

## **Open Space, Sheriff's deputies and the future of Calaveras**

(Jan. 10, 2008 Dana Nichols blog, Stockton Record online)

Some hopeful tidbits from Thursday's Calaveras County Planning Commission Meeting.

1) For the first time in Calaveras County History, land within the county is about to be zoned as open space. That will probably happen next week when the Planning Commission will approve a map for the first 670-home phase of the massive Oak Canyon Ranch development in Copperopolis. That map will include land zoned to be forever open space.

2) Oak Canyon Ranch and other developments nearby including Tuscany Hills, Copper Mill, and Copper Valley, are turning Copperopolis into a community of luxury homes along golf courses. In 20 or 30 years, depending on how things go, it could be more than 40 thousand people. That's roughly three times the present size of Lathrop or half the present size of Tracy. And those wealthy new residents, or at least the developers building homes for them, want adequate police protection. That's why the developers of Oak Canyon Ranch are voluntarily negotiating a deal to put a mechanism in place to fund adequate Sheriff's Department staffing for the community. Although the details of negotiations are not yet public, Calaveras Sheriff's Capt. Jim Macedo said he's in talks and expects to both cut a deal with Oak Canyon developers and, within a few months, present a staffing report detailing how much county residents would have to pay to have adequate numbers of deputies to protect them.

Preservation of open space and the dire lack of funding for basic services such as law enforcement are two of the top crises facing Calaveras County. Paradoxically, it seems to take thousands of rooftops (Oak Canyon alone will ultimately have 3,475 dwellings including detached houses, resort condos and luxury hotel rooms) to change the political deadlock. Once the county is clearly no longer just a wide open frontier for ranchers and miners, it is also clearly time to preserve some of that land and to police the increasingly urban communities. It is quite possible that the deals struck for Oak Canyon Ranch will set a precedent that will help the rest of the county address those problems.