



Tehipite Topics

January 2007 ❧ Vol. 53, No. 1

www.tehipite.sierraclub.org

Checkered Flag Not Yet Waved - Merced Group Continues the Fight

by Rod Webster, chair, Merced Group

The largest racing facility in the West butted up against cattle ranches and almond orchards, a federal prison and a poultry farm? Thirty-nine weekends a year with 6,000 to 50,000 motorsports fans wending a path over miles of two-lane country roads making a pilgrimage to their racing mecca? Eight racing venues, including a 3 1/2 mile road course, motorcycle motocross, and a 5000-foot dragstrip plunked down on 1187 acres of uniquely classified farm land? That's what the Merced County Board of

Supervisors envisions, despite an outcry from the farming community and citizenry.

On December 12th at 2:00 A.M.—the early morning hours of December 13th, to be more precise—the Merced Supervisors voted 3-2 to accept the EIR for the proposed Riverside Motorsports Park (RMP). In another critical component of the process, they voted in a required super majority (4-1) to override the recommendation of the Airport Landuse Com-

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Big Baldy

by Aimee Leyva

As an avid hiker and Sierra Club outings leader, one of the biggest hesitations that I had in starting a family concerned what to do with the baby while on outings. What I didn't know, and what many of my friends failed to mention, was that there is virtually nothing you *can't* do with your child. In September 2005, when she was three months of age, we took her on her first Sierra Club day hike to Squaw Leap. After that, we began taking her on many of our outings, including bike trips and car camps.

In September 2006, a year later, I began leading hikes for the Sierra Club again. My fear that having a child would hinder or in any way adversely affect the outing was quickly realized to be false. As seen in this photo, we took her and several Sierra Club members to Big Baldy in Sequoia National Park for a day hike. She actually fell asleep on the hiking trail, despite bouncing around on her father's back.

Just a reminder to all the families that enjoy hiking, biking, camping, and other outdoor activities as much as I do: please don't ever let having small children prevent you from continuing to enjoy the outdoors. As both a participant and an outings leader, I welcome children of all ages to participate in many of our outings.

If you see a hike that interests you, please call the outings leader and verify if it is suitable for your child's age group, as factors such as terrain and distance may render age requirements on some outings. ❧



January General Meeting

"Mending the Trails of the High Sierra"

presented by Shane Krogen

Wednesday, January 17th at 7:00 P.M.
University of California Center
550 E. Shaw Ave., Fresno
(across from Fashion Fair)

Shane Krogen, a Fresno native and owner of California Outfitters, has been active in the environmental care and management of our local Sierra mountains. He

will provide the Tehipite Chapter with a stunning slide show on the efforts of his High Sierra Volunteer Trail Crew.

Come join Shane, founder and director of the High Sierra Volunteer Trail Crew, for a slide show about the community service they provide on the trails of the High Sierra, and the clean-up and restoration of illegal Marijuana farms on our public lands. His pictures will inspire much debate and conversation.

Join The Sierra Club Online!

Visit www.sierraclub.org/membership

Conservation & Executive Committees

Wednesday, January 10th at 7:00 P.M.

University of California Center, 550 E. Shaw Ave., Fresno



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Merced Group

Conservation and Executive Committee Meeting

Thursday, February 8th at 7:00 P.M. at Rod Webster's home, 345 E. 20th St., Merced.

Conservation meeting is first and can last 30-40 minutes. Anyone with an interest in local, state or national conservation issues is welcome to attend. Come just to get informed or get as involved as you wish.

January General Meeting

Thursday, January 18th at 7:30 P.M. at Sierra Presbyterian Church, 3603 M St., Merced.

Merced River Biology

presented by Maia Sager and Peter Downs

Maia Sager and Peter Downs are two Audubon speakers who will share their experiences and knowledge about the flora and fauna characteristic of Merced River habitats.

Come find out what is so special about this micro environment and why it is so important to conserve and protect the Merced River.

February General Meeting

Thursday, February 22nd at 7:30 P.M. at Sierra Presbyterian Church, 3603 M St., Merced.

Electric Cars

presented by Heather Bernikoff and David Raboy

Heather Bernikoff and David Raboy will make a presentation on and bring their electric car. This technology has such a huge connection with the air quality issues facing the Valley today. According to Heather and David, the issue of oil is at the root of many environmental problems, yet leadership on the national level has been far from helpful in the effort to find other options.

Outings

Please see the Tehipite and Yokuts (Modesto area) chapter listings. Phone Rod Webster at (209) 723-4747 if you would like to coordinate carpooling with others from your area.

Our local group needs someone who can volunteer to be in charge of our calendar and card sales. Contact Rod Webster at (209) 723-4747 if you are willing to help.



Explore, enjoy and protect the planet



Bear in mind the consequences.

The Yellowstone grizzly bear is an irreplaceable part of America's natural heritage, a symbol of the independence that defines the American character and an icon of all that is wild and free. The Bush administration set forth a proposal that would remove federal protection for the Yellowstone grizzly bear. Help Sierra Club protect our forest friends; they prefer the woods than being on display.

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Zip _____ Phone (____) _____

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Card Number _____

Exp. Date ____/____/____

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Standard	<input type="checkbox"/> \$39	<input type="checkbox"/> \$47
Supporting	<input type="checkbox"/> \$75	<input type="checkbox"/> \$100
Contributing	<input type="checkbox"/> \$150	<input type="checkbox"/> \$175
Life	<input type="checkbox"/> \$1000	<input type="checkbox"/> \$1250
Senior	<input type="checkbox"/> \$24	<input type="checkbox"/> \$32
Student/Limited Income	<input type="checkbox"/> \$24	<input type="checkbox"/> \$32

Contributions, gifts and dues to Sierra Club are not tax deductible; they support our effective, citizen-based advocacy and lobbying efforts. Your dues include \$7.50 for a subscription to *Sierra* magazine and \$1 for your Chapter newsletters.

Enclose a check and mail to Sierra Club, P.O. Box 52968, Boulder, CO 80322-2968 or visit our website www.sierraclub.org

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Racing, from page 1

mission and allow the racing project to locate adjacent to Castle airfield in Atwater, California.

It was the culmination of an evening of public testimony that began seven hours earlier. Over 70 individuals addressed the Board. Some supported the proposed racetrack, but the "super majority" (an estimated 4:1 ratio) adamantly opposed it. Private residents, local ranchers and farmers, Foster Farms, a Federal Penitentiary, and the Merced Group of the Sierra Club were among those who cataloged the reasons why the motorsports park is the wrong project in the wrong location.

The Merced Group's involvement in trying to thwart the proposed raceway has been ongoing over the past two and a half years. A comment letter on the Notice of Preparation was the first official action. It was followed by letters of concern submitted to the County Planning Department in response to the Draft EIR, and then more recently written protestations about the inadequacies of the Final EIR. Sierra Club Group members spoke up at public forums and hearings throughout the process, joined neighborhood canvassing, and donated both personally and as an organization to help fund leaflets and advertisements.

The Merced Group has also actively been part of two community coalitions that have provided collective resistance and financing to try and fight the project. MC-CAR (Merced County Citizens Against the Raceway) has been the main force spearheading opposition over the duration of the public debate. MARG (Merced Alliance for Responsible Growth) is a wide-based coalition of a dozen local organizations, united for a common purpose. Merced Group members have been integrally involved and held leadership positions in both collective efforts.

The public debate on the proposed Riverside motorsports park has, of course, overflowed from the formal hearings of the board room. The local newspaper has been a ripe field for public discussion. It has been peppered with letters to the editor for literally years. Op-ed pieces and editorials have been proffered. The newspaper has run full page ads, paid for by one side and then the other. Recent town meetings in small nearby farming communities have packed local school auditoriums. And in addition to the recent seven hours of public comments there was an even longer marathon during the official public hearings that lasted for ten and a half hours on November 14th.

Opposition to the Raceway has had no shortage of ammunition with which to fight. The three linchpins are the projected impacts on air quality, traffic, and noise. Traffic and noise are both discussed extensively in the EIR. The draft listed 35 significant and unavoidable impacts in these two areas. Improvements and mitigations to address these in the final EIR left 34 still remaining! To add insult to injury, the applicant (RMP) has also convinced Merced County to make exceptions to the General Plan solely to accommodate them.

For RMP's "major event" weekends, the noise ordinance will be laxed from 80db, measured at the property line, to 90db, a level twice the intensity currently allowed. These same eight weekends, Riverside will be given a "pass" on traffic standards too. The currently allowed LOE (level of efficiency) on the roads leading to the facility is a "C". On major race days, a level of "F" will be permitted. Yes, "F" is the lowest possible level, though more accurately it should probably be "G" for gridlock.

Oddly enough, the impacts on our Valley air are not adequately addressed in the EIR. Racing machines burn fairly cleanly and the “mobile sources” of thousands of vehicles fighting through traffic to get to the raceway do not fall under the San Joaquin Air District’s jurisdiction. Even the small moneys paid in for mitigation will not necessarily be applied to cleaning up the air in the county which creates the pollution.

The problems of our Valley’s air are a long-standing and ongoing story in Valley newspaper articles and editorials. Passionate testimony at the Board meetings, letters to the editor in the local newspaper, and flyers circulated around town document well the heavy toll on human health, an impact which falls most directly on youth and the elderly.

At the state level, a recent price tag of \$4.5 billion was quoted to meet future air standards. Senator Feinstein has championed a bill to have the feds commit \$100 million each year until 2020 to help the state tackle this problem. And in the wake of all that, the Merced County Board of Supervisors still welcomes a new major polluter to their community. Unconscionable!

There are many additional significant environmental and quality of life issues that accompany the Riverside Motorsports Park plan.

- The loss of 1200 acres of productive farmland.
- A proposed solid waste treatment plant on the racing site that could foul local waterways and groundwater and would burden the local landfill.
- The compromised ability of emergency response (fire, ambulance, and law enforcement) to reach homes and businesses on race days.
- Noise will disrupt schools located within a short distance of the raceway. Practice for weekend events will begin on Fridays. In addition race-related businesses located at the track would be testing and running equipment during the work week.
- Two-lane country roads clogged on race days, obstructing agricultural equipment, trucks, suppliers, harvest crews and animal transport.
- Costs for local road and intersection upgrades. Eighty-one to 93 percent would fall on local taxpayers. This, in a region that rejected road improvement bonds in the last two elections.

And finally, of note are two large players who are next door neighbors to the proposed motorsports park—Foster Farms and a Federal Penitentiary. Without expounding, they have major economic, employee, inmate, and public safety concerns with the raceway proposal as it stands. Both have

been unsuccessful in negotiating with the raceway people and stand at the front of the line with those likely to contest the project in court.

Future litigation will likely center on the EIR’s failure to follow CEQA. Violations can be found not only in the details, but in the overall process as well. RMP’s approach seems to have been to classify most mitigations as “unfeasible” and thereby limit their obligations to compensate the community for the hardships they bring. More disturbing is the Board of Supervisors’ failure even to suggest, much less impose, appropriate mitigations. Alternative sites and a reduced event schedule are glaringly lacking as options to minimize the significant impacts. Cumulative impacts and the health risk assessment are also not adequately addressed. And throughout the process, public input has neither been properly sought nor facilitated.

The Merced Group is thankful for the Tehipite Chapter’s support on this issue. Certainly, with regard to air quality, it is one in which we all have a stake. We are hoping, as the battle moves into the courtroom, that the National Sierra Club and its resources can help us continue our efforts to keep this gross polluter and degrader of our county’s well-being out of town.

For more information visit www.mc-car.org. ❧



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Tehipite Chapter Annual Awards Banquet

Saturday, January 27th 2007

Special guest speakers: Mark Grossi, author, and Mark Crosse, photographer.

The Annual Awards Banquet will be at the Old Spaghetti Factory, 1610 East Shaw Avenue, Fresno, starting at 6:00 P.M. Tickets will be limited to 75 people, so hurry and buy your tickets early.

Tickets will be available by mail from Joe Ruff, 4441 W. Herndon Ave., Fresno, California 93722. Phone reservations will also be allowed, if available, up to January 20th. Call Joe or Jayne at (559) 436-4880. Tickets may also be purchased from selected members.

Remember, seating is limited to 75 people, so don't wait until the last minute and be disappointed. This year's price will be \$20.00 per person.

Menu choices:

Meat Lover's Treat:

Meatballs, Italian sausage, and spaghetti with rich meat Sauce.

Fettuccine Alfredo:

Fettuccine noodles in a butter cream sauce with shredded Romano cheese.

All dinners include one adult beverage (beer or wine); choice of soda, iced tea, or lemonade.

Green salad with choice of thousand island or creamy pesto dressing, fresh baked bread, and spumoni or vanilla ice cream.

Banquet Program:

Mark Grossi and Mark Crosse hiked more than 78 miles in eight days. As a reporter-photographer team, they have hiked for The Bee to report stories on Half Dome, Mount Whitney, and parts of the eastern Sierra. Grossi authored a book on the Sierra Nevada in 2000. Crosse has trekked in the Himalayas and New Zealand Alps.

Their Muir Trail segment had intense climbs—more than 10,000 feet of calf- and thigh-burning elevation gain and more than 12,000 feet of knee- and toe-pounding elevation loss. Here's a daily breakdown of their hike:

- Aug. 21: Florence Lake (7,400 feet) to the San Joaquin River and Piute Creek junction (8,050 feet), 8.4 miles
- Aug. 22: River junction to Colby Meadow in Evolution Valley (9,600 feet), 7.5 miles
- Aug. 23: Colby Meadow to Wanda Lake (11,494 feet), 7.5 miles
- Aug. 24: Wanda Lake over Muir Pass (11,955 feet) down to Little Pete Meadow (about 9,000 feet), 7 miles
- Aug. 25: Little Pete Meadow up Golden Staircase to Upper Palisade Lake (10,700 feet), 11.5 miles
- Aug. 26: Upper Palisade Lake over Mather Pass (12,100 feet) down to Kings River Upper Basin (10,000 feet), 10 miles
- Aug. 27: Upper Basin to Pinchot Pass (12,130 feet) down to Woods Creek Crossing (8,500 feet), 11 miles
- Aug. 28: Woods Creek Crossing to Road's End (4,500 feet), about 15.5 miles

Teach the River 2007

Would you like to learn more about the natural world of the Central Valley—where our water comes from, the name of that bird in your backyard, where to find spectacular wildflowers or where to take a hike? We invite you to rediscover Teach the River. Teach the River is now open to the general public, including families, teachers, parents, or anyone who wants to learn and discover the wonders where you live. A wide variety of seminars, field trips and other special events are offered from January through June, all located in the greater Fresno area.

Visit www.teachtheriver.org for a calendar of activities and to register (academic credit available!!!)

Upcoming January and February opportunities: Eagle Canoe Tours, Weekend Nature Walks, River Workdays, Wetlands Tour in Los Banos, and Junior Duck Stamp Contest for kids. ❀



Outings Schedule

January 6th - Saturday

Cross Country Skiing—Beginners
Location to be determined.
Walt Taguchi (559) 435-2818

January 7th - Sunday

Day Hike (2C)—Moderate.
Chilnualna Falls.
Elevation gain 2,100 feet.
Carolyn Ordway (559) 449-7780

January 13th - Saturday

Day Hike (4B)
San Joaquin River Gorge to Sky harbor. A one-way hike, 16 miles. Carolyn will start from Squaw Leap and go to Sky Harbor. Walt will come from Sky Harbor and go to Squaw Leap.
Walt Taguchi (559) 435-2818
Carolyn Ordway (559) 449-7780

January 14th - Sunday

Cross Country Skiing—Intermediate
Location to be determined.
Steve Fretz (559) 439-6673

January 20th - Saturday

Cross Country Skiing—Intermediate
Location to be determined.
Walt Taguchi (559) 435-2818

January 20th - Saturday

Day Hike, Easy to Moderate
Hensley Lake, 6 miles with 700 feet elevation gain.
Beautiful hike along the lake.
Call for directions.
Don Gaede (559) 434-5138

January 27th - Saturday

Cross Country Skiing—Intermediate
Location to be determined.
John Cameron (559) 903-5138

January 28th - Sunday

Snowshoe (2B)
Beginner to Intermediate
Snowshoe to Dewey Point with spectacular view of Yosemite Valley. Afterward we can go to Badger Pass Ski Lodge and have something hot to drink.
Carolyn Ordway (559) 449-7780

January 26th - 30th

Friday night - Tuesday night

Car Camp
Day Hikes (1B) (1B) (1A)
This adventure starts with an exploration of the Lookout Ghost Town and an Adopt-A-Cabin party at the Minietta Cabin in the Panamint Valley. Sunday we move to the hot springs in the Saline Valley and a hike through Black Canyon. If Steele Pass is open, we will then go to Eureka Dunes and Death Valley Scotty's Castle. Return late Tuesday evening.
Richard Sloan (559) 696-2971

April 13th - 16th (17th)

Friday night to Monday or Tuesday night

Car Camp and Backpack (3D)
Panamint City ghost town. Located at 7,000 elevation in the Panamint Mountains, it is an 11-mile bush-whack, sometimes in a stream bed with flowing water. The rewards of this difficult hike are worth it. Historic remains of the town, Indian pictographs, wild animal encounters. 2wd vehicles should be OK.
Richard Sloan (559) 696-2971

May 19th - 27th

National River Cleanup Activities
Richard Sloan (559) 696-2971

Outing Ratings

Distance	Elevation Gain
1) up to 6 miles	A) under 1,000 feet
2) 6 to 10 miles	B) 1,000 to 2,000 feet
3) 10 to 15 miles	C) 2,000 to 3,000 feet
4) 15 to 20 miles	D) 3,000 to 4,000 feet
5) over 20 miles	E) over 4,000 feet

Our Tehipite Chapter Outings Chair is Richard Sloan (559) 696-2971, or RiverRich1509@aol.com. Please contact him with any questions concerning our outings program. Contact the trip leader directly if you are interested in one of the listed trips.

Tehipite Chapter outings are free and open to the public. All leaders are unpaid volunteers assuming responsibility for a good trip, and your cooperation is mandatory. Please review additional trip and participant requirements at www.tehipite.sierraclub.org/outings.

July 20th - 21st

Friday - Saturday

Car Camp and Hike (2B)
Dinkey Wilderness. Trailhead at 8,200 elevation. Should be good flowers, with mosquitoes disappearing by now. Hike to 6 lakes. Non-aggressive dogs welcome.
Richard Sloan (559) 696-2971

The Merced Birders would like you to know some of the activities that they are planning. Feel free to contact Carolyn at (209) 722-2104 for more information about these trips.

- Morro Bay—January 13th-15th
- Snelling (Henderson Park and Cathy's place)—winter
- Magneson farm—winter
- Cosumnes River Preserve—?
- Copperstown Road—spring
- Arena Plains—?
- Pinnacles National Monument—fall/spring
- Santa Fe Grade—?



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The *Tehipite Topics* is available, in color, on the Chapter website at <http://tehipite.sierraclub.org>.

Deadline for the February *Tehipite Topics* will be January 12th.

Mark Grossi

Pinchot Pass



Mark Crosse

Annual Awards Banquet

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