

Board backs two new programs, rejects claim

BY JILL BALLINGER
GAZETTE EDITOR

The Mariposa County Board of Supervisors voted to support two new programs on Tuesday, and rejected a \$1.1 million lawsuit against the county. The action came at the board's regular meeting.

Kim Carr of the Sierra Nevada Conservancy presented a short overview of the new geotourism project backed by her organization, the Sierra Business Council and National Geographic. She said the new program "really works" in that it is "working toward sustainability, supporting the local economy and social well-being" throughout the Sierra region.

Carr explained that the mapping project, which officially kicked-off at the Mariposa Museum on Wednesday morning, "ties it all together" for visitors who travel to the Sierra from Yosemite National Park to Lake Tahoe. She explained that it is a "locally driven" project that is working with groups in Mariposa, Oakhurst and Groveland.

Over the next three months, the program will be hosting forums to "learn what are the unique aspects of this area," according to Carr.

A spokesperson from the National Geographic Center for Sustainable Destinations said the success of the project is based on getting information from the people who live here. "Authenticity can only be provided locally," he told the board. "Tourism managed well can greatly enhance communities. Americans are looking for authenticity in their travel experience."

Jeff Hentz, director of the Mariposa/Yosemite Tourism Bureau, said his agency fully backs the project. He said geotourism is an "emerging market" that "creates opportunities for balance" in the tourism industry.

The board unanimously approved a resolution supporting the project.