



**Butte, Glenn, Lassen, Plumas & Tehama Counties**

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**Yahi Summer 2020 Outings and Events**  
*Coordinated by Alan Mendoza*

[www.sierraclub.org/mother-lode/yahi/outings](http://www.sierraclub.org/mother-lode/yahi/outings)

**Recycling Challenge**  
*By Betty Volker, Yahi ExCom*



Last fall Yahi Group volunteered to provide beverage glasses and coffee cups for a housing conference.

Jane Coleman and I volunteered to do research and procure the items needed. Of course we wanted to be environmentally friendly and be thrifty at the same time. We thought it would be an easy job. It was not: but it was a learning experience.

What I learned in the process:

Most paper coffee cups are made from virgin materials without the reuse of pre- or post-consumer recycled content. Paper cups are also typically lined with plastic, which allows consumers to contain hot or cold liquids without having to hold a soggy mess. Unfortunately, this plastic layer inherently makes an otherwise recyclable material (paper) unrecyclable, because there is no easy or efficient process to separate the two materials (paper and plastic).

Polystyrene or more commonly known as Styrofoam is another material used for coffee cups. Polystyrene foam is 95% air so it is not cost-effective to store or ship. It is often contaminated with food or drink, and it is difficult to clean because it is so porous. While it is technically able to be recycled, there is no market for it. Thus, all single-use coffee cups are not recyclable.

Compostable drinkware is made from PLA or polylactic acid, which is a fermented starch usually using GMO corn. Most communities do not have a municipal composting facility to properly handle their disposal. Unfortunately, they typically end up in the recycling stream and contaminate the load. In the absence of a composting facility, the correct disposal would be to send these cups to the landfill. Since they are made from corn, they pose the same issues that arise in sending organics to the landfill. When organics try to break down, they do so anaerobically and produce methane as a byproduct, which is 28x more potent as a greenhouse gas than CO2. PLA is a bioplastic and can take an estimated 100-1000 years to break down in the landfill. The closest composting facility in our area is in Yuba City.

We decided to use a corn-based product, because we were told the bioplastic would breakdown eventually in a home garden compost. Jane broke cups into small pieces and did the slow process of letting them compost. It was slow and it did take months!

At the housing conference- there was also the problem of distracted people throwing the food waste in the recycle bin. ( sigh! )

Trying to do the right thing is not easy or simple.

My conclusion: PLA is not the product to buy. It should not even be sold where there is not an appropriate composting facility. There seems to be no good answer to disposable products. It's probably best to rent glassware if you can afford it. Another option would be to purchase inexpensive mugs at a thrift store that can be washed and reused for events.

All the articles I have read are consistent in this thought- carrying our own reusable beverage container is the way to go.

## Yahi Group Is Seeking a New Treasurer

Paul Krause is stepping down as treasurer of the Yahi Group after 15 years of service. We seek a new treasurer as soon as possible.

The responsibilities of the treasurer are outlined below. The position has a time commitment of about 4-5 hours per month.

The new treasurer should have some bookkeeping skills and be able to balance a check-book at the end of the month. Responsibilities are as follow-

- Maintain checking account recording all revenues and expenses. (1-2 hours per month)
- Submit month-end reports to the executive committee. (one hour or less per month)
- Access the group's post office at least 2 times per month for mail.
- Track revenue sales and report for tax purposes any taxable income to the chapter treasurer. (1/2 hour per quarter).
- Manage and track any funding from Sierra Club headquarters. We current have two active funds and three closed funds. (From zero time most months to 2-3 hours per month occasionally)
- Submit year end reports to chapter. ( About 2-4 hours at year-end).

If you are interested contact Paul Krause [paul@paulkrause.com](mailto:paul@paulkrause.com) or Suzette Welch [book-sontape@rocketmail.com](mailto:book-sontape@rocketmail.com).

## Thank You, Laura Grossman

The Yahi Group wishes to thank Laura Grossman again this year for her very generous donation. Laura is a former Yahi ExCom member and past Chairperson. Her generosity has allowed us to continue to do projects to support the local environment.

Her contributions have helped the group donate \$1000 to Respectful Revolution, \$500 to Sunrise Movement Chico, and sent our conservation chair to conferences outside of Butte County.

We also used \$500 dollars to start a new program to pay for first time memberships for people who currently cannot afford to become club members. We offer this especially to young people to get them started with the group.

Laura's generous donations have also given our Outreach Chair Wendy LeMaster up to \$800 for her environmental outreach program with Ridgeview High Students in Paradise. This will be an ongoing program for a year to purchase plants and materials for testing of soil and water.

Laura has been a consistent and generous donor to the Yahi Group and has enabled us to invest in good environmental and educational programs locally. So again thank you Laura.

# Just a Few of Trump's Environmental Rollbacks

By Grace Maria Marvin, Conservation Chair

## INTRODUCTION

While the Harvard University Law program and other research organizations recently documented 95 environmental rollbacks by the Trump administration, the Covid virus is slowing down his aim to advance the interests of highly polluting industries. The oil industry is enduring large financial losses as people are driving less, while there is less demand for electricity because of the closure of factories and other work locations. Many of us are pleased to see cleaner air in our communities, large and small; that not only creates better breathing, fewer diseases and deaths, but it also temporarily slows down climate change. It would be wonderful if we could get rid of the virus, while getting the industry and government to recognize how this current *breather* in pollution ought to be continued post *Covid*. Instead, Andrew Wheeler, a former coal lobbyist, is currently granting waivers to industry so as to reduce the amount of monitoring, reporting, and prevention of hazardous wastes during the corona virus catastrophe.

## KEY ROLLBACKS

Although many did not like some of his immigration and foreign policies, the Obama Administration goals included a broad array of public health and energy policies aimed at slowing down climate change, as well as increased protection of waters, endangered species, and of public and tribal lands and monuments. Indeed, Trump's *America First* policies are a major rollback, since helping the economy (and therefore his electability) has been Trump's #1 goal; **he has been deregulating industries to create jobs and greater corporate profit at the expense of public health, air, water, and endangered species, tribal and public lands and global climate change.** Another goal: cutting back on taxes for corporations and the very wealthy and, then, spending less on governmental and international agencies that have regulations he does not like. Example: **he proposed cutting almost a third of money that went to the EPA for combatting toxic air and water, and he withdrew from the Paris Climate Agreement** with its costs and regulations. Trump has said his administration does not believe that carbon dioxide contributes to climate change. And, recently, he has been threatening U.S. funding for the World Health Organization.

His factual errors abound, for example, about coal and jobs. The country had been developing a large variety of more energy efficient and less expensive technologies (such as solar panel, hybrid engines, and wind), but **Trump wants to promote industries using fossil fuels, without considering the human costs of doing so.** For example, Trump said that environmental regulations have been stifling the coal industry, when he wants *more* coal mining jobs. But the prior loss of mining jobs has more to do with the increased mechanization of the mines and the greater expense of coal as compared to more efficient energy sources. Yet, Trump is attempting to weaken the Coal Ash Rule, by postponing deadlines for and decreasing the safety in disposal of dangerous Coal Ash.

**Trump has also been pushing more energy extraction on lands that were considered off limits in the Obama administration.** The Arctic National Wildlife Refuges (ANWR) has some of the purest waters and land, as well as an amazing diversity of animals and birds, on its more than 19 million acres. 80% of this land had been protected from gas and oil

development due to a Congressional law passed in 1980. ANWR's coastal plain is not protected by that law. Since 1980, studies have shown that there are billions of barrels there. Sadly, The BLM under the Trump administration issued the final environmental impact statement allowing an oil and gas leasing program to take place on ANWR. The Fish and Wildlife Service was accepting public comments until April 20, so we should have heard or soon will hear about developments on ANWR.

Speaking of lands that were once protected, another Trump roll back involves National Monuments. Several rulings and appeals on both sides have taken place regarding Trump's efforts to essentially **seize and utilize national monument property for economic interests**. For example, lands that have long been considered sacred to Native Americans have been targets of the Trump administration. Thus, our government has stripped away land protection from the Bear Ears and Grand Staircase Escalante National Monuments in southern Utah for timber removal, grazing, coal and other mining. One estimate is that 85% of Bear Ears tribal lands and archeological objects have been cut out for industrial uses.

Now that he has more opportunities to access fossil fuels, the Trump Administration is also **weakening regulations on methane gas and particulate emissions**. Large amounts of methane gas leakage occurs in the process of fracking, storing and transporting of oil and gas. If he gets his way, industry would no longer be responsible for measuring and preventing methane leaks. Remember the massive natural gas leak at Aliso Canyon, CA, where more than 80,000 tons of methane gas leaked? Keep in mind that low income, Black, and Latino communities have been especially harmed by methane leaks and release of fine particulate matter, because many are located near oil, gas, and chemical operations. Even before the corona virus situation, the American Lung Association found that nearly 9 million more people, this year than last, are breathing unhealthy air because of the rapidity of climate change: "more frequent and intense heat waves and wildfires are leading to more days with dangerously high levels of ozone and particulate matter." Yet Trump's EPA turned down appeals to improve the country's air quality on April 14, despite the public health requirements contained in the Clean Air Act.

Even Trump's **weakening of the Endangered Species Act** relates to his economic interests and disbelief in global warming. Again, Trump is seeking to help out fossil fuel industries -- as well as rural landowners, who want to make money by building more infrastructure. CNBC reported that removing protections for threatened animals and plants would decrease economic burdens on such landowners and "remove tools used by scientists to predict future harm to species from climate change."

Let's not forget our cars. Whereas policies were in place under Obama that increased energy efficiency and restricted vehicle pollution, **Trump finds efficiency goals and pollution rules too costly for car, truck, and oil companies**. California and other states continue fighting to retain their own chosen emission rates -- with lower rates actually encouraging the development of more zero emission, hybrid, and hydrogen powered vehicles.

A very important overall check on environmental destruction has been NEPA, the National Environmental Protection Act, which passed under Nixon's administration. This law is similar to California's CEQA (California Environmental Protection Act), but NEPA deals with the projects of federal agencies. NEPA enforcement entails review of these federal projects to prevent or disallow major negative environmental effects. But President Trump is saying that NEPA slows down infrastructure projects and hampers economic growth. As

reported in *High Country News*, however, “over the last decade full environmental impact statements have taken, on average, less than 5 years to complete.” Wheeler maintains that only direct and immediate effects of a project should be considered and not long-run or accumulative consequences: For example, a company might propose building a major highway in a low-income neighborhood, which means more traffic, and pollution and health issues, while it makes climate change worse. But these effects would be discounted by this Administration because they occur over time. **Trump has begun the process of reviewing NEPA to weaken it.**

And here’s a sad NEPA event. The 2015 hydraulic fracturing rule passed under Obama had requirements for fracking companies, including (1) stating what fracking chemicals are used and (2) covering ponds having fracking fluids in them. This rule never had time to get into effect, because it was halted and then overturned by a federal judge in 2016. The state of California, the Sierra Club and other organizations had sued saying that the repeal violated NEPA. But last month, the **Northern District Court of California upheld the Trump administration’s fracking repeal.** A Sierra Club lawyer reacted, saying, “Fracking on public and tribal lands puts our air, water, and communities at risk. The Trump Administration was wrong to rescind this commonsense protection, and it’s disappointing that the court is allowing this dangerous rollback to stand.” (*The Hill* (4/21/20))

### ***SOME POTENTIAL GOOD NEWS***

The Standing Rock Sioux of North Dakota had a major victory in April, along with people whom they rallied around the world with their cause. The Trump Administration ordered a 1200 mile pipeline be built near tribal lands. The tribe sued (twice actually) and the judge ruled that the Army Corps had not considered tribal interests in their environmental review. So the Tribe may have won “for good” this Spring when a new review was ordered. It was pointed out that such a review will take time to complete .... **ANOTHER REASON to get out the vote against Trump! May the Native and other Americans get their country back!**

## **Clair Tappaan**

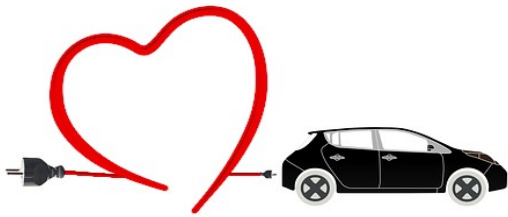
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# Now Is the Time To Start Thinking About Getting An Electric Car

*By Suzette Welch, Yahi Chair*



As we are enjoying cleaner air and clearer skies due to fewer cars out on the roads. I feel it is a good time to not only enjoy this but take some action to continue this state of affairs. When we get back to business as usual maybe it will be time to give a thought to replacing at least one of your cars with an electric car.

Electric cars are a lot more economical to run than traditional cars. Powering cars electrically is less expensive than powering a car with gas. Another cost saving is that there is almost no maintenance cost. All that our Nissan dealer needed to do to my Leaf during its two annual checkups was change the air filter. My husband has now taken over that project after looking at a YouTube how to video. On your own you should periodically check the brakes and tires and replace as necessary. This project should also include checking the fluids including coolants, windshield wiper fluid and brake fluid.

For those of us who have solar panels the fuel to power our electric vehicles is free. We planned on having an electric vehicle when we first got our solar panels and so got enough panels to include powering the car. We then added panels a year ago when we replaced our old gas heater and air conditioner with an electric heat pump which cools and heats our house. Our solar panel provider, Wing Solar, calculated how many extra panels we would need for that project. They did a good job because our annual PG&E bill last year was only eleven cents above the cost PG&E charges as a monthly service fee, \$10.35.

People who attended a Gateway Science Museum presentation on alternative energy discussing electric vehicles were concerned that they would have to discard the electric car batteries after 6 or 7 years. They thought that was the lifetime of electric car batteries. I have had my car for 8 years. The batteries when new held 75 miles per charge now hold 60 to 65 miles per charge. So I do have to charge a little more frequently but that is no big deal since the charger station is in my garage.

We just use our Leaf as an around town car but with the newer electric vehicles which have a range of around 200 miles. Using your electric vehicle as a trip car is more and more feasible as more charging stations are being built. AAA had an article in the Feb. 2020 VIA "Electric car trip in California and Oregon". It details what a trip involves as far as availability of charging stations, planning for charging as needed, and how this can add to the adventure of your trip. The article can be read online by GOOGLING the title.

Unfortunately tax credits and government incentives are gone or will be soon. The current administration believes oil and gas subsidies and promotion of fossil fuels is the way to go. If you feel differently please be sure to vote this fall and consider purchasing an electric vehicle.

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## Newsletter Information

*Yahi News* is published four times a year, in March, June, September, and December, by the Yahi Group of the Sierra Club, P.O. Box 2012, Chico, CA 95927. For changes in mailing address or email address, contact Suzette Welch, [booksontape@rocketmail.com](mailto:booksontape@rocketmail.com).

For submissions, comments, or inquiries, contact Louise Casey, [Yahinews@comcaset.net](mailto:Yahinews@comcaset.net). Please include name, phone number, 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.

*Yahi News* reserves the right to edit all submissions for reasons of space, clarity and potential libel. The opinions expressed by contributors are not necessarily those of the Sierra Club or the Yahi Group.

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