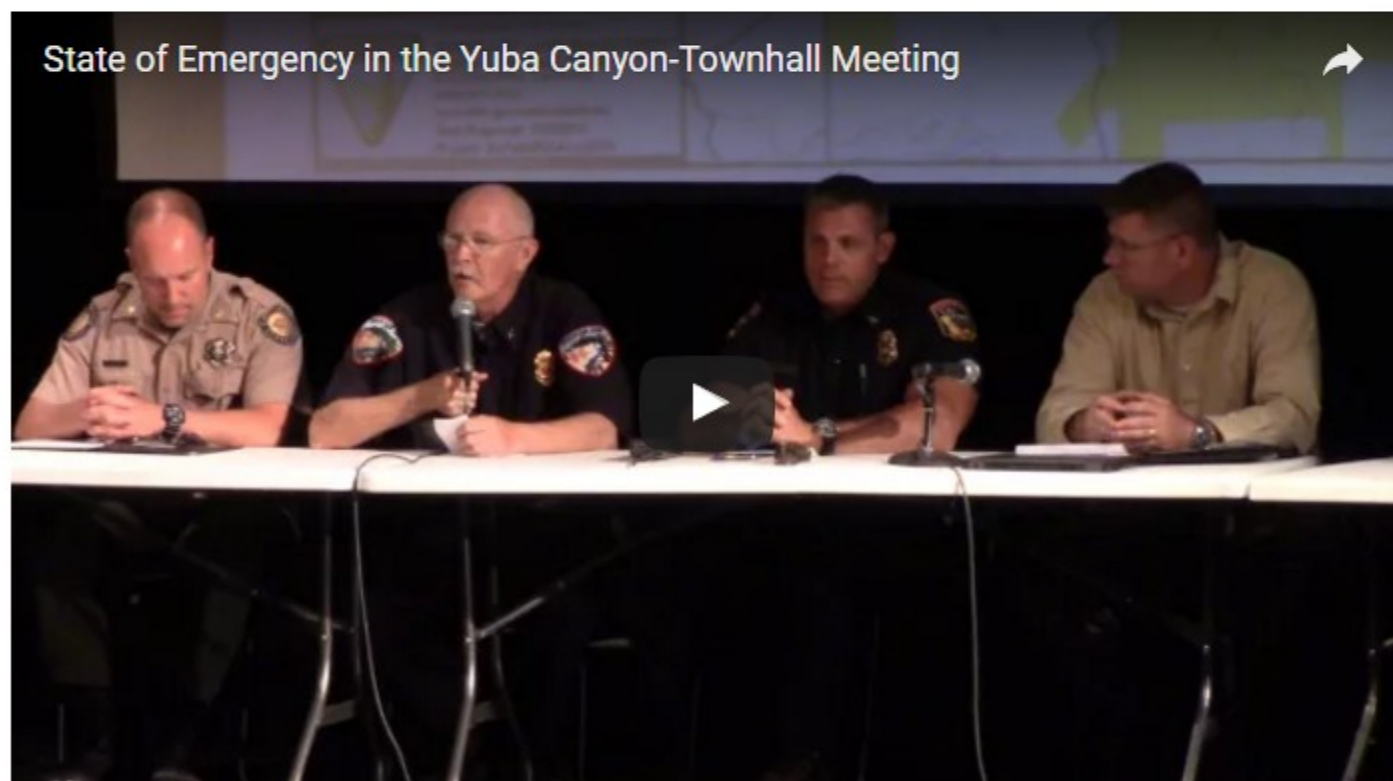


Communication, Access, Fuels and Funding emerge as major issues for Yuba Canyon

By YubaNet - August 8, 2016, 11:25:21 PM

August 10, 2016 at 10:35 AM Thanks to KVMR videographer Karl Chelette for the full video of the meeting.

NEVADA CITY, Calif. August 8, 2016 – Ten experts in their field, over one hundred people in the Nevada Theatre, KVMR listeners and YubaNet readers participated in a community conversation about the imminent dangers facing the Yuba river canyon.



Visitor numbers have increased to 700,000 annually for State Parks properties in the canyon stated Matt Green, the Chief Ranger of State Parks' Sierra District.

The number of fires has increased exponentially said both Matt Wallen CAL FIRE's Battalion Chief for the area and Shelly Allen, the Fire Chief for the Tahoe National Forest. The complexity of the fires in the steep, inaccessible canyon make every fire a high potential fire.

Battalion Chiefs Sunde from Consolidated and Johnson from North San Juan Fire related the numerous calls their agencies respond to in the canyon, mostly medical calls, fires and technical rescues. NCSO Captain Jeff Pettitt pointed to the ongoing illegal parking problems and said the Sheriff's Office wrote over 80 tickets in the past 35 days.

Prescribed burns as part of fuels management and prevention are necessary and need to be brought back to restore forest health, a goal Tahoe's Fuels Officer Jennifer Hinckley wants to work towards – across public lands.

BLM Outdoor Recreation Planner Jeff Horn said he was interested in collaborating with the other agencies on joint patrols to provide coverage for the less accessible river areas. CDA Director Sean Powers said he heard many suggestions from the public worth pursuing. SYRCL's Caleb Dardick invited the community to become more involved in the day-to-day management of the river by becoming volunteers for SYRCL.

The Big Four

Access to the river and to any incident is a major issue. Roads to Edwards, Purdon, Washington and other river access points are narrow, bridges can't carry the weight of a fire engine as BC Boyd Johnson pointed out. Any fire on the North San Juan side initially is fought by the volunteer department alone, until resources from the Nevada City side can make their way over Hwy 49 and down into the canyon.

Communication is spotty at best, even for radio communications. The complete lack of cellphone coverage adds time to any initial report of a fire or, more often, a medical injury.

Fuels are heavy, with dead trees and manzanita creating a thick, uninterrupted fuel bed that can turn an escaped campfire into a major incident.

Additional patrols, prevention work, community outreach and fuel modification need funding that is not available at this time. A **comprehensive management plan**, produced by the

agencies in 2004, could be funded under Federal Wild&Scenic designation. The South Yuba was designated a State Wild&Scenic river in 1999.

Next steps

The public had many suggestions for the agency representatives, the Q&A session went beyond the 8:00 pm broadcast. Several non-profits, involved with the river or fire safety, surely can use more members and/or volunteers. SYRCL, the Fire Safe Council of Nevada County, the Friends of Purdon and the Yuba Watershed Institute will be invited to voice their opinion and needs in the upcoming weeks.

Broadening the scope of the Purdon taskforce to encompass a larger segment of the Yuba and establishing mutual delegations of authority between agencies are also options.

Thanks again to KVMR for broadcasting the meeting and making it available later on in their streaming archives and to all the agency representatives for sharing and listening.