



Tehipite Topics

January-March 2012 ❧ Vol. 58, No. 1

www.tehipite.sierraclub.org

Tehipite Chapter Annual Awards Banquet

Friday, March 9th, 6:00 p.m. no host bar, 7:00 p.m. dinner



Four Points by Sheraton Crystal Ballroom

3737 Blackstone Ave., Fresno SW Corner Blackstone and Dakota

Menu:

Choice of Marinated Tri-Tip, Chicken Piccata,
Vegetable con capellini (vegetarian)

Tickets are \$25

Checks payable to Tehipite Chapter, Sierra Club.

Please fill out form below and mail by Feb. 27

To: Karen Hammer 709 W. Scandia Ln. Clovis, CA 93619

(559)298-5272 ecuagirl45@yahoo.com

Don Neubacher, recently appointed Superintendent of Yosemite National Park, will be our featured speaker. Mr. Neubacher began his appointment at Yosemite National Park on March 15, 2010. Yosemite, a designated World Heritage Site, is home to some of the most iconic images in the National Park system. Half Dome and El Capitan are recognized world-wide.

Mr. Neubacher's job is a big one. The park is staffed by more than 750 permanent and term employees. During the summer season this expands to over 1,200. Yosemite is comprised of eight operational divisions which include: Administration, Business and Revenue Management, Facilities Management, Interpretation and

Education, Resources Management and Science, Planning, Project Management, and Visitor and Resource Protection. The park has an annual operational budget of \$29 million, with an additional \$50 to 70 million in special project funds. The park receives annual visitation of approximately 4 million people.

Prior to his appointment to Yosemite, Don Neubacher was the Superintendent at Point Reyes National Seashore for 15 years. Mr. Neubacher's 30 year career in the National Park Service (NPS) also included appointments at Glacier Bay National Park, Denver Service Center, Golden Gate National Recreation Area and serving as the Deputy General

Name _____
Address _____
City _____ Zip _____
Phone (____) _____ Email _____

Name of each person attending. Please check entrée choice.
_____ beef ___ chicken ___ vegetarian _____
_____ beef ___ chicken ___ vegetarian _____
_____ beef ___ chicken ___ vegetarian _____

If additional guests will be joining you, please attach a list with their choice of entrée

See "Banquet" page 5

Tehipite Chapter



SIERRA CLUB
FOUNDED 1892

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of the Sierra Club
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Tehipite Chapter News

Chapter Elections Results

A big thanks to all who participated in the recent chapter elections as a candidate, voter, or member of the election committee. The chapter could not function without your participation.

As you know the ballot was included in the November 2011 edition of the Tehipite Topics. The election committee (David Cehrs, chair; John Rasmussen, Marcia Rasmussen, and Chip Ashley) received by mail 80 completed ballots, of which two were rejected because they were incorrectly filled out. The voting went as follows: Bill Fjellbo received 74 votes; Heather Anderson, 72 votes; Gary Lasky, 72 votes; Karen Laws, 61 votes; and Connie Peterson, 60 votes.

The Tehipite Chapter Executive Committee in turn elected officers for the next year at its meeting on December 14th. Bill Fjellbo is our new chair, Gary Lasky is vice chair, Chip Ashley is secretary, and Wayne Dill remains treasurer. Incidentally, the secretary and treasurer do not have to be elected members of the executive committee.

Tehipite Supports Fracking Suit

The Tehipite Chapter Executive Committee has voted to support a lawsuit against fracking on two BLM leases in Fresno and Monterey Counties. Sierra Club California is joining the Center for Biological Diversity in the lawsuit.

“Fracking” refers to “hydro-fracture,” a technique used in drilling for oil and natural gas. Fracking involves injecting into strata of shale containing natural gas or oil millions of gallons of water mixed with hundreds of toxic chemicals under great pressure to break up the rock to release the gas or oil. To date many of the chemicals used in fracking are trade secrets, not available to the public—one of the more important issues in the lawsuit.

According to Scientific American, “A decade ago layers of shale lying deep underground supplied only 1 percent of America’s natural gas. Today they provide 30 percent. Drillers are rushing to hydraulically fracture, or ‘frack,’ shales in a growing list of U.S. states” (November 2011).

See News, page 8

Tehipite Chapter Meetings

Conservation & Executive Committee Meetings

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

January 11 February 8 March 14 April 11 May 9 June 13 September 12 October 10 November 14 December 12

The Conservation Committee meets at 7 PM The Executive Committee meets at 8 PM

University of California Center 550 E. Shaw Ave., Fresno

General Meetings

FREE AND OPEN TO GENERAL PUBLIC UC Center, 550 E. Shaw Ave., Fresno

General Meeting Schedule and Programs for 2012:

January, no meeting

February 15, What should we know about GMOs?
with Judy Nelson (description below)

March 9, Banquet with Yosemite Superintendent Don Neubacher (see cover)

April 18, Gardening in a Warming Climate, with Bonnie Bladen of Intermountain Nursery

May, no meeting

June, September, October, November, December TBA

February 15 General Meeting Program

***What should we know about GMOs?
with Judy Nelson***

We Have a Right to Know What is in Our Food

Since the 1990s, Americans have been eating Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs) in processed foods without their knowledge or consent as they do not have to be labeled. There have been no long term safety studies to insure that GMOs are safe for human consumption. Most objective, short term, scientific research has raised many health, as well as environmental concerns. As a result, 50 countries have either banned GMOs



or require labeling, but not the USA. Repeated requests to the FDA, the USDA, our legislators and the courts to label foods containing GMOs have been stymied and ignored. During this talk you will learn how GMOs differ from traditionally bred plants, the health and environmental concerns, and what you can do to help give Californians a choice to eat them or not. Everyone needs to be informed on this topic so informed choices can be made. Please bring anyone who eats with you to hear this talk. The presenter, Judy Nelson, MA Ed, has been trained by Jeffrey Smith, author of *Seeds of Deception* and *Genetic Roulette* to help educate people on the topic of GMOs. She is also the

Fresno Leader for the LabelGMOs initiative for Nov. 2012. You can reach her at JNelson522@aol.com.

April 18 General Meeting Program

Gardening with Native Plants in a Warming Climate

Bonnie Bladen of Intermountain Nursery in Prather will present a slide show of California native plants and talk about gardening for drought conditions and future warming, to improve wildlife habitat and to grow your own food. Her Nursery specializes in California Native Plants and low water use plants suitable for a Mediterranean Climate. (See: intermountainnursery.com)



Merced Group

Merced Group

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Charlie Magneson . . (209) 394-7045

Membership open

Publicity

Rod Webster (209) 723-4747

Population

. open

Conservation and Executive Committee Meetings

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

Conservation meeting is first and can last 30-40 minutes.

Anyone with an interest in local, state, or national conservation issues is welcome to attend.

Merced Group General Meetings

Third Thursday of each month (except Dec. and May)

Starts at 7:00, usually over by 8:30 or so.

Merced United Methodist Church, 899 Yosemite Parkway (that's Hwy 140 to Yosemite)-park in the lot off Cypress Ave.

Thursday, January 19th

Laura Allen of Greywater Action

“Greywater Recycling--A Solution for Merced County?”

Residential/urban water use is the source of the greatest water waste. Much of the water that we use in our homes can be recycled and re-used on site. “Greywater” from baths and showers, washing dishes and clothes, need not head down the drain and off to the sewage plant. Instead, with a proper system in place, it can be recycled and used by the homeowner or business for landscaping and crops.

There has been controversy whether this method of water conservation can be used in Merced County. Can existing homes be retrofitted? Can new housing be plumbed with greywater hookups? Greywater Action thinks so. They can educate us about changes in building codes that make these innovations feasible. . . and prudent.

Other areas where Greywater Action has expertise in saving water are composting toilets and rainwater harvesting. The former have

found great use at large gatherings like outdoor concerts and at refugee camps where sanitation is a formidable challenge.

Harvesting rainwater can reduce our need--and demand--for water transport systems that threaten the health of the water cycle and our local environments. On any house lot there are three potential sources for harvesting the rain: direct rainfall, street harvesting, and roof harvesting.

Education is the first step in promoting these water conserving solutions. Greywater Action is heavily involved in that task. They provide workshops, trainings, presentations, theater, and a demonstration booth on sustainable water use technologies. We will be getting the “introductory” lesson. Hands on participatory lessons”in installation are offered in the “advanced course”.

Election results

Congrats to newly elected ex-comm member Lisa Kayser-Grant. We are particularly glad to have her accounting expertise to call upon (already conscripted as Treasurer!). Annette Allsup and Rod Webster also re-elected to serve on ex-comm for the coming year.



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.

"Banquet" from page 1

Manager and Planning Director for the Presidio of San

Francisco from January 1992 until February 1995. Formerly, Don was a lecturer at California's Humboldt State University in northern California. Mr. Neubacher's professional history includes interpretive, recreational, and park planning; exhibit design; park and land use management; and park partner/partnership development. During his career, he has developed expertise in strategic planning, partnerships, science-based management, and cooperative conservation. He served as the Co-Chair of the Natural Resource Challenge Council that was successful in generating \$80 million in Congressional funding for enhancement of NPS resource management activities.

Personal

Don has been married to his wife Patty for 25 years. She also works for the National Park Service as the Deputy Director of the Pacific West Region in Oakland.

Superintendent Yosemite National Park

Heather Anderson

It is difficult to condense Don Neubacher's exceptional thirty-year career in the National Park Service. It culminates with his recent 2010 appointment as Superintendent of Yosemite National Park. His list of awards is long, including several from the National Park Service Pacific West Region Natural Resource as Superintendent of the Year, and some from the Department of the Interior: Environmental Achievement Award--Pacific Coast Learning Center, Meritorious Service Award, Unit Award for Excellence of Service, and Partnership Award. Neubacher has also received a couple of awards for planning excellence from the American Planning Association.

Graduating with a B.S. degree in Environmental Planning and Management from the University of California, and an M.S. Degree in Resource Management from Humboldt State University, Neubacher went on to work as Superintendent at Point Reyes National Seashore, and also served at Glacier Bay National Park, Golden Gate National Recreational Area, Denver Service Center, and for the Presidio of San Francisco.

Yosemite is one of our national parks' crown jewels. Come and hear more from Don Neubacher at our Tehipite Chapter Banquet on March 9.

Great

San Joaquin River Clean-up

Please contact Richard Sloan at 559-696-2971, riverrich1509@aol.com, Steve Starcher, 559-289-8874, sastarcher@gmail.com or Steve Haze, 559-970-6320 re opportunities to help clean up the San Joaquin River.

Island Hopping in Channel Islands National Park, 2012

3-Day, Live-Aboard, Multi-Island Cruises
May 6-8; July 8-10; September 9-11

Explore the wild, windswept islands of Channel Island National Park. Enjoy the frolicking seals and sea lions. Train your binoculars on rare sea and land birds. Hike trails bordered by blankets of wildflowers and plants found in no other place on earth. Kayak or snorkel the pristine waters--- or just relax at sea. All tours depart from Santa Barbara aboard the 68' twin diesel Turth. Fee for all tours, \$590, includes an assigned bunk, all meals, snacks, beverages, plus the services of a ranger/naturalist who will travel with us to lead hikes, call attention to items of interest and present evening programs.

To make a reservation mail a \$100 check, payable to Sierra Club to leader: Joan Jones Holtz, 11826 The Wye St., El Monte, CA 91732. Contact leader for more information (626-443-0706; jholtzhln@aol.com)



Clearing the Air

with Kevin Hall

The Pivotal Year Ahead

The coming year will prove to be pivotal in the effort to reduce valley air pollution to “safe” levels any time soon. The valley air board is required to create its first cleanup plan for “fine particulates” in 2012 and, possibly, a new plan for ozone reductions, too.

Fine particulates are usually referred to as PM2.5, which means solid particles known as particulate matter less than two and a half microns across. These pollutants are small enough to bypass the body’s defenses and pass straight into the bloodstream leading to damage on a cellular level. On the way in, they cause significant damage to the respiratory system and from there go on to trigger heart attacks and strokes.

These chunks of gunk are suspended in humid air, which in the valley means dangerously high levels in fall, winter and spring mornings and evenings. Under certain weather conditions the danger stays high all day and night.

And unlike the ozone gas that attacks your health in the spring, summer and fall (note the overlap of both types of pollution in spring and fall) which are caused by two major components, fine particulates have five sources. Also unlike ozone, the air board will no longer be able to focus on reducing a single type of pollution to reduce our toxic atmospheric soup. They’ll have to go after all of them because any combination of the five, and sometimes just one of them, causes this most deadly of all pollution types.

Why is this wider regulatory net important? Dairies.

Consider the inventory of pollutants as measured in tons per day. This literally refers to the total physical weight of pollutants emitted daily by all sources and which must be reduced by vast amounts to get us

to clean air. We’re currently at around 1,400 tons per day.

All vehicles on the road – from the smallest, cleanest passenger vehicle to the largest, dirtiest diesel truck – combined emit a total of 357 tons per day of PM2.5-causing pollutants. All of them. Together.

Farming operations alone, primarily megadairies, emit 373 tons of ammonia and another 72 tons of “volatile organic compounds.” We’re not talking about farm equipment, pesticides or fertilizers, just dairies, feedlots and other confined animal feeding operations. In short, a few thousand businesses cause more pollution than the hundreds of thousands of vehicles of all types on valley roads today.

Worse yet, pollution from these least-regulated places is climbing while vehicle emissions are dropping. In fact, the growth in dairy and feedlot emissions are projected to exceed the reductions in vehicle emissions in the coming years.

This will be the year of truth for valley air board members. These mostly rural elected officials will be faced with the biggest test of their anti-regulatory political philosophy ever because we’re going into 2012 armed with two new reports that, at long last, severely undercut the air board’s favorite delay rallying cry of “we need more research.” We have it.

Land of Risk

The recently released UC Davis report “Land of Risk, Land of Opportunity” is a data-based mapping project of the valley’s most at-risk residents and where they live. Advocates typically refer to these as environmental justice communities and the researchers have labeled them Cumulative Environmental Vulnerability Assessment Zones. Go to www.sjvchip.org to see the whole report and find your place on the map. More than a third of the valley’s nearly 4 million residents are at high risk due to socioeconomic and environmental factors.

While you’re digging in, check out the Central California Health Policy Institute’s “Impacts of Short-Term Changes in Air Quality on Emergency Room and Hospital Use in California’s San Joaquin Valley” and read about the direct link between air pollution and asthma attacks in the valley. Go here http://www.csufresno.edu/ccchhs/institutes_programs/CVHPI/index.shtml or just search online for the institute by name.

Old Tricks New Dogs

The San Joaquin Valley needs some really good dogcatchers right now because the air polluters and their lapdogs, watchdogs and guard-dogs are running loose and need to be locked up.

Pollution levels this fall reached highly dangerous levels throughout the valley on repeated mornings, nights and the occasional afternoon, and it’s only going to get worse in January. This time of year we’re breathing in the very small particles that lodge deep in our lungs or enter the bloodstream to trigger heart attacks, strokes and even do damage at a cellular level.

During this prolonged red-air season, not a single Air Alert was (or will be) issued by the Valley Air Board. Children ran and played through recesses. Evening football games were played. Seniors took morning walks. Joggers went on their runs. Little did they know the damage being done to their lungs, their hearts, their futures – and the immune systems of their future descendants. Not once did the regional agency formed to address this public health crisis issue a word of warning.

Why Not?

Because the Valley Air Board is a captive agency controlled by the polluters it’s supposed to regulate. Instead of warning the public of impacts and risks, the board’s staff has entered the final stage of the classic industry “four dog defense.”

First perfected by cigarette-makers and later used by every bad actor from chemical manufacturers to the fossil fuel industry, this is a four-stage process (as described by Jennifer Sass of the NRDC in an Amy Goodman interview).

Outing Ratings

Distance	Elevation Gain
1) up to 6 miles	A) under 1,000 feet
2) 6 to 10 miles	B) 1,000 to 2,000 feet
3) 10 to 15 miles	C) 2,000 to 3,000 feet
4) 15 to 20 miles	D) 3,000 to 4,000 feet
5) over 20 miles	E) over 4,000 feet

Our Tehipite Chapter Outings Chair is Marcia Rasmussen, Marcia@BigBaldy.com, 559-332-2419. Please contact Marcia with any questions concerning our outings program. Contact the trip leader directly if you are interested in one of the listed trips.

Tehipite Chapter outings are free and open to the public. All leaders are unpaid volunteers assuming responsibility for a good trip, and your cooperation is mandatory. Please review additional trip and participant requirements at www.tehipite.sierraclub.org/outings.

Outings Leaders may post their own trips on the web page or send them to Marcia@BigBaldy.com.

CST #2087766-40. Registration as a seller of travel does not constitute approval by the State of California. California has established a Travel Consumer Restitution Fund (TCRF) under the California Seller of Travel Act. The TCRF is not applicable to these Outings. The law requires us to advise you that you would not be eligible to make any claim from the TCRF in the unlikely event of default by the Sierra Club. California law also requires certain sellers of travel to have a trust account or bond. The Sierra Club has such a trust account.

Would you like to be an Outings Leader?

Being an Outings Leader can be very rewarding. Basic qualifications include a desire to lead outings, basic first aid or the ability to devote time to getting qualified in first aid, and reading the Sierra Club Outings Leader Handbook. The Tehipite Chapter would like to offer outings to people of all abilities and ages. If you are interested, phone Marcia Rasmussen (559) 332-2419 or email her at Marcia@bigbaldy.com

Outings Schedule

Required Liability Waiver

All participants on Sierra Club outings are required to sign a standard liability waiver. If you would like to read the Liability Waiver before you choose to participate on an outing, please go to: <http://www.sierraclub.org/outings/chapter/forms/>, or contact the Outings Department at (415) 977-5528 for a printed version.

Saturday, January 7, 2012 - 8:00am - 4:00pm

Leader: Walter Taguchi

Cross Country Ski Rating: Easy Distance: 4.00 miles

Description: Trail head: Badger Pass ski resort. Lesson in the morning and easy tour in afternoon. Equipment can be rented at Badger Pass or at Fresno.

Contact: Walter Taguchi (559) 435 2818

Saturday, January 14, 2012 - 8:00am

Leader: Steve Fretz

Intermediate cross-country ski to Buck Rock in Giant Sequoia National Monument. Call for details.

Type: Cross Country Ski Rating: Intermediate Distance: 8.00 miles

Elevation Gain: 1,000 feet

Contact: Steve Fretz, (559) 439-6673

Saturday, January 14, 2012 - 9:30am

Leader: Dorothy

Type: Day Hike Rating: Easy Distance: 4.00 miles

Description: Four mile hike along the Tuolumne River. Meet at 9:30 at the American Legion Hall parking lot, 1001 S. Santa Cruze Ave., Modesto. Dogs and children welcome. Heavy rain cancels.

Contact: Dorothy (209) 549-9155

Saturday, January 21, 2012 - 8:00am

Leader: Marcia Rasmussen

Type: Day Hike Rating: Easy Distance: 3.00 miles

Description: Join us for a birdwatching trip to Chip Ashley's ranch in Watts Valley. Chip will guide us on an easy 3-mile walk, to search for some of the interesting species in that area. No previous birding experience necessary. All ages welcome. Contact trip leader Marcia Rasmussen for details.

Contact: Marcia Rasmussen: marcia@bigbaldy.com or (559) 332-2419

Saturday, January 28

Day hike 2A

New Melones Recreation Area (Yokuts)

Enjoy a hike in the Sierra foothills in the winter. We will hike approx. 8 miles at two locations in the Glory Hole Recreation Area of New Melones. We will likely see wintering/migrating birds. Bring warm clothes, good hiking shoes, rain gear, lunch, beverage, binoculars, other essentials, and \$8 parking fee. Meet at 10 am at Glory Hole Entrance Station, Whittle Ranch Rd. (south of Angels Camp, off hiway 49). HEAVY RAIN CANCELS. Optional dinner in Columbia. Contact leader Elaine Gorman at 209-586-9640 or vevado@yahoo.com to sign up. Check out www.usbr.gov/mp/ccao/newmelones/ for more info.

More Outings, page 14

It goes like this: the first “dog” or line of defense is where the polluter responds to public criticism by saying, “My dog doesn’t bite!” Meaning, in this case, that air pollution doesn’t cause harm, but of course the science proves them wrong. So, they release the second hound which barks, “Okay. My dog bites, but he didn’t bite you.” Again, the science proves them wrong. Air pollution is pervasive and we’re all exposed to dangerous levels. Third dog: “Fine! My dog bites; he bit you, but he didn’t hurt you.” Wrong yet again, of course. Air pollution really, really hurts you, and the more research we see the more harm we learn about.

So the fourth dog is unleashed, and this is the one our Valley Air Board and staff now use exclusively in their role as the P.R. arm of the industrial polluters. It says, “My dog bites. He bit you. He hurt you. It’s your fault!”

This is why we don’t see Air Alerts being issued on an almost daily basis during the summer months and every other day during the fall and winter. If they did, the public would soon be calling on those air board members to demand clean air and, worse yet in their eyes, force these elected officials to either take real action or step down.

Red Pill vs. Blue Pill

Dr. Kari Nadeau, a medical doctor and Stanford researcher, gave a presentation recently that delivered a Matrix-like, red-pill moment of awakening into a harsh reality.

In simple terms and leaving out the reams of technical research data Dr. Nadeau and her team released only after nine years of careful study, the researchers examined the genetic code of our children as it relates to the production of t-cells in their immune systems.

T-cells play a critical role in a body’s ability to respond to attack, determining the type and degree of chemical response within the body. People with low counts have severe allergies, asthma, GI disease and diabetes type I.

It turns out the human body has a very efficient method of taking elements, like air pollutants, in blood and injecting them into cells, specifically into the nuclei. In Fresno (and similarly impacted valley communities, in my opinion), the genetic code of the children studied has been permanently damaged, resulting in lower t-cell counts.

As it turns out, Fresno kids with asthma not only have t-cell counts lower than Fresno ones without asthma, but when compared with young ones from outside the valley, our healthy kids have lower counts than Palo Alto kids with asthma. A “healthy” immune system in a valley child is weaker than a damaged immune system from one on the outside.

And the genetic damage is not only permanent, it’s hereditary. The genetic inheritance these kids pass along to the next generation is one of a weakened immune system...from birth. Chances are it’s been happening here for some time now.

So the next time you hear that fourth dog barking, remember who loses and for how long. Think about volunteering as a dog-catcher and joining the effort. We need you. Generations to come need you.

Kevin Hall is director of the Central Valley Air Quality Coalition based in Fresno, online at www.calcleanair.org and on Facebook. CVAQ is a partnership of more than 70 community, medical, public health, environmental and environmental justice organizations representing thousands of residents in the San Joaquin Valley unified in their commitment to improve the health of Californians. Kevin can be reached at kevin@calcleanair.org.

News, from page 2

According to Oakland’s Eastbay Express newspaper, “the federal government leased 2,343 acres of public land in Monterey County and 240 acres in Fresno County to three oil and gas companies for a total of \$257,051 on September 14 without, environmentalists say, conducting an adequate review of potential environmental impacts.” I’m no energy economist, but \$257,051 seems to be a pittance compared to what these companies will make out of this deal.

In 2005, at the behest of Vice President Cheney, a former CEO of fossil fuel giant Halliburton Company, Congress voted to exempt fracking from the Safe Drinking Water Act.

The recent documentary film *Gasland* chronicles pollution in the wells of landowners living near gas leases where fracking is used. Several homeowners showed how they could light their taps on fire.

Fracking risks polluting our air as well as our water supplies. Tehipite activist Gary Lasky is quoted in the Eastbay Express story: “Any fracking done in Fresno County would negatively impact the air quality, and these cumulative effects would be a violation of the law. Natural gas might be cleaner to burn, and that’s what the energy companies always tell us in their advertising, but it’s not cleaner to mine.” In the San Joaquin Valley, one child in three suffers from asthma.

Tehipite Comments on the Yosemite Merced River plan

by George Whitmore

The National Park Service (NPS) in Yosemite is in the midst of another major planning process. This one is really massive, involving a huge commitment of resources. The process has the potential to result in substantial changes in the way the public is accustomed to experiencing Yosemite. The current effort is directed toward producing a Comprehensive Management Plan for the Merced Wild and Scenic River. Since the Merced River and its corridor occupy most of Yosemite Valley, the plan will affect almost all development and activity in Yosemite Valley. It will also affect Little Yosemite Valley and the Merced Lake High Sierra Camp, as well as the El Portal Administrative Area. On the South Fork of the Merced River, it will affect much of the Wawona area.

The schedule calls for a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) to be published later in 2012. The NPS is presently engaged in a process to formulate Alternatives which will be presented for consideration in the Draft EIS. As part of the process of formulating Alternatives, the NPS produced a Workbook for public comment. We submitted comments on the Workbook, and those comments are printed below.

Our comments on the Workbook were preceded by years of involvement in Yosemite management issues and planning. Some readers probably will remember having been involved in the lengthy planning process which led to Yosemite’s 1980 General Management Plan. It has been going on for a long time. In recent years, as Chair of the Tehipite Chapter Yosemite Committee, I have coordinat-

ed the Chapter's input to the NPS on various management and planning issues. In order to understand the rationale behind our recent comments, the reader needs to know something of the context in which they were written.

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Starting in the mid-1990's, there were a series of lawsuits which have challenged various aspects of how the NPS was managing Yosemite.

The first lawsuit was over an NPS proposal for a huge expansion of Yosemite Lodge. That project was stopped by Sierra Club intervention before it could get started.

That was closely followed by an NPS project to widen and straighten the road up the Merced River gorge from El Portal into Yosemite Valley. The Sierra Club joined in the legal challenge to that project. The judge held that the NPS was violating the law. However, since the government lawyers claimed that most of the damage had already been done (a false claim), the judge allowed the NPS to complete what they had started on three-fourths of the project. The remainder of the project was completed years later, but in a highly modified way which was not as destructive of natural values as had originally been intended.

That was followed by eight or nine years of litigation over the Merced River planning process. The Sierra Club was supportive of that litigation, joining in the filing of amicus briefs at two different points. The end result of that protracted litigation was a stunning setback to the NPS. The appellate court essentially suggested that the NPS management decisions which had been made over the years were destructive of natural values, and that the NPS must prepare a new plan which would be protective of natural values.

The essence of the court ruling was that the NPS had failed to address user capacity in the past, and that the new plan which was to be prepared must do so. The Tehipite Chapter comments on the Workbook were primarily focused on the NPS' failure so far to deal

with the foundational issues of user capacity, transportation, and parking. We felt that comments on specific management issues would be inappropriate for the simple reason that such comments would have been submitted in an uninformed vacuum. What would have been the point of endorsing or opposing an increase or decrease in campgrounds when we have no idea how the NPS intends to address the issue of unlimited demand for access to a finite resource, or whether the impact of existing campgrounds is acceptable?

We wanted our response to be consistent with duly established Sierra Club policy, which has been supportive of litigation seeking to force compliance with the user capacity mandates. The Sierra Club has also formally endorsed the ruling of the Ninth Circuit Court, asking the NPS to implement the intent of the court ruling. We felt that the NPS process so far is not in compliance with the terms of the Ninth Circuit Court ruling or with the resultant Settlement Agreement, and that the NPS should be made aware of that view. (The plaintiffs expressed that view somewhat more forcefully!)

With all of the above in mind, we submitted the following comments to the NPS.

### Comments

[This was addressed to the Superintendent of Yosemite National Park on December 14, 2011.]

This is being sent on behalf of the Tehipite Chapter of the Sierra Club. The Tehipite Chapter encompasses several counties in Central California, including all of Yosemite National Park.

This is in response to your request for comments on the Merced Wild and Scenic River Alternatives Planning Workbook, dated Fall 2011.

The Workbook is an impressive publication, reflecting the immense investment of thought, energy, and time which went into producing it. We do feel, however, that the Workbook's usefulness is limited because certain basic foundational elements are lacking. Among these are

information on user capacity, transportation, and parking.

When this MRP [Merced River Plan] process was started we were told that a park-wide transportation plan would be an integral part of it, because you can't deal with capacity without talking about transportation. But, for whatever reason, transportation kept getting downplayed. It is to the point now that it is basically off the table, which leaves the Workbook irrelevant.

Consideration of user capacity, transportation, and parking are matters which should have been an integral part of the process of formulating "potential management options". Instead, there seems to be an assumption that there will always be room for more people and more vehicles, and all that is needed is to figure out how to manage them. This is especially noticeable in discussion of the Visitor Use Management Program on page nine.

It is also noticeable in the way in which the demand for more camping is addressed. At various points in the Workbook it is stated that there has been a significant demand for more camping, and the NPS response appears to be that they must therefore provide more camping. In fact, at the Wawona workshop a staff member was overheard telling several citizens, "We have decided to have a large increase in camping in the Valley."

Is demand from various user groups going to drive the planning process, regardless of legally mandated guidelines?

The goal of never turning anyone away is very commendable, but we are concerned that it may not be realistic, or legal.

Where are the studies which would support creation of the infrastructure needed to accommodate ever-increasing numbers of people and vehicles?

We agree that more people could be accommodated by telling visitors to stay on paved surfaces, or to be content with looking out of a bus window. But would this type of experience be accepted by the visitor? Even if the visitor accepted it, is it really the type of experience which the NPS would wish to encourage?

Which perhaps brings us to what should have been the starting point of the alternatives formulation process. It should have begun with a determination of (1) what type of visitor experience is desired, and (2) what level of impact on natural resources is acceptable. If this has been done, we have seen no evidence of it.

Instead, we are asked our opinion about where additional campgrounds should be put, where additional parking should be put, what is the best way of keeping people out of meadows, how roads should be arranged to deal with congestion, and what we think of pedestrian undercrossings. We could answer these questions, but since our opinions would not be informed by basic background information, would our responses really be of any value?

If this sounds as though we are frustrated, that is because we are. Your staff has devoted an immense amount of thought, energy, and time to this planning process. That investment could still be salvaged if you would put further development of alternatives on hold until you have come to grips with user capacity, transportation, and parking. And that needs to be closely linked to deciding what type of visitor experience is desired, and how much impact on natural resources is acceptable. Only then should you be asking the public's opinion about specifics.

However, we realize that this process might proceed forward in spite of our objections, so we reluctantly offer the following limited comments.

In general, there should be less development of all kinds, with the exceptions of

a. More parking for visitors by converting spaces presently used for other purposes, and a few new small dispersed parking lots in areas with minimal visual impacts. There should be NO large parking facilities in the west Valley.

b. Expanded shuttle system, especially throughout Yosemite Valley in its entirety to Pohono Bridge and Tunnel View.

c. Increased bicycling opportunities throughout Yosemite Valley, including west valley to Pohono Bridge. Bicycle trails do not have to be asphalted.

d. More toilets throughout Yosemite Valley, where the need is demonstrated by human waste behind rocks and trees. At the very least, information should be provided so visitors can find the toilets that do exist.

Abide by the Olmsted Line, which called for no development west of the area presently occupied by the Yosemite Lodge complex (Lodge/Camp Four/Indian Village)

Camping. Consider only in areas presently occupied with development, such as the DNC stables area. This does NOT include the west Valley. Keep development out of the west Valley---abide by the Olmsted Line prohibition! The sites of the former Upper and Lower River Campgrounds should be restored to natural conditions.

Camping (continued). On page 15, the Workbook suggests expanding camping capacity in Yosemite Valley, or keeping it the same as at present. It does not suggest a reduction. Is it not conceivable that appropriate studies would determine that the present number of campsites is excessive, and there should be a reduction from the present number? The way the query is posed seems to suggest that decisions have already been made in the absence of appropriate studies. (Note the incident cited above where one staff member was heard telling several members of the public, "We have decided to have a large increase in camping in the Valley.")

Rafting. Present impacts from commercial use are excessive. Consider prohibiting floating, or limiting to private activity; one advantage would be reduced liability if people are doing it on their own.

Merced Lake HSC [High Sierra Camp]. Reduce quality and quantity of amenities to bring the camp more into line with the wilderness concept. Consider eventual removal of the HSC

Helicopters vs mules. In some areas, and for some purposes, helicopters are considered to be less intrusive than mules. Decisions should be on a case by case basis, using the method which has the least impact. The need for either

would be greatly reduced if the HSCs were eliminated.

El Cap meadow. Boardwalks are a visual intrusion and should be avoided. The need to walk into the meadow for a view of El Capitan would be greatly reduced if some of the numerous conifers along the north side of the road were removed. Use temporary rail fencing to direct use away from impacted areas. Parking near the El Cap bridge should be restricted to administrative use, keeping it available for emergencies; this would improve visual esthetics, as well as discouraging human use of the most highly impacted area.

Sugar Pine Bridge. In view of the historic significance of the bridge, efforts should be made to avoid its removal. The present situation is not acceptable, but the bridge does not have to be removed to address it. If the elevated road berm which connects the two bridges were removed, high water would be able to go around the bridge and back into the main channel, rather than being forced into the man-caused cut-off channel. There are numerous constructed features on the river bank which constrain the river from following its natural course. Why single out the Sugar Pine bridge for attention? Its removal would possibly require the placement of more rip-rap in order to protect the Ahwahnee Hotel. If you remove the bridge, then be prepared to allow the river to take out the Ahwahnee.

Road intersections: There should be NO pedestrian over/'under crossings. Problems, if any, should be addressed without adding new structures. Because of the entrenched resistance to removing anything once it has been introduced, the addition of new structures anywhere in the Valley should be approached with extreme caution. If user capacity management were implemented, it might obviate the perceived vehicle/pedestrian problems.

Cathedral Beach. Provide a delineated loop road for unloading, with parking farther away from the picnic area.

Sentinel Beach. Provide a delineated loop road.

At the beginning of this message we commented on the seeming abandonment of the concept of limits. We realize that this has been addressed at times in other settings, but we are responding to the contents of the Workbook. The concept of limits seems to be absent from that document.

We greatly appreciate the dedication to this Park of you and your staff. It is clear that you have good intentions. This planning process is extremely difficult, and we do not wish to complicate it needlessly. But we do feel that going back to the basics with some additional time and effort at this point would eventually pay off with a vastly improved final plan. The Workbook is commendable for its innovative approach to public involvement. We regret that there has not been sufficient time under the right circumstances to respond to it as the NPS had intended.

George Whitmore, Chair  
Tehipite Chapter Yosemite Committee  
Sierra Club

## Jesse Morrow Mountain: Final EIR Made Public

Chip Ashley

The final Environmental Impact Report (FEIR) on the Cemex aggregate mining project proposed for Jesse Morrow Mountain was made public in mid-December.

We haven't been able to digest completely this massive document, which according to a December 17, 2011 Fresno Bee story weighs in at 28 pounds, but we feel we should present some of the highlights of the document before it goes before the Fresno County Planning Commission in mid-February.

Here's what jumped out at me in the FEIR. Italicized portions are direct quotations from the FEIR; non-italicized is my commentary:

### Effects on Scenic Resources

*The Project would alter natural features and scenic qualities near SR 180, a designated scenic highway.*

The FEIR says this impact is SU—significant and unavoidable, a politically correct way of saying, “In order to feed our addiction to money and all the consumer junk it can buy, let's put a green and brown bag on

this pig to help us ignore it.” Cemex will mitigate by hiding what they can of the project with berms and trees (not specified as native) and by painting buildings in earth tones. This will really do little to reduce the impact to the gateway to Kings Canyon and Sequoia National Parks except perhaps for the least discerning.

### Long-Term Operations Emissions

*Project operations would increase air emissions due to emissions from mobile equipment and fugitive dust from mining operations (blasting, crushing, screening, and handling of aggregate, asphalt plant, ready-mix plant, and truck and employee traffic).*

One of the most notable changes in the FEIR, reproduced here in photographic images from the FEIR, is the lining out of the mitigations for project generated emissions Cemex proposed in the Draft EIR:

#### Mitigation Measure: Not Feasible 3.3-2a

*It has not been determined if Tier 4 controls are available, compatible, or would reduce NO<sub>x</sub> emissions to any significant level. Even if such mitigation were available, emissions of NO<sub>x</sub> would still be significant due to emissions generated from on-road truck traffic. The emission rates presented in Table 3.3-8 are applicable to the first three years, after which there would be a step-down in usage as discussed in Mitigation Measure 3.3-2b. There would be another step-down after 10 years of operation, when the applicant would have replaced or upgraded all diesel engines to meet Tier 4 standards, also discussed in Mitigation Measure 3.3-2b.*

#### Mitigation Measure 3.3-2b

*The following measures will be required of the applicant to ensure that health impacts to sensitive receptors would be less than significant:*

*Reduce operational times for the onsite mobile equipment from 16 hours per day to 8 hours per day, or less, depending on where the equipment were operating (i.e., pit production area or processing area), what they were doing (i.e., operations or maintenance), and equipment type.*

*Eliminate the use of large end-dump trucks after the first three years of operation, replacing them with a conveyor system.*

*After 10 years of operation, remove or upgrade all Tier 3 diesel engines and replace them with diesel engines designed to meet cleaner future EPA Tier 4 emission standards.*

#### Mitigation Measures- None Feasible Measure 3.3-1:

*The design of the plant has the biggest effect on the odor emissions (primarily VOCs and semi-volatile organic compounds (SVOCs)) from the asphaltic cement. A counterflow drum design would inherently have lower VOC emissions relative to a batch or parallel*

I can only speculate as to the reason for lining out the mitigation measures. In the first part, concerning Tier 4 controls, the reason for lining out may be that the argument that “It has not been determined if Tier 4 controls are available, compatible, or would reduce NO<sub>x</sub> emissions to any significant level” seems to be factually inaccurate. Indeed, according to the U.S. EPA web site, the EPA implemented Tier 4 in 2004 specifically because “reductions in NO<sub>x</sub> and PM emissions from nonroad diesel engines will provide enormous public health benefits. EPA estimates that by 2030, controlling these emissions would annually prevent 12,000 premature deaths, 8,900 hospitalizations, and one million work days lost.” It should also be noted that the San Joaquin Valley al-

ready has some of the worst NO<sub>x</sub> and PM pollution in the world, and particulates (PM) and oxides of nitrogen (a precursor to ozone) cause thousands of premature deaths in the Valley.

Furthermore, according to the December 16 Fresno Bee story, although Cemex declined to confirm it, Fresno County officials are claiming the company has agreed to reduce the size and time period of the project so as to extract 25% less rock during only 50 years instead of 100 years. Perhaps by reducing the size and time of the project, Cemex may be hoping to avoid mitigating for on-site emissions.

The second lined out section on on-site emissions measures required “to ensure that health impacts to sensitive receptors would be less than significant.” Again perhaps Cemex is hoping, by reducing the size and duration of the project, to avoid costs of mitigating to protect sensitive receptors, a term of art which actually means people with asthma and other serious chronic lung ailments putting them at greater risk because of these emissions.

Several skeptics quoted in the Bee story suspected that Cemex has ulterior motives for offering a reduced project. Then, once the camel gets its nose into the tent ... well, you know the rest. 50 years is less than 100 years, but is still a long time, and lots can happen.

The point about the camel's nose deserves more attention. This FEIR is the thin end of the wedge, and there is simply no guarantee that Cemex will keep up its side of the bargain, particularly in the current regulatory regime. The fact of the matter is that Cemex has a long track record of not playing by the rules. The largest fine ever levied against Cemex is 1.5 million dollars, which is of course pocket change to this huge global corporation. To this company, this seems to be considered just part of the cost of doing business. Unfortunately, corporate law protects corporate employees from being imprisoned for such liabilities. Certainly, lawsuits--as in the PG&E hexavalent chromium cases--are a possible avenue, but these are difficult to bring about.

The point is that there is simply no guarantee that we can trust Cemex to protect endangered species or cultural resources on the project site. I am sure Fresno County's Board of Supervisors is aware of this question. The next question is do they care? I believe Susan Anderson does. As for the others, they will probably vote for this project if they think

they have enough public cover among the voters to do so.

Finally, please watch the superb film, made by the Traditional Choinumni Tribe, on Wa-Ha-Lish, the Choinumni name for JMM, at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VdoFzuW2mhI>

## ECONOMICS

With Marian Orvis

### DANGER-HAZARDOUS CHEMICALS

WELCOME TO 2012 the year of the healthy!

In 1976, Congress, bless their little hearts, enacted the Toxic Substances Control Act (TSCA), which gave the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) the right to track industrial chemicals used in the US. HOWEVER...

Of the roughly 85,000 chemicals used in the US, 62,000 were presumed safe and “grandfathered into use” when TSCA was enacted and never tested for safety. About 23,000 new chemicals have been introduced into US products and processed since TSCA was enacted. EPA cannot order testing on a new chemical unless it has been proven to pose an unreasonable risk to health.

Manufacturers may conduct safety tests, but they’re NOT required to do so. How can this happen?

EPA has gathered proof of harm and ordered testing of ONLY 200 chemicals since TSCA was enacted. How can this happen?

Only five chemicals the EPA has banned from use in the US since TSCA became law; only one of those--PCBs--is a full ban, The rest are partial bans! What’s wrong with this picture?

Source:GREEN AMERICAN.ORG 4&511

Okay, let’s get really serious: HONESTLY

Let’s look at some church bulletins Hall of Fame (I can’t wait!)

\* The ladies of the church have cast off clothing of every kind and these can be seen in the church basement Friday afternoon.

\* This being Easter Sunday, we will ask Mrs. White to come forward to lay an egg on the altar.

\* This afternoon, there will be a meeting in the south and north end of the church. Children will be baptized at both ends.

\* Support our church rummage sale: a good opportunity to get rid of anything not worth keeping but too good to throw away. Bring your husbands.

Strange but True (and not Ripley)

NO SLIP-UPS: Minced banana peels do as well as or better at purifying water that is painted with toxic metals than most other materials, according to scientists. The peels were especially good at separating lead and copper from river water and they can be used 11 times before losing their metal-binding properties. Believe it or not!

WHERE’S PLANNED PARENTHOOD WHEN YOU NEED THEM? An Indian man has 39 wives, 94 children and 33 grandchildren--all living under the same roof. They live in a four-story building with 100 rooms in a mountainous village in India’s remote northeast. The family, all 167 of them, consumes around 200 pounds of rice and 130 pounds of potatoes a day. The wives share a dormitory near the private bedroom of Ziona Chana, 66, although he said he likes to have seven or eight of them by his side at all times. He heads a local Christian (?) sect that allows polygamy. Who need a job here?

OKAY, let’s welcome in the New Year’s with this thought:. The Virgin Mary was an unwed teenage mother. Source unknown

## The Environmental Community

Chip Ashley

One essential requirement necessary of environmental work like ours to succeed is community, by which I mean a group of people held together by a traditional value system. That’s hard to come by in a world of ever increasing change and turmoil, and so we often seem to be fighting a disorganized retreat against forces that exploit and therefore degrade our environment. As Aldo Leopold said in *A Sand County Almanac*, “one lives

alone in a world of wounds.” Well, maybe not quite alone anymore, but even with the allies we have, we are the thin green line against a powerful and well-funded foe.

By “traditional value system” I do not mean the fundamentalist forms of religion practiced in the megachurches we see popping up like toadstools all over the landscape, which from my perspective are much more a part of the problem than part of the solution. Indeed, according to radical environmentalist Derrick Jensen, such churches worship the toxic mimic of Christ and certainly not the one who preached the Golden Rule, which is at the heart of any true community, Christian or not. Communities are made up of people, Christian and otherwise, who care about each other, who are “there” for each other in a way that seems to be disappearing in America and the rest of the industrialized world. And certainly the Golden Rule is bound up inextricably with the environment because in treating the environment with concern and compassion we are also treating each other and all our fellow creatures with concern and compassion.

Jensen’s concept of toxic mimic is core in the discussion of the disappearance of community, for community is being replaced by the toxic mimic of community—by a “social” aggregation that, if not closely examined, looks like community, but that turns out to be on more careful examination a pernicious imitation of community, a hollowed out façade whose real purpose is to serve the few at the expense of the many. In *Endgame*, Jensen provides a cogent example of “toxic mimic” when he describes how renaissance “Christians” sought to convert Native Americans by offering them a choice—converting or being burned at the stake. “One Indian asked in response [to this choice], if he converted to Christianity would he go to heaven? And if so, would there be other Christians there? When he found the answer to both questions was yes, he said he’d rather burn to death.”

The version of Christianity offered to the Indian is the toxic mimic of the version Jesus Christ offered to the poor and sick as he ministered to them not in a temple or church paid for with money with cunningly disguised strings attached, but in the open air. The real concern of these colonial zealots was neither Christ nor the souls of the indigenous peoples of America, but gold and other wealth to be sent back to Spain or any similar colonial empire which used religion as a mining implement to extract wealth from the New World to be sent to the Old.

When Columbus “discovered” America he also imported an economic system based on the exploitation not only of powerless people—in this case the indigenous of the Caribbean islands—whom he enslaved to dig gold, but also of the environment. The evolution of that system—the evolution of capitalism in America—can be traced from that moment of “discovery” in 1492 up to the present. Of course this system has proven to be ingeniously adaptive as it has shifted shapes again and again to adapt to measures taken to regulate and trammel it in. Money has a way of doing that. Modern capitalists no longer use slaves or cut off the hands of slaves (at least in the narrowest since of the term)—as Columbus did—who fail to produce the requisite amount of gold, but they nevertheless employ means that exploit people and degrade the environment. And if we look with a discerning eye we can see it happening everyday all around us.

In *Deer Hunting with Jesus*, Joe Bageant provides a colorful look at community such as it is in the U.S. “Many of those picturesque towns you whip by on the interstate are small feudal systems, ruled by local networks of moneyed families, bankers, developers, lawyers, and merchants. That part of a community’s life you cannot see from the road or from your Marriott hotel room and it certainly does not appear in tourist brochures pushing Winchester’s Apple Blossom Festival [DHW] is set in Winchester] or the Oktoberfest in your Midwestern town. It is in the interest of these well-heeled conservative provincials to maintain a feudal state with low taxes, few or no local regulations, no unions, a cheap school system, and a chamber of commerce with the state senate on its speed-dial. At the same time they dominate most elected offices and municipal boards. It seems only natural that these small business owners, after generations of shaving down the soap bars in the back room and soaking the pork chops in water for extra scale weight, would conclude that America is solely about the quickest buck. ‘Screw the scenic creek, you tree hugger. I’m getting an Outback Steakhouse franchise. Pave it, baby!’”

A pretty apt description of Fresno—our sprawling patch of the Midwest transplanted to the West Coast. This is our version of community, and it has been ever becoming thus since Leland Stanford, as the story goes, surveyed on horseback the route for the Central Pacific (since become the Southern Pacific), saw Moses Church’s irrigation system and the lush farmland it watered, and

decided to plant a railway station here to suck up all the money growing in those lush fields. The developers own it—always have owned it—and they have the City Council and County Board of Sups on speed-dial as well as in their back pockets, right next to their thick billfolds. To wit: recent statements of the Fresno City Council to homeless advocates.

The economy of Fresno does not exist for the people—at least not, as the Occupy Movement puts it, for the 99 percent—but for the very few, the 1 percent. People are here—again, most of them—to serve money, to serve capital, the great octopus that gripped California and the Central Valley as described in Frank Norris’ novel, *The Octopus*, about the Mussel Slough Tragedy in Kings County in 1880. No, people came here to feed that octopus—they had to; they were slaves to that octopus named Capital, just as we are today, although the octopus’ tentacles have changed the way they grip—people like John Sontag, of Evans and Sontag fame, who worked for the railroad in those days and was cast aside without compensation of any kind after he was seriously injured on the job. It is somewhat better now, with workers compensation and unemployment insurance, due to the hard work and sacrifices of the union movement. But the safety net does not catch all the octopus’ victims as capital ejects surplus labor as unnecessary, as the thousands of unemployed and homeless now suffering in Fresno prove. The octopus’ henchman, the political machine of Fresno, treats them as so much garbage as it bulldozes their encampments and removes in dump trucks to the landfill the very blankets, clothing, and sleeping bags they depend on for warmth during the coldest season.

This is why I now shout, “Welcome to Pottersville!” I refer of course to the town Bedford Falls would have been if George Bailey, played by Jimmy Stewart in Frank Capra’s *It’s a Wonderful Life* (repeatedly aired at Christmas time, so often aired nowadays perhaps that we don’t notice it anymore or heed its message). Bedford Falls is a community which serves all of its people, the 99% percent as well as the 1%, the absent-minded Uncle Billies and small business Mr. Gowers and Martinis and those down on their luck, as well as the wealthy Henry Potters. It is not a faux community, the mere façade of a community whose hidden agenda is to serve the great octopus Capital and capital only, the rest to receive only a trickle or a crumb or a squirt of ink in the eye.

Fresno has always trended somewhat toward Pottersville (which serves the wealthy slum lord banker Henry Potter), but it seems to be getting worse again, more like the by-gone days Norris wrote of, and this includes not only our city and county governments’ treatment of the poor and homeless but also matters of the environment, particularly air pollution and availability of water, both clean drinking water and water to sustain ecosystems, such as the San Joaquin River. The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control district, whose job ostensibly is to serve the community by protecting us from air pollution and regulate the sources of that pollution, seems on closer inspection to be working for the wealthy polluters as its managers repeatedly make excuses as to why they cannot do more to reduce pollution; it is the toxic mimic of a regulatory agency. Many small rural communities around the valley inhabited mostly by poor agricultural workers must import drinking water because their wells are polluted with pesticides and effluvia from dairies.

Why is it thus? In *In the Realm of Hungry Ghosts*, psychologist Gabor Maté says the reason is that the foundation of the capitalist economy is addiction. To maximize profits capital uses mass marketing to addict us to all sorts of consumer products by convincing us that we cannot possibly live without them, and the ads selling us these products are produced so as to bypass our critical reasoning processes. Like all addictions, the addiction of greed destroys communities by cutting traditional ties among people. “Capitalism destroys contact and connection. It has destroyed the clan, the tribe, the extended family, the community, the neighborhood. You see human beings never used to live the way we live now. ... We used to live in community, connection; and that was the context for child rearing. Children used to have many adults to relate to as they were growing up. And people had each other to relate to. We don’t have that anymore.” The single-income household has become almost non-existent among the working and middle classes. Now both parents must get jobs usually located at considerable distance from their children. In turn, their children are sent off to daycare centers or schools where they learn not from significant experienced adults (such as their parents) but from other children. Maté contrasts the situation of childrearing in modern industrial societies with the hunter-gatherer community, where children learn from their parents and

see “Community” page 15

# More Outings

## **Saturday, January 28, 2012 - 10:00am**

Leader: Elaine Gorman Type: Day Hike  
Rating: Intermediate Distance: 8.00 miles

Description: Enjoy a hike (2A) in the Sierra foothills in the winter. We will hike approximately 8 mi. at two locations in the Glory Hole Recreation Area of New Melones. We will likely see wintering/migrating birds. Bring warm clothes, good hiking shoes, rain gear, lunch, beverage, binoculars, other essentials, and \$8 parking fee. Meet at 10 AM at Glory Hole Entrance Station, Whittle Ranch Rd. (south of Angels Camp, off hwy. 49). Heavy rain cancels. Optional dinner in Columbia. Contact leader to sign up. Check out [www.usbr.gov/mp/ccao/newmelones/](http://www.usbr.gov/mp/ccao/newmelones/) for more info.

Contact: Elaine Gorman - [vevado@yahoo.com](mailto:vevado@yahoo.com) or (209) 586-9640

## **Saturday, February 4, 2012**

Leader: Derek Castle

Type: Day Hike Rating: Intermediate  
Climbing Elevation: 1,000 feet Descending Elevation: 1,000 feet Maximum Elevation: 5,000 feet Minimum Elevation: 4,000 feet  
Distance: 4.00 miles

Description: Hike (1B) Yosemite Falls Trail from the valley floor (elev. 4000 ft.) to the cascades at the base of the Upper Falls (elev. 5000 ft.) for great views of the valley in Winter, the lower falls from above, the cascades, the upper falls and the ice cone formed around it. Round trip about 4 mi. Bring rain gear, warm clothing, lunch, beverage, car-pool \$\$, hiking poles, other essentials. Experience hikers only. Call leaders for meeting time and place (Modesto area).

Contact: Derek Castle (209) 529-7816 co-leader Jim McGurrin (209) 538-6765

## **Sunday, February 5, 2012**

Leader: Karen Hammer

Type: Snowshoe hike Rating: Easy Distance: 5.00 miles

Superbowl Sunday Snowshoe hike for beginners who would like an introduction to the sport or for experienced snowshoers just looking to get out for part of the day. We will start at Coyote Nordic Trailhead in the Sierra National Forest off highway 168 and fol-

low the Eagle Trail to the Shaver Lake Vista. The level of difficulty involved in snowshoeing is always dependent on snow conditions, so it is impossible to accurately rate such a trip in advance. If you plan to participate and don't have your own gear you can rent snowshoes (and poles if you like) from REI or Herb Bauer. You will need to pick them up the day before the outing.

Dress in layers and be prepared for wet weather and to add or remove layers of clothing as needed. Please pack 1 - 2 quarts of water, lunch and snacks.

We encourage carpooling. If you drive please be aware that a snow parking permit must be obtained. These can be picked up in Shaver Lake on the way. If you are a passenger please be prepared to reimburse your driver for gas and for the parking permit. Bad road conditions due to snow or ice will result in the trip being cancelled or postponed.

Contact the leader for meeting time and place and to be sure this outing is appropriate for your level of conditioning. Karen Hammer (559)298-5272

## **Saturday, February 11, 2012**

### **Anything-Can-Happen Trip for Outings Leaders**

Leader: Marcia Rasmussen

Type: Other Rating: Intermediate

Description: Are you prepared for ANYTHING? Sometimes things can go wrong--VERY wrong--in the outdoors. What's going to happen on this trip? You won't know until it happens. Plan for a full day. We will hike--or ski, if all participants are skiers. Something bad will happen. Will you be ready?

This trip is open to Outings Leaders and Leader Trainees. Date tentative. Location to be decided.

Contact: Marcia Rasmussen: [Marcia@Big-Baldy.com](mailto:Marcia@Big-Baldy.com) or (559) 332-2419

## **Saturday, March 3, 2012 - Sunday, March 4, 2012**

### **Snow Camp II**

Outing type:Backpack Rating: Easy

Leader: Marcia Rasmussen

Date is tentative. Location to be decided.

This trip will be similar to Snow Camp I, except that we will leave the cars behind, load our gear into backpacks, and ski/snowshoe a short distance to the campsite. Gear list will be provided. Ideally, participants would do Snow Camp I first, but this is not required.

Contact: Marcia Rasmussen: [Marcia@Big-Baldy.com](mailto:Marcia@Big-Baldy.com) or (559) 332-2419

## **Saturday, March 10, 2012 - 8:00am**

### **Intermediate X/C Ski Tour: Tamarack**

Outing type:Cross Country Ski

Rating: Intermediate

Leader: Gerald Vinnard

We will start at Tamarack Trailhead in the Sierra National Forest and ski the Raven Trail. 8:00 to 5:00. Call leader for details.

Contact: Gerald Vinnard - (559) 431-5780

## **Sunday, July 1, 2012 - Friday, August 31, 2012**

### **Mt. Whitney Day Hike - tentative, date to be decided**

Leader: Marcia Rasmussen

Type: Day Hike Rating: Difficult Climbing Elevation: 6,000 feet Descending Elevation: 6,000 feet

Maximum Elevation: 14,500 feet Minimum Elevation: 8,500 feet

Distance: 22.00 miles

Description: Mt. Whitney trips are tentative, date(s) unknown. All depends on the Inyo National Forest lottery system. We will go whenever permits are available.

When we announced the Whitney trip in 2011, the trip filled quickly with a long waiting list. In the end, the mountain itself canceled our hike with a massive storm. This summer, we hope to run 2 separate Whitney trips, each limited to 10 people. This is a long, difficult hike. Participants will be screened for appropriate fitness/experience. We may not know the date(s) until March/April. Sign up now if you would like to be placed on the list early. As soon as dates are announced, you will be asked to pay a \$15 permit fee to reserve your place.

Check this website frequently for updates.

Contact: Marcia Rasmussen: [Marcia@Big-Baldy.com](mailto:Marcia@Big-Baldy.com) or (559) 332-2419

other significant adults, “non-stressed, non-depressed, emotionally attuned available care-givers,” from whom they are seldom if ever separated.

In the 1940s, in his autobiography *The Seven Storey Mountain*, Thomas Merton described our problem thus: “We live in a society whose whole policy is to excite every nerve in the human body and keep it at the highest pitch of artificial tension, to strain every human desire to the limit and to create as many new desires and synthetic passions as possible, in order to cater to them with the products of our factories and printing presses and movie studios and all the rest.”

In *Requiem for a Dream*, Hubert Selby writes, “I believe that to pursue the American dream is not only futile but self-destructive because ultimately it destroys everything and everyone involved with it. By definition it must, because it nurtures everything except those things that are important: integrity, ethics, truth, our very heart and soul. Why? The reason is simple: because life ... is giving, not getting.”

My friends and colleagues in the Peace, Social Justice, and Environmental Movement in Fresno and the San Joaquin Valley—I use the singular “Movement” because these are really the same movement—understand these truths and share these values. I am proud to say I saw these truths and values displayed in the press conference in front of Fresno City Hall on December 21, 2011. It is hard to build a community—it takes decades, maybe centuries. But these folks are working on it and progressing. So there is hope that we can change our Pottersville into Bedford Falls.

**Children, Even Adults,  
in Nature--An Overlooked Gift**  
Rob Jordan  
*from Sierra Club's Words of the Wild,  
edited by Heather Anderson*

You may have overlooked an invaluable gift to children for the holidays. It is an antidote to stress, mental fatigue and obesity. It is a respite from urban cityscapes, ever-present technology, and daily demands. It is the gift of the outdoors. Children are increasingly isolated from nature. They tend to lose themselves in video games and text messages instead of forests, vacant lots and other open spaces. Future generations may come to see nature and the outdoors as superflu-

ous and wilderness as utterly alien. Who will care for the last remaining wilderness or open spaces then?

Children may not ask for outdoor adventures, but we can show them the way. The Sierra Club is on a mission to bring the gift of the outdoors to children across the country. Under the umbrella of its new Mission Outdoors initiative, the Club is focusing on four coordinated programs aimed at getting kids and their families into nature. “We are all working to reconnect people with the outdoors and to connect them with the conservation movement,” said Sierra Club National Youth Outreach Representative Tiffany Saleh of the club’s Los Angeles field office.

These are Mission Outdoors’ core components:

- Building Bridges to the Outdoors (BBTO) is an effort to educate community leaders, decision-makers and the public, convene national and state level partners, and advocate for more opportunities for youth to experience nature. Through BBTO, we hope to engage new audiences in advocacy and invest in the next generation of environmental activists and stewards.
- Inner City Outings (ICO) is a community outreach program that provides opportunities for urban youth and adults to explore, enjoy, and protect the natural world. ICO primarily serves young people who would not otherwise have access to outdoor opportunities (due to lack of awareness, income, skills, or adult role models). ICO is an effective way to link participants from different cultures, foster respect of self and others, and provide outdoor skills training and leadership opportunities.
- Local Outings are a great way to find out about local conservation issues while enjoying the great outdoors. With 63 chapters and more than 400 local groups providing more than 10,000 day and overnight outings for 200,000 people annually, you can choose from day hikes, peak scrambles, bicycling, cross-country skiing, bird-watching, conservation-oriented walks, or outings into the remaining natural areas of our major cities.
- Military Families Outdoors is a program aimed at getting military families and veterans outdoors as a method of stress relief, family and social integration, and physical, mental, and emotional

health improvement. In partnership with organizations such as the National Military Family Associations and Operation Purple Camps, we have helped get 50,000 military families, veterans, and youth outside since 2006. Moving forward, we will focus on providing consistent contact and leadership in the outdoors for military families and veterans across the nation.

Together, these programs engage more than 250,000 people in outdoor experiences each year and train thousands of volunteer leaders, including youth leaders, across all 50 states, Washington, DC and Puerto Rico. Each program will continue to do what it does best. But by integrating our activities and strengths where appropriate, we can work more effectively to accomplish larger goals.

The overarching long term goal of Mission Outdoors is to get America outdoors. We will do this by providing access to outdoor experiences for more people of all backgrounds, building alliances and partnerships that connect all communities to their natural heritage, and organizing grassroots and federal administration support for the value of outdoor experiences and the protection of our natural heritage.



Photo by Tiffany Saleh, Sierra Club Mission Outdoors program

**The Children in Nature Network**

One of our partner groups is the Children and Nature Network, a national network of approximately 80 loosely affiliated regional collaboratives that support and accelerate the growth of the children-in-nature movement. The movement is an offshoot of *The Last Child in the Woods*, the pathbreaking book by Richard Louv (2000). The book’s prediction of a nation beset by “Nature Deficit Disorder” galvanized parents’ groups and local neighborhoods groups around the country. Speaking with the Sierra Club recently, Louv said more adults need to understand and act on the importance of nature in their children’s lives. “By learning how effective nature can be in the promotion of their children’s health and well being as well



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 Deadline for *Tehipite Topics* is the 15th of each month. Please submit your work to [wattsvillepreservation@gmail.com](mailto:wattsvillepreservation@gmail.com).

as cognitive functioning; and by realizing that, as adults, they'll receive all the benefits themselves when they do get outside.

The children-in-nature movement shows signs of real progress. First Lady Michelle Obama, with the support of the Sierra Club and other groups, started "Let's Move Outside," a component of Mrs. Obama's nationwide "Let's Move" physical activity initiative to combat childhood obesity in a single generation. New ideas are gaining traction, according to Louv. They include outfitting local libraries with area hiking maps, pamphlets on local nature, registries for community gardens, and even outdoor gear for checkout. A campaign in the Netherlands seeks to enshrine children's right to nature experiences in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Closer to home, the Healthy Kids Outdoors Act under consideration by Congress would bolster state, local and federal efforts to connect children and families with nature and is supported by OAK (Outdoors Alliance for Kids), a national alliance co-founded by Sierra Club to promote the value of outdoor experiences for children, youth and families.

At least eight states, and some cities and parks, have passed children's outdoor bills of rights or environmental literacy plans. Such initiatives are working their way through legislatures in at least three more states. California was one of the first states to adopt a Children's Outdoor Bill of Rights. This statement provides that every child should have the right to camp under the stars, follow a trail, or catch a fish.

*(Rob Jordan is a freelance writer and editor based in San Francisco. The article is from Sierra Club's Words of the Wild, 12/11)*



Photo by Brian Beffort, Friends of Nevada Wilderness

### How to Get Involved

What can you do? It can be as easy as walking out your front door. A few ideas:

- Organize a family outdoor outing;
- Join or start a family hiking club in your neighborhood;
- Take a walk through a local park;
- Enjoy a backyard picnic;
- Contact a decision maker in your community and let them know why getting kids outside is important to you;
- Get together with other concerned community members to brainstorm how you can get kids involved in outdoor activities in your neighborhood.

More Information on getting Children Outdoors [www.sierraclub.org/missionoutdoors](http://www.sierraclub.org/missionoutdoors))

Information on starting a family nature club

Information about getting young people involved as "Natural Leaders"

Richard Louv's blogs: [www.natureprinciple.org](http://www.natureprinciple.org) and [www.childrenandnature.org](http://www.childrenandnature.org) Information about how contact with the natural world affects children's development