

# Sierra Club California 2023 Impact Report



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CALIFORNIA





Photo by Sierra Club

Over the last several years, California has experienced unprecedented heatwaves, floods, and other natural disasters. These are stark reminders of the escalating climate crisis and the critical need for our leaders to address it.

Sierra Club California is a leader in the battle to address the climate crisis. We secure investments in California's green energy transition, protect the state's natural resources, and safeguard communities burdened by pollution. As a result, California has allocated unprecedented resources and adopted strategies to protect our most vulnerable communities from the harms of climate change. We've also helped strengthen the state's dedication to environmental stewardship.

Sierra Club California is a leading voice for the environment within the halls of California's State Capitol and regulatory agencies. We work tirelessly to stop anti-environmental legislation and policies while propelling progressive bills forward. Our arsenal encompasses every tool from social media to legislator meetings to grassroots organizing all harnessed to push the environment to the forefront of California's elected officials' deliberations.


Our work requires more than just the staff of Sierra Club California, it requires our greatest asset: you, our members, and our volunteers. It is clear that we can't stop the climate crisis alone. In order to meet the urgency of this moment, we need the collaborative might of a grassroots movement that values everyone's contribution, regardless of their background, expertise, or skills.

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***This impact report shines a spotlight on the exceptional work of Sierra Club California over the past year and a half. Work that was made possible thanks to the generosity of individuals like you. As you navigate through our work, we hope these stories ignite a spark of inspiration within you, compelling you to stand alongside us.***

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**Brandon Dawson**  
Director





## Clearing the Air: A Resounding Victory for California's Public Health

*“Requiring 100% of medium and heavy-duty vehicle sales to be ZEVs beginning in 2036 is groundbreaking and the earliest date for such a requirement internationally.”*

*–Ray Pingle, Sierra Club California Lead Volunteer*

In the heart of California, frontline communities often bear the brunt of the nation's most insidious air pollution. The American Lung Association's 2023 State of the Air Report delivered a grim reality: more than 5 million Californians, many of whom are people of color, have significantly greater risk for cancer, asthma, or cardiovascular disease due to the pervasive scourge of air pollution. A staggering 17 out of the top 25 most ozone-polluted locations and 20 out of the top 25 short-term particle pollution-choked areas in the United States are nestled within California's counties. This tale of airborne peril points its finger squarely at the transportation sector, the source of half of the state's greenhouse gas emissions, nearly 80 percent of nitrogen oxide pollution, and a staggering 90 percent of diesel particulate matter pollution.

Sierra Club California, alongside its steadfast allies, embarked on a mission to reverse this trend. We rallied across various platforms, championed zero-emission transportation investments and demanded rigorous emissions cuts. In a win that unfolded earlier this year, our formidable coalition of over 20 organizations, representing labor, environmental justice, health advocates, green entities, and zero-emission industry pioneers secured a key victory at the California Air Resources Board (CARB).

Led by the tenacious efforts and impassioned leadership of our staff and volunteers, notably Ray Pingle, Lead Transportation Volunteer, Sierra Club California advocated for CARB to implement stronger air quality regulations. We directly lobbied CARB's experts, meticulously dissected data, and fiercely advocated for more audacious mandates to protect frontline communities from toxic air pollution. Our grassroots strength materialized through thousands of voices—we delivered thousands of comments and supported dozens of volunteer testimonies to call for a bolder, more proactive approach to preserve California's air quality.

In a historic moment, CARB passed the Locomotives Rule, a trailblazing initiative which mandates the retirement of diesel power trains aged over 23 years within California's borders. This intervention could prevent 3,200 deaths directly caused by air pollution. CARB also adopted the Advanced Clean Fleets rule, which requires manufacturers to sell only zero-emission medium- and heavy-duty vehicles starting in 2036. This regulation will add 700,000 zero-emission vehicles to California's fleet by 2050 and will reduce carbon dioxide emissions by 327 million metric tons by 2050.

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*The benefits of these victories will span generations. They are the result of a collective outcry of communities calling for cleaner air, voicing their struggles, and demanding change. Sierra Club California will continue to push for stronger regulations to curb toxic air pollution across the state. We can and must preserve the state's air quality for generations to come.*

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## Protecting California's Water Resources

*"The future of California water demands a paradigm shift. Current dam and conveyance proposals perpetuate unjust water practices. We stand with our partners to fight the current system: Environmental Justice communities, conservation groups, fishing groups, and Tribes."*

*–Erin Woolley, Sierra Club California Senior Policy Strategist*

California's water management system has been plagued by decades of resource misallocation and is in dire need of reform. Amidst the throes of a climate crisis that has eroded hydrological conditions, the state continues to divert precious water resources to massive agricultural enterprises in the Central Valley. This allocation is detrimental to the fragile balance of the San Francisco Bay-Delta and has led to an alarming decades-long decline in its sprawling ecosystem of 750 unique plant and wildlife species, including the cherished salmon. Many of the local communities, including indigenous groups that have occupied the valley for centuries, rely on the Bay-Delta ecosystem for their livelihoods.

Yet, the solution posed by the state defies logic—rather than nurturing the ecosystem through widespread local water conservation, the state proposed an antiquated project known by shifting monikers—the Peripheral Canal, California WaterFix, and now the Delta Conveyance Project. This tunnel threatens to amplify the decline of the Delta ecosystem.

In December 2022, Sierra Club California submitted a comprehensive comment letter on the Draft environmental impact report (EIR) to the Department of Water Resources (DWR), the culmination of months of advocacy and relentless dedication. We also put out a whitepaper, "Smart Water Alternatives 2022," in which we propose alternatives to the tunnel. We brought together over 5,000 supporters to sign petitions, submit comments, and rally against the Delta Tunnel.

Following our efforts, we successfully fought for the exclusion of the Delta Conveyance Project from the Governor's hasty infrastructure package in June 2023. The legislature heard the



voices of our coalition and our impassioned volunteers, listened, and successfully removed the Delta Tunnel from the package.

The following month, in July 2023 we rallied alongside tribal and environmental justice allies for a Day of Action for Water Justice at the State Capitol. Through passionate speeches and dozens of lobbying meetings with legislators, we urged Governor Newsom and the legislature to abandon the tunnel project altogether and instead preserve the ecosystem of the Bay Delta through local, sustainable alternatives.

The steps of the Capitol became a podium for change as environmental justice leaders, tribal representatives, and Sierra Club California spoke up for the water rights of Bay-Delta communities.

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***Sierra Club California volunteers came from every corner of the state to stand up for water rights. This beautiful moment of solidarity and unity wouldn't be possible without the continued support of our funders. We'll continue to advocate for a bold future where water resources are treasured and safeguarded, rather than sold to the highest bidder. We hope you'll join us.***

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## 30x30: Preserving California's Natural Beauty for the Future

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*“30x30’s success in California requires a grassroots movement that spans across the state. Sierra Club California can provide this with our expansive network of impassioned volunteers and members who are tirelessly dedicated to fostering local access to nature, bolstering climate resilience, and nurturing biodiversity within their local Sierra Club chapters.”*

*–Mahtisa Djahangiri, Sierra Club California Policy Associate*

The 30x30 movement is a global pledge to safeguard 30% of Earth’s lands and waters by 2030, en route to the goal of preserving “half earth” by 2050. With the initial benchmark looming just 6.5 years away, California’s role is pivotal. Our ongoing commitment to conservation is a vital shield against the climate crisis.

The gravity of this situation cannot be understated. California is grappling with the imminent threat of endangered species being eradicated, and invaluable ecosystems being permanently degraded. 30x30 offers us a spark of hope. It’s not just a campaign; it’s emblematic of our commitment to confront the climate crisis head-on.

In 2023, the California Natural Resources Agency (CNRA) unveiled two progress reports on 30x30: first, the “Outdoors for All Draft Strategy,” which champions equitable outdoor access; second

the “Pathways to 30x30 Progress Report” which encompasses all 30x30 objectives and echoes CNRA’s 2022 Pathways to 30x30. These reports highlight the state’s conservation priorities and celebrate California’s strides in environmental preservation.

We’ve come so far in protecting our state’s unique ecosystems, yet we still have so much further to go. The California 30x30 Campaign, a partnership between Sierra Club California, the Sierra Club Grassroots Network, and the Our Wild America campaign, leverages our expansive reach and deep-rooted volunteer network to support this vital cause. We collaborate with a statewide coalition of environmental groups, to promote conservation, equity, and access to public lands, as well as hold the state accountable to its 30x30 commitment.

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*In 2022, the Sierra Club California 30x30 Task Force sent in comment letters, engaged volunteers from across the state, and secured over \$1.5 billion in funding for 30x30 initiatives in the state’s 2023 budget. Our 13 local chapters rallied behind this mission, persuading local elected officials, and fervently supporting projects in their districts. We won’t rest until California’s natural landscapes are fully preserved, for everyone to enjoy and appreciate.*

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## **2022** *by the numbers*

We receive most funding from individual donors like you who believe in our cause. Every dollar invested is channeled into transformative action—fueling grassroots initiatives, empowering volunteers, advancing policy changes, and conserving California for generations to come.

**100%** Budget Spent in California

**67%** Giving from Committed Individuals

**1,579** Generous Individual Donors

**28%** Funding from National Office

**33%** Giving from Foundations



# Staff and Volunteer Leaders

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## Staff



**Brandon Dawson**  
Director



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Senior Policy Strategist



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## Executive Committee

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Karen Maki, Secretary  
Bruce Rienzo, Treasurer  
Kathy Dervin, CCC Liaison  
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Jason Islas  
Alex Mintzer  
Marisol Rubio  
Igor Tregub  
Wendy-Sue Rosen  
Ruben Arizmendi



# Get Involved

## Donate

Looking for ways to contribute to protect California's environment and support our work? Give back by becoming a c(3) and/or c(4) donor which helps fuel our mission in our State Capitol. Donate at [sierraclub.org/california.ways-give](https://sierraclub.org/california.ways-give).

## Volunteer

Inspired to make a difference? Volunteer with us! We have opportunities available across the state in-person and remote. Sign up at [sierraclub.org/California/Volunteer](https://sierraclub.org/California/Volunteer). If you would like to learn more about our volunteer program, email Destiny Villarreal at [destiny.villarreal@sierraclub.org](mailto:destiny.villarreal@sierraclub.org)

## Social media

Stay updated and follow us on Social Media!



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