

Tehipite Topics

Summer 2016 – Vol. 62, No. 2

www.sierraclub.org/tehipite

Tehipite Chapter Calls for Volunteers to Join Committees

Some of our members may not know this, but none of the Tehipite Chapter officers, ExCom members, or committee chairs receive compensation for their time spent attending meetings, researching issues, engaging in public advocacy, or lobbying public and private officials to promote an environmental agenda for San Joaquin Valley and the Sierra Nevada. Many other non-governmental groups with whom we have joined forces are operated by paid staff, but the Tehipite Chapter is a truly grassroots organization, composed entirely of volunteers motivated by our shared vision of a clean, healthy environment, protected wildlands, and environmental justice across our community.

Our personal rewards are the satisfaction of working hard in a noble cause and the camaraderie of friends sharing common interests. And don't make the mistake that because we are not being paid that we are a bunch of amateurs. Our active membership includes scientists and engineers, and former National Forest Service and National Park Service professionals.

If you have a desire to be an agent of change, to broaden your understanding of environmental issues, and to work with and learn from experts and activists both within the Sierra Club and among our many allies, then we want you to get involved. We can't promise that you won't be disappointed sometimes; we don't always win our campaigns. But we cannot succeed without trying, and success depends upon the strength of numbers—many people working together, combining our expertise and our enthusiasm.

We have several issue committees and a large number

Sierra Club Tehipite Chapter Committees:

- Political Committee
- Outings Committee
- Social Media Committee
- Energy/Climate Committee
- Land Use/Air Quality Committee (includes Transportation & Urban Planning and Sustainable Agriculture issues)
- Water Committee (includes River Restoration and Groundwater Management issues and the campaign to stop the Temperance Flat Dam)
- Desert Committee
- Wilderness Committee
- National Forests Committee
- Kings Canyon National Park Committee
- Yosemite National Park Committee

of active campaigns that you can choose to join. (See the list in the box.) Below are descriptions of three important committees that need new enthusiastic activists.

1. **Political Committee:** We are seeking Sierra Club Tehipite Chapter members (and new members) from across Fresno, Madera, Merced, and Mariposa counties to join our Chapter Political Committee. In the months of prior to elections, committee members evaluate and vote on which local political candidates deserve our Sierra Club endorsement. Tasks consist of writing questionnaires for the candidates to complete and submit, interviewing the candidates in small teams, sharing our opinions with other team members, and voting on endorsements. All actions are in accordance to the Sierra Club's 100-page

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see also:

Vulcan's "Austin Quarry" Approved by Madera Planning Commission

The Rights of Nature

Kokolik River — Brooks Range to the Chukchi Sea

on page 10

on page 12

on page 14



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.



Tehipite Chapter of the Sierra Club

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Help Save the Sierra Club's Home in Yosemite NP



YCHC IN YOSEMITE VALLEY
VISITORS ENJOYING THE KIDS CORNER

PHOTO BY JEREMY EVANS
PHOTO BY ELAINE GORMAN



The Yosemite Conservation Heritage Center (YCHC) is a National Historic Landmark built by the Sierra Club in 1903. It is the first permanent Visitor Center in Yosemite Valley and home to the Sierra Club's oldest educational program. Featuring rough-hewn granite masonry, a steep-pitched wooden gabled roof, exposed hammer beams, and scissor trusses, the building lends itself to lofty thoughts and inspiration.

Many notable Sierra Club pioneers have guided the program and cared for the building, including Edward T. Parsons, Ansel Adams, Joseph N. LeConte ("Little Joe"), and Marion Randall Parsons. Today, the Curator is the highly regarded John Muir historian and author, Bonnie J. Gisel, Ph.D. Since 2002, Bonnie has developed a world-class program that is enjoyed by over 15,000 visitors per year.

"I envision community as a place that embraces an ideal of inclusiveness and brings forth the best in us as human beings to preserve and conserve natural resources, wilderness, and all things wild. Here at the Yosemite Conservation Heritage Center, we share that ideal with visitors from around the world and all walks of life."

Over 100 volunteers staff the Lodge during the summer season between May 1 and September 30. These Sierra Club members greet visitors and introduce them to the Club's vision of environmental stewardship. Elaine Gorman of the Mother Lode Chapter is one such volunteer. *"Seeing the awe and joy on visitors' faces reminds me of the uniqueness of Yosemite Valley, and of the Sierra Club's activism to get the Valley added to Yosemite National Park in 1906."*

All who enter marvel at the beautiful architecture of the building. A well-stocked library and children's corner are big attractions. Well-attended evening programs are presented Friday and Saturday evenings offering a wide variety of topics including natural history, literature, music, and photography. This year's interactive project, "Think like a Tree" lets kids create an art project and take home information about the life cycle of trees and their importance to our ecosystem.

In 2016, our Sierra Club Board of Directors voted to stop funding this unique program. Please help us **Save the Sierra Club Home in Yosemite National Park!** We need to raise **\$90,000** by **October 1, 2016** to fund operations for 2017.

The YCHC is where the Sierra Club began its journey to become the influential environmental organization it is today. Now more than ever, we must remember our story. Please support this effort to save the YCHC for the future. If you are not able to donate, please share our message with others to support the efforts of dedicated volunteers.

Donate online at <http://www.sierraclub.org/yosemite-heritage-center>.

To donate by check, please write "Restricted to LeConte Memorial Fund" on the memo line, and make it payable to: The Sierra Club Foundation.

Mail your donation to: The Sierra Club Foundation, 2101 Webster St., Suite 1250, Oakland, CA 94612.

For more information contact Michael Bryant: michael.bryant@sierraclub.org or (707) 579-1429.

For more on the history of the Yosemite Conservation Heritage Center, go to: <http://vault.sierraclub.org/education/leconte/history.asp>.

Upcoming Tehipite Chapter Meetings

Tehipite Chapter Conservation & Executive Committee Meetings

Second Wednesday of each month ~ members welcome

September 14, October 12, and November 9, December 14, January 11, February 8, March 8, April 12, May 10, June 14, July 12, August 9

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

Third Wednesday of each month from 7 to 9 PM, except for July, August, and—this year only—December
OUR GENERAL MEETINGS ARE FREE AND OPEN TO THE PUBLIC, AND PARKING IS FREE.

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



Wednesday, September 21, 7:00 PM

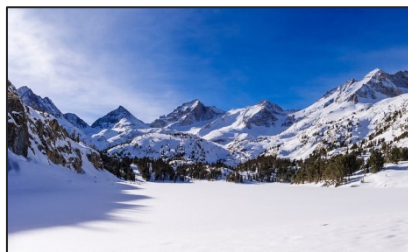
Photographing Mountains of the West, with David Hunter

Local Fresno Unified elementary school teacher David Hunter moonlights as a professional photographer taking not-so-typical shots of mountains, canyons, fields, deserts, and nature in general, where he looks for “the out of the way stuff.” David will show photos from twenty years of summer trips in the Sierra Nevada, and beyond to Wyoming’s Wind River Mountains.

Wednesday, October 19, 7:00 PM

Winter Mountaineering in the Sierra Nevada, with Larry Harris

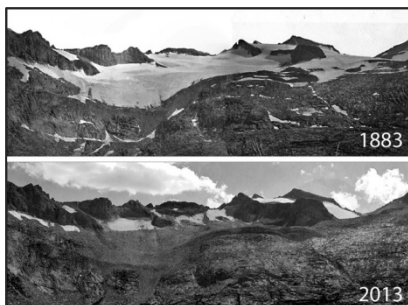
Local adventurer Larry Harris finds it easy to avoid the crowds in Yosemite, Sequoia, and nearby national forests by heading into the backcountry during the winter months. From trailheads on both the eastern escarpment and the western slope, cross country skiing gets him to destinations like Mt. Dana, Koip Peak, Mt. Warren, and Mt. Givens. Sometimes it’s a day outing; sometimes it’s an overnighter. Anyone who has taken a winter hike, whether short or long, in snowshoes or on skis, alone or shared, can attest that the wilderness has an added allure when cloaked in white. Come and vicariously explore some snow-clad terrain and wintery vistas.



Wednesday, November 16, 7:00 PM

Pacific Odyssey: Hawaii to New Zealand, with JoAnne Clarke

In 2012, JoAnne Clarke and George Deane sailed their 45-foot sailboat, Hana Hou, from Hawaii to New Zealand. Come get a good look at beautiful remote islands and atolls that can only be reached by sailboat, with stops at National Parks, bird rookeries, and some of the finest dive locations in the Pacific.



Saturday, March 25, 6:00 PM, at The Big Red Church, 2131 N. Van Ness

Avenue, Fresno (Date and location are still tentative. Check the next *Topics*.)

Our Annual Potluck Banquet — Measuring Glacial Movement in Yosemite, from John Muir to today, with Yosemite Park Geologist Greg Stock

Scientists have explored and studied Lyell and Maclure glaciers for nearly 150 years. John Muir and other early scientists such as Joseph LeConte and François Matthes mapped the glaciers’ extent, measured their movement, and observed changes in the ice through time. Park naturalists and scientists have continued to regularly survey these glaciers, carrying on this legacy of science in Yosemite.



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Merced Group Conservation & Executive Committee Meetings

The first Wednesday of each month at 7:00 PM — at Rod Webster's home, 345 E. 20th St., Merced.

The 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 Monthly Meetings Return to the Methodist Church

Our regular monthly meetings will resume in September and we'll return to our old hang out — the Merced United Methodist Church at 899 Yosemite Parkway (that's Hwy 140 to Yosemite). We'll continue to meet on the third Thursday of each month at 7:00 PM. We meet in the Fireside room that is best accessed from the parking lot on the Cypress Ave. side of the church.

We have a nice variety of programs planned for this year — some topical and informational, some entertaining and inspiring. Speakers cannot always be confirmed in time for the *Topics*, so some program information may be TBA. For details you can either phone Rod Webster at (209) 723-474, check the local newspapers, or get on Rod's email list for automatic up-to-date notification. Rod's email address is rwebster@elite.net.

Merced Group's September General Meeting

Thursday, September 15, 7:00 PM — Ron Stork, Legal Analyst and Lobbyist for Friends of the River

Ron will speak on the Temperance Flat Dam project, as well as other statewide water projects on California's drawing board. That includes Governor Brown's Twin Tunnels, the Sites Dam, and whatever else attendees will want to ask about. Merced folks will undoubtedly want an update on the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission's forty-year relicensing of dams on the Merced River. This process has been in underway for several years and should now be nearing completion.

Yosemite Wilderness Plan Reopened for Comments on Two Issues

The National Park Service has reopened comments on the scoping for the Yosemite Wilderness Stewardship Plan and Environmental Impact Statement, asking the public to provide more guidance on two issues of particular complexity: (1) Visitor Use & Capacity and (2) Stock Use. The comment period ends on September 30.

At a recent public meeting held in Oakhurst, most of the attendees were either commercial guides who conduct trips in Yosemite National Park or members of either the Backcountry Horsemen of California or the Sierra Club Tehipite Chapter. A lively discussion generally rejected proposed alternatives that would drastically increase restrictions on, respectively, campsite location or stock grazing in meadows.

With regard to visitor capacity in the wilderness, the Park Service stated that under the current system most trailhead quotas will have to be reduced in order to preserve the physical quality of certain popular destinations. However, if destination quotas are instituted (Concept 2), or if the permitting system switches to the zone quota approach (Concept 3), then wilderness numbers can remain at the current high level while still protecting the most visited locations from high-impact overuse. Concept 4, which would require designating one's expected campsite locations when obtaining a wilderness permit, was criticized as overly inflexible. Significantly, it would degrade a powerful aspect of wilderness enjoyment, the sense of discovery that comes with exploring an area one has never before visited, when one doesn't precisely yet know where that perfect campsite will be found.

Stock users are faced with their own set of alternatives. No one liked Concept 3, which bans grazing altogether. The first two would continue to allow private but not commercial parties to freely site their camps anywhere close to a trail.

The easiest and most efficient way to comment is through the Park Service's website at www.parkplanning.nps.gov/yosewild. All comments will be published. Newsletters to guide you through the alternatives and help you focus your comments are at the same site.

Merced Group News

UC Merced Scholarships Awarded

At the Merced Group's April meeting, Jake and Fran Kirihara scholarships were awarded to two deserving UC Merced students. Mirella Gutierrez and Lawrence Rush were honored for their involvement in environmental education and advocacy. They show promise of carrying on the stewardship for our planet and its peoples that Jake and Fran epitomized.

Both are in the Yosemite Leadership program at the University. The national park has a wilderness center on campus which those in the program help to staff. In addition each participant prepares an educational outreach project that is presented to school children in the community. Both Mirella and Lawrence have also been selected to serve as seasonal rangers in the Park this summer.

Surprisingly, many in the Yosemite Leadership Program that we have met over the years hail not from the Central Valley, foothills, or mountains, but from SoCal. The stories of Mirella and Lawrence are no exception.

Mirella describes her journey: "I was born and raised in Southern California in a town called Claremont, just an hour east of Los Angeles. It is known as the City of Trees and is located in the foothills of the San Gabriel Mountains. My parents would often take my younger brother and me up to Mount Baldy during the winter to play in the snow. I grew up being exposed to nature's wonders and was fortunate enough to have the opportunity to go on a service project to Costa Rica my junior year of high school. It wasn't until that trip, when I got to volunteer at a sea turtle research station, that my interest in conservation was peaked.

"I came to UC Merced by chance, still not knowing what I wanted to do until I joined the Yosemite Leadership Program my second year. I became passionate about the national park system and learning more about the ecosystems they protect. I am currently pursuing a B.S. in Earth Systems Science and am set to graduate next May. With my degree and future studies, I want to become an Interpretive Ranger with the National Park Service and educate people about the natural wonders around them to build an appreciation and awareness of the resources and splendors in our care."

Lawrence's tale has similarities, but his has an interesting twist, as he intends to combine an interest in marketing with his environmental bent: "I am a sophomore at UC Merced and am originally from Orange County in Southern California. I am currently pursuing a Bachelor of Science in Cognitive Science, and hope to one day work in marketing for environmentally sustainable businesses. Currently, many businesses seem to have little regard for their natural resources and environmental footprint, and I hope to change that.

"My interest in environmentalism was first peaked camping with my mother in my childhood, as many of my most fond memories were made in national and state parks. Although Orange County is not known for its expanses of wilderness, it just made me appreciate the times I could go to the natural world all the more. My interest in environmentalism received a massive resurgence when I joined the Yosemite Leadership Program, who took me to Yosemite for the first time. I felt like a kid again, and knew immediately I wanted to give back to a place that held such a special part of my heart."

Our congratulations to both Mirella and Lawrence. May this summer amidst the Big Trees and Big Rocks in Yosemite grow their connections to the natural world. May they return to school in the fall invigorated and recommitted, and may careers of purpose and fulfillment await them further down the trail.



Insects and Humans Dine — but not on each other!

The weather was perfect for the Merced Group's picnic last May. Twenty or so folks gathered at retired farmer Jean Okuye's home in the almond orchards near Cressey, northeast of Livingston. Jean's straw-bale home is designed with many energy-efficient features which ensure that supplemental heating or cooling is required only a few days out of the year. Xeriscape enthusiasts were treated to a tour around the gardens which surround her home. Represented are a varied collection of native and drought-resistant plants which she has gathered from plant nurseries and private parties all over Central Valley. Bees, hummingbirds, and butterflies were in abundance, so clearly the humans aren't the only ones who enjoy the beauty and aromas that abound on this farm. And of course the insects weren't the only ones well fed that day. A potluck of homemade soup, salads, and desserts supplemented the conversations that fed the day. Many thanks to Jean for sharing her digs and making all of us feel so at home.



JEAN OKUYE'S HAY-BALE STUCCOED HOME



MEMBERS ENJOY THE CONVIVIALITY OF A RESTFUL SPRING AFTERNOON AT THE MERCED GROUP'S MAY POTLUCK.



BEAUTIFUL FAIR WEATHER GRACED OUR DAY BESIDE A YOUNG ALMOND GROVE IN THE HEART OF CENTRAL VALLEY.

Merced Group Needs a Little Help

Many hands do lighten the work, so the leadership of the Merced Group is looking for some folks willing to serve as a contact person and to provide some support in any of the following areas:

- **Membership:** The main task is to use the lists of new members that we are sent by national to address and mail a brief letter of greeting inviting those folks to attend our monthly meetings. Letters, envelopes, and stamps will be provided.
- **Agriculture:** This person will help keep the Executive Committee and Conservation Chair appraised of any topics or issues in the ag arena, particularly within Merced County.
- **Conservation:** This is a meatier position since it covers a wide umbrella of topics. Others will provide information and input, but someone needs to serve as a central clearing house and filter, to help us focus on the most pertinent issues for our Group. Usually our attention is centered on issues of air and water quality, land use and wise growth, and protection of farmland and natural spaces. The easiest way to share this information would be by attending the ExCom meetings on the first Wednesday of each month, 7:00-8:30 PM.

If you can help in one of these capacities, or if you have a relevant area of interest of your own, please contact Rod Webster for more information at (209) 723-4747.

Call for Candidates

2016 Executive Committee Nominations

The world's most democratic environmental organization needs you!

Yes, Tehipite Chapter members, you can run for Executive Committee and have a say in decision making in the Sierra Club as an elected Club leader. The ExCom is the administrative body of the Tehipite Chapter. We need people who can organize committees and inspire participation from our members. The Chapter always needs volunteers to handle the tasks common to all organizations.

If you have some time and would like to help this great organization, please volunteer to run for a seat on the ExCom. Each winning candidate is elected for a two-year term.

The Executive Committee typically meets at 7:00 pm on the 2nd Wednesday of each month in the UC Merced Center, across from the Fashion Fair Mall in Fresno.

You may volunteer yourself for consideration or suggest another member to the Nominating Committee (NomCom). Suggestions for nominations will be accepted until 5:00 pm Tuesday, September 13. Any submissions mailed must be received by the deadline.

Members may also run by petition. Any Chapter member proposed in writing by at least fifteen Chapter members prior to the deadline for submission of petitions, and who gives consent, shall also be included on the ballot. Petitions must be submitted to the Chapter Secretary (e-mail to sailboard@prodigy.net) by 5:00 pm Monday, October 10.

Please submit names to Sierra Club, P.O. Box 5396, Fresno CA 93755-5396, or e-mail names to one of our NomCom members listed below. Only those who consent to run will be on the ballot.

Election Schedule:

August 26	Notice of elections mailed / Start of nominations	December 7	Ballots counted by Election Committee, meeting at 6:00 pm at the UC Merced Center
September 13, 5pm	Deadline to submit names to Nominating Committee for consideration	December 7	Candidates contacted with results
September 14	Nominating Committee reports nominees to Executive Committee	December 14	ExCom certifies election and welcomes new members to the ExCom
October 10, 5pm	Deadline to submit petitions to Chapter Secretary	<u>For election nominations or information contact a member of the Nominating Committee:</u>	
October 14	Deadline for candidate statements to be submitted to Election Committee	Heather Anderson	(559) 681-6305 heather.anderson8@comcast.net
October 24	List of eligible voters produced	Bruce Gray	(559) 868-4400 olenski01@gmail.com
October 31	Ballots mailed out / Start of voting	Gerald Vinnard	(559) 431-5740 gvinnard@hotmail.com
December 1, 5pm	Close of voting		

manual on how to conduct endorsements and support our endorsed candidates. Sierra Club policy is to endorse only those candidates who demonstrate a commitment to our Sierra Club issues. We sometimes back a newcomer with a viable campaign who is an environmental champion, especially where the race involves an incumbent who, as often happens, is 180-degrees opposed to our positions.

2. Social Media Committee: Chapter leadership is in need of adding social media to communications and outreach to increase membership and to widen our audience. The Chapter needs volunteers to assist, develop, launch and maintain current and new social media sites. Volunteers will take direction from the Executive Committee and follow Sierra Club communication and social media guidelines and protocol, with content to be approved by the ExCom or those appointed by Chapter leadership for supervision. To begin, the Chapter needs to update, monitor, and post to our established Facebook page, develop and establish Twitter and Meetup accounts, and work with leadership to develop additional media for successful outreach and communication with new and current members, especially interested younger people.

3. Water Committee: The Tehipite Chapter is seeking volunteers who wish to learn about the water issues facing us in the central San Joaquin Valley. Expertise and prior knowledge are not required, just a curiosity to learn about water issues and a desire to protect the environment and our communities for the future. You can pick the specific issue or issues that you want to become knowledgeable in, some of which are described below. Some roles involve attendance at occasional public meetings.

- **Temperance Flat Dam**: This project, proposed for the San Joaquin River upstream from Millerton Lake, would be a colossal waste of nearly \$2 billion in taxpayer money. The San Joaquin is already the most heavily dammed river in California, and there is almost no new water to be had. We need volunteers to communicate our message to a wider audience in Fresno and Madera Counties.
- **Westlands Watch**: The largest agricultural district in the U.S. is headquartered in Fresno. Westlands Water District lands are east of Interstate 5, running from Coalinga to Los Banos. Recently, the Securities and Exchange Commission fined Westlands \$150,000 over what its General Manager joked was “a little Enron accounting.” Also, Westlands recently concluded a deal, brokered by Senator Feinstein, to ensure its access to future water supplies, although its landowners are junior water rights holders who previously had no assurance of any water in drought water years.
- **Delta Tunnels (renamed the California “WaterFix”)**: This \$18 billion boondoggle is being pushed by Governor Brown to benefit Southern California water interests and other giant water users. It will capture no new water sources. The tunnels are proposed to pipe water from the north, under the Sacramento/San Joaquin Delta, to southern California, with some going to San Joaquin Valley farms. This project has been stalled by lack of funding, since the water districts want federal handouts to pay for it, as well as by biologists, who report it would not provide enough water for salmon, steelhead, and other endangered fish to recover.
- **Groundwater overdraft**: The rapid drawdown of our San Joaquin

China Creek Park Management — ‘A Good Fit’ for Sierra Club Members

Every month on the third Saturday, volunteers from the Sequoia Chapter of the California Native Plant Society and their guests gather at China Creek Park, an undeveloped Fresno County regional park in Centerville, just off Highway 180. We are basically in charge of the park, managing trails and signage, keeping fences in order, removing graffiti, and trash and litter, and most importantly, encouraging the growth of native plants while discouraging the non-natives, of which there are many. In the latter category, there was a substantial stand of ailanthus (tree of heaven), which is mostly now gone after our program of ‘hack and squirt’— basically chopping into the cambium layer in a circle around the trunk and squirting in an agricultural poison. Sadly, many little suckers have sprouted in an area of about 1,500 square feet, but we deal with these as they come up. Other invasive species include large fig trees, and Bermuda and other non-native grasses. We have managed to cage and protect many native Valley oak trees—necessary because we’ve brought in cattle for weed abatement. Also native to this area are lizard’s tail, a beautiful, low-growing perennial, large stands of rushes, many elderberry bushes, native nettle (which delivers a monster sting if you’re not careful), a few ash trees and many more. The park has two fields, the eponymous ‘creek’ (a tributary of the Kings River which was turned into an irrigation canal long ago, but still looks quite natural), a ‘natural,’ overgrown area between the fields, and two ponds that the locals like to fish in. Animals include beaver, bobcat, deer, foxes, coyotes and weasels, plus many bird species.

Is this a good fit for Sierra Club members to participate in? We always need volunteers. This time of year we are in a frenzy of killing three kinds of thistle: bull, yellow star, and milk. We also cage oak seedlings, or remove cages when the trees reach about 8 feet tall. The work party is from 8am to noon, but volunteers can show up anytime. And if you’d like, just take a walk around... or snooze under a tree. Call Gene Richards at (559)264-2608, or email Warren Shaw at warshaw1955@gmail.com to be put on his mailing list for reminders.

What a great activity: out in nature on a quiet Saturday morning, learning about California natives, eliminating non-natives and preserving a bit of San Joaquin Valley natural history, great company—and the homemade muffins at break time are to die for.

Valley aquifer by three million acre-feet per year has created a crisis, as many residential wells go dry or collapse. California’s new law, the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA), has set up a planning process for the future, and we need volunteers to follow developments in its implementation.

Volunteers across the state research water issues and share their knowledge with other members of Sierra Club California’s Water Committee during twice-monthly conference calls. We need volunteers who can join these statewide calls to learn more about this central issue in California’s environmental politics.

Vulcan's "Austin Quarry" Approved by Madera County Planning Commission

Proposed project would be located at the southwest corner of Hwy 41 and Hwy 145

by Bruce Gray

Following approval for Vulcan's Austin Quarry project by the Madera County Planning Commission, the Madera Oversight Coalition (MOC) appealed its decision. The Madera County Board of Supervisors has called for a special meeting to be held on September 12 to decide the fate of the Austin Quarry. The meeting will be at the Madera Government Center, 200 W. 4th Street in Madera, starting at 9 AM.

The Austin Quarry project is set to remove 2.5 million tons of material from a 258-acre pit at the southwest corner of Highways 41 and 145. Since the eventual 400-foot deep hole is well below the water table, the quarry would have to constantly be pumping water out, creating a huge drawdown of the groundwater level in the area surrounding the project, potentially affecting private wells in nearby residential communities. The quarry would have an operating life of 100 years, meaning transportation congestion, dust, and noise would continue unabated for a century.



VULCAN EMPLOYEES IN BLUE SHIRTS TOOK UP THE MAJORITY OF SEATS AT THE PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING, LEAVING RESIDENTS WHO WANTED TO SPEAK AGAINST THE QUARRY OUTSIDE THE BOARD ROOM STANDING FOR HOURS



This project cannot even mitigate its most severe issue which is traffic. Vulcan has publicly stated that they will pay for a southbound lane from Hwy 145 to Ave 15 as mitigation for traffic. Caltrans states that this may not happen for at least 5 years and then it would just go back to a two-lane road at Ave 15. And hey, what about the northbound lane on Hwy 41, Vulcan?

This project has a multitude of issues that we feel have not been feasibly mitigated, such as impact on the overdrafted "Madera Groundwater Subbasin," which is in one of the state's top five overdrafted basins. The California Department of Water Resources is on the same page with MOC and has even more negatives regarding water than MOC does.

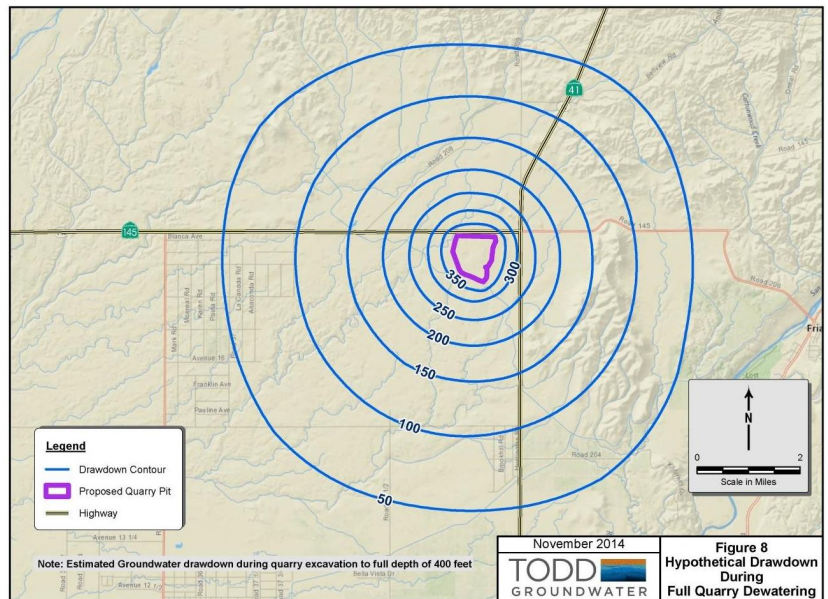
Air pollution and noise pollution are high on our list, with quarry trucks running directly thru the Madera Ranchos and the poor neighborhoods of Madera City to get to Hwy 99.

At the Planning Commission meeting the funniest telling

statement that Vulcan made was to ask for a variance for the height of their equipment. They would like to increase their equipment and stacks of materials from the code-approved height of 35 feet to a height of 70 feet. They told the Planning Commission there would be no visible difference to the public. The shocker? The Planning Commission bought it hook, line, and sinker.

Vulcan’s Austin Quarry Public Relations Department has been flooding the newspapers for the last nine months telling everyone how great the quarry will be and what a wonderful neighbor they will make. A major theme of the campaign was to tell everybody, “We are listening,” so as to be a great neighbor. Vulcan, you are listening to the wrong people—your shareholders. If you really have been listening to residents you would have saved yourself some money and moved on.

At the Planning Commission meeting, Vulcan finally showed their hand when they paid their employees to attend the meeting wearing Austin Quarry blue tee shirts. The blue shirts took up the majority of seats, leaving the residents who wanted to speak in objection to the project outside the board room standing for hours. Vulcan, “Might does not make right.” Your project is wrong for Madera County and its residents.



50-FOOT CONTOURS SHOW THE EXPECTED AMOUNT OF GROUNDWATER DRAWDOWN AT THE QUARRY’S FULL DEPTH OF 400 FEET

Volunteers Wanted for Tabling at Outdoor Events

Earth Day in Radio Park, The WILPF Peace Community Crafts Fair, guest speaker days at the Unitarian Universalist Church of Fresno, and coming up soon, CenCalVia’s Open Streets Event, organized by the Fresno County Bicycle Coalition (see the announcement at right—I guess they don’t know which streets will be closed yet). At each of these events the Sierra Club Tehipite Chapter tries to have a visible presence with a table offering *Sierra* magazines, *Tehipite Topics*, and issue flyers.

But we would like to expand our show with some fun activities and interesting displays. Some suggestions include matching games, with pine cones to pictures of different trees or tracks in snow to local wild animals, a display of photos by chapter members of our local scenic highlights, a nature guessing game of pictures (trees, flowers, birds, insects, scenic spots) with the answers under a flap, lists and maps and handouts on recommended hikes in the nearby mountains and foothills, as well as the usual information about our upcoming speakers and films, and the campaigns in which our chapter is engaged. We often share a table with the Citizens Climate Lobby and Fresnans Against Fracking, so there is always lots to talk about with other activists and the newcomers who drop by our table.

We need volunteers to create our games and poster displays, and also to spend some time at the table welcoming visitors, interacting with curious children, and explaining to one and all just what the Sierra Club is all about. Give us a ring by calling Connie Young at (559) 225-2547 and saying, “Yes, I’d like to help recruit new members and youth to protect our planet, to clean the air and restore our rivers, to send minority youth up to the mountain parks, to save endangered plants and animals, and to enlarge our wilderness. There is so much that needs to be done. Count me in.”

The Rights of Nature

by Chip Ashley

Does nature have rights?

I attended a conference organized by the Human Rights Coalition of the Central Valley entitled “Climate Change: People, Planet, and the Valley” on December 5th. The purpose of the conference was to discuss the relationship between human rights and climate change.

Whose rights should take precedence—those of humans or nature’s? This question was floated, but more in an attempt to stimulate thought than as a serious choice. There is no choice because having human rights depends on having a climate that can support human life. After all, no life, no rights.

It was reassuring for me to learn that everyone I spoke with recognized this was a trick question based on a false dilemma. Everyone understood that human rights and the rights of nature are inseparably linked.

The diagram on the next page presents two models of sustainability. The left one represents the current model, where sustainability is the small overlapping portions of the three circles. This model does not recognize the complete dependence of society and economy on nature. The model is by its design unsustainable. Unfortunately, this chart represents the current practice of most developed nations, including the United States.

The chart on the right, on the other hand, represents strong sustainability, because it shows the actual dependence of human society and our economy on nature—with a viable economy, it is important to point out, totally dependent upon a stable and sustainable society, and not the other way around.

Human rights and nature’s rights are interdependent and therefore inseparable. If either is to take precedence, it must be nature. Human rights depend upon nature, so we humans need to be more cognizant and concerned about nature’s rights, especially in a world increasingly impacted by human behavior, one result of which is climate change.

Codifying the rights of nature in our institutions

Recognition of the rights of nature is gaining momentum. In 2007-2008 Ecuador rewrote its constitution to include nature’s rights. “Nature ... has the right to exist, persist, maintain and regenerate its vital cycles, structure, functions and its processes in evolution.” (Article 71) “Nature has the right to restoration. This integral restoration is independent of the obligation on natural and juridical persons or the State to indemnify the

people and the collectives that depend on the natural systems.” (Article 72) “The State will apply precaution and restriction measures in all the activities that can lead to the extinction of species, the destruction of the ecosystems or the permanent alteration of the natural cycles.” (Article 73) “The persons, people, communities and nationalities will have the right to benefit from the environment and form natural wealth that will allow wellbeing.

Environmental services cannot be appropriated; their production, provision, use and exploitation will be regulated by the State.” (Article 74)

[See more at the website of the Global Alliance for the Rights of Nature <http://therightsofnature.org/ecuador-rights/>.]

People need nature, and in protecting nature, people are protecting themselves. As North Fork Mono elder Ron Goode put it at the conference, “Healthy land, healthy people.”

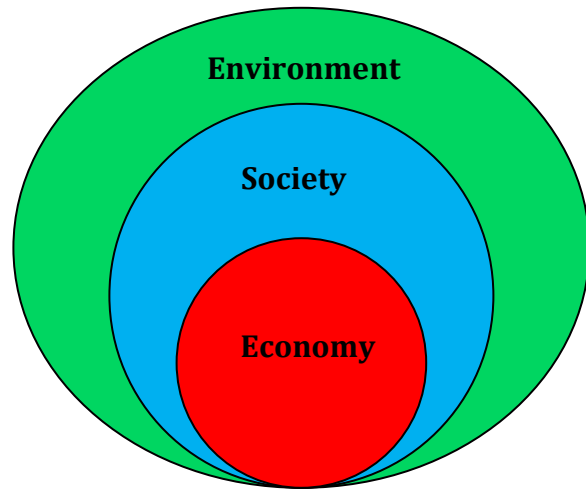
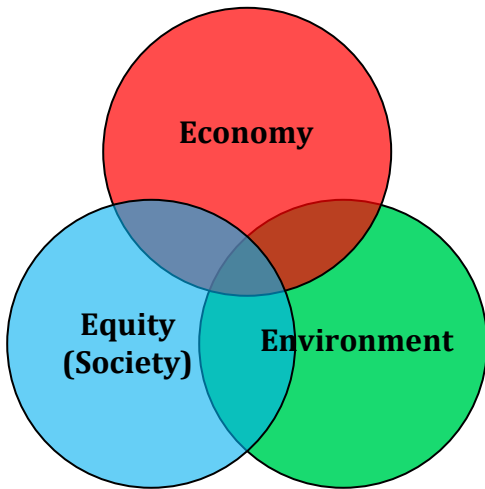
Industrial capitalism sees nature as a commodity

The dominant economic system in the United States and most of the industrialized world—a form of capitalism largely driven and controlled by large business interests—has looked at the world as a collection of commodities to be valued in the capitalist marketplace. Legally, capitalism sees nature as property—a commodity. Even human beings are valued in this system as a commodity—labor—whose worth is determined according to supply and demand.

The capitalist system has led to a great deal of environmental degradation, including forest destruction and climate change, the result of 250 years of burning fossil fuels for energy. The current local pine bark beetle epidemic, exacerbated by a drought intensified by climate change, is killing most of the pines in the Sierra Nevada. Because the forest was valued as a natural resource, without rights of its own, natural fires were suppressed and the forest was allowed to grow unnaturally dense (more trees means more timber), putting undue competition between the trees for what little water was available during the drought. This weakened the capacity of the trees to manufacture sap, which has served as an evolved defense against the beetles.

Much of this tree die-off is manufactured disaster. The term “natural resource” gives the game away. A natural resource is, of course, a commodity, and our natural forests have been, and continue to be managed, as commodities.

Human rights frequently place second behind economic “rights.” Economically vulnerable communities, often comprised of mostly farm or other “unskilled” laborers, are also subject to environmental degradation. Tehipite



TWO ALTERNATIVE VIEWS OF SUSTAINABILITY

“The concept of the “triple bottom line,” now widely referred to as the three pillars of sustainability— people, profits and planet— is hindering our ability to understand why the system is not working for so many people. In reality, the environment *contains* human society, which in turns *contains* the economy. A vibrant economy depends on the rule of law and depends on people earning enough money to create a robust market for goods and services. Society depends on having a stable climate that supports agriculture and that allows most (or all) people to support their families and communities through the fruits of their labor.

“The model of three pillars of environment, economy and equity (or people, profit, planet), is misleading. The environment is the service provider that enables human society to exist. Human society creates the conditions, rules and relationships that support economic activity.”

from “Redefining the Relationship between the Environment, Society and the Economy” (November 14, 2011), by Marianna Grossman, Executive Director, Sustainable Silicon Valley, at

<http://www.environmentalleader.com/2011/11/14/redefining-the-relationship-between-the-environment-society-and-the-economy/#ixzz4GyMyQQva>.

Chapter member Dr. Don Gaede’s presentation at the conference focused on human communities in the San Joaquin Valley that are disproportionately impacted by poor air quality due to ozone and particulates because of their geographic locations beside highways and industrial facilities. These same communities are also subject to poor water quality due to competition with agricultural interests and more affluent communities who have the financial wherewithal to drill deeper wells than their poor neighbors, legally stealing their water away in California’s currently unregulated groundwater economy.

Nature’s rights come last in our economy

Nature is last in the Valley water line. The water “rights” of cities and growers have always come before riparian, estuarial, wetland, and marine ecosystems, whose rights for life-giving water are considered only after human needs are met. Thus the San Joaquin River salmon runs stopped when Friant Dam was built in 1944. Thus the vast numbers of waterfowl migrating through the San

Joaquin Valley have been greatly reduced as wetland water sources continue to get diverted for human use.

Coastal marine ecosystems need fresh water too. As water flows downstream from fresh to brackish to saltwater, distinct ecosystems harbor different sets of species that can exist only in a certain range of salinity. Upstream diversions profoundly affect the survival of native species in the Delta and the estuaries of San Francisco Bay. These effects are not immediately obvious to the casual observer or to business interests using the water to make a profit, who see no problem because they believe they have no interest in seeing a problem.

Humanity is not separate from but a part of nature

The Human Rights Coalition of the Central Valley deserves great credit for recognizing the dependence of human rights on nature. It is a sign of hope as more and more humans are waking up to the fact that humans and human communities are not separate from nature, but indeed are a part of nature.

Kokolik River — Brooks Range to the Chukchi Sea

by Heather Anderson

It started out with flights from Fresno, San Francisco, Seattle, and Anchorage, and then a flight across Alaska to the small coastal city of Kotzebue. At the hangar I transferred gear to my rubber river bag and walked the short distance with my new roommate to find the Bayside Inn, overlooking a bay of the Chukchi Sea.

It was June, so in front of the hotel small ice floes were slipping silently and rapidly out to sea from higher elevations in the Brooks Range. I'd be flying the next day across the crest of these wild mountains to our put-in spot on the Kokolik River. Finding no cafes open for dinner in the small village, I resorted to my left-over sandwich from lunch. Despite the 24/7 daylight, we settled comfortably in our hotel and slept.

Next day was a no-fly day due to bad weather in the direction of our trip.

When not waiting in the hangar for weather news, I walked around the village, noticing several broken-down cabins and musing what this town might have looked like eighty or a hundred years ago. Bits of ice-pack continued to flow quietly down the sound.



On the third day, we were able to fly low through valleys and over the vast Brooks Range, to land on a flat rocky runway down the middle of a small island in the narrow Kokolik River. I was grateful to set up my tent at last. It has always been an uplifting experience to hop out of the bush plane into a week of wilderness, several hours from the nearest mini-airport and support. The sounds and visual vestiges of civilized society fall away,



replaced by rushing rivers, unusual birdcalls, tundra, and taiga.

The clucking calls of ptarmigan awakened me, though I was unable

to see any, as they hid in the bushes. Other paddlers did get photos of these small chicken-like birds of the arctic grouse family, who change plumage from brown to white according to season. Then I smelled our breakfast of



NORTHWEST ALASKA WITH KOTZEBUE AND THE KOKOLIK RIVER HIGHLIGHTED. WITH A LITTLE OVER 3000 RESIDENTS KOTZEBUE IS THE LARGEST CITY IN THE NORTHWEST ARCTIC BOROUGH. THE 200-MILE-LONG KOKOLIK RIVER ARISES IN THE DE LONG MOUNTAINS OF THE WESTERN BROOKS RANGE AND FLOWS NORTH TO THE KASEGALUK LAGOON BESIDE THE CHUKCHI SEA.

eggs, hashed browns, and coffee, cooking over a small propane camp stove.

It was an unusually hot Alaskan day, but only in the eighties so not hot for a Californian like me. The heat encouraged mosquitos, as well as lush blooms of lupine, cotton grass, white heather, anemone, yellow cinquefoil, and lavender rosebay. Dwarf willow was ever present.



After breaking camp and packing the four canoes and one "rubber

ducky" for our seven paddlers and two guides, I was grateful to be back on the river. It was heaven with a cool breeze to blow away biting insects. June is the worst month for these insects, so it is better to travel Alaska in early fall. Shortly, we reached our new campsite, perched on a tributary stream against a sloping hillside of more Arctic wildflowers.

Since light was everlasting and time was not of the essence, we often found ourselves hiking over grassy, rounded hills until eleven or twelve in late evening. It is



called “arctic time” and often includes a late breakfast. A great view of the Kokolik River in the distance was

our reward for another midnight hike.

One windy day required rough paddling through waves, and climaxed with an uncomfortable dinner in the rain, even inside in my unforeseeably leaky tent. The next day provided us with views of five muskoxen, remnants of an ancient species. They are distinguished for their long, shaggy coat, uniquely curved horns, and for the males, a strong musky odor, though I didn’t get close enough to smell them. Related more to sheep and goats than to oxen, they are believed to have

migrated from Siberia to North America around 100,000 years ago. Although I was more interested in wild landscape than wild animals, our group of wildlife buffs were ecstatic and I went along with their enthusiasm. Of course, we also



saw caribou and even a few wolves. All of them contributed to a wonderful wildness.



Since this was Arctic Wild’s exploratory trip on the Kokolik, it was necessary to scout for the perfect gravel bar, long and smooth enough for the bush

plane’s special balloon tires to connect safely with the earth when landing. After two of our selected gravel bars were rejected, we paddled many more miles before spotting our pilots and planes waiting ahead.

My trips rafting the Kongacut and the Tatshenshini , and canoeing the Noatak and now the Kokolik, were all rewarding, as well as a great way to avoid carrying a backpack.

The flight back, following river valleys and mountain ranges, was a visual treat. Endings are always abrupt; one minute you are flying over the vast Alaskan landscape, the next packing gear to head home. That final bush flight helped soften the end of our Kokolik canoe trip.





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Tehipite Topics is published three to four times per year. Color versions of the *Topics* are available on the Chapter website at www.sierraclub.org/tehipite/newsletters. Back issues are archived on the website beginning from April 2004. Articles and photographs from Sierra Club members are always welcome for our coming issues. Send your contributions for the Autumn 2016 issue by email to robertsturner52@gmail.com before Oct 1st.

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 21ST GENERAL MEETING, 7PM

UC Center, 550 E. Shaw Ave, across from Fashion Fair Mall

***David Hunter:
Photonaturalist***

I document animals, plants and the environments they inhabit using my camera. I bring to the field a keen eye and a spirit of honoring what is present, honed from training and experience gained from years in the newspaper photojournalism industry.

I photograph wildlife, with an emphasis on endangered and threatened species, for the purpose of documentation, conservation and education. I take particular delight in photographing small vertebrate and invertebrate species.

When documenting an animal, plant or insect, I strive to capture an image of the subject that represents it well in its natural habitat, untouched by man. The safety of the animal is always my first priority.



**DAVID HUNTER PHOTOGRAPHING TITCOMB BASIN
IN WYOMING’S WIND RIVER MOUNTAINS**