

Fake cell tower trees irk Placerville area residents

By Associated Press

Wireless communications companies have erected several cell towers dressed up as evergreen trees along Highway 50 under El Dorado County's strict design guidelines. But some residents are pushing back as new cell towers are proposed for areas deeper in the wilderness.

At least six highway-area "mono-pines" – cell towers dressed as faux trees – have been erected along Highway 50, but residents are organizing against a 90-foot tower to be built by Verizon Wireless on private acreage amid oak-studded hills above Arrowbee Lake in Placerville, the *Sacramento Bee* reported.

The complaints of residents highlight the challenges local governments face in trying to accommodate expanded cellular service in some of Northern California's picturesque areas.

Janet Barbieri, who lives about 400 feet from the proposed tower site, created a **website** with the support of some neighbors and is organizing community meetings to discuss the project.

"We all bought our property here because of the way it looks," Barbieri said. "It looks like a fake pine tree that doesn't belong there. It looks like it should be in an urban or industrial area."

The tower, which in a simulated photographic design looks like a spindly pine with gray panels sticking out, would serve a remote region that includes upscale 5-acre country estates.

Verizon said in the documents submitted to the county for the

Arrowbee Lake project that it had reviewed six other sites for a cellular tower to alleviate "poor coverage" and "reoccurring lost calls" in the area. The company deemed three sites inadequate for cellular transmission and said property owners at three other sites declined leasing agreements.

"We tried to find a site that will not only meet the technical and engineering requirements" for cellular service providers "but is also suitable for the neighborhood," said Heidi Flato, a Verizon Wireless spokeswoman.