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Yahi
Group



News Articles Programs Hikes and Outings Meetings

Mining's Toxic Legacy

Throughout the Sierra Nevada we hear a lot about the "49ers" and the "Legacy" of mining. The iconic image of the miner and his pan is emblazoned everywhere. The stories of gold mining are fascinating tales of bravery, ingenuity, gold strikes and busts.

As is often the case with history, however, only part of the story is told.

The other side of the coin is as dark and troubling as the glitter of the gold that blinded the miners to the damage they were doing to the land and its people in their pursuit of it. Cultural genocide, environmental destruction, and wide distribution of toxins are included in this dark legacy.

The ongoing presence of mercury, arsenic, asbestos and other heavy metals from historic mining threaten healthy life in the Sierra more than a century after the glitter is gone.

The Sierra Fund is a nonprofit organization in Nevada City, CA, working to raise awareness of mining's toxic legacy throughout the Sierra Nevada.

The first "49ers" mined gold with pick and pan, however it was not long before industrial scale operations were built to rip gold and other minerals out of the ground in search of huge profits. Mining operations rerouted the rivers, washed away mountains, uprooted and decimated the native people through forced march and murder.

Some 26 million pounds of mercury were imported into the Sierra Nevada to use in gold mining and 13 million pounds of it was released to the environment in the process. Mercury can become highly toxic when it is in the food chain, and pollute large amounts of water, contaminate fish and poison the wildlife and humans who consume them. Since mercury affects the brain and nerves, it is especially dangerous for pregnant women and young children.

Arsenic and asbestos are known carcinogens, and occur naturally in Sierra rock. Large mining operations made naturally occurring arsenic and asbestos much more dangerous when they processed millions of tons of this rock, crushed it and left the waste "tailings" spread across the surface.

Arsenic and asbestos in historic mine tailings can cause serious health problems when inhaled as dust (in the course of working or



The widespread distribution of toxins associated with historic mining constitutes the oldest and longest neglected environmental problem in the State of California.

recreating in the Sierra), and arsenic can leach into the groundwater.

Up until relatively recently contaminated mine waste was actually used for building and road materials.

Acid Mine Drainage (AMD) is another deadly result of historic mining. Water and air combine with other minerals to create sulfuric acid strong enough to dissolve everything around it. AMD can work its way through mine tunnels and tailings to pollute creeks, rivers and groundwater.

Much is still not known about the effects of mining's toxic legacy.

Mining toxins definitely pose risks to human health, but who is being exposed to what and to how much? These kinds of questions are difficult to answer because many people who live and work in the Sierra are unaware of the daily threat of historic mining toxins, and do not take precautions to protect their health.

As noted in The Sierra Fund's *Mining's Toxic Legacy* report, not one of 13 rural health clinics surveyed by CSU, Chico conducted an environmental exposure screening of patients even though it is known that they live, work and recreate in areas containing mining toxins. More surprisingly,

none of these clinics educated pregnant women about the dangers of consuming fish contaminated with mercury.

The Sierra Nevada is one of the fastest growing regions in the State of California. As more people move into areas containing abandoned mines and mining toxins, land use planners need to direct this growth to ensure that human health is protected and the problem is not aggravated.

Managing legacy mining toxins is a factor in maintaining the health of our rivers, water system, and the San Francisco Bay-Delta. With 60% of the state's water coming from the Sierra this makes the topic of mining toxins vital to everyone in California.

There are answers to these difficult problems.

First, we need to acknowledge these issues exist and that what has happened over the last century and a half is impacting the present.

The Sierra Fund, a nonprofit foundation dedicated to bringing strategic investment in the Sierra Nevada, is spearheading a multi-year Initiative to address mining's toxic legacy. This Initiative includes publication (March 2008) of the first-ever comprehensive report on the topic, *Mining's Toxic Legacy*, and extensive outreach to bring together diverse partners and communities across the Sierra to address this issue.

The Sierra Fund is in the process of traveling across the Sierra Nevada presenting its report and engaging in dialog with public and environmental health professionals, land use planners, advocacy and community groups, land trusts, environmental organizations, tribes, the mining industry and the general public to discuss the problem and seek realistic solutions.

Some of the topics discussed so far are: health education programs, appropriate land use

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GENERAL PLANS

Butte County and city officials, staff, and the consultants whom they have hired are playing lead roles in shaping our future through their updating of county and city General Plans. The focus is on future land use, i.e., where should projected increases in population result in more homes, offices, stores, roads, protection for agriculture, etc.? Citizens have expressed concern about both the substance and process of many city and Butte County General Plan meetings. As Yahi Conservation Chair, I have been participating in several of them -- seeing some Club members at these meetings as well. My letters, news articles, and presentations have been directed either to the importance of *Sustainability*, *Smart Growth* (see www.smartgrowth.org), preserving the *Greenline*, or to the huge need for a specific *Water Element* in our county's plan for future development.

One example of a "process" issue of concern to several environmentalists has been Butte County's method of approving land uses for the 31 so-called Study Areas (to be considered for development) on July 29 and 30, 2008. There were many hundreds of pages of data collected (cultural, biological, water, road and fire and sewer conditions, etc.) but no discussion of guiding principles by the board on how to make choices. I joined with others in calling for such principles, identifying and explaining why sustainability needed to be part of the policy direction. The Board Chair replied that policies would be decided only AFTER supervisors had voted on the 31 study areas, and that there still can be changes to those decisions sometime AFTER the supervisors vote -- when and if there are new data or new considerations. This hardly satisfied those who believe the decisions to be "developer driven." Many environmentalists must wonder: will the California Attorney General's demand for sustainable policies in other counties become precedent setting? If so, can that impact the Butte County General Plan before its completion in 2010? Will rumors about potential lawsuits in Butte County come true?

Prior to the supervisors' vote, many workshops were organized by county staff and consultants, during which the public could give (limited) input about where and how they wanted to see any land use changes. The Citizens Advisory Committee made decisions this spring regarding the 31 Study Areas (<http://www.buttegeneralplan.net>). Subsequent recommendations or "preferred alternatives"

were made by the Butte County Planning Commission. Both bodies' recommendations were then presented to the five member Butte County Board of Supervisors at the July 29 and 30 meetings; they had to weigh their own preferences alongside the others -- with the goal of giving Butte County's consultants and staff the "final direction on a preferred land use alternative" for each Study Area.

During the first part of the July 29 meeting, the public could give input, so long as it was not project-specific; but it often turned out to be just that, e.g., many supporters for the Tuscan Ridge golf course made their presence known. We are fortunate that two of the five Supervisors seemed to be on the side of sustainability and made some good choices, correspondingly. And one supervisor, who is a swing voter, sometimes did swing in the sustainability direction. For example, supervisors voted 3-2 to keep one predominantly undeveloped area south of Chico (with water and sewer issues and numerous biological constraints) free of more development. Of course, it helped that the swing voter wanted to see the proposed Business Park near his city of Oroville, instead of near Chico.

The next series of workshops concern the policies for the General Plan. Will the cart be able to lead the horse? *Butte County's Plan's deadline is 2010, so please consider getting involved if you live in the county, singing out: don't allow Paradise or any other ecologically or historically valuable area from being "paved to put up a parking lot."* Much useful information is at <http://www.buttegeneralplan.net>.

DISC GOLF

Many members of the Yahi group are also very concerned about the upcoming votes of the Park and Playground Commission, and then, of Chico City Council concerning disc golf, one of four projects proposed for the 3,670 acre park (the largest *per capita* municipal park in the nation!). Disc golf has been seriously harming the vegetation (including Blue Oak and Checkerbloom) in Upper Bidwell Park for the last ten years, during which time it never was an officially sanctioned activity. It is essential to note that this part of the park is exquisitely beautiful -- with views to match -- and "oriented towards more non-intensive recreation and open space preservation consistent with Resource Conservation Area status" (Final EIR 2-9). But disc golf advocates have been numerous and vocal at meetings of the Citizens Advisory Committee, the Park Commission and the Bidwell Park Master Management Plan (BPMMP). They are proposing in that Plan to build more elaborate long and short courses that are supposed to be nature friendly. The Final EIR (Environmental Impact Report), including these alternative golf course building plans, was made available for public review on July 15, 2008.

Although the city's EIR announcement stated that the project could have significant negative effects on the environment, it also stated that the "Draft EIR contains measures that would reduce the impacts to less than significant." We do not believe that the mitigated impacts will be less than significant, and thus we ask Yahi members and other citizens to either (1) not certify the EIR because it has those faults, or (2) my preference, vote for the *Restoration* option. That would mean attempts would be made to restore the ecological health and biological diversity in the area where the unofficial disc golf course now exists, and efforts would be made to seek another place in Chico to have these disc golf courses.

It is true that the contract Annie Bidwell made with the city, when she donated land to the city in 1905, is no longer binding and that more land has been added to the park; but that does not mean the non disc golf playing people of Chico and Butte County want the spirit of her contract diminished. One of her four major conditions for donating the land to the park was that the city "shall preserve, as far as reasonably possible, for the beauty of said park as well as for the preservation and protection of the waters of Chico Creek, all of the trees, shrubs, and vines therein, and it shall sacredly guard the same and only remove such thereof it may find absolutely necessary." While being aware that some City council members seem not to be very "environmentally" aware, let's contact and educate them before the vote! (See documents and photos at http://www.chico.ca.us/common/_mod_resource.asp?p=179&f=50).

WILDFIRES

Yahi Group counties have been among those greatly suffering from the damage caused by many recent wildfires. In that light it was particularly interesting to consider the different perspectives on the causes and prevention of such fires discussed

on June 21 in Plumas County. John Shower helped organize a highly interesting and very well organized Yahi tour of the huge amount of woodland that was burned during the Moonlight Fires in 2007. It was heart-breaking to see the huge amount of burned trees, while fascinating to hear the many informative persons John had invited to speak. A surprise tour guest Chad Hanson (once a national club leader) inserted alternative views, not only about what causes fires, but also on the best ways to protect communities, and ensure long term forest health. There was a gracious shaking of hands between the competing sides after the day long tour and discussion, while my head was buzzing with all the new sights and perspectives.

If you have access to the Internet, you can see Sierra Club policies regarding wild fire management at <http://www.sierraclub.org/policy/conservation/fire.asp>. Because John wrote an article for this newsletter in the last edition and led the Moonlight Fire tour, and since many of his views seem to reflect those of the Quincy Library Group, I am hoping that one of the Yahi Groups' forestry leaders can present alternative Sierra Club perspectives on wildfire issues in this paper. You also may want to contact Trish Puterbaugh, our Yahi forestry leader at Cohasset@shocking.com.

Yahi Fall Programs

October 9, (Thursday): Susan Mason, with Friends of Bidwell Park, will discuss restoration projects involving Big Chico Creek and Verbena Fields in Chico.

November 19 (Wednesday): Marily Woodhouse, Sierra Club member with the Shasta Group, will present a slide program and update of clearcutting in Northern California by Sierra Pacific Industries (SPI).

Meetings are held in the Conference Room of the Chico Public Library at East 1st Avenue and Sherman Way from 7 P.M. to 9 P.M. Meetings are open to the public and refreshments will be served.

Yahi ExCom Meetings

Yahi Group Executive Committee meetings usually will be held the first Tuesday of every month from 3 P.M. to 5 P.M. Please contact Laura Grossman at joebass@outrageous.net or 893-3882 regarding the specific time and place if you would like to attend and if you have an item you would like to place on the agenda.

Join the YAH! Blog

Join the conversation about local environmental issues and events. To read the Yahi blog, visit yahinews.blogspot.com. To sign up to contribute, contact yahinews@comcast.net.

About This Newsletter

SIERRA CLUB YAH! GROUP NEWSLETTER is published quarterly in March, June, September and December by the Yahi Group of the Sierra Club, Post Office Box 2012, Chico, CA 95927 or 5590 Feather River Place, Paradise, CA 95969, Attn: Louise Casey.

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The newsletter is mailed free to all current members of the Sierra Club residing in the Yahi Group area. It is also available, without charge, at selected public places and merchants in the Yahi Group area.

For submissions, comments and inquiries, please write to Sierra Club, Post Office Box 2012, Chico, CA 95927 or contact the content editor Susan Sears at 530-532-0149 or the copy editor Louise Casey at 530-872-9159.

For advertising in the Newsletter, please call John Woods (530-899-8607). For changes in membership address (which also affects the address for receiving the newsletter by mail) please write to Sierra Club Member Services, Post Office Box 52968, Boulder, CO 80328-2968; sending a mailing label for the old address will speed the process.

Submission Guidelines:

Please include name, phone, and address with each submittal. Short, single topic articles are preferred. Deadlines for proposed articles and letters to the editor: February 1, May 1, August 1, and November 1. A one week extension is available if the submission is sent by e-mail and advance

Lassen Forest Preservation Group

The forestry committee of the Yahi Group has been busy continuing to defend our Lassen Forests from destructive Bush administration policy. We are very excited that the Sierra Club/NRDC/Wilderness Society/Center for Biological Diversity and Sierra Forest Legacy, litigation of the Bush 2004 Framework decision was successful. In May, the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals found the FS single-minded focus on logging old growth trees, in order to pay for fuel reduction activities, ignored alternative sources of funding. Each Sierra Nevada logging project will now have to be negotiated and possibly rewritten to follow the original 2001 framework, written during the Clinton administration. This has been a tedious and very frustrating experience for those on both sides of this issue. The Sierra Club is generally supportive of logging around communities for fire hazard reduction and also encourages projects that slowly restore forests to more historical conditions. We are also working with the FS on projects and policies to increase prescribed fire. However, the logging the 2004 framework allowed was destructive to watersheds, sensitive species and old forest ecosystems.

The Attorney General of the State of California also challenged the Bush 2004 framework in court. I am going to quote the Attorney General's June 30th response to a constituent, regarding this challenge, as it clearly outlines the Sierra Club position on this litigation.

"In 2001, after a decade-long process involving all relevant stakeholders, informed by the best available science, the Forest Service (FS) issued the 2001 Sierra Nevada Framework, (2001 Framework) governing the management of over 11.5 million acres of some of the most important and sensitive natural lands in California. The 2001 Framework, unlike its predecessor plans, took a region-wide approach to forest planning and struck a reasoned balance of competing uses – including logging - while still conserving old growth forests, preserving sensitive wildlife and unique ecosystems, and protecting Californians from wildfire.

The Regional Forester in 2001 specifically found that, notwithstanding the reduced logging of larger trees, "the cost of implementing this decision is realistic and reasonable." The Regional Forester acknowledged that the FS new course would "require supplemental support through volunteers, matching funds, and other methods in order to accomplish needed work". At that time, the Regional Forester committed himself to work with collaborators, organizations, and individuals to see that needed work does not get deferred simply for lack of funds.

On the change of Administration, the FS abruptly jettisoned the 2001 Framework without any substantial attempt to implement it. Its superseding plan, the 2004 Framework, marked the FS return to business as usual, using extensive commercial logging to fund its activities. The agency flatly refused to examine any alternative funding source other than allowing substantially more cutting of larger trees – trees that the FS acknowledged pose no fire danger. This refusal is the fatal failure noted by the 9th Circuit in its recent decision.

My office has repeatedly reminded the FS of the many alternative funding options available. More innovative approaches are also possible. If the FS took a leadership role, it could work to create a market for those smaller diameter trees and woody biomass that present a fire danger. This currently undervalued resource could, for example, be used as a renewable fuel stock, allowing us to reduce our carbon emissions and our dependence on foreign oil. The substantial value of the National Forests as carbon sinks could also be an ongoing source of funding. It is simply untenable to say that we can protect our irreplaceable Sierra Nevada forests only by allowing them to be cut down for cash.

The Ninth Circuit decision allows projects to proceed consistent with the 2001 Framework. The Attorney General strongly believes that today the FS has the ability, consistent with the 2001 Framework, and the funds to undertake substantial fire management in the wildland-urban interface. We have requested that FS and staff convene all interested stakeholders to discuss how we can break the agency impasse and move forward with necessary fire management. In our view, only by reestablishing the collaborative relationship that produced the 2001 Framework – a relationship badly damaged by the summary process that led to the 2004 Framework – can we manage this important resource in a way that serves the interests and

needs of all Californians.

Many projects in the Lassen National Forest have gone forward after significant changes, negotiations, and field work with the Forest Service regarding environmental impacts. Most of these projects are near communities, such as Prattville, Old Station, Hat Creek, Butte Meadows, Jonesville, Paynes Creek, Mineral, the High Lakes and others. Many projects have also gone forward in the Eagle Lake and Hat Creek Ranger Districts where there are fewer sensitive species and watershed concerns. We are currently attempting to resolve an appeal on a large project south of the Thousand Lakes Wilderness and we are in preliminary planning negotiations on projects in the Humboldt Valley/Humboldt summit area. These areas have some of the most important habitat and watersheds in the Lassen National Forest and we will work to protect them as well as work with stakeholders to restore historical conditions and return the forests to a more fire resilient landscape. We also have the Wilderness Society, California Wilderness Coalition and the Sierra Club working to include some of these areas into Wilderness areas.

With the thousands of acres of private land clear-cut logs sitting on log decks, the post-fire salvage logging by Sierra Pacific Industries, and the huge downturn in the building industry, timber operators have to regroup. Some forest service projects are simply not being bought by loggers, as there is no market for the lumber. In these difficult times it can also be an opportunity to look to alternative markets and other choices to manage our National Forests, as suggested by the Attorney General. We are also very hopeful the next administration will return to a sustainable, innovative approach to administer these glorious lands we are so blessed to live by.

We hope to have an article on the recent fires, fire science and post-fire observations in the next newsletter. If you are interested in helping with our efforts or have forestry questions please e-mail Trish Puterbaugh at cohasset@shocking.com

Pot Luck and Outing

Mark your calendars for September 21, 5:00 to 7:30 P.M. We are planning to have a potluck at 5-Mile in Bidwell Park to celebrate the Equinox. Bring a dish to share, your own tableware and non-alcoholic beverage and join us for some fun and good conversation. Any questions? Call Laura at 893-3882 or Gerda at 343-9277.

New YAH! Trail Guide

Don't forget to get your copy of the new Yahi Group Trail Guide. Cost: \$10 plus shipping if bought directly.

Contact: Alan Mendoza - 530-891-8789 or amendoza@prodigy.net

Yahi 25- and 50-Year Members

It is with great pleasure that we honor the following who have been members for 25 years: Dan Eckland, Paradise, Charlotte Ekland, Chico; Michael Fromer, Chico; Bill and Mary Gardner, Forest Ranch; Paul Krause, Chico; Floyd and Nancy Mellon, Sacramento; Kirk Montford, Chico; Greg Muelrath, Magalia; Don Noble, Oroville; Mary Queener, Paradise; and Duane and Renata Vanderveen, Blairsden-Graeagle. Our 50 year members are Wes and Phyllis Dempsey.

Congratulations all and thank you for your support.

Yahi Holiday Dinner

Mark Your Calendar

December 7, Sunday, the annual holiday dinner will be held at Caffe Melvinia's, 234 W 3rd Street, Chico, across from the parking structure. At 5PM there will be a no-host bar, silent auction and visiting. Dinner will be served at 6 P.M.

Vegetarian Lasagna and Baked Chicken with butter and lemon sauce each for \$21.00 including tax and tip.

Call Joanne at 893-2154 or Karen at 899-8305 to arrange your paid reservation no later than December 3rd.

Be gathering your Sierra Club type items, from books to ski boots, etc., to be auctioned with the proceeds going into the general fund.

It is always a fun event. See old friends and meet new friends.

Bidwell Park Update

The long awaited Final Environmental Impact Report for the Bidwell Park Master Management Plan Update is now available and can be reviewed on the City of Chico web site (www.ci.chico.ca.us). Printed copies are also available for viewing at the reference desk of the Butte County Library Chico branch, the CSU Chico Library Special Collections and at the Chico Planning Department.

On August 25th (7 P.M., City Council Chambers), the Bidwell Park and Playground Commission (BPPC) will decide whether to recommend to the Chico City Council that these documents be approved. The Commission will also vote on whether to legitimize disc golf at its current unofficial Hwy 32 location. According to city staff, the Park Commission will not review or consider the monetary cost of mitigations proposed for the four projects described in the MMP: 1) the Cedar Grove Plan, 2) the Disc Golf/Trailhead Plan, 3) the Horseshoe Lake Plan and 4) the Trail Plan. Unfortunately, without financial analysis, there is no way the Park Commission or the City Council will be able to determine if the numerous mitigations the City is proposing in order to minimize the significant impacts outlined in the Environmental Impact Report are economically feasible or not.

This is a historic point in time for Bidwell Park. The final decisions made by the Bidwell Park and Playground Commission and City Council will affect Bidwell Park for decades to come. Public participation is essential to ensure that future generations will enjoy the majestic beauty of this valuable and irreplaceable public resource. We urge people to attend both the August 25th Bidwell Park and Playground Commission meeting and the City Council meeting which will probably be held sometime later in the fall.

Additional information regarding the Bidwell Park Master Management Plan and Final Environmental Impact Report can be found on the Friends of Bidwell Park web site at www.FriendsofBidwellPark.org.

Yahi Group Outings Fall 2008

On-Going Tuesday Volleyball. Join Yahi Group members and friends for friendly, co-ed volleyball every Tuesday night at 7 P.M. at the Chapman Center (corner of E. 16th Street and B Street in Chico). Cost: \$3 per night. Free lessons included. For more information call Karen, 899-8305 or Betty, 345-7205.

Weekly Bidwell Park Bike Ride (grade 2, class A). Meet at the Chico Park & Ride each Tuesday evening at 6:30 P.M. for a 1 ½ hour bike ride along the creek. Walkers welcome for self-organized walk. Helmet and bike light required. Also bring water and a flashlight. Weekly bike rides will end Oct. 28th. Leader: Jeanne, 899-9980.

Cross-Country/Downhill Ski List: Join our more than 60 cross-country ski enthusiasts this winter as we explore the backcountry of Butte Meadows and Lassen Park and enjoy the groomed trails of the Mt. Shasta and Royal Gorge. Downhill skiing also available. All ability levels welcome. If you'd like to be added to (or updated to) our cross-country ski list, please contact Jeanne, 899-9980.

September

Sunday, September 7 - High Lakes March (grade 3, class A). Hike the 4WD roads with us, about 12 miles, as we explore Morris, Campbell, Long, and Saddle Lakes. This is for folks with a high clearance but not 4WD vehicle, and who want to see what the High Lakes fuss is all about by doing a long hike in beautiful country. Please call for details. The trailhead will be the Philbrook Road T at the end of road 25N05. Rain delays. Backup date is Sunday, September 14. Leader: Stephen, 530-876-1391.

Monday, September 8, 2008 - Mike Thornton of The Sierra Fund will make a presentation about "Mining's Toxic Legacy" addressing the Environmental, Health and Cultural problems related to "Legacy" mining operations dating back to the Gold Rush. Time: 6 P.M. Location: Trinity United Methodist Church, 295 East 5th St.. Sponsor: Big Chico Creek Watershed Alliance. For more information, see www.bigchicocreek.org or call 892-2196.

Saturday-Sunday, September 13-14 - Wade Lake Backpack (grade 1, class A) This is a two mile backpack, all uphill on the way in and downhill coming out. A beautiful Sierra Buttes Lake with dramatic geologic features. Many trails for day hikes or enjoy the birds and rocks in the area. We'll miss the summer crowds. I will share stove, water filter, or loan other gear. Individual commissary. Must contact leader to reserve a spot, 872-8258 or hubhollister@yahoo.com.

Sunday, September 21 - Upper Chambers Creek Trail Maintenance (Conservation) (grade 1, class B). This will be our second official trail maintenance outing to our newly adopted trail in need of a lot of brush clearing at about 5000 feet in elevation. The hike in from Reese Flat is mostly level, but we will push further downhill this time, as our volunteer manpower allows. Please call for details. Rain will delay this trip. Backup date is Sunday, September 28. Leader: Stephen, 530-876-1391; Asst. Leader: John 872-8258.

Sunday, September 21—Equinox Potluck—5:00 to 7:30 P.M.: We are planning to have a potluck at 5-Mile in Bidwell Park to celebrate the Equinox. Bring a dish to share, your own tableware and non-alcoholic beverage and join us for some fun and good conversation. Any questions? Call Laura at 893-3882 or Gerda at 343-9277.

Saturday, September 27 - Caper Acres to Honey Run Road & Skyway Junction Bike Ride. Join us to explore the newest addition to suburban bike paths, the Harrison Memorial Path to Honey Run Road. This is your chance to explore country fields, Baroni Park and Little Chico Creek Bike path. We meet and start at Caper Acres parking lot in lower Bidwell Park and ride to Humboldt Road. Then we join the Little Chico Creek bike path to Bruce Road and continue to Baroni Park and the new bike path, essentially a flat, leisurely 9 1/2 mile round trip ride. Bring water. Helmets required. Meet at Caper Acres parking lot at 9:00 A.M. Leader: Gene, 873-1552; Asst. Leader: Carla, 891-6977.

Saturday, September 28 - Yahi Trail Dinner Hike (grade 1, class A). Leisurely hike the Yahi Trail in Upper Bidwell Park. This 4-5 mile round-trip trail passes by Alligator Hole, Bear Hole and a Diversion Dam and affords great views of Big Chico Creek and the surrounding canyon. Bring a sack dinner, boots, water and a snack. Rain cancels. Meet at 6 P.M. at Horseshoe Lake parking area in Upper Bidwell Park. Leader: Jeanne, 899-9980; Asst. Leader: Annette, 872-3557.

October

Thursday, October 9—Susan Mason, with Friends of Bidwell Park, will discuss restoration projects involving Big Chico Creek and Verbena Fields in Chico. Meetings are held in the Conference Room of the Chico Public Library at East 1st Avenue and Sherman Way from 7 p.m. - 9 p.m. Meetings are open to the public and refreshments will be served.

Saturday, October 11 - Cross-Country Ski Trail Maintenance (grade 1, class A) (Service). Free cross-country ski lessons for those who work on the McGowen ski area. Tools furnished by the Forest Service. Bring work clothes, boots, gloves, lunch and \$ for drivers. Meet at the Chico Park & Ride at 8:00 AM. Leader: Larry, 342-7998.

Sunday, October 12 - Caribou Wilderness Hike (grade 2, class A). Pass by over 10 lakes and several meadows in 7-8 miles of hiking through the relatively flat, forested terrain of the beautiful Caribou Wilderness east of Lassen Park. Bring hiking boots, water, lunch and \$ for drivers. About a 150 mile round-trip drive. Meet at Chico Park & Ride at 8:30 A.M. Leader: Alan, 891-8789 or ajmendoza@prodigy.net, Asst. Leader: Dave Garcia 533-2357 or rangerdave@mynvw.com.

Tues Oct. 14- Full Moon Paddle (3 miles, flat water). The Blood or Hunter's Moon will be bright and huge rising over the Sierra. Learn about some moon facts, lore, and constellations. Bring your own canoe or kayak for a leisurely paddle on the calm cool waters of the North Forebay. You must have warm clothing, a flashlight, and wear a PFD to attend. Limited to the first 12 boats to sign-up with the leader. There is a \$4 entrance fee. Meet at the boat ramp at 6 P.M. Leader: Dave Garcia 533-2357 or rangerdave@mynvw.com.

Saturday, October 18 - Thomes Gorge Day Hike (grade 3, class B). A 10-11 mile hike in the foothills of the Mendocino National Forest. The historic Nomlaki Trail features extensive views of the Sacramento Valley, vernal pools and spectacular geological formations. We will hike through chaparral and foothill pines, then descend 1100' to the deep sparkling pools of Thomes Creek. Bring boots, water, lunch and \$ for drivers. Rain cancels. Meet at Chico Park & Ride at 9 A.M. or in Orland at the Burger King restaurant at 9:30 A.M. Return to Chico around 6 P.M. Driving distance about 120 miles round-trip. Leader: Bill, 527-8203; Asst. Leader: Michelle (Orland), 865-9491.

Saturday, October 25 - Make a Difference Day in Bidwell Park (Conservation). Come make a difference in Bidwell Park

One Mile Recreation Area working 10:00 A.M. to 1:00 P.M. on several projects: habitat restoration, remove litter and help weed around baby oak trees. Organized by Bidwell Park Volunteer Coordinator, Lise Smith-Peters at 896-7831. Meet at 10:00 A.M. in the area south of the One Mile restrooms and park in the Sycamore Baseball Field parking lot. Leader: Carla, 891-6977; Asst. Leader: Gene, 873-1552.

Saturday, October 25 - Cross-Country Ski Trail Maintenance (grade 1, class A) (Service). Free cross-country ski lessons for those who work on the Colby Meadows ski area. Tools furnished by the Forest Service. Bring work clothes, boots, gloves, lunch and \$ for drivers. Meet at the Chico Park & Ride at 8:00 A.M. Leader: Larry, 342-7998.

Sunday, October 26 - Paradise Lake Hike (grade 2, class A). Enjoy the fall beauty of Paradise Lake on this 5-6 mile hike on a flat path along the lake. Bring lunch, water and comfortable shoes. Meet at 9AM at the Chico Park & Ride or at Paradise Lake trailhead around 9:45 A.M. Leader: Jeanne, 899-9980; Asst. Leader: Annette, 872-3557.

Thursday, October 31 - Halloween Game Night. Hand out treats and tricks and we'll play games. Costume optional. Snacks will be provided. Card tables and chairs appreciated and bring a favorite game to play. The fun begins at 6 P.M. Call for directions to meeting place. Leader: Alan/Joy, 891-8789 or ajmendoza@prodigy.net.

November

Sunday, Nov 9 - Autumn in the Orchards Bike Ride. A flat leisurely 15 mile ride through orchards and pastures on quiet country roads to Durham Park for lunch, then return to Chico on the Durham Bike Path. Meet at 10 A.M. at the Glen Oaks Memorial Park Cemetery office, Hegan Lane and the Midway. Bring water and a lunch (or buy one at the Durham Market). Helmets required. Rain cancels. Leader: Carla, 891-6977; Asst. Leader: Gene, 873-1552.

Saturday, November 15 - Cross-Country Ski Trail Maintenance (grade 1, class A) (Service). Free cross-country ski lessons for those who work on the Colby Meadows ski area. Tools furnished by the Forest Service. Bring work clothes, boots, gloves, lunch and \$ for drivers. Meet at the Chico Park & Ride at 8:00 A.M. Leader: Larry, 342-7998.

Sunday, November 16 - Shuttle Hike from the South Side of Bidwell Park to Five Mile (grade 2, class A). Join us as we start from the Green Gate along Hwy 32 and hike one-way, downhill

Yahi Group's General Outing Information

The following information is intended for people who have decided to take or are contemplating an outing that has been organized by the Yahi Group of the Sierra Club. The information is based on the Group's established policy (available from the web site or from the Outings Committee Chair); it will be supplemented by trip specific information and by the outing leader.

Updates: Updated outings information can be found on our web site at <http://www.motherlode.sierraclub.org/yahi/>

Transportation: There is an active interest in car pooling, but leaders cannot organize car pools to Sierra Club outings. All trips begin and end at the trailhead, which is not necessarily the initial meeting place. Any car pool arrangements are private agreements between the driver and the passengers.

Riders are expected, as a matter of courtesy, to reimburse drivers to cover the transportation expenses of the trip. The customary amount is 10 cents per mile per passenger depending on the vehicle, the number of passengers and the road conditions. For example, one passenger only should pay the driver a little more and a car full of passengers should pay a little less. This is only a guideline.

Membership in Sierra Club not required: Outings are open to the general public unless otherwise indicated. If you enjoy the outings, it is hoped that you will see the value of joining; application information is available in this newsletter or on the website.

Fees and costs: Occasionally an outing announcement will indicate a cost. Unless the announcement specifically indicates that outing is a fund raiser, the cost indicated is only that which has been estimated to cover trip expenses. **Non-Sierra Club members are asked to make a \$2 donation if attending an outing to help defray our costs for outings**

Sign-up: Most activities do not require advance sign-up; it is merely necessary to show up at the designated time and place. For those outings where advance sign-up is requested, a call to the leader will initiate the procedure. If fees or deposits are needed, the sign-up is not considered complete until those have been paid. Deposits may not be refundable; please inquire at time of making payment.

Outing Waivers: All participants on Sierra Club outings are required to sign a standard liability waiver. If you would like to read the liability waiver before you choose to participate on an outing, please go to

<http://www.sierraclub.org/outings/chapter/forms/>, or contact the Outings Department at (415) 977-5528 for a printed version.

All activities: These are group outings. It is important that participants follow the instructions of the outing leader. Please be sure you are in adequate physical condition to undertake the activity you choose (see classifications for guidance). If you are unsure of the difficulty of the trip or of your ability, check with the leader before deciding to go. The outing leader may decide to disallow the participation of an outing applicant if the leader concludes that the applicant's reduced preparation or capability may negatively affect the outing for the rest of the group.

Hiking and Day Activities: Bring lunch, water, and essentials, as well as reimbursement money for your driver. Wear boots or sturdy shoes.

Dos and Don'ts: Plan to carry out anything you carry in. Pets are not allowed unless the trip specifically indicates "pets permitted". No firearms. No electronic music devices.

for 6-7 miles along the south side of Bidwell Park to Five Mile below the golf course. Beautiful views along the way of the Sacramento Valley, Big Chico Creek and Upper Bidwell Park. A short car shuttle will be required. Bring lunch, water, \$ for drivers and sturdy shoes. Rain cancels. Meet at 9:30 A.M. at the Five Mile Parking Area. Leader: Jeanne, 899-9980; Asst. Leader: Alan, 891-8789 or ajmendoza@prodigy.net.

Wednesday, November 19—Marily Woodhouse, Sierra Club member with the Shasta Group, will present a slide program and update of clearcutting in Northern California by Sierra Pacific Industries (SPI). Meetings are held in the Conference Room of the Chico Public Library at East 1st Avenue and Sherman Way from 7 P.M. - 9 P.M. Meetings are open to the public and refreshments will be served.

Thursday, November 20 – Yahi Newsletter Folding. Join us to prepare and sort the Yahi Group newsletter for mailing. It only takes about an hour and we always have lots of fun. Volunteers are always needed. Call 343-9277 for directions and more info.

Sunday, November 23 – Loop Hike at Mendocino Tree Improvement Center (grade 1, class A). Join us as we walk both outside loops of the Mendocino Tree Center for a round trip of 3-4 miles. Well behaved dogs welcome. Wear comfortable shoes. Meet at 8 A.M. at Tree Center parking lot (Cramer Lane). Leader: Alan, 891-8789 or ajmendoza@prodigy.net.

Thursday, November 27 – Cross Country Ski and Snowshoe (grade 1, class A) Ski or snowshoe followed by Thanksgiving Dinner at the Mineral Lodge. If there isn't enough snow cover we'll take an easy hike. Meet at Chico Park & Ride at 8:30 A.M. Turkey dinner in Mineral 1:30 P.M. and return to Chico around 4:30-5 P.M. Cost: \$18 for dinner, plus \$ for drivers. Reservations required. Call Larry, 342-7998 for more info.

December

Saturday, December 6 – Cross Country Ski (grade 2, class A). We'll go where the snow is good. This is for people who own ski equipment. Bring ski gear, lunch, water, appropriate clothing and \$ for drivers. Call leader for meeting time and place. Leader: Larry, 342-7998.

Sunday, Dec. 14 - Volunteer Bell Ringing for the Salvation Army. Get in the Christmas spirit by helping the Salvation Army. Spend 1 to 2 hours bringing Christmas cheer to shoppers as you ring the Salvation Army Bell and help bring in donations for the less fortunate! If we can get 4 to 8 volunteers you'll only have to spend 1 to 2 hours helping a great cause in the name of the Sierra Club. Contact the leader for more details. Leader Dave Garcia 533-2357 or rangerdave@mynvw.com

Sierra Club Hike Classifications

Distance Rating	Elevation Gain Rating
Grade 1: up to 6 miles	Class A: up to 1000 feet
Grade 2: 6-10 miles	Class B: 1000-2000 feet
Grade 3: 10-15 miles	Class C: 2000-3000 feet
Grade 4: 15-20 miles	Class D: over 3000 feet
Grade 5: over 20 miles	

Full Moon Floats On the Sac River

The **Sacramento River Preservation Trust** is offering a series of three fall floats.

Two full moon floats from Irvine Finch to Scotty's Landing and a Sacramento River Bend area float.

- Sunday, September 14, 2008
- Monday, October 13, 2008

Sacramento River Bend Area float

- Sunday, November 9th

Times and Cost to be announced.

More information please contact:

Yahi Group Contacts

General Contact

Linda Stuke: 530-345-2696: *She will relay inquiries or comments to the appropriate person.*

Executive Committee Officers

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Vice Chair—Marcia Toruno:

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Vice Chair—Bob Woods:

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Secretary- Norma Odell:

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and Greenville: Fred Binswanger:

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530-284-6856 or theshowers@frontiernet.net

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Plumas Natural Resources Management Tours



A Plumas County non-profit introduces visitors to community and natural resource management efforts .

The Sierra Institute's Center of Forestry hosts outdoor, educational tours that focus on the achievements of local forest and watershed management groups and their connection to the health of rural communities. The tours cover a broad array of rural issues including forest and watershed management, critical bird habitat, fire ecology, and local culture and history. The Center of Forestry aims to present all aspects of management issues and practices, allowing participants to form their own opinions about the topics. The Sierra Institute believes that rural community well-being and ecosystem management go hand in hand. The organization brings people from varied backgrounds together to work collectively and find solutions to tackle community and ecosystem issues.

Plumas County lies at the junction of the Sierra Nevada and Cascade mountain ranges, creating a unique and diverse habitat for vegetation, wildlife, and recreational human activity. Plumas County provides essential resources and services to California's population through both public and private means. A portion of the state's electricity is provided through Pacific Gas and Electric's powerhouses and reservoirs along the Feather River. In addition, the upper Feather River, along with Antelope Lake, Lake Davis, and Frenchman Lake, are part of the California State Water Project. The project is the nation's largest state-built water and power development and conveyance system. Logging also plays a prominent role in Northern California. Due to recent forest fires and salvage operations, many rural, mountain residents share the roads with logging trucks, practically year round. Natural resource management in and around many mountain communities is often not fully understood by the urban residents and consumers of the resources. To bridge the information gap, the Sierra Institute for Community and Environment provides informative, unbiased, educational tours for those interested in gaining a greater understanding of rural community well-being and natural resource management issues.

Founded in 1993, the Sierra Institute is a non-governmental, non-profit 501(c)3 research and education organization based in the northern Sierra Nevada town of Taylorsville, California. Please contact Jennifer Kaufmann at 530-284-1022 or through e-mail at jkaufmann@SierraInstitute.us, with any questions or to learn more about our tours and what we do. Our website can be found at www.sierrainstitute.us. We look forward to hearing from you!

Check upcoming Plumas Resources Management Tours at motherlode.sierraclub.org/yahi/

2009 Sierra Club Calendars

The Sierra Club Yahi Group, as a fund raising event, will be selling both the beautiful wall calendars and smaller engagement books again this year.

Look for Laura at the Farmers Market or call Joanne at 893-2154 to pickup yours. They make nice, fairly inexpensive gifts at \$12.00 and/or help keep you organized. In addition they lift your spirits to see that sparkling stream when it cold and rainy outside or banks of snow when it is 110! All that for only \$12.00. They will also be at all meetings starting sometime in August.

Death Traps

I noticed some splashing in a gallon jug of water on our patio, and when I investigated there was a tree frog trapped inside, treading water, unable to climb toward the small opening overhead. It would have perished in its beloved water element if the Good Gardener Jo hadn't come to the rescue.

I have seen food containers along roadways that become traps, and in the woods where an empty bottle or can was tossed aside it becomes a gruesome side of litter when an animal slips inside and can't get out. You find it especially in rain-filled bottles where a creature was trying to get a drink and slipped into the pit of no return. Insects slide into that trap, too.

Mankind's castoffs have endangered the lives of countless creatures, the real downside of litter. At Lake Merritt Wildlife Refuge we were constantly seeing birds with their heads stuck in a plastic six-pack carrier. That is usually fatal as it interferes with feeding or it chokes the bird to death. When pop-top soda cans had the throwaway kind of tab, ducks would get their beaks stuck in the rings. It was an improvement when the pop-top stayed with the can.

Another wildlife peril is the monofilament fishing line that is strewn around waterways. It is indestructible, and a bird that gets a loop around head or leg is doomed. It cuts off circulation, especially on legs. By the time they weaken to the point you can catch them, they are beyond recovery.

At camp one time, we found a housecat that had got an empty meat can stuck on its head and it had suffocated. I can still remember the gagging reaction of my seven-year-old son when he had the misfortune to see that tragedy. Garbage areas can be sites of mass destruction if that treacherous debris isn't covered quickly.

Birds run into a gauntlet of perils, or rather fly into destruction, when they crash into a window thinking it an open avenue for flight. Those marvelous wings also carry countless birds, especially birds of prey, into energy-gathering windmills, a big problem in the Altamont Pass near the Bay Area. Some get electrocuted on power lines when wings touch two lines.

My cousin in a motorhome in Colorado reported western bluebirds that had built a nest in their tailpipe! Luckily, they spotted the activity or it could have resulted in a death trap.

One of the biggest death traps, not only for animals but humans too, are the roadways where high-speed autos become lethal projectiles. Travel across several western states and you will encounter a variety of "flattened fauna," so called by a book of that name. In fact, the book made a kind of game out of identifying those deflated carcasses, which can be anything from jackrabbits, the most common, to snakes and even eagles. Scavengers try to feed on the dead bodies and they, too, become victims of the speed trap.

I moan every time I see a car-struck gray squirrel around Oroville. The long-tailed beauties have a habit of pausing as if to evaluate oncoming traffic, and gallop to the side too late. Give wildlife a brake when you can. Simply slowing a few miles per hour will give them a chance. Snakes crawl out on the sun-warmed pavement after sundown and become struck, sometimes on purpose, as there are those who consider all snakes bad.

Shakespeare says we are creatures that look before and after: the more surprising that we do not look round a little, and see what is passing under our very eyes. – Thomas Carlyle

Join the Sierra Club

Do something for the environment, for the YAH! group and for yourself. Join the Sierra Club Yahi Group. When you join through the Yahi Group website, the Yahi Group will receive a part of your membership fee to support local conservation efforts.

motherlode.sierraclub.org/yahi/

The Forest Surrounding Clair Tappaan Lodge

By Joel Brody, Member Clair Tappaan Lodge Committee

Clair Tappaan Lodge (CTL) is widely known as a winter ski lodge, but the Lodge hosts year round activities in the midst of the Tahoe Sierra. The Lodge owns 94 acres of forest land that fronts one mile of Donner Pass Road - historic Old Highway 40. The land north of Sierra Club property is largely Tahoe National Forest land, so the CTL property is an important buffer to unbridled development. The forest is there and visitors can use it to enjoy and to learn about nature. It is also the center of a debate on the history of the forest and what will be our stewardship strategies for the land in a time of developmental pressures and climate change.

There is quite a bit of variety in the small area that CTL owns and a lot of nature hiking throughout the area that begins from the north entrance of the Lodge. There are two main creeks going through our land including Lytton Creek, which has carved out scenic Lytton Gorge, just west of CTL, lying between the Lodge and Hutchinson Lodge. Lytton Creek was dammed for many years to help supply water to CTL. Sediment filled in above the dam creating a meadow and a fascinating, productive riparian area now that the dam has been removed. There are dry hillsides, cool, forested hollows, areas of glacial moraine and granite dominated hillsides. It's a nice selection of Sierra terrains for such a small area.

The current interest in the CTL forest began when Herb Holden, the previous CTL manager, started a project to rehabilitate CTL's forest lands. It was then thought that the area was essentially clear-cut during the construction of the railroad and the building of Truckee. There was also a need to be sure that CTL and Hutchinson Lodge were made safe from the danger of fire. The renewed interest and energy that has gone into the Lodge the last few years has focused more attention on the forest lands, since there are more year round visitors with more common interests in nature and forest preservation.

Recently Dr. Don Harkin, a retired forester, began studies on the CTL lands. He indeed found indications of extensive activity during the railroad period.

Teichert Ponds: A Living Entity?

Lying just to the east of Highway 99N between 20th Street and Humboldt Road are the Teichert Ponds. These 33+ acres of water and riparian growth have been owned by the City of Chico since 1999 and used as a detention basin since 1982. By detaining the inflowing water, debris settles out and some decomposition of organic material occurs.

These bodies of water, mined for gravel to build the freeway in the early 60s, have the characteristics of a living organism. Let me explain.

The sustenance of life is, of course, water. Like humans, what comes in determines the health of the body. The source of water has been and continues to be runoff, precipitation and groundwater. Unfortunately for the ponds, the water entering them from the watershed to the east contains residential and commercial chemicals harmful to life. It's like consuming too much negative cholesterol; it clogs the arteries.

This influx of high concentrations of nitrates and phosphates contributes to a condition known as eutrophication. Plugging of the culvert to Little Chico Creek, caused mainly by beaver construction, reduces outlet flow and the water temperature increases. This blockage (constipation, as it were) causes a cancerous growth of algae, elodea, and parrot's feather over the water surface. This roughly compares to melanoma in humans. This bloom, as it is called, shields light from penetrating the water, reducing photosynthesis and lowering dissolved oxygen in the ponds. This reduces oxygen/carbon dioxide exchange, causing aquatic life to go "belly-up" and reduces growth of submergents. As all of these organisms die, they sink to the bottom and become odoriferous. This is comparable to pneumonia in animals.

Increased volumes of water also are detrimental to pond-side vegetation. The roots are starved for oxygen by being drowned in water. It's like overeating. Too much of a good thing.

After many years of debate and study, the City of Chico on November 16, 2004 adopted a plan to treat this condition. Based on a year-long study by Jones and Stokes, an environmental consulting

firm from Sacramento, the city council voted to adopt the proposal.

There are many trees that had very slow growth until around 1870, when there was a sudden spurt of growth. This indicated that they were shaded by much larger trees. When the larger trees were removed, the smaller trees gained better access to sunlight and other resources for growth. However, there are also a number of trees that are fairly old. There are majestic Jeffery pines that are 400-500 years old that were spared the saw. Many of these were in areas where they could not be easily removed or have 'defects' that make them less than suitable for logging purposes.

Don has also engaged in debate as to what was the composition of the pre-Euro settlement forest. The current forest of lodgepole pine, red fir, white fir, Western white pine and some Jeffery pine may be quite representative of this ecosystem as opposed to some views of forest with a much larger percent of Jeffery pine.

The current prognostication envisions a somewhat drier future for the Sierras, with less snowfall and more rain as a consequence of climate change. The area has historically had a large snow pack at the end of the long winter that supplies most of the area's moisture as it slowly melts during the spring and early summer. The summer and fall are quite dry. Many feel that there will now be a longer dry period without the extended snowmelt. Fires have been a part of the evolution of the forest ecosystem over its development, but we have suppressed fires during the settlement period, which has produced changes in the forest structure and has made the area more prone to the catastrophic fires that we read about every year. Visitors can get a first hand introduction to these issues with a visit to CTL during the snow-free months.

We will be doing forest programs and work parties at CTL. If you are interested in helping with forest issues please contact Joel Brody (jrbrody@sbcglobal.net).

The plan calls for a separation of the deep pond to the east from the shallower ponds by the freeway. By the construction of a berm, the vegetative mat caused by eutrophication will then be skimmed off and controlled. Water will still flow into pond one by the perforations in the water table, precipitation, and a small amount from the nearby Heritage Oaks subdivision.

Ponds two and three will then be used exclusively for water treatment and detention, and pond one will be allowed to recover. A system of channels and conduits will be used to control flow between the two ponds. This bypass will permit drying of one pond while the other continues in use. Do you get the comparison to a heart bypass? Cleaning out the trash and killing off blooms will improve the health of both bodies of water.

Finally, the "excretory system" of the ponds will be improved by constructing a beaver-proof outlet. The flow of water through the system will promote regularity and reduce water temperature and algal blooms. Can you digest all this?

It may take five years to implement this corrective "surgery" and medication, but it is better than being bogged down!

Fire in the Feather River Canyon

The devastating dry lightning fires that struck Northern California on June 22 continued to burn after July 4, and a night wind reversal on July 6 sent suffocating smoke pouring down into the lowlands. Oroville was immersed about 2 A.M., affecting man and wildlife alike.

I watched a sparrow seeking food in the smoky morning light in Jo's garden, rather twitching its head and looking dazed, and I was reminded of the multitudes of wild animals that have also suffered in this devastating firestorm. They are exposed to the elements whether it be smoke, sleet, snow, rain or heat, yet they have to forage for daily food to keep alive.

It was a cruel blow, the June 2008 fires, blackening much of the normally green and lush canyon, obliterating zillions of insects and small animals and charring grand old trees that have clung to the walls for several hundred years. It is the start of a desert canyon if the rain levels go down, where large trees are absent and chaparral brushy communities take over. I mourn for the lost life, as each insect, each leaf has wondrous qualities worthy of study, art, or photography. You wonder how it can all be replaced, yet in time, the void will be slowly filled by adjoining biotas.

It was also the week that Oakland Feather River Camp started, with a couple hundred art students, seniors, and campers blanketed with irritating smoke, even though the camp was spared from lightning storm fires. You just can't get away from smoke in an open outdoor camp.

I am reminded of Wilson Canyon in Nevada. When I was rockhounding, I made that two-mile walk through scrub desert land to reach a gorge where my map indicated highly prized "green" agate wood was found. There were no trees visible at all, and a covey of chukar partridge sailed over the edge to disappear in the sage. What I found were beautiful limb casts of agate-wood sticking out from the eroded canyon walls, AND,



Butte Complex Fire: Photograph by Jeri Bills taken from the deck of her home on the west side of Feather River Canyon looking toward Concow.

gigantic petrified stumps, some still standing upright six feet high, partially charred, protruding along the slopes indicating that at one time, perhaps in a wetter period, trees had grown abundantly in that canyon...just like they have been growing in the Feather River Canyon. Fires had evidently swept down Wilson Canyon during a dry time, and the place never recovered, as a desert phase swept that part of Nevada. Is that the future for Feather River Canyon?

As more and more droughts strike various parts of the world, you wonder about the future of earth and its inhabitants. We know organisms have risen to heights

during periods of favorable weather and then dropped when climatic forces changed the nature of the habitats. Early swamps, seas that covered half a continent, redwoods in Nevada, the rise and fall of the dinosaurs, the Burgess shales that revealed thousands of species that became extinct, but through it all, Nature eventually made adjustments and a new surge of life took over. These are interesting scenarios...but vast periods of time are involved, and we like to see things happening while we're alive!

Meanwhile, I gasp in the smoke of the present reality, hardly able to comprehend the destruction of special nooks and unique vegetation. I will dread to look to see what favorite places have been changed from vibrant greens to haunting blacks. Only winter rains will bring back some species, and others may be lost for good. I shudder to think that the rare and scarce *Sedum albomarginatum* stonecrop may have been hit. I will be sorely dejected if Yellow Creek near Belden was burned. The loss of that steep-walled wooded canyon with the gold of maple and Indian rhubarb in the fall and its rich fauna of American dippers, mink, and bear would be a staggering blow to the nature devotee. Time will tell. In the meantime, help Smokey and his smoke-fighting people keep the smoke at a minimum...and pray for a sea-breeze.

Forebay Litter Cleanup: A Heaping Success

Water is the life blood of all living things. California State Parks' North Forebay Unit is a revealing example with its teeming diversity of wildlife. Beaver, Muskrat, River Otter, Bald Eagle, Osprey, Whittail Kite, Great Horned Owl, hordes of waterfowl, freshwater clam, Carp, and Western Pondhawk are just a few of the species found in this fabulous natural treasure full of life.

Maybe this is why 21 energetic volunteers braved a smoky blazing morning to help clean up the littered shoreline of this marvelous community resource. State Park Administrative Chief Kim Preston was on hand with her kayak and ready to get down and dirty wading through the rushes picking up trash. Kim is also a Committee Chair of Boy Scout Troop 29. She has worked at Lake Oroville for over 25 years and has never seen a volunteer cleanup project of this magnitude attempted. The two full dumpsters containing over one and one-half tons of trash were a testament to the cache of trash the sedges, rushes and willows had shrouded in concealment.

A decomposing bed mattress, a car bench seat adorned with flowers growing out of the springs, nearly a dozen tires with rims still attached, a dozen escaped and battered hazard buoys, vandalized park signs with posts still attached, hundreds of pounds of plastic containers, glass bottles, soda and beer cans, toys, balloons, and weathered worn-out flip-flops galore were just some of the aged trash collected along the shoreline.

The great success of this community volunteer project involved many organizations. The project was designed as a positive vision for the interaction and collaboration of community groups in promoting safe, clean and healthy waterways through volunteerism. The CSU, Chico Forebay Aquatic Center is a new and great community facility which rents kayaks, canoes, hydro-bikes, sailboats, catamarans and sculling boats, and provides lessons and aquatic camps. Manager Joel Robinson backed the cleanup project 100% by offering free kayak use to volunteers picking up trash. Lake Oroville Superintendent Steve Feazel approved the special events permit and provided a State Parks boat to haul the trash out. Park Maintenance Supervisor Shawnee Rose made sure there were extra trash dumpsters, trash bags and gloves.

Chico Paddleheads' co-president Calvin Hamilton was present with seven other members of the local kayak, canoe and rafting club. They were ready to rumble and pick up trash to help maintain and restore safe, clean, healthy waterways and promote an aquatic conservation ethic in our community. The Chico Paddleheads Club sponsors fun aquatic outings on California's waterways and promotes aquatic recreation which contribute to community cohesiveness, solidarity, productivity and self-worth.

The trash cleanup project was developed and coordinated by Sierra Club National Service Leader Dave Garcia. Dave has led extensive week-long service trips to Point Reyes National Seashore, Channel Islands National Park, Big Sur, and Rainbow Springs Florida State Park. Dave envisions volunteerism as a vital component to helping state and national parks solve their mounting maintenance and project workloads. Dave is also a local leader of the Sierra Club Yahi Group, which had six members participating in the Forebay cleanup. There were also eager and energetic community members from Oroville, Chico, Paradise, Magalia and Yankee Hill.

After signing in and listening to the safety talk, volunteers were amazed to learn that 500 billion to 1 trillion plastic bags are consumed annually worldwide, with most ending up as litter. This volume equates to 1 million plastic bags consumed per minute. The sadder news: plastic is forever, plastic only photo-degrades, and every piece of petroleum plastic ever made is still in existence, polluting our soil and waterways. Water, the life blood of all living things, is a vital resource we need to protect, maintain and keep clean, not only for our wildlife but as our drinking resource, and for crop irrigation.

Due to the poor air quality, there were eight people who had to cancel on the event. Overall, 21 volunteers answered the challenge and made the commitment to better our community, environment and waterways. These volunteers are truly the backbone of American democracy and the reason this nation is great. A community's power is based in its people, people who are willing to sacrifice their time and hard work for the betterment of all community members. This is what true volunteerism and public service are all about.

Approximately one and one-half miles of shoreline

were combed for trash. Everyone was safe and had fun exploring the wetlands, seeing the wildlife, and eating the fresh wild blackberries growing along the shoreline. To add fun and entertainment, prizes of aluminum water bottles and Chico Shopping Recycle Bags were awarded in a trash scavenger hunt. The project ended with chips, sales, hot dogs and beverages served in the shaded ramada area.

Besides visually observing the one and one-half tons of heaping trash collected, the real satisfaction was that many volunteers said we should do this more often, or at least once a year – with broad smiles of accomplishment on their faces.



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