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**Yahi
Group**



Butte, Glenn, Lassen, Plumas & Tehama Counties

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Yahi Winter 2011/2012 Outings and Events

Coordinated by Alan Mendoza

<http://www.motherlode.sierraclub.org/yahi/outing.htm>



Yahi Holiday Party

On Saturday, December 10, meet us at Gooney Birds for the annual Yahi Holiday Dinner. There will be a social gathering from 6:00 pm to 7:00 pm, and dinner will begin at 7. Dinner tickets are \$30 each. For information and reservations, contact David McKinney 530-566-1500 or daviddryfly@comcast.net.

Support the Yahi Group

Buy Sierra Club Calendars and Holiday Cards Locally this year

and a larger percentage of the price will go to our local conservation efforts. 2012 Sierra Club holiday cards and engagement books will be available at Yahi events and local events where Yahi has a presence. Or call Joanne Gerson, 893-2154.

Yahi ExCom Elections

All Yahi members receive ballots to vote for people to represent them on the Executive Committee (ExCom) of the local Yahi chapter. This year we have two candidates: Lorna Cuncle and Carla Moreno.

Please take a few minutes to participate in this important process. Read the Candidates' Statements, and show your support by mailing your ballot by December 31, 2011.

Conservation Forum

They're Baaack!! Wal-Mart tries again in Paradise

Courtesy of Mike McLaughlin, Chair, Save Our Gateway

In 2007, after a seven year battle pitting a citizen's group called Save Our Gateway committee(SOG) against the combined forces of Paradise Town Hall, Sacramento Developer Mr. Fred Katz and the sentiments of many Paradise residents, plans for a Wal-Mart anchored Skyway Plaza Shopping Center collapsed in apparent defeat. Responsible for this surprising turn of events was the Butte County Superior Court sustained by the California Court of Appeals. These courts upheld the contentions of a SOG law suit stating that the Environmental Impact Review, which was required in the application process, did not meet the legal mandates of CEQA, the California Environmental Quality Act.



Land that was cleared for Skyway Plaza, ten years ago. Heavily wooded, slowly returning now. No permit then, as now, was required by county.

In 2012, residents of the town of Paradise will witness a return of Wal-Mart, in a second attempt to build a 160,000 sf Superstore on the same acreage previously designated. This time the company has applied in its own name. Giving some perspective to this, I want to offer a short chronology of events, bringing us up to the present day, and with a peek into the future.

In 2000, a developer, Mr. Fred Katz, appeared, unannounced, in town, quickly clearing 59 acres of trees and foliage on county property, in the median between the east and west corridors of the Skyway. Directly adjacent to the Town of Paradise line, the property was scraped clean of all vegetation, leaving surprised residents to wonder what in the world was going on. Finally, after the clearing was finished, the developer arranged a public meeting, announcing that plans had been made to build a very large shopping center, with promises of restaurants, a service station, small "mom and pop" type of stores and perhaps even an upscale hotel anchored to the Little Butte Creek Canyon rim. And for the anchor building, there might even be a Wal-Mart Super Store. This exciting news was met with loud and persistent objection by many of the 80 or so people in attendance.

Thus began a seven year process of Environmental Impact Reports, economic impact analysis, hearings, letters, recriminations and a slick public relations campaign by the Town and developer. An elephant in the room through the entire process was that Wal-Mart, although rarely mentioned, would be the anchor building and, perhaps, the only building in the project. Then, as now, Paradiseans were either adamantly for or against the project. No one was in the middle.

The Save Our Gateway committee was formed in February of 2001 and was the core of opposition throughout the process. It was structured around a steering committee of twelve Paradise residents, representing a cross section of the town's demographics. Additionally, there were close to 300 volunteers who performed all the necessary grassroots activities, such as attending the many hearings, sitting at information tables throughout town, doing phone banking, writing letters, and raising funds.

There is a dictum that citizens groups must accept when faced with battling land use issues against entrenched forces of local government and influential developers.. There are essentially only two ways to

win such a contest: by political means, or in the courts.

Politically, in order to succeed, the citizen's group must find a way to secure a majority of votes from the governing body, thus defeating the proposed development. An example is the Chico City Council's, refusal to allow Wal-Mart's request for expansion last year. The other political tactic, if the necessary votes are not forthcoming, is to have a referendum. Referendums function to make null and void a legislative action by a governing body. Signatures must be collected within a limited time frame, and if successful will force the issue onto the ballot box for all residents to decide.

Politically, Save Our Gateway lost on both counts. In 2006, the council voted 4 to 5 to accept Skyway Plaza. Our referendum went before the people in November of that year and we lost 60 to 40%.

The courts are the other option. Legal action against a project is conditioned on the prerequisite that there be an Environmental Impact Review(EIR) as required by CEQA,. The basis for a law suit is limited to the question of whether the particular EIR meets the requirements of CEQA. We challenged the EIR and in 2007 both the Butte County Superior Court and to a narrower degree the California 3rd Appellate Court upheld us, effectively ending the project.

And now Wal-Mart is back; this time coming under its own name. The process begins again. Wal-Mart applied to the town three years ago with essentially the same plan that the developer submitted a decade ago. After a long period of negotiation town staff accepted the application as complete, thereby beginning, once again, the inevitable process toward Council approval. It is expected that the Draft EIR will be made public by the end of the year, with hearings and public comment to begin in the spring.



Several empty buildings dot the Skyway Commercial District, some like this are in physical decay. Coming of Wal-Mart may compound the problem of blight.

The arguments against having a Wal-Mart at the entrance to town remain the same as before. Esthetic incompatibility, the loss of many existing businesses large and small, the fact that Wal-Mart will not bring in new money to the community, but will draw existing dollars to the edge of town, leaving empty buildings and physical deterioration behind, sending money out of state that now circulates through Paradise enhancing our economic health; one could go on and on. Of course, all these perceived problems multiply in impact because of the increased fragility of our town's recession damaged economy. One needs only drive through the business district along Skyway to witness the sadness of those empty store fronts.

Save Our Gateway is ready once again. We are gathering our volunteers. We are beginning to speak out once more. Although the physical makeup of the Town Council has changed, it appears the mind set hasn't. We hope we are wrong in this assessment. In any event we are ready to see this process through once more. I am, personally, a 35 year resident. Although not a retailer, I have been a businessman for most of those years. From my perspective the cost, economically, and socially, this town must pay if Wal-Mart succeeds will be tragic. Reason enough to continue the fight.

*Find out how you can help by contacting us through our website
<http://www.paradisesaveourgateway.com/contact-us.html>*

YAH! Club News

Grace Notes: Yah! Conservation News

By Grace Maria Marvin, Yah! Conservation Chair

1-From June 2-12, I was in the D.C. Area where I received excellent training from the S. Club Staff and experienced volunteers for several days of lobbying. One other person was from California, and about 16 others were from across the country. I was fortunate that the other Californian (Rick Galbreath) was a legislative aide to a member of the SF Board of Supervisors. Not only did he know how to talk very smoothly to the aides we visited, but he also was a very energetic person and had made such a lobbying trip to D. C. three times previously. Our **lobbying was part of the Sierra Club's Resilient Habitats Campaign** team about which you can read at [http://connect.sierraclub.org/project/Resilient Habitats Lobbies 2011/blog](http://connect.sierraclub.org/project/Resilient_Habitats_Lobbies_2011/blog).

2-Subsequently, I attended meetings of the **Citizens Water Watch in Chico** in June and July where we are still working on developing materials for the public explaining our goals. It was wonderful to hear both there and on the news that Rep. Wally Herger voted against a bill that would have given the Delta more access to north state water. I wrote him a note of thanks and reminded him that when I met with his legislative aide, the (only) item on which we agreed was that both Herger and the Sierra Club share an interest in preserving the natural resources we have here.

3-**Crystal Geysers in Orland:** the court decision was made at the end of August. Although the Sierra Club had not been party to this case, many of us are very excited about the outcome. Dave Garcia, Carol Perkins, and I were active participants. We (Save our Water Resources) won our case against Orland, such that an EIR will now have to be done IF Crystal Geysers goes ahead with plans to build a plant in Orland.

4-The (bad) **Dyer Mt.** decision will still be appealed. On Friday, August 28, I was involved in a Conference call with Sierra Watch leaders, and to discuss strategies. The appeal will be written by our lawyers sometime in September. On August 27, Terry Davis (Mother Lode Chapter coordinator) and I talked about a possible amicus brief that the Mother Lode Chapter may help fund.



Celebrate the Season with Yah!

Sunday, December 4 - Victorian Christmas Mistletoe Party at the Lott House in downtown Oroville. Free event. Enjoy a house tour and entertainment such as Bellringers! Meet at Chico Park N Ride at 11 AM. Bring lunch and water and carpool \$. Return at approx. 4:30. Leader; Jeanne, 899-9980; Asst. leaders: Annette, 872-3557 and Michelle, 865-9491.

Saturday, December 10 - Yah! Holiday Dinner at Gooney Birds. For dinner (\$30) we will have choice of salmon, chicken, fettuccine, grilled vegetables, rice, garlic potatoes, two types of salad, non-alcoholic drinks. Social gathering and drinks from 6-7. Dinner will be at 7:00 pm.

Sunday, December 18 - Christmas caroling/pot luck dinner. Let's spread the Christmas cheer to our community seniors with our sweet voices and bright smiles. Wear something festive! Song sheets provided. Musical instruments welcome. Bring a dish to share for the pot luck after singing in three senior centers. A water bottle is a must! Call to sign up and get directions, meeting place and time (afternoon). Leader: Jeanne, 899-9980; Asst. leader: Peggy, 343-9843.

The Conservation Forum

River Watcher: A Time for Harvest

By Rex Burress

Sometime in the fall most crops are harvested. Plucking the fruit of the vine is quite evident in Butte County, CA, when the rice fields are stripped of seeds, nuts gathered from the trees, and pumpkin patches glow orange in maturity.

Many plant species have worked all summer to prepare their seed-children for a new generation, but, alas, the bulk of the effort is consumed by man or beast so the original intentions never become fulfilled. Acorns are consumed in such abundance that it is almost a miracle when a new oak rises above the sapling stage. At one time, autochthons joined in the acorn harvest.

No wonder a walnut tree will perfect a 100,000 nuts in hopes that one or two can become a new tree! Grass seeds litter the fields by the billions, but seeds are nourishment and countless creatures consume them. Even Amerindians would flail the fields and garner baskets of tiny seeds. "A store of small strengths makes one strong!"

Conserving Planet Earth's natural resources was slow in coming. Most prehistoric tribes merely used plants and animals until they became scarce, and then would move on to a new location. There was space to do that in early times. Soil was depleted, forests cut, and animal habitats ravaged.

Protective laws were even slower in being applied, and some species were completely eliminated, as we have seen most graphically in the loss of the passenger pigeon. "There are so many they will always be here," harvesters said as they dynamited roosts and fed the birds to the hogs. The vast herds of bison fared no better, and they, too, almost slipped over the brink of oblivion.

During my rural days in Missouri during the 1940's, over-hunting had taken the deer, turkeys, beaver, otter, and made other furbearers scarce. We had to hunt hard to bag a few mink, raccoon, and rabbits, strictly managed by the Missouri Dept of Conservation, and they succeeded in restocking those missing components until now deer and turkey poise on over-population!

Thus it was that I rather grimaced when I saw a documentary on the harvest of water snakes in Cambodia. Efficient hunters were capturing them by the boatloads and it was apparent the marshes wouldn't sustain that invasion. There was no thought of the future—just produce for the moment—as often happens in modern resource extraction methods. The Asian hunters are very efficient, as was all too plainly shown by Hmong refugees who harvested along the Feather River at Oroville until they learned the laws. Amazon blowgun monkey hunters reap high mortality on their game, too.

Some food plants, such as corn, exist mostly through cultivation. Autumn and corn harvesting are good companions, especially in the Midwest, just as rice harvest is in the Sacramento Valley. But with the advent of mechanization, the romance was taken out of manual harvesting. I can hear it now: "Thump, thump, thump," as Dad husked the golden ears of corn in the crisp jungle and tossed them against the backboard of the iron-rimmed wagon. Of course, that was a wagon pulled by a team of horses, that hauled a full load of hard yellow corn-on-the-cob to the barn for scooping into the crib.

That was a time when I acted as 'water-boy,' but was more apt to hide from the invisible enemy in the towering stalk-field, or later, when Dad would whack the stout spent stems into cozy 'shocks,' make a 'tepee' hideaway, where I could be at home with squirrel and quail.

"How can we expect a harvest of thought who have not had a seed-time of character?"

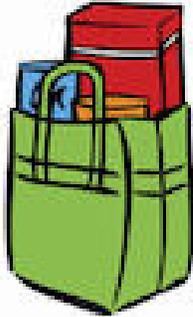
—Henry David Thoreau

"As I love nature, as I love singing birds, and gleaming stubble, and flowing rivers, and morning and evening, and summer and winter, I love thee, my Friend."

—Thoreau

The Conservation Forum

A Simple Gesture



A Simple Gesture is a door-to-door food collection program that will provide a steady supply of food to help feed the hungry in the communities of Paradise and Magalia, California.

<http://www.asimplegesture.org>

It is a grass roots food collection effort in which neighbor feeds neighbor by purchasing one or two extra non-perishable foods each time they go to the grocery store. These items are placed in a re-useable "cool green bag" picked up by volunteers every two months. Then the food gets distributed among six different food pantries on the Ridge.

The program was started by Jonathan and Karen Trivers. Jonathan Trivers explains "The need is real. In 2009 those living at or below poverty in Butte County was 20.3%. Families are forced to make terrible choices between their house and medical insurance or food and education or...."



"This downturn in the economy has hit young families and single parents the hardest. The younger the family (ages 19 to 34), the more likely they are to be in desperate economic straights. And 75 percent of single moms and their kids live in poverty. (His numbers come from the American Community Survey for the Census.)"

"For these families, it's no longer a question of eating the right food. It's whether they have enough food. The new poor, the new hungry are our children and grandchildren. It's brutal."

The Trivers moved to Paradise four years ago from Nova Scotia where they hosted a summer camp on their own property for disadvantaged and disabled children. The nonprofit camp's name was also A Simple Gesture. When the couple closed the camp and moved, the law required that as a nonprofit A Simple Gesture had to either give its money to a like charity or redirect it. The couple chose to redirect the money into fighting hunger.

"We looked at who was serving meals to the hungry and there were just two churches serving two lunches a week. There are 45 churches here, and we were underwhelmed by those who were not participating and thought they could do much better."

Through A Simple Gesture, the couple offered up a two-year financial promise to local churches willing to



Jonathan and Karen Trivers
Photo by Christine G.K.Lapado



either start or expand their free meal programs. Today, six Ridge churches and the Family Resource Center are serving meals seven days a week. That's an increase from 6,800 meals annually to 35,000.

While the increase in free meals was making a difference, the Trivers, who volunteered serving meals, saw firsthand it still wasn't enough. More and more families with young children were coming in needing not just a meal but groceries. The two local food pantries just didn't have enough food or money, said Karen Trivers.

"These families needed groceries and not just once a month or once in a while in emergencies. They were in emergency mode all the time," she said.

"Our deal with the food pantries was we'll help supply you with good food to give away. You have to allow people to come twice a month and get enough for a family of four," - Jonathan Trivers.

The local pantries agreed and several other pantries opened up. The first green bags were handed out on December 16, 2010, and Ridge residents quickly embraced the program. In the first pickup, February 2011, volunteers gathered, sorted and stocked food pantry shelves with 6000 pounds of food.

But it still wasn't enough. The couple wanted to add fresh foods to the pantries' offerings so "the cool green bag people," as the Trivers are known, enrolled Brian Marshall and Nancy Heinzl, owners of Saw Mill Creek Farm, into leasing an acre of land to grow organic produce for A Simple Gesture.

While Marshall and Heinzl do the majority of work on the food program's acre, developmentally disabled adults from another nonprofit, California Vocation, assist in harvesting, cool green bag delivery and pickup.

In October 2011, volunteers collected and stocked local food pantry shelves with 20,100 pounds of food from 1444 "greenbaggers". So far, the program has gathered 71,000 pounds of food, with one more pickup to go in its first year.

A Simple Gesture is modeled on similar project in Ashland, Ore., the Ashland Food Project. The Trivers have presented the program to people in other communities in Gridley/Biggs, Orland, an elementary school in Sacramento, Point Richmond, Ca., Cummings, Georgia and Cincinnati, Ohio.

"This program is one way the 'community takes care of its own;' not with grants or government help but members of the community taking care of their neighbors. It is the ultimate in sustainability, and there are many communities in your geographic area that should do this. We have a kit that we send to communities that are interested." -Karen Trivers

Every day of the week there are free meals offered by community organizations on the Ridge. A Simple Gesture is available at (530) 876-8448 and at www.asimplegesture.org.

Resources: Karen and Jonathan Trivers, A Simple Gestures Website, Paradise Post: "A Simple Gesture" by Paul Wellersdick (2/15/11), Enterprise Record: "We Can Feed Our Hungry" by Kyra Gottesman, (7/28/11), Chico News and Review: "Put It in the Cool Green Bag" by Christine Lapado (6/2/11)

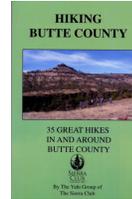


Ron Jones and Bob Irvine, Executive Director of California Vocation

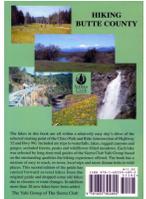
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Yahi Group Trail Guide



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Newsletter Information

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For submissions, comments and inquiries, please write to Sierra Club, Post Office Box 2012, Chico, CA 95927 or contact Susan Sears at 532-0149.

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, June 1, October 1. A one week extension is available if the submission is sent by e-mail and advance advisory has been provided that the article is forthcoming. Submissions will be returned if specifically requested and accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed envelope.

The right is reserved 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.