



Tehipite Topics

Tehipite Chapter Challenges County Environmental Impact Reports

by Gary Lasky, Conservation and Legal Chair, Sierra Club Tehipite Chapter

Tehipite Chapter Wins in Court of Appeal

Friant Ranch Lawsuit Now Heads to California Supreme Court

Last week, an air pollution episode sent particulate PM_{2.5} levels skyrocketing. The school near my home flew a purple flag—the highest warning level. *Something needs to be done.* Air pollution costs the Valley billions of dollars in economic losses from crop damage, asthma and respiratory disease.

The Tehipite Chapter and our partners, the League of Women Voters of Fresno and Revive the San Joaquin, are taking action on air pollution and sprawl. In May 2014, the Fifth District Court of Appeal, in Fresno, ruled in our favor in

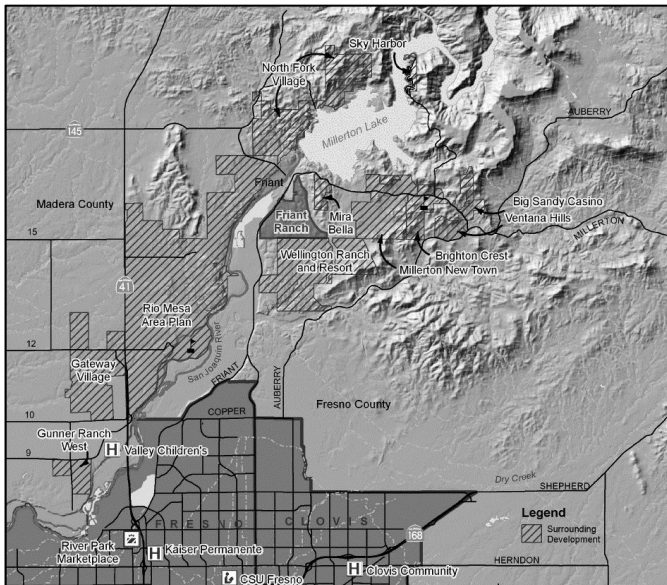
Sierra Club v. County of Fresno.

Reversing in part a lower court ruling, the Court ordered the County to revoke its approval of the Friant Ranch development. Friant Ranch is a proposed Del Webb retirement community of 4,500 residents, to be located on grazing land, six miles north of Fresno, near Millerton Lake.

The County must now redraft its Environmental Impact Report (EIR) to include an analysis of how the air pollution from future residents' autos would affect the public health.

We cannot declare victory yet, however. On October 3, the California Supreme Court agreed to review this case. We do not, however, expect a ruling *until 2016.*

At this time, we need to raise \$10,000 to pay our attorney, Sara Hedgpeth-Harris, to represent us before the Supreme Court. **We need your help** to see this case through to a successful conclusion. Please contact the author at data.nations@gmail.com or 559-790-3495 with questions or to support us with a tax-deductible donation.



THE FRIANT RANCH PROJECT (HIGHLIGHTED IN CENTER) AND OTHER PROPOSED PROJECTS NORTH OF FRESNO WILL CROWD THE SHORES OF THE SAN JOAQUIN RIVER AND MILLERTON LAKE.

SOURCE: FRIANT RANCH ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT

Tehipite Chapter Takes Merced Cty to Court Lawsuit Challenges the 2014 Regional Transportation Plan

This October, the Sierra Club Tehipite Chapter and the Center for Biological Diversity filed a legal challenge to the Merced County 2014 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) in Merced Superior Court.

Our lawsuit against the Merced County Association of Governments (MCAG) is for failure to comply with the California Environmental Quality Act, CEQA. The Environmental Impact Report (EIR) failed to analyze the impacts of the plan on greenhouse gas emissions, farmland loss or disadvantaged communities.

There is no funding in this RTP for added public transit or

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see also:

Photos from the National Wilderness Conference in Albuquerque
Impressions after a National Forest Plan Revision Public Meeting
A Trip down the Colorado River through the Grand Canyon

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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.

Get grizzly and JOIN Sierra Club.

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Join today and receive a FREE Sierra Club Weekender Bag!



Check enclosed. Please make payable to Sierra Club.

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Special Offer	<input type="checkbox"/> \$25	
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Contributing	<input type="checkbox"/> \$150	<input type="checkbox"/> \$175
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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.



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2014: WILDERNESS 50

CELEBRATING THE FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF THE WILDERNESS ACT

PHOTOGRAPHS FROM THE OCTOBER 2014 NATIONAL WILDERNESS CONFERENCE IN ALBUQUERQUE, NEW MEXICO



TIRELESS WILDERNESS ADVOCATE VICKY HOOVER ARRIVES



BROCK EVANS – PRESIDENT ENDANGERED SPECIES COALITION



SIERRA CLUB SW REGIONAL REP LAWSON LEGATE & HIS WIFE



WEDNESDAY OCTOBER 15 OPENING THE FIVE-DAY CONFERENCE



SIERRA CLUB LITERATURE IN THE EXHIBITION HALL



TISHA BROSKA AND VICKIE SHARE A LAUGH



THE AGENCY HEADS AT LUNCH PANEL



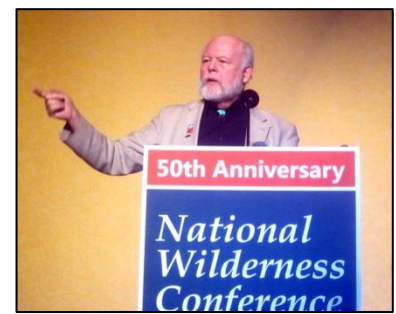
SIERRA CLUB PRESIDENT DAVE SCOTT ADDRESSES CLUB MEMBERS



TERI SHORE GIVES \$1000 CHECK FROM GROUP FUND-RAISING HIKE



GIVING FUNDS TO WILDERNESS DIRECTOR BRUCE HAMILTON



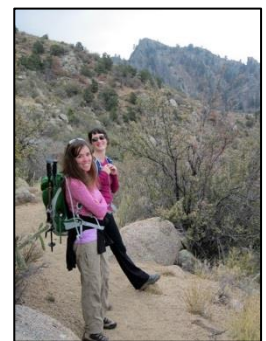
ECO-WARRIOR DAVID FOREMAN GIVES CONFERENCE CLOSING TALK



SATURDAY'S GET WILD FESTIVAL IN CIVIC PLAZA



DUSTIN CHAVEZ-DAVIS & VICKIE FROM THE RIO GRANDE CHAPTER



CLIMBING SANDIA MOUNTAIN



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Population

open

Merced Group Conservation & Executive Committee Meetings

The first Wednesday of each month at 7:00 PM — 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.

Executive Committee meeting is open as well.

Merced Group General Meetings

THE PUBLIC AS WELL AS MEMBERS ARE CORDIALLY INVITED

Meetings are usually on the 3rd Thursday of each month, though not in November or December, when we have our banquet instead, or in May, when we have our picnic.

Meetings start at 7:00 PM and are usually over by 8:30 or so. We meet in the Fireside Room at Merced United Methodist Church, 899 Yosemite Parkway (that's Hwy 140 to Yosemite). Other events are often going on, so park in the lot off of Cypress Avenue and use the entrance there.

Speakers cannot always be confirmed in time for the Topics so some program info may be "TBA". You can either phone Rod Webster at [209-723-4747](tel:209-723-4747) or send him your email at rwebster@elite.net and he will put you on the regular notification list.

Saturday, December 6, 2014 from 6:00 to 9:00 PM — Annual Potluck Awards Dinner and Fund Raiser, featuring Don Baldwin's newest video production: "John Muir Walks His Beloved Yosemite."

Location: Hoffmeister Center at 1920 Canal Street in Merced. See the next page for more information on this program and details about time, parking, dinner, and door prizes.

Thursday, January 15, 2015 at 7:00 PM — Linda Lagace speaking on "Birds of the Merced County Wildlife Refuges."

Linda will present inspiring photography of the many birds that make the San Joaquin Valley their winter home. Linda visits the local wildlife refuges regularly and has been doing so for many years. Come see her latest and greatest photos and learn more about our local "snow geese" — literally!

Thursday, February 15, 2015 at 7:00 PM — Mark Osborne presenting "Sailing across the Great Lakes to Nova Scotia"

In his 29-foot sailboat, local adventurer Mark Osborne has spent several sail trips working his way to the Atlantic Ocean in a route that began at Lake Michigan. Every two years he takes a month or so and continues on his journey. Over the past three outings he has progressed through the Great Lakes, along the St. Lawrence River through its canal systems, and on this most recent leg got as far as Peggy's harbor in Nova Scotia. A friend or one of his sons have taken turns crewing on various legs. Come hear about the challenges, the days under sail, and the harrowing rides through storms that have made this personal quest so exciting.



Don Baldwin's Newest Video Production

“John Muir Walks His Beloved Yosemite”

STUNNING PHOTOGRAPHY

SOARING MUSIC

JOHN MUIR'S

INSPIRATIONAL WORDS

“The clearest way into the Universe
is through a forest wilderness.” J. Muir

A 17-minute walk into the universe of John Muir, designed to capture his heart and soul, and bring the viewer into the profound joy and thrilling delight that Muir experienced in Sierra-Nevada mountains, his “Range of Light.”

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 6th, 2014

6:00 - 9:00 PM

**MERCED SIERRA CLUB ANNUAL POTLUCK
AWARDS DINNER AND FUND RAISER**

**Featuring Don Baldwin's newest video production:
“John Muir Walks His Beloved Yosemite”**

Hoffmeister Center at 1920 Canal Street in Merced

Convenient parking at the rear entrance on 19th Street

Arrival time is 6:00. Dinner will begin at 6:30 and the program at 7:15.

*Donation tickets will be available for door prizes from local businesses
and for a two-night stay at a Lake Tahoe resort home.*

2015 Sierra Club Wall Calendars and Engagement Books for sale.

To support Merced Group's local programs, speakers, and environmental advocacy.

Inspired nature photography from familiar and exotic locales around the U.S.

On sale while they last! Contact Annette at [\(209\) 723-5152](tel:2097235152).

Upcoming Tehipite Chapter Meetings

Tehipite Chapter Conservation & Executive Committee Meetings

Second Wednesday of each month ~ Open to the Public

December 10, January 14, February 11, March 11, April 8, May 13, June 10, (July 8), (August 12),
September 9, October 14, November 11.

(July and August meeting dates are tentative, subject to whether there is important business.)

The Conservation Committee meets at 7 PM. The Executive Committee meets at 8 PM.

University of California Center, 550 E. Shaw Avenue, Fresno (between First and Fresno Streets)

Tehipite Chapter General Meetings

**Monthly meetings are on the third Wednesday of each month from 7 to 9 PM
except in July, August, and November (This year we are having one in November!)**

MEETINGS ARE FREE AND OPEN TO THE GENERAL PUBLIC

University of California Center, 550 E. Shaw Avenue, Fresno (between First and Fresno Street)

Wednesday, November 19, 2014 at 7:00 PM — Movie Night: “Promised Land” starring Matt Damon, Frances McDormand, Hal Holbrook, and John Krasinski

Directed by Gus Van Sant and written by John Krasinski (also in the cast), this 2012 American drama portrays an employee for a natural gas company trying to convince the residents of a small town to accept fracking technology for tapping into the natural resources that lie beneath the homes and farms of their community. His view of his employer’s tactics is altered by secrets revealed to him during his visit.

Wednesday, December 17, 2014 at 7:00 PM — Dan Saunders presents “Skiing Cross-Country in the High Sierra Wilderness of Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks: A Tale of Two Winters”

Dan Saunders will present a slideshow of two High Sierra ski tours, comparing the first tour in the early spring of 2011, during our last heavy precipitation winter season, to last year's ski tour, which had the lightest precipitation in over 35 years. Get ready for the upcoming winter season by enjoying beautiful photographs of our wonderful wild High Sierra Nevada. (see more on the next page)

Wednesday, January 21, 2015 at 7:00 PM — FSU Biology Professor Steve Blumenshine speaks on “Restoring Chinook Salmon to the San Joaquin River — Challenges in Times of Drought”

Wednesday, February 18, 2015 at 7:00 PM — Harold Wood presents “John Muir’s Continuing Inspiration”

Long-time John Muir scholar and wilderness activist, chair of the Sierra Club John Muir Education Team, and Webmaster for the Sierra Club John Muir Exhibit website, Harold Wood will present an expanded version of the presentation he gave at the October 2014 Wilderness Conference in Albuquerque for the California Historical Society. (see more on the next page)

The focus of this year’s presentations will be, when possible, on volunteerism and engaging young people in the work and joy of conservation. While there are great instances of new generation members participating heavily in the Sierra Club at all levels, our membership is still mostly older folks. We need to find out, as an organization, how to reach out to youth to get them involved in our activities, whether those are political, educational, or recreational. If you know of any great speakers who would fit right into this theme, please contact our Program Chair, Heather Anderson, at heather.anderson8@comcast.net or (559)681-6305.

Wednesday, December 17, 7:00 PM

“Skiing Cross-Country in the High Sierra Wilderness of Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks: A Tale of Two Winters”

Come join Dan Saunders' on his spring skiing adventures in the beautiful and magnificent High Sierras during the months of March and April when virtually no one else shares hundreds of miles of pristine wilderness peaks, valleys, and forests. Dan will present a slideshow of two High Sierra ski tours, comparing the first from early spring of



DAN POINTING TO SOME OF THE BARE SLOPES ENCOUNTERED IN HIS SPRING 2014 SKI TRIP

2011, our last heavy precipitation winter season, to his tour last year, which had the lightest precipitation in over 35 years.

Beautiful scenes of early spring skiing in bowls and off peaks will highlight the discussion. Get ready for the upcoming winter season by enjoying beautiful photographs of our wonderful wild High Sierra Nevada.

Dan Saunders is recently retired after 33 years as a high school Social Sciences teacher. He has skied in the Sierra for more than 50 years and has taken part in mountain adventures in Alaska, New Zealand, Peru, the European Alps, and throughout North America for over 40 years. Dan has assisted students participating in the San Joaquin River clean up and has taken hundreds of his students on many local backpacking, skiing, and river rafting adventures.



DAN SAUNDERS IN FRONT OF BEAR CREEK SPIRE IN THE SNOWY WINTER OF 2010-11

Wednesday, February 18, 7:00 PM

Harold Wood presents “John Muir’s Continuing Inspiration”

John Muir is regularly celebrated today in culture, arts, and conservation efforts. Even 100 years after his death, his life continues to be an inspiration and role model for wilderness and environmental protection.

Harold will be presenting an expanded version of the presentation that he made at the October 2014 Wilderness Conference in Albuquerque for the California Historical Society.

John Muir believed that there should never be complacency about wilderness preservation and protection, and ultimately about living in harmony with the Earth. Muir helped found the Sierra Club to ensure that there would be an ongoing, persistent education enterprise to keep the public informed, active, aroused, and effective. To this end, we do not merely celebrate Muir's legacy of wilderness preservation, but his broader perception of the ultimate importance of nature and learning to live in harmony with it—an inspiration founded equally on scientific understanding and poetic sensibility. With Muir, we're talking about ultimate meanings, especially about the place of humankind within the environment.

To learn about John Muir is to understand how one person who cares about the environment can make a difference for public values and policy, and local, state, and national legislation. He is an inspirational figure and a role-model for youth and adults. His life commitments and energies reveal his revelation that it is not enough to enjoy wilderness and nature if one wants it to be preserved; one must actively express one's appreciation and concern about it. For him, enjoyment of nature is inextricable from the responsibility to let public leaders, who make and enforce the laws, know that this is important.

One component of John Muir’s continuing inspiration is expanding the upcoming generation's knowledge of public policy. We cannot deal effectively with our current pressing environmental issues if we do not understand something about conservation and environmental history—including the formation of the national parks and wilderness preservation systems that Muir was so instrumental in supporting.



HAROLD WOOD IS A LONG-TIME JOHN MUIR SCHOLAR AND WILDERNESS ACTIVIST, CHAIR OF THE SIERRA CLUB JOHN MUIR EDUCATION TEAM, AND WEBMASTER FOR THE SIERRA CLUB JOHN MUIR EXHIBIT WEBSITE.

My impressions after the Forest Plan Revision Public Meetings on June 16 and 17

By Chip Ashley

I attended public meetings in Fresno (June 16), regarding the Sierra National Forest, and Lake Isabella (June 17), regarding the Sequoia National Forest Plan Revision process.

This revision of the current management plan, written in 1995, is critical because of some positive changes in the regulatory structure and because of the current science that is, and should be, driving these important structural changes. After a century of managing our national forests as giant tree farms, it is finally dawning on us humans as a collective that our forests must be managed as ecosystems because if we do not respect them as such, they will degrade faster and faster till they can no longer provide the “environmental services” we need, i.e. water, air quality, lumber, and recreation, including opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation in wilderness, according to the 1964 Wilderness Act. Perhaps equally important, these forests are not currently being respected as systems that must be allowed to follow their own natural rules in order to be “healthy.” The new direction at least seems to promise to recognize that these are natural systems that can tolerate only so much interference and exploitation for commercial purposes.

There was a big difference between the Sierra NF meeting in Fresno and the Sequoia one in Lake Isabella. About 150 attended the Fresno meeting, most of them apparently from the local Tea Party chapters and a Tea Party affiliate, Defend Rural America. Most of these folks were not very helpful, taking up valuable time with rowdiness verging on name-calling. Sierra NF Supervisor Dean Gould responded to these comments with polite, professional firmness. One comment from this group was helpful. A member of the Auberry Tea Party chapter read a quotation from GTR-220, “An Ecosystem Management Strategy for Sierran Mixed-Conifer Forests” and recommended the USFS start implementing it. This seemed to be intended as a “gotcha.” But the gotcha backfired. The commenter had done some homework, at least, but not enough to know that the GTR (General Technical Report) is already the foundation of the work being done by the Dinkey Landscape Restoration Project, a collaborative of diverse stakeholders working with the Forest Service. This important document is informing the

planning process and will inform the Sierra Nevada Forest Plan Revision.

There were so many people at the meeting it was hard to talk with the experts at the various content stations. But all in all, I felt the outcome was positive. The Tea Party folks learned that local conditions on these forests are not nearly as dire as a local Congressman and a sidekick from Defend Rural America have led them to believe with their demagoguery.

The Sequoia NF meeting was more constructive. While the views of the Tea Party were represented, there were fewer people and it was much easier to have an in-depth discussion with the Forest Service content experts.

I cannot go into depth on the content stations, but here is an interesting anecdote concerning two important areas. At the Timber Suitability station, the specialist had a map of areas suitable for timber harvest on the Sequoia NF, excluding the Giant Sequoia National Monument. He said the areas on the map represented 188,000 acres suitable for sustainable timber harvest. Another man at the station pointed out that these areas were mostly “covered up” by the potential wilderness areas on a map being shown across the room at the “wilderness” station. He claimed then that the Forest Service is controlled by the “preservationists.” He was alarmed that all these areas would be made wilderness, blotting out any possibility of maintaining a viable timber industry. I politely averred that it is unlikely many of these areas would be designated wilderness under the 1964 Wilderness Act. Indeed, I said I would be surprised if one or two actually made it to wilderness status since an act of Congress is required. I also pointed out that most areas already in wilderness were not areas rich with timber, being mostly rock in the alpine and subalpine areas of the Sierra. Foothill savannah and oak woodland, among other eco-types, is hardly represented because most of the foothills had been taken up in private ownership before the establishment of the Forest Reserve in 1891. So maybe we can have an opportunity to add some foothill areas in the revision process. Such areas exist, though what remain are rugged up-and-down areas not desired by Euro-American settlers in the 19th century. There is also little representation in wilderness of mixed conifer Jeffrey, ponderosa, sugar pine forest.



NATIONAL FOREST SERVICE STAFF MEET WITH CONCERNED CITIZENS AT ONE OF THEIR REGULAR PUBLIC INPUT MEETINGS ON THE SCOPE, DETAILS, AND RAMIFICATIONS OF REVISING MANAGEMENT PLANS FOR THE FORESTS.

PHOTO BY BOB TURNER

This is for the obvious reason that industry considers this kind of timber a valuable resource. In any case, since a few previously unharvested areas of this eco-type still exist, this may be the opportunity to protect some of this eco-type with designation as wilderness.

One of the most serious issues to be examined is salvage logging, which is being justified under the current plan as a means to restore forest health. Of course nothing could be further from the truth. Salvage logging interferes with healing after disturbances like wildfire. It degrades habitat for species of concern, like the Pacific fisher and spotted owl, both of which use recently severely burned forests that are not interfered with by salvage logging. Research on the McNally Fire, which saw little or no salvage, in Sequoia National Park supports this contention. Salvage on the Aspen Fire is worth discussing in this context. I've seen quite a few trucks with some very large sugar, Jeffrey, and ponderosa pine coming down the hill, some perhaps 60 inches in diameter at breast height. Many of these looked only lightly burned—trees that probably would have lived if not cut.

It is hard to tell. The trucks I've seen are only a small fraction of all the timber moving downhill from the Aspen Fire footprint. Forest Service could dispel doubt and earn trust by having the public monitor salvage operations. Perhaps this should be one of the changes made in the revision.

The plan revision process has been going on nationally for about two years on eight "early adopter" forests, three of which are in California. These three are the Sierra, Sequoia, and Inyo National Forests, which are in Tehipite Chapter's backyard. All of the Sierra NF is within Tehipite's boundary, as is a small portion of Sequoia. The first step was an assessment of current conditions. The second is the "Need for Change," which is based on the assessment, and focuses on which of the current plan's components need to change to bring about "desired conditions" based on current science. In other words, how does the management plan need to change to bring about these desired conditions?

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2014: WILDERNESS 50

CELEBRATING THE FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF THE WILDERNESS ACT

A Trip down the Colorado River through the Wilderness of the Grand Canyon

by Heather Anderson

My son, Noel, and I signed up at the last minute to raft the Colorado River through the Grand Canyon, from Lee's Ferry to the helicopter take-out at Whitmore Wash. After reading Kevin Fedarko's *Emerald Mile*, I simply had to refresh my images of those colored walls, cool rapids, and side canyons with pools, grottos, falls, and lush green foliage amid the desert landscape. To refresh ourselves in the 110-degree heat, we mitigated it by soaking our shirts, sitting in the cold river coming from the bottom of Glen Canyon Dam, or pouring hats full of water over our heads.



PHOTO BY NOEL ANDERSON

Rafting down the Colorado is like walking back through history. Remembering a bit of basic geology from my sophomore year helped peak my interest even more. Using a mnemonic phrase beginning with, "Kissing takes concentration, however Supai requires time and more breath," starting from top down, I saw layers and cross-bedding of Kaibab Limestone, Toroweap, Coconino, Hermit, Supai, Surprise Canyon, Redwall Limestone, Temple Butte, Muav Limestone, Bright Angel Shale, and Tapeats Sandstone resting on Supergroup rocks and Vishnu Schist.

The Grand Canyon is 277 miles long, up to 18 miles wide in places and over a mile deep (6,000 feet). The river exposed almost two billion years of geological history as it cut through the layers deposited on shores, in swamps, or under warm, shallow seas, while the Colorado Plateau began to lift 1,000 feet higher. Although the current course of the river was established over the last 17 million years, it continues to erode and change.

We could see remnants of an early culture of ancestral Ancient Puebloans and Athabascans left in caves in the walls. As we hiked up a rather good trail to these Nankoweap graineries on Day 3 we also saw chards, foundation stones, and other archaeological evidence. We even gained a wide view of the river. Today, much adjacent land is owned and governed by tribal descendants from this earlier time, like the Hualapai, Havasupai, Southern Paiutes, and Navaho.

I tried to keep my eyes sharp and my observation alert, but my eyes were not sharp enough, since one fellow rafter identified 32 varieties of birds while I spotted only six that had to be pointed out to me, including a file of Common Mergansers, the Great Blue Heron, swallows, wrens, hawks, and especially the Peregrine falcon and the high flying California Condor. We were able to see several Bighorn Sheep, but didn't see Black Bear, Mule Deer, Gray Fox or identify smaller mammals like porcupines, squirrels, reptiles, or insects (we did see ants).

After put-in on Day 2, we were introduced immediately to the rapids beginning with the "Roaring 20s:" twenty rapids in a row; all had names. They were almost continual, but were rendered harmless with our large motorized raft, our superb boatman with his practiced eye reading the river, and his experienced hand knowing and negotiating how to

run what he saw. We glided swiftly and easily over all of them, including those graded 8-10 difficulty (on a scale of 1 to 10).

There were holes, deep troughs and high crests, very large waves, splashes over everyone, and joyous whoops of shock and fun, notably at the famous Lava Falls, rated 8-10 (about 7 falls are rated up to 8). One group of rapids is called the Gems: Agate, Sapphire, Emerald, Ruby, etc. Crystal (up to 10) is where Kenton Grua was upended in a wave three-stories high during his speed run in the huge 1983 surge of water from the dam.

Over the days we hiked into several side canyons. The Little Colorado River was a stunning turquoise and folks enjoyed jumping in, floating down the current, hopping out and doing it over again. At Elves Chasm, we walked up a side canyon and took a group photo under a small waterfall. At Havasu, another brilliant turquoise side canyon, we again hiked upriver to nice pools and jumping off places.

Wake-up call each morning for coffee was at 5:30 a.m. Days were divided by lunches of delicious, camper-made sandwiches of meats and cheeses heaped with assorted fresh veggies. We sat on a sandbar, talking with our family of river lovers, watching the rippling river run by. After dinner, we carried on conversation with our circle-of-friends, under a narrow strip of indigo sky studded with stars. Nights turned cool enough to sleep comfortably in a thin bag.

There are many trails to get into or out of the Canyon. One can hike steeply down (or up) 6,000 feet and nine miles on the Bright Angel Trail and engage (or depart) your raft there at Phantom Ranch. Some trails enable folks to hike along the canyon. We picked up a "hitchhiker," needing to cross the river while hiking from south to north rims.

The helicopter lift out on Day 7 gave me an overview of that deep gouge, which cut in earth's crust while winding its way through the southwest plateau to its mouth at the Gulf of California. But I prefer the close-up view of the river with its own special identity. As it flows swiftly along, I pretend I am part of it and gently absorb everything above it and along its edges, while picking up its rhythm, the rhythm of the canyon, even the exquisite rhythm of this piece of our wild natural world.

Impressions of a Forest Plan Revision Public Meeting

– CONTINUED FROM PAGE 9 –

The comment period on the "Need to Change" step ended June 30. But this is not the end of public participation. The next step is the beginning of the NEPA process, which is where things get serious. NEPA means National Environmental Quality Act.

I will end by noting some important quotes from the 2012 Planning Rule, on which the Forest Plan Revision is based.

"The framework supports an integrated approach to the management of resources and uses, incorporates the landscape-scale context for management, and will help the Agency to adapt to changing conditions and improve management based on new information and monitoring."

"The new planning rule provides a process for planning that is adaptive and science-based, engages the public, and is designed to be efficient, effective, and within the Agency's ability to implement."

"The planning rule framework includes three phases: assessment, plan development/amendment/revision, and monitoring. The framework supports an integrated approach to the management of resources and uses, incorporates the landscape-scale context for

management, and will help the Agency to adapt to changing conditions and improve management based on new information and monitoring."

"This final planning rule requires that land management plans provide for ecological sustainability and contribute to social and economic sustainability, using public input and the best available scientific information to inform plan decisions."

Role of Best Available Scientific Information (BASI):
"To clarify the Department's intent, the final rule requires the responsible official to use the BASI to inform the planning process rather than take BASI into account. While the BASI must inform the planning process and plan components, it does not dictate what the decision must be: BASI may lead a responsible official to a range of possible options. There also may be competing scientific perspectives and uncertainty in the science. Furthermore, scientific information is one of the factors relevant to decision making. Other factors include budget, legal authority, local and indigenous knowledge, Agency policies, public input, and the experience of land managers."

This rule contains much that is reassuring to us environmentalists, but we have to participate to make sure that, indeed, these parts of the rule are respected and implemented on our forests.



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Tehipite Topics is currently published four times per year. Full-color versions of *Tehipite Topics* are available on the chapter website at www.tehipitesierraclub.org. Articles and photographs from Sierra Club members are always welcome. The next issue will be out around the first of the year. Send contributions for the October–December 2014 issue by email to robertsturner52@gmail.com before December 15.

Tehipite Chapter in Need of Funds to Continue Court Challenges

– CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE –

bikeways. In addition, this RTP fails to meet the greenhouse gas (GHG) reduction targets set by the California Air Resources Board, a 5% reduction in per-person Vehicle Miles Traveled by 2020 and a 10% reduction by 2035. It was written for a disappearing era of cheap gasoline, county government channeled state and federal funds to road building, and urban sprawl onto prime agricultural lands.

The State of California has recognized that we need to prepare for a hotter, drier planet as a result of human-caused Climate Change. By the year 2100, scientists are predicting Sierra snowpack to be one-third of the present. And it is possible that we will see a 30-year drought.

California Senate Bill 375 (SB 375) is a landmark piece of legislation. It addresses the GHG problem by requiring each regional transportation agency to plan for a future where residents will be less dependent on cars—a prime source of the GHG carbon dioxide. Under SB 375 each regional planning agency is to integrate transportation and land use planning in a Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS).

The first RTP/SCS was released in 2012 by the San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG). The Sierra Club won in the trial court. The appellate court decision is expected later this month.

The last two SCS reports were completed this past summer, in Madera and Merced Counties. The Tehipite

Chapter deployed our \$40,000 Rose Foundation grant to educate and organize Madera County residents about land use planning and to develop concern about the future plans for sprawl near Fresno. We received a \$9,300 grant from WildSpaces Foundation to hire attorney Craig Breon to write comment letters on the Madera and Merced County RTPs.

We then retained the law firm of Shute, Mihaly & Weinberger to write comment letters. Our attorney, Rachel Hooper, is a top expert in challenging RTP/SCS plans and represents the Club on the SANDAG case.

The Tehipite Chapter needs to raise \$38,000 to pay our attorneys and we **need your help** to accomplish this. *Please consider making tax-deductible, end-of-year donation.* Please contact the author at data.nations@gmail.com or (559) 790-3495 if you have any questions or if you can support us with a tax-deductible donation.

Fracking News: At the ballot box this November, voters in two California counties banned fracking and other extreme oil drilling techniques in unincorporated areas. At press time, San Benito County had passed Measure J by a margin of 57-43%. Mendocino County passed Measure S by 67-33%. A third ballot initiative in Santa Barbara County, Measure P, failed by 62-38% after the oil industry spent an estimated \$8 million to defeat it.