



December 2024

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3rtogether.org

Three Rivers Together!

Welcome to our first Three Rivers Together newsletter! It is a place where our community members, charitable organizations, and government organizations can share information that doesn't have the urgency of an announcement or qualify as an event. We plan to publish it every other month at first. Subscribers who have checked the 'Newsletter' option in their subscriptions settings will receive it in their inboxes. To change your options, scroll to the bottom of the last email we sent you and click the "update your preferences" link.

Message from Eddie Valero

Dear Three Rivers Community,

As your County Supervisor, I am honored to serve this vibrant, small, but mighty community. Together, we've accomplished much, and I'm confident that with continued collaboration, we'll achieve even greater strides in the year ahead.

This year, we'll focus on several important initiatives, including:

- Expanding the use of bear-resistant trash containers to protect wildlife and minimize human-wildlife conflict.
- Reviewing and refining our Community Plan to ensure it aligns with your vision and needs.
- Hosting upcoming Town Halls: one with Southern California Edison to address power concerns and another with County staff to discuss vital issues like the Mountain Area Plan update and more.
- Tackling much-needed road and drainage system repairs, improving safety and accessibility for all.

These are just a few of the key priorities we'll be discussing and working on together. Your input is essential to ensure these efforts address the unique needs of Three Rivers.

As Helen Keller wisely said, "Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much." While challenges undoubtedly lie ahead, I believe our collective voice and shared determination will lead us to meaningful solutions.

Please don't hesitate to reach out to me with your thoughts or concerns. You can contact me at evalero@tularecounty.ca.gov or by phone at **559-636-5014 (Calls Only)**. I look forward to hearing from you and working alongside you to build a stronger, more resilient Three Rivers.

Thank you for your continued partnership and trust. Here's to a year of progress and unity!

Sincerely,
Eddie Valero
District Four, Tulare County Supervisor

Some good news! On December 3rd, the Board of Supervisors approved an agreement with the Three Rivers Community Services District (CSD) for repairs to their drinking water infrastructure per the County of Tulare American Rescue Plan Act Final Recovery Plan, in the amount of \$3,200, effective December 3, 2024 through December 31, 2025. The funding will help cover the repairs of a river well that serves approximately 78 homes. It was damaged during the 2023 floods. This is great news. And, if you are wondering about the CSD and what it can do for you, read on!

Local Government at Work

Did you know that Three Rivers has government organizations of its very own? One of them is the **Community Services District (CSD)**. A CSD is a local representative government organization that provides public services and facilities not provided (or adequately provided) by a municipal or county government. A CSD often serves as an alternative to the incorporation of a new city. It is funded by taxes and fees for services provided.

Our CSD serves both the district and a broader “sphere of influence” that includes most of Three Rivers (see map). **It is primarily committed to serving our water quality and septic needs**, while also managing the water system in the Alta Acres neighborhood and providing limited services to the Community Playground Project. See the ‘What Does Our CSD Do?’ box below for a list of the services our CSD provides, thanks to the work of General Manager Cindy Howell and volunteers.

Our CSD also has the power to tackle our bear and garbage challenges. See the ‘What *Can* Our CSD Do?’ box below for a list of the organization’s active powers and the latent powers that could potentially be activated.

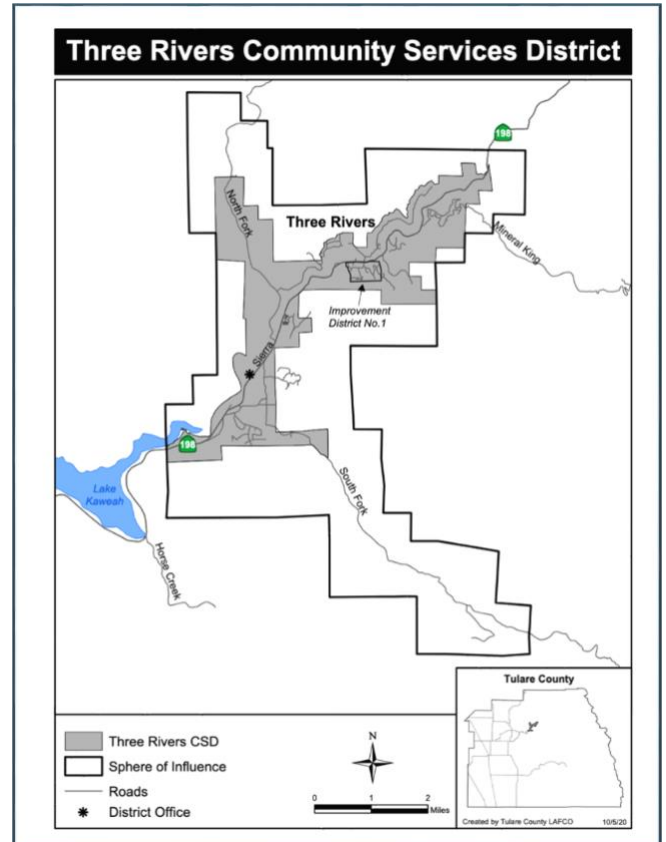
A CSD is run by five directors who are supposed to be elected by the community and accountable to the community. During their four-year terms, they collectively decide what services the CSD provides, determine how to fund those services, and oversee operations. The board of directors sets policies, approves budgets, and hires staff. The board is also responsible for communicating with residents and landowners, gathering input and feedback, and addressing concerns.

Due to an insufficient number of candidates, we have not been able to elect our CSD directors for well over a decade. Instead, the few qualified individuals who filed a declaration of candidacy were appointed in lieu of election. Often, these were incumbents. When there were vacancies or openings without any candidates at all, the Tulare County Board of Supervisors appointed recruited individuals. This occurred both this year and in 2022.

The CSD board holds a public meeting every other month on the third Wednesday at its office (in the Barn at 40838 Sierra Dr., Suite B). The agenda includes a public comment period, and the public is also welcome to address agenda items at the time they are taken up by the board. Everyone is encouraged to attend and participate. **The next meeting will be on 18 December at 6pm.**

By the time you read this, an official should have sworn in the three directors who will serve December 2024 to December 2028. These directors will serve with Mignon Gregg and Christopher Thompson, who commenced their four-year terms in December 2022. (Mignon Gregg was an incumbent appointed in lieu of election in December 2022; Christopher Thompson was appointed by the Board of Supervisors on 8 November 2022.)

- Kenneth A. Elias (incumbent appointed in lieu of election)
- David Mills (incumbent appointed in lieu of election, initially appointed by the Board of Supervisors on 8 November 2022)
- Scott Sherwood (appointed by the Board of Supervisors on 29 October 2024)



Click image to view large map in your browser.



Directors:

(until 5 December 2024)

- David Mills (President)
- Kenneth A. Elias (Vice President)
- Mignon Gregg
- Christopher Thompson

Staff

- Cindy Howell (Managing

Latest Documents

2024-2025 Fiscal Year Budget

Last approved meeting minutes
(for the meeting held June 19th 2024)

Resolution 061924-8 regarding parcel fee collection

What Does Our CSD Do?	What <i>Can</i> Our CSD Do?
<p>Provisioning water:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Managing the <u>Improvement District No. 1</u> (Alta Acres) water system <p>Monitoring water quality:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitoring well water and reporting to the California Water Quality Board • Helping mutual water companies maintain applicable water quality standards • Monitoring river water • Providing educational services regarding surface water quality • Providing low-cost drinking water testing • Investigating and taking action in response to complaints regarding groundwater, surface water, and drinking water problems • Collaborating actively with state and local agencies to achieve compliance with state and local water quality ordinances <p>Making sure septic tank systems are not contaminating the watershed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inspecting septic systems upon transfer of properties and at the owner’s request • Providing reviews and comment to county agencies on septic systems and special use permits • Investigating and taking action in response to complaints regarding septic problems • Providing homeowners information on septic systems, including a homeowner’s guide • Collaborating actively with state and local agencies to achieve compliance with state and local septic ordinances <p>Other:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing a meeting space to the Playground Committee and local organizations • Providing improvements to the community playground • Holding donations for the Community Playground Project 	<p>Active powers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitoring of individual septic systems • Preparation of project reports for sewer systems • Monitoring of potable water sources • Provision of water for various uses • Trash pick up <p>Latent powers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collection and disposal of refuse matter • Operation of recreational facilities • Street lighting • Maintaining and equipping a police force • Acquisition of facilities for public use • Maintenance/improvement of roads • Flood protection • Conversion of overhead electric and communication facilities to underground installations • Ambulance service through contract <p>NOTE: The CSD must seek <u>Tulare County LAFCO</u> approval to activate any of its latent powers that were not provided prior to January 1, 2006.</p>

Friends of the Three Rivers Library “First Line Contest” Results

Participants were asked to write the first sentence of a novel in the genre “Inspirational Science Fiction Westerns.” There was such a tremendous response to the contest and so many terrific entries that the Friends of the Three Rivers Library feel it only fair to give awards to two entrants. Many thanks to the twenty-nine brave and creative folk who participated! Our judges were local author Christina Lynch and avid book lover Carrie Vernon. Both said the entries were amazing. “I loved ALL of them, so this was really hard!” Chris said.

One first place entry by Laile Di Silvestro, “Hit on all 3 genres and made me laugh and made me want to read the whole story,” according to Chris.

“Head toward the light,” they told me, but as I eased my lame horse Heck down the dark trail, I realized this was no ordinary light and momentarily wished I was the sort of cowgirl who wore spiked heels.

The other first place entry by Peter Sodhy, “With a bit of editing could be the start of a great story,” according to Carrie.

Sheriff Eli Barker gingerly poked his knife around the still-smoking hole in what looked like the body of this four-legged metal man-thing when it suddenly spoke in a voice he recognized from childhood, “Barky, help me.”

Honorable mentions included

1. Dust billowed on the western horizon and a fiery haze bleared hills with sullen sky as ten sets of bionic hooves ground thunder into the plain...the Sky Miner Patrol spurred forward, keeping pace with the silent drones above, and hoping, praying that their training had prepared them for what lay ahead. (Theresa Wood -- was deemed most evocative by one of our judges.)
2. As soon as the morning light hit her solar battery array, Grok’s eyes sprung open and she knew exactly how she was going to steal her cattle back from the robot rustlers. (Jenny Kirk – was deemed most intriguing.)
3. My heart soared with gratitude and overwhelming delight at the sight – my white stallion careening across the lunar plain, circling the craters to come to my beckoning arms. (Kathleen McCleary – showed clever adherence to all three elements of the genre.)
4. If I had noticed his horse’s eyes, none of this would have happened, and I wouldn’t now be on this other-world, terror-stricken, witnessing what I’ve been told since childhood, doesn’t exist. (Nadi Spencer -- Propelled me into the story)
5. Here I sit on my trusty steed staring at Hospital Rock attempting to decode the number sequence to transform the rock back into the space craft it once was. (Timothy Waters – “Best local reference I will now never be able to get out of my head,” according to Chris.)
6. As I stepped through the Mag screen and arrived instantly in the fields, I longed for the trot; that old leisurely rhythm which still allowed time for thinking when passing through. (Shannon Lewis)



**Write an opening sentence for a book you might write with the theme:
Inspirational Science Fiction Western**

[Source: Friends of the Three Rivers Library]

News from Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks

Winter in the Parks

As winter conditions return to our Parks we are reminded that the road conditions hotline is the best place for people to get up to date road conditions, (call (559) 565-3341 then press 1, then 1 again). The Entrance Station and Visitor Centers should also be able to give up to date road conditions, but the Park website may not be kept up to date and is not the best resource for these conditions. Note that the Park also does not recommend particular places to purchase or rent chains and only indicates that people can get chains in Three Rivers. Ranger led programs are also offered throughout the winter season and the schedule can be found on [the calendar](#).

Exciting Developments

Exciting updates from the Park include the completion of a major water treatment upgrade at Lodgepole funded by the Great American Outdoors and a new exhibit inside the Giant Forest Museum of sequoia seedlings to check out.

Park Employee Housing

Regarding the ongoing issues with Park employee housing, you may have heard about efforts to purchase the former land of Lake Elowin to serve as a template for Park Housing within Three Rivers but outside of Park boundaries. The Sequoia Parks Conservancy Board of Directors has prioritized park employee housing. In response, the Conservancy has established a restricted fund with the generous support of donors. They are also collaborating with a local real estate agent to identify local, affordable properties that can accommodate more single- or multi-person units, ensuring both affordability and feasibility for purchase. This initiative supports their long-term goal of addressing the critical housing needs of National Park Service employees, park partners, and the Conservancy staff. While the initial effort to purchase Lake Elowin Resort would have placed a financial strain on the Conservancy, they continue actively searching for suitable properties, with or without existing housing.

Job Opportunities

Lastly, the Park is already actively hiring so let's help them find amazing people to join our community! There is ongoing need for immediate positions in custodial staff and emergency dispatch. There is also a new job for a Housing Management Specialist. The best place to find out what is currently available is on [USA Jobs](#).



Image from <https://www.nps.gov/seki/>.

Bureau of Land Management Update

Craig Ranch Parking Lot:

As you already know, the Case Mountain Recreation Area includes dozens of miles of mountain bike, foot, and equestrian trails, picnic tables, and endless opportunities for wildlife observation, photography, and exploration in the foothills of the Sierras. The area is also part of the nearly 20,000 acre Kaweah Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) designated in the Bakersfield Resource Management Plan for protection of the Case Mountain giant sequoia groves, other sensitive plant and animal species, riparian areas, and cultural resources.

The BLM opened the Craig Ranch Parking Lot to the public back in April of this year and it has the capacity for approximately 40 cars and 4 horse trailers. The Parking Lot also has 2 restrooms, a 3-pin horse corral and 2 picnic tables. The lot is open to the public between the hours of 6am and 8pm and has an automatic gate that opens/shuts at those times. The directions are simply Hwy 198 to Craig Ranch Road. Follow Craig Ranch to the end of the road (about 1 mile).

There is no overnight camping allowed in the parking lot and no vehicle access outside the posted hours (there is a magnetic sensor that will open the gate for vehicles trying to leave that are already inside the parking lot). Finally, the speed limit along Craig Ranch Road is 15mph and no parking is allowed along the road.

Coffeepot Fire impacts:

While the Coffeepot Fire had a definite impact within Case Mountain, the impact to Recreational uses is minimal. The fire burned through multiple Giant Sequoia Groves managed by the BLM, and those groves are now in various stages of repair and stabilization. The entire Recreation Area was under Emergency Closure during the Fire due to the significant amount of emergency vehicle traffic and heavy equipment use. None of the multi-use trails were negatively affected from the fire, and Case Mountain is back to normal operations.

Livestock/grazing:

There are currently 2 grazing permits at Case Mountain. The first is for 15 horses and they stay on site year-round. 2025 is the last year for that permit and the horses will be moved back to private property. The other active permit is for 106 cattle and runs annually from January 15 - May 15.

North Fork BLM Land:

The BLM manages land along the North Fork of Kaweah for multiple uses including cattle grazing, Wilderness Study Areas and more. There is publicly accessible land at Shepard Saddle Road as well at the National Park Service boundary. There is of course a 10-mile no parking county ordinance in place before you reach those areas, and there is no plan to reopen BLM locations within that closure.

[Source: Brian Ludt, Supervisory Outdoor Recreation Planner, Bakersfield Field Office, Bureau of Land Management]



Locals in the News!

A crime-solving pony. Christina Lynch's new novel *Pony Confidential* is already receiving considerable national acclaim. In this adult murder mystery, a vengeful pony embarks on a Homeric adventure that spans the continent. With humor and suspense, Christina and her pony captivate readers while exploring some of the dark aspects of the social constructs and emotions that bind us together. Ultimately, it is a book of love. Check out these three fun radio interviews in which Christina discusses the book:

- [**NPR - Christina Lynch's new novel follows a detective pony bent on revenge**](#)
- [**KVPR - Can a talking pony prove her owner's innocence?**](#)
- [**NPR - Book of the Day, Christina Lynch's Pony Confidential**](#)

Ground-breaking women (and a mic-stealing marmot). Sasha Khokha of public radio's California Report visited Mineral King to interview local archaeologist Laile Di Silvestro. Despite an adventure with a marmot who stole her microphone, she was able to create a 16-minute audio tale that highlights the unique women who mined in Mineral King in the 1870s, along with a short article and an amusing video. Check them all out at [**KOED - Uncovering women miners' forgotten legacy in the Swiss Alps of Sequoia National Park.**](#)



Three Rivers author, Chris Lynch. Photo from <https://www.clynchwriter.com/>.

Senior League Update

Hero Appreciation Months 2025

Since 2007 Peter and I have been running a program we call "Hero Appreciation Months", in which we set aside some time, and offer the community an opportunity to think about, honor, and thank our First Responders - those who have served or are serving as Firefighters/EMS personnel, Law Enforcement/Peace Officers, and in our Armed Forces. The program runs from January 1 through March 31 every year, and includes (1) a celebration on the last Friday of each month featuring individual honorees, (2) a discount program offered by local participating businesses which is in effect for the entire 3 months, and (3) a "family fun" event, which we call the Charity Bathtub Race and Picnic, that is held at Lake Kaweah on the last Saturday in March, where Bathtub Teams race for the charity of their choice with local businesses and local organizations contributing to the charity pot. For 2025 we have placed the program under the auspices of the nonprofit Three Rivers Senior League, hoping for even more community input and possible additional participation, and also to simplify the running of the program. **Those interested in offering their ideas and/or their time, should feel free to contact us, Leah Launey and Peter Sodhy, at 559-561-4270.**

[Source: Leah Launey]

We celebrate your participation in the Three Rivers Together effort and look forward to continuing to expand its offerings. Email info@3rtogether.org to submit content for the next newsletter or send us leads. If you're interested in joining our volunteer team, please email info@3rtogether.org.