

# Sierra Borealis

Alaska Chapter Newsletter

January 2006

## Top Environmental Stories of 2005

### 1. Katrina

The discussion about Hurricane Katrina and global warming largely missed the point. Of course global warming didn't cause Katrina – any given weather event is the nexus of thousands of causes,



proximate and distal. The point about Katrina that will linger in the public's mind is: Oh, that's what climate can do.

And, relatedly: We are totally and completely unprepared.

### 2. Bush wins on climate change

Despite taking fire from an astonishing array of sources – Tony Blair, Democrats, mayors, state attorneys general, celebrities, scientists, a majority of the public, and even Republicans in Congress -- the Bush administration succeeded in delaying significant efforts to address climate change for another year. At home, at the G8 summit, at the U.N. climate talks, it simply dug in its heels. No one figured out how to move it.

### 3. Fuel prices & hybrids

A variety of factors and trends collided to produce spiking gas prices. That turned the nation's attention – finally – to the fuel efficiency of its automobiles. SUV sales fell and hybrids continued their

remarkable success story. American automakers lagged behind, looked like fools, and hastened to jump on the bandwagon. Research on lighter hybrids, plug-in hybrids, "trybrids" that can also accept ethanol, and of course hydrogen cars proceeded at a breakneck pace. It became something close to conventional wisdom that all cars will eventually be hybrids.

### 4. Act locally

Federal intransigence aside, 2005 saw a flurry of state & local initiatives on climate change.

Seven northeastern states signed a Green-house Gas Initiative, an agreement to reduce emissions from power plants.

The California Public Utilities Commission resolved to boost funding for solar energy to \$3.2 billion over the next 11 years, creating the world's 2nd largest solar program. Schwarzenegger and Pataki, leading the two most influential states, threw their weight behind a range of eco-friendly legislation. Seattle mayor Greg Nickels corralled roughly 300 fellow U.S. mayors into pledging to meet or exceed Kyoto targets. (Our 3 largest cities were contacted by Nickels. Inexplicably, Anchorage and Fairbanks declined. Juneau didn't respond.)

Chicago, Portland, Salt Lake, and dozens of other cities announced green initiatives this year. Most folks are not aware of this stuff as a local issue, if at all. But in 2005, the media started connecting the dots.



Sen. Stevens has spent the last 25 years attempting to circumvent the clearly and repeatedly expressed preferences of a majority of U.S. citizens by allowing drilling in the Arctic Refuge. The latest attempt involved attaching drilling to the defense appropriations bill, in effect holding military funding hostage in the middle of an armed conflict.

We have perhaps become numbed by the sheer repetition and persistence of these efforts, but it's worth pausing, stepping back, and noting just how utterly venal and anti-democratic they are. The country would not benefit from Refuge oil. It would be sold on the world market just like any other oil. Oil companies would benefit. For that, Stevens is willing to make a mockery of legislative procedure.

Ted's latest defeat produced a self-pitying, thumb-sucking tantrum on the floor of the Senate. He said it was the "saddest day of his life." Pathetic.

### 5. Arctic Refuge still undrilled

They tried and failed to get it in the energy bill. They tried and failed to get it into the budget reconciliation bill. They tried and failed to get it into the defense appropriations bill. They'll keep trying.

By now, the fight over the Refuge has become far larger than the patch of land in question. Do we care at all about unspoiled land? Will we respond to energy pressure by drilling, refining, and going to war? The symbolic stakes have become incredibly high – all the more reason it's important to keep winning.

## DIRECTORY

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*Vice-Chair, Council Representative*

Will Taygan  
*Knik Group Chair*

Larry Paquin  
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Mark Rorick  
*Juneau Group Chair*

Richard Hellard  
*Conservation Committee Chair*

Stacey Cooper

Mary Grisco

Sara Callaghan Chapell

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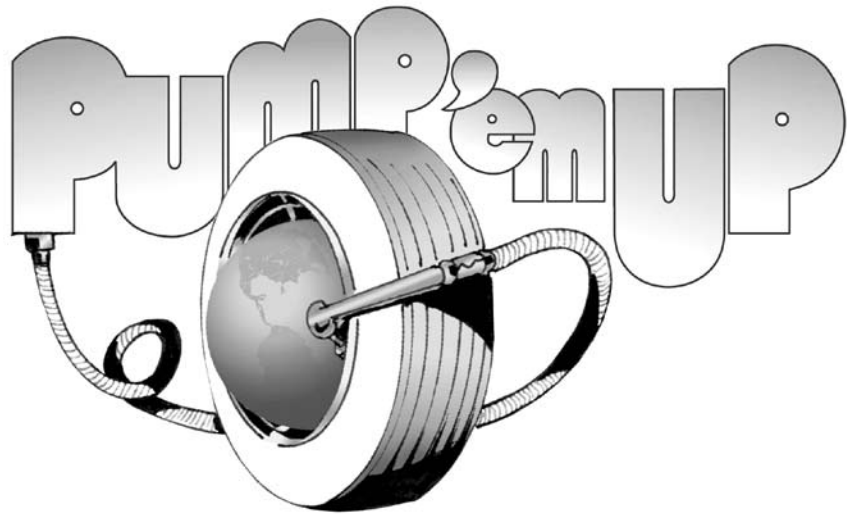
Katherine Fuselier  
*Conservation Organizer*

## Did you know?

According to the Department of Transportation, more than a 1/4 of all cars and nearly 1/3 of all SUVs, vans and pickups are driven with tires at least 8 pounds below their proper levels. The Energy Department has estimated that this wastes approximately 4 million gallons of gas every day in the U.S.

### With properly inflated tires Americans could...

- Improve gas mileage by around 3.3%.
- Extend the life of their tires by 25%.
- Cut down on air pollutants because we'd be burning less gas.
- Improve safety - since under-inflated tires are more prone to tread separation & blowouts, which can cause fatal accidents.
  - Cut the nation's gasoline use by 2%



Stop by the office and get a free tire gauge.

We'll also be on the streets giving them away on Earth Day  
Saturday, April 22



# Tongass Plan Fatally Flawed

In September, a federal court ruled that the U.S. Forest Service misled the public during the development of its logging plan in the Tongass National Forest. The decision is an outcome of two lawsuits filed by Earthjustice on behalf of the Sierra Club.

The suits challenged the 1997 Forest Plan and seven timber sales in roadless areas. Both challenges centered on the impact of a Forest Service error that doubled its projections of market demand for Tongass timber. The Forest Service admitted to the mistake but once discovered, they failed to do anything about it.

*“The Forest Service’s error in assessing market demand fatally infected its balance of economic and environmental considerations, rendering the plan for the Tongass arbitrary and capricious,” wrote Judge Ronald Gould.*

Judge Gould said that the “Forest Service’s error requires it to make a new revised forest plan for the Tongass.”

The court-ordered development of a new plan is an opportunity for the Forest Service to stop the logging and the waste.

## What’s at Stake

The Tongass is the largest intact temperate rainforest in the world. Its stands of giant Sitka Spruce and other old growth trees are home to wolves, bears, salmon and Bald Eagles that have disappeared from many other parts of the country.

Of the Forest Service’s timber programs, the Tongass is one of the most egregiously mismanaged. Since 1982, cumulative losses have reached nearly \$1 billion. U.S. taxpayers are bearing these costs.

There are over 5000 miles of logging roads already in the Tongass with a \$100 million road maintenance backlog. Two-thirds of the 17-million acre Tongass consists of mountain, glacier, bog and scrub timber. Only 4% is actually capable of growing commercially important forest - stands of trees big enough to produce at least 30,000 board feet per acre. To date, the timber industry has taken 70% of these.

These priceless public lands are under the stewardship of our federal government and belong to every American citizen. Yet despite overwhelming public support for protecting our forests from destructive

industries, the Bush administration is systematically giving away our public lands. For over 100 years, our forests have been destructively mismanaged, primarily for timber. Today, the situation is more dire than ever. With less than 5% of old growth forests remaining in the lower 48 states, we cannot afford to destroy what’s left.

Standing forests provide far greater economic benefits than do logged ones. They offer scenic beauty, recreational activities, climate stability, and vital wildlife habitat. Healthy ecosystem qualities such as clean air and water, fish, wildlife and recreation generate far more jobs and economic benefits for communities than timber dollars ever could. The government loses taxpayer’s money on every tree it sells. Deforestation is one of the tragedies of our time. It is also one of the most preventable. Only 2% of timber in the U.S. comes from our national forests. That’s timber we can readily do without, simply by reducing our use of wood and paper products and using recycled materials.



## Let the Forest Service know it’s time for a change!

Let’s move away from the wasteful spending on a flawed logging program and toward a new plan which ends commercial logging and promotes restoration.

If you are an Alaskan, write to:  
Forrest Cole, Forest Supervisor  
P.O. Box 21628  
Juneau AK 99802

If you live outside of Alaska:  
Dale Bosworth  
Chief, US Forest Service  
1400 Independence Ave SW  
Washington DC 20250

## Talking Points

- the economy of Southeast Alaska is more robust and much more diverse than it was two decades ago;
- Southeast Alaska is a destination tourism place of global significance that continues to draw millions of individuals and billions of dollars from around the world each year;
- the lifeblood of the economy is the scenic beauty, clean water, abundant fish and wildlife and overall quality of life provided by the wild places of the Tongass;
- the timber program is costly in federal dollars, personal conflict and damage to Southeast Alaska’s outstanding resources;
- there is no vital economic need for Tongass timber program to sustain or develop the job base or economic strength in Southeast;
- the millions spent on the timber program could be better used to generate recreation opportunities, restore damaged waters, decommission roads and provide non-commercial forest products.



# Kensington Mine: A Really Bad Precedent

**Alaska's clean water is one of our state's most important economic resources.**

Our top two private employers—commercial fishing and tourism—depend on clean water and provide income and sustenance to thousands of Alaskans.

Now, for the first time since Congress passed the Clean Water Act in 1972, the Army Corps of Engineers has authorized a mining corporation to dump millions of tons of toxic mining waste directly into a freshwater lake.

As part of its Kensington Mine project, Coeur d'Alene Mines Corporation got a permit to use Lower Slate Lake near Juneau as a disposal site for its tailings. The plan will kill all fish in the lake during the operation of the mine.

This sets a dangerous precedent for Alaska.

If the Corps allows chemically treated industrial waste to be dumped in a lake in the heart of the Tongass, the same thing can happen in almost any lake, river, or stream. Anywhere.

Coeur Alaska, a subsidiary of Idaho-based Coeur d'Alene Mines Corporation (the world's largest silver mining company and a growing gold producer) received a permit to dump 210,000 gallons of tailings per day from the Kensington Mine directly into Lower Slate Lake, part of the Berners Bay ecosystem. Over time, approximately 4.5 million tons of industrial waste will be dumped in the lake.

Lower Slate Lake is located at the base of Lions Head Mountain in the Tongass National Forest. It is surrounded by forest and wetlands and supports fish populations including Dolly Varden.

The lake drains into Berners Bay, one of the most ecologically rich areas of Southeast Alaska. The bay supports local commercial and sport coho and sockeye salmon fisheries. It also provides commercial catches of shrimp and king, tanner, and Dungeness crab. The Berners Bay watershed is home to abundant wildlife including herring, eagles, Steller sea lions, seals, humpback whales, bears, moose, and wolves. The bay provides opportunities for gathering, kayaking, camping, subsistence, and commercial tourism. The bay is also culturally significant to the Auk Kwaan, the original settlers of the area. Several ancient village sites remain.

This region is not the only special place in Alaska facing destruction from mining waste. There is another proposal to develop the Pebble gold mine just north of Lake Iliamna near Bristol Bay. The Lake Iliamna region holds the world's largest runs of sockeye and Chinook salmon. The proposal has raised serious concerns, drawing widespread opposition from Alaskans.

Earlier plans for the Kensington Mine relied on another method for disposing of its toxic waste. Coeur, however, changed these plans to cut costs and increase profits. The Corps did not follow the law when it authorized Coeur's new plan to dump millions of tons of mining waste into a lake. The Sierra Club subsequently challenged it.

Just as our attorneys at Earthjustice were about to file their opening brief, the Corps decided to re-evaluate the permit.

This gives the Army Corps the chance to do the right thing. This permit should be revoked.

Doing so would not only protect the public's interest in maintaining the ecological, cultural, subsistence, and recreational values of Southeast Alaska, but would also prevent other polluting mining operations in other parts of the state. Mining corporations need to act responsibly. Clean water must come first.

Mineral development usually causes significant environmental degradation, an economic cost as real as that associated with the depletion of any other resource. Coeur is not immune to this. Their record in Idaho and New Zealand reveals this.

Gold is not an important resource. It is not a strategic metal necessary for national security. Neither is it a commodity in short supply. Most gold is not used for essential services. 80% is used to make jewelry. Body ornaments. Totally unnecessary objects.

The production of a single 18 karat gold ring weighing less than an ounce generates at least 20 tons of mine waste. The real cost of the gold has to include the costs of what we lose. The worth of wetlands and water quality. The value of culture, floodplains, recreation, fish & wildlife. The price of pristine.



Lower Slate Lake



## Sample Letter

Colonel Gallagher:

Dumping mine tailings into lakes and rivers is a bad idea. That's why Congress passed the Clean Water Act more than 30 years ago—to ensure our waters would be safe and clean. I am therefore urging you to revoke the permit that the Army Corps of Engineers gave to Coeur d'Alene Mines to dump their mining waste into Lower Slate Lake.

Never before has the Corps permitted a mining company to dispose of its tailings directly in a lake or river protected by the Clean Water Act. It should not start now,

The Corps should revoke this destructive, illegal, and unprecedented permit.

Mail to:

District Engineer  
US Army Corps of Engineers  
Box 6898  
Elmendorf AFB, AK 99506

# Waste Not Want Not: Bridges to Nowhere & the Road to Ruin

For every dangerous stretch of road, congested intersection, or decaying ferry dock the State has the money to fix, DOT estimates there are 49 other projects that we cannot afford to repair. With increased flexibility on how we can spend the influx of federal transportation dollars and a predicted one billion dollar surplus, we can now afford to make long awaited repairs.

Unfortunately, Governor Murkowski proposed to put the maximum amount of federal money possible into the Knik Arm Bridge (\$94 million) and Gravina Bridge (\$91 million) in the next fiscal year. He has also proposed spending \$45 million from the State's General Fund on the Juneau Road. As a result, long-awaited transportation projects in nearly every community could be delayed or cut. An analysis of the state's last transportation plan found that nearly two-thirds of the previously proposed transportation projects could be cut or delayed to make room for the three mega projects.

One third of Alaska's roads are in poor or mediocre condition and 30% of the bridges are deficient or functionally obsolete according to a 2005 Report Card on America's Infrastructure from the American Society of Civil Engineers.

## Juneau Road

The proposed 50-mile dead-end extension will not actually connect with the continental road system. Instead, travelers will have a longer and more dangerous drive along an avalanche-prone road to a new ferry terminal 90 miles from downtown Juneau.

DOT's current road-shuttle ferry proposal will actually cost the state 45% more than the existing ferry system to maintain and operate over the long run, according to the Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement. Residents of all three of the affected communities: Juneau, Haines and Skagway, are currently on record as opposing the road and instead support improvements to the Alaska Marine Highway System, a designated National Scenic Byway.

## The Gravina Bridge

Construction of the Gravina Bridge would link the city of Ketchikan (pop 13,000) on Revilla Island and the city's airport on Gravina Island. The bridge would be nearly as long as the Golden Gate Bridge and higher than the Brooklyn Bridge. All to replace a 7-minute ferry ride to the airport. In the past year cost estimates for the project have risen roughly 40% to \$328 million and Alaskans are expecting US taxpayers to foot the bill.

## Knik Arm Bridge

Construction of the Knik Arm Bridge would connect the city of Anchorage to hundreds of square miles of unpopulated wetlands. The project would also impact feeding grounds for the rare Cook Inlet Beluga Whale. 2003 cost estimates for the over 2-mile-long crossing are upwards of \$1.5 billion



The legislature will debate the transportation priorities. The Finance Committee will draft a budget which may, or may not, include money for the Bridges and Roads to Nowhere. Please contact them and make it clear that Alaskans want to improve the roads and ferries we have. That spending money on the Juneau Access road and the bridges to Knik Arm and Gravina Island are an obscene waste of taxpayer dollars. They are completely unnecessary.

Alaska should focus on making our existing roads safer, smoother, and less congested.

Investing in our existing roads and ferries will give us the best return for our investment and is the most responsible use of money.

Legislative e-mail addresses:

Senator\_firstname\_lastname@legis.state.ak.us

Representative \_\_\_\_\_

Representative\_firstname\_lastname@legis.state.ak.us

# CANDIDATE STATEMENTS

## **Pamela Brodie, Homer**

For 25 years, I have worked to protect the environment as staff and as a volunteer with the Sierra Club, seventeen of those years here in Alaska. I coordinated the successful grassroots effort to persuade the *Exxon Valdez* Oil Spill Trustee Council to use Exxon's fines to purchase more than 600,000 acres of privately-owned coastal wildlife habitat and protect it as new state and federal park, refuge and forest lands. I also organized the Sierra Club's actions, in coordination with other conservation organizations, to improve management of the Tongass National Forest, leading up to the major reforms of the Tongass Land Management Plan revision of 1997. More recently, I have served on the Alaska Chapter's Conservation and Executive Committees.

## **Sara Callaghan Chapell**

I feel very honored to be a part of Sierra Club's volunteer network. I've been a member of Sierra Club since 1990, and worked as part of the staff of the Alaska office from 1998 until April 2005. As the chief organizer for Alaska's Arctic Refuge campaign, and later as the Staff Director in Anchorage, I had the opportunity to meet amazing volunteers throughout the state and help shape many successful campaigns. I "retired" last year in order to focus on raising our two young children, but couldn't leave Sierra Club behind. I would like to continue to put my skills to work for the Alaska Chapter. I will help keep the Alaska Chapter focused on priority conservation work like protecting the Arctic Refuge and Alaska's Rainforests and I will lend my expertise in developing grassroots campaigns that reach out to new allies and build our volunteer base. I would also like to encourage you to cast your vote for some of the proven leaders in Sierra Club. I have personally worked with these people, and consider them to be excellent representatives for the conservation movement. Please consider voting for: Pam Brodie, Richard Hellard, Jack Hession, Suzanne Moore, Stacey Cooper and Paul Forman.

## **Stacey Cooper**

I have been a member of the Sierra Club since 1997 and have served on the ExCom since 2003. Since I moved to Alaska in 2001, I have volunteered for the Sierra Club in a number of ways including leading outings, working at various tables, writing letters, and serving on the ExCom. The Alaskan environment is amazing and unique and must be protected from constant political threats. I have a particular interest in cleaning up contaminated sites and protecting unique wilderness areas from mining and drilling. It is important to make environmental preservation a priority in the minds of Alaskans and I hope to continue to help this cause by serving on the ExCom.

## **Paul Forman**

It is more critical than ever that we work tirelessly to stop the irreparable damage to our environment. As an ExCom member and Chapter Chair, I believe that I have contributed to the effectiveness of our organization, and if re-elected, I will continue to give my time and energies to these efforts.

## **Mary Grisco**

Joined April, 1970. Past: national service trip, local outings leader; local Urban, Military Lands Committees. Currently: Organizational Effectiveness Governance, Environmental Justice Committees

As former Delegate, Council of Club Leaders, helped get the Board to pass policies that bring more funds to chapters, streamlined process for volunteer resources for conservation work, guaranteed we would not be left out of volunteer training opportunities because of geography, opened up decision making about policies. Your ExCom is the glue that makes your volunteering count: we cross the "t's" and dot the "i's" for accountability, resource allocation, planning and connections.

As your ExCom member, I will promote teamwork, inclusive decision making, ensure all members know about ExCom meetings, see agendas prior so you can participate, hold our chapter staff accountable for meeting our work plan, provide connections to national Club decisions, opportunities, be respectful of your time and talents.

## **Richard Hellard**

Despite the immense challenges that we face, the Sierra Club is uniquely positioned to provide a different vision for our future. With our tradition of standing our ground and utilizing the courts, combined with our national activist network, we can educate the public to realize a sustainable future for Earth's inhabitants.

The Chapter Executive Committee is a crucial part of this effort, and I ask for your vote so that I may continue my work on your behalf. Since joining the Club in 1983, my experience includes—Juneau Group Vice-Chair, Sierra Club Council Delegate, Chapter Chair, Regional Vice-President, and my current position Conservation Chair.

As Shirley Taylor once said, "I am a shut it down, lock it up, sue the bastards," sort of activist. This rings true to me. With your support, I will continue my efforts.

## **Jack Hession**

Former Sierra Club staff representative for Alaska (1971-2004) focusing on protecting the parks, rivers, wilderness, and wildlife refuges established by ANILCA (1980); currently serving on Chapter Conservation Committee. As an Executive Committee member, I would continue to assist the Chapter and field staff in defending the National Interest Lands and reforming current management.

## **Suzanne Moore**

For a long time I have had hope for new blood to join the ExCom. Some members have been in chapter leadership for 20 years! A vote for me will be a vote for an enthusiastic volunteer. My priority issues are overpopulation, volunteer support and social events.

# CHAPTER EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE ELECTION

The Chapter Executive Committee (ExCom) manages the affairs and activities of the Alaska Chapter. Six members, along with one representative from each local group, make up the ExCom. They serve two year terms. Candidate statements for members seeking to serve on the ExCom are on page 6. Your ballot(s) is below.

Sierra Club members are 750,000 of your friends and neighbors. Inspired by nature, we work together to protect our communities and the planet.  
The Sierra Club is America's oldest, largest and most influential grassroots environmental organization.



## BALLOT

Vote for not more than six (6) candidates

The second column of boxes is for the second member of a joint membership only.

Write your Sierra Club membership number on the return address section of your envelope. If you do not know your number, please write your complete name and address.

Pam Brodie	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sara Chapell	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Stacey Cooper	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Paul Forman	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mary Grisco	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Richard Hellard	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Jack Hession	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Suzanne Moore	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Your ballot must be postmarked by March 10, 2006.**

**Mail to:**

Sierra Club  
attn: Chapter Elections  
333 W. 4th Ave., #307  
Anchorage, AK 99501



**Alaska Chapter**  
**333 W. Fourth #307**  
**Anchorage, AK 99501**

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photo/Kevin Walsh

It's time for America to get smart about energy and be less dependent on dwindling oil reserves. We need to increase our use of clean, renewable energy sources like wind and solar power.

**Add your voice to protect the planet.**  
**Join the Sierra Club today.**

**Join today and receive  
 a FREE Sierra Club  
 Weekender Bag!**



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 Address \_\_\_\_\_  
 City/State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_  
 Phone \_\_\_\_\_  
 email \_\_\_\_\_

Check enclosed, made payable to Sierra Club  
 Please charge my  MasterCard  Visa  AMEX Exp. Date \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_

Cardholder Name \_\_\_\_\_

Card Number \_\_\_\_\_

MEMBERSHIP CATEGORIES	INDIVIDUAL	JOINT
<b>INTRODUCTORY</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>\$25</b>	
REGULAR	<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 the 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 \$1.00 for your Chapter newsletter.

Enclose check and mail to: **Sierra Club,**  
**P.O. Box 52968, Boulder, CO 80322-2968**

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**Explore, enjoy and protect the planet**