



Friday March 18 • General Meeting • Yuba County Library, Marysville

Adventuring Alaska, the great land

In the course of ten summer trips to Alaska, our March speaker Chet Dunbar has had ample chance to see and photograph many amazing places. Whether leading a Sierra Club excursion or just adventuring on his own, Chet has made Denali the highlight of almost every trip.

Denali National Park and Preserve includes North America's highest mountain, Mount McKinley, countless other mountains, and many large glaciers. Denali's more than 6 million acres also encompass a complete sub-arctic eco-system with large mammals such as grizzly bears, wolves, Dall sheep, and moose. The Park, an international biosphere reserve, accommodates such uses as wildlife viewing, mountaineering, and backpacking. It continues to provide a laboratory for research in the natural sciences.

Join us at the Yuba County Library on Friday, March 18 for slides and stories of Alaska and especially of Denali. Dessert potluck begins at 7:00 pm and the program begins at 7:30. Last names A through M please bring a treat to share. See page 5 for directions to the library.

The Yuba Highlands Project currently proposed for Yuba County will be the focus of the potluck time and the first ten minutes of the March meeting. Yuba County Supervisor Hal Stocker will join us for an update. Please see the related article beginning on page 4 of this newsletter.



photo by Chet Dunbar

Friday April 15 • General Meeting • Seaman's Lodge, Pioneer Park, Nevada City

The Tahoe Rim Trail 2005 Promo Tour



Relay Peak along TRT

See the Tahoe Rim Trail as we bring it to you! The Tahoe Rim Trail Association is a non-profit organization dedicated to planning, building and maintaining a 165-mile loop trail along the ridge tops of beautiful Lake Tahoe. Join the TRTA staff in a virtual tour of the Association and the Trail. We'll take an in-depth look into the operations of a successful non-profit run by a small paid staff and supported by thousands of volunteer hours. And we'll discuss ways to both segment-hike and thru-hike the entire loop trail.

Presenters will be at least one if not all: Erin Casey, Associate Director TRTA; Daniella Hirschfeld, Interpreter and AmeriCorps Volunteer; Dakota Casserly, Program/Volunteer Coordinator and AmeriCorps Volunteer.

To learn more, please join us on Friday, April 15 at Seaman's Lodge in Pioneer Park, Nevada City. Potluck begins at 6:30 pm; program starts at 7:30.

Sierra Uplift

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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](http://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



Just when we thought we had given our all for the democratic process and deserved a rest, it seems the National Sierra Club election is hard upon us.

First time election endorsements

For the first time in the Club's history, Chapters are going to be allowed to endorse Board of Directors candidates and ballot measures, so be sure to take a look at the upcoming issue of the

Bonanza for any advice coming from the Chapter. A complete list of the candidates and the ballot measures is already on the web at <www.sierraclub.org/bod/2005>. Club President Larry Fahn says "voting in elections at all levels of the Club is both a privilege and a responsibility of membership and the Club requires a free flow of views on policy and priorities in order to function effectively."

LeConte Memorial Lodge in Yosemite

Another of the privileges awarded to Sierra Club members is the opportunity to be of service in one of the great wonders of the world, Yosemite Valley. Located in the heart of the Valley, LeConte Memorial Lodge is operated by the Sierra Club and staffed by volunteers. One of those volunteers could be you! Last August I answered the call and spent a delightful week meeting the vacationing public and basking in the glory that is Yosemite.

LeConte Memorial Lodge, which, despite its name, does not offer accommodations, provides information about Yosemite, the Sierra Nevada, the park system and the Club. Within the small, beautifully built

—continued on page 3



LeConte Memorial Lodge photo by Stephen Joseph

—continued from page 2
and detailed building, visitors can enjoy a well stocked natural history library, read about John Muir, Ansel Adams or David Brower, and in the evenings often enjoy poetry, storytelling or musical programs. Built as a tribute to Joseph LeConte, a professor of geology at the new University of California, a founding member of the Sierra Club and a friend of John Muir, the Lodge served as a meeting place and reading room for those early visitors to the Valley. Today, this national historic landmark provides a positive reminder of the important legacy of the Sierra Club: 113 years of conservation and environmental inspiration.

As a volunteer, you are made very comfortable, enjoying the company of others with like interests as well as the charming and knowledgeable curator and caretaker of the Lodge, Dr. Bonnie Gisel. She, along with the volunteers, staff the Lodge for about five months of the year. Your commitment is usually for a full week, staffing the Lodge for about four hours a day plus some evening programs. Camping space is provided in a lovely group camp, or you can arrange your own accommodations.

For information on volunteering at LeConte Memorial Lodge, go to <www.sierraclub.org/education/leconte>. We've signed up again for this year and I'm already looking forward to my brisk early morning hike to the showers with the sun rising over Half Dome and coyotes cavorting in the meadow. ■

Karen Cox

Conservation Report



Yuba River Watershed

This month I'm offering you an opportunity to influence the management of the Yuba River watershed. The Bureau of Land Management, Folsom Field Office is holding a public scoping meeting on their Sierra Resource Management Plan. Come to the Love Building in Condon Park, Grass Valley on March 9, 2005, at 6:30 pm to learn what the BLM is planning for the considerable amount of land they manage in our area.

Forest Management Regulations

The Bush Administration announced new regulations which will change the way management plans for individual National Forests are devised. Forest Service officials say the new system will allow individual forest managers more discretion and reduce paperwork and the length of time required to prepare new plans. Conservationists are concerned because the Forest Service will be allowed to sidestep current requirements for environmental impact statements. In addition, the new regulations would do away with a Reagan-era requirement that viable populations of wildlife be maintained in the

national forests. Instead of being a requirement it will now be a goal. Forest officials will still have to write an EIS for individual actions but not for general management plans. Conservationists also point out that the new rules closely resemble recommendations offered by the American Forest & Paper Association during testimony before the Natural Resources Committee in May, 2000.

Sierra Framework

The Sierra Club, the State of California and other environmental organizations filed suit against the Forest Service for failing to include essential scientific information in the 2004 revision of the Sierra Nevada Framework, a management plan for 11.5 million acres of California's national forest lands. The latest revision triples the amount of logging. Conservationists believe that the new plan decreases fire safety for local communities because it focuses on increased logging of large, fire-resistant trees in the back country.

Giant Sequoia Monument

The Sierra Club and several other organizations filed suit in January to prevent the implementation of the Giant Sequoia Monument Management Plan. The conservation groups maintain that the Management Plan fails to protect the Giant Sequoias by allowing logging of trees up to 30 inches in diameter. The Forest Service says that logging trees up to 30 inches will reduce the fire risk for the sequoias. The conservationists say keep the big trees and remove the surface fuels, brush, lower branches and small trees. ■

Yuba Highlands: sprawl with a cost to all

by Don Rivenes

The Yuba Highlands project is a classic example of sprawl: a proposed new town 20 miles from the nearest urban area. This development spreads out over large amounts of land; puts long distances between homes, stores, and job centers; and makes people even more dependent on driving in their daily lives. Sprawl like this wastes tax money by pulling economic resources away from existing communities to subsidize millions of dollars worth of new roads, new water and sewer lines, new schools and increased police and fire protection.

The Yuba Highlands project is part of the River Highlands Community Plan approved by the Yuba County Board of Supervisors as part of the 1993 General Plan.

The Yuba Highlands project is situated between Marysville and Grass Valley, in the area south of the town of Smartville and accessible by Hwy 20, Hammonton-Smartville Rd, and Smartville Rd, which ultimately reaches Camp Far West Rd in southeastern Yuba County. Its western boundary is Beale AFB and the property is part of the former Camp Beale site used during WWII for military exercises and within the cleanup area identified by the federal government for the removal of unexploded ordnance.

The project envisions 5100 homes, a golf course, neighborhood commercial services, and light industrial or office park development. For the most part, all public services in the Plan area still need to be established. The project is adjacent to the Spenceville Wildlife and Recreation Area which is owned by the State of California.

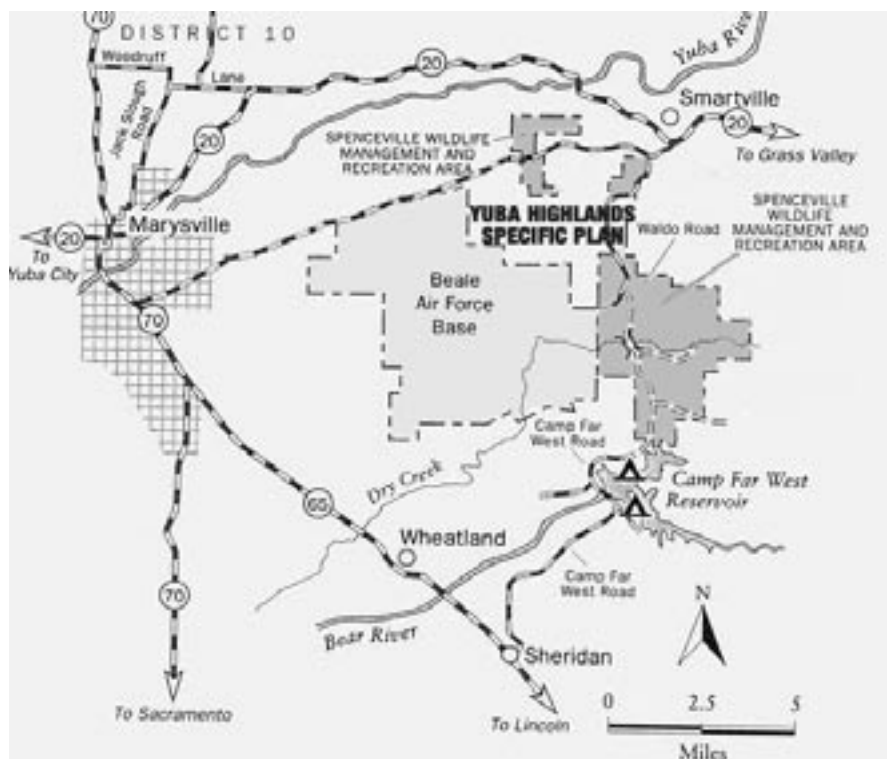
Information on Yuba Highlands and links to the Draft EIR and Draft Proposed Specific Plan can be found at <yubahighlands.org>.

In September 2002, area conservationists were shocked to hear of a proposal to build a town in eastern Yuba County of over 5,100 housing units and with a population equal to that of Grass Valley. The Yuba Highlands Specific Plan area is located along Spenceville Road off Highway 20 just north of Beale Air Force base smack in the middle of the Spenceville Wildlife Refuge and Recreation Area. The area is 20 miles from the nearest population center.

Friends of Spenceville, SYRCL, Sierra Nevada Group/Sierra Club, Sierra Foothills Audubon Society, Planning and Conservation

League, Sierra Watch and Sierra Nevada Alliance were all signers of an October, 2002 scoping letter detailing the impacts that needed to be addressed in a Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR). Two and one half years later in January, 2005 the Draft EIR was released.

The EIR has been prepared as a Program EIR, which can cover a series of actions characterized as one large project linked geographically that would have similar environmental effects that can be mitigated in similar ways. Put another way, providing less up-front information, it paves the way for future projects to be approved by conforming to the requirements of the Program EIR. The Program EIR for the 2,902 acre Yuba Highlands Specific Plan further defines the 21,800 acre River Highlands Community Plan, which was approved in 1994 causing the



Map adapted from Lyons Press/Globe Pequot Press. From John Kemper: Birding Northern California

Yuba County General Plan to be amended in 1996 to conform to it.

While meant as a planning tool it also means that it can be more difficult to identify specific environmental impacts to be able to oppose the project as a whole. Although the Program EIR lists pages of mitigations that could reduce significant environmental impacts to less than significant, the mitigations are based on various master plans and reports yet to be prepared. These include Master Plans for Roads, Parks, Water, Sewer, Drainage, Financing and Fire Safety. Other future mitigation plans include Elderberry Beetle and Oak Tree Mitigation and Monitoring Plans, a Construction Emission Plan, a Toxic Substances Control Plan and geotechnical investigations.

Significant impacts that were found unavoidable in the Draft EIR include cumulative impacts on regional ozone and particulate air quality, traffic noise levels, ongoing loss of natural undisturbed open space, human intrusion in wildlife habitat areas, potential to remove habitat for at-risk species, construction emissions, and road level of service F condition at Wheatland.

The Spenceville Wildlife and Recreation Management Area (SWRMA) is considered protected by having 450 foot setback areas from development. This does not begin to consider impacts on wildlife from 12,000 local people hunting, biking, and running their dogs in the SWRMA. Then add in the impacts from bringing Waldo and Camp Far West Roads up to full County standards as a commute path to Roseville. This main traffic artery would bisect and traverse the

core areas of Spenceville, severely disrupting sensitive wildlife species and further fragmenting the prime habitats.

Beale Air Force base is a major economic resource to Yuba County whose future may be threatened by the encroachment of this proposed community on base security and from noise level complaints from its new neighbors.

One justification for the project is that Yuba County can expand its housing base by developing low-value grasslands while staying out of the flood plain. And yet, Plumas Lakes was approved which is being built in that flood plain. It also doesn't explain why land adjacent to Marysville still outside the flood plain can't be developed without producing this project's sprawl.

The project's job creation is also cited, yet the commercial parts of the project are in Phase 5, a decade away. Sometimes later phases never happen. Unfortunately, these large sub-divisions tout their economic impacts, but end up costing the local citizens more in infrastructure costs than the revenue received.

A final point relates to cumulative and growth-inducing impacts. The market value of these homes will drive up land prices and associated property taxes and put pressure on other ranchland owners in the area and up Highway 20 toward Penn Valley to sell their land for housing. Principles of Smart Growth include: preserve open space, farmland, natural beauty and critical environmental areas; provide a variety of transportation choices; strengthen and direct development towards existing communities; create a range of housing opportunities and choices; and foster distinctive, attractive

communities with a strong sense of place.

But this project will create urban housing with a non-urban infrastructure, will force hour long car commutes to Sacramento jobs and trips to big-box stores on crowded highways, will contribute to worsening air quality in Yuba and Nevada Counties, possibly affect the Yuba River flows and surrounding ground water, place stresses on Spenceville wildlife, threaten Beale AFB's future, and contribute to more loss of open space and agricultural resources.

Comments on the Yuba Highlands Specific Plan Draft Program EIR are due March 17, 2005. Though the conservation groups mentioned in the beginning of this article will weigh in again, individual comments are very important in bringing out issues that may have been under-emphasized or overlooked. Please support this effort by submitting comments to:

Charles Thistlewaite,
Principal Planner
Yuba County
915 8th Street, Suite 123
Marysville, CA 95901
<planning@co.yuba.us> ■

DIRECTIONS to March SNG meeting location

Yuba County Library
303 Second Street
Marysville

Coming from Grass Valley on Hiway 20, follow signs toward Sacramento via Hiway 70, which becomes E Street as it turns south through town. From E Street turn left onto 3rd Street (the last light before leaving town), then right onto C Street. Parking lot entrance is between 2nd and 3rd Streets.

Sierra Uplift

THE SIERRA NEVADA GROUP
of the SIERRA CLUB
PO BOX 1042
NEVADA CITY CA 95959

NonProfit Org.
U.S. Postage Paid
Permit No. 8
Grass Valley, CA

General Meetings

Friday evenings

March 18, 2005

Meeting will be in Marysville
at Yuba County Library
(see page 5 for directions)
7:00 Dessert Pot Luck
7:30 Program

Hal Stocker:
Yuba Highlands
Chet Dunbar:
Adventuring Alaska

April 15, 2005

Seaman's Lodge, NC
6:30 Pot Luck
7:30 Program

Erin Casey, Daniella
Hirschfeld, Dakota Casserly:
The Tahoe Rim Trail

May 20, 2005

Forest Issues Program

July 15, 2005

Annual SNG Picnic

T-shirts from past Run Through the Colors

Low, low price of \$5 each.

- ◆ 2001 (white with lamppost and maple leaf, X-large only)
 - ◆ 2002 (ash with race logo, large and X-large),
 - ◆ 2003 (black with *Run Through the Colors*, medium and X-large).
- Contact the Thomas family at 265-2666.

Regular Committee Meetings

- **Conservation & Management Committee** Meets every 4th Monday, 6:30 p.m. at the SYRCL office, 216 Main St, Nevada City.
- **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.

Local Outings

- Sorry to disappoint all those winter sports enthusiasts, but our outings leader, GB Tucker, has been sidelined with a lower back injury. GB, we hope you recover quickly and can get out to enjoy the Sierra soon again.
- A group meets Wed and Sat mornings at 9:00 am 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 8:45 am 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.
- And there is also the **Nevada County Hiking Club**. See <www.ncws.com/akh/hike/>

Snowshoe Trail Etiquette & Safety

- Edith Lufkin offers a few points to enhance a peaceful trek through the woods. ■ Instead of snowshoeing directly on top of ski trails, walk on an established snowshoe trail or make your own next to the ski tracks. ■ Pack out everything you pack in. ■ Obey trail signs, including those marking trails as closed. ■ To prevent a collision with skiers or snowmobiles, yield to both, and step off the side of the trail when resting.