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Sierra Club California to Present Sher Award to Sen. Evans and Asm. Atkins

SACRAMENTO--Sierra Club California will present the 2013 Byron Sher award, recognizing outstanding work advancing environmental quality, to State Senator Noreen Evans and Assemblymember Toni Atkins on Monday, August 19, at the State Capitol.

"It's a huge pleasure to recognize these two legislators who have consistently supported legislation that protects California's environment," said Kathryn Phillips, Director of Sierra Club California. "This year, especially, each has assertively advanced the environment and the public interest despite strong opposition from powerful special interests."

Evans (SD2-Santa Rosa) began this legislative year by championing the California Environmental Quality Act. At public debates, in the press and through legislation she challenged then-Senator Michael Rubio's misguided attempt to dramatically weaken the law on behalf of powerful development interests.

"Senator Evans' uncompromising support for CEQA, and her straightforward defense of the public's right to know elevated the debate at a critical time," said Phillips. "She demonstrated the power of principled leadership."

This year Atkins (AD78-San Diego) is leading the fight to give the California Coastal Commission the Coastal Act enforcement tools it needs through her Assembly Bill 976. For more than 40 years, the Coastal Commission, unlike every other major state regulator, has been denied the ability to impose fines on property owners who chronically violate the law. Violations range from blocking access to public beaches to dumping concrete waste on beaches.

"Assemblymember Atkins has combined diplomacy, smarts and a steely will to successfully move this important bill through the Assembly and to the Senate floor," said Phillips. "If she succeeds in getting it to the Governor's desk, and he signs, the Coastal Act will be enforced as voters intended when they passed it more than 40 years ago."

The Byron Sher Award is named in honor of the retired legislator whose legacy includes authoring or helping shepherd some of the country's most important and innovative environmental legislation through the California legislature. Sierra Club California presents two Byron Sher Awards during its annual Lobby Day. This year the awards will be presented beginning at noon in room 126 in the Capitol Building.

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Sierra Club California is the legislative and regulatory advocacy arm of the Sierra Club's 13 chapters and more than 380,000 members and supporters in California.