

PG&E ready to start pipeline project

By Nick Baptista/ The Valley Springs News/ June 26, 2013

In wake of the 2010 San Bruno gas pipeline explosion where eight people died and 58 were injured, Pacific Gas & Electric Co., is undertaking an extensive safety program that is about to reach Calaveras County.

One of PG&E's natural gas pipelines runs from San Andreas through West Calaveras County before reaching Isleton. The utility company is about to begin clearing easements over the pipeline and property owners are being notified about the impending safety work.

Don Parker of Dodasa Ranch south of Burson was apprehensive when he heard the news last week. PG&E officials met with him on his property to discuss those concerns.

The easement travels about a mile through his property and he was troubled with the thought of the utility company cutting a 40-foot wide path through his ranch, a popular pumpkin patch in the fall.

Parker was especially concerned about losing a large number of oak and some olive trees near the easement.

Calaveras County District 1 Supervisor Cliff Edson joined Parker when PG&E officials Seth Perez and Ed Struffenegger arrived. They took about an hour walking along the easement, listening to Parker's concerns and outlining the extent of the safety program.

Instead of cutting a 40-foot swath, PG&E is clearing vegetation in just a five-foot wide area above the pipeline, while trees will be removed if they are within five feet from either side of the pipeline, Perez said.

Most of Parker's trees near the easement will remain.

"We'll evaluate what needs to go, but it's all about public safety," Perez Said.

Tree roots have been known to get into the pipeline's protective casing and cause problems, he added.

The PG&E safety program is a five-year project and will cover more than 4,000 miles of pipeline throughout the state.

All property owners with the PG&E easement are being notified prior to the clearing crew's arrival, anticipated in late July. Struffenegger said the crew does not work during hazardous fire condition days and has firefighting apparatus with them.

PG&E also has a replacement tree program, Struffenegger added, as long as those replacement trees are planted outside of the easement.