



The Sierra Club • Tehipite Chapter

Tehipite Topics

January-March 2015 – Vol. 61, No. 1

www.tehipitesierraclub.org

Mountain Explorer, Climber, Guide, and Author Andy Selters to Speak on the Remote Wilderness of the Karakoram at Tehipite Chapter Annual Banquet

Back from perhaps his most important expedition yet, Andy Selters has produced what's likely to become his most memorable multi-media show. With three Canadians and four Indian-Nepali climbers, he ventured to a restricted and barely-explored area at the northern tip of India, the Eastern Karakoram.

An internationally acclaimed nature photographer, Andy has also been a leading figure in the artistic and technical aspects of mountaineering for many years. He has guided treks and climbed high mountains from Alaska to South America and into the heart of Asia, pioneering new routes in the Himalaya and Karakoram.

"Mountains of the Blue Sheep" documents last year's exploration of an area previously off-limits to foreign visitors. Anecdotes from village elders recall the last camel caravans and first boundary wars of a region in geopolitical conflict. The team then ventures into the high country beyond Rongdo, traversing high cols, discovering wildlife and surprising signs of ancient humans, visiting an almost unknown hermitage, and climbing four newly-named peaks over 20,000 feet high.

In Blue Sheep's final and most poignant chapter, Andy stays on in Rongdo village to document life there. Sharing a common heritage for working hard and enjoying life in mountains, the villagers and he reach out across several levels of civilization to know each other as personal friends. Depending on basic skills at speaking Ladakhi, Andy learns their cultural roots and their methods of farming, herding, and daily living, while helping to bring in the autumn harvest. Returning to civilization and his home in Bishop, California, Andy comes back with new perspectives on humanity and a happiness that can only come from listening carefully.

Chapter Election Results

A big thanks to everyone who participated in the recent chapter elections as a candidate, voter, or member of the election committee. The Chapter could not function without your participation.

As you know the ballot was included in the November 2014 edition of Tehipite Topics. The election committee received and counted the ballots with the following candidates being voted onto the Executive Committee.

Newly elected committee members are: Bruce Gray, Gary Lasky, Ron Mackie, and Bob Turner. Returning committee members are William Fjellbo, Trudy Tucker, and Gerald Vinnard. The members in turn then voted in Bruce Gray as Chair, and Gary Lasky as Vice-Chair.

An unanticipated opening on the ExCom created by the resignation of Dan Gibby was filled by Ron Martin, who will serve out the remaining half of Dan's two-year term. Best wishes to Dan in his new job, and we hope that he will come back to work with us in the future.



Vote for your grassroots leadership by April 29th.

EXPLORE, ENJOY AND PROTECT THE PLANET



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.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____

Zip _____ Phone (____) _____

Email _____

Join today and receive a FREE Sierra Club Weekender Bag!



Check enclosed. Please make payable to Sierra Club.

Please charge my: Visa Mastercard AMEX

Cardholder Name _____

Card Number _____

Exp. Date ____/____/____

Membership Categories	Individual	Joint
Special Offer	<input type="checkbox"/> \$25	
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.



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CNRCC At-Large Delegate

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CNRCC Delegates

Bill Fjellbo (559) 642-4511
Bob Turner (559) 203-0714

MOUNTAINS OF THE BLUE SHEEP

A LIVE MULTI-MEDIA DOCUMENTARY
BY ANDY SELTERS

THE NORTHERN TIP OF INDIA REMAINS BARELY EXPLORED, A VASTNESS OF KARAKORAM MOUNTAINS AND GLACIERS THAT SHELTERS VILLAGES AND WILDLIFE IN ANCIENT PATTERNS. ANDY SELTERS HAS PIONEERED TREKS AND CLIMBS OF 20,000' PEAKS THERE AND FOUND THAT TRADITIONS OF GENEROSITY AND TRUST ARE STILL ALIVE.

SIERRA CLUB TEHIPITE CHAPTER BANQUET
THURSDAY, MARCH 26, 6:00PM
POTLUCK DINNER, \$2 DONATION
FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH
2131 N. VAN NESS, FRESNO
PUBLIC WELCOME



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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.

Upcoming Merced Group Meetings and Events

Thursday, March 19 at 7:00 PM — Al and Sandra Kratzer present “Touring the eastern Adriatic Sea”

Castles and pirates, waterfalls and caves, national parks, the birthplace of Marco polo, the Temple of Delphi, Roman ruins and more await our vicarious voyage with Al and Sandra Kratzer. Their excursion began on land in Slovenia and then took to the eastern Adriatic Sea in a small vessel with 50 passengers. Two weeks were spent cruising the Dalmatian coast, a historical region of Croatia, and then they finished up in Athens Greece and some of its nearby islands. All in all some exotic destinations with both historical significance and stunning natural beauty. Come see the sights and hear stories from these two experienced worldwide travelers.

Thursday, April 16 at 7:00 — Program and Speaker to be announced

May, on a Saturday, date & time to be announced — Picnic at Don and Cathy Weber’s home along the Merced River in Snelling

This event replaces the third Thursday evening program for May.

Merced Group News

John Muir pays Merced a visit.

Those attending the Merced Group's annual awards banquet in December had a personal and a personable encounter with "John Muir." Don Baldwin has portrayed Muir for decades, channeling a Scottish accent to recount stories and beliefs that Muir held dear. Conversation with the audience continued in a free-flowing and spontaneous way that presented a Muir of intimacy and authenticity. Baldwin then returned to his 21st century persona and shared a multi-media slide show of special moments captured in Yosemite Valley over the years.

Those years began back in the 60's when Don served as the resident minister in the Park. That was the beginning of a lifelong love of Yosemite and other inspiring places on the planet that speak to his soul. As Don has said, he "has been intimately engaged with religion and the arts all his life, sensing the universal interconnection of all life and creation. Deeply aware of the inherent spiritual gifts of nature, and the need for persons to experience renewal through beauty, poetry, and music," he has tried to be a vehicle for that kind of encounter. Don currently uses his skills with Earth Justice Ministries, whose goal is to work for peace, justice, and the restoration of the community of life.



**MARYANN REYNOLDS ACCEPTS THE AWARD FROM
MERCED GROUP CHAIR, ROD WEBSTER**

MaryAnn Reynolds honored at Merced Group gathering.

The Merced banquet is also an occasion to recognize individuals who have championed environmental causes both in the community and beyond. Mary Ann has been front and center in local advocacy for many years. She is currently co-chair of Mercedians Against Fracking and through the League of Women Voters has been involved with the Merced County Association of Government's compliance (or lack thereof!) with SB 375.

Involvement with the Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry over the last five years has involved opposition to the Bay Delta Conservation Plan. She spear-headed raising this issue to the Merced Group and bringing speakers to town for public presentations. She also joins the Sierra Club and NRDC in opposing the Keystone Pipeline project, phoning and writing to elected officials.

Other activists in the community describe MaryAnn as "persistent, tenacious, and dogged" in her work on environmental and social issues. Others assert that she indeed "walks the walk" and is effective in her advocacy by being "calm and cool, reasoning and caring." Her actions leave no doubt about her commitment. Since 2009 she posts regular updates to an email list of concerned citizens about the struggle for universal healthcare. For the election this November she traveled four times to San Benito County to phone bank and canvass door to door for Prop "J", which successfully banned fracking and other extreme oil extraction methods in that county.

The Merced Group was glad to recognize Mary Ann with this year's award... "In gratitude for many years of humanitarian activism and stewardship of the environment by encouraging conservation and sustainable practices for future generations".

Upcoming Tehipite Chapter Meetings

Tehipite Chapter Conservation & Executive Committee Meetings

Second Wednesday of each month ~ Open to the Public

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

(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 and August.

MEETINGS ARE FREE AND OPEN TO THE GENERAL PUBLIC

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

Thursday, March 26, 2015 at 6:00 PM — Tehipite Chapter Annual Potluck Banquet, with Andy Selters presenting a live multi-media documentary, "Mountains of the Blue Sheep," about his journey into a rarely visited region of the Karakoram Mountains in northern India.

This event will be at the Big Red Church on N. Van Ness and E. Yale near Fresno City College. See the front and back pages and page three for more information.

Wednesday, April 15, 2015 at 7:00 PM — Tom Cotter on Restoring Hetch Hetchy Valley.

Wednesday, May 20, 2015 at 7:00 PM — Movie Night:
"Wrenched: How Edward Abbey lit the flame of environmental activism and gave the movement its soul."



Wednesday, June 17, 2015 at 7:00 PM — Twyla Smith on the Citizens' Climate Lobby.

Citizens' Climate Lobby is dedicated to creating the political will for a stable and sustainable climate. Volunteers are trained to use their personal and political power to advocate for legislation that will put a price on carbon, meeting with members of Congress, writing letters to the editor and op/ed pieces, and launching letter-writing campaigns. CCL's proposed legislation would assess a steadily increasing fee on fossil fuels at their source. Revenues collected would be distributed evenly to US households, regardless of their fossil fuel usage, thus benefiting those who conserve. In addition, putting a price on carbon would shift investor dollars towards renewable energy sources. For more information go to www.citizensclimatelobby.org.

There will be no general meeting in July or August.

Earth Day Fresno will be held on Saturday, April 25th from 10 AM – 4 PM at Radio Park (First & Clinton).

Save the Date! This community Earth Day celebration will feature a bike show, exhibits, live music, kids' activities, local foods, green vendors, an alternative car show, and lots more. Ride your bike to the event and use I Bike Fresno's valet bike parking. More information at www.earthdayfresno.org.

Contact: email to info@earthdayfresno.org or call Connie Young at 559-225-2547

2015 – Island Hopping in Channel Islands National Park

March 28-30, April 5-7, May 3-5, June 14-16 (A Bird Lovers Special!),
July 19-21, August 23-25, September 27-29, October 25-27



Join us for a 3-day, 3-island, live-aboard tour of the enchanting Channel Islands! Hike wild, windswept trails bordered with blazing wildflowers. Kayak rugged coastlines. Marvel at pristine waters teeming with frolicking seals and sea lions. Train your binoculars on unusual sea and land birds — and an occasional whale. Watch for the highly endangered island fox. Look for reminders of the Chumash people who lived on these islands for thousands of years. Or, just relax at sea. All cruises depart from Santa Barbara, California. The cost, \$615, includes an assigned bunk, all meals, snacks, and beverages, plus the services of a ranger/naturalist who will travel with us to help lead hikes, point out items of interest, and give evening programs.

To reserve space, send a \$100 check, written to Sierra Club, to leader Joan Jones Holtz, 11826 The Wye St., El Monte, CA 91732. For more information contact leader at 626-443-0706 or jholtzhln@aol.com.

Chapter Volunteers Needed

WANTED: Sierra Club volunteers needed ASAP to:

- (a) write material for the *Tehipite Topics* newsletter and**
- (b) post material to our Tehipite Chapter website.**

Issues we will focus on this year are:

- National Forests & Giant Sequoia National Monument
- Yosemite & Kings Canyon National Parks
- Water, Land Use, and Sprawl
- Fracking and Oil Extraction

Additional topics (such as Climate Change) are a possibility if an energetic volunteer steps forward. No prior website experience is required — it's easy! — and we will train.

Contact Bob Turner at (559) 203-0715

or robertsturner52@gmail.com if you are interested.

ExCom Is in Serious Need of a Secretary

If you would like to be on the inside of all that is going on in and around your area, please volunteer. The hours are 7:00 PM to 9:30 PM the first Wednesday of each month.

Election for National Board Is Underway

Your participation is critical for a Strong Sierra Club, which requires a regular flow of views on policy and priorities from its membership in order to function well. In a typical year less than 10% of eligible members vote in the Board elections. A minimum of 5% is required for an election to be valid. Our grassroots structure is strengthened when our participation is high. Therefore your participation is needed in the voting process.

Members frequently state they don't know the candidates and find it difficult to vote without learning more. Your ballot is accompanied by candidates' statements about themselves and their views on prominent issues. You can learn more by asking questions of your chapter leadership and other experienced members. The Club's election web site at www.sierraclub.org/board/election has additional information about candidates. Voting online is quick and easy! We encourage use of our user-friendly Internet voting site to save time and postage. Ballots sent by mail must be received no later than April 29, 2015.

CAMPAIGN FOR THE CALIFORNIA DESERT

Protecting Our Legacy, Strengthening Our Future

In February Senator Dianne Feinstein introduced the California Desert Conservation & Recreation Act, building on the historic 1994 California Desert Protection Act. The new legislation is designed to protect additional land and help manage California's desert resources by carefully balancing conservation, recreation, and renewable energy development.

The draft legislation is a consensus document that reflects the many uses of the desert and is the product of years of engagement with relevant stakeholders including environmental groups, local and state government officials, off-highway recreation enthusiasts, cattle ranchers, mining interests, the Department of Defense, wind and solar energy companies, California's public utility companies, and many others.

Among the draft bill's provisions are the creation of two new national monuments: the Mojave Trails National Monument, encompassing 942,000 acres of land, and the Sand to Snow National Monument, 135,000 acres stretching from desert floor in Coachella Valley to the top of Mount San

Gorgonio. The proposal also designates five new Bureau of Land Management wilderness areas covering approximately 203,000 acres. Wild and Scenic Rivers protection would be declared for 77 miles of desert waterways. Death Valley National Park, Joshua Tree National Park, and Mojave National Preserve would all be expanded.

Five existing BLM Off-Highway Vehicle areas would become permanent OHV recreation areas, providing off-highway enthusiasts certainty that these uses will be protected as much as conservation areas.

The California Wilderness Coalition invites everyone to visit their awesome new website at www.californiadesert.org/, especially the Project Gallery page displaying places and rivers they hope to preserve. Because of the involvement of so many diverse stakeholders in the development of this proposal, perhaps this bill actually stands a chance of getting passed by the current Congress. You can get involved by going to their "Take Action" page of the website, and writing a letter to Senator Feinstein thanking her for this bill.



DESERT VISITOR

PHOTOS FROM THE CAMPAIGN FOR THE CALIFORNIA DESERT WEBSITE AT www.californiadesert.org/wild-places-rivers/



BUZZARDS PEAK & INDIAN PASS

SECOND PHOTO BY JOHN DITTLI

An Open Letter on California's "Bottomless Thirst" for Water — by Larry Miller

Will one more dam built in California satisfy the seemingly bottomless thirst for water in this state? Apparently, Assemblyman Jim Patterson and citrus farmer Joel Nelson think so in an opinion essay published in the January 26, 2015 *Fresno Bee* regarding how water bond money should be spent.

I moved to California some 10 years ago from New York and Pennsylvania and I am still astounded by how political and passionate water issues are here. Nobody talks much about water back east where 30 to 50 inches of precipitation fall each year. Here, people talk about their "right" to water as if it is in the Bill of Rights of the Constitution. Farmers have a "right" to irrigate their farm land; home owners have a "right" to spray it on their lawns. Conservationists argue a "right" to restore rivers and their once abundant wetlands for wildlife and habitat restoration lost to damming our rivers.

California has accommodated its explosive population growth and water-thirsty farming industry precisely because of the equally explosive development of dams and draining of groundwater aquifers. The California Department of Water Resources counts a rather mind-boggling 1,404 dams (large and small) in California. The San Joaquin and its tributaries alone have nineteen dams and 27 powerhouses, leading to the quoted claim that it is the "hardest working" river in the country. And now, Misters Patterson and Nelson and others want to build one more on the river. One of those others is the Bureau of Reclamation whose very mission is to build dams. I attended their fall 2014 Fresno public meeting regarding this proposed dam. While admittedly not a scientific sampling, of the dozen or so oral opinions voiced, only two spoke in favor of the Temperance Flat project. It would flood the San Joaquin River Gorge above Millerton, including two of the power stations on the river. It would destroy homes and popular recreation and habitat in the gorge. Its price tag is upwards of 3.5 billion dollars, nearly half of the entire 7.5 billion-dollar statewide bond issue approved by voters last fall.

That seems like a lot of money to spend on a single project without any evidence that it will help yield one more orange tree or justify one more green lawn in the dry, hot summer. The amount of natural precipitation in California is that of a desert. One more dam will not squeeze more water out of the sky, which is the real issue. We don't "desperately need" new expensive dams as Patterson and Nelson claim. What we need is to admit we live in a desert and invest in better water management practices. As sold to the voters, bond money should focus on conservation efforts, minimizing water-wasteful habits, upgrading our aging water infrastructure, and better management of our vital, but receding groundwater.

Water Waste in Fresno: A Newcomer's Perspective — from a Chapter Member

A friend recently emigrated to Fresno from Los Angeles, where water, or the lack of it, is very present in the Angelino conscience. She left behind her masterpiece xeriscaped garden of cacti and succulents, looking forward to a more water-aware consciousness in the Central Valley's agricultural mecca. Inadvertently, she heard a vague reference from her new landlord as to the odd day/even day schedule and set her water timer accordingly.

Noticing a *Fresno Bee* front-page feature, she saw photos of farmers holding placards and marching for water to irrigate their fields, stories about a three-year drought with land unfarmed due to lack of water, and unemployed workers without produce to pick and cultivate. Next to photos of Yosemite Falls, she also saw a conflicting headline announcing, "What Drought?"

She saw that churches seemed to water their large lawns midday, afternoon, basically any time, as did the shopping centers, apartment complexes, everybody. Walking through her neighborhood, she forded rivers of water pouring off saturated lawns and leaving slick sidewalks of moss and mold. And this was not 5 a.m., when we should be watering, but midday. There is a pond around the corner from her house. It's in the street, fed daily by a steady stream of over-watered lawns, even during record three-digit days. Some neighbors water every day, even during rain storms, despite water laws. After a freak two-day rain in June, she saw at least six lawns being watered. Where are the water police?

As far as the eye could see, there were no xeriscaped yards — only tender, tropical, water-loving ferns, flowers, coastal redwoods, roses, and acres of thirsty grass. There were few vegetable gardens seen either, but since Fresno is surrounded by farms, perhaps that is not a necessity. Urban farming, however, is quite the "in" thing now, with farms under freeways in New York and other big cities. Alice Waters, with her book, *The Edible Schoolyard*, is launching an entire educational program on gardening and nutrition.

A newcomer to this gorgeous city with its bike paths, grape fields, and farmers' markets, my friend felt that this watering business was way out of hand. We can't live without water. It's a precious resource that Fresnans seem to have little respect for, and she is very concerned.

A Dam at Temperance Flat Will Be Costly in Taxpayer Funds and Environmental Consequences

by Robert Turner

How Proposition 1 Funds Will Be Spent

The passage of Proposition 1 (The Water Quality, Supply, and Infrastructure Improvement Act of 2014) in the November election allocated 7.12 billion dollars to state water supply infrastructure projects, such as public water system improvements, surface and groundwater storage, drinking water protection, water recycling and advanced water treatment technology, water supply management and conveyance, wastewater treatment, drought relief, emergency water supplies, and ecosystem and watershed protection and restoration. Of this total a half billion will be used to improve water quality (including drinking water in disadvantaged communities), 1.5 billion will be granted for ecosystem and watershed protection and restoration projects, 0.8 billion to the creation of integrated regional water management plans, 0.7 billion for water recycling and developing advanced water treatment technologies, 0.9 billion to cleaning up groundwater contamination, 0.4 billion for flood management projects, and by far the largest slice of the pie, 2.7 billion dollars toward new water storage facilities across the state, i.e., new dams and reservoirs.

The state budget process will be used to determine how funds in a particular category are allocated. The exception to this is with that last chunk of money

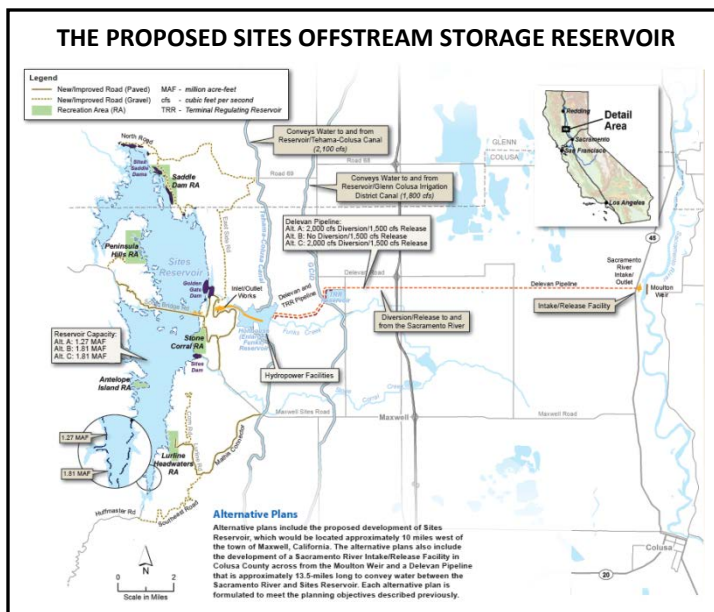
benefitting water storage facilities, which will be put into a competitive process. The Legislature will not oversee them or impose conditions through the budget process. Instead, these funds will be allocated directly by the California Water Commission (CWC), which is inviting public participation in developing the regulations to define and guide the process of deciding where these funds will go. None of the funding from Proposition 1 can be used to build a canal or tunnel to move water around the Delta.

Three New Dam Projects Proposed

The CWC has been in existence for several decades but without much power to do anything in recent years. Suddenly invested with new duties and control over massive funds, the Commission will be hit with competing proposals to accomplish the goals of the new law. At least three dam projects are under consideration: the raising of Shasta Dam to enlarge the reservoir's capacity, the construction of the Sites Offstream Storage Reservoir north of Sacramento, and the construction of Temperance Flat Dam in the upper reaches of Millerton Lake inside the San Joaquin River Gorge. Any project that is accepted for Proposition 1 funding must meet the requirement that these funds be dedicated toward "public benefits," which include restoring habitats, improving water quality, reducing damage from floods, responding to emergencies, and improving recreation. Remaining project costs must be met by local governments and other entities.

The proposed Temperance Flat Dam is estimated to cost 2.5 billion dollars by the Bureau of Reclamation (BoR), while other estimates range as high as 3.3 billion. The Bureau is claiming that half of the dam's cost will be to the public benefit in the form of increased salmon production downstream of the dam, so those funds can be requested from state taxpayers through the bond. Friends of the River, however, states that the BoR's own estimates of salmon population improvements are a paltry 0.4 to 2.8%, depending on how the dam is operated. Two of the dam's five operation scenarios actually reduce salmon populations by upwards of 13%. Whether the CWC considers that of adequate public benefit is by no means certain. Should any funds at all be allocated by the CWC toward the Temperance Flat Dam project, clearly whatever the CWC provides will have to be more than matched with funding from other sources.

Factoring in the river's average annual yield, it turns out



US BUREAU OF RECLAMATION & CA DEPARTMENT OF WATER RESOURCES
NORTH-OF-THE-DELTA OFFSTREAM STORAGE FACT SHEET – JUNE 2011

http://www.norcalwater.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/12/nodos_map_fact_sheet_7-20112.pdf

that building a dam at Temperance Flat will double the debt of the Central Valley Project, while increasing available water by merely one percent of current levels. Water from Temperance Flat will be the most expensive in the state, its cost ultimately borne by the public in one form or another through debt, fees, and taxation.

Reservoir Capacity versus Annual Yield

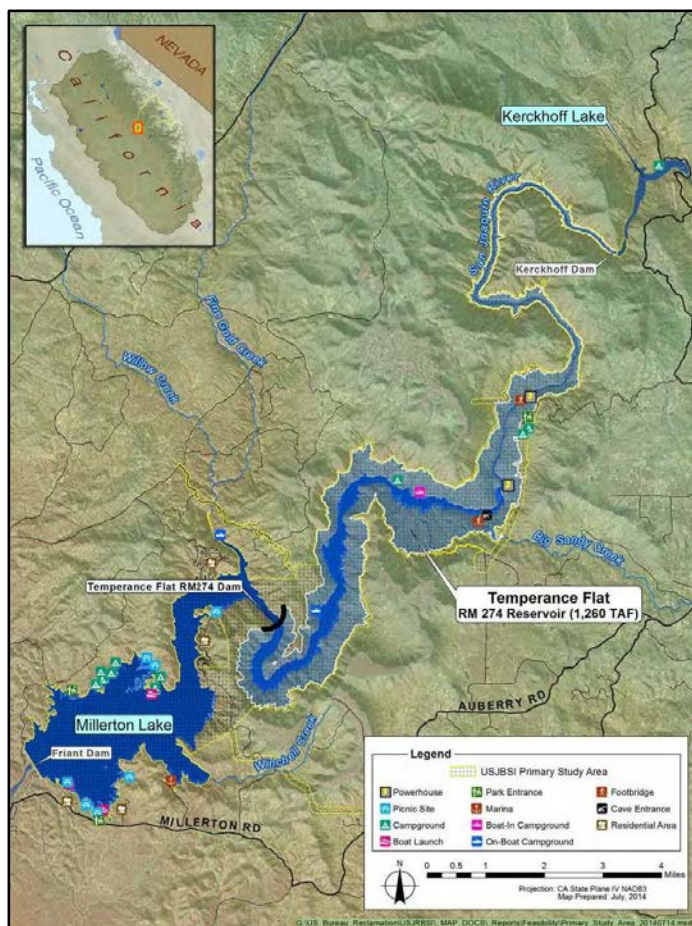
To many of us the building of Temperance Flat Dam is not a done deal. Proponents tell the media and public the dam will increase storage capacity in the state by over 1.2 million acre-feet (a net increase due to an overlap with the upper reaches of existing Millerton Lake), generating confusion that this amount will soon be available for use. The key figure to keep in mind is not reservoir capacity but average yield on the river. Based on known San Joaquin River hydrology, 70,000 acre-feet is the modeled average new yield of water per year. At that rate it would take decades to fill the reservoir even if the water were only stored and never used. Dam proponents have given the wrong numbers to the public, confusing storage with yield, so that people are expecting large quantities of water to be available with this new dam. Once these physical and financial realities set in during the oncoming debate, a discerning public may turn against construction of the Temperance Flat Dam.

Where's the Water to Fill Temperance Flat?

Most of the water brought down from the mountains by the San Joaquin is already being held in Millerton Lake. Temperance Flat Dam would be 665 in height, making it the second-highest dam in California (and fifth in the nation). If it ever could be filled, it would drown miles of wild river within a BLM Conservation Area that includes a long stretch of whitewater, beautiful flood erosional features, a rare granite cave of extraordinary aesthetic value, and a site deemed sacred to local tribes by the Native American Heritage Commission.

The proposed reservoir that would be formed behind the dam is large enough to hold the entire amount of water gathered in a year within the San Joaquin River basin. But it is unreasonable to think the reservoir could be filled anytime soon, if ever. The dam would do little to increase the annual yield from the river basin. Less than 100,000 acre-feet of water per year would be added in storage, and with looming mega-droughts on the horizon, that number may be reduced to zero in the coming decades.

It should be remembered that most of the water that enters the smaller Millerton Lake today does not stay stored there for long. It is quickly dispensed into canals and downstream for agricultural use across the San Joaquin Valley. With San Joaquin River water rights today over-



THE PROPOSED TEMPERANCE FLAT DAM WOULD BE 665 FEET IN HEIGHT, ITS FOOT RESTING BENEATH THE SURFACE OF MILLERTON LAKE. THE RESERVOIR'S UPPER REACHES WOULD DROWN THE SAN JOAQUIN RIVER GORGE, WHERE A STRETCH OF WILD RIVER RUNS THROUGH A BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT PARK. LOSSES INCLUDE A RARE AND BEAUTIFUL RIVER-ERODED GRANITE CAVERN DESCRIBED IN AN ARTICLE ON PAGE 14 OF THIS ISSUE OF TEHIPITE TOPICS.

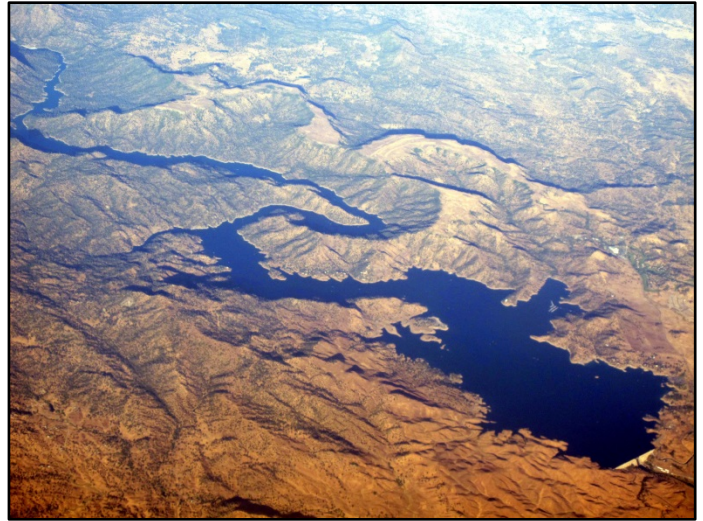
PAGE ES-3 FROM THE JANUARY 2014 DRAFT FEASIBILITY REPORT:
UPPER SAN JOAQUIN RIVER BASIN STORAGE INVESTIGATION
www.usbr.gov/mp/sccao/storage/docs/Draft_Feasibility_Report_2014/USJRBSI_Draft_FR_2014_Full_Report.pdf

allocated by eight times the river's average annual yield, one wonders whether the Bureau of Reclamation has the right to capture any water at all behind the Temperance Flat Dam.

Bad News for Millerton as a Recreational Park

Some say that the Temperance Flat reservoir will become the main storage facility to the detriment of Millerton, requiring recreational boaters, swimmers, and fishermen to transfer their activities to more remote parking areas farther away from the city, increasing travel time and adding more gasoline-burning pollution to our valley air. While it seems counterproductive not to keep Millerton Lake full during flush summers, while the upper reservoir is allowed to rise and fall, perhaps the reverse

is necessary in order for proposed electrical generating tunnels to function effectively. With two reservoirs at different elevations so close together, they could function like Wishon and Courtright Reservoirs as an enormous rechargeable hydroelectric battery, generating electricity during peak times when it is more valuable, then buying it back more cheaply off the grid in the off hours to pump water back uphill to the upper lake. Finally, the construction of Temperance Flat Dam would do nothing to mitigate the collapse of groundwater aquifers in the southern Central Valley. Better than capturing flood waters in a wild and scenic gorge would be to channel the water into shallow filtration basins to allow for groundwater recharge. Building another large storage facility in the mountains would increase water loss by evaporation.



– MILLERTON LAKE IN BETTER DAYS –
THE TEMPERANCE FLAT DAM WOULD BE BUILT IN THE
RESERVOIR AROUND THE FIRST BEND OF THE LAKE.

PHOTO BY UNCLE KICK-KICK, JUNE 10, 2012
www.flickr.com/photos/28016468@N06/7186605449/

To see beautiful pictures of wild San Joaquin River Gorge vegetation and erosional features, check out the website for xRez Studio. The web page photo gallery of the threatened river and gorge, which includes a gigapixel panorama of the BLM Management Area, is at www.xrez.com/case-studies/national-parks/san-joaquin-river-gorge/.

Historic New Laws Finally Establish Groundwater Regulation in California

by Robert Turner

Groundwater Management Will Be Local, Not Statewide

“We have to learn to manage wisely water, energy, land, and our investments,” stated Governor Brown as he signed three bills last September that create the framework for sustainable, local groundwater management for the first time in California history. The legislation, comprising AB 1739, SB 1168, and SB 1319, requires the establishment of local agencies to create sustainable groundwater plans tailored to their regional economic and environmental needs.

With the new groundwater regulations, governing authority will be local and regional rather than statewide. Groundwater basins will be defined as those described in the latest (2003) incarnation of the Bulletin 118 series from the California Department of Water Resources (DWR), a report to the Legislature that has been updated several times since the original assessment of groundwater basins authored in 1952. Fresno lies at the boundary between two of California’s ten hydrological regions, the San Joaquin River region north of the river and the Tulare Lake region to the south.

The “San Joaquin River Basin” is subdivided (from north to south) into Cosumnes, Eastern San Joaquin, Modesto,

Turlock, Merced, Chowchilla, and Madera sub-basins on the east side and Tracy and Delta-Mendota sub-basins on the west side. South of the San Joaquin River, in the Tulare Lake Hydrologic Region, the “San Joaquin Valley Basin” is divided into seven significant valley floor sub-basins: Kings, Kaweah, Tule, and Kern County on the east side, and Westside, Pleasant Valley, and Tulare Lake on the west side.

Overdrafted Basins Must Develop a Plan by 2020

The geographical delineation of each basin or sub-basin will be the legal boundary for that basin’s groundwater authority, known as a groundwater sustainability agency. These agencies will be created and composed according to representation by all government water authorities who share area designation within a basin’s geographical extent as defined by the latest Report 118 (including future amendments subsequent to the current 2003 update). A groundwater sustainability agency has two years to constitute itself and, if the basin is seriously overdrafted, five years in which to write a plan for sustainable use and allotment of groundwater within the basin. Every San Joaquin Valley basin from Chowchilla south to Kern County is on the critical overdraft list. Other high and medium

priority basins have until 2022 to begin management of groundwater resources. By 2040, all of these critical basins must achieve sustainability.

In developing a plan, the agency must consider the interests of all beneficial uses and users, including agricultural users, public water systems (large and small), municipal well operators, domestic well owners, local land use planning agencies, environmental users, disadvantaged communities, Native American tribes, and managers of military and other federal lands. Non-governmental groups can have a seat at the table as interested parties, but they will have no vote in the development of rules and allocations. However, a regular attendance by groups like the San Joaquin River Trust, Friends of the River, the Sierra Club, and the Audubon Society, may guarantee that their representatives have seats on committees that report to the main boards, and so it behooves each interested party to get and stay involved in these new agencies that are about to be formed.

GSA's Will Have Considerable Management Powers

The new groundwater sustainability agencies will be vested with considerable powers. They are authorized by law to adopt rules, regulations, ordinances, and resolutions, to conduct investigations of water rights, to require well operators to register wells and to measure



and report extractions, to regulate extractions (including limiting or prohibiting groundwater production), to impose fees and assessments, to impose well spacing requirements, to undertake enforcement actions for noncompliance, and to acquire property and water rights. Counties will maintain their well

permitting authority, although the GSA's can request that the counties provide well construction applications for their consideration and comment.

The new groundwater laws do not require metering or regulating anyone drawing out less than 2½ acre-feet per year, which covers most homeowners currently getting their household or landscaping water from wells. Also exempt are several areas of Southern California that are being adjudicated and have a water master appointed by the court. Basins that are fairly flush with water will be completely free of oversight.

However, over the long term, it may be prudent to have

all the districts develop plans, so that hard data on groundwater usage can be collected everywhere for accurate statewide planning, as well as to prevent these non-priority basins degrading and getting added to the critical list. The DWR needs local input from every part of the state. The National Forest Service can be of assistance in assessing the overall state of water in California, since they are required to do a water budget for the areas under their jurisdiction.

The aim of the new management process is to attain sustainability, which means no chronic lowering of groundwater levels or unreasonable reduction of storage, no significant seawater intrusion, no continued degradation of water quality, including migration of contaminant plumes that impair water supplies, no significant land subsidence interfering with surface activity, and no surface water depletions that have adverse impacts on their beneficial use. To this end, local land use



planning agencies must refer any proposed adoption of, or amendment to, a general plan to the local GSA for review. The GSA will then provide local planning agencies with the anticipated effects on the groundwater resources.

All Users Will Likely Be Losers

The new laws will have no direct effect on a landowner's surface water rights, and with regard to allocation of groundwater resources, there will be priority for senior water rights holders, who will not be required to incur a significant expense for the benefit of lower-priority rights holders. No water users will get to increase their current use levels. Instead there will be losers, worse losers, and really big losers, as there just isn't enough subsurface water to go around while still allowing for groundwater aquifer replenishment. Many users will have to accept drastic reductions in their current levels of use.

THE ABOVE MAPS OF THE SAN JOAQUIN RIVER HYDROLOGIC REGION AND THE TULARE LAKE HYDROLOGIC REGION ARE FROM THE CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF WATER RESOURCES BULLETIN 118, AND CAN BE VIEWED IN HIGH RESOLUTION ONLINE AT:

www.water.ca.gov/groundwater/bulletin118/sanjoaquinriver.cfm
and www.water.ca.gov/groundwater/bulletin118/tularelake.cfm.

University of the Pacific economist Jeffrey Michael has described the Temperance Flat Dam proposal, from a financial perspective, as the worst public works project in the history of California. This dam would be a giveaway of public funds to powerful water interests. Nobody is willing to pay for this dam and everyone who is supporting it hopes that the federal government, or someone else, will foot the bill. Were it to be built, the dam would be bone dry the vast majority of years. Groundwater storage is much cheaper and does not produce evaporative losses. With the dramatic, decades-long decline in our San Joaquin Valley aquifers, the number one task of legislators must be to recharge our San Joaquin Valley groundwater basins, not dream up expensive schemes for new dams that will not hold water — and I mean that quite literally. The Sierra Club opposes the Temperance Flat Dam proposal, which would add just one percent to California's water storage capacity at a cost of over two billion dollars.

— Gary Lasky, Conservation and Legal Chair of the Sierra club Tehipite Chapter

Observations on the February 4, 2015 Bureau of Reclamation Informational Meeting for Public Input on the Proposed Temperance Flat Dam

There was a fairly large turnout, and I am wondering how other people learned of the meeting in advance. Because of the size of the crowd, I might have missed seeing some of you. But I was concerned that I did not spot any of our current Tehipite activists.

The U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (USBR) acknowledged that the reservoir site would be dry in most years. It is expected to capture water only during years of exceptionally heavy run-off, assuming that we ever see those again. So the size of the reservoir site is not what matters. What counts is how much additional water would be made available by the project, beyond what is presently generated by the presence of Millerton Lake. In other words, what would be the “yield” of the Temperance project? The numbers vary, but different estimates of the average annual yield run between 60,000 and 80,000 acre-feet. This is a ridiculously small amount of water, given the expense of the project. For comparison, Millerton Lake holds about half a million acre-feet. Between 1950 and 1989, Millerton's average annual diversion into its two irrigation canals was 1,500,000 acre-feet (McBain and Trush, 2002). Temperance Flat would add perhaps 70,000 acre feet to that, making a total of perhaps 1,570,000 acre feet of delivered water. This is a five per cent increase, for which the taxpayers are expected to pay billions of dollars.

An article in the *Fresno Bee* some months back indicated that Temperance Flat would be the least cost-effective way of storing water, compared to a list of other possible projects throughout the state. So I was quite intrigued to find the USBR people saying that Temperance Flat would be highly cost-effective, surpassed only by raising Shasta Dam. There seems to be a gross inconsistency in the information being put out.

It is my understanding that these claims of economic benefit are based on improved water quality for salmon (lower temperatures at critical times). But how one can assign a dollar value to the temperature of the water in the river escapes me. (Also, USBR people indicated that the necessary water intake structure might not be cost-effective — they are trying to determine this.)

There would be a profound loss of high-quality public trails which are close to the Fresno-Clovis population center.

Temperance Flat has become the Holy Grail of those who would lay waste to our lands, waters, and public coffers. Given the quasi-religious nature of their crusade, facts are irrelevant. We have our work cut out for us.

— George Whitmore

My take on this meeting was entirely different than others. I spoke to several of the attendees, and they were equally disappointed. The people who made the meeting had made comments on the EIS, so they were notified of the meeting, and others were following along with the USBR.

The announcement was not noticed as the “Temperance Flat Dam” but instead the “Upper San Joaquin River Basin Storage Investigation.” Very deceiving if you are trying to Google meetings of interest. The PowerPoint presentation ran just over 10 minutes and they only pointed out the generalities of the project. They apologized for the misunderstanding that comments would be taken at this meeting. At the end of the recycled PowerPoint they told us we may ask questions of a few people in the back who were there to answer our questions. When asked if they could tell me about the amount of water that would be reserved for Madera and Fresno they could only dance around the question. As we all know there will be zip for us due to all of the water contractors getting first rights on any available water, just like this year's water went from Millerton to Tracy. The people presenting this meeting seem to only be going thru the motions to get a pay check. (I did talk with *one* individual who was knowledgeable.)

This meeting was titled as an “Investigation Informational” meeting but they asked no questions of the audience, not even how many of us would be adversely affected.

Another interesting issue that was presented was the creation of a quarry at the dam site to provide materials for the project, but when I asked how many trucks would be involved, running up and down Highway 41, the room went silent.

I sat in the front row, center aisle seat just 3 people down from Madera's Supervisor Tom Wheeler.

— Bruce Gray, Sierra Club Tehipite Chapter Chair

The Voice of Millerton Cave

by Marcia Rasmussen

A ray of sunlight pierces the depths. Beneath the forest floor, it lights the way into a realm of polished granite halls. Etched into the ceilings are intricate scallops, amidst granite pendants and spires sculpted into weird, fantastic shapes. Here, the persistent force of rushing water has carved the granite bedrock, polished it smooth as glass. As if to show deliberate contrast, some of the granite is honed into slender fins, sharp as knife blades. A rushing stream flows through the cave, still performing the slow artistry that has created this cave over tens to hundreds of thousands of years. The clear water swirls through deep pools and round potholes, bubbling, gushing, overflowing in whitewater cascades, echoing its wild music through the halls of stone.

If the proposed Temperance Flat Dam is built, Millerton Cave will be inundated, the music silenced forever.

On a warm, sunny morning in February, a news reporter visits Millerton Cave, accompanied by several local cavers. It is a new experience for the reporter, so the cavers guide her feet to each foothold. Caution is in order for all visitors, as one slip on the water-polished granite could lead to serious injury. The reporter descends carefully into the subdued light of the first chamber. At last, she can relax and lift her eyes to explore the scene around her. A crystal waterfall pours into a deep, round pool at her feet. She looks up at the vaulted ceiling, where two small windows allow just enough sunlight to cast a dim glow into the chamber. Even so, it is not sunlight, but sheer wonder that lights her face.

“Wow! This is *amaazing!*”

I had slept fitfully the previous night, anxious to say exactly the right things to this reporter. Through the night, I coached myself on what to say, as I wrestled with my pillow, tossing and turning in my bed. *Don't forget to mention that this is an extremely rare type of cave, sculpted from granite bedrock by flowing water. There are only a few of these in the world, and Millerton is one of the finest examples.*

We rise while the stars still shine brightly in the sky, pack our gear, and are on our way to San Joaquin River Gorge just as the eastern sky becomes tinged with pink. It is not a long hike to the cave and my pack is not heavy, but I arrive tired and emotionally drained. *Don't forget to tell her what an absolute gem this cave is! A world class masterpiece!*

Amidst my effort to say a multitude of important things, I probably tell the reporter nothing of any importance at all. I do, however, help guide her feet onto those all-important footholds, guarding each step to make certain that her foot does not slip. In the end, when her face lights up and she exclaims how amazing the cave is, I breathe a sigh of joyful

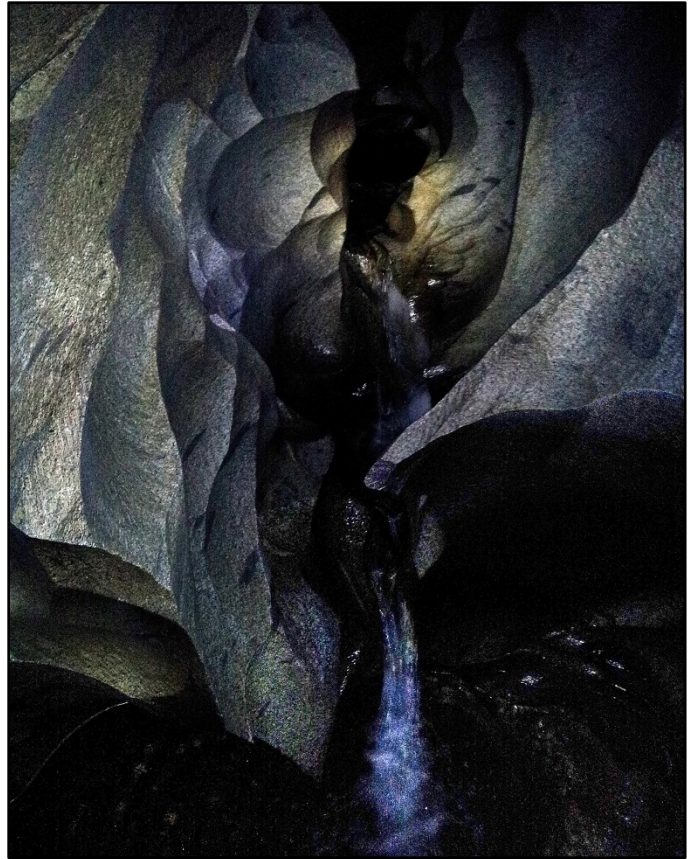


PHOTO BY RASMUSSEN

relief. I know the cave itself has told her everything she needs to know.

As we leave the Millerton Cave, the words of John Muir come to mind. “If people could be got into the woods, even for once, to hear the trees speak for themselves, all difficulties in the way of forest preservation would vanish.”

This is, no doubt, true of caves and river gorges as well.

For more than a century, the Sierra Club has used Outings as a means of communication. The Club has long understood that if people see, touch, feel, *experience* a resource, they are more inclined to take action to protect it. Our activism is nothing more than dry rhetoric if we do not encourage people to have an intimate, firsthand relationship with the wild places.

Of course, it would be naïve to think that we can thwart the proposed Temperance Flat dam simply by taking politicians and farmers out to San Joaquin River Gorge and Millerton Cave by the busload. Nevertheless, if we rely only on our words, the battle is all but lost. The wild places speak so eloquently — and quite loudly — to anyone who is in earshot. Shall we visit the San Joaquin River Gorge, then, and take a friend or two along? If a mere picture is worth a thousand words, a trip into these wild places must then be worth billions.



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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. Send contributions for the April–June 2015 issue by e-mail to robertsturner52@gmail.com before May 1st.

Tehipite Chapter Annual Banquet

“Mountains of the Blue Sheep”
 a live multi-media documentary by
 Andy Selters, climber, photographer, &
 author of *Ways to the Sky: A Historical
 Guide to North American Mountaineering
 and Glacier Travel & Crevasse Rescue*



PHOTO BY CECILE SKOG, 2004

Thursday, March 26, 6–9 P.M.

at the First Congregational Church of Fresno (the Big Red Church)

2131 N. Van Ness Blvd. (corner of Yale), just north of Fresno High School

This is a free potluck banquet: A–H Main Dish, I–P Dessert, Q–Z Salad or Side Dish

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