

WORDS OF *the* WILD

Vol. XXIV, No. 2 August 2021

Newsletter of the Sierra Club's California/Nevada Wilderness Committee

Sierra Club's California 30 by 30 Task Force urges state to action

-- by Anne Henny

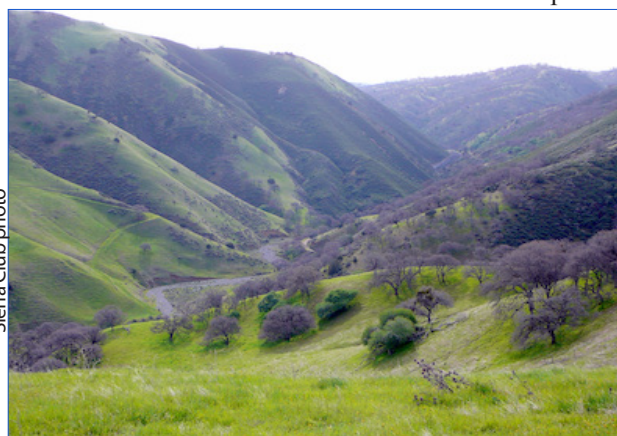
After officially launching in February, Sierra Club's 30 by 30 Campaign in California is going strong. We have a statewide volunteer/staff Task Force--with representatives from all 13 Chapters and several issue committees--that is actively participating in the California Natural Resource Agency

Volunteer co-leads are the California/Nevada Wilderness Committee's Anne Henny and Vicky Hoover.

Since early April, our Task Force and coalition allies have driven strong turnouts and effective public comments at CNRA's nine regional workshops and three topical workshops. The topical workshops

focused on nature-based climate solutions, 30 by 30 and social equity, and protecting biodiversity. Two more workshops in August are focusing on conserving lands and coastal waters. Our Task Force has prepared talking points and other resources to help members learn about

Secretary for Biodiversity and Habitat, the state's top official leading 30 by 30 implementation, and asked hard questions such as: How does CNRA intend to broaden and diversify its community engagement for 30 by 30? How will the state work with local and federal governments and other state agencies, boards, and commissions to achieve meaningful conservation? What standards of protection will be used and how will progress be measured? How will 30 by 30 implementation be funded and staffed? Will the state influence change in state-level laws, policies and regulations that harm nature and need to be improved, amended or eliminated? Some of our concerns still remain unanswered, but -- *continued on page 2*



Sierra Club photo

State protection for Tesla Park, at Alameda County's eastern edge, is a top 30 by 30 priority of the San Francisco Bay Chapter

(CNRA) public engagement process for 30 by 30 and Nature Based Climate Solutions.

Our group of committed volunteers collaborates with staff from several California Chapters, Sierra Club California's Director, Brandon Dawson, and national Our Wild America Campaign staff (Jenny Binstock, Moises Cisneros, Roberto Gonzales, and Kris Hohag).

workshops, and recruit more volunteers. We are working in coalition with other conservation and social justice organizations across the state, pursuing every opportunity to speak out and ensure that implementing 30 by 30 in California will lead to transformational change, not merely rebranding of existing, inadequate policies and programs.

In July our Task Force met with Jennifer Norris, CNRA's Deputy

Featured in this issue :

30 by 30 progress, we push State	pp.1-2
Chumash leader on marine sanctuary	p. 3
National Wilderness Workshop	p. 4
Wilderness bills in Senate	p. 4
Conglomerate Mesa scoping alert	p. 5
Amargosa Monument update	p. 6
Massacre Rim Dark Skies	p. 7
30 by 30 in Nevada	p. 7
Channel Is. NP new planning	p. 8
Castle Lakes & Santa Lucia addition	p. 8
LWCF agency projects FY2022	pp.9-10
Bird protection bill needs support	p.10
Outings	p.11
Poem: Thicketleaf Yerba Santa	p.12

30 by 30 Task Force urges state to real conservation action --from page 1

we appreciated the opportunity to directly express many of them.

Our CA 30 by 30 Task Force also engaged Chapters and Issue Committees in a collaborative survey of “Local Conservation Priorities” and compiled a listing --coming directly from each Chapter-- of more than 150 places that are important to their members for more protection. This list and our related biodiversity criteria [see sidebar] will accompany Sierra Club California’s late-August 30 by 30 comment letter to CNRA. Also, these grassroots Local Conservation Priorities can help invigorate Sierra Club advocacy for protecting California’s lands, waters, and wildlife over the coming decade—no matter how slowly or boldly the CNRA’s 30 by 30 initiative plays out.

The international community is now alert to the linkages between the biodiversity and climate crises: a June 2021 report from the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) concludes that biodiversity loss and climate change are both driven by human economic activities and mutually reinforce each other:

Actions led by the state

In October of 2020, Governor Newsom’s “Executive Order on Biodiversity and Climate Change”, directed California state agencies to advance strategies to conserve at least 30 percent of California’s land and waters by 2030 in a way that maintains California’s economic prosperity and food security; protects and restores biodiversity; enables enduring conservation measures on natural

and working lands; builds climate resilience, reduces climate risk; and expands equitable access to outdoor lands and recreation. To comply with the order, the CNRA and other agencies are engaging in stakeholder consultations and plan to release a “Pathways to Reach 30 by 30” document by February 2022.

After the Pathways document is published, the state will move to implementation. While it’s doubtful that California will quickly fund and implement transformational 30 by 30 change, there are reasons to take the program seriously. For one, it makes social equity integral to protecting nature and climate, as outlined in its Summary Document, *Using Nature-Based Solutions to Advance Equity*. Also, it makes the important linkage between the species extinction crisis and the climate crisis. And obviously: being the first state to adopt 30 by 30 as a goal, California actions will set precedent for the Administration as well as for other states. The Biden-Harris administration’s national 30 by 30 initiative, “Conserving and Restoring America the Beautiful”, calls for steps to tackle the climate and biodiversity crises and address inequitable access to the outdoors, emphasizing job creation and local, voluntary conservation and restoration efforts across public, private, and Tribal lands and waters.

The definition of what counts as conserved under the America the Beautiful program is likely to get diluted to include lands used for agriculture, grazing, timber harvesting and other uses that degrade ecosystems. The CNRA has not yet committed to a definition, so we have a chance to influence how strong that may be—for example by using the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) system (see sidebar),

There still are many questions about how meaningful the State of California’s 30 by 30 program implementation will be. Our persistent pressure is needed to move the state to actions that bring real gains for biodiversity, social equity, and climate. And it’s an opportunity

to help reinvigorate Sierra Club advocacy for lands, waters, wildlife, and people—we’ll demand positive action and stay engaged for the next months--and years.

Vicky Hoover, our 30 by 30 Campaign volunteer co-lead, summed it up well in her 90-second public comment at the July 27 Biodiversity Workshop: “The criteria most needed to protect biodiversity are action-oriented. Even before establishing strategies to enhance biodiversity, and without expensive acquisitions, we must first halt current activities that degrade biodiversity. The state can, and must, act fast and firmly for at least the following:

- Restrict destructive off-highway vehicle (OHV) use;
- Regulate - and stop - open pit cyanide heap leach mining;
- Subsidize urban rooftop solar, to save valuable desert habitat;
- Stop poisoning offshore islands;
- Restrict large monoculture agriculture, such as for biofuel;
- Stop forest clearcutting and monoculture planting;
- Fund more highway crossings for wildlife; and
- Encourage more Indigenous community traditional land practices.

The state’s setting a good 30 by 30 goal, writing a Pathways document, and taking public input in workshops are all valuable mainly--and maybe only--insofar as they lead to real action.”

The International Union for the Conservation of Nature’s six categories of protected areas:

- Ia. Strict Nature Reserve
- Ib. Wilderness Area
- II. National Park
- III. Natural Monument or Feature
- IV. Habitat/Species Management Area
- V. Protected Landscape/Seascape
- VI. Protected area with sustainable use of natural resources

Criteria for Protecting Biodiversity in CA Local Conservation Priorities:

- California is a global biodiversity hotspot, and achieving our 30 by30 goals requires a full, lasting plan to protect and restore biodiversity--with these criteria:
- Areas that represent intact ecosystems;
 - Areas that provide good habitat for rare, threatened, and/or endangered species;
 - Lands and waters with wildlife migration routes and/or connectivity corridors
 - Lands and waters that provide critical biodiversity locations that promote climate resilience for flora and fauna;
 - Lands and waters with recognized wilderness characteristics but not yet protected or protected inadequately;
 - Inholdings or gaps in present protections like wild and scenic river segments, wilderness inholdings, or State School Lands, railroad checkerboard parcels, etc.
 - Lands that could protect buffer zones for parks, monuments, and wilderness areas.

President Biden Should Designate Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary

-- By Violet Sage-Walker

I grew up at the beach, and my compass, and the compass of my people, is set by where the ocean is.

Six years ago my father, Chairman of the Northern Chumash tribe, led the public nomination effort to designate the Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary, and it has been on the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's list of possible new National Marine Sanctuary sites ever since. If designated, it would be the first National Marine Sanctuary to be indigenous-led in its design and management.

My people have lived on our ancestral land and navigated its coastal waters for millennia as protectors and managers, but history has seen our sovereignty over that land taken from us, and we're not alone. The majority of tribal nations are denied access to the very spaces where our ancestors once lived; denied access to the decision-making on our lands by non-tribal governments; and denied the resources necessary to protect and preserve those lands. It is time to reverse some of that legacy of colonization with concrete actions.

The history of the Chumash is awe-inspiring. For the last 15,000 to 20,000 years we have lived along the same stretch of Central California coastline. There are more than a thousand recorded archaeological sites both onshore and offshore that tell our stories. Prior to European colonization, we were coastal traders and open ocean navigators. That way of life had mostly been lost to us until 1976, when the disparate Chumash tribes came together to rebuild the ancient tomol canoes. The tomols allowed us to return to navigating the waters of the Santa Barbara Channel and reconnected us with our ancient island homelands. They helped us to rediscover the old seafaring ways and to reclaim our heritage as stewards over these waters. The ocean brought our

people back together.

My tribe's nomination of the Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary six years ago was an opportunity for us to reclaim our identity as an ocean-going people.

The proposed Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary would protect miles of coastal waters from Gaviota Creek in Santa Barbara County to Santa Rosa Creek in Cambria. This area contains biologically productive and diverse ecosystems including large concentrations of kelp, wetlands, and estuaries, as well as extensive cultural Chumash sites.

At the southern edge of the proposed site is an area known as Point Conception, which has been recognized internationally as being of historical significance with regard to spiritual and cultural archaeological evidence of pre-history. We call it Humqaq, and we regard this "Western Gate" as one of our most sacred sites not only on Chumash lands, but in all of North America. It is the point where the coast of California goes from a North/South bearing to an East/West one. My people believe that this point is the doorway to the afterlife and we consider ourselves its guardians.

If the Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary is designated it would exemplify the principles laid out in the Biden Administration's recently released Conserving and Restoring America the Beautiful report, which recommends supporting locally led and locally designed conservation efforts; honoring tribal sovereignty; and providing support for tribal nation priorities.

My people hold in our hearts deep reverence for Grandmother Ocean, Mother Earth, and all living things. The preservation of our tribe's spiritual and cultural resources is our

heritage and our responsibility. The Biden administration's designation of the Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary would protect ocean life and sacred cultural Chumash sites; strengthen our community; and serve as a model of indigenous-led conservation in local and national efforts to protect 30x30. ~

(Violet Sage-Walker is vice chairwoman of the Northern Chumash Tribal Council.)

This Op-Ed first appeared on June 8, 2021, in the Real Clear Policy newsletter, which gave WOW permission to use it. https://www.realclearpolicy.com/articles/2021/06/08/president_biden_should_designate_chumash_heritage_national_marine_sanctuary_780439.html

(See WOW, April 2021 and earlier for more on the Chumash Heritage Marine Sanctuary proposal, from Sierra Club Santa Lucia Chapter.)



New U.N. report stresses urgency of cutting carbon emissions

The authors--nearly 200 leading climate scientists--hope the report's findings will be front and center when world leaders meet for a major climate conference in November. The science is clear. Warming has deadly effects around the world. Heat waves, droughts and floods, wildfires, ocean heat waves--all threaten entire ecosystems and supercharge megastorms. The IPCC report underscores the need for Congress to pass a second stronger bill than the inadequate Infrastructure bill now clearing the Senate--a budget reconciliation bill--later this fall that truly combats climate change, speeds the transition to clean energy, and safeguards our most vulnerable communities. ~

Scholarships available for November National Wilderness Workshop

For the second year in a row, the CA/NV Wilderness Committee has obtained a Sierra Club Grassroots Network grant that enables us to offer registration scholarships for interested volunteers from underserved or minority communities to attend the 2021 workshop--which offers three days of presentations focused on stewardship of wilderness. Originally scheduled to take place in Roanoke, Virginia, the Nov. 15-19 event was changed in mid-July to a virtual workshop on Zoom due to increasing concerns about surges in COVID's delta variant. (Contact Anne Henny for scholarship info-- anneth16@sbc-global.net.)

In 2020, the Committee's grant allowed approximately 30 additional attendees to enjoy the events, as well as covered registration fees for members of our committee and the club's

National Wildlands Team. The 2020 planning team included two CA/NV Wilderness Committee members. The theme of "Wilderness in a Time of Change" focussed on Ecological, Cultural, Scientific, and Managerial Change, with presentations on diversifying wilderness visitors and wilderness jobs, Science and Data, Youth and Outreach, a panel on "Should We Actively Manage for Resilience?--or Intervention for Ecological Restoration?" and much more.

Since 2012, this annual event, for a mixture of wilderness management professionals from agencies and academia and concerned volunteers, has been sponsored jointly by the Society for Wilderness Stewardship and the National Wilderness Stewardship Alliance. Find registration and program information for the Nov. 15-19, 2021, workshop at https://www.wildernessalliance.org/2021_nww

California Wilderness bills in the U.S. Senate:

In May, U.S. Senator Alex Padilla (D-CA) introduced the bill known as the "PUBLIC Lands Act, which stands for "Protecting Unique and Beautiful Landscapes by Investing in California." His new bill (S 1459) includes three California bills for more wilderness that were passed by the U.S. House in February as a package together with bills for wilderness in several other states.

Passage of the Senator's bill is a top priority for the Sierra Club. The proposal would preserve redwood forests along the north coast, create a trail stretching from Monterey County to Los Angeles and expand the San Gabriel Mountains National Monument in Southern California, among other things. Senator Padilla's bill protects more than 1 million acres of public lands in California only and includes:

**Congressman Jared Huffman's landmark Northwest California Wilderness, Recreation and Working Forests Act, preserving redwood forests along the north coast, and more, especially in Trinity County. (See WOW, April 2021 and earlier). This bill protects 259,216 acres of federal public lands, adds 379 miles of new wild and scenic rivers, and strengthens management for critical habitat for imperilled salmon and steelhead.

**The Central Coast Heritage Protection Act which would designate vast new

wilderness in the Los Padres National Forest and establish the Condor Trail stretching from Monterey County to Los Angeles. About this bill Conservation Chair of the Los Padres Chapter Jim Hines states: "The Los Padres Chapter has worked for years to get the Los Padres NF bill passed, which would protect more of the Sespe Creek watershed and fragile ecosystem lands in the Santa Barbara county portion of the national forest. I'm excited about this bill as some of the lands proposed for wilderness protections would include lands of my family's former ranch land, now owned by the U.S. Government. To see the land I was born on protected as wild open space forever is something I thought I would never see but now it is on the doorstep of happening."

**And finally the PUBLIC Lands Act includes the San Gabriel Mountains Foothills and Rivers Protection Act by Rep. Judy Chu (CA-27), which expands the San Gabriel Mountains National Monument, establishes a National Recreation Area (NRA) along the foothills of the San Gabriel River corridor, and designates over 30,000 acres of protected wilderness and 45.5 miles of protected rivers in Southern California. About this bill, Los Angeles activist Juana Torres says, "We've made great strides in protecting the San

Gabriels since our first meetings with community residents, but our work is far from over. Too many people in the Los Angeles area do not have access to these natural spaces, despite how close they live to the mountains and waters. And that lack of green spaces leaves communities with dirtier water, polluted air, and more vulnerable to excessive heat. The PUBLIC Lands Act can help us address all of these issues. The benefits of spending time outdoors are as diverse as Los Angeles itself, but we all deserve a liveable planet that belongs to all of us." <https://www.sierraclub.org/articles/2021/07/public-lands-act-will-help-us-find-refuge-nature>

The conservation push comes as the new administration in Washington encourages protection of the nation's wildlands. President Biden has been a champion of the 30 by 30 campaign, which aims to safeguard 30 percent of U.S. land and waters by 2030.

Senator Padilla's S 1459 now awaits action in the U.S. Senate. It was referred to the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee but has not yet had a hearing,

"It is incumbent upon us to be thoughtful stewards of these special places so that our communities can enjoy them and benefit from America's natural resources for generations to come," Senator Padilla said. ♪

Comments due Aug 30 on Conglomerate Mesa mining

On July 30, the Ridgecrest office of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) announced the formal opening of a 30-day public scoping comment period on K2 Gold's/Mojave Precious Metals, LLC's mining proposal. This is a chance to make your voice heard and urge Conglomerate Mesa be protected, rather than opened up to new mining.

Nestled between Death Valley National Park, Malpais Mesa Wilderness, Inyo Mountains Wilderness, and the Owens Lake bed, is Conglomerate Mesa. This 22,500 acres of nearly roadless BLM public land is unconfined, rugged, and brimming with rich desert life and cultural history. Conglomerate Mesa is part of the ancestral homeland of the contemporary Timbisha Shoshone Tribe and Lone Pine Paiute Shoshone Tribe. The mesa is home to sensitive plant species, such as threatened Joshua trees and the rare Inyo rock daisy. (WOW, April & Aug 2020, Aug 2019, Dec 2017).

Lynn Boulton, Chair of the Club's Range of Light Group in the eastern Sierra, adds: "This Phase 2 is a much bigger project than previous work. They will drill at 30 locations, not just four. They plan to haul the drill rig and supplies in and out by vehicles and trucks and to use mules to carry out bags of samples. Road scars from exploration done 30 years ago are still visible today. "Temporary" roads (roads built and then reclaimed) will be visible for decades to come. Reclamation never returns the land back fully. It leaves a lasting trace.

"It isn't just road scars that impact the environment: drilling noise 24/7 and flood lights at night for months will force wildlife out of the area. Birds, bats, and animals can't listen for prey or communicate in a noisy world. They'll spray gallons and gallons (500-1,000 gals/day) of water on the road-in, to keep dust down and to lubricate the drill bit. This is serious loss of scarce groundwater. And they'll clear the vegetation for drill pads.

Worst may be the intrusion into a place that is sacred to the Lone Pine

Paiute-Shoshone and Death Valley Timbisha Shoshone Tribes.

"Exploratory drilling may lead to an open-pit, cyanide heap leach mine. That would be a permanent loss for nature of a special place with acres and acres of fine Joshua Tree habitat. One could look down on this pit from the top of Mt. Whitney.

"On July 27 the House of Representatives' Natural Resources Committee held a hearing on the 1872 Mining Law. Did it need to be reformed? The Republican camp said *no*, no reform is needed because the U.S. has the toughest environmental laws in the world: NEPA, The Clean Water Act, the Endangered Species Act. But none of these laws says "no" to a project that would destroy a place like Conglomerate Mesa! This Mojave Precious Metals project is on *our* lands in an area designated National Conservation Land (NCL) and an Area of Critical Environmental Concern. We all have a vested interest to comment."

➔ What you can do:

Please comment to BLM by **August 30**. If you value remote wild lands, help now to protect an irreplaceable Eastern Sierra landscape. ("Scoping" opens an agency's public comment process and asks the public WHAT issues need to be covered when considering approval or denial of a proposed project.)

Personalize your comments as much as possible—tell BLM WHY you care. Here are some points you can make:

** Conglomerate Mesa is designated as California Desert National Conservation Land (CDNCL) and protected by the Desert Renewable Energy Conservation Plan (DRECP). The BLM is to manage this land for the "benefit of current and future generations" while supporting conservation and recreation values of the landscape. Conglomerate Mesa is a test of procedures that either permit or deny exploration and a larger mine and will set precedent for future mines on CDCL and DRECP land.



photo: from Friends of the Inyo

Concerned eastern Sierra community residents

** Outdoor recreation is the economic engine of the Eastern Sierra, where local businesses depend on tourism-based revenue. Mining operations will scar the land and degrade Inyo County's reputation as a scenic recreation destination.

** Conglomerate Mesa is the traditional homelands of the Timbisha Shoshone and Paiute Shoshone Tribal Nations and remains important for pinyon nut harvesting. Local tribal leaders have opposed K2 Gold's gold exploration and mining. I stand with the Indigenous people in their opposition.

** Many populations of rare and special-status plants here would be adversely impacted by proposed drilling and road construction. Any exploratory drilling and road construction would significantly threaten this botanic oasis.

** The Biden administration's and California's new emphasis on protecting 30 percent of our lands by 2030 (30 by 30) calls for saving MORE land—not new degrading and scarring of key habitat lands..

HOW TO COMMENT:

Submit written comments for the "Proposed Mojave Exploration Drilling Project" via one of the following methods:

1. Online through the BLM ePlanning website; url is <https://eplanning.blm.gov/eplanning-ui/project/2013863/570>.
2. By an email to: BLM_ca_ri_mojavePmetals@blm.gov with subject "Mojave Project Scoping".
3. By mail to this address: Attn: Mojave Project BLM Ridgecrest Field Office 300 S. Richmond Rd. Ridgecrest CA 93555 ☺

(from alerts by Friends of the Inyo and Protect Conglomerate Mesa Coalition) (ProtectConglomerateMesa.com).

Update:

Amargosa Monument Proposal

Friends of the Amargosa Basin stands strong for proposed National Monument

-- by Susan Sorrells

The Amargosa Basin in California's desert close to the Nevada border is under siege. The area long has been vulnerable simply because of its location in one of the hottest and driest places in North America. In addition, its water, that sustains life for the region's plants and animals, including human beings, is found mostly underground and surfaces only intermittently -- bringing life giving springs, seeps and streams.

Ironically it is this extreme environment, marked by highs and lows in temperature as well as elevation, in addition to these water sources limited to intermittent springs and streams, that has created the Amargosa Basin's unique, yet fragile, values.

The Amargosa River that flows through the Amargosa Basin is the crown jewel of the proposed Monument and was designated a Wild and Scenic River in 2009 because it is a place of breathtaking beauty as well as being an unusual desert treasure trove of natural and human resources. The Amargosa often is called the "hide and seek river" since it travels underground for long distances, then pops up suddenly, creating lush desert ecosystems that support an abundance of desert flora and fauna, many of these species being endemic. Some of these species that are found only in the Amargosa Basin are the Amargosa vole (*Microtus californicus*), Shoshone pupfish (*Cyprinodon nevadensis shoshone*), and Niterwort (*Nitrophila mojavensis*). As a result, the Amargosa Basin has a vast biodiversity among its flora and fauna. Nature Conservancy

in its report, *Ecological Values of the Amargosa River in California*, published in April 2018, describes the river in this way: "The aquatic habitats in the perennially-wet parts of the Amargosa Watershed contain one of the most outstanding suites of endemic and imperiled species in the world."

It is precisely the environmental vulnerability of the Amargosa Basin that has placed it in the cross hairs of harm. In the last fifteen to twenty years indications of degradation leading to irretrievable destruction have become evident in the region. The principal causes of this destruction are an explosion of unregulated human development growth in nearby desert communities, increasing and unsustainable water consumption, loss of wildlife connectivity, degradation of ecosystems and the most serious long-range threat of all, climate change—with its associated reduced levels of precipitation. In this era of mass extinctions, the endangered species already on the brink of extinction in the Amargosa Basin easily may blink out without careful management. And unfortunately, the dearth of holistic and consistent planning and management in the Amargosa has escalated this destruction. Establishing the Amargosa Basin National Monument could provide coordinated management for the basin as a whole and



photo: Susan Sorrells

Amargosa Basin landscape

be the first step toward addressing the existential threat of global warming accelerated by these destructive developments. (See WOW, April 2020.)

Friends of the Amargosa Basin is a new nonprofit that was incorporated in December 2020 to advocate for the establishment of the proposed National Monument. But to achieve this goal we also need the widespread support of all who care about the region. The Board of Directors is locally based, diverse and dedicated to equity, justice and inclusion. Since FAB (Friends of the Amargosa Basin) evolved from the communities of Shoshone, Tecopa and Death Valley, it has strong local support, including from other Inyo County communities

Since *Words of the Wild* first described our proposed monument, a group of advocates has worked with the Board to publish an extensive, detailed Prospectus for the proposed Amargosa Basin National Monument that describes the numerous values of the region. This comprehensive, illustrated prospectus can be found on the FAB website at www.friendsoftheamargosabasin.org.

This website also has a page where supporters can enroll as a Friend to join the campaign to advocate for the proposed Amargosa Basin National Monument.

This unique California desert area at the edge of Nevada is in the crosshairs of relentless destruction, and time is of the essence. ∞



photo: Susan Sorrells

Along the Amargosa River near Tecopa

NW Nevada's Dark Sky Sanctuary: Massacre Rim WSA

In spring of 2019 the International Dark Sky Association named Massacre Rim in northwest Nevada one of the darkest places on Earth. The Bureau of Land Management's Massacre Rim Wilderness Study Area (WSA) became just the seventh certified Dark Sky Sanctuary in the world! <https://www.darksky.org/>

The International Dark Sky Places Program was developed by the International Dark-Sky Association to promote dark sky preservation and to reduce light pollution through public education, policy, and lighting design.

Located more than 150 miles north of Reno and surrounded by only a few small communities, the Massacre Rim Dark Sky Sanctuary suffers little from light pollution. The Sanctuary encompasses two volcanic plateaus surrounded by wide valley floors. Along the western edge of the Dark Sky Sanctuary, the Massacre Rim, a 1,200 foot tall escarpment, descends dramatically into Long Valley.

The best star gazing happens in July when the Sagittarius and Scorpio constellations are at their highest in the sky. The Perseids meteor shower, a prolific meteor shower associated with the comet Swift-Tuttle, is visible from mid-July each year--until early August.



photo: Kurt Kuznicki, Friends of Nevada Wilderness

The Massacre Rim Dark Sky Sanctuary is located near the ghost town of Vya and close to the Massacre Lakes, a series of seasonally-dry lakes. The Massacre Rim area, where humans have lived for more than 10,000 years, contains numerous archaeological sites, including an astonishing number of prehistoric petroglyphs.

traditional territory of the Northern Paiute. Massacre Rim derives its name from the steep escarpment along the western edge of the volcanic plateau.



photo: Kurt Kuznicki, Friends of Nevada Wilderness

Northwestern Nevada night sky

The Massacre Rim Wilderness Study Area (WSA) is within the traditional territory of the Northern Paiute, near the border between lands of two bands of the Northern Paiute: the Kidütikado (Groundhog-Eaters) and the Aga'ipañinadökadö (Trout-Eaters). The traditional Aga'ipañinadökadö territory centered on Summit Lake. The traditional Kidütikado territory was predominantly focussed around Surprise Valley (in California), Big Valley and Warner Valley (in Oregon). Areas in the north end of Long Valley were used seasonally for plant gathering and hunting. Deer, antelope, and bighorn sheep were hunted in the hills, while groups of people would gather for rabbit drives on the valley floor.

Euro-American exploration of the region began in the mid-1800s. John C. Fremont, with Kit Carson, led an expedition that passed through nearby High Rock Canyon in 1843. In 1846, the Applegate brothers established the Applegate Emigrant Trail as an alternative route to Oregon.

As a landscape administered to protect wilderness values, the WSA has only a few designated, very rough vehicle routes that require a high-clearance, 4-wheel drive vehicle. All these remote roads may be impassible and prone to washouts in wet weather, and are dangerous in snow conditions.

Friends of Nevada Wilderness points out: Because so much of our world is flooded with artificial

Nevada state resolution urges 30 by 30 action

Nevada state assemblywoman Cecelia Gonzalez introduced Assembly Joint Resolution 3 (AJR3) in the Nevada Legislature in late April. This resolution is Nevada's first step in doing our part in creating a vision to protect nature and combat the climate crisis. Although this resolution does not mandate any on-the-ground protections, it is an important call for action, urging the U.S. Congress, Governor Sisolak, and federal, state and local agencies to work cooperatively to protect 30 percent of Nevada's lands and waters by 2030.

To reach the ambitious goals in the resolution, Nevada lawmakers are encouraged to urge the federal government to use all conservation measures available, including the creation of new national monuments, wildlife refuges and wilderness study areas. Sections of the resolution call specifically for protection of the Desert National Wildlife Refuge and the proposed Avi Kwa Ame National Monument. (See WOW Dec 2020.) The conservation efforts of Tribal Nations, towns and cities, and landowners also should be prioritized.

This state resolution easily passed the Nevada legislature and was signed by Governor Steve Sisolak. According to a recent poll from Colorado College, 82 percent of Nevadans support a national 30 by 30 benchmark. In 2019, Nevada's Governor and Legislature established the Office of Outdoor Recreation to support conservation efforts across the state. In January, 450 state and local leaders from across the country signed an open letter supporting the 30 by 30 goal, including 14 signers in Nevada, emphasizing the local benefits of a major shift in conservation. Conserving nature will make our communities healthier and safer--both now and in the future. ♻️

(excerpted from an Op-ed in Reno-Gazette Journal, April 28, by retired wildlife biologist Laura Richards, member of Toiyabe Chapter's Legislative Committee.)

light, most of us have no idea what we can actually see if we're in a place as intensively dark as Massacre Rim. Awe-inspiring. So many stars on a moonless night that the stars cast a real shadow. ♻️
(From <https://www.nevadawilderness.org/>)

Channel Islands National Park Wilderness planning

-- by Jim Hines

Wilderness protections for the beautiful and environmentally fragile Channel Islands National Park are a top priority for the Sierra Club's Los Padres Chapter. In May, the National Park Service began development of a backcountry and wilderness management plan to address various management issues within proposed wilderness, proposed potential wilderness, and backcountry areas of the park. (The park does not now have any designated wilderness.) According to the park's website, "The plan will help to identify concepts and provide a decision-making framework for managing visitor use while protecting wilderness character and natural and cultural resources. The concepts identified as part of this planning effort will be consistent with the National Park Service's mission and the park's enabling legislation for administering visitor use on a low-intensity, limited-entry basis."

(From <https://parkplanning.nps.gov/projectHome.cfm?projectID=100539>)

While public comment on updating the park's wilderness and backcountry management plan has closed, the Los Padres Chapter continues to follow the process closely.

The Chapter supports full wilderness protections for the 90 percent of the lands within the park that qualify for wilderness.

Protecting critical habitat for the Island fox as well as several endangered plant species is best done by wilderness designations. The solitude and remoteness of the park islands is what draws visitors to the islands, and wilderness designation is the best way to preserve what matters most to park visitors.

Wilderness land designation is also precisely in keeping with the Sierra Club's 30 by 30 Conservation Plan. ♪

(Jim Hines is Los Padres Chapter Conservation Chair)

Santa Lucia Wilderness and Castle Crag expanded with Little Castle Lake

The Santa Lucia Wilderness near San Luis Obispo, California is a unique refuge for plants, animals and humans that covers the interior coastal range mountains. Designated in 1978, it totals 20,241 acres and is known for its mountain peaks, chaparral-covered slopes and ancient oaks. This landscape is part of more than 1.7 million acres of protected coastal landscapes that provide resilience to a rapidly changing climate.

The Wilderness Land Trust



Santa Lucia Wilderness

has just purchased 148 acres in the Los Padres National Forest that will add to that total and help provide an important wildlife connection between the existing Santa Lucia Wilderness and a proposed wilderness to the northeast.

This new Trout Creek acquisition builds on our purchase and transfer of three prior properties in the area — Trout Creek I, II, III — that total more than 800 acres, and together provide a key link to the planned California Condor Trail, a 400-mile route connecting the south and north ends of the Los Padres National Forest. The property's watershed supports critical habitat for endangered, threatened and sensitive species like mountain lion, black bear, two-stripe garter snake, California spotted owl, western pond turtle, brown and rainbow trout, and migratory song birds.

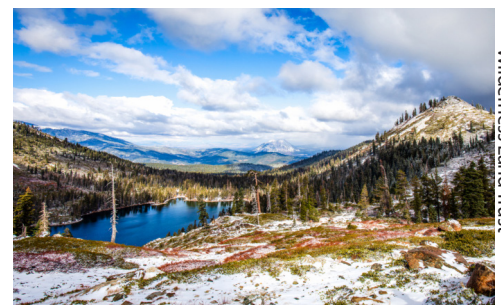
This spring, the Wilderness Land Trust officially transferred to public ownership through the Shasta-Trinity National Forest the 637-acre Little Castle Lake property in California which represented the largest remaining private parcel in the Castle Crag Wilderness. This land straddles the wilderness boundary and includes part of Castle Lake and all of Little Castle Lake.

The Trust's 2019 purchase of the property began the process that allowed protection of the hiking trail to Heart Lake, access to lake use, fishing and hunting, and protection from logging and development, which would have threatened old growth forest, critical habitat and a major source of clean water for California and the west.

The Castle Crag Wilderness encompasses more than 12,000 acres at the south end of the 11 million-acre Klamath Siskiyou wild area in northern California and southern Oregon. The Castle Crag dramatic granite peaks and densely forested ridges provide critical habitat for Pacific marten, blue ribbon trout, black bear, and the endemic Castle Crag harebell wildflower. Wolves have recently returned.

The area also attracts thousands of visitors every year, drawn to the pristine hiking trails, crisp, clear alpine lakes and rock climbing. Unfortunately, over the years, intrepid hikers created a spider web of unofficial routes, to the detriment of the ecosystem.

Forest Service staff, the Mt. Shasta Trail Association and the Trust jointly planned an official trail, designed carefully to meet Forest Service trail standards and traversing the Trust's newly purchased property, from Castle Lake to Heart Lake. A trail crew began work in November 2020, and this summer, crews continue and are restoring the alpine meadows damaged by foot traffic. ♪



Winter view of Castle Lake from the new trail to Heart Lake

photos on this page: from Wilderness Land Trust

Agencies propose LWCF-funded land acquisition projects for FY 2022

On August 4, we celebrated the one-year anniversary of the Great American Outdoors Act—which fully funded the vital federal Land & Water Conservation Fund—and made possible increased land acquisitions for agency conservation units; and more local parks and other outdoor recreation spaces. (See WOW Aug 2020.) Although Congress can no longer starve the LWCF overall, it retains discretion over specific project funding. Here are some California projects already put out for next fiscal year by the **National Park Service** and **Fish & Wildlife Service:**

FWS PROJECTS:

**** The Sacramento River National Wildlife Refuge**, established in 1989, consists of 30 units totaling 10,353 acres along an 80-mile stretch of the Sacramento River between Red Bluff and Princeton, in Tehama, Butte, Glenn, and Colusa Counties. The Refuge is primarily restored and remnant riparian habitats and grasslands and is managed to maintain, enhance, and restore riparian, wetland, and upland habitats for birds, fish, and other wildlife. Many flood-prone agricultural lands have been converted into riparian habitats in cooperation with The Nature Conservancy, River Partners, and other partners. The riparian habitat along the Sacramento River is critically important for fish, migratory birds, plants, and river health. It shelters many songbirds and water-associated animals, including the river otter, beaver, American pelicans, and ospreys. The Refuge provides public recreational opportunities and is home to threatened, endangered, and sensitive species like Chinook salmon, valley elderberry longhorn beetle, yellow-billed cuckoos, Swainson's hawks, and bank swallows.

Project Description: The Service, supported by partner groups, will acquire a 500-acre tract that includes extensive frontage on the Sacramento River and will provide public hunting, fishing, boating, hiking, wildlife viewing, photography, and other recreation and

and educational opportunities to the residents of Tehama County, which has underserved and non-English-speaking communities at risk. The population includes 25 percent Hispanic or Latino persons. The acquisition will be potential habitat for yellow-billed cuckoo; the riparian forest will provide shade for winter- and spring-run Chinook salmon.

Land/Cost: 500 Acres; Funding Estimate for FY 2022 \$1,000,000.

**** The San Joaquin River National Wildlife Refuge**, established in 1987, is situated where three major rivers (Tuolumne, Stanislaus, and San Joaquin) join in the San Joaquin Valley, creating a mix of habitats for high wildlife and plant diversity. The Refuge was initially established primarily to protect and manage habitat for the Aleutian cackling goose—a then listed endangered species. Today, the Refuge is managed with a focus on migratory birds and endangered species including Swainson's hawks; herons and cormorants that form communal nesting colonies within the tops of the large valley oaks; and the endangered riparian brush rabbits. These woodlands also support a diversity of breeding songbirds including grosbeaks, orioles, flycatchers, and warblers, as well as the least Bell's vireo—an endangered species which had last nested in the San Joaquin Valley more than five decades ago. The Refuge provides public wildlife-dependent recreation, such as wildlife viewing and photography.

Project Description: The Service will acquire a 160-acre tract in Stanislaus County, approximately 10 miles southwest of Modesto, California, that is a key remnant of riparian habitat along the San Joaquin River. Acquisition will benefit federally listed species including endangered riparian brush rabbit, riparian woodrat, least Bell's vireo, Central Valley spring-run Chinook salmon, and giant garter snake. The acquisition supports

a number of regional conservation plans including the California Riparian Habitat Conservation Program, Recovery Plan for Upland Species of the San Joaquin Valley, Central Valley Joint Venture, Riparian Bird Conservation Plan, and the Least Bell's Vireo Recovery Plan. Stanislaus County has underserved and non-English speaking communities at risk; the acquisition will provide outdoor recreation and education opportunities to these communities.

Land/Cost 160 Acres; Funding Estimate for FY 2022 \$2,500,000.

NPS PROJECTS:

****Death Valley National Park**



is located in the southeastern California desert in counties of Inyo and San Bernardino and in the southwestern Nevada counties of Esmeralda and Nye, and in Congressional District(s): CA-8, NV-4. Threat: Grazing damage is ongoing in this unique Mojave Desert-Great Basin transitional forest, which includes sensitive meadow habitats supporting an endemic butterfly species. Selective grazing alters plant communities and increases non-native grasses. The loss of biomass and shrub cover adversely affects habitat for reptiles and mammals. Diversion of water from natural springs into artificial water catchments disrupts riparian areas and interferes with wildlife use of very limited water.

Project Description: The LWCF funds will be used to acquire significant grazing and -- continued p.10

More cosponsors needed for Albatross & Petrel Conservation Act-- Help protect key at-risk ocean bird species

So far, there has been no such designation as true “Ocean wilderness”; marine sanctuaries are the closest kind of protection that we have for undisturbed regions of our oceans. With threats to ocean ecosystems and ocean-dependent wildlife extremely high, it is gratifying when from time to time there is something specific we can do to help imperiled species of the sea.

On June 22, U.S. Representatives Alan Lowenthal (D-CA) and Brian Fitzpatrick (R-PA), joined by 20 House colleagues, reintroduced the bipartisan Albatross and Petrel Conservation Act (APCA)—HR 4057. This legislation will leverage American leadership in order to expand international cooperation in combatting threats to imperiled pelagic seabirds. The Act will enable the United States to implement the Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels (ACAP). Joining the

Agreement had received bipartisan support from both President George W. Bush and President Barack Obama.

“This is a critical opportunity for the United States to resume its leadership role in international conservation efforts,” Congressman Lowenthal said. Fifteen of the 22 albatross species and over half of petrel species are threatened with extinction. Albatrosses and petrels are acutely vulnerable to interactions with fishing operations across the globe.

⇒ **Ask your Representative to cosponsor the bipartisan Albatross and Petrel Conservation Act (HR 4057) to help save imperiled seabirds.**

As of early August, there were only 22 cosponsors to this legislation. In addition to the lead sponsor, California’s Congressman Lowenthal, there were only four other Californians on board— Rep. Anna Eshoo [D-CA-18], Rep. John Garamendi, [D-CA-3], Rep. Jared Huffman, [D-CA-2], and freshman Rep. Sara Jacobs, [D-CA-53]. All are “original cosponsors”,

meaning they were on board at time of the June bill introduction. No Nevada representatives are yet signed on in support.

But it is highly likely further members of Congress will show their support *if urged by concerned constituents!* It’s easy to ask: go to your representative’s website and send a message through there, or call the office and ask who is the DC staffer working on conservation bills like this; be sure to get the spelling of the name, and then send an email direct to the staffer at the standard House email address of: `firstname.lastname@mail.house.gov`. ☞

(Based on an alert from American Bird Conservancy. <https://abcbirds.org>)



Black-browed albatross (*Thalassarche melanophris*)

--from Wikipedia

Some LWCF projects for upcoming fiscal year, FY 2022 -- from page 9

water rights in the park. The 90,075-acre Hunter Grazing Allotment is the last permitted grazing allotment in Death Valley. The owner is interested in selling the water rights and retiring his grazing allotment. Conservation groups are willing to contribute \$500,000 in addition to the requested Federal appropriation. The acquisition will protect critical habitats and prevent loss of biomass and shrub cover. Cooperator(s): The Mojave Desert Land Trust.

Land/Cost: 90,075 Acres; Funding Estimate for FY 2022, \$750,000. Remaining to be Acquired, 9,716 acres; \$30,000,000.

** **Joshua Tree National Park** The 795,156-acre park in the California desert is located in Riverside and San

Bernardino Counties, and Congressional Districts 8 and 36. The popular park contains a significant stand of Joshua trees, and varied plants and animals, with wildlife corridors and many miles of trails for the thousands of visitors to traverse.

Project Description: This 2022 Quail Mountain Project lands is described in the Dingell Act for acquisition to be included in the federal estate of the Park. This beautiful parcel in the Joshua Tree Highlands encompass multiple parcels of pristine wildlife habitat. Bighorn sheep, desert tortoise, mule deer, bobcat, gray fox, skunk, coyote, badger and mountain lion all use this significant wildlife migration corridor. Part of the proposed acquisition is a culturally significant landscape known

as “Samuelson’s Rocks.” This private property lies less than a mile from the main park road and is a favorite hiking destination, even though it involves trespass. The park seeks to acquire this property from the willing seller to reduce liability for the landowner and improve the safety of visitors and increase the protection of the resource. By preserving critical, high-quality habitat for the threatened desert tortoise and by providing a wildlife corridor for a number of species, this acquisition will strengthen the park’s and the surrounding area’s resiliency to the effects of climate change. Cooperator(s): The Mojave Desert Land Trust.

Land/Cost: 2,200 Acres; \$2,500,000; Remaining to be Acquired, 6,674 acres; \$12,500,000. ☞

(from <https://www.doi.gov/budget/gaoa>)



Outings



Support wilderness the Sierra Club way!

--May your trails be crooked, winding, lonesome, dangerous, leading to the most amazing view. May your mountains rise into and above the clouds. -- Edward Abbey

Two spring service trips



photo: Vicky Hoover

On the Amethyst Canyon Trail at edge of the Kingston Range Wilderness

Sierra Club outings are returning! Since July 4, Club outings have been authorized to resume, gradually, with extra COVID precautions. As Delta variant concerns increase, these precautions are further emphasized. Our Chapters are preparing upcoming outings, and the CA/NV Wilderness Committee is looking ahead to the next outings season too.

The wilderness committee did not



photo: Susanna Murphy

Highland Ridge sheep pen removal

wait for the official resumption. During the past spring, members of the committee—as individual volunteers—organized two spring wilderness service trips with Bureau of Land Management wilderness staffers—in late April, with the Needles, California office, in the California desert’s Kingston Range Wilderness, and, then, over the Memorial Day weekend, in eastern Nevada’s Highland Ridge Wilderness—with Ely, Nevada

staff. Committee members had helped on projects in both these areas previously and were pleased to be able to work again with the same enthusiastic BLM wilderness staffers. The April California project completed the Amethyst Canyon trail work we began last fall (See WOW Dec 2020). Spring time allowed better—cooler—working



In camp at Highland Ridge--by the old, now restored cabin

photo: Susanna Murphy

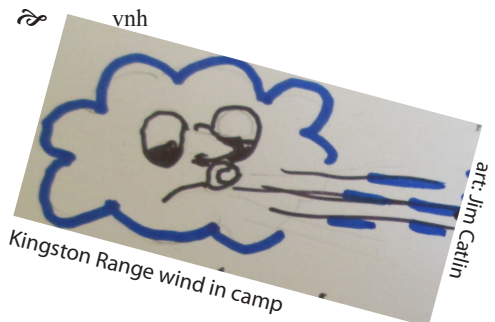
conditions than the hot fall days, but it also brought strong winds that challenged our camping skills. In Nevada’s Highland Ridge, we removed barbed wire fences—



photo: Susanna Murphy

Carrying out sheep pen posts at Highland Ridge

ing around a dilapidated, no-longer used sheep pen, restoring that bit of wilderness to a more natural condition. Next spring our volunteers expect to continue wilderness service work with BLM, and we hope these trips can be real Sierra Club outings!



Kingston Range wind in camp

art: Jim Catlin

Thickleaf Yerba Santa

-- by Judy Anderson

Longtime desert and wilderness activist leader Judy Anderson sent WOW this brief poem of hers, based on a memorable experience some years ago:

Judy added: Explanation may help. I arrived in Los Angeles in '69, and following an inadequate map I wandered into an oil field in the Los Padres "national forest". Appalled, I still drove around on the hot fall day. I was looking for a vista where I could see the extent of the construction and development mess. Finally I parked and hiked to look. I made many mistakes. No pack, no water, no hat, no shade. Never found a good photo spot. Desperate for shade, I huddled behind a fuzzy leaf bush that leaned slightly over a road cut, providing shade. After sitting only a few moments I felt refreshed, as though I had just had a drink of minty water. I learned later it was Yerba Santa -- but not until the California Native Plant Society guide



Thuckleaf Yerba Santa

**Fragrance at my finger tips,
Welcomed in the sun.
Fuzzy toothed leaf,
Brought relief from heat.**



"Flowering Plants" by Nancy Dale was I sure. Her description of native uses told me Indigenous people had used it too. ♪



<http://allthingsplants.com/users/profile/kelli> © 2014 by Kelli

Thuckleaf Yerba Santa (Eriodictyon crassifolium)

Sierra Club's California/Nevada Wilderness Committee, an issue committee of the California Conservation Committee, advocates for preservation of unroaded, undeveloped public lands in a wild state through legislation and appropriate management, and sponsors stewardship and wilderness study outings.

Chair: Anne Henny, SF Bay Chapter (510) 289-2294
Heather Anderson (559) 681-6305: Arts and Wildlands liaison
Judy Anderson (818) 248-0402: wilderness management
Victoria Brandon (707) 994-1931: Redwood Chapter coordinator
Joyce Burk (760) 252-3820: Southern CA forests co-chair
Cindy Buxton (619) 934-0323: San Diego Chapter coordinator
Alan Carlton (510) 769-3403: Forest Planning liaison
Sandra Cattell (661) 714 -2850: Angeles Chapter coordinator
JoAnne Clarke (209) 233-7380: Tehipite Chapter coordinator
Eric Diesel (650) 847-8646: Southern CA forests co-chair
Larry Dwyer (775) 786-8564: Toiyabe Chapter coordinator
Steve Evans (916) 442-3155: Wild & Scenic Rivers
Joe Fontaine (661) 821-2055: Wilderness Watch, Kern Kaweah Ch.
Terry Frewin (805) 966-3754: CA Desert areas
Hermi Hiatt (702) 361-1171: Friends of Nevada Wilderness
James Hines (805) 340-9266: Los Padres Chapter & Wildlife coord.
Vicky Hoover (415) 977-5527: Newsletter editor, Outings
John Moore (916) 731-7153: Mother Lode Chapter coordinator
Mike Painter: (415) 752-3911: Californians for Western Wilderness
Richard Popchiak (831) 818-6255: Ventana Chapter coordinator
Geoffrey Smith (858) 442-1425: Wilderness Listserv manager
OPEN-San Francisco Bay, San Geronio, and Santa Lucia Chapter coordinators--vokunteers sought;

❖❖ Land Acknowledgement ❖❖

(from Gary Lasky, Tehipite Chapter)

The Sierra Club Tehipite Chapter acknowledges that the land we call Yosemite was originally occupied by the Southern Sierra Miwuk and six other Native tribes.

"The Southern Sierra Miwuk Nation are people indigenous to Mariposa and Yosemite, CA. Today we live within Mariposa and the surrounding communities and have spread throughout the state and country. Ceremonies and events throughout the year allow for family and extended families to come together to give thanks and pray for all our relations."

Source: www.southernsierramiwuknation.org/about-2.

Be sure to vote on
Sept. 14!
Sierra Club supports Gov. Newsom --&
his 30 by 30 plan.

2101 Webster St.,
Suite 1300,
Oakland CA 94612



Next Committee Meeting:
September 15 Wilderness Committee Zoom Meeting – featuring progress and plans for our work on 30 by 30 Ca. Join our Zoom Meeting the evening of Sept, 15, 5:30-7 p.m.. Stay tuned for more information on our Facebook and our Grassroots Network page. Contact chair Anne Henny for zoom info at <anneth16@sbcglobal.net>.