



Friday November 19 • General Meeting • Seaman Lodge, Pioneer Park, Nevada City

The Loma Rica Project

Phillip Carville, president of Carville Sierra, will join us to discuss the Loma Rica project, one of four developments currently proposed in Grass Valley. His presentation will include such topics as • What is growth? • How are we to prevent sprawl? • What is the Loma Rica project? • Why carry through on the Loma Rica project? • What is rural quality and how do we preserve it? • How can citizens distinguish between 'good' and 'bad' development? • Where has growth improved communities? • What can people do to prevent Grass Valley from becoming another Roseville?

Please join us at Seaman Lodge in Pioneer Park, Nevada City. Dessert potluck begins at 7:00 pm; program starts at 7:30.

Gorgeous Sierra Club calendars will be on sale at the meeting—a good opportunity to get the jump on the year 2005.



Barbara Rivenes: Chair chat

Foothills water conference

On a warm Saturday in September a group of about 40 or so got together, not to hike or look at birds, but to listen to each other talk about water policy and politics in the foothills. This meeting was initiated by a number of foothill Sierra Club activists and got its momentum from Go Wild! Consulting of Berkeley. The purpose was to gather the people and environmental groups with an interest in the watersheds of the Yuba, the Bear and the North Fork American Rivers to talk about the challenges and opportunities that the next few years would present.

Some of the basics about the key events on this shared horizon are: 1) All the major water facilities and dams in these three regions will be up for FERC (Federal Energy Regulatory Commission) re-licensing. These licenses are in effect for 30-50 years. How might we want to influence that process for the benefit of the environment?

2) The energy contracts with PG&E will come to a close in 2013 with the debt retirement. The flow of energy and revenue may be directed locally. How will that affect foothill communities?

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Barbara Rivenes: Chair chat

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3) Simultaneously, all water rights renewals, with their conditions of use, will be in proceedings with the State Water Resources Control Board.

4) There will be local elections with water agency directors playing key roles in all of the above.

Those present in September each had important information and ideas to share. There are white papers discussing various participants' views on water issues available on the web at:

<www.motherlode.sierraclub.org/conservation.html>. Then look for Foothill Network White Papers Introduction.

We urge anyone who is interested in these topics to please join us. There will another meeting Saturday January 22, 2005, probably in Auburn again. Please call 478-0117 for more information.

Wilderness Week in Review

Don Rivenes and I were recruited to be part of a celebration in honor of the 1964 Wilderness Act's 40th anniversary and wilderness lobby week in Washington, D.C. this last September. Don has been very active in trying to secure Wilderness designation for two Nevada County areas, Castle Peak and Grouse Lakes, as part of the California Wild Heritage Act proposed by Senator Boxer.

We arrived in the wake of hurricane Ivan which left Washington, D.C. clear, sunny and picture postcard perfect. The first day was spent in preparation for our assault on the Hill, hearing from current wilderness advocates based in Washington and learning once again the vitally important aspects of wilderness protection. Particularly memorable was a talk from Doug Scott, author of a brand new book entitled *The Enduring Wilderness: Protecting Our Natural Heritage through the Wilderness Act*, highly recommended for those who want to know more about the history of the wilderness movement and the challenges yet to come. Doug is a true wilderness warrior having been a part of the movement since 1966, serving first as a lobbyist for The Wilderness Society, then conservation director of the Sierra Club and mostly recently as policy director for the Campaign for America's Wilderness.

Many others also gave the gathering of about 80 to 100 citizen lobbyists advice and up-to-date information on the status of several

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 other wilderness bills making their way through Congress. The California Wilderness Coalition, the delegation that we were a part of, fielded a large contingent, most of who were there to remind our representatives that we care about wilderness and to support the Northern California Coastal Wild Heritage Wilderness Act, H.R. 1501 (Thompson). Folks had come from all around the country to chat with their congressperson about either pending wilderness legislation or citizen proposals for wilderness in their state. Alaska and Utah had by far the largest number of advocates, right up there with California.

Feeling very purposeful, and more dressed up than usual, we visited about five California Congressional offices, carrying our wilderness protection message. Of course, we did not actually TALK to any Congressman, but rather to their environmental staff people who were always pressed for time and had other meetings with constituents before and after ours. It's clearly a hectic life. Our local Congressman John Doolittle's staff person suggested that we not even bother to drop by since he does not support wilderness as a concept. Apparently my Representative does not choose to represent me even by listening to me!

Traveling among the six Congressional office buildings is exhausting but encouraging. I write this to urge all who are interested in carrying a message to Washington to seize any opportunity that may come your way and DO IT. It's good for you and it's good for them to hear from you, even by letter.

Conservation Report



by
 Karen Cox

Amphibians

One of my recent columns drew a response from Michael Graf (son of local Sierra Club members, Sue and Peter). My discussion of the mystery of the vanishing frogs may have been over-simplified. I wrote about a study offering evidence that rainbow trout are primarily responsible for the disappearance of the mountain yellow-legged frog from the High Sierra lakes. Michael has written an article based on a number of different scientific studies concluding that pesticides play a role in the decline of amphibians. The journal *Science* reports that disease, climate change and habitat loss are threatening one-third of the world's frogs, toads, newts and salamanders. Amphibians seem to be faring worse than either birds or mammals. The survey found that California has more threatened or extinct amphibians than any other U.S. state. The largest numbers of threatened species occur in Columbia, Mexico and Ecuador.

However, I do have a little good news on the subject. On a recent backpacking trip into the Marble Mountain wilderness, our only hardship occurred at Calif

Lake: trying to avoid stepping on thousands of Western toads, most of them just emerged from the polliwog stage. It was an amazing sight and one I hope my grandson has a chance to experience.

Spotted Owls

A recent report, conducted by a private firm for the Fish and Wildlife Service, says that after 14 years of federal protection, the northern spotted owl continues to decline in the Pacific Northwest. Owls declined by 2.2 percent in Northern California. Now the major threats facing the owl are wildfires and the barred owl, which is taking over the spotted owl's habitat. Fish and Wildlife Service will decide by November 15 whether the owl should continue to be protected by the Endangered Species Act.

Trails

The Forest Service has begun a nation-wide effort to inventory existing trails in order to manage the growing use by off-highway vehicles. The Tahoe National Forest has begun the process in an area near Truckee. The process is a lengthy one and will include an inventory of existing roads, trails and open areas used by wheeled vehicles. OHV riders have been organizing around this issue for more than a year. It is important that the Forest Service also hear from hikers about which trails are and are not appropriate for off highway vehicle use. If you are interested you can get on the USFS email list by sending a message to <a.westling@fs.fed.us>. When we hear about any scheduled informational meetings we will post the information on our web site.

The impact of growth: Loma Rica, a case in point

by Jim Bair *, citizen of Nevada County

There are four large developments proposed for Grass Valley at Loma Rica, Kenny Ranch, North Star, and South Hill Village. Loma Rica has been described as the most attractive proposal of the four. In addition, the EIR for the City's 1999 General Plan indicated that annexation of the area northeast of Grass Valley, including Loma Rica and the Glenbrook Basin, would be environmentally superior to having annexation and development occur to the south and west (South Hill Village, Kenny Ranch and North Star). Since our Chapter will have a presentation by the developer of Loma Rica this month, I will focus on the most obvious impacts as the project is currently proposed. It is possible that the developer's desired number of housing units will not be approved, but it is likely, in my opinion, that a large number of housing units, along with commercial and business park development, will be approved by the City.

Grass Valley's 1999 General Plan proposed 180 housing units at Loma Rica. Carville Enterprises is, today, proposing 1300 housing units at last count, up from 700 several months ago. At an average of 2.47 persons per unit, that's about 3211 new residents, who will put an incomprehensible 13,000 more vehicles on roads around Brunswick Basin every day (10 trips per unit per day, the standard traffic engineering estimate). There will be an EIR

(Environmental Impact Report) required by state law (CEQA) that will present detailed analysis of all the impacts of this project. We citizens will be asked to comment on the adequacy of the EIR in properly identifying and analyzing environmental impacts and then suggesting alternatives and/or mitigation measures that will, to the extent feasible, reduce impacts to a level less than significant.

Note that, to my surprise, in the event specific economic, social, or other conditions make infeasible the mitigation measures, individual projects may still be approved in spite of one or more significant, negative impacts.

Ultimately, it is expected that the developer will be permitted by the City of Grass Valley to build a number of units based on the EIR findings with input from many agencies (e.g. CALTRANS) and citizens. It sounds logical but consider:

- The 1300 proposed housing units are almost seven times what is called for in both Grass Valley's 1999 General Plan and Nevada County's 1995 General Plan. Both plans are based on the land use needs and the limits of the site.

- Grass Valley is growing at a rate of about 2% per year without this or the other major developments. At present, over 300 housing units are in the City's pipeline, and another several hundred are likely within the existing City limits, especially with the recent annexation of much of

the Glenbrook Basin. This "infill" can meet much of the needed housing through 2008 (1440 units required by the state); additional land will need to be annexed to the City to meet needs through 2020, which is the justification for the developments on annexed land.

Growth is necessary and planned, and the General Plan provides for that growth. It does so with consideration of impacts of traffic, air quality, services capacity, and quality of life. BUT, what will it mean for Loma Rica to be 7 times larger than provided for?

Let's take traffic for example, skipping air quality, police protection, water run-off into Wolf Creek, etc. for this article. Traffic will be routed in and out of the developed, high density housing area through three routes:

- Brunswick Road north into Brunswick basin: rated E (very poor at over 14,000 trips per day)

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with other intersections rated level E (very poor) at the current time, Sutton Rd., the freeway interchange, and Nevada Highway. There are plans to mitigate these impacts such as adding turn lanes. But not much more can be done than to widen Brunswick Rd. to four lanes for its full length, but only 3 lanes are planned.

- Brunswick Road south into Route 174, with the 2 lanes converging at the “Y” a nasty intersection that I have not found any plans to improve. But how much of Loma Rica’s traffic will head south on 174? This is not a viable opportunity for traffic relief. That leaves Bennett Rd. as a long way around to a mostly residential part of Grass Valley.

- Idaho-Maryland Road to the east, is considered a significant mitigation opportunity. First, the current dangerous intersection with Brunswick is planned to be eliminated, and the traffic rerouted to higher ground. The easterly connection will be with Dorsey

Drive, either directly or via Sutton Way. This is argued to be the most useful access to the project IF the Dorsey interchange is built as currently planned for roughly 2008-2010.

If traffic were divided evenly, that would be about 4,300 additional vehicles per day per intersection. For perspective, Brunswick has a range of 10,686 to 14, 504 average daily trips (ADT) now. Sutton Way is 6,700 ADT and Idaho Maryland is 12,111 ADT. Using a simple percent of each number for discussion purposes, this is a 40%, 30%, 64%, and 36% increase respectively. Thus, if the traffic were distributed evenly, there would be roughly a 43% increase on intersections around Loma Rica.

This arithmetic exercise places the magnitude of proposed growth in perspective. Along with traffic increasing more than 40% comes between 1300 and 2300 vehicles added to the Brunswick basin shopping area and surrounding destinations. Retail and other

services within the Loma Rica development are offered as mitigation as well as public transportation. I am personally skeptical that this will lessen the use of personal autos for travel about the area. However, the project has been planned with a great deal of thought and sensitivity leading to a large open space, trails, an organic farm, and mixed-use buildings.

The bottom line is that this development will have a very significant impact on the whole area to say nothing of the 30,000 or more trips that could be generated daily by the other three annexation projects. The question for Loma Rica is: Why do we need 1300 where 180 were planned and would meet Grass Valley’s needs along with the other annexations?

**Disclaimer: I am providing this information as an individual citizen and resident of the greater Grass Valley area. The views and opinions expressed are my personal opinions and not necessarily those of the City of Grass Valley or the Grass Valley City Council.*



Bridge over Fordyce Creek: photo by Ernie Malamud

Sierra Uplift

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of the SIERRA CLUB
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NonProfit Org.
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Permit No. 8
Grass Valley, CA

General Meetings

Friday evenings

November 19, 2004

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

The Loma Rica Project

Phil Carville

January 21, 2005

program not yet determined

February 18, 2005

Big Spring Gardens

Don Phillips

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

Newsletter Mailing Party

Join like-minded Sierra Clubbers to get out the mailing of *Sierra Uplift*. Celebration occurs on the last Saturday of even-numbered months. Contact Rachel Hillemann at 274-9477.

Monthly Committee Meetings

■ Conservation & Management Committee

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

Local Outings

- If you have interest in Winter Sports such as Snow Shoeing, XCcountry Skiing or Alpine Skiing and would like to be put on a call or e-mail list to be notified as outings are scheduled, advise GB Tucker at 265-2432 or <gbtu@infostations.com> with the event you have interest in, the day of week you can be available, and the level of skill i.e. beginner, intermediate or expert.
- A group meets Wed and Sat mornings at 9:00 am (note the later, winter 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/>