

WORDS OF *the* WILD

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

Monumental Progress

FIVE national Monument campaigns in California and Nevada

**New monuments: Chuckwalla and Medicine Lake Highlands; Bahsahwahbee in Nevada.
Expansions: San Gabriel Mountains and Berryessa/Snow Mountain National Monuments**

Chuckwalla--in Congress

On Sept. 21, Congressman Raul Ruiz (D-CA25) introduced HR 5660, the Chuckwalla National Monument Establishment and Joshua Tree National Park Expansion Act of 2023 into Congress. This new



monument would permanently protect approximately 660,000 acres of public lands in Riverside and

Imperial counties--stretching from Joshua Tree National Park's southern boundary to the Arizona border at the Colorado River. (see WOW, Dec 2022)

"It's going to protect our land, it's going to protect the plants. It's going to protect the animals and it's going to protect sacred cultural sites," Congressman Ruiz said. He promised to work to move this bill through the committee process, but, "if there is no clear path through Congress," he will send a letter to President Biden.

At a public press event in Coachella on Sept. 25, alongside local

elected officials, Tribal and community leaders, and residents, Congressman Ruiz announced his bill and urged President Biden to use the Antiquities Act in the California Desert to designate Chuckwalla National Monument and protect lands adjacent to Joshua Tree National Park.

"I'm very happy to be a part of this event, because we have a lot of different entities coming together in order to make this a successful request for a national monument," said Donald Medart Jr., a Councilmember for the Quechan Indian Tribe.

Some species that would benefit include the chuckwalla lizard, desert tortoise, desert bighorn sheep, and a rare population of --continued page 2

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Molok Luyuk: Interior Secretary Deb Haaland Visits

-- by Bob Schneider

In a show of support for Berryessa/Snow Mountain Monument expansion, Interior Secretary Deb Haaland came to visit Molok Luyuk on September 23, 2023! It was an exciting and emotional day.

The Berryessa Snow Mountain National Monument proclamation was



photo: Bob Schneider

The Secretary with Charlie Martin, Kletsel Dehe; and Leland Kinter, Yocha Dehe signed July 10, 2015. Eight years later we are back in support of tribal efforts to add Molok Luyuk to the monument.

Molok Luyuk is presently named Walker Ridge, and the current campaign adds this 13,975-acre ridge to the national monument. The campaign also renames it to Molok Luyuk, which means Condor Ridge in the Hill Patwin language; and calls for tribal co-management for a full recognition for these lands and Tribal ancestors. -- continued page 2

Chuckwalla in Congress -- from page 1

giant saguaro (*carnegiea gigantea*) found in California. Rep. Ruiz said he is excited about the plan because of the strong involvement of Tribal leadership. "This is the movement of a community coming together to protect our lands for the betterment of all creation," he said.

Rep. Ruiz said the Chuckwalla National Monument would be co-managed with Tribes. The monument would help California reach its goal of conserving 30 percent of the state's lands and coastal waters by 2030.

No lands within the proposed Chuckwalla National Monument boundaries overlap with areas identified as Development Focus Areas. 🌀

Haaland visit ramps up effort to add Molok Luyuk to Berryesaa/Snow Mountain National Monument -- from page 1

This ridge is sacred land and an important Tribal place for prayer and medicine herb gathering.

The strong collaborative effort with key Tribal leadership working for this monument addition includes the Sierra Club, Cal Wild, California Native Plant Society, Tuleyome, Conservation Lands Foundation, Great Old Broads for Wilderness, Western Conservation Foundation, businesses, elected officials, and many others.

Haaland's visit was a recognition of this effort and these Tribal values. On her



photo: Bob Schneider

During discussions on her Molok Luyuk tour, Secretary Haaland is flanked by Congressman Mike Thompson to her right; and Congressman John Garibaldi to her left.

San Gabriel Mountains Monument expansion

On November 7, USDA Under Secretary for Natural Resources Dr. Homer Wilkes held a public listening session for a longtime effort to expand the San Gabriel National Monument.

Sierra Club's Angeles Chapter, supported by national staff alongside partners from the Nature for All Coalition and the San Gabriel Mountains Forever Campaign, composed of dozens of conservation groups, helped mobilize more than 150 community members to attend and provide more than 100 in-person comments in support as well

as thousands of petition signatures calling on the Biden Administration to use the Antiquities Act to expand the National Monument to protect more than 100,000 acres of the Angeles Forest.

A similar listening session occurred nearly ten years ago calling on then President Obama to declare the San Gabriels a national monument. (WOW, Aug & Dec 2014.) It was exciting to see many leaders among local tribes, mayors, the governor's office and representatives from the state legislature come out now to support this expansion-- and to call for adequate resources to care for this special place. Today's active "30 by 30"

statewide and national efforts lend new urgency to conserving these lands--even more than the strong rationale given in 2013. Congresswoman Judy Chu (D-CA28) and Senator Alex Padilla reintroduced legislation this year to expand

arrival, the Secretary first toured to the top of the ridge at Cold Springs Mountain with clear views towards Medicine Highlands, Mt Shasta, Lassen, Sutter Buttes, Mt Diablo, and Mt. Konocti at Clear Lake. The group then traveled to and over the newly rebuilt Low Water bridge across Cache Creek to the Stone Barn for a roundtable discussion.

Other federal officials present in the Secretary's party included Congressmen John Garamendi and Mike Thompson, BLM Director Tracy Stone-Manning, BLM California Director Katherine Mortison, National Monument manager Mellissa Hovey, Forest Service Region Five Supervisor Jennifer Eberlien, and Mendocino National Forest Supervisor Wade McMaster. Tribal members came from Yocha Dehe, Kletsel Dehe, and Lake Miwok tribes.

After the discussion Deb Haaland led a brisk hike along the Frog Pond Trail. (You should be fit to keep up!)

I was honored to attend, along with others from the coalition working for the monument--such as Nick Jensen of California Native Plants Society and Sandy Schubert, executive director of Tuleyome, that led the effort for the initial monument designation, and Ryan Henson of the California Wilderness Coalition and Sara Husby, Great Old Broads for Wilderness.

And I am humbled by a comment by a Tribal elder about the name Molok Luyuk: "When they say the name it makes us feel good."

Please stay involved for important next steps: right now, you can help by signing the petition to ask for Presidential expansion of the Berryesaa Snow Mountain by adding Molok Luyuk, (Condor Ridge).

Go to: https://bit.ly/SC_MolokLuyuk. 🌀

Proposed national monument expansion

Elected officials, community leaders and residents in the Los Angeles region are joining Democratic Sen. Alex Padilla and Rep. Judy Chu, D-Pasadena, in calling on President Joe Biden to add 109,000 acres of public land to San Gabriel Mountains National Monument.



Source: San Gabriel Mountains Forever

JEFF GOERTZEN, SCNG

-- continued page 3

Medicine Lake Highlands--a new national monument campaign

On November 1, the start of Native American Heritage Month, the Pit River Nation launched a public campaign underscoring the urgent need to protect ancestral homelands and spiritual sites currently managed by the US Forest Service in northern California. The Pit River Nation is calling on President Biden and California's federal delegation to put in place national monument protections for a little more than 200,000 acres in the Medicine Lake Highlands about 30 miles from Mount Shasta, known as Sáttítla. The area is mainly in the Shasta-Trinity National Forest, partially extending into the Modoc National Forest. The Highlands were first formed from a caldera caused by collapse of the Medicine Lake volcano, probably the largest shield volcano in North America, more than 100,000 years ago.

These lands have sustained Indigenous peoples for thousands of years, and also serve as critical headwaters in California, providing pure water resources downstream for agriculture and millions of people. The volcanically formed aquifers below the surface capture snow melt and store as

San Gabriel Monument Expansion

- from page 2

the monument, currently HR 3681 in the House and S 1776 in the Senate). Los Angeles County as well as multiple cities across the region have passed resolutions calling for expansion of the monument.

The San Gabriel Mountains are an extremely important recreational resource to all of Southern California, being two thirds of all of Los Angeles' open space and receiving more than four million visitors per year.

The next steps for our campaign will be to continue to pressure the Biden administration on this designation by collecting more comments, resolutions from cities, and hosting more events to raise awareness about this effort. 🌀

much water as California's 200 largest surface reservoirs. These aquifers deliver clean water to the Fall River Springs — the largest spring system in the state, and one of the biggest aquifer networks in the western United States.

The Pit River Tribe fights to defend the lands and waters of the Medicine Lake Highlands from potentially devastating geothermal energy development. Since the late 1990s they have opposed multinational geothermal corporations--to prevent polluting industrial geothermal energy development with associated hydraulic fracturing, acid leaching and habitat fragmentation from getting a foothold on this sacred ground. Permanently protecting these lands and waters will honor the Tribe's long standing preservation efforts.

Sierra Club stands in support of the Pit River Tribe goals. In September, in advance of a delegation from the Tribe traveling to DC, Executive Director Ben Jealous sent a letter to President Biden in support of the Tribe's call for a Monument proclamation. Here is an excerpt:

Dear President Biden:

The Sierra Club urges you to honor the Pit River Tribe's request for national monument protections via use of the Antiquities Act for sacred and traditional cultural lands of great ecological significance in the Medicine Lake Highlands of Northern California.

We believe this effort to protect the Medicine Lake Highlands is important for the original people of the region and an important action to address the biodiversity and climate crises. We stand with the Pit River Tribe in recognizing that protection for Medicine Lake Highlands is long overdue and needed urgently.

The Medicine Lake Highlands are highly significant to the cultural and religious ways of the Pit River Tribe as well as the Modoc, Shasta, Karuk, and Wintu. The Pit River and Modoc Tribes continue to use the

area for religious activities, ceremonies, and gatherings.... The Medicine Lake Highlands have been designated a Traditional Cultural District due in large part to the broad and undeniable recognition of the deep connection of Native people to the landscape.

The National Congress of American Indians passed its own resolution supporting the establishment of a new Medicine Lake Highlands National Monument to honor the Pit River Tribe's long-standing efforts to permanently protect these sacred lands and waters from development.

The Sierra Club respectfully requests that you take action to ensure national monument protections for these sacred and ecologically significant lands and waters. Sincerely,
Ben Jealous,
Executive Director, Sierra Club

WHAT YOU CAN DO: The campaign's petition asks President Biden to use his authority under the Antiquities Act to take swift action to ensure the Medicine Lake Highlands are permanently protected. Won't you sign too? Go to: <https://www.protectmedicinelakehighlands.org/take-action>. 🌀

The Next meeting of the California/ Nevada Wilderness Committee will be

January 17, 2024

Program

"Stop messing with Mother Nature: keep our forests wild"

Forest and fire ecologist Dr. Chad Hanson, author of the book, *Smokescreen: Debunking Wildfire Myths to Save Our Forests and Our Climate*, will discuss the remarkable information now emerging regarding recent wildfires in Giant Sequoia groves. Dr. Hanson will discuss how and why government agencies have misled the public, and how the media has gotten this issue so wrong regarding the misguided plan to create tree plantations and cut thousands of trees in recently-burned Sequoia groves inside Wilderness in Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks. If you care about forests that are truly healthy in their ecological surroundings, please join us on January 17, 2024.

Email jo_clarke@att.net for the Zoom link.

Nevada: The Effort to Create the Bahsahwahbee National Monument

-- by Janet Carter

A coalition of various environmental and conservation groups, local officials, and tribal representatives met in late November to discuss the effort to establish the Bahsahwahbee (“Sacred Water Valley”) National Monument in the area also known as the “Swamp Cedars” in northeastern Nevada. Tribal Nations are now calling for these federal public lands, covering some 27,000 acres east of Ely in White Pine County, to be preserved as a National Monument within the National Park System. The land is considered sacred by the Duckwater Shoshone Tribe, who are leading the Tribal effort, which also includes the Ely Shoshone Tribe and the Confederated Tribes of Goshute.

There was enthusiastic discussion among the approximately 25 people attending the Zoom meeting on how to best promote the proposed monument. In addition to Tribal leaders, those present included representatives of such varied groups as the White Pine County Tourism Council, Friends of Nevada Wilderness, Nevada Plants, the Great Basin Water Network, the Duckwater Shoshone Tribe, and the Sierra Club Toiyabe Chapter.

Bahsahwahbee National Monument will protect land that has been a ceremonial and pilgrimage site for indigenous peoples for centuries. There were many villages in the area, as there are numerous springs and water was relatively plentiful. Tragically, the site was also the location of a number of large massacres, all of which occurred at times of religious gatherings. The Newe people believe that the sacred Swamp Cedars at Bahsahwahbee embody the spirits of those who were killed there. Tribal members from throughout the area still visit the area regularly to pray and honor their ancestors.

The grove of so-called swamp cedars within the proposed monument

is thought to embody the spirits of those who were killed there. These ecologically unique trees are actually Rocky Mountain junipers, and they are unusual in that they are growing in an area very different from their usual habitat. The trees have a shallow root system and usually are found on mountainsides. The abundance of water in the Spring Valley allows the trees to grow on the valley floor, and their unusual presence helped make the valley



photo:swampcedars.org

Junipers (swamp cedars) in eastern Nevada's Spring Valley

a sacred place for the Shoshone people.

The recent coalition meeting began with an introduction and greeting from Warren Graham, Chair of the Duckwater Shoshone Tribe, and was led by Tribal members. All present were in agreement that the Tribes should serve as the chief messengers on the proposal. The Tribes strongly support the formation of a national monument. They prefer National Park Service management, as they view the National Park Service as one of the most effective “story-tellers” for similar sacred places. Tribal members want all the monument’s supporters to understand that it is important to have indigenous voices front and center in this effort due to sensitivities about what happened on these lands. Tribal members are developing sample language for emails, social media posts, and other communications to share with supporters.

The Toiyabe Chapter of the Sierra Club has unanimously passed a resolution supporting the establishment of the Bahsahwahbee National

Monument and is hopeful that other Sierra Club chapters will join in the effort. Senator Catherine Cortez Masto (D-NV) plans to introduce legislation that would establish the monument. She is also asking the Department of the Interior and the Biden administration to create the monument. In 2021 the Nevada Legislature passed a joint resolution asking for the protection of the Swamp Cedars. The National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) has endorsed the proposal.

At this point, the best help we can give is to get the word out, using language and messaging that the Tribe will develop. They hope to have an event at the proposed monument in the coming year. This would provide an opportunity for Tribal elders to tell the story of Bahsahwahbee and encourage broader support for a national monument.

You can learn more about the proposed monument, see maps of the area, and sign a petition in support of its formation by going to www.swampcedars.org. This sacred and unique land definitely deserves our recognition and support. ☞

(Janet Carter is Secretary of the Toiyabe Chapter)

Update on Nevada's Desert National Wildlife Refuge

Senator Cortez Masto is introducing legislation that is considered a compromise, for Refuge lands the Air Force wants for training. It will allow the Air Force a few small buildings (radar Installations) on the edge of the refuge, but NO new roads and NO extension of the bombing range. Several groups have expressed support for the compromise, but some aspects of the bill are concerning, such as the location of a new water main and loss of some *de facto* protections, so Sierra Club is staying neutral. Congressman Steven Horsford (D-NV4) has introduced the Desert Refuge bill in the House. ☞ (--from Janet Carter)

State designated Wilderness



As we approach 2024, the sixtieth anniversary of the Wilderness Act--America's first official action to preserve natural lands BY LAW -- it is a good time to remind ourselves that -- in ad-

dition to the vast system of federal wilderness -- now with 805 areas in 44 states and Puerto Rico -- there are also STATE-designated wild places.

Seven states have established legislated or administrative systems for keeping certain state lands wild.

1. **Alaska** -- In Alaska, wilderness areas were administratively designated in 1972, and one state wilderness park, Kachemak Bay State Wilderness Park, was legislatively designated in 1972. There has been only limited administrative wilderness designation since 1972. The state wilderness park definition contains no size criteria but emphasizes the protection of wilderness values, with Wilderness areas defined to be of a size that maintains the area's wilderness qualities.

2. **California** -- YES, our state -- and we presently have twelve state wildernesses (see list above). The California Wilderness Preservation System (CWPS) was launched in 1974 by California Public Resources Code 5093.30. This statute designated Sinkyone Wilderness State Park as the first and then only stand-alone component of the system. The other now 11 components of the CWPS are zones within other state parks called "classified internal units." The Wilderness definition of the enabling state legislation closely resembles the U.S. Wilderness Act definition, including the 5,000 acre size criterion and other wilderness values.

3. **Maryland**:

The state of Maryland has a wildlands preservation system considered Maryland's counterpart to the National Wilderness Preservation System. The Maryland Wildlands Preservation System was legislatively established by the Maryland Wildlands Act in 1971 and designations

began in 1973. All state wild lands are internal units within state parks, state forests, and wildlife management areas. The definition of Wildlands recognizes the importance of preserving areas with wilderness characteristics and values.

4. **Michigan** includes wilderness areas in the High Conservation Value Areas program, which started in 1972 when the Wilderness and Natural Areas Act 241 was passed, and designations began the same year. Only 3,000 acres (1,215 ha) are required for state wilderness designation.

5. **Missouri** has designated some state lands as wild areas. The Missouri Wild Areas Program was administratively established by the Missouri Department of Natural Resources in 1977 and designations began in 1978. All wild areas in Missouri are internal units within state parks and have an administrative level of protection.

6. **New York** has designated some state land within the Adirondack Park and the Catskill Park as wilderness areas. Article XIV, § 1 of the New York State Constitution states that state forest preserve lands shall be kept forever wild as forest lands. The Adirondack Park Agency (APA) is legislatively mandated by the APA Act to preserve the natural resources of state lands, and the APA has administratively designated some lands within the Adirondack Park as wilderness. Similarly, the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) has administratively designated some

lands within the Catskill Park as wilderness. Designations began in 1972 in the Adirondacks and 1985 for the Catskills.

The same wilderness definition is used for both parks and is similar to the U.S. Wilderness Act definition, except the size criterion, which requires a minimum of 10,000 acres.

7. **Wisconsin** administratively established one wilderness in 1973, and then updated their state land policies in 2001 for Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) properties with Wild Resources Management Areas. There is currently only one WRMA in the state, the Manitowish WRMA, which is located in a state forest.

Five other states also have designated one or two wilderness areas but without strong enough criteria to be listed as a state wilderness "program". They are **Minnesota**, with 18,000 acres of legislatively designated wilderness; **Hawaii**, with one wilderness preserve on Kauai and one wilderness area on the island of Hawaii. Hawaii also has a Natural Areas Reserve System;

Maine with Baxter State Park and the Allagash Wilderness Waterway; **Ohio** with the Shawnee Wilderness Area in Shawnee State Forest; and **Oklahoma** (like Maryland a state lacking federal wilderness) has its McCurtain County Wilderness Area, managed by Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation. ♪

(Info from *IJW [International Journal of Wilderness]* APRIL 2008 • VOLUME 14, #1) ♪

The 12 California State wildernesses are:

NAME	Park of location	size in acres
Anza-Borrego	Anza-Borrego Desert SP	297,400
Boney Mountain	Point Mugu SP	6,190
Bull Creek	Humboldt Redwoods SP	10,450
Cuyamaca Mountain	Cuyamaca Rancho SP	13,210
Henry W Coe (Orestimba)	Henry W Coe	23,300
Limekiln	Limekiln SP	413
Mount San Jacinto	Mount San Jacinto SP	12,465
Murrelet	Prairie Creek Redwoods SP	6,600
Redwood Heritage	Jedediah Smith Redwoods SP	5,500
Santa Rosa Mountains	Anza-Borrego Desert SP	87,000
Sinkyone	Sinkyone Wilderness SP	7,100

Beavers—Eco Engineers—get top billing in California Beaver Restoration Program

-- by Teri Shore

Near where I live, the beaver dam is back on Sonoma Creek in Maxwell Farms Regional Park in Sonoma Valley. It washed away during last winter's atmospheric rivers when the waterway swelled to a gushing torrent heading for San Pablo Bay. By summer's end, the dam's intertwined limbs and branches once again held back stream water flows and provided multiple ecosystem benefits—as beaver dams and other work do across California and North America.

The dams and reservoirs that beavers build provide habitat for fish and frogs and safe places where deer, coyotes and birds can drink and bathe. Along the shore, trees and plants take root and provide shade, and reduce erosion. New science also suggests that beaver dams can serve as wildfire buffer by increasing water tables and wetlands over a large area.

As a result of this industrious eco-construction work in wildlands as well as in rural and urban settings, the North American beaver (*castor canadensis*) is considered a keystone species and the ultimate ecosystem engineer, as described by Ben Goldfarb in *Sierra* magazine (July/August 2014). See <https://www.sierraclub.org/sierra/2018-4-july-august/feature/beavers-are-ultimate-ecosystem-engineers> The beaver's work helps to filter pollution, store groundwater, create wetlands, prevent flooding, sustain salmon, store carbon and helps with climate resiliency.

The biggest rodent in North America, the beaver is an herbivore that eats all kinds of plants as well as tree bark. Adults weigh 40 to 80 pounds. They live in tight knit family groups composed of two parents and young kits as well as yearlings and juveniles. The mating pair have only one litter per year and live an average 12 years in the wild.

Historically, beavers lived in just about every stream in North America, millions and millions of them, according to the California Department of Fish and Wildlife. But they were hunted to near

extinction for their pelts by trappers in the 1700s and 1800s. By 1900 they were almost gone. Today California has an estimated 10 to 15 million beavers.

When massive exploitation ended and beavers started to return, they were mostly considered a nuisance and killed on sight. A few years back, beavers caught munching on winegrape vines in Sonoma County raised a ruckus. Back then vineyard owners and other farmers were allowed to remove troublemaking beavers with a state depredation permit. But the public outcry against vineyard owners killing beavers was tremendous.

Now beavers are no longer considered a pest. Under new state rules adopted just this summer, they get another chance. The California Department of Fish and Wildlife just launched a major new beaver restoration program to protect beavers and enhance their populations. Now non-lethal methods to deter beavers are required before landowners can get a permit to kill a beaver.

The new state Beaver Restoration Program has five permanent staff positions in the Department of Fish and Wildlife. In addition, \$2 million in grant funding is now available to implement non-lethal beaver management. The four main beaver program components are: 1. Human-Beaver Coexistence Strategies, 2. Beaver Translocations, 3. Developing a Beaver Management and Restoration Plan and 4. Conducting Outreach and Education. A webinar held earlier this year spells out details: <https://wildlife.ca.gov/Conservation/Mammals/Beaver#laws> and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nn6Cpo1faO4>

Sierra Club has long advocated for

beaver re-introduction as a way to restore the health of our lakes, streams, waterways and beyond, (See Santa Barbara-Ventura Chapter's 2021 blog, *Bring Back the Beavers* <https://www.sierraclub.org/los-padres/blog/2021/06/bring-back-beavers>.)

Because beavers are not listed as protected species, it remains legal to hunt beavers with a permit and no bag limit in 42 of 58 counties in California. Source: https://www.sierraforestlegacy.org/FC_SierraNevadaWildlifeRisk/NorthAmericanBeaver.php.

While I've never actually spotted a beaver in Sonoma Valley, I've seen several dams, including on the creek along the road to Wingo. The Fryer Creek beavers in downtown Sonoma have been in the news. There the creek was engineered to allow the beavers to operate without flooding nearby homes. In Martinez, the beavers are a tourist attraction downtown.



The state's new program offers good prospects for beavers. Back in the 1950s, beavers were reintroduced to remote wilderness of El Dorado County in California by parachute! Yes, bizarre as that sounds, that was how they were taken to wild areas. Today many beavers are related to those parachutists. Apparently, no parachutes now.

For more information about beavers: California Department of Fish and Wildlife, <https://wildlife.ca.gov/Conservation/Mammals/Beaver>.

Sierra Club Statement on the Passing of Senator Dianne Feinstein



We mourn Dave Grubb, longtime leader for wild lands, coasts and waters



Senator Feinstein at a press event in the Sierra Club's Los Angeles office on Oct. 31, 1994, the day President Bill Clinton signed the California Desert Protection Act.

Sierra Club Executive Director Ben Jealous released this statement:

Washington, DC – Sept. 29, 2023 “The Sierra Club’s thoughts are with Senator Feinstein’s family, friends, and staff. A pillar in the Senate for more than three decades, Senator Feinstein authored a historic career, including fiercely advocating for strong CAFE standards, protecting our coasts from the threats of offshore drilling, and passing the California Desert Protection Act that established Death Valley National Park, Joshua Tree National Park, the Mojave National Preserve [and 69 wilderness areas], thus preserving more desert habitat than anyone. But this, nor any collection of her accomplishments and accolades could ever tell the complete story of the impact she had on California and the country. Senator Feinstein brought immeasurable change and progress to this country, and we are better for it.”



vnh photos

At the Oct. 31, 1994 press event, the Senator receives the Sierra Club's desert champion award.

It is with profound sadness that we in the San Diego Chapter announce the passing of our dear friend and longtime colleague, David Grubb, a tireless advocate for environmental protection and sound transportation planning. The San Diego Chapter of the Sierra Club mourns the loss of our former Chapter Chair, State and National Sierra Club representative, and liaison to numerous community groups and public agencies.

Dave passed away October 25 while participating in the Tribal EPA & U.S. EPA Region 9 Annual Conference hosted by the Viejas Band Of Kumeyaay Indians and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

He served the Sierra Club San Diego Chapter in a variety of roles. He was founder and driving force behind the formation of the North County Coastal Group in 2004, served as Chair 2004 to 2015. He was also active on the state level, as cochair



The Senator at Whitewater Preserve, near Palm Springs, at the fall, 2014, celebration for the 20th anniversary of the California Desert Protection Act.

Senator Dianne Feinstein served in the U.S. Senate for 31 years from her initial election in 1992. Prior to that, she was the mayor of San Francisco for three terms. California Wilderness activists always think of her strong championship of preserving the California Desert. ♻️

of the Coastal Committee, and on the political committee. In the last few years, he was a regular and vigorous participant in the Club’s statewide 30x30 task force.

His activism extended to other organizations such as Surfrider Foundation, League of Conservation Voters and California Coastal



photo: from Richard Miller

Commission. He won many Chapter awards and Sierra Club California’s SALLY AND LES REID AWARD that recognizes an individual who has served Sierra Club California in the area of conservation.

Dave was the ultimate community champion. *He was the complete package.* Unlike many people who have one or two issues or places they care about, Dave deeply cared about all of them, all of the places and all of the issues. He deeply cared about fair housing, about climate, about worker rights, about environmental justice, about transportation, about the California coast, and about habitat conservation and more.

He was an irreplaceable brain trust for all of us in the activist community. His length and depth of service to the San Diego community was key to many of our successes. ♻️

-- Richard Miller,
Director, San Diego Chapter

California Sierra Clubbers head to Riverside for 30 by 30 gathering

-- by Mahtisa Djahangiri

In mid-October, Sierra Club volunteers and staff from across the state showed up in Riverside with around 350 others at the big 30x30 Partnership Event hosted by the California Natural Resources Agency, CA Biodiversity Network, and by our partner organizations at Power In Nature coalition. This event was an opportunity for folks who work on all aspects of 30x30 to meet each other and share successes, build community,



Desert organizer Moises Cisneros promotes Chuckwalla National Monument at Riverside.

and identify ways to work together to reach our collective biodiversity, equity, access, conservation, and climate resilience goals.

Our primary goal for the event was to build relationships by connecting with partners and each other, as well as the myriad of other conservation groups, scientists, regulators, climate justice groups, and community members in attendance. We also highlighted and sought input on our chapter's Local Conservation Priorities and Flagship Campaigns at our Sierra Club table on Day 2 of the event.

By sharing the critical work happening at the local level across our chapters, we emphasized the importance of community-led conservation and the need for more engagement and capacity building work from the state. This also presented an opportunity to gain insight on our partners' priorities, where there is overlap with ours, and

how we might be able to collaborate. We were even [highlighted](#) by CNRA Secretary Wade Crowfoot on X.

As for next steps, we are excited to continue building power for locally led 30x30 efforts with our new found connections, increase our collaboration and partnerships with Tribes, and push the state for more community engagement and capacity building across California.

Thanks to the work of our organizers and volunteers, the Sierra Club was there in force! Huge thanks to Anne Henny (30x30 Task Force Volunteer Lead, SF Bay), Barbara Hensliegh (Task Force Lead, Angeles), Bobbi Jo Chavarria (Executive Committee chair, San Gorgonio) Brandon Dawson (Director, SC CA), Charles Rilli (Organizer, San Diego), Daniel O'Connell (Tehipite), David Grubb (then-Task Force Lead, San Diego), Enrique Flores (Volunteer, San Gorgonio), Erin Woolley, (Senior Policy Strategist, Sierra Club California), Jason John (Associate Director, Sierra Club California), Jennifer Cardenas (Organizer), Joz Sida (Director, San Gorgonio), Kelly Ramsey (Director, Redwood), Mary Ann Ruiz (Sierra Club California Chair and Volunteer, San Gorgonio), Moises Cisneros (Field Organizer), Richard Rollins (Grassroots Network), Roberto Morales (Field Organizer and Acting Associate Director- Outdoors for All Campaign), and Yassi Kavezade (CA Field Manager)

-- and by Anne Henny

To add a bit to Mahtisa's summary: I was among the Sierra Club volunteers fortunate enough to attend the two-day



Riverside dinner for Sierra Club 30x30 team



30x30 task force co-chair Anne Henny explains the Sierra Club's 30x30 work to CNRA Secretary Wade Crowfoot.

30x30 Partnership 2023 Gathering in Riverside. It was uplifting, educational and fun to meet and mingle with so many like-minded people from different places and walks of life—all united in our commitment to protect 30 percent of California's lands and coastal waters by 2030.

Our Sierra Club CA 30x30 Campaign began during the Covid 19 pandemic, and many staff and volunteers still have never met in person, only via Zoom. So, in Riverside it was such a treat to just be together, swap stories, share a meal, get to know each other. We had worked hard ahead of time to make a big Sierra Club display with materials about our Chapters and programs, and two large, thick binders full of information about our Chapters' 30x30 "Local Conservation Priorities." It felt like old times, "tabling" at a real-live event, telling people about our statewide campaign and learning about what they were doing to advance 30x30.

The conference was so chock full of conversations, exhibits, presentations, art, and activities, it is hard to describe briefly. Some high points for me were the daily opening blessing by local Indigenous leaders honoring the land; chatting one-on-one with Jen Norris, Wade Crowfoot and other state officials; hearing inspiring examples of 30x30 successes like the "Making the Impossible Possible" panel; and connecting with people who stopped by our Sierra Club table. 🌿

Nevada public lands day trip

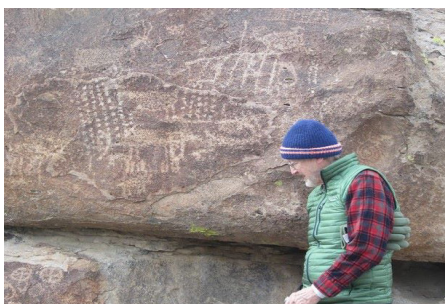
Land management agencies love to use Public Lands Day, marked each year in late September, to promote volunteer service projects. This year, we worked with the Bureau of Land Management's staff of the Basin and Range National Monument, in central/south Nevada. They had just designed and built a brand new campground



in the remote monument, and sought volunteers to help improve and establish a couple of trails from the camp area to the nearby Mt. Irish Petroglyph Site. Monument manager Alicia Styles and recreation planner Michael Irving welcomed our group and several local "friends" groups who arrived to help.

Our Sierra Club volunteers pioneered the new campground—just opened the day before, ready to help complete the trail system. After a second night of camping there, we had really fallen in love with this ruggedly scenic and little-known wild part of Nevada; maybe next year, we'll be back.

President Obama established the Basin & Range National Monument in 2015, on the urging of then Senate leader Harry Reid, who wanted to use the famed landscape artwork "City" to protect a larger remote area around it from development. vnh



Wild horses east of the Sierra -- by Kristine Green

A funny thing happened on my way to go hiking ... I was stopped by a herd of wild horses as I drove past the Black Lake Preserve near Mono Lake. A few were crossing the highway, and I counted 120 individuals of a variety of colors: black, gray, chestnut, cream, and white. They were right in the road, and as I discovered, they've also encroached into the Granite Mountain Wilderness. They're part of the Montgomery Pass herd. The Inyo National Forest is the lead management agency for their territory. As coincidence would have it, a Bureau of Land Management scoping project calling for comments closed Dec. 7 on the gather and removal of horses.

Why are wild horses such a problem? In short because they multiply with amazing rapidity and soon overrun the landscapes, trampling water sources needed by wildlife and generally displacing wildlife that lived here before the horses came and took over.

The national forest's management plan allows for a population of between 138 to 230 horses only. A 2020 aerial survey counted 654 horses with most located outside of the herd management territory. The project notes the need to reduce the number of horses by wild horse gathers in order to protect existing ecosystems and species at risk, threatened, or endangered. In this case, there is the protection of the proposed critical habitat of a distinct population segment of the greater sage-grouse (*centrocercus urophasianus*). The January 2022 USGS Annual Data Summary draft report on the bi-state sage-grouse population indicates the population declined 40 percent since 2008.

Good thing there's the Sierra Club Wild Horse and Burro Policy, which outlines a few salient points regarding wild horses living on federal lands. That policy emphasizes the concept that wild horses should be managed so that native wildlife



Three Horses of the Apocalypse?

-- photo: Kristine Green

and ecosystem values are prioritized for full protection, and that range and riparian areas should be restored and maintained in an excellent ecological condition.

The Club policy further stresses that "To protect wild horses and burros from injury and stress, the use of motorized vehicles (land/air) for roundups should be avoided whenever possible." This BLM



Wild Horses near Highway 120 in Mono County, California

-- photo: Kristine Green

gather project includes the potential use of helicopters and motorized vehicles.

On the other hand, the BLM considers their gathers to be more humane, effective, and efficient than other types of gather methods when large numbers of animals need to be removed over wide areas or rugged terrain. They say helicopters start the horses moving in the right direction, and then they back off a long distance to let the animals travel at their own pace.

Regardless of which is the most humane method, The Wilderness Act bars the use of motor vehicles, motorized equipment, the landing of aircraft, and any other form of mechanical transport within wilderness areas. There is evidence the herd has wandered into the Granite Mountain Wilderness, which is 31,059 acres under management of the BLM, and in between the official herd territory and some of their recent stomping grounds.

Note that the BLM Wild Horse and Burro Program states that horses that are gathered are relocated to long-term holding pastures and are not intentionally sold or sent to slaughter. vnh



Outings



Support Wilderness the Sierra Club way: From Outings to Advocacy

photos for this article by JoAnne Clarke



Dry Lakes Plateau

With the help of Range of Light Group Chair Lynn Boulton and 30x30 advocate Janet Barth, CA/NV Wilderness outing leader Anne Henny planned and led a memorable fall advocacy outing to eastern California's Bodie Hills. (Wow, Aug 2023.)

Friday evening we all met at the Bridgeport Memorial Hall for an informal talk with Evan Standler, a BLM sage-grouse biologist. He gave us an introduction to the sage-grouse and explained their mating habits, called lekking. He explained there are several lek sites in the Bodie Hills and described the threats to these birds. The sage-grouse are considered an "umbrella species". By conserving habitat necessary for sage-grouse to survive and thrive, more than 350 species of sagebrush associated plant and animals also benefit. The Bodie Hills are one of the last strongholds for bi-state sage-grouse, a Distinct Population Segment of sage-grouse with unique characteristics which is found in only a few counties along the central California-Nevada border (sometimes called Mono Basin sage grouse). We were fortunate to spot six sage grouse in the road during our driving tour.

Saturday, we took a driving tour of the Bodie Hills, led by Lynn and Janet. Jora Fogg, CA Associate Program Director for Conservation Lands Foundation, joined us on this tour and provided much of the information. Our first stop was at a Forest Service road to look at the pinyon pine forest and to talk about the [Sweetwater Forest Resilience Project](#) which is studying how best to protect the pinyon forests. The Project is also considering the perspective of the Washoe and other Tribes who have lost many of their pine nut collecting sites.

Our second stop was the Chemung

Advocacy Outing to the Bodie Hills, October 6-9, 2023

-- by JoAnne Clarke

Mine--a gold and silver mine started in 1909 and abandoned by the 1950s. Across the way is an ephemeral pond, and the Sweetwater Mountains are in the distance to the north. Above the mine is Masonic Mountain.

Our third stop was the Masonic/New York Mountain mining district, where gold was first discovered in the 1860s and was in production until the 1920s. Claims were recently filed around Dome Hill on both the California side and the Nevada side of the border portending a mining revival. Various springs feed Masonic Creek, which boasts a unique riparian area with high biodiversity. While we were here, Jora described arborglyphs, carvings into the bark of living aspen trees, so we looked for some carved by Basque shepherds. We also found a tree that had been scratched by a bear.

We had lunch in a small aspen grove on the way to the Paramount Mine, which was mined for mercury. It is the western end of a sinter that extends into Nevada to Bald Peak on the Dry Lakes Plateau. A sinter is a vein of hydrothermally altered rock. Geologists looking for gold look at sinters. If gold is present, even if microscopic, they then drill and extract core samples looking for the gold veins below--the source of the gold at the surface in the sinter.



Jora's hand shows size of the bear's claw marks.

After lunch we hiked up to a view point to see the Dry Lakes Plateau, Bald Peak where the gold exploration will be, Beauty Peak and the Rough Creek and Atastr Creek drainages. The Dry Lakes Plateau--the heart of the Bodie Hills Wilderness Study Area--is listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

We walked around town at the

Bodie State Historic Park and peeked in the windows. Gold was discovered in 1859 by W. S. Bodey. The town's population of 8,000 -10,000 people started to decline in 1881 and mining stopped in 1942. Fires in 1892 and 1932 burned down most of the town.

Sunday Gary Nelson and Ryan Garrett of the Mono Lake Committee treated us to a canoe tour of Mono Lake where we witnessed bubbling springs, alkali flies, brine shrimp, underwater



Canoeing on Mono Lake

tufa towers, migrating birds, and crystalline waters, all from the vantage point of a canoe. Gary and Ryan shared some of Mono Lake's unusual natural history as well as the story about heroic efforts to protect this million-year-old lake. Then we took a walking tour and had a presentation at South Tufa about the Los Angeles Dept of Water and Power (LADWP) diversions from the watershed. Trip participant George Deane pointed out, "The structure built by the LA Department of Water and Power to take water from upstream of Mono Lake is a true engineering marvel."

Ryan took us to the original diversion of Upper Lee Vining Creek and we followed the aqueduct to Grant Lake, LADWP's water storage, and finally to the site of West Portal, the town where they built the tunnel through the Mono Craters as part of the aqueduct. To finish off the day's exploration, we hiked the beautiful Lee Vining Creek Trail from the Mono Lake Visitor Center to Lee Vining.

Monday Lynn and -- *continued page 11*

George Meléndez Wright: *The Fight for Wildlife and Wilderness in the National Parks* -- by Jerry Emory

The National Park Service was established in 1916. In its early years, Park Service managers were dedicated to providing visitors with wildlife “shows”—they fed park wildlife mountains of garbage—while visitors watched from bleachers. And, in order to assure watchable wildlife had an easy life, they killed undesired predators.

This management style ruled until George Melendez Wright came along.

In this biography of a visionary young Park Service employee, Jerry Emory, who married into the Wright family, makes good use of archives, detailed journals and field reports, to describe an influential figure in the early years of wildlife conservation and wilderness advocacy

Bodie Hills Outing *- from page 10*

Janet led us on a driving tour of the north side of the Bodie Hills. We followed the East Walker River to its relatively new state park. State Park Ranger Larry Spickert gave us an interesting history of the ranch area. George Deane adds, “He gave us an excellent overview of the history of the Nevada regulations for Bodie Hills which is substantially different than the regulations in California.” We also drove by the Aurora Gold Mine, an open pit where we saw a tailings pile of cyanide leached ore and a pit lake, then walked through the historic Aurora cemetery and viewed drilling sites from an overlook.

Truly, a dazzling weekend, THANKS, Anne, Lynn, Janet, and all presenters—and participants! 🌀



The Bodie Hills outing gang

who receives little publicity today. With a foreword by former NPS director Jonathan Jarvis, the book highlights Wright’s formative upbringing and enduring vision that puts him deservedly high up on the list of American conservation leaders.

Born in 1904, George grew up in San Francisco, son of a wealthy steamship heir and an El Salvadoran mother, Mercedes Meléndez. As a child, he spent his spare time in city parks—bird book in hand; active in Boy Scouts, he soon taught scouts about Nature and started an Audubon Club in his high school. When he was a college student at Berkeley, his mentors were Joseph Grinnell and forester Walter Mulford. After his first college year, he headed to Southeast Alaska’s Inside Passage, and the following summer, he joined the Sierra Club’s annual High trip—in Sequoia National Park—his first of numerous such outings. Soon George was driving with friends to visit all western parks. He took many photographs on these trips and began a system of detailed field notes.

In 1927 as a naturalist and forestry graduate, Wright joined the National Park Service, which sent him to Yosemite as «assistant naturalist». During two years stationed there, he became certain that management to amuse visitors was wrong and that preserving the full biological function of the parks was vital. He formed an idea, which soon obsessed him—he would organize—and personally fund—the first ever

coordinated survey of wildlife in the western parks. In time, even Park Service Director Horace Albright approved this idea, and Wright and two close friends set off in 1929 in a Model-T Ford to assess the condition of wildlife. They interviewed old timers on what predators they used to see—grizzlies, wolverines, wolves, cougars, coyotes—since then systematically killed off.

They determined that

none of the parks had large enough boundaries to conserve year-around wildlife habitat. Their published findings became known as “Fauna 1” (followed later by a supplemental study—“Fauna 2.”) These books truly changed wildlife management in the National Park System.

As Wright learned to deal with agency bureaucracy, he kept pushing to change the “wildlife show” regimes and stop the killing of predators; agency staffers resisted, but Wright persisted, and little by little change took place. Wright emphasized that unless the federal government acts, “floral and faunal resources will be ground under the wheels of commercialism.”

His work on behalf of wildlife welfare led him to a strong concern for wilderness preservation. To describe this need for large areas of undisturbed habitat, Wright used the phrase «primeval America». Inspired by Thoreau, Muir, Aldo Leopold, and more, he in turn influenced Bob Marshall, Ansel Adams, Harold Ickes, and even FDR—plus a suite of Park Service Directors. He came to see highway proposals as major threats to his concepts. He worked with Ansel Adams on the campaign to establish Kings Canyon National Park—persuading Adams to lobby in DC, along with a stack of his photographs. But by 1940, when this campaign was won, the youthful Wright, tragically, was already gone—he was killed in a car accident in 1936—while he was on another trip to promote park expansion.

Jerry Emory brings to life this enthusiastic young visionary, as an explorer, naturalist, philosopher, family man, and influential wildlife and wilderness advocate. This is a good read! Think of Wright if you camp at the high-up Wright Lakes in Sequoia National Park. *(My interest was sparked in summer 2023 by a California Historical Society lecture by the author. vnh*
248 pages, © 2023. \$27.99 <https://press.uchicago.edu/ucp/books/book/chicago/G/> 🌀

September was proclaimed as national wilderness month

On August 31, (obviously a very special day), President Biden issued a proclamation naming September as “national wilderness month”. In doing so, he followed President Obama, who regularly made September national wilderness month during his presidency. (Why September? Because President Lyndon Johnson signed the Wilderness Act on Sept. 3, 1964.) Here is an excerpt from Mr. Biden’s proclamation:

“America’s natural wonders are marvels of the world. People travel across seas and continents to behold the spirit of this great land embodied by our majestic mountains, breathtaking deserts, emerald valleys, and mighty rivers. During National Wilderness Month, we celebrate the power and promise of our country’s extraordinary natural gifts and renew our commitment to protecting them for generations to come.

When we conserve our country’s landscapes and wilderness, we do more than preserve their beauty for our own enjoyment. We safeguard the future of people who depend on and sustain the land as a way

of life — Indigenous peoples, farmers and ranchers, recreation businesses, and rural communities. We enshrine landmarks that identify the places where the history of our Nation was made. We protect sacred spaces that have been stewarded by Tribal Nations since time immemorial. And we mitigate the impacts of climate change to help make our country more resilient.

A respect for nature’s ability to support and enrich our lives has led my Administration to develop the most ambitious land and water conservation agenda in American history. During my first week in office, I issued an Executive Order establishing the country’s first-ever National Conservation Goal to conserve at least 30 percent of our lands and waters by 2030. It is the cornerstone of my “America the Beautiful” campaign to support locally led and voluntary conservation and restoration



THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

efforts across the country. I also signed an Executive Order to protect America’s forests, harness the power of nature in the fight against climate change, and initiate the first National Nature Assessment to evaluate the state of our lands, waters, and wildlife...

This National Wilderness Month, we renew our commitment to protecting our wilderness areas and ensuring that all their splendor is passed down from generation to generation of Americans, helping to bridge our past and our future.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, JOSEPH R. BIDEN JR., President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and the laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim September 2023 as National Wilderness Month. I encourage all Americans to experience our Nation’s outdoor heritage, to recreate responsibly and leave no trace, to celebrate the value of preserving an enduring wilderness, and to strengthen our commitment to protecting these vital lands and waters now and for future generations.

JOSEPH R. BIDEN JR.

The Sierra Club’s California/Nevada Wilderness Committee, an issue committee of the CA/NV Regional 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: JoAnne Clarke, chair: Tehipite Chapter: jo_clarke@att.net
Judy Anderson: wilderness management: andersonjudithann@gmail.com
Victoria Brandon: Redwood Chptr coordinator: vbrandon95457@gmail.com
Joyce Burk: Southern CA forests : joyceburk@earthlink.net
Cindy Buxton: San Diego Chapter coordinator. cindy.buxton@hp.com
Alan Carlton: Forest Planning liaison: carltonal@yahoo.com
Sandra Cattell: Angeles Chapter coordinator: sumcatt@yahoo.com
Larry Dwyer: Toiyabe Chapter coordinator: kdwyer31@charter.net
Steve Evans: Wild & Scenic Rivers: sevans@calwild.org
Kristine Green: Eastern Sierra coordinator: krgr14@gmx.com
Anne Henny: Outings chair/outing leader: anneth16@sbcglobal.net
Hermi Hiatt: Friends of Nevada Wilderness: hjhiatt@yahoo.com
James Hines: Los Padres Chapter & Wildlife coord.: jhcasitas@gmail.com
Vicky Hoover: Newsletter editor: vicky.hoover@sierraclub.org
John Moore: Mother Lode Chapter coord. jkmoore6891@sbcglobal.net:
Mike Painter: Californians for Western Wilderness: mike@caluwild.org:
Pam Nelson: San Gorgonio Chapter coord. pamela05n@yahoo.com
Richard Popchiak: Ventana Chapter coordinator: rich@ventanawild.org
Geoffrey Smith: Listserv manager: geoffrey@partners4nature.com
Joan Taylor: CA Desert areas: palmcanyon@mac.com
OPEN--San Francisco Bay, Kern Kaweah, Santa Lucia Chapter coord.



SIERRA
CLUB
FOUNDED 1892

2101 Webster St.,
Suite 1300, Oakland
CA 94612

