

# Board approves rafting ordinance

WOODLAND — Yolo County supervisors on Tuesday approved an ordinance that will allow the county to recoup from rafting companies the costs associated with thousands of rafters traveling through the Cache Creek Regional Park area every year.

The ordinance, which takes effect in 30 days, sets up a three-tiered rate structure that will include:

- \* A base fee covering administration;
- \* A park use fee that would charge rafting companies for their use of park facilities such as restrooms and parking lots; and
- \* A park improvement fee aimed at any upgrades needed due to the presence of thousands of rafters moving through the area.

Fees also would help cover any habitat restoration required.

Previously, county staff have estimated the fees would total \$5 to \$10 per rafter, but said Tuesday they won't have specific numbers until they collect river use plans from the rafting companies and determine what the actual costs to the county are.

Every year, as many as 15,000 rafters travel along Cache Creek during the March-to-September whitewater rafting season, with most paying a few commercial rafting companies anywhere from \$45 for one-day trips to \$155 for two-day trips. Rafters access the river from Cache Creek Regional Park, about six miles north of Rumsey.

According to Terry Vernon, Yolo County deputy director of general services, "Extra work is required every rafting season to maintain Cache Creek Regional Park and accommodate rafting companies."

County staff say the rafters use park facilities and leave behind litter and should help pay for cleanup and maintenance.

For many years, rafting companies did just that, entering into voluntary agreements with the county, agreeing to respect the riparian habitat and paying a portion of what they charge rafters to the county.

But only one company — Cache Canyon River Trips — has a current contract with the county.

Owner Julie Karlonas expressed concern Tuesday that her company's contract would be superseded by the new ordinance, a concern shared by Supervisor Matt Rexroad of

Woodland, who asked, “Why would anyone want to enter into a negotiation with us if it can be superseded by an ordinance?”

And though County Administrator Patrick Blacklock said there was a verbal agreement with Cache Canyon that the contract would be honored, Supervisor Don Saylor of Davis said if the contract doesn’t cover the costs to the county, it shouldn’t necessarily be honored.

“The idea is to identify the county’s costs and base fees on those costs,” he noted. “I’m assuming ... this contract doesn’t cover those costs.”

Saylor moved to approve the ordinance and have county staff return with the actual rates “and then decide if the existing contract is in the ballpark.”

His motion passed unanimously.

Supervisor Jim Provenza of Davis noted that even with the ordinance enacted, it’s still a work in progress.

“This going to take further work in terms of the rates and consideration of the existing contract. But I think this approach can work,” he said.

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