

Happy New Year 2009!

ANNUAL YEAR-IN-REVIEW TRILOGY

This week: THE NEWS OF 2008
 January 16:
 THE NEWS OF 2008, *continued*
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 PHOTO FINISH 2008: THE FACES
 January 30:
 PHOTO
 FINISH 2008:
 THE PLACES

THE Kaweah Commonwealth

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WEEKLY NEWSPAPER OF THREE RIVERS AND SEQUOIA~KINGS CANYON NATIONAL PARKS

ON THE WATER FRONT



In 2002, when Marcos Guzman persuaded a few friends to take a New Year's Day plunge in the chilly pools next to the Gateway Restaurant, he never could have foreseen the implications of his dip. For each successive January 1, a few more hearty souls braved the chilly sub-40-degree waters.

That seemingly simple act symbolized the establishment of a tradition and an annual event that now has become indispensable for celebrating the New Year in Three Rivers. In 2005, Marcos moved back to the Central Coast, but the legacy of his Polar Dip has thrived.

For the next couple of years, folks from the flatlands heard about Three Rivers's annual New Year's Day plunge on KJUG radio and in *The Fresno Bee*, ensuring that the popularity of the Polar Dip and daylong party grew by leaps and bounds.

In 2009, more than 70 revelers took the plunge. Now the world can log on to view the insanity as the 2009 Polar Dip is the featured January photo on THE KAWEAH COMMONWEALTH'S home page (www.kaweahcommonwealth.com).

PHOTO ABOVE: Some of the 2009 Polar Dippers.

PHOTO RIGHT: Gateway Restaurant owner Glenn McIntyre is interviewed by ABC 30.



Town meeting features 2009 updates

The Three Rivers Town Hall monthly meeting resumes Monday, Jan. 12, and features a busy agenda with updates on two local projects and State of the County remarks by Supervisor Allen Ishida. The meeting is hosted by the Three Rivers Village Foundation at the Memorial Building and is scheduled to begin at 7 p.m.

COUNTY ECONOMY— Supervisor Ishida said the Board of Supervisors is facing some difficult choices in the county budget and immediate layoffs in several departments are imminent. The first round of cuts is expected to be announced at Tuesday's BOS meeting.

Much of the shortfall in county revenue, Ishida said, is tied to a dismal economy that's affecting every county in the state. There are less property and sales tax dollars being collected so that means if the economy doesn't turn around soon more stringent cost-cutting

measures will be needed.

In a worst-case scenario, the county could be forced to make sweeping cuts across the board. In Three Rivers that could translate to a loss of emergency services like police, fire, and ambulance.

SCENIC HIGHWAY— Tom Sparks, spokesperson for the Village Foundation, will also furnish an update on the scenic highway application.

The site plan review is already part of an existing county ordinance so the adoption of a scenic-highway designation does not affect whether a project is required to have a site plan review.

—see MEETING, page 4

SUNNY SIDE UP

Solar demand: An economic bright spot

By JOHN ELLIOTT

In uncertain times, when consumers are lacking confidence, the recent spike in demand for solar power might be a beacon pointing the way to the light at the end of the economic tunnel. That's because applications in California for solar rebates hit an all-time high last month, one of the few silver linings in an otherwise lackluster economy.

Californians filed more than 1,200 applications seeking solar subsidies in December 2008, according to the California Public Utilities Commission. That's

the most applications received in the program's two-year history.

More than 18,000 home and business owners have applied for the subsidies since the program began in 2006. Though just filing the paperwork doesn't always mean the solar panels were actually installed, it's an accurate barometer of things to come.

A record 133 megawatts of solar photovoltaics have been installed in 2008 alone while the demand for nearly all other construction was significantly lower. Some property owners, who have

—see SOLAR, page 4

KAWEAH COUNTRY OUTLOOK: three rivers • lemon cove • woodlake

Saturday, January 10	Sunday, January 11	Monday, January 12	Tuesday, January 13	Wednesday, January 14	Thursday, January 15	Friday, January 16
Clouds and sun Hi 56 • Lo 39	Clouds and sun Hi 61 • Lo 42	Clouds and sun Hi 62 • Lo 43	Sunny Hi 62 • Lo 43	Clouds and sun Hi 59 • Lo 41	Mostly sunny Hi 59 • Lo 41	Sunny Hi 59 • Lo 40

WEATHER WATCH

While steady jet-stream winds continue to pump extremely wet weather into the Pacific Northwest, Kaweah Country remains mired in a typical January pattern — a daily struggle between foggy conditions and winter sunshine. Most days, it's simply a matter of elevation. Ascend to areas above Lake Kaweah and chances for encountering sunshine increase. If stubborn morning fog persists in Three Rivers head for 2,000 feet or Potwisha where a pleasant dayhike this time of year often includes afternoon temperatures in the mid-60s; a refreshing break from the chilly, foggy conditions below.