "Ah, I love this!"

That day, Lowrey and her organization **From the Ground Up Farms** facilitated the distribution of 22,000 pounds of fresh food from the **USDA Farmers to Families Food Box Program** to more than a dozen other local organizations and groups providing food assistance across Butte County.

Lowrey is the co-founder and executive director of From the Ground Up Farms, which has been offering no-cost food to locals in need since 2013. Her Concow home was one of thousands destroyed by the Camp Fire, and since the disaster the organization has served as a connector and catalyst for support and relief for survivors from outlying areas within the burn scar, including Concow and Yankee Hill. The all-volunteer organization typically offers educational activities and events regarding nutrition, gardening and other life skills that have been on hold since the coronavirus shut down California.

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That morning, the Yankee Hill Hardware store was a flurry of activity. Shoppers dropped by to browse at the store, while volunteers (some also fire survivors) lifted and secured hundreds of boxes of food into truck beds and trailers in the parking lot. From there, the food was transported to low-income households and others in need during the pandemic, including Camp Fire victims, homeless folks, seniors and indigenous Native American families.



Jenny Lowrey, co-founder and executive director of From the Ground Up Farms, facilitated the distribution of 22,000 pounds of free food to Butte County families late last month. (Photo by Ashiah Scharaga)

A key component of the program is its offerings of fresh produce, including onions, tomatoes, plums, apples, lettuce and potatoes. That's why Lowrey—and many organization representatives picking up food that day—were so thrilled.

The reality for so many Camp Fire survivors, Lowrey said, is one of picking and choosing between vital resources.

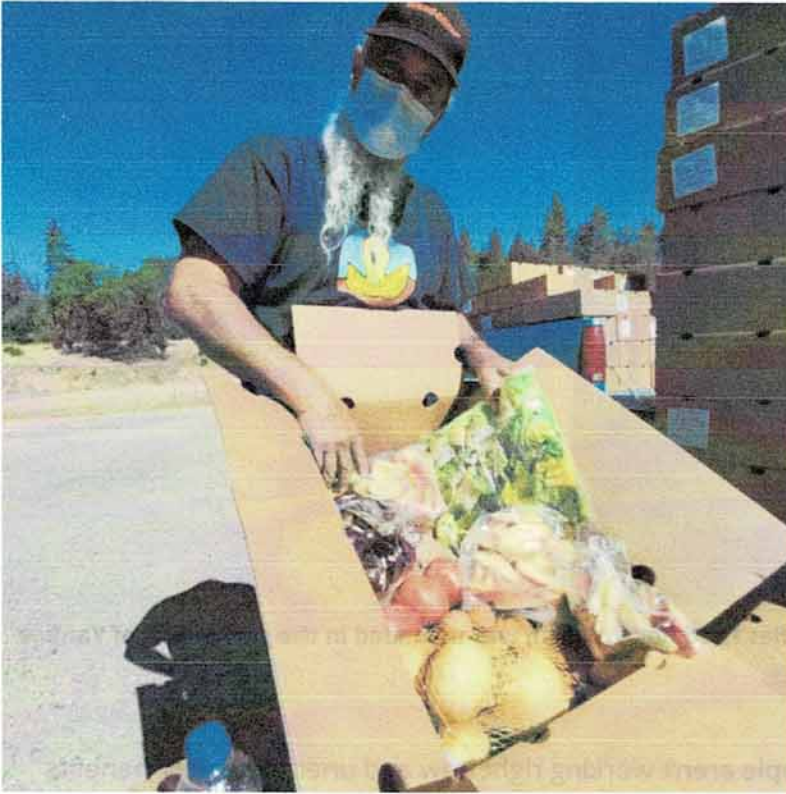
"Do you choose healthy food or do you buy dollar store groceries so you can put \$20 into the generator?" she said, referring to those living on properties without power.

Nancee Ellsworth, the coordinator of the food pantry for First Christian Church of Paradise, explained that it's not easy for survivors to secure fresh food. The church has been providing rations to 150 families every weekend. Most of what the congregation has been able to offer are pantry items that are canned, preserved or have a long shelf-life.

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Bruce Matthews, co-founder of From the Ground Up Farms, shows what's inside each USDA food box. The volunteer organization recently helped distribute 1,700 of these boxes to local families. (Photo by Ashiah Scharaga)

This giveaway also was significant because, like many other locals providing food assistance to fire victims, Ellsworth has noticed a **surge in food insecurity** due to the pandemic, she said.

"There's so much need. I thought maybe it'd get better as time went on, but that's not happening," she said. "This [resource] is awesome. Our families don't have access to a lot of fresh food. ... It's such a treat for our families."

While Ellsworth loaded up provisions that day, across the parking lot, Wallace Clark, leader of the Konkow Valley Band of Maidu Indians, worked with volunteers and other tribe members to load 200 boxes of food into the back of a truck. Clark told the CN&R that the rations were going to the tribal office in Oroville, where they would then be distributed to Konkow Maidu families scattered across the North State.

Clark emphasized the importance of this donation for Native American families, which experience some of the highest rates of food insecurity in the U.S. The pandemic has compounded their need.

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Several tons of fresh food from the USDA Farmers to Families Food Box Program was unloaded in the parking lot of Yankee Hill Hardware on July 31. (Photo by Ashiah Scharaga)

"For all of us, it's a really big deal, because a lot of people aren't working right now and unemployment benefits are running out," he said.

The Farmers to Families Food Box Program, which was created in response to the pandemic, has distributed more than 35 million boxes across America, with plans to distribute a total of nearly 60 million by the end of August. The program may be extended beyond then, but that depends on its success and available funds. The USDA has spent \$1.2 billion so far, and aims to purchase up to \$1.47 billion on additional 21.3 million food boxes through this month.

The program starts with the USDA purchasing fresh produce, dairy and meat from national, regional and local distributors that have been significantly impacted by restaurant, hotel and other food service business closures. These distributors then package the products and transport them to food banks, community and faith-based organizations and nonprofits.

The Yankee Hill distribution event was a community effort, Lowrey said. She heard about the program from Butte County Supervisor Tami Ritter, who connected her with Josh Cook, of California Senator Brian Dahle's office.

Ritter told the CN&R she had worked with Cook, Dahle's chief of staff, on Camp Fire emergency housing projects. When Cook told her the office was looking for communities in need for this program, the Concow area immediately came to mind, Ritter said. Many Camp Fire survivors are living there in RVs and other temporary homes without power and water, she added.

"I felt like if the distribution happened in Chico, then we probably weren't going to see it go to the areas most in need, so connecting them to Concow seemed the best bet," she said.

Lowrey said when she was given this huge opportunity to help distribute fresh produce on a scale she'd never attempted before, she told herself, "I have to figure it out."

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Nancee Ellsworth, of the First Christian Church of Paradise, said the congregation's food pantry serves 150 families each week, and fresh produce is hard to come by. (Photo by Ashiah Scharaga)

She began making phone calls and assembled a roster of just over a dozen agencies. On July 31 over the span of about two hours, 22,000 pounds of food had left the parking lot of Yankee Hill Hardware and were en route to the neediest families in the county.

"I am blown away at how well it went!" Lowrey told the CN&R later. "The agencies all showed up as scheduled, the volunteers poured in even with masks required."

From the Ground Up has forged other connections in order to provide healthy food to hungry families. For example, the organization partnered with Chico Natural Foods to provide \$50 and \$100 gift cards to Camp Fire-affected families. Lowrey also coordinated with the **Butte County Local Food Network**, which now delivers fresh produce twice a week to Concow. From the Ground Up facilitated a partnership with Chico farmers' markets, and now offers surplus produce to families in Concow.

"We're just trying to find really innovative ways to get fresh fruits and vegetables to these families," Lowrey said.

LIGHTNING STRIKES

MORE FIRES THAN AVAILABLE PERSONNEL



PHOTOS BY CARIN DORGHALLI — ENTERPRISE-RECORD

A plume of smoke drifts Monday over Lake Oroville. Cal Fire-Butte County said lightning strikes caused fires throughout the county, including the blaze in Potters Ravine.

By Carin Dorghalli, Will Denner and Natalie Hanson
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Early morning lightning strikes on Monday caused at least 26 fires to ignite in Butte County, leaving fire responders with the difficult task of deciding where to send limited resources.

By 11 a.m., the Cal Fire-Butte County said "some" of the fires had been contained, but others, namely in the Forest Ranch and Potters Ravine areas, were the biggest priorities for firefighters.

Two fires reported in the Potters Ravine area near Lake Oroville were subsequently merged into one incident dubbed the "Potters Fire." Cal Fire-Butte County said the Potters Fire, which had grown to approximately 800 acres with 0% containment just before 7 p.m., was the largest of the fires within the unit.

An erupting plume of smoke could be spotted from the Oroville Dam. The smoke spread so wide and thick, Lake Oroville could no longer be seen.

At 3:45 p.m., the Butte County Sheriff's Office issued an evacuation order, upgrading an earlier evacuation warning, for residents living on Potters Ravine Drive and Oregon Gulch Road, west to Cherokee Road and all roads in between south to the Feather River.

An evacuation order was added just after 6 p.m. for residents living on the north side of Orange Avenue from the roundabout to Long Bar Road, including residents on the north side of the road, all the way to the Feather River.

A temporary evacuation point was established at Church of the Nazarene's parking lot at 2238 Monte Vista Avenue in Oroville.



A lightning-caused fire burns Monday in the Canyon Oaks area of Chico.

At 4:11 p.m., an evacuation warning was added for residents in Oroville, including the intersection of Table Mountain Boulevard and Montgomery Street east to Oro Dam Boulevard, from Oro Dam Boulevard to Rusty Dusty Road, and all roads running north to the Feather River.

An evacuation warning also remained in effect around 6 p.m. for residents of Canyon Drive going east to Loafer Creek Road, and from Olive Highway north to Lake Oroville.

An evacuation warning means that there is a potential threat to life and property, and is done in preparation of a possible evacuation order, requiring people to leave immediately.

Cal Fire-Butte County has also set up a call center, which can be reached at 538-7826, for residents who have questions re-

garding the fires currently burning in the county.

In an interview with this newspaper, Cal Fire-Butte County Division Chief Bill Reid said only 19 of those 29 fires are staffed as a result of resources being stretched thin across the north state.

"We have multiple resources within the unit, but everything in the north state, everybody got hit with the same lightning storm," Reid said. "Normally, we share resources among counties and Cal Fire units, and right now, we just have no resources. So, we're really struggling with getting enough resources here (at Potters Ravine)."

"We just don't have the resources available to us right now because we're in major draw down throughout the north state."

Reid said the firefighting

agency relies on spotter planes to prioritize which fires to divert resources to, based on possible structures threatened and if a fire has the potential to reach a community.

"What that means is, there's fires all over in the mountains that may not have any structure threat right now that we can't get any resources to," Reid said.

Radio transmissions just after 11:30 a.m. from a unit on the scene said the fires were between 11 and 20 acres with a moderate rate of spread. Aerial tanker teams were also requested. These fires were determined the priority of the unit at that time.

Travis Gee, superintendent II captain for State Parks Northern Buttes district, said they have been monitoring the area throughout the morning.

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Storm

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"The lightning this morning, obviously like everybody said, it was pretty active in the valley, and it was active up here," said Gee, near the Oroville Dam spillway boat ramp.

Additionally, a fire between Forest Ranch and Centerville on Doe Mill Ridge had reached approximately 330 acres with 0% containment just before 7 p.m. It was at 75 acres around 1:40 p.m.

Cal Fire-Butte County said that rainfall has aided firefighters in getting the lightning-caused fires under control, but reminded residents that fire danger is still very high due to severe drought conditions.

"Although some rainfall accompanied this storm, it's important for residents to continue to be extremely cautious in their outdoor activities because there is still a very high fire danger," Cal Fire-Butte County Fire Chief John Messina said in a press release.

A fire in Richardson Springs, below Cohasset and approximately eight-and-a-half miles north of Chico, did not have any resources committed to it, Reid said.

A fire was reported along Forbestown Road, where scanner dispatches indicated multiple structures were threatened, before it was contained.

Later in the afternoon, the Kelly Ridge area experienced additional fire activity in the area near



PHOTOS BY CARIN DORGHALLI — ENTERPRISE-RECORD

A Chico Fire Department firefighter drags water hose out to a lightning-caused fire Monday in the Canyon Oaks neighborhood of Chico.

Woodman Drive, according to scanner dispatches.

At least two fires started in the Canyon Oaks neighborhood in east Chico, in addition to another fire in upper Bidwell Park near Shadybrook Lane and Whispering Pines Circle.

The city of Chico said the Chico Police Department "received multiple 911 calls" regarding a vegetation fire in upper Bidwell Park, and advised the public that the Chico Fire and Police departments were responding to the fire, which was roughly one-



Two lightning strikes cause Potters Ravine to burst into flames Monday near Oroville.

and-a-half acres around 11:45 a.m. and contained.

skip Creek. A fire was also reported near Butte Meadows.

Further south, a fire caused by a lightning strike on Durham Pentz Road near the intersection of Pentz Road was reported.

The area is further east of a wildfire that burned approximately 70 acres on Friday caused by a semi-trailer and SUV crash on Clark Road.

Numerous other fires were reported in Oroville including in the following locations:

- Mission Olive Road
- Pleasant View Lane
- Stony Oaks Loop

There was also a downed tree reported at Foothill Boulevard and Green Bank Avenue.

In Palermo, a structure fire was reported on Pleasant View Lane, a dead end street off of Mission Olive Road.

There was also a fire reported near the Wicks Corner Interchange where Highway 149 and Highway 70 come together.

At 8:14 a.m., Cal Fire-Butte County said on Twitter "all resources are responding appropriately" to the multiple fires across the unit caused by lightning strikes.

A red flag warning was in effect through 9 p.m. Monday with dry lightning storms expected to continue.

No evacuations were required and no structures were impacted.

Other fires reported in Chico were located at 760 Cohasset Road and multiple fires near Hogan Road near Chico of "an unknown exact number."

There were also two separate fires reported on Highway 32 near Humboldt Road, both of which were less than two acres.

Another report of visible smoke seen northeast of Stirling City and east of Highway 32 was later pinpointed to the area of In-

Contact reporter Carin Dorghalli at , Will Denner at 530-896-7774 and Natalie Hanson at 530-896-7763.

Chico Enterprise Record

8-21-2020

EDUCATION

Rural families turn to hot spots, study independently

By Sharon Martin
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CONCOW » Out in Concow, the tiny, remote community located in the foothills of Butte County, spotty internet service and overall connectivity issues are nothing new.

Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, every school in Butte County must operate with distance or online learning. Insufficient internet connectivity in rural and remote areas is making it challenging for students to attend school.

In the rural areas of Butte County, families are having to pivot by finding alternative ways for schooling when internet access isn't available.

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Education

FROM PAGE 1

"The internet has not been doing that well. It's having glitches where it just stops. You don't have any for a while then it magically comes back on. Other times the speed drops pretty drastically," said Peggy Moak, a resident of Concow. "Those are challenges that people in this community have."

Moak, a now-retired tax collector and treasurer for Butte County, has a 16-year-old grandson who lives with her and attends Paradise High School.

Equipped with a Chromebook laptop provided by the school district, Moak's grandson began school online on Aug. 13.

Nearly every day for the last week, her grandson has been on the phone with their internet service provider hoping to hear of a fix to have a reliable and stable connection. Zoom meetings and videos often drop in resolution while voices from other teachers and classmates sound garbled, Moak said of her grandson's experience.

Moak said the internet in Concow doesn't come cheap as she's paying \$130 a month for an internet speed of 25 mbps.

"It's nothing compared to what town has," Moak said.

The Golden Feather Union Elementary School District, which is made up of two schools, Concow Elementary and Community Day School, has made accommodations for families in need of internet.

Internet hot spots powered by AT&T or T-Mobile can be issued to students based on need. And if hot spots won't work at a student's home, the outdoor areas at Concow Elementary School are available to use as the campus is set up with high-speed internet.

Picnic tables that are spaced out and limited to one household per table have been set up at



SHARON MARTIN — ENTERPRISE-RECORD

Concow resident Emilia Erickson holds her son Ronin outside the Pines Yankee Hill Hardware Store on Saturday in Concow. Erickson is homeschooling her three school-aged kids.

Concow Elementary. Students must sit outside since classrooms can't reopen because the campus still doesn't have running water since the Camp Fire caused damage in 2018.

Students, however, can work from the parking lot at the school or in the shaded areas on campus and can connect from their school-issued laptops.

"That's not very easy either, sitting in your car trying to do school work or participate in a meeting," Moak said. "It's not optimal but it's something that's available."

The internet at Concow School is also available for students within the Oroville Union High School District to use as well.

For some, conducting school online doesn't fit their lifestyle.

Garrett Lobemyer, a 16-year old who lives in Concow, is starting his junior year in the Oroville High School independent study program.

Instead of attending classes online, Lobemyer will be completing packets of coursework for his education.

"I have mixed emotions about it," Lobemyer said. "I can do most of everything. Math is just one of my harder subjects."

Lobemyer opted for the independent study program to accommodate his work schedule. He works

for his father running a tractor and also does yard maintenance.

Other schools that are aware of their students' connectivity limitations are also making accommodations.

At Ophir Elementary, which serves 400 students from Oroville to as far as Feather Falls, Principal Teresa Lightle said her staff will copy video instruction onto a flash drive for students who can't access the internet or a hot spot. From there, families can make the drive to campus to pick up the flash drive. The students won't be taught synchronously with their classmates, but they'll still be able to watch the course instruction.

Emilia Erickson, a mother of four kids, three who are of school age, is also having to find alternative ways to educate her children.

Erickson has a second-grader, a fifth-grader and a seventh-grader who all attend Lake View Charter School, a school that serves Glenn, Butte, Lake, Mendocino and Tehama Counties. Erickson's is homeschooling her children through the charter school.

The Camp Fire destroyed her family's home, leaving her and her children to learn in the tight space of a trailer. Her family's home is still in the process of being rebuilt.

"I don't do a lot of online stuff ... We just have this little trailer. There's no room for us," Erickson said. "We can't do stuff online. We do it traditionally."

Prior to the pandemic, classes through Lake View were in person with other students and more hands-on.

Erickson said a science class would typically consist of a trip to Bidwell Park where the kids can explore and learn about water and wildlife.

With no in-person instruction, her kids tried to take the class through Zoom.

"On Zoom it wasn't hands-on, it was the kids sitting in the front yard watching my phone on a stump waiting for their turn to speak," Erickson said. "I can't safely do a small group hands-on science class safely even if the kids wear masks."

The school day consists of Erickson teaching while her three kids take notes and do assignments on clipboards. Erickson said she can't play videos or use the internet for instruction since the only access to the internet she has is through a hot spot on her phone.

Erickson said she's paying \$200 a month for two cell phones, one for her and one for her husband.

"There's no way you're going to have three kids streaming at the same time," Erickson said. "My kids are not sitting at a computer for two hours, five hours or eight hours."

Though Erickson said her kids miss the in-person interaction with other students, she's still finding a way for teaching to get done.

"It isn't the same but there are benefits. You don't have to drive and buy gas. We're all camping, our houses burned down," Erickson said. "I'm an extreme optimist all the time. Whatever we're getting handed you have to deal with it in the most positive way."

Contact reporter Sharon Martin at 530-896-7778.

8-22-2020

CONCOW, Calif. - A new fire has been reported in Concow. It was reported at approximately 1:15 p.m. on Saturday, Aug. 22, 2020.

The fire is at Hoffman Rd. and Concow Road.

Action News Now has a reporter on the way to the scene, traveling with a CAL FIRE Public Information Officer. As soon as we get more information we will post it here.

CONCOW FIRE BURNED WHERE FIRE SAFE TREATMENT TOOK PLACE AND WAS QUICKLY CONTAINED ⊕ ⊞



"Just to know that ten days ago the weeds were over four feet tall," said Brenda Rightmyer, right after neighbors and CAL FIRE crews quickly contained a new fire in Concow.

Posted: Aug 22, 2020 1:52 PM

Updated: Aug 22, 2020 10:58 PM

Posted By: Lorraine Dechter & Esteban Reynoso



CONCOW, Calif. - The Hoffman Fire started near Camelot in Concow on Saturday, but the area had recently been treated by a fire safe prescription by the local Fire Safe Council. One of the volunteers of the Fire Safe Council thinks the treatment made all the difference.

Air support was immediately requested, but because of the thick smoke, the fire retardant drop was canceled due to a lack of visibility.

Crews are spread thin across the state as California has more than 500 fires.

"Normally we would just have a typical vegetation fire dispatch," said CAL FIRE Public Information Officer Rick Carhart. "But now it's a matter of scrambling, and finding, we've got the resources, we're sure we have the resources to respond to things like this. But it stretches it even thinner."



Carhart said three fire engines had to divert their other fires from to tackle the one in Concow.

Two volunteer crews stepped in to help with the fire, along with some neighbors.

"They did a great job of getting this stopped," said Carhart praising fire crews. "Because this Camelot area of Concow is an area with a lot of fire history," he continued.

Brenda Rightmyer knows its history all too well. She is involved with the community Fire Safe Council, that recently treated the area where the fire was quickly contained.

It was only recently that this vegetation was trimmed, or Rightmyer says this fire could've been a lot harder to fight.

"Just to know that ten days ago the weeds were over four feet tall," said Rightmyer, talking about the vegetation trimming. "I'm just tickled that stuff can work."

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2020 CENSUS

Concow campground setting for today's event

By **Laura Urseny**
lurseny@chicoer.com

CONCOW » Continuing her campaign to rally foothill residents, Jenny Lowrey can be found at the Lake Concow Campground today, ready to talk about the census survey.

From 1 to 3 p.m., she and other volunteers will be staffing a table at the campground, 12967 Concow Road, handing out census fliers, and generally talking about why the count is so important to foothill residents.

This will be Lowrey's second outing, with her first on the last Friday in August. Her next two will be 3 to 5 p.m. Sept. 12 at the Rock House restaurant again, 11865 Highway 70 in Yankee Hill, and again at the campground, 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. Sept. 19.

That first event on Aug. 28 was "slow," said Lowrey about midway through the



STEVE SCHOONOVER — ENTERPRISE-RECORD

Jenny Lowrey of Concow sets up a table of free items on Aug. 28 to help attract foothill households to fill out the 2020 census, which must be done by Sept. 30.

stint. Set on a curve, it might have been hard for residents to make the turn against traffic into the Rock House, but Lowrey had hopes just seeing the volunteers and table would plant the seed to come by again.

Ready to hand out sandwiches made by Karen

Mac Gowan of the Rock House the first time, Lowrey pointed to pizza for today's sustenance. Handing out food means having an opportunity to connect, an essential ingredient in encouraging census action.

Lowrey herself knows the importance of the cen-

sus, having gotten several grants to get foothill residences because of census answers from 10 years ago, the last census. It gives a snapshot of household conditions. Questions include age, race and income of everyone in the household. The survey does not ask for Social Security or immigration information.

The Butte County Complete Count Committee, a group of volunteers who work to encourage a full response to the census, along with North Valley Community Foundation are hosting the foothill events, knowing that those households may be among the hardest to reach.

It's not only the rough terrain and hidden areas of the foothills that makes knocking on doors difficult, but some households feel the survey questionnaire is a "government intrusion," Lowrey said.

CENSUS » PAGE 4



STEVE SCHOONOVER — ENTERPRISE-RECORD

The Rock House on Highway 70 east of Oroville is the backdrop on Aug. 28 for an effort to encourage foothill households to complete the 2020 census. On Sept. 5, the volunteers will be at the Lake Concow Campground.

Census

FROM PAGE 1

“It’s a big concern out here, that big government is trying to get in.”

When she hears that, Lowrey counters with the campaign’s significance, pointing out it opens the door to federal funding for items like schools, health care, roads and infrastructure, among others.

“People really need to fill it out,” she said.

Standing in front of a table brimming with t-shirts and water bottles to give

away, Lowrey said that her goal is to talk to everyone, and having them talk to others.

In Oroville, a similar effort is under way with a team from the African-American Family and Cultural Center giving away ice cream from the organization’s van and talking up the census.

The van will be traveling around the Oroville area from 1 to 3 p.m. every Monday, Wednesday and Friday in September. The goal is to emphasize the importance of being counted in the census as well.

At today’s event in Con-

cow, free WiFi is available at the campground, and individuals can bring their tablets or computers to fill out the census online.

Lowrey said volunteers will hand out fliers and answer questions, “but we’re not pushing buttons, we’re not submitting information.”

To fill out a census form, visit www.my2020census.gov or by phone call 1-844-330-2020 (English) or 1-844-468-2020 (Spanish). The census deadline is Sept. 30.

Contact reporter Laura Urseny at 530-896-7756.

Chico Enterprise Record

9-10-2020

PARADISE

Residents' minds go 'right back to that Camp Fire'

Scene is all-too-familiar for most people on the ridge

By Rick Silva

As the Bear Fire exploded into Butte County on Tuesday night into Wednesday morning, turning an otherwise sunny day into a dark-as-night morning on the ridge, it's not surprising that Paradise residents and officials had a "here we go again" feeling.

Collete Curtis, Paradise's public information officer and assistant to the town manager, said the town was taking the fire seriously and was monitoring it. She said that the town was going to get the information to residents as quickly as possible.

"I think I heard that 'here we go again, this morning,' she said. "This experience we are having now is bringing all of us here, you and the residents right back to that Camp Fire. Even though in our minds, we know so many things are different."

That, she said, is why the town wants to be sensitive to the public's needs.

The wind-driven fire has burned 150,140 acres and is 38 percent contained, and led to an evacuation warning to the lower part of Zone 14 in Paradise. That was for the area east of Pentz Road.

"We are seeing people pre-self evacuate, which is great," Town Manager Lauren Gill said. "It's what they should do."

She said that if people are feeling traumatized or uncomfortable, they should leave and go be where they will feel comfortable. The morning winds gave residents concerns as some left town, but most didn't leave.

Gill said that even though the Bear Fire is a fast-moving fire, and too close for her comfort, she said that



Mid-morning traffic beneath a darkening orange sky took on the look of an evening commute Wednesday.

PHOTOS BY RICK SILVA — ENTERPRISE-RECORD



Paradise resident John Teixeira fills up his 5,000-gallon tank on Wednesday morning. Teixeira, who lost his home in the Camp Fire, wasn't going to leave this time.

town is a good position to get out information.

And she added the town has the fire fighting resources in town to address this fire. She said that town

officials would be patrolling the Pentz Road area and keeping an eye on the Concow area.

Former Mayor Steve Culleton said that at 8 a.m.



A tree fell on a truck in the area of Stark Lane on Wednesday night.

Wednesday it felt much like the morning of the Camp Fire that he and his wife Maureen fled.

The Culletons aren't leaving this time — however, he did say they were packed up

and ready to leave if need be.

The couple just completed rebuilding the home on Forest Service road last November, a year after they lost it in the Camp Fire.

They were not the only

"This experience we are having now is bringing all of us here, you and the residents right back to that Camp Fire. Even though in our minds, we know so many things are different."

— Collete Curtis, Paradise public information officer

ones that are staying put. John Teixeira, who lives on the Billie Road extension, is planning on fighting the fire if it makes its way from Concow once more. He lost his home in the Camp Fire and said that he's not losing another one.

"I'm scared," he said as he filled a 5,000-gallon tank with water. "But I don't have a choice."

He and his neighbor were staying to fight it — with a fire hydrant if they had to.

Teixeira said that all of the houses in the area burned in 2018, except the one house. That house had a tree fall on a truck Wednesday morning.

The fire also blew up on town manager Gill's last day.

"It's interesting," she said. "I do feel a very calm resolve, not to let the fire — or another fire win."

She said the town was staying on top of the events as they unfolded.

Butte Fire Safe Council's Jim Broshears said that the main threat to Paradise was in the morning from Concow.

He said that people should be preparing to leave if it makes sense to them. "You might have a lot lower blood pressure," he said, "if you were a little further away."

Chico Enterprise Record

9-22-2020

Survivors feel pushed out of rebuilding as more fires threaten

By Natalie Hanson
nhanson@chicoer.com

PARADISE » On the ridge, some Camp Fire survivors who cannot afford to rebuild and still live in trailers are feeling pushed out of the town, watching friends face fines and evictions.

Those who haven't started rebuilding after the Camp Fire are often still waiting for insurance funds to know if they can afford to stay, and some say they were not able to get permits in time before the Town Council suspended those for temporary use camping.

Survivors are now also facing the trauma and fear of devastating fires in their backyard — like the North Complex West Zone that pushed Sept. 8 into Butte County and seemed poised to threaten the Pulga area once again Sept. 9.

Despite the fear of a new major fire, "Most people in Concow and Yankee Hill area chose to stay and fight," from the Ground Up Executive Director Jennie Lowrey said.

"Some stayed, some walked away with little hope so soon after the Camp Fire. Both agree they have worked harder these last two years than ever before and some refused to leave and chose to defend while others are back in hotels and RVs and cars, waiting to hear if there's anything to go back to again.

"There are Camp Fire survivors who moved to Berry Creek and Oroville rural areas and some lost again. Once the roads closed, it (was) too late to move RVs out."

These communities living in temporary housing are often choosing to stay, despite threats of fire and evictions, to wait for funds for a new future.

"Most people are waiting for whatever they get from PG&E to decide whether they're going to rebuild or not," former renter Cinda Larimer said, adding she has been unable to move from a friend's garage since the Camp Fire due to trouble getting permits.

"We were going to move a donated trailer to our property," she said, and planned to have water and septic lines set up for the process. But by the time her fam-

ily could afford to, "they stopped us before we could get to our property" by suspending the permits.

And if people can't get water to their property, they are required to clear the property to avoid paying other fines.

Some remain in trailers because their claim with PG&E is needed to rebuild. Desinty Hamlett said her family was living in Concow before, and after the fire moved to Big Bend Trailer Park.

"We don't plan on staying in the trailer forever but right now we can't afford to rebuild. ... We do have a PG&E claim just waiting like everyone else," Hamlett said.

Hamlett also had to evacuate when the Bear Fire threatened the park, and stayed in a friend's yard in Thermalito.

Evicting properties

Eric Day, of Redding, has been allowing Shari Ring to live on his vacant property in Paradise, and subsequently faced an eviction notice and fines for Ring.

Day said he had emailed Paradise Code Enforcement about the situation, as "I'm really worried that evicting Shari will have a devastating impact on her health." He expressed his frustration that the town does not approve of people staying in trailers on property for the long term, even if a property owner like himself approves of it.

"The California wildfire situation has created thousands more evacuees looking for places to park their RVs and trailers — further drying up any hope of a safe place to move for Shari and all RV dwellers in Paradise," Day said. "Those (camping) codes were written before the COVID-19 pandemic, and well before the wildfires that have already consumed over one million acres of California, but neither catastrophe has moved anyone in the Paradise government to consider changing their plan of attack against RV-dwellers."

Day called the decisions of the town "unresponsive and heavy-handed."

"It should be allowed to let her live on my lot for the next six months. What's the worst case scenario if you kick her out now when she's

too sick to move, can't afford to pay these fines? What kind of considerations have you made for people who are sick, who are unable to move or even unable to afford to move? Or even worse, if they can't find a place to go?"

Extending the ordinance

In August, Assistant to the Town Manager Colette Curtis said if people are being asked by Code Enforcement to move, "It is likely they either don't have a permit, or they are not a Camp Fire survivor," the latter condition requiring proof of prior residency.

Camp Fire victims who cannot afford to join the town's rebuild effort are being effectively pushed out, Larimer thinks.

"They're rebuilding the town for a higher tax bracket," Larimer said.

"It seems they have their own agenda, they're for themselves and by themselves. They're trying to gentrify their town, and want low income families like mine to be gone."

Larimer added she knows "a lot of people" who have emailed Paradise Town Council, and soon the ordinance on RV camping can be revisited.

"Hopefully ... it will allow people to still live on their property but be in the rebuild process," she said. "Now, it's (that) you must have a rebuild permit to stay there after the end of the year. The amount of work it takes to get that permit; ... there's a lot of hidden costs."

One day after his statements about Ring's pending eviction and fines, Day said Paradise Code Enforcement's manager did get back to him, and extended Ring's notice of eviction.

The department "has agreed to not fine us and also to push back the eviction for four weeks!" Day said. "I almost cried on the phone."

Paradise Code Enforcement and former Town Manager Lauren Gill did not respond to requests for comment in time for this article's publishing.

Contact reporter Natalie Hanson at 530-896-7763.

CAMP FIRE



CONTRIBUTED — DESTINY HAMLETT

The Bear Fire filled the skies with smoke and threatened the new homes of some Camp Fire survivors, as seen Sept. 9 in Thermalito from the trailer residence of former Concow and Big Bend resident Destiny Hamlett.

Chico Enterprise Record

9-25-2020

NORTH COMPLEX WEST ZONE FIRES

County Sheriff's Office downgrades evacuation orders to warnings

Weather change could increase fire activity

By **Laura Urseny
and Will Denner**

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OROVILLE » While containment on the North Complex West Zone fire has grown and some notices have been lifted, shifting weather patterns expected over the weekend could increase fire activity.

A fire weather watch has been issued for Saturday through Monday, meaning fires are more likely to start. Vegetation in the foothills is extremely dry and dense, according to Cal Fire-Butte County, which easily burns. Some of California's most devastating fires have started in September and October.

Fire crews are working to strengthen containment lines, and some back burning was conducted on Wednesday.

As of Thursday night, the North Complex West Zone is 69% contained, having burned 84,583 acres. Fire fatalities stand at 15 residents of Berry Creek and Feather Falls. A total of 2,218 structures have been destroyed and 111 have been damaged.

Total burned acreage of the entire North Complex is 304,492 acres with 78% containment.

At 5 p.m. Thursday, the Butte County Sheriff's Office downgraded a previous evacuation order to an evacuation warning for the area of Highway 162 to Whispering Chapel Lane, including the area west to Lake Oroville and the roads accessed from Highway 162 to the east. Residents will be allowed to enter the area until 5 p.m. Friday, and are required to carry proof of residency for re-entry.

Earlier in the day, an evacuation order was downgraded to an evacuation warning for the community of Clipper Mills, including the roads accessed to Clipper Mills from La Porte Road between the Butte County lines. This includes the area directly surrounding Sly Creek Reservoir.

BCSO said residents now under an evacuation warning may return to their homes, but are asked to remain alert for potential updates and orders. A map of areas under evacuation orders and evacuation warnings can be found at www.buttecounty.net/sheriff.

Evacuation orders for Encina Grande Road and the remaining areas of Berry Creek still stand.

The Sheriff's Office lifted an evacuation warning for the communities of Concow and Yankee Hill on Wednesday evening. The affected area includes Highway 70 from the West Branch Bridge north to Pulga Road, all areas west of

Highway 70 and east of Highway 70 to the north fork of the Feather River.

The area east of Highway 70 above Pulga Road and east of the north fork to the Feather River remain under an evacuation order.

Evacuation warnings are as follows:

- Highway 162 from Bidwell Bar Bridge to Simmons Road. Simmons Road to Big Ridge Road including all roads that connect with Simmons Road. Big Ridge Road will remain closed.

- The area enclosed by Highway 162 from Miner's Ranch Road to Forbestown Road to the Butte County line on the north. Swedes Flat Road on the south. Miner's Ranch Road to Swedes Flat Rd on the west perimeter. County line on the east perimeter.

- Highway 162 from Forbestown Road north to the Bidwell Bar Bridge to include both sides of the roadway.

- Areas north of Forbestown Road to Lumpkin Road including Lake Haven Way and Faye Mar Road all of Stringtown Road and connecting roads.

A local assistance center has opened in Oroville to help those affected by the fires. Located at 1875 Feather River Blvd., it is at the Feather River Parks and Recreation Gymnastics Academy.

Help at the center includes replacing important documents, such as drivers licenses, social security cards, deeds and tax documents, along with updating voter information.

At the Tractor Supply parking lot across the street at 2000 Feather River Blvd., the Federal Emergency Management Agency has opened an area to help fire victims register with FEMA, which the agency recommends to help with the recovery details.

Both the assistance center and FEMA center hours are open 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. weekdays, and 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday.

The Butte County Sheriff's Office has set up an escort service for residents with urgent needs to return to their properties briefly.

The online document to request an escort into the burned area can be found at <https://bit.ly/SheriffEscortDoc> or by calling the Butte County Sheriff's call center at 552-3010.

More information for fire victims is on the Butte County Sheriff website and social media accounts www.buttecounty.net/sheriffcoroner.

Injured wildlife can be reported to the vets on call with the Wildlife Disaster Network at 1-800-942-6459.

Contact reporter *Laura Urseny* at 530-896-7756 and *Will Denner* at 530-896-7774.

Fire forces Concow evacuation orders

Flare up at Bucks Lake brings smoke in Butte County

**By Richard Silva
and Justin Couchot**

*rsilva@paradisepost.com and
jcouchot@chicoer.com*

CONCOW » The Butte County Sheriff's Office issued an immediate evacuation order for the areas of Pulga, Concow, Big Bend, and Yankee Hill due to fire on Sunday night. The order comes after Cal Fire-Butte County said Sunday night that a flare-up in the Bucks Lake area of the North Complex Fire was a concern to them.

Winds overnight Sunday into today in that area were expected to have gusts up to 35 MPH.

Residents are urged to the Public Map on the BCSO website, www.buttecounty.net/sheriff for further information or call 833-512-5378.

The order came after firefighters continued to strengthen fire lines in the North Complex West Zone on Sunday with heavy wind events in the forecast overnight Sunday. The fire had not grown Sunday for the second consecutive day as the North Complex West Zone fire was at 85,595 acres, which Cal Fire reported Sunday afternoon. Firefighters increased containment Sunday as the fire at that time was 85% contained.

Chico Enterprise Record 9-28-2020

Concow

FROM PAGE 1

Cal Fire was also able to announce the final structure damaged/destroyed numbers since the North Complex West Zone fire began Aug. 17. There have been 2,342 structures destroyed and 113 damaged. Cal Fire meteorologist Kari Flegel said that a red flag warning will remain in place through 9 p.m. tonight with a wind advisory in place until 7 p.m. tonight.

Flegel added that winds tonight will be between 15 and 25 out of the northeast with gusts up to 30 miles an hour. She said that the temperature rose on the line of the fire on Sunday, while humidity continued to drop. Flegel expects a traditional wind pattern to return to Butte County later this week.

Cal Fire Operations Section Chief Monty Smith spoke to Butte County residents about the smoky skies in the area. Smith said the smoke is from a flare up in the Bucks Lake area of the North Complex fire, and that Cal Fire firefighters are keeping an eye on.

Smith updated all of the fire lines saying that it all looks good as they head into the evening hours.

Butte County Sheriff's Office updates

Butte County Sheriff



The map of the North Complex Fire provided by Cal Fire Sunday morning before the blaze shifted to threaten Concow.

Kory Honea announced the search for remains is complete, searching 1,500 structures with no more remains found. He said all 192 people that were thought to be missing have been found.

He added that there were no new arrests this weekend, but said they're still looking for Robert Strawn, 36, who is wanted on a looting charge. Honea said deputies visited Strawn property and 242

illegal marijuana plants were found along unsafe electrical lines that were a fire hazard. Honea urged Strawn to surrender himself. In the meantime PG&E has disconnected the lines.

The Sheriff's office will soon be able to relieve evacuation warnings and orders, but he stressed that the people need to be ready to leave with tonight's wind events.

Evacuee information and law enforcement escort

Residents displaced by the North Complex Fire are being directed to the assistance center at Feather River Parks and Recreation Gymnastics Academy, 1875 Feather River Blvd., as well as the Federal Emergency Management Agency center at 2000 Feather River Blvd. in Oroville.

The hours of both centers

are 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday through Friday, and 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday. The centers are closed Sundays.

FEMA registration will close Oct. 21 at the center. A complete map of evacuation orders and warnings can be found at www.buttecounty.net/sheriff.

Similar to that of the Camp Fire, the Butte County Sheriff Office has created an online form enabling residents to request law enforcement escorts to

areas that remain under evacuation orders.

The link to submit a request is <https://forms.gle/QKkdVwk78qR344t9>.

The fire information call center will be accepting calls for escort requests as well and can be reached at 552-3010. While the call center is open 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday, the Sheriff's Office is encouraging the public to make requests online due to high call volumes anticipated.

There was a public safety power shut-off in Butte County which began between midnight and 4 a.m. on Sunday. Power was expected to be restored between 8 p.m. Sunday and midnight today, PG&E communications confirmed. For concerned citizens who believe they may be in outage zones, a map can be seen at <https://pgealerts.alerts.pge.com/outages/map/?type=forecasted>.

"The first de-energization phase will begin early Sunday morning and impact approximately 15,000 customers. The second phase is expected to begin Sunday afternoon and will impact approximately 74,000 customers," PG&E said in a press release. "This (public safety power shut-off) event is based on forecasts of widespread, severely dry conditions and strong, gusty winds."

Contact reporter Richard Silva at 530-876-3014 and Justin Couchot at 530-896-7720.

Chico Enterprise Record

10-1-2020

NORTH COMPLEX WILDFIRES

Warning for ridge lifted, orders lightened

The fire still hadn't
crossed Highway 70
by Wednesday evening

By Laura Urseny
and Will Denner

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and wdenner@chicoer.com

QUINCY » Evacuation orders have been reduced to warnings in Concow, Yankee Hill and Big Bend, following the lifting of warnings in Paradise and Magalia by Butte County Sheriff's Office on Wednesday afternoon because of improved weather and less fire activity.

Pulga remains under an evacuation order, and Stirling City is under an evacuation warning, according to the Sheriff's Office.

The area on both sides of Highway 70, from Pulga Road north to Tobin, including Storrie, Pulga Road and Concow Road north of Rim Road will remain closed and under an evacuation order, according to the Plumas County and Butte County sheriff's offices.

Residents whose orders have been downgraded must still remain alert to possible changes in notices and weather, and be prepared to leave.

The focus of work on Wednesday was construction of contingency fire lines on the west and north sides of Highway 70 to counter any spot fires that could jump the Feather River Canyon, but as of late Wednesday the North Complex fire had not crossed over.

In a 6:30 p.m. Wednesday briefing Casey Cheesborough of the Forest Service noted that the fires

had not crossed the highway, and that heavy equipment had been used to create fire lines on the west side of the canyon.

However, putting out any spot fires before they got to contingency was the "No. 1 goal" should they occur, he said. Hoses and sprinklers were also being placed.

"The fire does remain well established in the vicinity of Grizzly Dome Tunnel and has bumped up to the highway along a half-mile section," the Plumas National Forest Facebook page indicated.

Predicted weather conditions are favorable and should allow for the heavy use of helicopters in supporting these Highway 70 efforts.

In a Wednesday morning briefing, Cheesborough called the fire activity in the Grizzly Dome area "not super active" but consistent. That's the area that fire crews have been focused on, among others, but Cheesborough noted it's steep terrain, which makes fire battles difficult.

Addressing where the fire is burning, he said Wednesday morning, "It's all within planned containment lines."

He said the use of air tankers was hampered Tuesday when visibility was diminished because of smoke, and noted there are "unburned islands of 500 acres" inside the containment lines that kick up the smoke and that crews are working on.

Bucks Lake area was still under evacuation order, but residents were allowed back into the LaPorte and Little Grass Valley areas.

Cheesborough said that

new dozer lines would be created between Highway 70 and McGee Ridge to the south, countering the new fire activity that had popped up Tuesday south of Bear Creek Ranch, which air tankers dropped on.

In a Facebook post Tuesday evening, a national forest official indicated that "To say that firefighters are 'letting' the fire burn is not accurate. They are going direct or building line on the fire's edge, in locations where they safely can, which is limited in this terrain. Contingency lines away from the fire's edge gives firefighters multiple opportunities to catch the fire if it were to spot ahead or make a run in one direction or the other."

Cheesborough noted that fire-fighting resources in California were sparse with so many fires burning, so that forward planning on more distanced contingency lines, including more dozer and utility clearance lines, was important.

"Firefighters will continue trying to keep the fire south of Highway 70 however they will do everything they can to keep the community safe in the event that it makes it across," noted a Wednesday Facebook post from an unnamed fire official.

A once-delayed virtual community meeting regarding the north zone was held at 6:30 p.m. Wednesday on the Plumas National Forest's Facebook page.

The North Complex has burned 314,949 acres and as of Wednesday and was 79 percent contained. The west zone, which pushed into Butte County is 95 percent contained and burned more than 84,000 acres.

The Local Assistance Center, 1875 Feather River Blvd. in Oroville is open

Monday through Friday, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., and 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturdays. It will likely close by Oct. 9.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency is across the street at 2000 Feather River Blvd., and will remain open until around Oct. 21. Fire victims can also call 1-800-621-3362 to register.

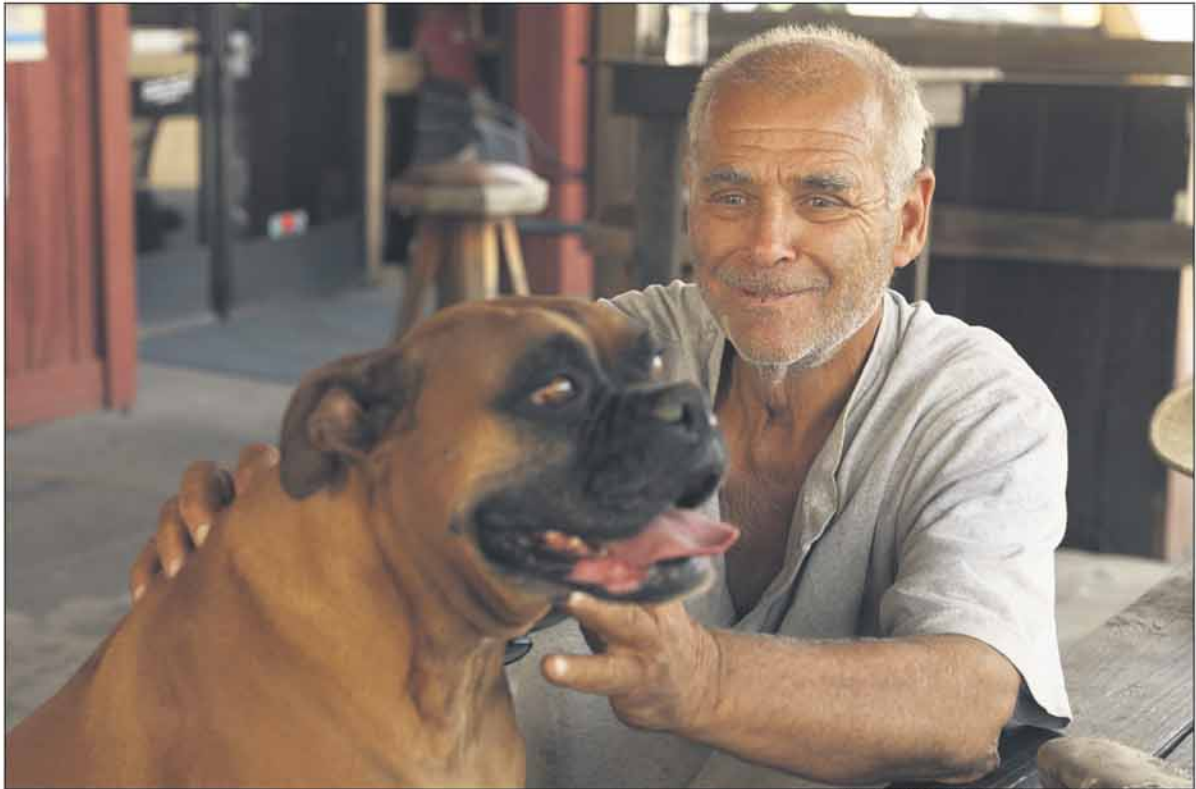
The Butte County Sheriff's Office has maintained a call center for fire information, evacuation information, and escort service. Forms to request an escort into a closed area is available at <https://forms.gle/QKrkdVwk78qR344t9>.

The call center number is 530-552-3010, and the call center will be open from 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. daily.

Contact reporter Laura Urseny at 530-896-7756 and Will Denner at 530-896-7774.

NORTH COMPLEX

CAFE BECOMES A HUB FOR THOSE WHO DIDN'T EVACUATE



PHOTOS BY CARIN DORGHALLI — ENTERPRISE-RECORD

Svend Peterson refuses to evacuate from his home in Brush Creek. He already lost a home in the Camp Fire. He sits at Toni's Cafe near Concow with Sophie his dog Tuesday so he can be in the know of fire happenings. Peterson said he lets firefighters play with Sophie so they can feel energized before hitting the fire line.

'If you've already made it here, I'm not going to turn you away,' the owner says

By Carin Dorghalli
cdorghalli@chicoer.com

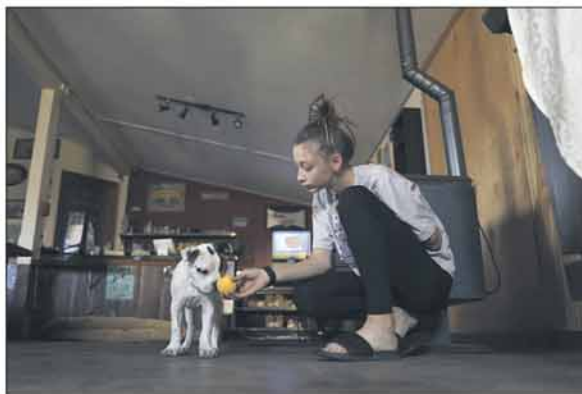
CONCOW » Though mountain communities are under evacuation orders, there's still some life buzzing in Toni's Cafe off Highway 70 in Concow.

Formerly Scooter's cafe, it's home to people huddled around police scanners, eagerly listening in on the happenings of their community.

And not only them, but first responders who desperately need a break.

Toni Suzor recently took over the vintage cafe. She never thought it would become a fire season hub. She's not technically supposed to keep it open, but she can't turn away an empty stomach or someone longing for company.

"If you've already made it



Ashlee Suzor, 15, helps her mom run Toni's Cafe, which has become a hub for first responders and mountain community members who don't want to evacuate their homes. Suzor plays with her puppy Baxter on Tuesday in Concow.

here, I'm not going to turn you away," she said. "It feels good to

The other night, while taking her puppy Baxter out for a walk, the Concow resident found that every picnic table on the cafe's patio had firefighters sleeping on it.

"It's awesome they have a spot, but I'm sad that they're all out there piled on wood benches," she said.

Suzor now wakes up at 6 a.m. to give free coffee to first responders. She runs the place with her 15-year-old daughter, Ashley Suzor.

"I couldn't have done it without her," the proud mom said.

She and her daughter plan to stay put.

"I think this is the safest place for all of us. We have all the first responders outside. They're not going to let themselves burn, so we're safe right here."

be able to help and have the resources that it takes to be here."



CARIN DORGHALLI — ENTERPRISE-RECORD

Baxter plays with a peach on Tuesday in Concow at Toni's Cafe. He belongs to Toni Suzer, owner of the eatery. Suzer said she's keeping the cafe open for mountain community members who need company and first responders.

Cafe

FROM PAGE 1

Emergency vehicles are parked all around the property.

Two of the mountain residents gathered Tuesday in the cafe were John King of Concow and Robert Nageo of Big Bend.

"Living out here, a lot of people have learned a lot of dependency on our own," King said. "We've been robbed, you know. Completely robbed. It's made it hard to build again. And now, there's fires again."

King's property was looted during the Camp Fire. His truck burned down. Since then, he's worked hard to ensure he has what he needs to withstand the power of flames. Defensible space, 7,500 gallons of water, chainsaws and more.

"I don't plan to evacuate at all," he said.

The same goes for Nageo.

"I live in a place that's already been burned out, which doesn't mean there's nothing to burn," he said, but that still makes things "a lot easier than last

time."

Each day, Nageo treats one stranger to a meal in the cafe.

Svend Peterson, with Sophie his dog, joined the cafe goers to get information. He lost his home in the Camp Fire and now lives in Brush Creek. There's no way he's leaving the area.

"Find something good to look forward to. It's what we do next. It's not what happened today or yesterday. It's what you do next. Somehow, find something that makes you enthused and gives you hope," the retired firefighter advised.

Petersen has found joy in helping weary firefighters find life again by letting them play with Sophie.

"I'm so excited about life. These are tough times, but it's life. We don't have shrapnel flying around us like a lot of places in the world have," he continued. "I've been through a little bit, but I don't have it anywhere near as tough as most people have it."

All of these mountain denizens have one thing in common: they love their home and can't bear the thought of leaving.

FIRE RELIEF

LOCAL FOOD HUBS BRING COMFORT



NATALIE HANSON — ENTERPRISE-RECORD

Lupita Resendiz brings boxes to visitors at the food pantry Friday at First Baptist Church in Paradise.

By Natalie Hanson
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CHICO » As Butte County scrambles to address the immediate needs of communities displaced or hungry due to the North Complex fires, grassroots organizations are employing local food strategies from lessons learned in the Camp Fire.

Some local resources truly became hubs after the Camp Fire left many hungry as well as homeless. A food pantry that began at First Baptist Church was once located in a small room, but after the fire, it grew bigger and bigger

and soon required many more hands and a larger facility as the need grew.

With COVID-19 and the North Complex fires, the pantry is seeing more visitors each week than ever — up to 120 in one day, with about 2,000 served in September, according to organizer Linda Kliefloth.

The pantry still allows people to enter the church from noon to 5 p.m. each Friday with a sanitized cart, to choose from canned and dry goods, as well as some produce, refrigerated items and baby supplies.

Fresh food donated from

Holiday Mart and Save Mart in Paradise always goes first, as produce is hard to come by on the ridge, volunteer Staci deJesus said.

Kliefloth said the pantry gets donations from Contra Costa Food Bank and Feeding America every week, and some refrigeration items were donated thanks to Butte Strong grants.

However, deJesus said the pantry began “hurting” for enough food to meet the local need in the year after the Camp Fire — going from eight shipments a week to two — and only began to get more

state help when COVID-19 struck. She criticized the state's lessening aid when the community continues to be in need after thousands of homes have not been rebuilt.

"We were scrounging for food," she said. "The need is not drying up at all, but the supplies dry up regularly."

Local hunger has only increased as people struggle to rebuild or have lost their jobs in the pandemic, and deJesus said all of the area's food banks try to work together to support each other and connect with more resources — "there's no competition here."

People always return to small grassroots food banks because of the personal connection and sense of trust, Kliefoth and deJesus said.

"For some this is their social outing. They're coming in for a hug and we can't give it to them," deJesus said.

Others come for a sense of stability, knowing the help is local and their unique names and situations will be remembered — "Nothing here is safe or secure anymore," deJesus said. "We're one of the only things that is stable."

"These people matter to us. It's their anchor. And ours too."



PHOTOS BY NATALIE HANSON — ENTERPRISE-RECORD

Left to right, Greg DeCristofaro, Kathryn DeCristofaro and Linda Kliefoth organize food as people enter First Baptist Church in Paradise on Friday afternoon.



Sarah Mattern, left, helps Eric Bevries select grocery items at the food pantry Friday in First Baptist Church in Paradise. Mattern has been a volunteer for over a year — "It's good to be part of the healing of Paradise."

Musician Frank Martinez of Franklin's Tower Mission Relief said what was learned in the 2018 fire has made local groups well practiced at networking aid. His group formed from the band Franklin's Tower began connecting with aid sources within and outside the county to gather supplies, meals and toy drives for survivors, and they organized cook out events for Thanksgiving and Christmas.

Martinez continues to do the same now during the North Complex fires, and is hoping to organize outdoor cooking events for the holidays again.

What makes handing out food trickier is the pandemic with current restrictions for protecting residents. That's why distributions have turned to "tailgate" drive-through style events. Martinez's group also has an open "wish list" running for people's immediate needs, from food and baby supplies to clothing and tools.

Some are hubs for even more isolated communities. Brenda Rightmyer of the Yankee Hill Fire Safe Council runs the voucher program with Lakeside Market, with owner Paul Manjinder Hayer and man-

ager Charles Luttrell. Their collaboration started with the 2017 wildfires and relies on funding from the market, and help from United Way and the North Valley Community Foundation.

Anyone living in an evacuation zone can get \$15 vouchers at the market, for any items except for alcohol. In this round, 650 have been given out, and some larger families get more than one.

Rightmyer, who gets up to 60 phone calls a day, said the market is a hub for foothill communities because of its location, and her organization is trusted because they often help the same families and know many by name. Some even come back to Oroville while staying in Roseville or Anderson, she said.

"We have been through it and we know the journey they're embarking on," she said. "We can empathize with what's happened and we're familiar with a lot of the community members.

"A lot of resources pop up and then go after a while — we're not going anywhere."

Grassroots Alliance coordinator Justin Baker has also been involved locally starting since the Camp Fire, saying he has been frustrated by national responses to small areas that need help from organizations that stay local and understand the community.

"It happens over and over again — FEMA comes in and they don't even check with local agencies there and what they need," Baker claimed. He said this affects



Volunteer Jeanie Sparks prepares packages of bread as visitors enter the food pantry Friday at First Baptist Church in Paradise.

marginalized communities like migrants and indigenous tribes, who may be afraid to seek help from federal or state organizations.

Baker represents the small nonprofit Grassroots Alliance and works with Grassroots Aid Partnership, a larger hub that connects resources with small local charity efforts for disaster relief, forming a coalition of sponsors in the health food industry.

It is very important to him to use sponsors with items that "make sense" for the realities evacuees face — shelf-stable healthy food like organic milk that doesn't need to be refrigerated, soap designed for various uses and small snacks like CLIF Bars.

Baker has been running up and down the state due to many fires, even taking a trip to southern Oregon this week to distribute in wild-fire zones. In those areas, he said he witnessed grassroots efforts like local businesses that organize events for marginalized communities who have trouble connecting to local aid.

The same is happening in Butte County, where local businesses are pitching in to donate food or offering spaces for people to access aid.

"Just because there's not a fire doesn't mean the community isn't as vulnerable," Baker said. "Whenever these disasters happen, the way the local community responds is a special and beautiful thing. It's like a birthing spot for people who want to help their community."

Rightmyer encourages anyone in need of vouchers to contact her at 370-5302. Anyone contacting her with donations should reach out to Oroville Hope Center or Salvation Army. Cash donations can go to Lakeside Market or checks can be made out to Yankee Hill Fire Safe Council.

Contact reporter Natalie Hanson at 530-896-7763.

Chico Enterprise Record

10-7-2020

NORTH COMPLEX FIRES

HIGHWAY 70 IS REOPENED, EVACUATION ORDERS LIFTED



CARIN DORGHALLI — ENTERPRISE-RECORD

Highway 70 opened Tuesday in the Concow area, seen here, however the highway was still under one-way traffic control from Rock Crest to Rock Creek.

By Laura Urseny
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OROVILLE » Firefighters had “another successful day,” said Operation Section Chief Jake Cagle, as they continue to fight the North Complex in Butte and Plumas counties.

Early Tuesday morning, Highway 70 reopened for traffic by order of Butte County Sheriff’s Office. Additionally, all remaining evacuation orders and warnings in Butte County put in place regarding the North Complex fires have been lifted.

Highway 70 north of Pulga from Rock Crest to Rock Creek has one lane open to controlled traffic.

Overnight, fire crews conducted back burning in the steep terrain near Highway 70 to secure sections of the containment lines. Heavy equipment, aircraft and ground crews are being used as the fire backs down to the Feather River.

Cagle said the back burning went well and with aircraft assisting in that area, there are “no issues there.”

A 100-acre spot fire burned in the canyon west of the main

Earlier this week, crews from the California Department of Toxic Substances Control began the first phase of assessing residential properties destroyed as a result of the North Complex fires.

body of the fire, but firefighters but out the flames and are conducting mop-up operations on it, Cagle said.

The wind is expected to shift from northeast winds to southwest winds on Wednesday with gusts around 18-20 mph, which will prevent further back burning, but Cagle said lower temperature should lead to higher humidity and help firefighters out a bit.

Bucks Lake area

For Bucks Lake, the mandatory evacuation order will remain in place, according to Plumas County Sheriff.

“Higher winds are expected to impact the fire west of Bucks Lake and we need to see what this weather/wind will do to fire activity before we reassess

lifting any orders in the Bucks Lake area,” the sheriff’s office reported late Monday on Facebook.

According to the sheriff’s office, all road closures and evacuations advisories have been lifted along La Porte Road from the Plumas/Yuba county line north down Quincy La Porte Road to Highway 70.

According to Butte County Sheriff, “Oro-Quincy Highway from Lake Madrone north to the Butte County line is only open to residents.

A community meeting is planned at 5 p.m. Wednesday on the Plumas National Forest Facebook page to update the public about the fires.

As of 7:30 p.m. Tuesday, the fire had burned 318,928 acres and was 87 percent contained.

Clean up

As of Monday, crews from the California Department of Toxic Substances Control began the first phase of assessing residential properties destroyed during the North Complex fires.

The first phase includes assessing and removing household hazardous waste and bulk asbestos from burned residential properties.

Items to be removed include paints, cleaners, solvents, oils, batteries, herbicides and pesticides. Fuel from pressurized cylinders and tanks will be removed and marked with a white X and left as scrap metal.

The agency will also remove bulk asbestos items like transite siding, transite roofing and certain types of floor tile.

The state is removing these materials because they pose a threat to public health and safety, according to the agency.

For additional information on the recovery efforts, visit Butte County’s website www.butte-county.net.

Contact reporter Laura Urseny at 530-896-7756.

Chico Enterprise Record

10-27-2020

GOLD COUNTRY CASINO

Rancheria sues former employees for \$38M

By Will Denner
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OROVILLE » The Berry Creek Rancheria of Maidu Indians has filed a fraud and money laundering lawsuit against two former top employees of tribe-operated Gold Country Casino Resort, alleging they took more than \$1 million for personal gain.

The two former in-house employees named are Deborah Howard, former chief financial officer, and Jesse Brown, former tribal administrator. The lawsuit, which

was filed Oct. 22 in U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of California, in Sacramento, alleges the two, who have since married, used their "joint power" of presiding over the tribe's finances and business affairs to "carry out a grand scheme centered around misappropriating tribal assets on a grand scale."

Between 2011 and 2016, the lawsuit claims Howard and Brown did this in four unique ways:

- Issuing a "secret" credit card to Brown that was charged more than \$1.3 million for personal ex-

penses;

- Misappropriating more than \$200,000 over five holiday seasons for Christmas gifts meant for tribal children;

- Skimming more than \$1.1 million in cash receipts from the Berry Creek-operated Smoke Shop;

- Giving themselves approximately \$250,000 in unauthorized payroll distributions through the system Howard managed.

"This course of conduct went on for years, involved thousands

CASINO » PAGE 4



The front of Gold Country Casino Resort is seen Monday in Oroville.

WILL DENNER
— ENTERPRISE-RECORD

Casino

FROM PAGE 1

of individual transactions, and was only discovered long after Ms. Howard and Mr. Brown's departures from the Tribe in 2017 when the bank finally disclosed the existence of the aforesaid credit card (after first informing the Berry Creek Tribal Council that its members could not access the account because Ms. Howard and Mr. Brown were the only authorized individuals), the lawsuit states.

The lawsuit seeks more than \$38 million in damages, specifically, \$2.9 million it claims the couple stole, in addition to approximately \$26 million in punitive damages, and more than \$8.8 million in Racketeer Influence and Corrupt Organization damages.

The lawsuit filing was first reported by the Sacramento Bee.

Howard was hired in 2002 and Brown in 2006 at their respective positions, which are the two highest-

ranking executive officers for Berry Creek, according to the lawsuit.

The lawsuit claims that by the beginning of 2011, the two began a personal relationship that they did not disclose and actively hid from the tribe. It goes on to suggest that almost immediately after beginning their relationship is when they conspired to "enrich themselves personally through the misappropriation of Tribal assets."

The first action, the lawsuit alleges, was Howard issuing a "secret" credit card to Brown without tribal authorization. The credit card was used for a multitude of expenses over several years, including the purchase of Kenny Chesney and G-Eazy concert tickets, UFC and Sacramento Kings tickets, hotel room stays in Palm Springs and La Jolla, and vacation getaways to Las Vegas, Lake Tahoe, Disneyland, Napa and Calistoga wineries, among others.

In total, the lawsuit claims more than \$1.3 million was charged to the

credit card and paid for by Berry Creek.

Between 2012 and 2016, Howard and Brown were responsible for organizing Berry Creek's annual Christmas party, which would include cash gifts to tribal youths, the lawsuit states. Each year, Howard would call the main bank at Gold Country Casino to inform the teller how much money would be withdrawn for the party.

The lawsuit used 2016 as an example to illustrate the discrepancy. The lawsuit said \$54,060 was needed to cover the Christmas party, however, Howard allegedly withdrew \$96,900 — an additional \$42,840 of what was needed.

The lawsuit also alleges that Howard skimmed cash and checks upwards of \$1.1 million from the Smoke Shop, a drive-through tobacco store operated by the rancheria, and double- and triple-dipped into the payroll system to add or change disbursements for herself and Brown.

"All of this fraud only came to light because of

chance. The 2016 annual audit of Berry Creek that had to be completed by Sept. 30 of the following year indicated unreconciled credit card expenses on the credit cards known to be in the Tribe's name," the lawsuit said.

According to the lawsuit, the tribe "encountered significant difficulties" in accessing bank records "because Ms. Howard and Mr. Brown had designated themselves as the only individuals authorized to access the accounts."

Beyond personal expenses, the lawsuit also alleges Howard and Brown used tribal funds to start two businesses, The Exchange, a "self-described 'upscale full-service bar' in historic Oroville," and a women's clothing store in Gridley called Makeup Room & Co.

Calls to the businesses seeking comment were not returned by deadline. Howard denied the allegations in an interview Thursday with the Sacramento Bee.

Contact reporter Will Denner at 530-896-7774.

FIRE RECOVERY

Tribes hope for a say on lands

Management, restoration of regional lands among areas where inclusion is sought, particularly in wake of fires

By Natalie Hanson

nhanson@chicoer.com

CHICO » The future of land stewardship in Butte County may greatly depend on partnerships with its indigenous communities, and county relationships with the region's multiple tribes are already shifting in the face of disastrous fires.

The Camp Fire destroyed many acres of land that particularly impacts the Mooretown Maidu and Konkow Maidu tribal communities, which claim original occupancy of some of the land. The North Complex fires also tore through the landscape once again, affecting tribes residing in the Berry Creek and Yankee Hill areas, much of which burned or was destroyed.

To address restoration of these lands, local tribal representatives say it has become impossible to ignore the voices of those who have known the land for thousands of years and are also

affected by its destruction. It's also an opportunity to bring more economic opportunities to the table, which is where the non-profit Calaveras Healthy Impact Product Solutions program came in.

Local activist Ali Meders Knight works with Traditional Ecological Stewardship Chico and Chico State educating youth on land management practices. She emphasized that the recent incredibly destructive fires only demonstrated the damage done since the area was settled "over 180 years ago."

Meders Knight and fellow organizer Mel Figueroa said the consequences of colonization, extractive industry and timber plantations mean today's forest is very different from the land's historic nature — which is why tribal knowledge of the land's past is so important. Meders Knight said the lands of Butte County should be wetlands, as the Maidu tribes were once accustomed to "swamps" — a far cry from the county's many acres of dry brush and thick, overgrown tree canopies and undergrowth.

Faced with such destruction, to have a chance to repair lands and restore ecosystems properly, Meders Knight said relationships with tribes will be vital.

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Beginning work with the nonprofit began as “We were looking at what we could do for restoration after the Camp Fire,” she said. The program’s approach is to employ members of indigenous communities so they share and acquire knowledge about land restoration and stewardship, getting certified and earning job advancement opportunities.

Meders Knight said they are developing a workforce as well as mainly working with tribes that are federally recognized that “have the authority to negotiate with Washington D.C.”

“Our local representatives are basically only used to working with tribes on casino issues,” she said. “They don’t have a lot of info on how land management works with federal Indian law.”

This reality is insulting for indigenous tribes who live on local land, but haven’t been invited to conversations about that land, she said.

“Tribes have a straight conduit to federal agencies ... and place based knowledge for managing the ecosystem, based on what we consider thousands of years of science. To look at watershed restoration, we have to look at long term stewardship contracts,” she said. And the program encourages such contracts and economic development for indigenous communities.

“We have 10 local Butte County folks in their second week of training ... at Yosemite and El Dorado County,” she said.

“They would get certified for tree removal but also in traditional knowledge in what to plant,” and they also qualify for higher wages with a higher knowledge of restoration, she added.

Meders Knight is planning a local work base in the county’s forests, to restore biomass using funding over the next several months to hopefully “introduce the right plants within the correct watershed.” The program is hoped to “show resilience from cooperation from tribes and municipal (bodies),” she said.

Including the unrecognized

However, the Calaveras Healthy Impact Product Solutions program may not work for all tribal communities in the region.

The Konkow Maidu are one local tribe that are not federally recognized. Traditionally claiming Concow and Pulga lands in the Camp Fire burn scar, their homeland was heavily destroyed in the Camp Fire, yet they have not been able to receive federal wildfire aid. They also do not receive federal COVID-19 aid.

Tribal Affairs Chair Jessica Lopez said the Konkow Maidu are feeling shamed largely due to disagreements and not being federally recognized, are now working to form their own traditional ecological stewardship program, to utilize and enrich the generational knowledge of their own people independently.

High Leader Wallace Clark said the rancheria is working with the Sierra Institute on repairing the landscape of the Concow area. He spoke proudly of his ancestors as “caretakers of the north fork of Feather River ... and basins from Paradise to the Cherokee area.”

“Our stories say we’ve been there since the beginning of time,” Clark said. “We were the first to be taken out of there because we were the larger group. When the gold rush happened, they had to remove us. My great grandfather was forced to take all people out they were force marched over to the Mendocino area, the Round Valley Reservation.”

But many hid from capture, who produced many of today’s descendants, he said.

The road to federal recognition by the Bureau of Indian Affairs’ Branch of Acknowledgment and Research has not been fruitful, “because they removed the majority of the tribe.” Since 1997, Clark said the tribe has worked on the traditional route to recognition (a seven-step process) which was submitted in 2016, but as regulations keep changing from the federal government, the proposal was returned.

Although continuing to seek federal recognition, without it, the tribe has little money, Lopez said.

“Any of the grants or funds that come out there only go to federally recognized tribes,” Clark added.

This problem contributed to Lopez’s reasons for not feeling able to participate in the nonprofit’s program, saying while she feels the program has good intentions for workforce development, she felt a lack of open communication with the program and with other tribes.

“I think the problem



Council member George Engassen, of Palermo, adds his signature Saturday, Sept. 17, 2016, to the Konkow Valley Band of Maidu petition to the federal government for recognition as an independent tribe at Riverbend Park in Oroville. The request for federal recognition later failed, and the tribe continues to seek recognition in other ways, after two fires in 2018 and 2020 which severely damaged their traditional lands.

Note: Name in caption above is George Engasser and not Engassen

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here especially in Butte (County) is there's so many of us," Lopez said. "I think our tribe feels unnoticed because it's not federally recognized."

Yet the generational knowledge of her people should be respected, she added.

"We have elders who have knowledge, who know what our common practices are," Lopez said, and this knowledge is critical when considering different approaches to managing different types of land. For example, what works on valley land will not work on the highest peaks in Concow or Yankee Hill, she said.

"Traditional knowledge has gone back thousands of years ... a lot of companies tend to forget that," she said. "But they don't give us the same respect because we're not federally recognized. They don't see us as actual stakeholders because we don't have money. But we're the original occupants of that soil."

There have been some positive changes. Lopez said the city of Oroville's declaration recognizing the tribe was a great acknowledgement of the relationship with the community. And the county has been "very open" to working with the tribe within the last few months, respecting the community as a separate sovereign entity.

"It's taken myself (and the council) to create that relationship ... to reach out to agencies. These agencies have started to include us in that open forum of what our concerns are for proper land management. They are beginning to recognize us as a tribe and respect us in our sovereignty."

Still, Lopez said even many local people did not know who the Konkow Maidu were until recently. This will be an issue for all tribes getting included in the local conversation around land stewardship, she said.

"The bigger issue is everyone wants to classify us as all Maidu," Lopez said. "That is not the case. I am Konkow Maidu. Mechoopda (Tribe) is valley Maidu ... Enterprise (Rancheria) is Estom Yumeka Maidu. We have different dialects."

Gaining further recognition will be key to understanding the wealth of all tribes' knowledge to manage the land going forward, and to begin restoring it after wildfires.

"Once people start obtaining cultural knowledge of who their ancestors were, it becomes more powerful ... then they start to respect the land, to have proper land management," Lopez said.

Contact reporter Natalie Hanson at 530-896-7763.

CAMP FIRE — 2 YEARS LATER

TWICE BURNED

Concow fire survivor loses home twice — from fire, fallen trees

By Natalie Hanson
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PARADISE » For Paige Stoker, when a major fire bore down on Butte County's foothills for the second time, it also meant being homeless once again thanks to chance.

Before the Camp Fire, "I lived in Concow, and I had my own three-bed trailer," Stoker said.

"I was doing really good, had a job cleaning houses. Had a nice car, a 2003 Kia. It wiped all that out."

Stoker said she escaped with the help of a police officer, barely in time to save her bird, dog, guinea pig and two cats.

After over a year of uncertainty, she said she found a new trailer to live on a friend's property in Concow in June, and helped work on the land after it burned.

Then the Bear Fire, now known as the North Complex fires, hit.

Stoker evacuated Concow and left behind her trailer that night. But just half an hour after she

STOKER » PAGE 6



PAIGE STOKER — CONTRIBUTED

The view from Camp Fire survivor Paige Stoker's trailer in Concow, after a tree fell on it during the North Complex West Zone fires in September and destroyed half of the home.



PAIGE STOKER — CONTRIBUTED

The view from Camp Fire survivor Paige Stoker's trailer in Concow, after a tree fell on it during the Bear Fire in September and destroyed half of the home.

and her partner had left, a tree fell on the trailer.

"Half of it was smashed flat."

For the next month after the fire, Stoker lived in the destroyed half of the trailer and made a GoFundMe, as she had difficulty getting aid due to difficulty proving her address on the Concow property.

The destruction of the trailer was also caused by wind, rather than directly by the fire — "They don't see my area as an area that got devastated by it," Stoker said. "It was the winds and a tree. Even though it happened while I was evacuated I guess that doesn't count."

She still planned to stay and rebuild the trailer — "I don't really have any other choice."

"It's sad, it devastated us really. We just got water working and our solar and generators all good. And then the tree fell and broke it all."

Stoker was forced to go to Magalia when the evacuation order for the Bear Fire hit Concow on Sept.

24. That time, she had to leave animals due to a road block. She was told by Red Cross to go to a hotel in Roseville, but had no gas to get there.

For a time, she lived in her car with her pets and said she was tired "mentally and physically."

"It's been a struggle to find resources that I'm eligible for," she said at the time.

In October, Stoker said she was given a new trailer to live in with her partner and another friend, but tragically, another tree destroyed that trailer Oct. 26. on Cirby Creek Road in Concow while they were inside. She and her partner escaped, but their friend had to be airlifted to Enloe Medical Center and underwent several surgeries.

For now, Stoker and her partner are staying in the new trailer, waiting to repair it. One end is tarped off, and the stove still works for heat, she said.

As of Nov. 2, she still had not received assistance from any local programs.

"Honestly, I feel like giving up," Stoker said.

Contact reporter Natalie Hanson at 530-896-7763.

Chico Enterprise Record

11-9-2020

CONCOW

Toni's Mix'n It Up hosts Camp Fire Memorial Gathering

Several organizations around Butte County team up to provide a free meal for visitors

By Justin Couchot
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OROVILLE » Three months ago Toni Suzor achieved her dream alongside her 15-year old daughter Ashlee when opening the Concow restaurant Toni's Mix'n It Up.

Suzor was a former employee of Jake's Burgers on the Hill on the Highway 70 corridor in Concow and had dreams of opening a restaurant of her own. She began the research on opening a food truck, but when hearing Jake's was closing she insisted she would purchase the restaurant and take over. Her colleagues doubted her, but that only brought more enthusiasm, despite honest concern opening up in a time restaurants are

slowly reopening.

Suzor joined forces with Dustin Bronk, added her own twist to the menu by adding more side options and a vegetarian sandwich, and on August 4 she purchased the restaurant. On August 15, just 11 days later, the restaurant was open for firefighters fighting fires burning across Butte County once more.

After being open for the last three months while complying with COVID-19 limitations, Suzor teamed up with several organizations on Sunday, the second anniversary of the Camp Fire, to host a free meal and Camp Fire Memorial Gathering for Camp Fire survivors.

"She's my role model so it's very good to look at her and see

CONCOW » PAGE 4

on a day to day, it's aggravating, it's stressful, and sometimes discouraging. So here at the restaurant, a lot of people come here to unite to get support from one another. Emotionally and physically."

A hog was donated by the organization From The Ground Up Farms Inc., Chico Natural Foods Cooperative donated salads and Cozy Dinner donated chicken for those who could not eat pork. From The Ground Up Farms, an organization that gives raised garden beds to those in at-risk housing also brought live music and two speakers as well.



JUSTIN COUCHOT — ENTERPRISE-RECORD

Toni Suzor, right, prepares a table for a whole hog to be carved on alongside her father Bart Suzor and aunt Annette Trunkett at the Camp Fire Memorial Gathering on Sunday at Toni's Mix'n It Up near Concow in Oroville.

Concow

FROM PAGE 1

that she's doing so well," said Toni Suzor's daughter Ashlee Suzor. "I'm glad that we're all back as a community. I'm glad that we can do this for our community and just be there for everyone struggling."

The owner Suzor said she understands as a Concow resident herself for the last five years the struggle that Concow residents have gone through and continue to go through.

"They're still struggling to get their houses up. And

"Because we are also Camp Fire survivors from Concow," said From the Ground Up Farms Inc. Executive Director Jenny Lowrey. "And Concow is kind of being ignored. In Concow 58,000 people burned out that day. There are 27,000 residents in Paradise. So these people are our priority."

Speakers spoke about other fire prevention and fire suppression, including one who spoke about Native American methods including selective logging.

"It is kind of weird for me to be celebrating so we're here to memorialize. We're here to remember those that we lost," Lowrey said. "It's a memorial gathering. This isn't a party."

While the speakers were

informative, the free food to guests was welcomed, and helping Suzor begin her new restaurant journey was important on Sunday, for both Suzor and Lowrey they were most excited to bring the people of Concow back together on such an emotional day for their town.

"This is for families to come together and get to hug each other," Lowrey said about Sunday. "It's already been a success. Just seeing the kids running around here. These kids and families have all been separated by fires. They live everywhere. I just couldn't sit there and not do something for Concow."

Contact reporter Justin Couchot at 530-896-7720.

WEATHER

Tornado touches down at Spring Valley School

By Sharon Martin
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BUTTE VALLY » As if 2020 couldn't get any more weird and unusual, a tornado touched down in Butte County at Spring Valley School on Wednesday.

The tornado was witnessed by students and staff at the school located off Pentz Road near Highway 70.

"We were playing Simon Says and we just looked out the window and saw a tornado," said Desirae Miller, a sixth-grader at the school.

Samantha Gobba, a sev-

enth and eighth-grade teacher at the school, was taking her students outside for physical education briefly after 2 p.m. It had been windy and raining all day, but there was a brief break in the weather. She felt it was perfect timing to bring her students outside and have a game of four square.

"We were getting ready to play four square then suddenly we noticed all this debris getting kicked up very violently west of the school," Gobba said. "We could see tree branches and what

TORNADO » PAGE 4



An tornado touched down at Spring Valley School on Wednesday afternoon. The National Weather Service rated the tornado an EFO.

JOSH PEETE — CONTRIBUTED

Tornado

FROM PAGE 1

looked like roof shingles. It started getting closer and faster. As we're looking it starts to swirl and at that point, I said 'that looks concerning.'

Gobba then herded her students back into the classroom only to see that the power had been shut off. Inside the classroom, her students watched through the window the funnel cloud touch down and move across the soccer field.

"We watched it go right across the soccer field. Knocked over a fence and carried on," Gobba said. "We watched it form, we watched it touch down and we watched it peter out."

The National Weather

Service has rated the tornado as an EFO on the damage scale. Emily Heller of the National Weather Service Sacramento said there was minor damage. Heller confirmed the tornado and said there were several funnel clouds that had formed in Butte County on Wednesday.

"There were a lot of thunderstorms in the area and almost every one that formed yesterday was spinning," Heller said.

The tornado narrowly missed the school's new playground, Gobba said. The playground is actually being inspected Friday. But a temporary fence was knocked over.

"It was a miracle that it did not hit that playground," Gobba said.

Gobba said her students didn't panic while watching the tornado. In fact,

many were more amazed and entertained by the sudden weather change.

"The thing that was probably going through everyone's mind was 'Oh, it's a tornado, that's cool,'" said Annie Iles, a seventh-grader and Camp Fire survivor in Gobba's class. "It was pretty cool. We haven't been through a tornado before."

Contact reporter Sharon Martin at 530-896-7778.



JOSH PEETE — CONTRIBUTED

A tornado touched down at Spring Valley School on Wednesday afternoon.