

CONCOW

Propane, other goods donated to Camp Fire survivors

Travis Cross fills propane tanks during a giveaway for Camp Fire survivors on Saturday in Concow.



CARIN DORGHALLI — ENTERPRISE-RECORD

By Carin Dorghalli
cdorghalli@chicoer.com

CONCOW » The cold weather can be a concern to Camp Fire survivors who are still in the process of rebuilding. Brian Beabout lost his Concow home to the fire. He built a tiny house on his property to live in, but relies heavily on propane for his furnace, refrigerator, oven and more.

"It's my dream to be up here. I was raised up here," he said.

On Saturday afternoon, he patiently waited in line to get free propane. As did dozens of other fire survivors during a giveaway on the grounds of the Canyon Creek Market, otherwise known as "the dome" among locals.

Anywhere between 370-520 gallons of propane are donated during these giveaways, plus some goodies. Last week, dog treats and toys were distributed. This week, cheese, rice and lemon cakes were.

PROPANE » PAGE 4



PHOTOS BY CARIN DORGHALLI — ENTERPRISE-RECORD

ABOVE, RIGHT: A propane giveaway takes place at the Canyon Lakes Market (otherwise known as "The Dome") on Saturday in Concow.



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Pat Butler, a Camp Fire survivor, attends a propane giveaway with Shiner, her dog on Saturday in Concow.



A dog sits in the back of a truck with supplies distributed during a giveaway for Camp Fire survivors on Saturday in Concow.

Propane

FROM PAGE 1

“Every time they do it, it helps very much,” Beabout said.

Mel Contant coordinated the event, and has coordinated many others over the last two years. She’s from Chicago, but was living in the Bay Area when the Camp Fire broke out. Her son escaped the inferno and kept her updated on the happenings.

Contant drove straight up to Butte County and stopped by several evacuation centers to better gauge the needs of the community.

“The people were talking to you, telling you the most horrendous stories ever. They had no feelings or emotion. They were in shock,” Contant said through teary eyes.

Her first big act was filling a 16-foot trailer filled with tarps, blankets, sleeping bags, socks, toilet paper and more to be distributed to survivors.

She went back to the Bay Area, but only to grab her dog before permanently moving to Concow to better serve the community up there. She founded Connect the Dots to further relief efforts on the ridge.

Contant is currently in the process of becoming the next Cal Fire-Butte County volunteer firefighter in Concow. She finished her skills test last weekend and should be fully done by the end of March.

The first propane giveaway was in November. A whole team of volunteers helped distribute the propane. It lasted four hours.

“It was cold and dark, but it was worth it,” Contant said.

Pat Butler of Yankee Hill lost nearly everything in the Camp Fire. Her little travel trailer, though, survived. That’s what she’s been living in since she was able to return to her property. She has been taking advantage of these giveaways.

“Oh my god, they’re very helpful,” she said. “Especially with the snow and colder weather.”

For information about these giveaways, visit the Connect the Dots Facebook, Instagram or Twitter profiles. Each time, there’s a whole team of volunteers there to help.

“These are Camp Fire survivors who were burned out and have no place to live who are helping me. There’s no way I can do this all by myself. No way,” Contant said.

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NVCF

Butte Strong Fund grants include rebuilding, fire mitigation funding

Staff reports

PARADISE » The Butte Strong Fund approved \$250,000 for Habitat for Humanity to buy home lots in Paradise for affordable housing in March.

Nine grants approved by the North Valley Community Foundation in the past month total \$610,805.

The grant to Habitat for Humanity of Butte County will help buy lots on the ridge, as the organization aims to purchase 30 lots and build four to six homes a year for up to 10 years.

Other recently awarded

Butte Strong Fund grants include:

- \$103,305 for a tree removal project in Concow managed by From The Ground Up Farms, to remove dangerous, deadly trees from Concow properties for families for free. This project would remove about 1,200 dangerous trees in the Highway 70 corridor and help with defensible space requirements and lot clearing, aiding 24 to 36 families.
- \$50,000 for United Policyholders to provide guidance for homeowners on rebuilding and insurance

settlements.

- \$50,000 in funding to Youth on the Ridge Community Foundation for the "Rediscover the Ridge" video series.
- \$30,000 to Paradise Gleaners/Butte County Gleaners to provide food and other necessities to fire survivors and at-risk populations.
- \$50,000 to allow Sol Sanctuary to provide community wellness services to Camp Fire survivors.
- \$17,000 for vouchers to help parents in the Concow area transport students to Spring Valley School. The

grant funds a collaboration between the Golden Feather Union Elementary School District and the Yankee Hill Fire Safe Council, providing gas vouchers for parents in the district.

- \$50,000 for counseling services to adults, seniors and disabled Camp Fire survivors through Caring Choices, adding 30 new clients for in-person and virtual counseling services.
- \$10,500 to the Tzu Chi Foundation to build a food distribution center as part of John and Teri Rubiolo's "I AM's Garden" meal service facility.

THE REAL DIRT



PHOTOS BY LAURA LUKES — CONTRIBUTED

The Spring Fever Nursery inventory grows one plant at a time.

Local nursery weathers changes wrought by fire in the foothills

By Laura Lukes

This is a story of adaptation, by both plants and their people. It's set in the fire-prone foothills of eastern Butte County, where in 1994 David and Cathy Walther purchased a home on 1.5 acres. The property sits on a gentle slope above the Feather River Canyon and is reached by roads that wind steeply up the hill and then through the undulating topography of Yankee Hill.

Their introduction to wildfire and evacuation occurred the first year when the Raulsen Fire burned within a half mile of their home. They knew when they bought the place they'd be in a fire zone or, as David Walther (a fellow Master Gardener) said during our recent garden tour and interview: "It's not if we will burn, it's when."

Still, when the evacuation order was lifted, they began to build a life there around their shared love of plants.

Two raging infernos — the Poe Fire in 2001 and the Camp Fire in 2018 — two terrifying evacuations, and 27 years later, they and their plants continue to adapt to new conditions in the burn scars that show how close these fires came to the walls of their home.

In the deep shade provided by 20 or so immense pines on the west side of their acreage in the early years, they began to amend the thin red clay soils and introduce a large assortment of plant species. They drew from hardy perennials and shrubs native to Mediterranean climates, including proteus, hebe, summer-blooming cyclamen, heliobore, calanthe orchid, podophyllum and echium, to name just a few. David Walther is especially interested in plants that have whimsical "Dr. Se-



Cyclamen blooms.

uss" shapes and uncommon flowers and foliage.

The result was a lush garden spreading just past the green lawn in front of the house, interspersed with geometrically placed rock collections and dotted with garden art. But David Walther's true passion lies in experimentation, finding what can adapt to the conditions there. For example, he says "I planted lots of proteus, about 50, all over the yard just to see how they would do. I planted them to see how they would hold up in our Northern California weather."

The plants were also a form of retirement planning. David Walther figured he could learn what would survive here and then offer other gardeners new choices: a larger palette of colors, textures, and shapes than are normally sold in our area. In fact, some of the species Da-



vid Walther began to grow are so uncommon that it is difficult to find information on propagating them.

Which meant lots of trial and error: taking and planting cuttings at various times of year; trying different types of cuttings.

With the bounty resulting from trials, the Walthers started Spring Fever Nursery, selling at first on a small scale (a 20-by-40 foot area on the property), and at the

Thursday Night Market in downtown Chico. To fund the commercial nursery operation, David Walther sold his lucrative landscape business.

And then the Poe Fire roared up the hill, forcing the Walthers and their pets to evacuate once again. Returning home to find their gardens, nursery, and home intact while surrounding areas had burned (in fact, fire fighters used their greenbelt as a refuge), the Walthers adapted by turning adversity to advantage. Their neighbor to the east was done with foothill fires and, by acquiring that adjacent property, tearing out burnt stumps — "it looked like a war zone," he said — and leveling the remaining area, Spring Fever grew to a large, beautifully organized commercial nursery, complete with shade and



LAURA LUKES — CONTRIBUTED

The sun reaches the western portion of the nursery for the first time in decades after the fire.

Real Dirt

FROM PAGE 6

green houses and metal tables, all sitting atop a bed of pea gravel.

Spring Fever Nursery joined other seasonal booths at the Chico Certified Farmers Market, setting up each Saturday spring through fall. They hauled their plants, almost all in pint-sized pots, in an old milk truck, the back steps of which doubled as their market sales office and official perching place.

Their plants are propagated from cuttings, seeds or divisions: any way David Walther can create one plant from another. They remain in the nursery through two growing seasons in order to develop an adequate root system and prove their hardiness, experiencing heat, wind, frost (even, occasionally, snow) and sometimes deer. As David Walther says, "If I didn't kill it, you can keep it alive."

In between the Poe Fire and the Camp Fire, the Walthers continued to play with an astounding variety of plants. Cathy Walther had a special circular garden just behind the house packed with aromatic and unusual herbs. An enormous royal paulownia (empress tree) towered beyond that, filling the air with an intoxicating fragrance each spring. One of the most charming aspects of the Walthers' landscape was its rambunctious exuberance; they encouraged all sorts of plants to co-exist. There was not a fussy garden in which one was afraid to step off the path. Their garden invited one to wander, discover, and revel in the sheer wonder of the plant kingdom.

But that changed with the Camp Fire in

2018. After their month-long evacuation, David and Cathy Walther returned to find that 70% of this joyful riot of plants had burned, as had a corner of the nursery, including the green houses. And their environment had changed drastically. Gone were the large pines offering hours of shade on the west-northwest exposure. Gone were Cathy's herb garden, the empress tree and other favorites. An oak stump left from the Poe Fire burned to the ground in the Camp Fire. Twisted equipment, charred plants, and melted plastic now adorned the formerly neat and tidy nursery grounds.

The Camp Fire watch word is "resilience." The one that came out of the COVID-19 pandemic is "pivot." Add them together and you get adaptation.

When the ash and dust cleared in late 2018, that is exactly what the Walthers did with their remaining plants.

Some wonderful things resulted in the wake of that fire. For instance, in a newly sundrenched patch of yard a forest of foxgloves volunteered. Huge echium — the beloved Dr. Suess plants — are popping back up all over the place. What David Walther calls a "freak hellebore," a beauty with white flowers, began to thrive in more sun than he thought possible. Other hellebores were basking in the now-open canopy, and David Walther found that they bloom more prolifically now than they did in the deep shade. He estimates that, compared to where they lived the first year, the successive fires have thinned out about three-quarters of the forest.

Of course, events of this magnitude change interior landscapes as well. During our conver-

sation, David Walther noted that he is now free from the illusion of control: he has acquired a sense of acceptance and adopted a "wait and see" attitude. He expressed a sense of hopeful joy, and he continues to explore the property to see what post-fire changes the plants are exhibiting.

He is building his nursery inventory, one plant at a time. And he is sure they have not seen the last of the fires on this ridge above the Feather River Canyon.

David Walther is grateful to Magnolia Gift and Garden for support — you can find Spring Fever Nursery plants there. Spring Fever Nursery is open by appointment and is holding a Comeback Sale on May 9 (Mother's Day) and May 10! Check their Facebook page for more details <https://www.facebook.com/springfevernursery>.

The Master Gardeners Spring Workshop Series has begun. Topics include: Plant Propagation, Native Gardens, Invasive Plants, Honeybees, and a 4-part series on Firewise Landscaping. Check Workshops for Spring 2021 — UC Master Gardeners of Butte County (ucanr.edu) to read about these upcoming free workshops and register for them.

The UC Master Gardeners of Butte County are part of the University of California Cooperative Extension system, serving our community in a variety of ways, including 4H, farm advisors, and nutrition and physical activity programs. To learn more about UCCE Butte County Master Gardeners, and for help with gardening in our area, visit <https://ucanr.edu/sites/bcmg/>. If you have a gardening question or problem, call the hotline at 538-7201 or email mgbutte@ucanr.edu.

DIXIE FIRE

NEW EVACUATION ORDERS

Jonesville, Philbrook evacuated and Butte Meadows, Inskip receive warnings 'out of an abundance of caution,' sheriff says



RICK SILVA — PARADISE POST

On Sunday the Dixie fire, seen here from Highway 32, forced both Plumas County and Butte County Sheriff's Departments to issue evacuation orders for parts of their counties.

By Rick Silva
rsilva@paradisepost.com

PULGA » An evacuation order was issued for Jonesville and Philbrook on Sunday as the Dixie Fire grew to more than 18,000 acres, sending a fresh plume of smoke that was visible from more than a hundred miles away.

The Butte County Sheriff's Office also issued evacuation warnings for Butte Meadows and Inskip. Both the order and warning went into effect around 4 p.m. Sunday.

An evacuation order means there is an immediate threat to life. It is a lawful order to leave. The area is lawfully closed to public access.

An evacuation warning means there is a potential threat to life and/or property. Those who require additional time to evacuate, and those with pets and livestock should leave immediately.

Butte County Sheriff Kory Honea said Sunday around 5 p.m. that there is no threat to Paradise or Magalia at this time. The warnings for Butte Meadows and

Inskip were done "out of an abundance of caution," he said.

Highway 70 was closed around 2:30 p.m. to traffic up the Feather River Canyon from the Cal Fire-Butte County Station 36 at the Jarbo Gap, which is about 14 miles northeast from the junction of Highway 70 and Clark Road, Cal Fire said in a press release.

The fire, which started on Tuesday at 5:15 p.m., has grown to 18,702 acres but firefighters held their containment at 15%.

Cal Fire said that the fire continues to burn towards the north-

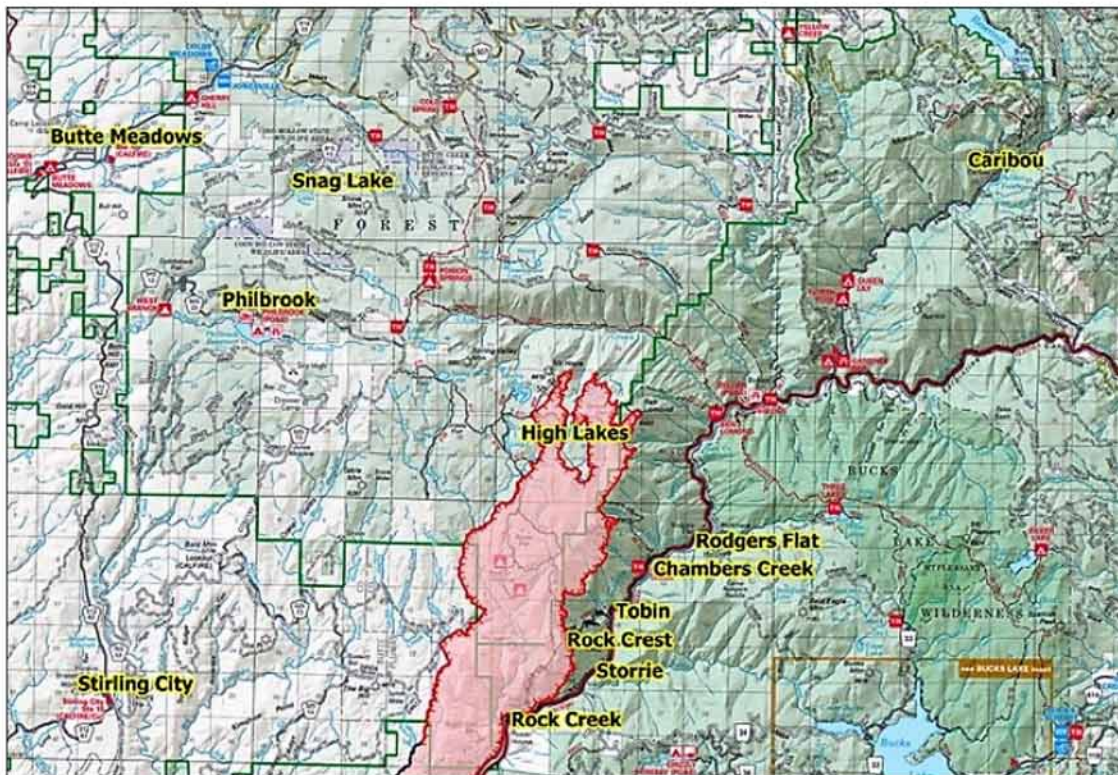
east, flanking and following the Feather River Canyon. Firefighters worked through the night to construct direct lines and extinguish any interior hotspots.

Cal Fire said that fire continues to burn in remote areas that have limited access and extended travel times are creating challenges to firefighters as they work to increase containment.

A Fire Weather Watch is in effect in Butte County due to strong winds, low humidity, and high temperatures.

DIXIE FIRE » PAGE 5

There are currently 85 engines on the fire with 17 water tenders, 10 helicopters, 56 hand crews, and 17 dozers. There are a total of 1,669 firefighters on the blaze.



PROVIDED BY CAL-FIRE

A map of the Dixie Fire.

Dixie Fire

FROM PAGE 1

Evacuation orders are in place for the High Lakes area in Plumas County, Storrie, Tobin, Rock Crest, Rich Bar, and Twain. Plumas County Sheriff has also ordered those in Meadow Valley and Bucks Lake to leave. That's for those from Bucks Lake Road at Snag Lake Road west to the Plumas/Butte County line and to the area of Tollgate. Those in Plumas County are being asked to evacuate to Quincy High School.

Evacuation warnings for the communities of Pulga, Snaglake, Chambers Creek, Rodgers Flat, Belden, and High Lakes (Butte County) area are in place.

In Plumas County, an evacuation warning is in place east of the Rock Creek Dam to Caribou, including both sides of Highway 70 in this area and the communities of Belden and Caribou.

Camp Creek Road is closed.

There are currently 85 engines on the fire with 17 water tenders, 10 helicopters, 56 hand crews, and 17 dozers. There are a to-



PHOTOS BY RICK SILVA — PARADISE POST

The Dixie Fire, which grew to 18,702 acres on Sunday was visible from the valley. Here is the view from Ceres and E. Eaton Road.

tal of 1,669 firefighters on the blaze.

Plumas National Forest has closed all roads and trails within the Dixie Fire closure area. Lassen National Forest has issued a separate closure.

The Plumas National Forest's closure is through Sept. 16.

Contact reporter Rick Silva at 530-876-3014.



One of the "numerous" air tankers on the Dixie Fire makes it way to the fire as it flies over Highway 32.

2021 FIRE SEASON

FAST-GROWING DIXIE FIRE IS LARGEST IN CALIFORNIA



RICK SILVA — PARADISE POST

The Dixie Fire here from the Neal Road fire is now at 142,940 acres.

Plumas County Sheriff's Office widens evacuation warnings to Quincy

By Rick Silva
rsilva@paradisepost.com

PULGA » The Dixie Fire now holds the distinction as the largest wildfire of the season in California, and shows no signs of slowing down yet.

The fire was mapped at 167,430 acres Friday evening with 18 percent containment. The fire grew by 29,034 acres overnight Thursday into Friday morning, and by nearly 25,000 acres during the day Friday.

Not only has it surpassed the Beckwourth Complex, which is nearing full containment at 105,000 acres, the Dixie Fire's growth Friday surpassed the deadly 2018 Camp Fire, which covered 153,336 acres.

Investigators have confirmed the fire has destroyed eight structures to date, and an additional 8,000 are threatened, which marks a significant increase from the 1,500 structures threatened as of Thursday night.

As a result, more evacuation orders and warnings were added for both Butte and Plumas counties Friday.

The Butte County Sheriff's Office issued an evacuation or-



THEE MICHAEL JONES — CONTRIBUTED

The Dixie Fire is seen from the north shore of Lake Almanor looking southwest across the lake Thursday. Canyondam is at the center of the photo.

der for Butte Meadows on Friday afternoon, and 25 deputies, as well as Butte County Sheriff Kory Honea, traveled to the area and went door to door informing residents to leave. Honea said deputies will continue to patrol the area to "secure and

protect" residences.

The evacuation order came at recommendation of Cal Fire officials, who observed fire activity picking up in the area Friday, an ongoing challenge that firefighters dealt with Thursday, said Mike Wink, operations section chief for

incident management team 1.

Aircraft were not able to fly for much of the day due to smoky conditions, but infrared data showed additional fire spread to the west toward Snag Lake, Jonesville and Butte Meadows.

DIXIE FIRE » PAGE 4

In addition to the Dixie Fire, Butte County fire and law enforcement officials responded to four other fires this week in lower Paradise, Thermalito, Kelly Ridge and Bangor. Two of those, Honea said, were started by people working and using lawn or other heavy equipment. That prompted the sheriff to levy a stern warning for residents at Friday evening's briefing.

"Folks, we can't afford to have anymore fires, and thankfully, Cal Fire was able to get ahold of those fires and stop them from destroying any structures or spreading," said Honea, raising his voice. "But luck will not last. So if you're going to be out there, doing things in the afternoon that could cause a fire — stop."

Philbrook and the High Lakes area are still under evacuation orders, while Inskip and east Concow have evacuation warnings in place.

Honea added the communities of Stirling City, Magalia and Paradise are not currently being threatened by the fire, but advised residents to remain vigilant and be prepared should conditions change with little advanced warning.

Additionally, as the fire continued to burn further into Plumas County, the Plumas County Sheriff's Office extended evacuation warnings to include all of Quincy.

The area added includes Highway 70 near Massack and everything west toward Meadow Valley, as well as Chandler Road and Quincy-La Porte Road from Highway 70 to Thompson Creek. The Sheriff's Office announced the warnings around 1:15 p.m. Friday. Previously, the west Quincy area was also put under an evacuation warning, which means there is a potential threat to life and property in the area, and gives people an advance notice to begin

BUTTE COUNTY'S LARGEST WILDFIRES

North Complex (2020):
318,935 acres

Dixie Fire (2021): 167,430
acres*

Camp Fire (2018):
153,336 acres

* Active

planning and/or packing to leave in the event an evacuation order is issued.

For the latest evacuation notices, visit the Plumas County Sheriff's Office Facebook page and a map of the affected areas in Plumas and Butte counties at www.buttecounty.net/sheriffcoroner.

The fire has been divided into two zones — the west and east zone, with one incident base in Chico and a second in Westwood to support additional logistical needs.

In the west zone, the fire remains active and still features active surface fire and tree torching with long-range planning and rollout.

Conditions over the last couple of days have allowed firefighters to light back fires.



KYRA GOTTESMAN — MERCURY-REGISTER

The burn scar from the Bear Fire is still visible Thursday as smoke from the Dixie Fire rises over the hills near a low Lake Oroville seen from the Oroville Dam in Oroville.

On Thursday night, relative humidity and temperature was favorable, allowing firefighters to conduct a firing operation parallel to Highway 89.

"Folks in the area definitely saw that last night and this morning ... they saw the fire's edge pretty close to Highway 89 or Lake Almanor. That was us putting in that black line, building that buffer, making it safer for us and removing those fuels for if (or) when this fire does get there," Wink said.

In the fire's east zone, authorities said crews made good progress on the southeast part of the Dixie Fire that has been moving toward Bucks Lake.

Firefighters are also responding to the Fly Fire and a new start just north of Kaddie — that fire started Thursday night in Butterfly Valley and burned quickly to the northeast along Highway 89 and 70. It is now at approximately 3,800 acres.

The blaze forced evacuation orders for Taylorsville, Chandler Road west to Oakland Camp, Keddie, Old Highway (west) and Round Roundhouse.

That fire is under investigation.

A total of 4,266 personnel are currently working the Dixie Fire. This includes 365 engines, 60 water tenders, 31 helicopters, 76 hand crews and 100 bulldozers.

Contact reporter Rick Silva at 530-876-3014.

CAL FIRE-BUTTE COUNTY

Wildfire stopped under 3 acres

Staff reports

CONCOW » Firefighters stopped a wildfire at just over two acres Monday morning near Hoffman and Concow roads.

The fire was burning slowly when the first engine crews arrived shortly after 8 a.m. Monday and began laying hose around the flames, according to a news release from Cal Fire-

Butte County.

A bulldozer, a helicopter, two planes, two water trucks, a volunteer crew and more engines helped fight the blaze and contained it to 2.36 acres.

Engine crews were expected to remain at the site throughout the day extinguishing any hot spots and patrolling the fire line.

The cause of the fire is under investigation.



EVENTS

Focus on community at Salmon Festival

By Melissa Joseph
mjoseph@chicoer.com

OROVILLE » For many Butte County residents, the Salmon Festival is a chance to enjoy local vendors and activities. For others, the festival is an opportunity to acknowledge and celebrate the salmon and wildlife culture in the Feather River.

To kick off the festival, the Maidu Konkow Valley Band from the North Fork of the Feather River performed a series of opening ceremony dances.

Wallace Clark, a member of the Maidu and a "noponi," the carrier of traditions, helped host and lead the opening ceremony alongside the traditional dancers.

"We've been celebrating the salmon for thousands of years, where all different people could come and enjoy the salmon feed," Clark said. "Throughout the decades that has incorporated into a larger base with the Salmon Festival."

The Maidu are the only tribe permitted to spear fish in the Feather River. During the weeks

leading up to the Salmon Festival, tribe members can be found fishing just south of Riverbend Park.

The festival not only celebrates salmon, but is an opportunity for members of the community to fundraise and spread awareness for numerous organizations in Butte County.

Joan Bosque, a member of The Friends of the Feather River Nature Center, recognized the community involvement during the annual Salmon Soirée, which aimed to raise funds for the fully

SALMON » PAGE 4



Maidu Tribe's Konkow Valley Band performs a series of opening ceremony dances wearing "batsawi" head dresses and traditional garb at the Salmon Festival in Oroville Saturday.

MELISSA JOSEPH —
MERCURY-REGISTER

Salmon

FROM PAGE 1

self supported nature center in Oroville.

"We had a big fundraising dinner for the nature center last night, and we almost sold out," Bosque said Saturday. "We had great support from the community for raffle prizes, wineries donated wine for the event and Feather Falls Brewery donated beer for the dinner provided by Feather Falls Catering, so it was really festive and community oriented."

The nature center partnered with the Feather River Fish Hatchery to further educate community members about salmon and the new struggles they face in today's evolving environment.

Although the Feather River Fish Hatchery is closed to the public because of the pandemic, the viewing windows and salmon ladder are still open for public enjoyment and education.

In recent years, about 50% of salmon habitats have been destroyed by the building of dams.

"The reason we're here is because of the building of the dam, as mitigation

"We've been celebrating the salmon for thousands of years, where all different people could come and enjoy the salmon feed. ... that has incorporated into a larger base with the Salmon Festival."

— Wallace Clark, member of the Maidu tribe

for the lost habitat that happened," Feather River Fish Hatchery Manager Anna Kastner, said. "We're trying to keep the populations going and because we care for these fish, we have an 80-85% survival rate, where out on the river they have maybe 5%. It's not just about the fish, it's about the environment."

The efforts of the hatchery combined with community outreach from other organizations has transformed the Salmon Festival into an educational opportunity for residents, as well as a fun day out with family.