

Sierra Club YODELER

THE NEWSPAPER OF THE SAN FRANCISCO BAY CHAPTER ♦ SUMMER 2020



TOWARD A JUST, GREEN RECOVERY ♦ SIERRA CLUB SIGNS ON TO
DEFEND RICHMOND COAL PHASE-OUT IN COURT ♦ PROTECTING
THE MOUNT TAMALPAIS WATERSHED FOR CLEAN DRINKING WATER ♦
CONTRA COSTA RESIDENTS SAY 'NO' TO NEW OIL AND GAS WELLS

LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

So much has changed since our last Yodeler. When the last issue came out, we were discussing how to electrify your home, volunteer opportunities in Yosemite, and Marin County's Measure D to preserve open space. Since that time, the world has come to a halt, with the COVID-19 global pandemic and country-wide shelter in place taking over as the main focus of our attention. So much has changed, and still so much has stayed the same.



The shelter in place struck Bay Area residents particularly hard. As keen lovers of the outdoors, we saw residents race to nature to soothe their anxiety about the pandemic. And as people raced to the outdoors, agencies that manage parks, beaches and trails closed certain areas and amenities (fearing further spread of the virus), adding to the hardship and heartbreak.

As we sheltered in place, the wheels of government did not stop — so the chapter's work could not stop either. During this chaotic time, we fought for our local East Bay Community Energy program to be nuclear-free (and won! Read more on page 6); supported eviction and foreclosure moratoriums (page 5); stepped in to support Richmond in the legal battle over the City's ordinance phasing out polluting coal dust (page 9); and — recognizing the particular harm the closing of schools and the shelter in place had on children and families — we asked city governments and the East Bay Regional Parks District to designate park "family hours". Even now as I write this, chapter staff and volunteers are advocating for opening our streets to pedestrians and bikes (see page 8).

In this issue of the Yodeler, you won't see any outings — we are restricting outings until it is truly safe for us to gather as groups of friends again. You will see, though, the amazing work we continue to do as we advance our campaigns from home. From standing up against new oil and gas drilling in Contra Costa County (page 4) to promoting climate literacy for school children (page 11), to advocating for a public park at Point Molate (page 7), the work at the chapter never slows. It's because of you that we are able to continue this work.

There are many opportunities to get involved today and in the near future. Keep reading to learn about ways to join us from home.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Minda Berbeco". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Minda Berbeco
DIRECTOR

Sierra Club YODELER

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Cover Photo

Cypresses along a path at Point Reyes (not the famous "tree tunnel" at the Receiving Station). This photo was taken before the coronavirus pandemic. Currently, it is recommended that you carry a mask and wear it when you're around other people, even outdoors. Photo courtesy Jay Huang Photography, www.flickr.com/jayhuangphotos.



SUMMER 2020 CHAPTER NEWS

In order to keep our community safe during the COVID-19 pandemic, all in-person meetings, events and outings have been cancelled through at least June 14th. Look to our website for updates: sierraclub.org/sfbay. During this period of necessary physical distancing, we are working hard to make sure there are many ways for our local Sierra Club community to stay connected online and keep up the work of protecting the environment. Here are a few ideas for how to stay involved:

Join a virtual Club meeting

Want to get involved in local Sierra Club campaigns from the comfort of your home? Why not sit in (virtually) on a meeting of one of our regional groups and issue committees. Their meetings are being held by phone or video conference for now. Visit our online calendar (sierraclub.org/sfbay/calendar) and contact meeting hosts for details.

Our eight regional groups take on issues within their geographical areas (find yours at sierraclub.org/sfbay/local-groups). Our issue committees cover topics like Energy & Climate, Zero Waste, Climate Literacy, Water, Transportation and more (read more and find contact information at bit.ly/issuecomms).

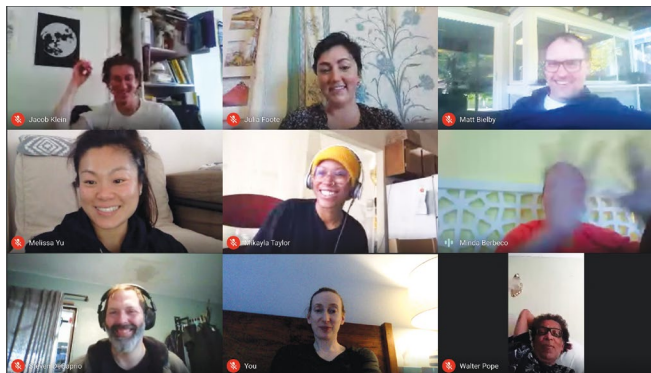


PHOTO: A virtual chapter staff "meeting" during the shelter in place

Chapter YouTube channel goes live

Looking for entertainment, information, and skills training? Check out our newly launched YouTube channel (bit.ly/SFBayYouTube) for videos of recent chapter educational programs and workshops. Titles include:

- Sea-Level Rise in the Bay Area: A Primer
- The People's Bailout Info Session & Art Build
- Building Electrification 101 Training
- The Power of Storytelling Workshop
- ... and more added all the time!

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Watch 'In the Know,' a new Sierra Club interview series with Olga Bolotina

The weekly In the Know series introduces you to the people behind environmental policies and initiatives. What drives them, what keeps them up at night, and what can we learn from and about them that will inspire us in our own life and work? Join Olga Bolotina, Chair of the San Francisco Bay Chapter of the Sierra Club and a long-time environmental activist, on Facebook Live each Friday at noon for a new In the Know conversation with environmental leaders, including Sierra Club volunteers and staff: [Facebook.com/SierraClubSFBayChapter](https://www.facebook.com/SierraClubSFBayChapter). We invite you to listen to the past conversations on YouTube at bit.ly/olgaintheknow.

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Run for your local Sierra Club Group Executive Committee

If you are an active Sierra Club member who is passionate about the environment and committed to local issues, you might consider running for a seat on your local Sierra Club Group Executive Committee. The Chapter has eight Groups covering the four counties that constitute the Chapter, so your Group is — or should be! — dealing with your concerns. If you read the election issue of the Yodeler that comes out every fall, you will see that there are usually plenty of candidates for the Chapter Executive Committee but too often too few candidates for Group Executive Committees.

The nomination period for candidates for both Group and Chapter Executive Committees opens on July 14th. Find out more on page 15 of this Yodeler.

Contra Costa poised to approve new oil and gas wells near residential neighborhood

JACOB KLEIN

Contra Costa County is poised to approve an application to drill new oil and gas wells within 1,000 feet of homes in unincorporated Brentwood. Living near oil and gas wells can cause asthma, cancer, respiratory illness, fetal harm, and more. Wells can explode or spill toxic chemicals and pollute groundwater. Yet county staff who reviewed the proposal found that the project’s environmental and public health impacts would be “less than significant.” They want to approve it with no further environmental impact research or public comment.

Indiana-based Powerdrive Oil and Gas wants to drill on a site south of Heidorn Ranch Road and Old Sand Creek Road. The proposal would allow for three exploratory wells and one permanent rig connected to a gas pipeline running beneath the City of Antioch. Beyond the residential neighborhood immediately bordering the drilling site, there is an elementary school within half a mile of the site and two medical centers within two miles.

The wells’ proposed placement flies in the face of a movement in the state for 2,500-foot setbacks for communities from oil and gas wells. That movement is based on

a growing body of research demonstrating that “the closer people live to oil and gas wells, the more likely they will be exposed to toxic air contaminants and the more elevated their risk of associated health effects.” (Read the full scientific literature review at bit.ly/WellLitReview.)

The project description was quietly posted on the Department of Conservation and Development website on April 13th, with no public announcement. Local communities who would be most impacted by the project were unaware of it until a week before the public comment period was originally supposed to close, on May 19th. Fortunately, public pressure has won an extension of the comment deadline June 9th.

In the midst of an unprecedented shelter-in-place, this proposal nearly slipped under the radar. We are learning more about the tragic links between air pollution and COVID-19 deaths. Now more than ever we have to fight for our community’s right to health. We can’t allow the county to rubber stamp fossil fuel projects with long-term impacts during a global crisis.

WHAT YOU CAN DO:

Don’t miss your chance to tell the county to stop this hazardous project. Send a message to decision makers before the deadline of 5:00 PM on Tuesday, June 9th. You can send a message using our online action form at bit.ly/nonewwells, or send your comments by email to Contra Costa County Planner Syd Sotoodeh at syd.sotoodeh@dcd.cccounty.us. Let the county know that they must deny the proposal and stop permitting new fossil fuel extraction projects.

Jacob Klein is a chapter staff organizer.

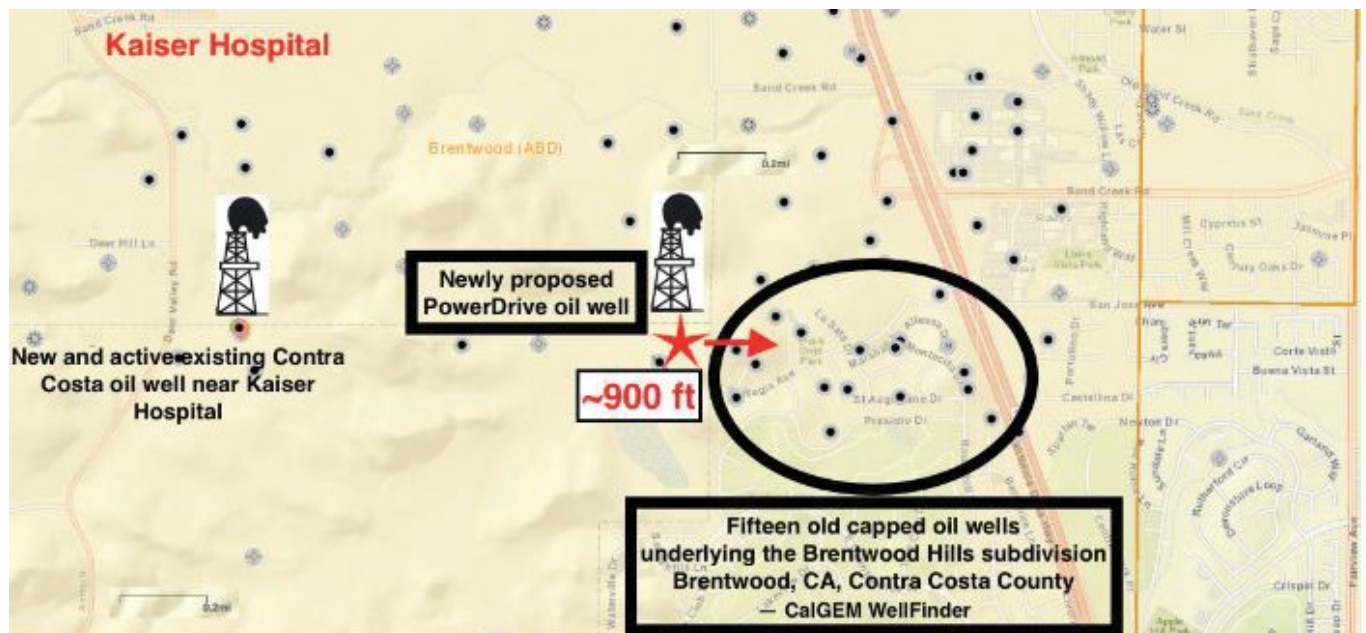


IMAGE CREDIT: Map by Charles Davidson

Our chapter by the numbers

During these challenging times, the Sierra Club's SF Bay Chapter continues to work for a stable climate, clean air and water, healthy parks and open space, and sustainable communities. With the active participation of members and supporters like you, we're winning important victories. Here are just a few measures of our impact this spring:

33,202 chapter members in Marin, San Francisco, Contra Costa and Alameda counties.

1,629 new first-time members in the first quarter of 2020. (Welcome aboard!)

404 of you sent in comments opposing a San Francisco Bay-Delta dredging project aimed at increasing oil shipments to local refineries.

What's next: The comment period is now closed but we're keeping a close watch on this proposal, which would lead to significant increases in local air pollution, a higher risk of oil spills, and a threat to imperiled fish and marine mammals living in the Bay and Delta.

626 members in Alameda County told your clean power supplier, East Bay Community Energy, that you oppose nuclear power for your household. *What we achieved:* Your input helped convince the EBCE board to vote down a proposal to purchase nuclear energy for local electricity customers. Read more on page 6.

242 of you called on Contra Costa County to reject an application to drill new oil and gas wells within 1,100 feet of homes in unincorporated Brentwood. Read more on the facing page.

What's next: The comment deadline ends on June 9th. Submit your comments at bit.ly/nonewwells.

658 of you called on your city and county governments to implement eviction and foreclosure moratoriums in late March as unemployment skyrocketed and rent payments loomed.

What we achieved: There are now emergency eviction protections in each of our chapter's four counties as well as in a number of Bay Area cities. As drafted, Alameda County's eviction moratorium is the strongest, but the protections provided by that emergency ordinance are now under threat. Visit bit.ly/alamedaevictionmoratorium to join the 271 (and counting!) members who have called on the county not to water down its own eviction moratorium.

1,025 texts sent to members and supporters in Marin County urging voters to reject Measure D on the March 2020 ballot. *What we achieved:* The campaign was a success! Marin voters rejected Measure D, clearing the way to continue planning for the former San Geronimo Golf Course's future as public land with key habitat restoration for endangered coho salmon and threatened steelhead trout.

24 new monthly donors since the Bay Area shelter in place began – 12 at the \$1,000 level or higher. These 24 join our 642 current installment donors. Thank you to our community for stepping up to support the work of the chapter, especially at this difficult time.

Will you join them? Fill out and send back the form at the bottom of this page, or make a gift online at sierraclub.org/sfbay/donate.

ADD YOUR VOICE:

Our action alerts are regularly sent by email. To receive them and add your voice to our petitions, sign up at sierraclub.org/sfbay/email. There, you can also sign up to receive a monthly email newsletter.

— — — — — cut here — — — — —

Like what you're reading? Support your local chapter's work in the Bay Area!

\$25 \$50 \$100 \$200 Surprise us! \$ _____

Make my gift monthly!

Make your check payable to **Sierra Club SF Bay Chapter**, or use your credit card.

Please select a payment method: MasterCard Visa Discover AmEx

Credit Card Number: _____ Exp. (mm/yy): _____

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Contributions to the Sierra Club are not tax-deductible; they support our effective citizen-based advocacy and lobbying efforts.

Return instructions:

Cut out this card and return it (in an envelope) to:



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2530 San Pablo Avenue, Suite 1
Berkeley, CA 94702-2000

Donate online:

www.sierraclub.org/sfbay/donate

Alameda County electric agency says 'no' to nuclear power

MELISSA YU

On April 22 — Earth Day — the board of Alameda County’s electricity supplier, East Bay Community Energy (EBCE), voted to reject a proposal to purchase nuclear energy for local customers. This community-led victory could not have succeeded without the outpouring of concern from individuals, including many Sierra Club members, along with representatives of Youth Vs. Apocalypse, Local Clean Energy Alliance, Oakland Climate Action Coalition and many more local groups.

“Community Choice” energy programs like EBCE were created to give the public the power to choose where their electricity comes from. This means we have the power to stop our energy suppliers from investing in unsafe, dirty

power like nuclear, and this is exactly what we did together!

At the moment there is no nuclear in EBCE’s power mix and we intend to keep it this way. It was understood by community advocates from the very start of the program that EBCE would not use nuclear energy. Nuclear is not locally generated and it is not renewable. As such, it does not provide local jobs or local economic benefits. Every dollar spent on nuclear is one less dollar spent on truly safe, affordable and renewable energy sources.

Thank you to all of our supporters who continue to stand up for just, equitable, and clean Community Choice energy programs for our communities. We will continue to keep a watchful eye on decisions made by the board and advocate for a program that is free of dirty energy and encourages local clean energy. For more information about EBCE’s power mix, go to: www.ebce.org/power-mix or reach out to community organizer Melissa Yu at melissa.yu@sierraclub.org.

Find your local Community Choice energy program at sierraclub.org/sfbay/community-choice-energy.

Melissa Yu is a chapter staff organizer.



Help us win big in November

VIRGINIA REINHART

The chapter is actively reevaluating our plans for the November 2020 election in light of the ongoing pandemic. The health and safety of our staff and volunteers is our top priority, so face-to-face campaigning like door-to-door canvassing and tabling at public events will be tightly controlled, if not completely eliminated, based on the evolving state of the public health crisis. The success of our electoral campaign will now hinge on our remote tactics like emailing, texting, letter-writing, phone calls, and social media outreach.

Although our tactics have shifted, our goals are the same: elect local environmental champions and win our ballot measure campaigns. We do that by:

1. Endorsing the best candidates and ballot measures.
2. Sharing our endorsements widely and educating voters about the local candidates and issues.
3. Investing in a get-out-the-vote effort to increase turnout among our constituents.

Much attention is rightly focused on removing Trump from office. But we can’t take our eye off our local races. Lasting change often starts at the local level, and what we do here

can provide a roadmap for the rest of the state and the nation. For example, the Bay Area is where the Community Choice Aggregation energy model began as a cleaner alternative to investor-owned electric utilities. Just ten years later, 21 Community Choice programs serve more than 10 million electricity customers all over California. That couldn’t have happened without the initial support of Bay Area elected officials. Policy innovations taking place today in Bay Area cities and counties will set the new standard for the nation tomorrow.

Watching our local elected officials deal with the coronavirus crisis reminds us of the magnitude of their responsibility. Will they implement emergency eviction moratoriums to keep the economically vulnerable in their homes? Will they act on what we’re learning about the effects of air pollution on COVID-19 deaths and move aggressively to limit the toxins flowing into our poorest communities? Will they put people back to work and help build a clean energy economy by investing in new renewable infrastructure? These and other questions will inform who we endorse.

WHAT YOU CAN DO:

In order to elect environmental champions to office, we will need a strong local volunteer corps. It will be work you can do from your home, in short increments and on a flexible schedule. To sign up, visit bit.ly/ChapterElectionTeam2020.

Virginia Reinhart is the chapter’s communications manager.

Preserve Point Molate for all of Richmond – not a wealthy few

NORMAN LA FORCE

Point Molate is one of the last great stretches of shoreline in the Bay Area that's not already developed or protected for the public. Because of its remote location and remarkable environmental features, it should be preserved as a park for all Richmond residents to enjoy — not sold off for a luxury housing development for a wealthy few. Unfortunately, the city is barreling ahead with a development boondoggle that would transfer this beautiful and biologically rich place to private hands. The city council even held a closed-session vote on the proposed development project during the COVID-19 shelter in place.

We can't allow the city to foreclose on the possibility of a priceless public park without proper and fully informed public input. Here's what we demand from the City:

1) Provide a full financial analysis of the development plan. In the absence of a fiscal impact analysis by the city, three citizen groups commissioned one, which has revealed very troubling costs that would be borne by Richmond taxpayers. The analysis, by Alexander Quinn, Director of Sustainable Economics at Hatch, a globally respected business and engineering consulting firm, found that the development could end up costing the city \$1.5 to \$3 million per year in city services, infrastructure, and other expenses.

2) Postpone signing a Development Agreement with Southern California developer SunCal. With the signing of the Development Agreement, the city will reach the point of no return on this project. Put a stop to this process until ongoing litigation over the proposal is resolved, the financial analysis has been published, risks have been addressed, and the COVID-19 crisis no longer prohibits the public from participating fully and in person.

3) Respect democracy by placing the Save Our Point Molate Initiative on the ballot for a vote in the November 2020 election. To allow the public to have a say in the fate of Point Molate, a coalition of local advocates wrote a ballot measure that, if approved by Richmond voters, would

limit private development and create a public park at Point Molate. Unfortunately, within days of getting the initiative certified, the shelter in place was implemented and in-person signature gathering needed to place it on the November 2020 ballot was no longer possible. The Save Our Point Molate Initiative offers the voters a choice between the city's inequitable and financially risky luxury development project and the Community Plan, which would:

- Preserve Ohlone sacred sites;
- Limit private development within the boundaries of the Winehaven historic district, creating a commercial, educational, and historic destination to provide jobs for residents and needed revenue for the city;
- Preserve the rest of the city-owned land as a public park. The East Bay Regional Park District Master Plan calls for a regional park at Point Molate. Ballot measures WW and FF provide initial funding;
- Preserve the historic Chinese shrimp camp made famous in Jack London's *Tales of the Fish Patrol*; and
- Create sports fields and offer access to nature.

Point Molate is rich in wildlife, home to unique habitats and flora, and the thriving offshore eelgrass beds are a pillar of the San Francisco Bay ecosystem. Covering it over with thousands of luxury housing units would destroy this special place, forever. Instead, Point Molate should be a public park with recreation opportunities open to everyone. Here's how you can help:

- Richmond residents should email the Mayor and City Council with our three demands above. Contact information at ci.richmond.ca.us/29/City-Council.
- Visit ptmolatealliance.org to learn more and sign up for email updates.
- Get involved with the Sierra Club's East Bay Public Lands Committee. Contact committee chair Norman La Force for details: n.laforce@comcast.net.



Slow Streets – now and forever?

JULIA FOOTE AND JOSH LEE

This pandemic certainly has us navigating a lot of new territory, whether it be the novel grab-bag of emotions that come with facing a global crisis, or new logistical challenges such as juggling work with childcare or socially distanced grocery runs. Something that has particularly stood out is how we now physically navigate the world outside our front doors. With more people seeking solace outdoors, we find ourselves preoccupied with maintaining at least six feet of distance with our neighbors — zig-zagging into and across the street to keep out of each other’s way. While parks and trails are crowded or closed, there are fewer opportunities to get outdoors safely. Those options are limited even further for under-resourced and underserved communities with already poor access to green space.

To meet people’s recreational and spatial needs, “Slow Streets” programs have started up in cities around the world. These programs help support residents’ safe, socially distant physical activity during the pandemic by closing streets to through traffic. Ideally, these programs center equity by reducing barriers to recreation and safe mobility for the most vulnerable communities.

In the Bay Area, Oakland has been leading the way on these efforts. The city closed “all existing and proposed Neighborhood Bike Routes” to through traffic—which accounts for nearly 10 percent of all Oakland streets—so that people can more comfortably walk, roll, and bike throughout the city. San Francisco also launched a Slow Streets program by targeting “lower-traffic residential streets that connect neighbors to essential services in the absence of Muni service.” Alameda followed suit by starting pilot “soft” closures of portions of Pacific and Versailles Avenues, and Emeryville closed portions of Doyle Street to help promote socially distant mobility and pedestrian safety.

Pedestrian-first approaches to transportation aren’t new. Unfortunately, they just aren’t the norm. COVID-19 has highlighted the need for safe networks of streets to

walk and bike on; but what if limiting car travel in our cities extended beyond a response to this crisis?

Earlier this year, San Francisco made Market Street car-free as part of its Better Market Street program and the results thus far have been incredible. Once death-defying bike commutes and hazardous crosswalks have become markedly—or, rather, Market-ly—safer. Car-free Market Street has simultaneously improved conditions for walking and cycling and increased transit reliability, making those modes of transit more appealing, while making driving less appealing. With it, San Francisco joined dozens of other cities limiting, or entirely banning, cars from certain areas to help promote other forms of transit, increase road safety, and address pollution.

Today’s Slow Streets initiatives continue the momentum of programs like Better Market Street, and show that cities are no longer submitting to the rule of automobiles. Pedestrians and cyclists deserve safer cities both now and beyond our public health crisis.

These closures are a necessary and innovative tool to respond to the particular needs of COVID-19 and so-

cial distancing measures. We should not lose sight of our ability to develop these kinds of rapid responses to emergencies as we continue to face not only this pandemic, but also our ongoing housing and climate crises.

Slow Streets programs are just one response to COVID-19 that has applicability outside of the pandemic. Emergency housing for our homeless, stronger financial support for our jobless, and appropriate compensation for our essential workers should not only happen during an international emergency, but must continue as we recover and beyond.

WHAT YOU CAN DO:

If your city has not yet put forward a Slow Streets plan, use our online action form at bit.ly/slowmystreets to ask your Mayor to make room for walking, biking, and rolling during the COVID-19 pandemic! Together we can call on our elected officials to demand that they put the health and safety of our communities first.

Julia Foote is a staff organizer. Josh Lee is a chapter intern.



Sierra Club joins Richmond in legal fight to phase out polluting coal dust from shipping terminal

ADIL TREHAN

The Sierra Club and San Francisco Baykeeper have moved to intervene as full parties in the lawsuit to defend the City of Richmond's ordinance that phases out the storage and handling of coal and petroleum coke in the city. The environmental legal organization Earthjustice is representing both the Sierra Club and SF Baykeeper in court.

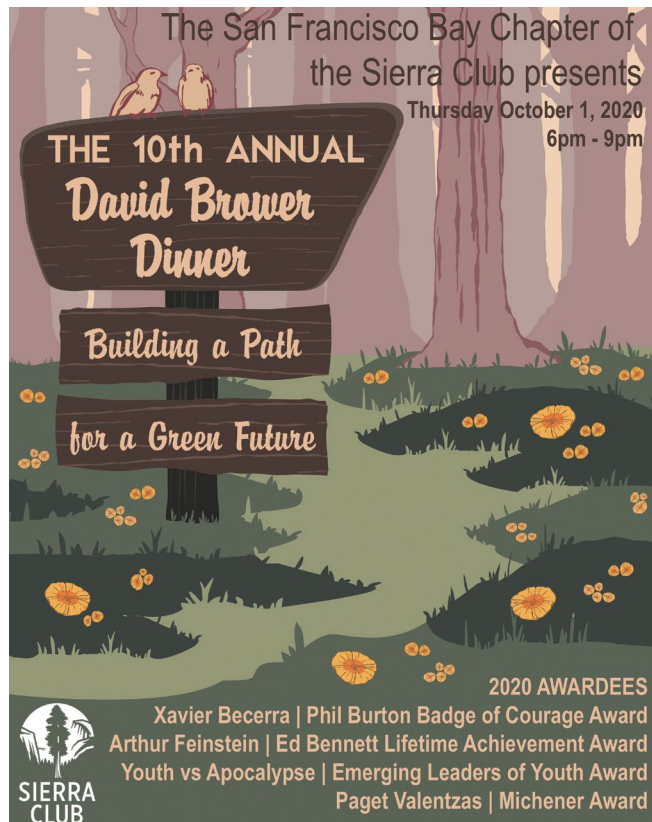
The Levin-Richmond Terminal is the only facility in Richmond handling coal and petcoke. For the past two years, the City Council, community members, and the Levin Terminal have discussed the best ways to reduce coal dust pollution. The ordinance, passed in January 2020, phases out the handling of coal in the city within three years, and prevents new coal and petcoke handling facilities during that time. The Levin-Richmond Terminal Corporation, petrochemical company Phillips 66, and coal company Wolverine Fuels filed

lawsuits against the City of Richmond in early March.

Dust from coal and petcoke handling and storage contains fine particulate matter (PM2.5) and toxic heavy metals including arsenic, lead, and chromium that pose a serious health threat — a danger that has grown even more acute during this coronavirus pandemic. A recent Harvard study showed long term exposure to PM2.5, in particular, increases the COVID-19 death rate. Exposure to PM2.5 and heavy metals is also linked to cardiovascular and respiratory conditions including asthma, pneumonia, emphysema, heart disease, and cancer. There is no safe level of PM2.5 exposure.

The legal fight comes on the heels of a major community effort within Richmond to address the coal dust that has afflicted residents at home, at work, and at school for years. Increases in coal handling at the Levin terminal prompted Richmond's City Council to take action after thousands of local residents, including teachers and nurses, wrote complaints to the city about the scourge of coal dust.

Upon reaching the waterfront terminal — less than a mile away from residential neighborhoods — coal and petcoke are heaped in massive open air piles and loaded onto ships. Bay breezes then carry the toxic coal dust for miles onto surrounding communities and the bay.



Save the date for the 10th annual David Brower Dinner

MINDA BERBECO

We are making plans to gather together on October 1st, 2020 to celebrate our honorees, our work, and one another at our 10th annual David Brower Dinner. We welcome your event sponsorship and attendance. You may become a sponsor, purchase tickets, or make a donation now by visiting www.sierraclub.org/sfbay/davidbrowerdinner2020, or by contacting our event planner, Laurie Earp, at 510-418-2354 or laurie@earpevents.com (note "DBD 2020" in the subject line).

The health of our community is our top priority and our event will follow all state, county, and city safety guidelines. We hope we will be able to gather in person, but in the event that is not safe to do so, our celebrations will be moved online. Either way, we hope you value the work of the chapter and will support this important event to allow us to continue our work for the environment.

New study highlights dangers of gas appliances to public health

JOSH LEE

We are in a time of profound change and isolation, but among all those changes, there is one that I have been particularly fixated on: all my friends are now baking bread. My social media feeds have been overwhelmed with photos of loaves and rolls, and the comfort of a fresh-baked loaf of bread or the catharsis of kneading dough is more than welcome. But I can't help but notice that there is an insidious danger in this bounty of boules and baguettes. Baking requires long and extended use of the oven, and more often than not, at least for my peers, that means using outdated, gas-powered ovens in tiny apartments with limited ventilation. A new study by UCLA has highlighted the impacts of gas appliances on indoor air quality and public health, and they are damning: respiratory illness, cardiovascular diseases, and premature death, especially among children, the elderly, low-income renters and communities of color.

While we know the climate benefits of moving away from gas to clean, zero-emission electric appliances, there have been few studies focused on the health impacts. Thankfully, the new study out of UCLA's Fielding School of Public Health, titled "Effects of Residential Gas Appliances on Indoor and Outdoor Air Quality and Public Health in California," helps provide insight on those impacts at a time when we are focused more than ever on public health. The nature of COVID-19 means that those who have certain respiratory illnesses, including asthma, are more vulnerable to the novel coronavirus, and this study helps reinforce our understanding that gas appliances can be drivers for increased respiratory illness and COVID-19 susceptibility. The UCLA study was commissioned by the Sierra Club.

Gas appliances emit several pollutants — including carbon monoxide (CO), nitrogen oxides (NOx) including nitrogen dioxide (NO₂), fine particulate matter (PM), and formaldehyde — which have been linked to various acute and chronic health effects, including respiratory illness. UCLA researchers found that after cooking for one hour with a gas stove and oven, peak levels of nitrogen dioxide inside the kitchen are so high they exceed both state and national outdoor acute air-quality standards in more than

In California, if all **gas-fired appliances** were replaced with **electric alternatives**, the cleaner air would:



Save over
350 LIVES
ANNUALLY

Avoid around
900 CASES
OF RESPIRATORY
ILLNESSES ANNUALLY



90 percent of the homes modeled.

Inhaling nitrogen dioxide is extremely dangerous, especially for children and the elderly, who are more susceptible to lung disease. Children exposed to elevated levels of nitrogen dioxide are more susceptible to lung infections and allergies, and are at increased risk of lowered IQ, learning deficits, and asthma. In fact, a 2013 study found that children who grow up in a home with a gas stove are 42 percent more likely to develop asthma than those who don't.

The report estimates that if all gas appliances in California homes were immediately replaced with electric alternatives, the reduced air pollution would result in approximately 350 fewer deaths, 600 fewer cases of acute bronchitis, and 300 fewer cases of chronic bronchitis every year. This is equal to approximately \$3.5 billion in health benefits over the course of each year.

This is also an issue of equity and environmental justice, with impacts falling hardest on the most vulnerable among us. Renters and low-income residents are particularly at risk from gas appliances, with the UCLA study finding that "concentrations of [carbon monoxide] and nitrogen dioxide resulting from gas cooking are the highest for apartments". UCLA researchers found that after an hour of cooking on a gas stove, 98 percent of smaller apartments had peak levels of nitrogen dioxide that exceeded state and national air-quality standards. In other words, the air quality inside nearly every apartment was so bad that it would be illegal if measured outside. Renters often have old and unmaintained appliances

es in households, smaller and overcrowded residences where air pollution can reach higher concentrations, and limited ability to control appliance choices or afford maintenance.

Emissions from gas appliances are harmful under normal circumstances, and they are even more frightening in light of a recent Harvard study that determined that “a small increase in long-term exposure to fine particulate matter leads to a large increase in the COVID-19 death rate.” This shows how critical it is that we address community electrification as part of our response to COVID-19.

While the impacts of this pandemic on outdoor air quality have been clear to see, indoor air quality has remained largely undiscussed. As we respond to this public health crisis, we have an unprecedented opportunity to not just return to the status quo, but to build a better, safer future, inside and out. Decarbonizing our homes is key in not only mitigating our emissions, but in protecting our communities’ health. A just response to the pandemic must recognize that.

Some immediate actions we can take as individuals to mitigate the impacts of gas appliances include: opening windows, using the exhaust range hood, installing carbon monoxide detectors, or switching out our gas-run appliances with electric induction technology. However, we have greater power collectively pushing our representatives to respond appropriately. Policymakers at all levels must set science-based guidelines for indoor air quality, provide incentives for electrification, and join communities like Berkeley and San Jose in moving forward with gas-free building ordinances.

WHAT YOU CAN DO:

Learn more about building decarbonization by joining one of our upcoming webinars and build the skills to advocate for your city to adopt gas-free and electric-ready ordinances. For more information or to get involved, reach out to Melissa Yu at melissa.yu@sierraclub.org.

Josh Lee is a chapter intern.

Climate change literacy for kids is more important than ever

REBECCA FRANKE & SARAH RANNEY

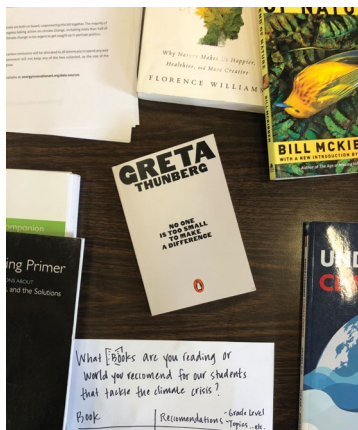
Has the pandemic left you with a desire to get involved in creating a better future? Are you looking for a way to have a personal impact on the climate emergency? You can, by ensuring that all graduating students in your local school district — or independent school — understand how the climate is changing for the worse and, most importantly, what they can do about it.

That has been the goal of a group of Sierra Club volunteers in the SF Bay Chapter. Working with teachers, students, and community members, the Climate Literacy Committee is making the case to school districts to incorporate climate change into their curricula. And not only into science classes — in government, economics, English, history, and more. Because while an understanding of the science is important, the pandemic has made it even more clear that students must be equipped to make the hard decisions around public policy that they will face as adults. This includes understanding

how environmental actions often disproportionately impact marginalized communities, so that those injustices don’t continue.

Do you have a connection with a school teacher, parent, or board member? Are you a graduate student who could help teachers expand their knowledge of climate issues? Have you been reading the latest literature on climate — fiction or non-fiction — and would like to write reviews for teachers? Do you have experience writing grants? Otherwise interested in getting involved?

It’s obvious that the pandemic will force schools to confront a new set of challenges in funding and focus, but the urgency of our climate emergency has not lessened. In fact, the pandemic has demonstrated what can happen when threats like climate change aren’t met with foresight and planning. The Climate Literacy Committee has important work to do, and needs your help. To that end, we have created material to assist new volunteers who want to work with their school districts. It’s all available at sierraclub.org/sfbay/climate-literacy. Or join our monthly organizing meetings, held via Zoom for now. For more information about our next meeting date or how to get involved, feel free to email us at clc@sfbaysc.org.



Oakland community advocates call for new ordinance to prevent coal pollution after Judge sides with developers

Today, over two years after Judge Vince Chhabria struck down the City of Oakland’s prohibition on handling and storage of coal at the former Oakland Army Base, the case was decided on appeal by three Ninth Circuit judges. The judges heard oral arguments on the appeal by the City of Oakland, Sierra Club, and San Francisco Baykeeper in November 2019. The judges decided to uphold the previous decision, overturning the City of Oakland’s prohibition on handling and storage of coal.

“West Oakland communities are already struggling with severe air pollution and can’t afford the added impacts of coal pollution,” said Jessica Yarnall Loarie, senior attorney for the Sierra Club Environmental Law Program. “The City of Oakland had, and continues to have, every right to use their legal authority to ban the storage and handling of coal for the sake of public health and safety. We will continue to support them as the City looks for a solution that creates jobs at the new terminal without compromising community health and safety.”

“This is not the end,” said Isha Clarke, member of Youth Vs Apocalypse. “We will continue to fight because the residents of West Oakland deserve to live in a community that hasn't been poisoned by racism and greed. We are calling on the City of Oakland to pass a new ban that will protect its citizens. No one is disposable.”

“Protecting the Bay and Bay Area communities from dirty coal pollution has never been more important,” said Ben Eichenberg, staff attorney for San Francisco Baykeeper. “Oakland, and all California cities, should stay the course and continue documenting the harm coal does to their communities, and protecting the health and safety of their residents and the Bay.”

BACKGROUND:

A portion of the former Oakland Army Base is being developed as a bulk export facility, known as the Oakland Bulk and Oversized Terminal (OBOT). CCIIG, the developer, promised not to include coal as a commodity handled by the terminal, but later solicited a partnership with four Utah counties that would have allowed coal companies to

ship up to 10 million tons of coal each year. A Utah funding body approved \$53 million to buy space at Oakland Bulk Terminal for these exports. This deal was conducted behind the back of the Oakland City Council.

Those who oppose the plan to store and handle coal in Oakland have voiced concerns over how this decision will affect the community’s safety, the environment, and public health. The Oakland City Council voted in July of 2016 to ban the storage and handling of coal in Oakland, and at the former Army Base. In December of 2016 developers including Phil Tagami sued the City of Oakland to overturn their ban on storage and handling of coal. In May 2018, Judge Vince Chhabria struck down the ban, only as it applied to the Army Base, after a three-day trial. The City of Oakland, Sierra Club, and San Francisco Baykeeper are appealing the decision.



Go solar and support your local Sierra Club chapter

Thinking of going solar? If you go solar through SunPower, you’ll receive a \$1,000 rebate and SunPower will donate \$500 to the SF Bay Chapter. It’s a win for you, your local Sierra Club chapter, and the planet. And if you’re sheltering at home, SunPower will walk you through the entire process online—from exploration to site assessment to drawing up a contract.

With more than 30 years of solar experience and a commitment to sustainability, SunPower can help you go solar today. By going solar with SunPower you can reduce — or potentially even eliminate — your electric bill.

Get started today at bit.ly/sunpowerforthebay to get your free quote and find out how much you can save by going solar with SunPower

Changing e-bike policy for Mount Tamalpais Watershed risks water, soil and wildlife

JUDITH ROGERS

A debate is underway about allowing electric bicycles on Marin Municipal Water District (MMWD) watershed land. E-bikes are currently prohibited on the watershed. However, an assertive lobby aimed at reversing the policy has succeeded in getting the MMWD board to reconsider e-bike restrictions. The Sierra Club opposes motorized vehicles including electric bikes on single-track trails not designed for them, as well as on dirt roads and trails in watershed lands that require special protection from erosion.

Electric assist bikes make all sorts of sense for replacing fuel-powered vehicles on roads and accommodating riders with special needs. However, allowing e-bikes for recreation on our watershed lands makes no sense at all. While increasing access to nature for all people is critically important, we must balance that value with the toll that e-bikes have on the natural environment. E-bikes degrade the environmental quality and aesthetic character of Marin's fragile watershed. California defines e-bikes as bicycles equipped with a motor. Motorized vehicles and motorized bicycles are prohibited on MMWD land for a reason. This is because of the impacts e-bikes have on the environment, including habitat fragmentation, compaction of soils, erosion, water pollution and disturbance to wildlife.

The mission of MMWD is to manage the district's natural resources in a sustainable manner and to provide its customers with reliable, high quality water. In order to main-

tain water quality and minimize sediment in creeks and reservoirs, MMWD must reduce the impacts of the road and trail network on wetlands, riparian areas, and other environmentally sensitive habitats. Maintaining the watershed's natural ecological function as well as the system of trails and roads requires best management and environmental protection measures. E-bikes are incompatible with that mission.

Last year, in response to a growing number of e-bike-related conflicts, MMWD created a community advisory commission to develop recommendations regarding e-bike usage on watershed lands. Concerns presented to the commission included the potential for increased accidents on trails, wildlife and environmental impacts, enforcement of e-bike classification and Americans with Disabilities permits, as well as possible influx of e-bike ecotourism. The commission was heavily weighted with electric cyclists, some of whom openly admitted to riding e-bikes on watershed lands in violation of policy. Concerned environmental experts were excluded and individuals representing environmental organizations were treated as one person rather than the many members they represent. MMWD's public process, agenda postings, and live-streaming rarely worked, further skewing any legitimate public participation.

MMWD will vote on this matter within the next few months. Stay tuned for opportunities to speak out in support of the existing e-bike policy to protect the watershed.

Judith Rogers is on the Marin Group Executive Committee.

NOTE: Before visiting MMWD lands for recreational purposes during the coronavirus pandemic, please check their website for restrictions: marinwater.org.



IMAGE CREDIT: View of the Marin Municipal Water District.
Photo by David Baron via Flickr Creative Commons, [flickr.com/dbaron](https://www.flickr.com/photos/dbaron/).

Toward a just, green recovery

JULIA FOOTE

The world is yearning for a return to normalcy; but what does it look like to abandon “normal” and progress forward?

“Normal” created the conditions that treat essential workers on the frontlines as disposable; leave people without healthcare or housing during a public health crisis; cause stark disparities in how social distancing is enforced in white and black neighborhoods; and allowed environmental injustices that make frontline communities more susceptible to the virus.

The coronavirus has exposed systems that have long been failing; especially in times of crisis and especially for low-income people, people of color, and Indigenous communities. Our pre-coronavirus system is unjust, unsustainable, and hurdling us towards future crises that will continue to exacerbate inequalities. We need to pivot towards a just recovery.

The COVID-19 crisis demands urgent action and immediate relief, but many of the solutions needed to mitigate the impacts of this pandemic now can contribute to just, long-term recovery if they consider the interrelated crises of wealth inequality, racism, and ecological decline.

Most urgently we need to protect people’s health and safety, particularly essential workers and our most vulnerable communities. COVID-19 is exacerbating pre-existing social and health inequities along class and racial lines. Much of our essential workforce—from healthcare and transportation service workers to grocery store clerks and kitchen staff—is made up of low-income, Indigenous, Black and Latinx people. Without the ability to work from home, and often serving in low-wage, high-stress jobs, these populations are exposed daily to increased health risks. It’s imperative that all workers be protected while providing essential services. A just recovery includes emergency paid sick leave, health care for all, adequate Personal Protective Equipment, and hazard pay to increase the economic security of low-wage workers.

People of color are shouldering a disproportionate burden of illness and death, in many cases due to long-term exposure to air pollutants. The location of polluting infrastructure and industries often targets minority communities, putting them on the frontline for respiratory and other underlying health issues which make them more

susceptible to the virus. A just recovery eradicates such environmental injustices by addressing structural inequalities that allow for discriminatory land use patterns and sacrifice zones; as well as moving away from polluters altogether and towards a green economy.

As we are ordered to “shelter in place,” it’s clear that housing is an essential element of healthcare. In the Bay Area there was already a severe shortage of affordable housing and a homeless crisis. Now the economic impact of COVID-19 is making it more and more difficult for many to make rent. People need homes with clean running water and reliable electricity in order to keep themselves safe and healthy. We need to respond with rent and eviction moratoria, as well as moratorium on shutoffs of water, electricity and gas. We should continue to invest in affordable housing construction and programs with additional support for renters and unhoused populations. A just recovery means that all people have access to housing, water, and energy to keep our communities safe, healthy, and resilient.

In addition to health disparities, COVID-19 has brought wealth disparities into sharp focus. With unemployment nearing Great Depression levels, this lack of economic resilience within our society is exposed as we learn the majority of people in the United States live paycheck-to-paycheck. As government stimulus packages prioritize corporate bailouts, economic relief is not reaching the people. A just recovery financially supports our working families and small businesses with a sense of urgency that their livelihoods deserve and ultimately takes on the root causes of economic inequality.

A lesson we’ve learned from COVID-19 is that early action is essential. As we envision what recovery from this crisis looks like, we need to prioritize how we invest in a regenerative economy that helps mitigate the risks of climate change, which will have huge impacts on health and our economies.

Meaningful action on the climate crisis has been at a standstill for decades, and yet the scale of societal cooperation during the pandemic has shown how virtually overnight, billions of people have accepted abrupt and radical changes to their lives to slow the spread of the virus. This collective response proves how quickly people can change and adapt in the face of an emergency; but the nature of the climate crisis as something that feels far-off, uncertain, or intangible makes it difficult to elicit necessary global cooperation.

The term “green recovery” has been making its rounds in the global sphere. It means investing in cleaner, greener infrastructure as a way to rebuild economies and mitigate future impacts of climate change. To be just, a green recovery

Continued on following page.

The Chapter Nominating Committee: Helping to make the grassroots grow

SARAH RANNEY & WILLIAM YRAGUI

Every year, the work of ensuring free and fair elections for Sierra Club Chapter and Group Executive Committee (ExCom) positions is carried out by a committee you may not have heard much about: the Chapter Nominating Committee (NomCom). NomCom members are chosen for their knowledge of the Club and a willingness to fairly oversee the nomination and election process. This year, seven members were appointed to the NomCom, each member bringing a unique skill set and perspective. Usually members of this committee are selected to continue as members of the Election Committee in September. In addition to the Chapter NomCom, several of our eight regional groups also have their own active Nominating Committees.

From 2015 to 2019, the SF Bay Chapter NomCom was chaired by Matt Morrison. His work with the committee ensured any campaign and voting conflicts were resolved by consulting with everyone involved, and that committee decisions were in accordance with chapter election rules, by-laws, and National Club rules and guidelines.

This year, Peggy da Silva has stepped up to chair the committee. She has several goals: to increase the transparency of the committee, increase outreach and communication to prospective candidates, ensure enough new candidates are nominated to have competitive elections, increase voter turnout, and more actively ensure all regional groups are in-

Continued from previous page.

ery must not leave people behind — that’s a main tenet of the Green New Deal, which is the major framework in the US for an equitable, green recovery.

The solutions that a just, green recovery offers must not exacerbate the racial and wealth inequalities that COVID-19 has highlighted. A just recovery is inclusive, and will strengthen our society in ways that prove resilient to future challenges. There is potential to create millions of good jobs with quality labor standards and direct investments to the working class, communities of color and Indigenous people who have been on the frontlines of COVID-19 and the climate crisis.

Julia Foote is a chapter staff organizer.

involved in the election process.

If you are an active Sierra Club member who is passionate about the environment and committed to local issues, you might consider running for a seat on your local Sierra Club Group ExCom. The NomCom can provide you with information about the nomination and election process.

Want to learn more? Sign up for future nomination updates by contacting the Bay Chapter Nominating Committee at elections@sfbayclub.org.

KEY DATES:

June - Group Nominations Committees are established: Time to look for and encourage local Club members to run for leadership positions.

July 14 - Nomination period opens: Packets with questionnaires and information available to all interested candidates.

September 28 - Nomination period is closed: All information on candidates must be complete.

November 16 to December 11 - Elections period: Votes can be sent in via Yodeler insert or submitted electronically.



WHAT WILL YOUR
LEGACY BE?

Ensure your environmental legacy by naming the Sierra Club’s San Francisco Bay Chapter in your will or trust.

If you have named your local Sierra Club chapter as a beneficiary or would like to discuss doing so, please contact us today:

MATT BIELBY
matt.bielby@sierraclub.org
510-848-0800 x 321



Bikers enjoying Oakland's 42nd Street without cars, part of the Slow Streets movement to expand access to the outdoors during the COVID-19 pandemic. Photo by Sergio Ruiz, courtesy Flickr.com/sirgiouis. For a chance to see your snapshot to be featured in the next issue of the Yodeler, share pictures on Twitter, Instagram, or Facebook with hashtag #SierraSnapshots, or email photos to yodedit@sfbaysc.org. Please tell us where and when it was taken and include the names of anyone in the photo.

FOLLOW US ON SOCIAL MEDIA!

Facebook.com/SierraClubSFBayChapter

Twitter @SFBaySierraClub

Instagram @SierraClub_SFBay

SIERRACLUB.ORG/SFBAY

Our website is home to helpful information and resources including:

- The Yodeler blog, updated regularly
- Our full events and activities calendar
- Group information and leadership roster

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- Sheltering at home? There are lots of ways to get involved in Sierra Club campaigns from the comfort of your couch (p. 3)
- Consider running for your local Sierra Club Group Executive Committee! (p. 15)
- 10th annual David Brower Dinner scheduled for October 1, 2020 (p. 12)
- Watch videos of Sierra Club programs and workshops on our new YouTube page (p. 3)

EMAIL

Visit sierraclub.org/sfbay/email to sign up for Bay Chapter emails, including monthly bulletins and action alerts.