



COUNTY OF LAKE COUNTY ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER  
CAROL J. HUCHINGSON

# THE CAO NEWSLETTER

Fall 2017

## Inside This Issue

- 1 Brown: Wrestler of Inspiration
- 2 Lawmakers Working Together,  
Rehabilitating Clear Lake
- 3 Valley Fire Debris Insurance  
Update
- 3 Responding to Cyanobacteria
- 4 CAO's Notes: Sulphur Fire
- 4 Know Your Departments: Ag  
Brown, cont.
- 6 Valley Fire Debris Insurance,  
cont.
- 6,7 Ag, Weights and Measures  
cont.

---

*A lot of people think  
they know Lake  
County's District 5  
Supervisor Rob Brown.*

---

## Leadership Profile: Rob Brown

### *Balladeer, Poet, Wrestler of Inspiration*

Inspiration comes in unexpected forms.

The snide remark that draws generosity instead of anger. The ripples of a moment of pain that somehow bring people together; when, out of profound loss, miraculously, hope and community are born.

Maybe it's a sonnet, wrestled to form. Maybe it's that same old conversation with a friend; only this time, we *finally* realize, in time, that we have to stop fighting.

The weight and form of our world can shift in a moment.

It is those who respond, those who flow, indeed those who conquer what must be subdued who have a chance to rise.

Those few rise to meet the Inspiration that went unrecognized by so many.

At first glance, they seem different, maybe even strange. You think you know them, you think you know their thoughts, only to find yourself taken aback.

In a moment, you become painfully aware that you don't know them at all.

A lot of people think they know Lake County's District 5 Supervisor Rob Brown.

People see the moments when he strikes, the moments he wrestles an issue to the ground.

*What a bully. What a brute. Is he some freak robot?*

They miss all of those times he waits, listens; when he meets intensity with peace.

Those many times he recognizes, while fighting may score points on a card, it could put the whole match at risk.

"There's a tendency to make assumptions," says Brown.

*(Cont. on pg. 5)*

## Lawmakers and Experts Working Together

### *AB 707 and the Future of Clear Lake*

It is difficult to overstate Clear Lake's value to our community; the Lake is our defining feature. Following Highway 20 around its North Shore, it is impossible not to marvel at the miracle of its majesty.

There are many places to go hiking in California, but few can duplicate the experience of reaching the summit at Mount Konociti's Wright Peak and seeing Clear Lake stretched out before you.

It isn't just the beauty of it, it's the knowledge that Ka-Ba-Tin, Clear Lake, has been inspiring human beings for more than 12,000 years, and that those 12,000 years likely represent no more than 2.4% of our Lake's history.

To consider all Clear Lake's waters have seen is to begin to appreciate time, itself.

It has also become more and more evident that the oldest species-rich, warm water, natural lake in the nation requires broad-based, expert care. High levels of mercury and an overabundance of surface algae and cyanobacteria have severely threatened water recreation and tourism.

California lawmakers recognized Clear Lake's health is a statewide priority, through the passage of AB 707, authored by Assemblymember Cecilia Aguiar-Curry, co-authored by Senator Mike McGuire, and championed by Lake County Supervisors Jim Steele, District 3, and Moke Simon, District 1.

"Our long-term success depends upon the health of the Lake," states Simon. "We need to continue educating our County on what needs to happen here, and that includes engaging the children, so that people know what kind of lake we have right here in our backyard."

Thanks particularly to Assemblymember Aguiar-Curry's diligent work, Governor Jerry Brown funded AB 707 through a \$2 million allocation in the 2017-18 State Budget. This will support formation of a Blue Ribbon Committee for the Rehabilitation of Clear Lake.

The Committee will be a part of the State Natural Resources Agency, and its nine or more members will include tribal leadership and experts in local economic development and agriculture, alongside environmental experts and representatives from UC Davis, the Natural Resources Agency, a Clear Lake public water supplier, the Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board and the Lake County Board of Supervisors.

"AB 707 is a formal legislative vehicle to put people to action with direction, collaboration, and structure," says Aguiar-Curry's Legislative Director, Angela Pontes.

Goals will be set in the initial meetings, and a plan developed for active management of one of California's most unique natural resources.

"Clear Lake is probably the most multidimensional, complex, constantly changing ecosystem on the planet," notes Supervisor Steele. "Our needs extend well beyond the reach of a small rural county economy; enter the Blue Ribbon Committee."

---

*"Probably the most multidimensional, complex, constantly changing ecosystem on the planet."*

*--Jim Steele, District 3 Supervisor*

---



## Valley Fire Debris Insurance Collection Update

### *Huge Undertaking, Harrison Shines*

In May, the County began accelerating steps to collect insurance reimbursement funds from Valley Fire survivors who authorized structural debris and tree removal services, at no immediate cost, from a government contractor.

The project meets a State mandate, to ensure Lake County residents do not receive a "Duplication of Benefits." If that were to happen, it would be a form of insurance fraud.

When a private insurance company reimburses the cost of services provided to a California resident by a government contractor, those funds must go to the State of California or FEMA, since the insured individual did not directly pay for the services they received.

The scope of the project has been immense.

In July, CAO and Valley Fire Recovery Coordinator, Carol Huchingson, Supervisors Moke Simon and Rob Brown, Environmental Health Director Ray Ruminski, Public Services Director Lars Ewing, and representatives from the California Department of Insurance participated in three public meetings, each of which included an extensive question and answer period. Many County Departments provided or offered assistance as the project was rolled out. (Cont. on pg. 6)

---

*The scope of the project has been immense.*

---

## County Working Group Responds to Cyanobacteria

### *By Michelle R. Scully, Deputy County Administrative Officer*

In follow up to a presentation to the Board of Supervisors on July 25, 2017 regarding the broad implications of cyanobacteria, a working group to address educational outreach and risk communication has convened. This group is comprised of Water Resources Director Dr. Phil Moy; Health Services Director Denise Pomeroy; Public Health Officer Dr. Karen Tait; Environmental Health Director Ray Ruminski; Cheryl Johns, IT Specialist, Website Support and Development; and Michelle Scully, Deputy CAO Administrative Office.

In addition, external working group members include Sarah Ryan, Environmental Director, Big Valley Band of Pomo Indians and Karola Kennedy, Environmental Director, Elem Indian Colony. The working group will also have access to technical assistance from the California Regional Water Quality Board and California Department of Public Health.

The **primary goals** of this group are to raise general awareness and understanding of the causes and impacts of cyanobacteria and to provide timely information to the public about conditions of the water bodies in our county as changes relate to the safe use and enjoyment of these natural resources. This group will focus on developing coordinated and consistent messaging for County residents and visitors about Cyanobacteria and related lake issues as well as developing a County webpage dedicated to Cyanobacteria that will work in coordination with the Facebook page maintained by the tribes.

*Editor's note: Scully authored the recently published, Broken: Tales of a Titanium Cowgirl, a timeless story of resilience, grace, collaboration, compassion, and triumph in the face of great personal challenge. Broken invites you to redefine objectives, rather than abandoning them, to not let a slip become a fall, and to never ever give up on the people, animals, and activities you love.*

<https://www.amazon.com/Broken-Titanium-Cowgirl-Michelle-Scully/dp/099924650X>



## CAO's Notes: Responding to the Sulphur Fire

Lake County has altogether too much experience, of late, responding to disaster. However, that experience has developed an incredible team of first responders. The Sheriff and his time, firefighters and other emergency crews have been tremendous, making sure community members are appropriately aware of risk levels, and devoting every resource available to limiting the effects of the Sulphur Fire.

County Officials have responded, as well. We are fortunate to have experienced Environmental and Public Health staff, fiscal and other administrative staff to help ensure those impacted by disaster have what they need, and the long-term effects for the County, as a whole are contained.

It has also been a privilege for County staff to lend expertise to neighboring Counties as they seek to mitigate their own wildfires.

Truly, this has been a regional event, and all of us feel its effects. The County of Lake is ready to serve, and we will continue to walk alongside Sulphur Fire survivors.

–Carol J. Huchingson

---

*We are fortunate to have experienced staff to help ensure those impacted by disaster have what they need.*

---

## Know Your County Departments

***Fair is Fair: Agriculture, Weights, and Measures***

When you pull up to a gas pump, you expect it to work, right?

You slide your credit card, press a few buttons, pump your gas, and at the end you are pretty sure you paid \$27.93 for the precise amount of gas on the pump's display; routines and monthly budgets depend upon 8.755 gallons of gas going so far.

When you check out at a grocery store, you assume your clamshell box of butter lettuce is indeed a clamshell box of butter lettuce, and the scale weighing your honeydew melon is doing its part to determine how much you owe; you pay the amount asked, and trust you got what you paid for.

Were those apples really organic? Whose pesticide reports did the State rely upon when certifying the producer?

When you go to the Farmer's Finest Market at Steele Wines on a Saturday morning, you expect that the food was actually grown by the farmers selling it, and you may even feel kind of cool when you buy tomatoes from that guy that lives half a mile down the road from your Aunt Jeanine and Uncle Charlie in Finley.

You may not know who certified that farmer grew the food, *and* helped them identify and get rid of stink bugs that threatened their whole tomato crop.

When a news report says a mountain lion that had been eating local livestock was captured, you believe your sheep are a bit safer, but have you ever wondered who decided how the situation would be handled?

When you go hiking, and pause to watch a black-tailed deer drinking from a stream, marveling at its strength, and the intricacy of the three-point horns on either side of its head, do you wonder who makes sure the Lake County Fish and Wildlife Advisory Committee has money to take common sense steps to limit poaching? (Cont. on pg. 6)



## Brown: Wrestler of Inspiration, Cont.

As an eight-year-old boy, Supervisor Brown sold bottles to buy a guitar. He has been writing poetry almost as long. Both are legacies of his parents and grandparents; their roots run deep.

People don't recognize that music and writing are more basic, more essential to Brown's character than bail bonds and even public service.

"Music is a real common denominator for people, people change their whole attitude. We may differ politically, but the guy's a drummer, so what do I care?"

Four years ago, Supervisor Brown entered a songwriting contest. He won. Since then, he has continued to share songs with some of Nashville's top producers and performers; they like and even promote them.

One reason is the sincerity of Brown's singing; an earnestness and urgency that bring to mind Merle Haggard and Hank Williams, Jr. "I'm not the best singer in the world, but no one else is going to duplicate the emotion."

A balladeer in the best sense, Brown sings songs in the present tense; tells stories in the first person.

Brown's ability to flexibly respond to the community's needs has made him an enduringly strong Supervisor. It's no accident: recognizing context, and providing the right input at the right times is the mark of a great musician, as well.

"You've got to be flexible enough to change the chords now and then, if it's going to sound better. You end up with a pretty good song, in the end."

Brown has succeeded, in government and in music, because he doesn't get stuck in one genre; he doesn't write the same song over and over.

Original and freethinking, Brown's positions on the issues follow his conscience. In the studio: "I like all kinds of music, as long as it is done well, with heart." Brown has written everything from country music, his first passion, to hip hop.

That flexibility has allowed him to see many important moments, as they emerged.

Brown recognized that his father still knew all of the old Country songs even as he struggled with dementia, and brought both guitar and comfort. He flew out of state to visit a dying friend, the Doobie Brothers' drummer, and wrote a song for his grieving family.

Are you surprised?

Brown's colleagues know him as fair, insightful; dependable. His excellence precedes him.

Referring to the County's Board, "Not everyone can be in the band. We have a good band right now, everyone's playing their own instrument."

Every good band needs a poet, that individual who is willing to say something unexpected, because it is true. That visionary, who can see beauty in unexpected places.

Supervisor Brown is the poet of the Board, the songwriter and balladeer, meeting the moment with emotion that cannot be duplicated.

He knows when to fight, and he knows when a strategic roll can propel the County in a positive direction.

Expect him to keep doing what he feels is right, and expect him to keep surprising you. The best musicians always do.

---

*"Music is a real common denominator for people. We may differ politically, but the guy's a drummer."*

*--Rob Brown*

---



## Valley Fire Debris Insurance Update, Cont.

Administrative Office staff have devoted considerable time to preparing invoices, collecting Frequently Asked Questions, responding to inquiries from insurance companies and providing public information via Press Releases and website updates. Kathy Barnwell, Marcy Harrison, Alicia Flores and Graham Brown have spent countless hours directly responding to Valley Fire Survivors' concerns; with grace and sensitivity, they have offered support, knowing, for many, the wounds of loss have been reopened.

The extensive interagency communication required has also brought significant challenges. Insurance fund reimbursement collection on this scale is unprecedented for a jurisdiction of Lake County's size. Agencies, such as the California Office of Emergency Services, CalRecycle and their contractors, and the California Department of Insurance have had significant roles to play; roles they have never played before.

As a result, County staff have developed procedures that will become a basis for future projects statewide. Our hiccups, while regrettable, will make the way straighter for recovering counties in the future.

The full County Administrative Office staff meaningfully contributed to early efforts, and Administrative Assistant Marcy Harrison's contributions stood out. Harrison collected information from a diversity of sources to compile a master spreadsheet, allowing County staff to better respond to incoming calls: she consistently culled and analyzed feedback from the public, and helped the team to develop appropriate responses. Ms. Harrison made it possible to get invoices and other information out to 1,400 people on time with quality recommendations, and reviewed insurance documentation with insight and energy.

As a result, the County Administrative Office is proud to announce that Marcy Harrison has promoted to Administrative Analyst, and Project Lead for Debris Insurance Collection. This huge task will be under very capable leadership, and all Administration staff will continue to serve Valley Fire Survivors.

## Agriculture, Weights and Measures, Cont.

In each of these cases, Commissioner and Sealer Steven Hajik and the Lake County Department of Agriculture's work is invisible. Yet, you depend upon and benefit from that work every day. How do they do it?

"The regulations are the regulations are the regulations. As long as we educate [people] on what they need to do, you generally don't have too many problems," says Hajik. "Although consistency is important, you have to be fair. And fair means, if [a person is] brand new, and [the Commissioner's Enforcement] is consistent, then that's not fair. So, there's a fine line between being consistent and being fair."

"I'm moderate. If I have to enforce [regulations], I will, not a problem. Every County that I've ever worked in would rather teach than take enforcement action."

If you listen to Commissioner Hajik speak for even a few minutes, it strikes you how uncommonly fair minded he is.

"If you have food on the kitchen floor, and you have a [cat door] that any animal can go through, and a skunk goes through, and you want us to kill the skunk, is that fair? No! Not to the skunk, right? So we tell them, 'Block up the door.'"

---

*County staff have developed procedures that will become a basis for future projects statewide.*

---





## Agriculture, Weights and Measures, Cont.

"On the other hand, if a possum or a raccoon is destroying an eighty-year-old lady's trailer, and they're on a limited income, can she hire somebody, a good trapper, to go out there on a per-hour basis? No! So, that's where the taxpayers' money comes in."

Hajik seeks justice. Just the kind of person you want as County Sealer of Weights and Measures.

"Weights and Measures... no one thinks about it. When it works well, it's invisible."

Partly because it isn't newsworthy, there aren't lobbyists at the State Capitol pushing to fund it, either. "Funding is woefully short at the State level, which is disturbing to me. Weights and Measures impacts everybody. We inspect every commercial device every year because it's the right thing to do."

Hajik's programs serve the community as a whole, because Commissioner Hajik makes a point to serve the whole community. That quality of discernment ensures fairness for businesses and customers, alike.

Gas pumps are one example. "Someone will complain to us. The higher the cost of gas, the more complaints come. Someone says, 'I know I had two gallons in my tank, and I filled it up to nine gallons, obviously the pump is bad.' It hardly ever happens that the pump is bad. We go out there within the day and check it, and it's not bad."

"It's not bad," is a thoughtful statement here: "Once it hits 90, maybe even 88 [degrees], you want to stop [measuring] gas pumps, because of the static electricity, and the volatilization of gas. That's why we do our [regular gas pump inspections] in November, December, January, February, March... as long as it's not raining. If rain gets into the gas, it's not good. If it's raining, that's when we'll do store scales."

The Department of Agriculture works in cooperation with scientists and professors from the University of California Cooperative Extension [UCCE], to ensure the Lake County Agriculture industry has the opportunity to succeed.

"For sure, [UCCE's] professors are involved with commercial pears, commercial grapes, commercial walnuts... But if it's a pest that no one's seen before, on pears, grapes, or walnuts, then we're first. Whether it be [an insect or a plant disease], we're first, because we have the legal authority to quarantine a crop. We don't want any new pests here. If there was a new pest [UCCE scientists] saw in their fieldwork, they would ask us."

Why did Commissioner Hajik get into Agriculture?

"I liked insects. Since I can remember... When I was back in Chicago, people used to bring me insects and ask me to identify them. It had to be third grade... I just liked insects."

That passion has served Lake County well since 2002, and Commissioner Hajik remains glad to be here.

"Every Ag Commissioner in the State is where they should be. It just depends on your style. There aren't right or wrong styles, it's just what fits... I like Lake County."

For more on Agriculture and Weights and Measures in Lake County, click here: <http://www.co.lake.ca.us/Government/Directory/Ag.htm>

For general information on the duties of County Departments, click here: <http://www.counties.org/county-structure>

To hear Commissioner Hajik's "Know Lake County" presentation on Farmer's Markets and what it means to be certified, recorded live at the Lake County Library, click here: <http://lakecountypegtv.org/farm.html>

---

*Hajik seeks justice. Just the kind of person you want as County Sealer of Weights and Measures.*

---

