



The Sierra Club • Tehipite Chapter

Tehipite Topics

January-March 2013 – Vol. 59, No. 1

www.tehipite.sierraclub.org

Park Ranger Shelton Johnson Endeavors to Preserve the Memory of African American Involvement in the Early Protection of Yosemite National Park

Before the term “ranger” was coined as a term for those who would patrol our national parks and forests, African American soldiers in a segregated U.S. Army were assigned to guard and protect the natural and scenic resources of California’s first national parks — Yosemite and Sequoia & General Grant — and the lives of the tourists visiting them. It was a story little known beyond those well-versed in local Yosemite lore until Yosemite Park Ranger Shelton Johnson began to spread the word about the critical role of these soldiers in the development of our park system.



“The story of the soldiers had always been there in primary documents like military files, but it was missing from our nation’s collective history,” says Johnson. “It wasn’t in history books; there were no exhibits here in the parks. I made it my personal mission to bring the story out of the library and into the forefront.”

Over much of the last two decades Ranger Johnson has helped in the development of exhibits and brochures about these early park stewards, and today he keeps their memory alive by sharing their story with park visitors, as well as with schools and other groups, in the form of a living history program, which usually runs in Yosemite from May through October. He also spoke eloquently about their history on Ken Burns’ epic historical documentary, *The National Parks: America’s Best Idea*, which aired on the Public Broadcasting System in 2009.

Shelton Johnson will be the guest of honor at the Tehipite Chapter’s annual banquet this year, to be held on March 27, presenting his program, “Yosemite through the Eyes of a Buffalo Soldier, 1904” to assembled chapter members and their guests.

BUFFALO SOLDIERS

Although African Americans have fought in America’s wars since the Revolution, they weren’t allowed to enlist in the Regular Army until after the Civil War. By 1869, Congress had created four all-black regiments: the 9th and 10th Cavalry and the 24th and 25th Infantry. The members of these regiments would later become known as the Buffalo Soldiers. According to a book written in 1871 by the wife of a U.S. Army officer stationed on the American frontier, the black soldiers received this name from the Native Americans living on the Great Plains, who thought the dark, curly hair of the soldiers resembled a buffalo’s coat. As the buffalo were revered by tribal leaders, the soldiers accepted this title with pride and honor.

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Tehipite Chapter Annual Banquet — Wednesday, March 27, 6–9 P.M.
featuring Shelton Johnson, Yosemite National Park Ranger, presenting
“Yosemite through the Eyes of a Buffalo Soldier, 1904”

THIS WILL BE A FREE POTLUCK BANQUET, details on page 7

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Merced Group Meetings

SEE THE NEXT PAGE FOR MORE DETAILS ABOUT THE MERCED GROUP MEETINGS

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.

Merced Group General Meetings

Usually the third Thursday of each month (May and December excepted)
Starts at 7:00, usually over by 8:30 or so

Merced United Methodist Church, 899 Yosemite Parkway (that's Hwy 140 to Yosemite)

Other events are often going on, so park in the lot along Cypress Avenue and enter there to find us easily.

Tehipite Chapter Meetings

Conservation & Executive Committee Meetings

Second Wednesday of each month, except July and August ~ Open to the Public

February 13, March 13, April 10, May 8, June 12, September 11, October 9, November 13, December 11

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

7-9 P.M. — FREE AND OPEN TO THE GENERAL PUBLIC

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

January 16 General Meeting: Scot Kruze, The Globe Program — Education for All Ages in Our Natural Environment

February 20 General Meeting: Rosanna Ruiz — The Sierra Foothill Conservancy Program

March 27 Free Potluck Banquet: Shelton Johnson — Yosemite through the Eyes of a Buffalo Soldier, 1904

6-9 P.M. AT THE BIG RED CHURCH — OPEN TO THE GENERAL PUBLIC AND SEATING MAY BE LIMITED, SO MAKE A RESERVATION NOW.
Call, write, or email Karen Laws at (559) 473-9618, 55 E. Fountain Way, Fresno, CA 93704, <Karen3245Laws@gmail.com> [ATTN: Sierra Club]

April 17 General Meeting: Robert Merrill, Radley Reep, and Gordon Nipp — Fracking and CEQA in the Central Valley

May 15 General Meeting: Joanna Clines, Sierra National Forest Biologist — Native Plants & Invasive Weeds in the Sierra Nevada

June 19 Movie Night: An issue of your choice — Fracking, The Delta, Arctic National Wildlife Refuge?

Merced Group News

Merced Group January Meeting

Thursday, January 17, 7:00 P.M.

Tom Willey, local organic farmer and much more

“Everyone who Eats is a Farmer” A short romp through the history of our human race featuring the problematic invention of agriculture.

Tom Willey with his wife, Denesse has operated T&D Willey Farms since 1981, a seventy-five-acre certified organic farm in Madera, California growing a wide array of Mediterranean vegetables the year round. Willey Farms produce is appreciated in specialty markets and fine restaurants up and down the west coast as well as on the tables of over 800 weekly Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) subscription members in their own community.

Tom was, until recently, Slow Food USA's governor for California's Central Valley and passionately advocates for local food prominence through his writing, speaking, radio, and event organizing activities. His monthly “Down on the Farm” radio interview program features the work of progressive farmers and others prominent in San Joaquin Valley's agriculture and food communities.



Monthly meetings of the Merced Group are on the third Thursday of each month at 7:00 P.M. The public is cordially invited. We meet at Merced United Methodist Church. It is located at 899 Yosemite Parkway (also known as Hwy. 140 to Yosemite). Park in the lot off of Cypress Ave. and use the entrance there.

NOTE: Sometimes it is hard to confirm speakers and programs months in advance. If I (Rod Webster, publicity) have your email I can contact you when things are set. This is also helpful should there be any last minute changes. Occasionally (maybe once or twice a month at the most) I might also send you info on a pertinent community or Valley enviro event. If you would like to be added to our email list, send it to me at <rwelster@elite.net>.

2013 Sierra Club Outing: Island Hopping in Channel Islands National Park

April 7-9, May 5-7, June 2-4, July 21-23, August 25-27, September 15-17

— same price, same islands as last year —

We have added June and April. We are especially excited about April. It means more wildflowers and more elephant seals on the beach. Join us on one of these 2013 trips.

Join us for a three-day, three-island, live-onboard cruise to Channel Islands National Park. 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. 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 aboard the 68-foot twin diesel *Truth*.

The \$590 cost 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 present evening programs. To make a reservation send a \$100 check, written to the 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>.

Merced Group Honors Two Dedicated “Community Voices”

The Merced Group held its annual awards banquet on the first Saturday in December. The 60 or so in attendance filled the tables and made the room echo with the holiday spirit. The combined culinary skills of the potluck dinner made for some varied and interesting dining. Vegetarian and vegan sections augmented the customary omnivorous fare. Tony Rowell, the evening's presenter, traveled all the way from Bishop (the long way around this time of year!) Tony shared images and stories from three generations including his father Galen Rowell, famed mountaineer, adventurer, and photographer. Tony's own photographic work is being published in well known magazines and garnering recognition. He wowed the group with his



unique, nighttime time-lapse frames. A 20-minute video short was accompanied by background music that increased the already dramatic night sky photography fronted by some well-known eastern Sierra vistas.

Honorees of the evening were Sierra Club members Jean Okuye and Cindy Lashbrook who are local organic farmers with a penchant for activism. Both demonstrate a selfless zeal to work at protecting those resources and places that make our Valley a home that nurtures both body and spirit.

Jean is known as a whirlwind of energy and activism who challenges all of us to do more by her example. Air quality, water issues, community general plans, development projects, farming issues, protection of the Valley's unique lands — all fall under her purview. Jean is the current president of the Merced Farm Bureau (its first woman). Also of special note is her role as a co-founder and on-going leader of Valley Land Alliance,

an organization focused on the preservation of local farmlands. Jean is also a member of the Regional Water Advisory Group, trying to tackle that sticky issue.

Education by experience is also a main thrust of Jean's. She is a key organizer of the annual green tour in Merced County. She helps host annual visits by high-schoolers from the Bay Area. They visit the Valley to experience and thereby appreciate: "How does that food get onto your table?" A recent "Farm-to-Fridge" event at the local fairgrounds was held for 1200 third-graders. It fosters connections awareness with the ag community that surrounds them. As head of the Farm Bureau she is working with the University of California to develop learning opportunities in the wetlands. The Merced County agri-nature tourism effort is also one of her babies. And the list continues... but I stop there. A friend posted the following on Jean's computer: "Lord, please help me slow down." Suffice it to say — it doesn't seem to be working!

Cindy has a similar tireless dedication to her community. A former Merced College instructor, she now focuses her attentions on her farm along the Merced River where she raises organic cherries and blueberries. At least that's what she does when she is not advocating for responsible growth, protection of farmland, sustainable agriculture, and the protection of recreational lands. Most recently, Cindy was co-founder and a primary force in the Save Our State Parks. This effort raised \$65,000 of local money to keep Hatfield and McConnel parks open for the 10,000 local resident that use them each year.

Cindy currently serves on the Merced College Board of Trustees. She is a director on the state CAFF Board (Community Alliance of Family Farms). She is on the Integrated Regional Water Management Plan Advisory Committee. She is a former board member and current assistant member of the EMRCD (East Merced Irrigation District). Cindy was a leader and facilitator for the former Merced River Stakeholders. While with that group she oversaw a restoration planning project along the Merced River. She also helped foster a program that got Snelling students involved in on-going water monitoring along their stretch of the Merced River.

And in the breadth of her involvement Cindy works at both the city and county level. She is involved in past and ongoing General Plan updates. Relicensing of the dams along the Merced River has also garnered her attention. Wild and Scenic River protection and recreational improvements are part of that discussion.

And finally one must mention the Pick-and-Gather Farm Festival/Merced River Fair that is an annual event on Cindy's farm along the Merced River. On two days in late June folks from near and far get together for music, food, learning, and relaxation in a setting that celebrates farm and river. It tangibly lets us experience those unique and local attributes worth fighting for.

**Shelton Johnson, Yosemite National Park Ranger
and the History of the Buffalo Soldiers in the Sierra Nevada Parks**

– CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1 –



**SOLDIERS OF THE 24TH INFANTRY ASSIGNED TO PROTECT
THE NATIONAL PARKS OF THE SIERRA NEVADA IN 1899**

under control. But conditions in the Valley continued to worsen until President Theodore Roosevelt and Congress were convinced to take back jurisdiction of the Valley and the Wawona Grove from the State of California in 1906.

The U.S. Army served as the official administrator of Yosemite and Sequoia National Parks between 1891 and 1913, creating a model for park management as we know it today. These army troops were garrisoned at the Presidio of San Francisco during the winter months and served in the Sierra only during the summer months. This arrangement was an unusual duty for troops and greatly prized by army men, with one army officer referring to the Sierra Nevada as the “Cavalryman’s Paradise.” Commanding officers became acting military superintendents for these national parks, with two troops of cavalry, made up of approximately 60 men each, assigned to each park. Their presence was welcomed by local residents, both for the money they personally brought to the region’s economy and the improvements they made to the parks that increased tourism. Their presence as official stewards of the park lands also brought a sense of law and order to the mountain wilderness.

In 1899, Buffalo Soldiers from Company H of the all-black 24th Infantry Regiment briefly served in Yosemite National Park and in Sequoia and General Grant National Parks.



THE BODYGUARD OF YOSEMITE IN 1904

A more substantial period of service by African American soldiers in the California parks began in 1903 when several

hundred soldiers of the 9th Cavalry Regiment rode on horseback from Army Headquarters in the Presidio to Camp Wood near the Wawona park entrance to take on duties creating maps, constructing roads, blazing trails, suppressing wildfires, evicting poachers and loggers, and protecting the ever-growing numbers of tourists. Further south, 9th Cavalrymen in Sequoia National Park built the first wagon road into the Giant Forest and constructed the first trail to the top of Mount Whitney.

One particular Buffalo Soldier stands out in the history of the national parks. Born into slavery in Kentucky, Charles Young was the third African American graduate of West Point, the first black to achieve the rank of colonel, and the highest-ranking black officer in the United States Army at the time of his death in 1922. In 1903, as captain of a black company at the Presidio of San Francisco, Young

In the decades after the civil war, Buffalo Soldiers performed a crucial role in the advance of civilization across the West by patrolling the frontier, building infrastructure, improving roads, escorting mail, and pursuing bandits.

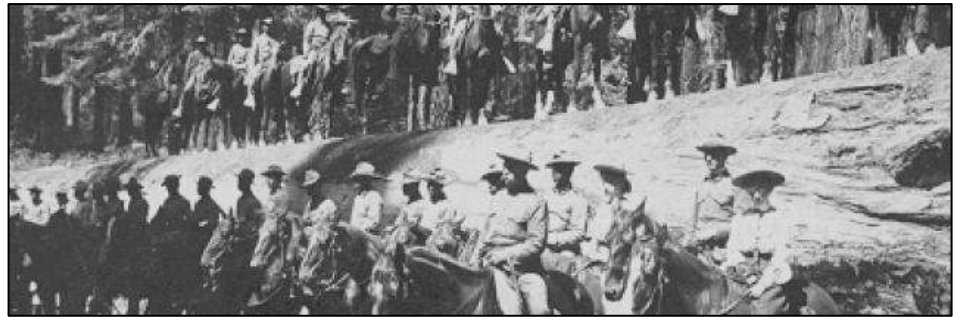
THE BODYGUARD OF YOSEMITE

Soon after the region around Yosemite Valley became the nation’s third national park in 1890, the newly created park was put under the jurisdiction of the United States Army’s 4th Cavalry, which set up camp in Wawona “to prevent timber cutting, sheep herding, trespassing, or spoliation in particular.” The ancient forests were saved and game thrived in the protected area. Through the arrest of shepherders and the dispersing of their herds on opposite sides of the park, the problem of overgrazing was brought



**CAPTAIN CHARLES YOUNG,
FIRST AFRICAN AMERICAN
SUPERINTENDENT OF A
NATIONAL PARK**

was appointed to be the Acting Superintendent of Sequoia and General Grant National Parks. In the one summer under Captain Young's administration, his troops accomplished more than had teams under the three military officers who preceded him during the previous three summers. The completion during his assignment of a wagon road into the Giant Forest and to the base of Moro Rock enabled visitors to enter the mountaintop forest for the first time.



THE 9TH CAVALRY POSE AT THE FALLEN MONARCH IN THE WAWONA GROVE IN 1904

THE YOSEMITE ARBORETUM

In 1904, 9th Cavalrymen in Yosemite built an arboretum on the South Fork of the Merced River near Wawona. In this 75-acre natural botanical garden 36 trees and plants were identified and labeled in English and in Latin, and seats and signposts were constructed for the rest and guidance of visitors. Yosemite's arboretum is considered to be the first museum in the National Park System. In his 1904 report, Yosemite Superintendent Major John Bigelow, Jr. declared the arboretum as "a great museum of nature for the general public free of cost to preserve not only trees, but everything that is associated with them in nature; not only the sylvia, but also the flora and fauna, the animal life, and the mineral and geological features of the country comprised in the park." Unfortunately, the following year the boundaries of the park were cut back to the river, leaving the new nature walk on private land in the path of development. It would be sixteen years before Dr. Harold C. Bryant initiated the nature-guiding service in Yosemite, which became the nucleus of the present naturalist interpretive program for the entire National Park Service.

One lasting legacy of the soldiers as park rangers is the Ranger Hat (popularly known as the Smokey Bear Hat). Although not officially adopted by the Army until 1911, the distinctive hat crease, called a Montana Peak, (or pinch) can be seen being worn by several of the Buffalo Soldiers in park

photographs dating back to 1899. Soldiers serving in the Spanish-American War began to recrease the Stetson hat with a Montana pinch to better shed water from the torrential tropical rains. Many retained that distinctive pinch upon their return to the U.S. The park photographs, in all likelihood, show Buffalo Soldiers who were veterans from that 1898 war.

STRENGTH AND TACT

In the Sierra Nevada, the Buffalo Soldiers regularly endured long days in the saddle, slim rations, racism, and separation from family and friends. Even though they wore the uniform of the U.S. Army, their ethnicity combined with the racial prejudice of the time made the performance of their duties quite challenging. In the early 1900s, African Americans were routinely abused, or even killed, for the slightest perceived offense. They occupied one of the lowest rungs of the social ladder, a fact which served to undercut the authority of any black man who served in any position of power. Yosemite and Sequoia's Buffalo Soldiers had to be simultaneously strong and diplomatic to fulfill the duties of their job while also avoiding giving offense.

When Ranger Shelton Johnson came across a century-old photograph of five uniformed black men on horseback in the Yosemite Valley, he began to research their lives, uncovering the nearly lost legacy of these African American soldiers who enforced environmental laws and helped improve access for

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Tehipite Chapter Annual Banquet

featuring Shelton Johnson,

**Yosemite National Park Historian Ranger, presenting
"Yosemite through the Eyes of a Buffalo Soldier, 1904"**

Wednesday, March 27, 6-9 P.M.

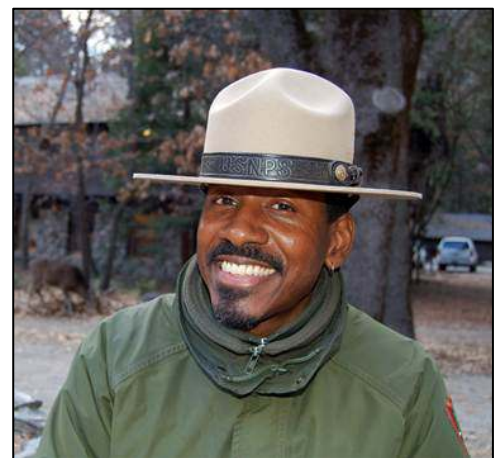
**at the First Congregational Church of Fresno (the Big Red Church)
2131 N. Van Ness Blvd. (corner of Yale), just north of Fresno High School**

This is a free potluck banquet: A-H Salads, I-P Main Dishes, Q-Z Desserts

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55 E. Fountain Way, Fresno, CA 93704,**

or <Karen3245Laws@gmail.com> [ATTN: Sierra Club]



visitors in the new national parks of California. To better preserve that history, Ranger Shelton developed a "living history" interpretive program about the Buffalo Soldiers, which he has been honing since the 1990s. He presents this program in Yosemite during the summer months, then takes it on the road to schools and other groups around the state the rest of the year, allowing the Buffalo Soldier of the late 1800s to speak across the centuries to park visitors and students, young and old, in the 21st-century.

Assuming the character of of Elizy Boman, a real sergeant he found in the U.S. Army's muster rolls, Johnson tells of growing up in 19th-century Spartanburg, South Carolina. There were miles of sidewalks through the town, he says, all of them laid by black men forbidden to use them. In Johnson's telling, Bowman is a headstrong youth who dared to walk those sidewalks, causing his parents to strongly encourage their son to enlist so that Elizy wouldn't be killed in his own home town, since guns fired for personal reasons usually have better aim. To disadvantaged youth in the cities of today, it is a remarkable message of both personal empowerment and the necessity of having to sometimes accept social injustice.



RANGER SHELTON JOHNSON BECOMES ELIZY BOWMAN, A BUFFALO SOLDIER WHO SERVED IN YOSEMITE IN 1904

The Sierra Club and other organizations have long been interested in issues of environmental justice, which means several things, including giving a voice to disadvantaged communities — very often populated with minorities and immigrants — which frequently bear the brunt of major infrastructure development and heavily polluting enterprises. Environmental justice also means sharing the splendors of America's parks and wilderness with all citizens, including the poor. Inner City Outings is one example of how the Sierra Club extends opportunities to youth who have grown up in an urban environment lacking exposure to nature due to their economic status, while also bringing its message of environmental stewardship into urban communities. These urban youth outings include hiking, backpacking, kayaking, and tree-planting expeditions.

But there is another issue involving minorities, which was recognized in the 1970s, and which Shelton Johnson has actively sought to remedy. Just as membership in the Valley's Sierra Club chapters is heavily weighted toward older, more upscale white residents, so the demographics of visitors to Yosemite and other natural preserves in the United States is lacking in minority participation. This isn't just a function of high entry fees. There is often a lack of interest, or even fear, about visiting a national park, born of a paucity of actual involvement in rural outdoor activities by African American families and the culture to which they belong.

"African Americans are the group that is least likely to have a wilderness experience," says Johnson. "It doesn't matter if you're male or female, rich or poor, highly educated or not as highly educated. If you're of African descent, you're much less likely to have a national park experience."

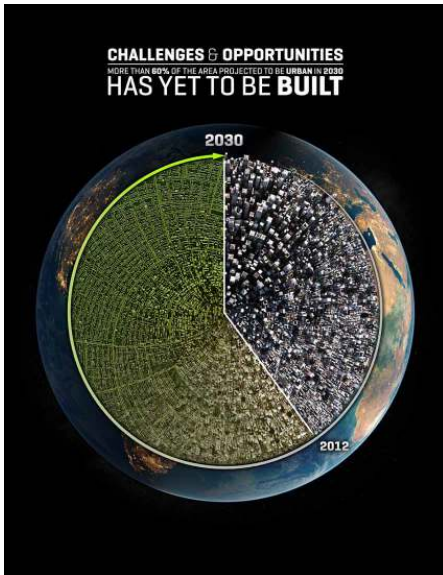
Advocates of the wildlands should be concerned about this phenomenon, since some of the leaders of tomorrow will be coming out of this culture. If we want to have strong political backing for the funding of park and forest maintenance and research in wilderness preservation, then we need to do all we can to develop a cultural connection to the land with all urban minorities.

Johnson has been doing his best this past decade to reach millions of African Americans who live within driving distance of Yosemite and is encouraging them to come to the Park, partly to embrace the African American history that can be found there, but also to experience the sense of wildness that so changed his own life when he was young. It took the original Buffalo Soldiers 14 days on horseback to reach Yosemite on a dirt road. That route still exists, and Johnson is campaigning to make it a national historic trail. "What this Buffalo Soldier story does is it provides that bridge back to the earth — back to America."

Shelton Johnson has worked for the National Park Service since 1987, having served in Great Basin and Yellowstone National Parks, as well as in parks in and around Washington, D.C. He served with the Peace Corps in Liberia and attended graduate school at the University of Michigan, where he won several writing awards, including a Hopwood Award in poetry.



RANGER SHELTON JOHNSON SPEAKS TO STUDENTS IN UC MERCED'S YOSEMITE LEADERSHIP PROGRAM



The Challenges of Urbanization Are Opportunities To Create a Sustainable World Future

by Robert Turner

More than 60% of the area projected to be urban in 2030 has yet to be built. This shocking prediction is emphasized in the graphic illustrated on this page, taken from a new publication of the Convention on Biological Diversity, *Cities and Biodiversity Outlook — Action and Policy: A Global Assessment of the Links between Urbanization, Biodiversity, and Ecosystem Services*. One of the ten lead authors of the study is Dr. Madhusudan Katti, Professor of Biology at Fresno State University.

Our planet is currently undergoing the largest and fastest period of urban expansion in human history. The challenges we face from this urbanization are profound, but so too are the opportunities. The Rio+20 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development emphasized that “if they are well planned and developed, including through integrated planning and management approaches, cities can promote economically, socially and environmentally sustainable societies.” Ideally, the world’s future will see this expansion accommodated in the design of cities that sustainably accommodate a large number of

people in a relatively small amount of space, offering at once an improved quality of life, greater resource efficiency, and the preservation of larger intact natural areas in the surrounding ecosystems that nurture the urban cores.

The report is rich in examples of cities around the world practicing new (and old) ideas for enhancing sustainability and biodiversity within their boundaries. But it organizes its message around ten key points, which to those of us who have been studying and debating these issues for the past several decades may seem like a restatement of common sense:

- 1 – Urbanization is both a challenge and an opportunity to manage ecosystem services globally.
- 2 – Rich biodiversity can exist in cities.
- 3 – Biodiversity and ecosystem services are critical natural capital.
- 4 – Maintaining functioning urban ecosystems can significantly enhance human health and well-being.
- 5 – Urban ecosystem services and biodiversity can help contribute to climate-change mitigation and adaptation.
- 6 – Increasing the biodiversity of urban food systems can enhance food and nutrition security.
- 7 – Ecosystem services must be integrated in urban policy and planning.
- 8 – Successful management of biodiversity and ecosystem services must be based on multi-scale, multi-sectoral, and multi-stakeholder involvement.
- 9 – Cities offer unique opportunities for learning and education about a resilient and sustainable future.
- 10 – Cities have a large potential to generate innovations and governance tools and therefore can, and must, take the lead in sustainable development.

— CONTINUED ON PAGE 10 —

FRESNO CITIZENS AND METRO AREA RESIDENTS — GET INVOLVED IN THE FUTURE OF YOUR CITY

There are still opportunities for citizens to comment on the details of the 2035 Fresno General Plan Update at open workshops with City Planners.

All Meetings are on Wednesday, beginning at 6 pm, and are held in the Council Chambers at City Hall. The City is encouraging the Public to participate at these Special Meetings of the Planning Commission.

January 23 — Resource Conservation; Parks, Open Space, and Schools; Historic & Cultural Resources; and Noise and Safety Draft General Plan Chapters

February 13 — Healthy Communities and Public Utilities Draft General Plan Chapters

March 20 — Economic Development and Fiscal Sustainability Draft General Plan Chapter and Wrap-up workshop

Overall Project Schedule

May 2013 — Draft Development Code released for public review and Planning Commission workshops

May 2013 — Complete Hearing Draft General Plan and Draft EIR released for public review and comment

October 2013 — Final General Plan, Specific and Community Plan amendments and repeals, Development Code update, new proposed Planning Guidelines and EIR presented to City Council for action

Resource documents available online at <www.fresno.gov/newplan>.

Review the Draft 2035 General Plan online at <www.fresno.gov/planningdocs/Aug152012/VIIIB.pdf>.

ECObits by Marian Orvis

Welcome back from the holidays! Hope they were well spent with family and friends. Let's look at some salient sillies that you've been without for the past many months. All are derived from various newsletters of the Northcoast Environmental Center's newsletter, ECONEWS. Enjoy, for the truth is strange, stranger than fiction.

The Ultimate Recycler – Nothing says "I love you" more than a greeting card made from pulped elephant feces. That's why an Indian company hopes this unique format of romantic missive will take the market by storm. It plans to process 30(!) tons of dung a month to make a high-quality paper from the grass and leaf fibers that pass through the elephants' system without being digested. "People always worry about the smell, but believe me the cards smell as sweet as any other Valentine's Day cards on the market," a spokesman said.

Becoming Fertilizer – A posthumous bath in liquid nitrogen may be the key to the world's first completely ecological burial. It involves recycling human bodies as fertilizer, said Swedish scientist Susanne Wiigh-Mäsak. First, you remove the approximately 70 percent of water from the corpse by freezing it to -18 degrees Celsius and then submerging it in liquid nitrogen. The body, now very brittle, is then treated to vibrations that reduce the corpse to a fine organic powder, both hygienic and odorless. It finally is laid in a biodegradable container made of cornstarch. The remains are buried in a shallow grave and the living soil turns it into compost in about six to twelve months.

Navel Exercise – The Belly Button Biodiversity Project has released the first results from 95 samples and found a whopping total of more than 1,400 bacterial strains. In fact, 662 of the microbes could not even be classified to family. This "strongly suggests that they are new to science," commented the leader of the study at North Carolina State University.

New Threat – Seagrass holds as much carbon per acre as the world's forests and is now among its most threatened ecosystems. In the past century, 29% of seagrass has been destroyed globally, mostly by water pollution, dredging for new developments and climate change. Because seagrass meadows are disappearing at an annual rate of about 1.5%, about 300 million tons of carbon are released back into the environment each year, seriously adding to global warming.

Until the next issue of *Tehipite Topics*, happy trails...

— "OPPORTUNITIES FOR URBAN SUSTAINABILITY AND BIODIVERSITY" CONTINUED FROM PAGE 9 —

Still, it is heartening to see these ideas finally become the mainstream standards for development around the world, with planners assessing both the monetary and non-monetary economic value of ecological services provided by retention of natural habitat within the city limits of urban areas.

The impoverished megacities of the third world offer a particular challenge and opportunity to refashion themselves along urban ecological principles. One resource of special significance is the wealth of native agricultural knowledge retained by those who have migrated from a rural section of the country into the urban metropolis. Before these elders pass on, cities would be wise to embark on a program of integrating community vegetable gardens into the cultural fabric of dense urban neighborhoods, so that these rural transplants can usefully pass on their expertise to the next generation. Integrating the production of food in the city with primary-level education by encouraging children to participate in the planting and tending of gardens will bring together young and old, help to develop a work ethic in the young, foster a love for healthy eating, create a venue for acquiring substantial practical knowledge of biological systems, and let children feel a real sense of accomplishment and contribution to the community.



WHOEVER CAN COME UP WITH AN ATTRACTIVE BUT EQUALLY STURDY, LASTING, AND EFFICIENT ALTERNATIVE TO THE GALVANIZED STEEL CHAIN-LINK FENCE WILL LIKELY MAKE A FORTUNE.

Enhancing biodiversity within the city is another action strongly supported by the report. Having natural areas close to homes improves the physical as well as the mental health of residents for a variety of reasons. Fresno has one of the lowest ratios of park acreage to number of citizens of any city in the country. And yet there are large areas of open land and water inside the city that do not count as parkland because the public is locked out. Vandalism, dumping, the chronic lack of funding to provide maintenance, and fear of liability for injuries sustained on public property have led the controlling agencies to surround their drainage basins with one of the most unattractive, yet pervasive, elements of modern urban landscape design, the cyclone fence. By opening these area to the public, if local residents are willing to take on the task of keeping them clean and tidy, and tearing down the fences, the insurance companies that are so concerned with liability will probably find they have a lot more to gain from the rise in property values due to the resulting enhanced aesthetic urban environment. Likewise with tearing out the concrete lining of the city's canals and allowing riparian habitat to develop along them even as they continue to convey water to the agricultural areas on the other side of the city.



THE REPORT IS AVAILABLE FREE FOR DOWNLOADING ONLINE AT <[HTTP://WWW.CBD.INT/EN/SUBNATIONAL/PARTNERS-AND-INITIATIVES/CBO](http://www.cbd.int/en/subnational/partners-and-initiatives/cbo)> .

in southeast Spain, one-third of the country is at risk of becoming desert from climate change and poor land use. Thousands of illegal wells have depleted underground water. Despite limited water, some farmers dared to switch to more thirsty crops and developers have even promised water-hungry ventures of golf courses and resorts with swimming pools.

In the United States, water in the two big western reservoirs, Lake Mead, Nevada, and Lake Powell, Utah (both on the Colorado River), are also affected by global change; severe depletion is predicted in coming decades. Risk of full depletion is possible by 2026 to 2056, if current management and conservation practice, population pressure, and climate drying persist. More than thirty million people depend on the Colorado River. Las Vegas may be among the first victims of life in the desert without adequate water! An exploding human population and a shrinking water supply could cause chaos, and landscapes will become xeriscapes with gravel lawns, cacti, mesquite bushes, and palm trees.

Wallace Stegner, former author and Stanford professor, wrote that Westerners never understood the meaning of the word “arid.” This is evidenced by politicization of water, poor water management, and subsequent water wars. California has also had its share of water wars, as pictured in the 1974 film classic, *Chinatown*, based on the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power siphoning off most of the Owens River from the east side of the Sierra. Mark Reisner wrote in *Cadillac Desert* that water in California runs uphill toward money and power.

Without rain and with snowpack decreased by 20 percent, the lowest level in twenty years, the Rocky Mountains have

warmed by 2 degrees Fahrenheit, and the Sierra is up 1.7 degrees. An optimistic figure is that 30 to 70 percent of the snowpack will disappear by the end of this century — a sobering scenario. Water managers should rethink current water strategies. Rather than doom and gloom, we could lighten up and do a rain dance in the style of Gene Kelly singing and dancing.

Little rain resulting in dry rivers, small snowpack, melting glaciers, and sea ice thinning are not the only effects of a hotter world. There would be rising oceans, submerged coastal cities and wetlands, soil depletion, disease and death, invasive species as well as loss of species, heat waves and cold fronts, shifting habitats, moving precipitation patterns, famine, and war. In Spain, for example, the water war is between north and south. Prime Minister Jose Zapatero plans to build a pipeline diverting water from the Ebro, Spain’s largest river, north to Barcelona. Valencia, and Murcia, conservative-governed coastal, agricultural regions are outraged over the northern diversion, since they need the water diverted south.

Mark Hersgaard’s book *Hot* is a call for solutions, which require some sacrifice and life-style changes, and hope. Recycle water. Practice water conservation in the kitchen, laundry, and bathroom: take shorter showers, check and repair leaks, install low-flow faucets, buy water-efficient appliances, run your washer and dishwasher only when full. In the yard: replace water-thirsty grass and plants with drought-tolerant plants, recycle water, catch rain water, use a broom instead of water to clean walkways. You know the solutions. Aquifers are shrinking at a rapid rate. We can’t grow water; we can only conserve it.

The time to act is yesterday.



THE DUSTY FLOOR OF THIS VALLEY WAS FLOODED IN THE 1960S TO PROVIDE WATER FOR THE CATALONIA REGION. NOW A DROUGHT, SO SEVERE IT HAS FORCED BARCELONA TO SHIP IN WATER, HAS EMPTIED THE RESERVOIR. THIS 11TH-CENTURY CHURCH FROM THE DROWNED VILLAGE OF SANT ROMA IN SPAIN HAS EMERGED FROM THE WATERS TO ATTRACT CROWDS OF TOURISTS.



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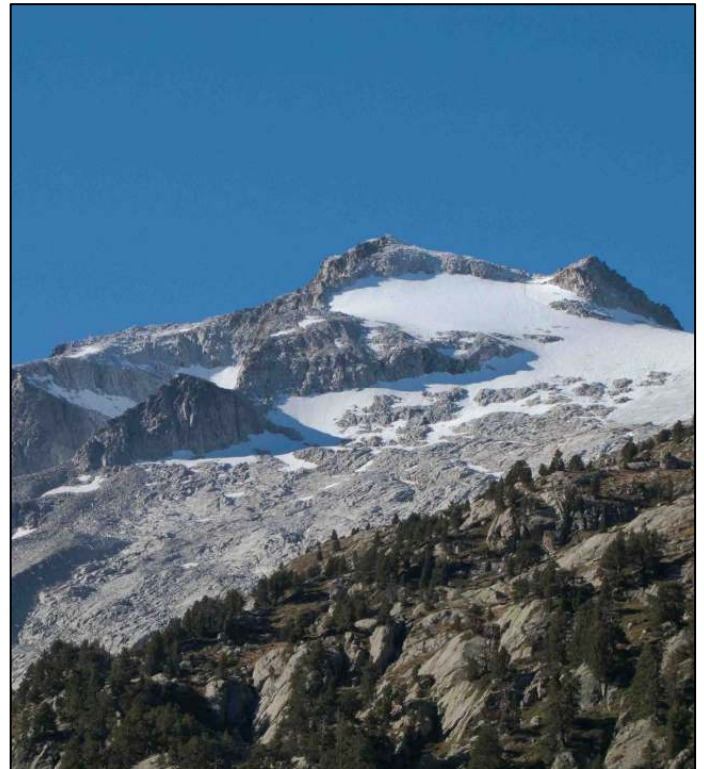
Tehipite Topics is currently published four times per year. Full-color versions of this issue and the previous two issues of *Tehipite Topics* are available on the chapter website at www.tehipitesierraclub.org. Articles and photographs from Sierra Club members are always welcome. Please send your personal contributions for the April-June 2013 issue by email to robertsturner52@gmail.com before March 20.

No Rain in Spain

by Heather Anderson

Despite that great scene of professor Henry Higgins teaching Eliza Doolittle to pronounce in correct English rather than her Cockney English, “The rain in Spain falls mainly in the plain,” it does not. Spain’s rain falls not in the plain but mainly in the northern coastal mountains around Bilbao (about 47.05 inches annually). Visiting my daughter in Barcelona recently, I heard remarks like, “It’s so hot,” and “It has never been like this before.” Barcelonans are used to mid-afternoon showers which cool and refresh the city. Now, Spain is part of the worst drought of a century resulting from global climate change. Get used to it. The country’s reservoirs are 30% full while Barcelona’s are only 20% full. Total rainfall there for the year has been 40% lower than average, and without an increase, drinking water supply is likely to dry up by October. This is after a global warming of only 2 degrees Fahrenheit, so what will the future look like when Spain, the American Southwest, and the planet warm another 6 to 10 degrees Fahrenheit? The future is drying up. It can’t be called a drought anymore; no one says the Sahara is in drought.

Spain has lost 90% of their glacier ice during the past century. European glaciers, including those of the Spanish Pyrenees, which water the foothills and plains to the south, may be the first to disappear from the continent in the near future. It is estimated that



GLACIERS IN THE SPANISH PYRENEES, AS ELSEWHERE IN EUROPE, HAVE BEEN RETREATING AND DISAPPEARING DUE TO WARMING AND DROUGHT FROM GLOBAL CLIMATE CHANGE

– CONTINUED INSIDE ON PAGE 11 –