

July/August 2004



Friday July 16 • Annual Picnic • 14676 Highland Drive, Grass Valley

Share SNG's Summer Picnic

Come join us for our annual delightful and delicious event at the home of Bob and Joyce Regan-Goar. The setting is lovely and wooded with a babbling brook, actually a historic canal, running alongside.

Please bring something to put on the barby, your plate and utensils, a dish to share (side dish, salad or dessert) and a beverage of your choice. Ice for drinks and coals for the fire will be supplied by our hosts.

Arrive 6 p.m., mix, mingle, socialize. Eat about 7 p.m.

Directions to the Goars: 14676 Highland Dr. in Grass Valley; phone 477-5050.

From Grass Valley: turn right on Rattlesnake Rd. off Hwy 174 just past Union Hill. Go approximately one mile south to the second Highland Drive sign (it is a loop) and turn left at a house with white picket fence on the corner. The Goar's home is the second on the left.



Barbara Rivenes: Chair chat

Who's the group with greatest clout?

I just spent the weekend at a gathering of Sierra Club California – their annual Convention. Now, what the heck is Sierra Club California, you ask? In the hierarchy that is Sierra Club, at the most local level there is our Sierra Nevada Group which is part of the Mother Lodea Chapter – the organization that is responsible for a large geographic chunk of northern California's Sierra Clubbers. The Chapter has 11 Groups with about 18,000 members. Our Group has about 1200 members. The state overall has over 200,000 members.

Then we come to the next level – Sierra Club California (SCC). We don't hear too much about SCC,

but they are hugely important! Sierra Club California employs the folks who work for us in Sacramento, our lobbyists. They are there to champion good environmental legislation, to thwart bad bills and to pave the way for producing positive legislation from Assembly members and Senators. The National Sierra Club sets Club policies but does not direct state lobbying activities, though they do contribute to the budget controlled by SCC.

At the present time we have five overworked and underpaid lobbyists. Bill Allayaud is the director with Bill Magavern, Jim Metropolis, Paul Mason

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Sierra Uplift

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Web Connections

Find national and local Sierra Club
news by visiting these web sites:

<www.sierraclub.org>

<www.sierraclub.org/ca>

<www.motherlode.sierraclub.org>

<www.motherlode.sierraclub.org/sierranevada>

SNG is a member of the Sierra
Nevada Alliance, a regional coalition
of groups. See <www.sierranevadaalliance.org>

Barbara Rivenes: Chair chat

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and Pat Veasart working in different issue areas handling various aspects of lobbying and legislation. A vast number of bills are introduced each session and these guys have to sort the good from the bad in order to support, not support or remain neutral as Sierra Club. The Club's support (or not) has significant impact for legislators and the Governor. Of all the environmental groups we have the greatest clout – the grassroots! With 200,000 members

we represent a constituency that cares deeply about certain issues and are willing to let officials know how we feel. Their credibility is often dependent on our grassroots level of activity. More and more, I think, we are going to have to let officials hear from us, the local chapter members.

Sierra Club California is, of course, really all of us. We are represented by delegates from each of the state's thirteen Chapters. Those delegates are appointed from each Chapter's Executive Committee and from another little known entity – the California Nevada Regional Conservation Committee (CNRCC). The CNRCC (also delegates from each Chapter) sets state conservation priorities. Together delegates from each of those bodies elect an Executive Committee to oversee the state lobbying staff that carries out the conservation priorities. At the annual Convention the Executive Committee is elected.

The Executive Committee of Sierra Club California is responsible for the lobbying staff and the Regional Conservation Committee sets the direction and priorities to be carried out by that staff. Floating to the top of priorities this year is SPRAWL, or to be more precise, inappropriate land use decisions leading to a cascading list of issues: increased air pollution, traffic congestion, disappearing agricultural land, wildlife and habitat loss throughout California. Inappropriate decisions about land use are certainly in the forefront our Group's concerns as well.

So there you have it, Sierra Club California – an important and effective environmental advocacy force in our state's Capitol. From the mission statement:

"The mission of Sierra Club California is to promote public policy that preserves, restores, and furthers enjoyment of California's natural environment, and to enable California's 13 chapters and 205,000 members to speak as one voice at the State Capitol."

Sierra Club
California,
the environmental
group with the
greatest clout,
is of course
really all of us

Conservation Report

by Karen Cox

Some Good News

As part of its bankruptcy settlement, Pacific Gas and Electric Company has agreed to permanently protect more than 140,000 acres of wilderness and provide \$100 million for environmental programs. When PG&E declared bankruptcy many environmentalists worried that its lands would need to be sold to developers or energy contractors. But that is not the case. The land contains power facilities and reservoirs which PG&E will continue to operate. Decisions on the use of the remaining land will be decided by the Pacific Forest and Watershed Lands Stewardship Council. There are 10,653 acres of the PG&E land in Nevada County.



Update on Spotted Owl

The Sierra Club and other environmental groups sued the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service last month, charging that the agency wrongfully denied protected status to the California spotted owl with its 2003 decision not to list the owl under the federal Endangered Species Act. The groups are claiming that the agency did not list the owl because it was assumed the owls' habitat would be protected under the Sierra

Nevada Framework, a plan that restricted logging of old-growth forests. Now that the Framework has been revised to triple the amount of logging and remove protections for the owl and old-growth forests the owl needs protection.

Mystery of the Vanishing Frogs

There have been many theories about the cause of the disappearance of the mountain yellow-legged frog from the High Sierra. UC Berkeley biologist, Vance T. Vredenberg's new study offers the best evidence yet that rainbow trout are primarily responsible for the frog's disappearance. For eight years he has studied a cluster of lakes located between 10,000 and 11,500 foot elevation in Kings Canyon National Park. When Vredenburg used gill nets to remove all the trout from any lake where the frogs had almost disappeared, the few remaining amphibians underwent a three-year population explosion. Now it will be a struggle between the trout fisherman and the frogs to see how many of the 10,000 High Sierra lakes will have the introduced species of trout removed.

Rules for Off-Road Vehicles

U.S. Forest Service Chief Dale Bosworth has identified unmanaged recreation, particularly off-road vehicle use, as one of the four great threats to national forests. A draft rule governing the use of dirt bikes, ATVs etc. on all national forests could be out for public comment this summer. In March a group of biologists and other scientists wrote Bosworth urging him to ensure that

new rules for off-road vehicle use are based on science and focus on protecting natural resources. They are concerned that the life-supporting elements of soil, air and water are becoming so damaged that they are unlikely to be restored to a healthy condition in a lifetime. You can contact the Forest Service at www.webmaster@fs.fed.us to let them know what you would like to see covered in the new rules.

Hurrah for Wilderness

This fall we will be celebrating the 40th anniversary of the Wilderness Act. In my opinion one of the most important legislative acts ever passed by Congress. I suggest that we all celebrate the Wilderness Act this summer by making an effort to visit a wilderness area or a proposed wilderness area. One opportunity will occur on Sunday, July 25 when Don Rivenes will be leading a trip to a proposed wilderness area for the local Deep Ecology organization. Meet at the Rood Center at 10 am with your lunch and a suggested \$10 donation. They will carpool up to Grouse Ridge. The hike is about 4 miles.

Legacies

I am going to end this column with a quote from President Lyndon Johnson when he signed the Wilderness Act: "If future generations are to remember us with gratitude rather than contempt, we must leave them more than the miracles of technology. We must leave them with a glimpse of the world as it was in the beginning, not just after we got through with it."



Photodisc

Engaging friends and neighbors with environmental facts

by Barbara Rivenes

Americans are bombarded by an estimated 60,000 messages, ads, signs, and e-mails every week, up from 20,000 just five years ago. We don't listen or believe most of them. But there's one source of information that Americans still trust to cut through the media clutter – that's each other. Or more specifically, trusted and informed friends and neighbors.

Keeping your message simple helps to cut through the clutter. For example, here's a small statistic that tells a big and important story. In 1995, taxpayers paid 18 percent of the cost of cleaning up abandoned toxic waste sites. This year taxpayers will foot the entire bill, thanks to Bush administration policy changes.

Another easy to remember fact: every administration since Theodore Roosevelt's has left more wildlands protected upon leaving

office than upon arriving. Except the Bush administration, which has stripped protection from 10 percent of America's land, opening an area larger than Texas and Oklahoma combined to logging, mining, and oil extraction. But for the most part these wildlands are still wild. They have been tied to the train tracks – but there's still time to cut the ropes and rescue them. We cannot dawdle, however; the logging trucks and drilling rigs are moving fast.

It's important to have some simple facts and inform your friends. So we invite you to join our e-mail list to receive pertinent environmental information, occasional action alerts and Group meeting reminders – no dumb blonde jokes, we promise. Please send your request to be on the list to <rivenes@infostations.com> with "SNG Simple Facts, Events" in the subject line.

A FEW SIMPLE FACTS

Global Warming

Put on the Back Burner

During his 2000 presidential campaign, now-President Bush repeatedly vowed to address carbon dioxide emissions, the main compound that causes global warming. But once in office, the Bush administration has refused to set limits on the pollutant. After dismissing the Kyoto Protocol as flawed (signed by 155 other na-

tions), the administration offered no other alternatives. Under pressure from environmental groups, the EPA has acknowledged the dangers of global warming, but claims it lacks authority to do anything about it.

The Energy Plan:

Dig, Drill and Destroy

Hatched from the secret Cheney energy task force meetings, the

Bush administration's energy bill calls for subsidies and tax credits to coal, oil and nuclear industries totaling in the tens of billions of dollars, but does nothing to reduce dependence on oil (or curb global warming effects of coal and oil). It opens up coastal areas to offshore drilling, encourages methane drilling on farm and ranch land, and protects uses of the cancer-causing chemical MBTE from being prosecuted. The bill does all this without raising fuel economy standards for cars, trucks and SUVs, without addressing problems with the nation's power grid that led to blackouts in 2003 (remember those?), and without making meaningful investments in renewable energy sources.

Three Times More Mercury for 10 More Years

Bush's EPA Administrator has announced a plan that would allow three times more mercury in our air and water than simply enforcing the Clean Air Act as currently written. And it will give utilities ten more years to reach these standards. This despite findings by the EPA and the Food and Drug Administration that mercury threatens the health of more Americans than previously believed.

More Dirty Air

Expansion of the oldest and dirtiest power plants was not allowed under the Clean Air Act unless they installed modern anti-pollution technologies like scrubbers. The Bush administration has all but eliminated that provision (called New Source Review). New rules would allow almost unlimited changes to be classified by plant operators as "routine maintenance." So they will just get bigger, generating more pollution along with increased capacity, spewing forth more soot, lead, mercury and other contaminants. The American Lung Association calls these rule changes "the most harmful and unlawful air-pollution initiative ever undertaken by the federal government."

Fire Up the Chainsaws

The Bush Administration so-called "Healthy Forest Initiative" promises to protect communities from

forest fires, but is really a gift to the logging industry, allowing the harvesting of old-growth trees deep in forests, far from affected communities. Forest Service scientists has shown that the best way to protect communities is by clearing the wooded areas located within 500 yards of homes. The bill calls for the thinning of 190 million acres of forest land. But, according to USA Today (July 2, 2003), "there were only about 1.9 million acres of private and federal forestland – one percent of the Bush administration's estimate – that are both at high risk of fire and close enough to communities to ignite homes."

Thanks to *The Planet*, the Sierra Club Activist Resource, for this information. To contact them and to join the Activist network, call (415) 977-5653; or go to <sierraclub.org/planet>.



Sierra Uplift

THE SIERRA NEVADA GROUP
of the SIERRA CLUB
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NonProfit Org.
U.S. Postage Paid
Permit No. 8
Grass Valley, CA

General Meetings

Friday evenings

July 16, 2004

Goar residence (see page 1)
6:00 Gather, socialize, barbecue
7:00 Pot Luck Dinner

Annual Sierra Nevada Group Picnic

September 17, 2004

Seaman's Lodge
6:30 Pot Luck Dinner
7:30 Program

Saving Tahoe's Martis Valley

Tom Mooers, Executive Director,
Sierra Watch

The Sierra Nevada Conservancy

Shawn Garvey, Chief Executive
Officer, The Sierra Fund

October 15, 2004

Seaman's Lodge
7:00 Dessert Pot Luck
7:30 Program

Hetch Hetchy, Yosemite's Lost Valley

Ron Good, Executive Director,
Restore Hetch Hetchy

November 19, 2004

Seaman's Lodge
7:00 Dessert Pot Luck
7:30 Program

The Loma Rica Project

Phil Carville

January 21, 2005

February 18, 2005

programs not yet determined

March 18, 2005

Meeting will be in Marysville

Gems of Alaska

Chet Dunbar

April 15, 2005

May 20, 2005

programs not yet determined

July 15, 2005

Annual Sierra Nevada Group
Picnic

Monthly Committee Meetings

■ Conservation & Management Committee

Meets every 4th Monday, 6:30 p.m. at the SYRCL office,
216 Main St, Nevada City.

Local Hiking Groups

- A group meets Wed and Sat mornings at 8:30 am (note the earlier, summer time) on Sutton Way just up from the Coldwell Banker office. They decide that morning where they are going and their hikes are easy to moderate (5-7 miles). Contact Clarence Motter at 274-3697 or Helen Kelly at 273-7309 for more information.
- Another group whose hikes are longer and more strenuous (6 to 12 miles) meets on Tues and Fri at 8:45am on Sutton Way just up from the Coldwell Banker office. They also decide that morning where they are going to hike, Contact Vicky Anthony at 274-3863 for more information.
- And there is the **Nevada County Hiking Club**.
See <www.ncws.com/akh/hike/>