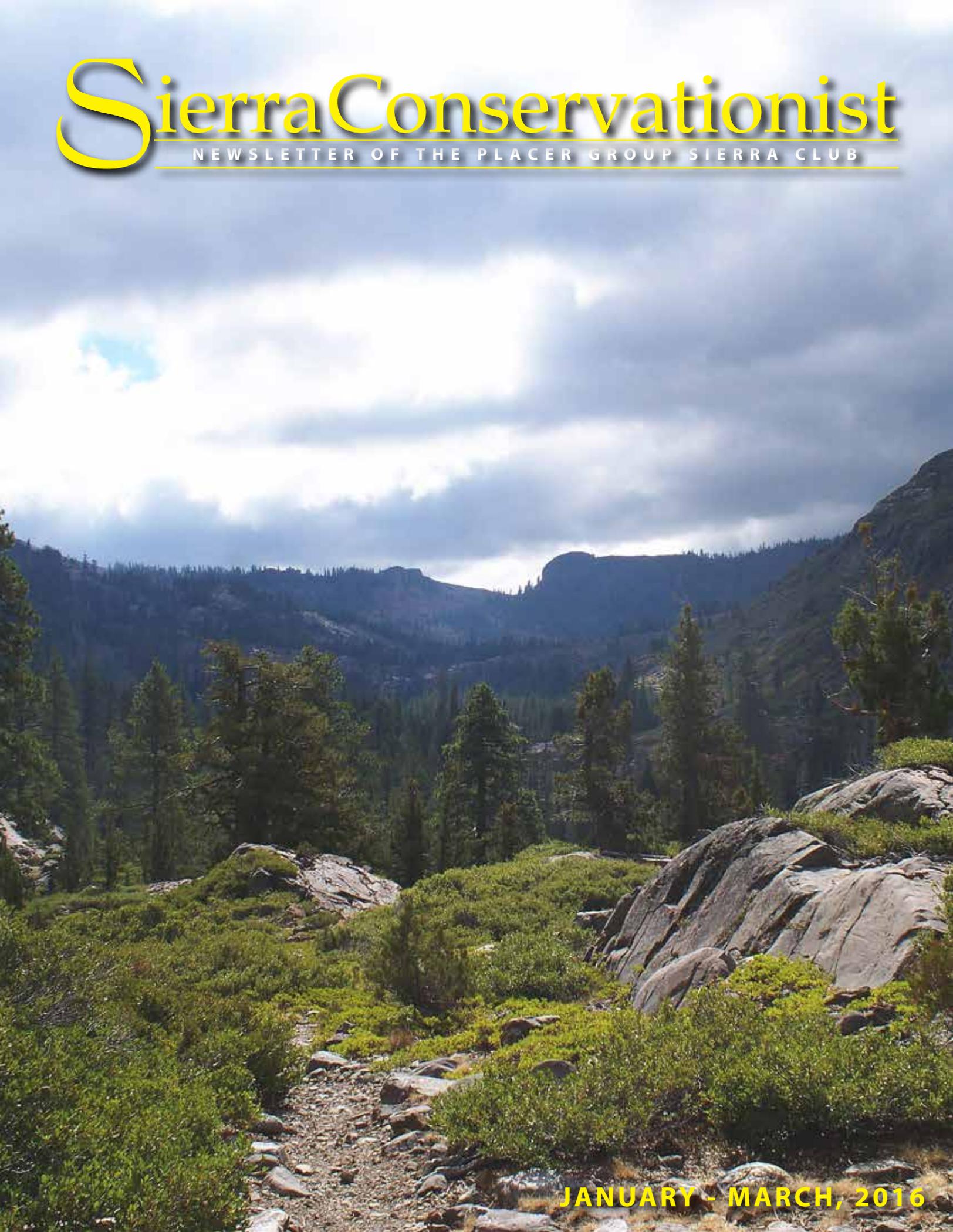


# Sierra Conservationist

NEWSLETTER OF THE PLACER GROUP SIERRA CLUB



JANUARY - MARCH, 2016

## County Transportation Tax - Where's the Vision?

Residents throughout the County received mailers from the Placer County Transportation Planning Agency (PCTPA) during the past two months, glossy documents which detailed plans for how increased revenue from a proposed half-cent sales tax increase to fund transportation improvements would be spent.

The purpose of the mailers seemed clear - to boost sagging support county-wide for the tax hike, which could appear on the 2016 ballot. The measure would require two-thirds of voter support for approval; however, polling announced by the PCTPA last August revealed support amongst County residents for the measure at 61 percent, 5 percent short of the needed threshold.

Despite growing alarm worldwide at the rapidly increasing rate of global climate disruption caused by greenhouse gas emissions, the PCTPA's plan for how to spend the revenue reveals a surprisingly antiquated vision for Placer County. Rather than directing new transportation funds primarily towards buses, bike lanes, train routes like the Capitol Corridor, and other greenhouse-gas slashing proposals, PCTPA wants to spend more than 80 percent of the sales tax revenue on improving roads for single occupancy vehicles.

The Placer Group will continue to follow the PCTPA's efforts to place a sales tax increase on a future election ballot. For now, it appears the measure exacerbates the problems that have led to climate disruption, rather than attempting to solve them. We hope there is still time for the PCTPA to present a vision of the County's transportation future that acknowledges the type of visionary planning necessary to address the major challenges climate change presents.

- Casey Mills, Placer Group ExCom

## Placer County "Secondary Homes" Zoning Text Change Would Undermine Neighborhood Character

County zoning rules are mandated by state law to permit adding homes to lots with existing houses for expanding families, aging parents and affordable housing.

The Board of Supervisors will soon take up a proposal to make it easier to build second homes on single residence zoned parcels. An example would be to reduce the current 9,000 square foot minimum lot size requirement to 5,000 square feet.

Unfortunately, neighbors have already seen questionable variances that granted second residences and fear that shrinking the lot size requirement will further erode the zoning that protects their neighborhoods.

Existing and potential second homes faced strong criticism from the Sierra Club before the current proposal due to a high visibility second home on a lot overlooking the Auburn State Recreation Area canyon. This eyesore secondary home was added to a lot on the Foresthill Divide at the end of Eagle Ridge Road and has a driveway on Ponderosa Way.

The Foresthill Divide Community Plan has a Viewshed map to protect views from the North Fork American River. The Sierra Club supports writing new protection like this into the secondary home zoning ordinance. Because secondary homes must be allowed "by right," the existing zoning text needs to be amended. Specific standards need to be adopted to protect natural resources such as river views and preserve scenic natural and neighborhood values from impacts of canyon rim houses.

The other major need for second home standards is because the Eagle Ridge Rd secondary home is built in a highly vulnerable position for fire in a Very-High-Fire-Threat Area. Taking topography and relationship to the first home into consideration can minimize risk. "The County needs to adopt standards that prevent second homes from being in fire unsafe and highly visible locations on lots," said Placer County Group Co-chairs Marilyn Jasper and Michael Garabedian.





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**P.O. Box 7167 • Auburn, CA 95604**

<http://www.sierraclub.org/mother-lode/placer>

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**ON THE COVER:** Gateway to the Picayune Valley, Granite Chief wilderness  
 Photo: Cat Raymond



## From the Chair

By Marilyn Jasper

It's been a wild and wonderful ride for the past 16 years as Chair of the Placer Group Sierra Club. My intentions are to stay involved with the Sierra Club Placer Group (see ExCom election results), but as president or chair of three other nonprofit board of directors, something had to give. There have always been issues or proposals to deal with, and I can honestly say, there is never a dull moment with the Sierra Club! I hope whoever is elected as the new chair enjoys the volunteer work as much as I have.

The message that seems to have been our mantra for all the years I've been involved remains: If you care about environmental health, natural resources, wildlife, open space, etc., then become involved with the Placer Group. Just a "big toe dip" to test the waters will suffice at first. Hopefully, as you get your "sea legs," you will find the volunteer work very rewarding. Our efforts may be successful or not, but they are still worthwhile when we know we did our best.

Please consider coming to our Placer Group "Member-Executive Committee and Conservation" meetings. Give us your input, or send us feedback on what we might change to attract more volunteers to carry on good environmental work for future generations. We wish the very best to all our loyal members and supporters in 2016.

## Reduced Prices! 2016 Sierra Club Wall Calendars *ON SALE*

We have gorgeous 2016 Sierra Club wilderness wallcalendars on sale now. The usual cost is \$15, and the reduced/sale prices below include tax.

- 1-2 calendars, \$3 off (20% discount) = \$12 each
- 3-4 calendars, \$4 off = \$11 each
- 5 or more calendars, \$5 off = \$10 each

We all receive the many "free" calendars each year, but none can hold a candle to the Sierra Club's beautiful photographs and big squares for writing. To make arrangements to purchase, contact Marilyn at [marilyn.jasper@mlc.sierraclub.org](mailto:marilyn.jasper@mlc.sierraclub.org) or (916) 652-7005. Calendars can be mailed (via USPS) for an additional \$5 each.



## Service at Fort Ord National Monument

Bobcats, bicycles, bombs and bullets are an unusual combination, but you will find these and many more interesting things on the Fort Ord National Monument in Monterey, California.

Service Trips are among the many national trips offered by the Sierra Club. I was a staff member of the recent service trip on the former army base, Fort Ord. The approximately 14,650 acres of what was the Fort Ord Army Base is now the Fort Ord National Monument. The Monument is jointly administered by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and the U.S. Army. BLM's area will be enlarged and open to the public when the Army clears about 5,000 acres of munition hazards.

We camped, worked and explored for a week in the Monument. Our work included scattering native grass seeds on a hillside that needed restoring. We then covered the seeds with rice straw to keep them in place. We learned how to protect the oak trees and constructed additional fencing to contain the goats that would be brought in for grazing. The goats quickly cleared brush in the contained areas. We collected native seeds for replanting and pulled and piled the non-native ice plant that is common in coastal areas.

The excellent BLM staff led our work outings each day. In our introduction, we learned about the history of the area, the previous inhabitants and the Monument's wildlife. They have an active volunteer organization and welcome folks to join in the restoration efforts.

Fort Ord's military heritage dates back to 1917 when the Army purchased the land as a training ground for field artillery and cavalry troops stationed at the nearby Presidio of Monterey. It served as a primary training ground for the military and at one time, was home to 50,000 troops. The Fort Ord Army Base was decommissioned and closed in 1994.

The Monument today is loved for its beauty and rich biodiversity. It is happily used by bicyclists, walkers and hikers. In addition, California State University has a campus adjacent to the Monument. This is a wonderful area to visit and explore.

**Arlene Jamar**

## Executive Committee (ExCom) Election Results

Thanks to all members who voted in our Placer Group member election to fill the three ExCom two-year positions: Casey Mills, Tom Beattie, and Marilyn Jasper were elected for two-year terms. Congratulations! Placer Group officers will be elected at the January 6, 2016 meeting.

To keep us going, make a New Year's Resolution to volunteer for just one day of tabling or helping with an environmental issue. You'll feel good about it, and so will we! All members are most welcome and urged to attend Placer Group's monthly ExCom meetings.

Many hands...



# CA Wolf

# Update



*Some news articles are wrongly claiming that because wolves in Siskiyou County were seen feeding on a cattle carcass, that CDFW's investigation report concluded that the kill (two animals) was from the wolves. Nothing could be further from the truth.*

The CA Dept of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) has released a draft wolf conservation plan for Gray Wolves in California for public comment. Deadline for commenting is February 15, 2016. The Draft Plan (two parts) can be downloaded at <https://www.wildlife.ca.gov/Conservation/Mammals/Gray-Wolf>. Part 1 is relatively short—25 pages; Part II, is considerably longer, but still worth looking at.

One of the conservation groups' concerns is that the plan calls for reducing wolves' current protection after they reach only 50 to 75 wolves. These population numbers are considered too low for a sustained recovery. If you submit comments, please urge the CDFW to keep wolves fully protected until they completely recover. To submit comments online, go to: <http://wolfconservationplan-comments.org/>.

**If you wish to speak to the plan in person, there will be three public hearings—Yreka on Jan 21; Long Beach on Jan 26; and Sacramento on Monday, Feb 1, from 5 pm to 8 pm at the Double Tree Hotel at 2001 Point West Way, Sacramento, CA 95815.**

Written comments may also be sent to Wolf Plan Comments, PO Box 26750. San Francisco, CA 94126.

As an aside, some news articles are wrongly claiming that because wolves in Siskiyou County were seen feeding on a cattle carcass, that CDFW's investigation report concluded that the kill (two animals) was from the wolves. Nothing could be further from the truth. The report concludes that the wolf kill on one "could not be determined," and the other was possibly wolves, but "undetermined." When livestock is put out in remote areas where predators (including a wolf pack) are known to exist, the animals should be checked regularly and non-lethal deterrents utilized. Sick or otherwise injured animal (as one animal's carcass condition indicated) may attract predators. More importantly, such unhealthy animals may have died from a number of possibilities. Thus it is improper for anyone to jump to erroneous conclusions. Carcass scavenging does not equate to killing. To read the Depredation Investigation Report, visit: <http://nrm.dfg.ca.gov/FileHandler.ashx?DocumentID=113512&inline>



## Sierra Club—the BIG picture and the Placer Group

The Sierra Club is one club (national and global). From there, it is organized with Chapters, Groups, Committees, sub-committees, coalitions, specific issue organizations, etc. Depending upon their size, entire states in the U.S. may be designated as one “Chapter,” but larger Chapters may consist of multiple “Groups.” For example, California has 13 Chapters throughout the state. The Mother Lode Chapter is one of the largest geographically (22 counties, covered by 11 Groups). As you can see from the map, our Placer Group boundaries are contained within Placer County, running from the crest of the Sierra to the western boundary line.

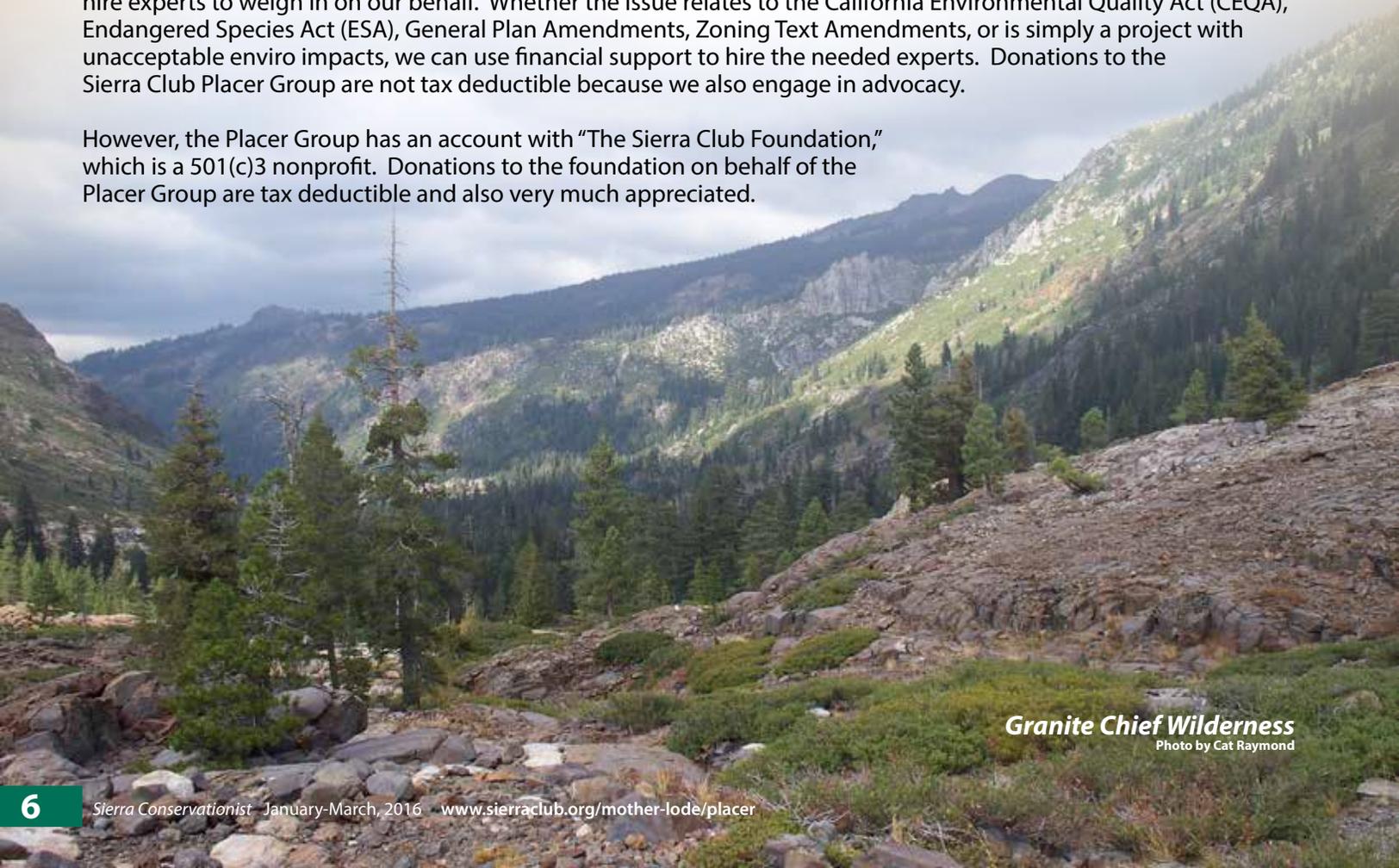


Sierra Club members may attend Chapters and Group meetings, vote to elect “Executive Committees” who in turn vote on issues and make policy decisions.

Groups meet regularly to deal with local issues, and that’s why volunteers are so critically important. If there are only a few active volunteers, then many proposals slip through the nets with little-to-no scrutiny. This is why we need YOU.

If you cannot volunteer, then donating to the Placer Group is very helpful. For example, on a number of occasions, as volunteers, we’ve studied the issues, made comments, attended years of meetings, but when the final proposals are presented, we discover that our concerns are either ignored or dismissed. Rather than walk away, that’s when we hire experts to weigh in on our behalf. Whether the issue relates to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), Endangered Species Act (ESA), General Plan Amendments, Zoning Text Amendments, or is simply a project with unacceptable enviro impacts, we can use financial support to hire the needed experts. Donations to the Sierra Club Placer Group are not tax deductible because we also engage in advocacy.

However, the Placer Group has an account with “The Sierra Club Foundation,” which is a 501(c)3 nonprofit. Donations to the foundation on behalf of the Placer Group are tax deductible and also very much appreciated.



**Granite Chief Wilderness**  
Photo by Cat Raymond

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## FIELD NOTES

### Balloon Pod Milkvetch

*Astragalus whitneyi*

Also called Whitney's Locoweed, this California native perennial has seedpods which look like inflated alien balloons and rattle when shaken during their mature phase. A member of the pea family, the genus *Astragalus* has 144 species but only 10 of them occur within Placer and Nevada Counties. Most are uncommon and found only at high elevations east of the Sierra. This specimen was photographed on a hike at Squaw Valley high camp.



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