



The *Business Alliance...Update* is a bi-monthly publication of the El Dorado Business Alliance (BA). The BA is made up of the following organizations: El Dorado County Association of Realtors (EDCAR), El Dorado County Chamber of Commerce, North State Building Industry Association (NSBIA) and Shingle Springs-Cameron Park Chamber of Commerce. Web Address for Subscription Info: [KathyeRussell@gmail.com](mailto:KathyeRussell@gmail.com)

## *“Developing Mutual Support on Community-Wide Issues”*

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### Tid-Bit

**Heard at supermarket this weekend:** Customers are likely to re-think their answer when asked “paper or plastic” at California supermarkets starting next January. According to one Raley’s check-out clerk this week, *“In 2015 we’ll be charging customers 15 cents per bag if you don’t supply your own.”* The clerk did not clarify if the fee will be applied to only plastic bags, paper bags or both.

**Looking at the Best of Us:** As I draft this newsletter I feel kind of bad: there’s always so much more of the bad than the good news to report it seems. A recent local event reminds us of the many wonderful people who live, work, play and volunteer in this community. They’re not the loud, caustic voices often heard at Board of Supervisors (BOS) hearings on land use matters: They are the majority of people who live quiet lives centered on the good things about our neighborhoods, coworkers, friends and associates. They are the folks in the middle. In that middle are the people that have made EDC (El Dorado County) more than just another rural county.

I attended a Sand Fire Benefit at the EDC fairgrounds. It was put together in a mere 3 weeks by local businessmen Gordon Vicini and Jim Carter. Though both will cringe when seeing their names called out, their leadership cannot be understated: They have the vision, enthusiasm and passion for others that makes such an event work. It’s their positive passion and humble qualities that make friends, family and others in the community want to step in and help.

The event benefitted the 19 families who lost their homes in the recent Sand fire. Attendance hit about 3,500 or so from all walks of life, from all areas of the county, and from all demographics, young and old alike. With their team of volunteers Gordon and Jim orchestrated an excellent pasta feed, considering the number of people they had to feed over the course of several hours. The lawn at the fairground’s grandstand steadily filled-up as bands entertained and folks wandered to the raffle prize tables where a variety of community groups had donated prizes to appeal to all interests. At last count over \$78,000 was donated to help those families who lost their homes in the recent Sand Fire with the caveat that more money was still being collected. ALL the money went to the victims and even the food was donated. For that we can thank the many local service groups and the Community Foundation.

To sum it up, this writer attended with a local couple that had relocated here from the Bay Area fewer than ten years ago. They seemed amazed about the high number of people flowing into the fairgrounds, and in awe of the friendly

### Apple Hill Turns 50

As we move into the fall season of 2014, we note that EDC’s Apple Hill Growers Association™ (AHGA) turned 50 this year! Happy Birthday to this successful example of how local energy, commitment and passion is becoming an earmark of El Dorado County, and an example of how it can be achieved, as discussed in our first article. Local volunteers have been responsible for showing us how far a good idea can go with such passion and leadership.

Apple Hill Growers™ has remained a family destination since 1964 for multitudes of Sacramento Region residents, as well as being a huge tourism draw from all over the state, nation and even worldwide. Not too many years ago (may still be accurate today) Apple Hill was listed as the biggest regional tourists’ draw/destination, second only to Old Town Sacramento. Visitors are estimated to be 750,000 each year, with one-third of annual visitors from the State of Nevada.

The Apple Hill Growers Association™ has been busy growing attractions and perfecting their advertising/out-reach for local farms and orchards these past 50 years, and they continue to increase the number of local events one can enjoy in a visit to Apple Hill. Activities include the chance to sample many kinds of fresh baked apple and fruit delights, especially good after taking part in you-pick ranches and orchards and other kid-friendly activities. Then there are the wines and hand-crafted beers enjoyed all year long, but especially in the cooling fall air, with leaves turning color, and friendly locals who never seem to tire of educating visitors about their products. Congratulations to all those who continue to contribute to this successful long-term effort.

## Gas Prices to Rise in 2015

At a time when California continues to lose good paying jobs to other, often nearby, states (recent reports of large employers moving firms to Nevada as well as Texas), gas prices are now set to increase in California based on a new "carbon tax" that will be added to every gallon of gas sold statewide. In what many view as a misguided effort to change human-induced climate change, the "carbon tax" proposed on oil companies is expected to go into effect in 2015, and those companies will be required to pay for the greenhouse gases they're charged with releasing into the air. Many companies have reported that the tax will affect the prices consumers pay at the pump. And numerous firms of different types of businesses just seem to have given up and continue to move their firms from this State.

California Senate leader Darrell Steinberg (D) attempted to eliminate the carbon tax legislatively *on oil companies*, but *instead he wants to tax consumers directly*. **Steinberg proposed that the state increase the price at the pump by 15 cents per gallon starting in 2015. That would increase to 43 cents per gallon in 2030.** *"Higher prices discourage demand. If carbon pricing doesn't sting, at least a little bit, we won't change our habits"* Steinberg said.

The revenue generated by this proposal is earmarked for use towards mass transit (the California bullet train) and to give families a tax credit if they make under \$75,000 a year. The tax credit was discussed as at least \$600 per family. It is unclear to this writer what the obvious nexus is to lower income families, other than recognition that this is a costly program and California residents will pay for it. It could also be just one more means of charging the voter-perceived "well off residents" (small and large business owners) with subsidizing the "not so well off".

## Water Issues - Leadership: Missing in Action

California has not developed new water sources (including major water storage) for decades, despite ongoing droughts, floods, residents' and farmers' suffering and financial losses associated with the lack of water. In fact, environmental advocates continue to push an agenda to remove existing dams, and no coalition of advocates for more water, including prestigious community leaders, informed scientists or even problem solving politicians, have succeeded. We could spend a lot of time and space writing about a variety of those plans, but the truth is it's really about politics and decisions being made that ignore looming problems, so that effort would be futile.

The drought is affecting local residents and farmers, and local advocates to stop all growth have included the lack of long-term water supplies as yet another environmental reason stop the growth planned for in the EDC General Plan, from occurring. If the traffic claims fail to gain traction and stop implementation of the adopted General Plan, then their plan is to also have water issues on the record as obstacles to growth that they say cannot be mitigated. The problem with such claims is that both issues – lack of long-term water guarantees and local, short-term traffic congestion - can be fixed! When opponents to growth cite traffic statistics, they usually fail to include solutions that have already been made, and will continue to be made, that will change congestion patterns to free-flowing traffic. Likewise, water is an issue, but EDC is not alone: this is a statewide issue and the State has mandated that EDC must accept a certain percentage of California's new growth; notwithstanding the lack of long term water solutions adopted by our state leaders. With Supervisors adopting a slow 1.03% growth rate, as experienced historically in EDC, opponents to the General Plan have not offered solutions.

Regarding State water needs, it's not as if State and National leaders and legislators aren't aware of the need for more water in California. Business Alliance members have long believed that with planning and foresight in decision making, and professional efforts that engage all stake holders, residents could benefit from the construction of more local water supplies and water storage facilities. Our location is ideal for such projects. The flip side of the current drought is represented by the always-present danger that the Sacramento Valley will be impacted by a devastating flood sooner or later. We came close in 1986 and water experts continue to warn, *"It's not if the region has a devastating flood – it's a matter of when."*

Currently rules and laws passed by the California Legislature have given the courts the ability to say "no" to any location identified for new dams. With California's population already increased by about 15 million more people since any new water supplies have been obtained, and with the legislature's failure to deal with looming disasters waiting to happen, not only are storage facilities not being approved, but the state has also re-allocated water from the Colorado River to other States. Instead of tackling and solving these major problems, the State leaders retain an unfriendly attitude not only towards businesses in California, but also to the residents with long-held rights to groundwater.

**Next Issue:** *We will continue to cover information about recent California legislative actions that affects residents of El Dorado County and the supply, storage and use of water. We also discuss looming groundwater use impacts not experienced in the past, based on recent State actions.*