



SIERRA
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Yahi
Group



News Articles Programs Hikes and Outings Meetings Events

Parallel Universe: Highway 149 and the Beavers

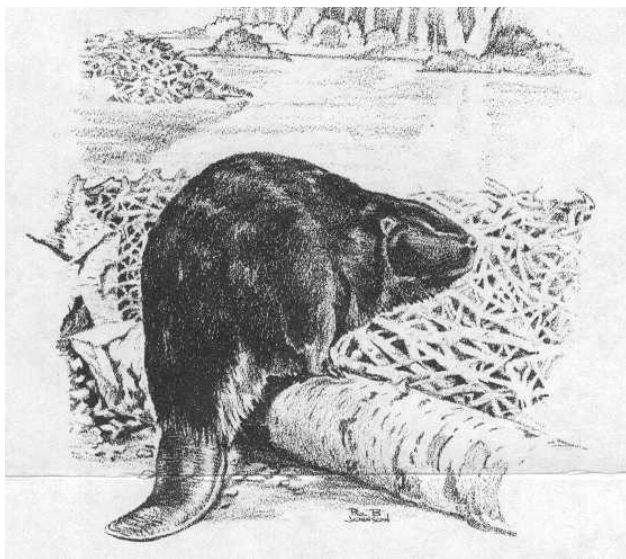
by Susan Sears

As the human population on Earth continues to explode, its effects are being felt everywhere, and Butte County is no exception. As businesses seek new markets, retirees and young families migrate, new homes and commercial enterprises spring up everywhere, and the pressure on the State's highway system mounts daily.

State Route 70, the main route serving Oroville, continues eastward up the Feather River Canyon, offering a lower-altitude alternative for truck traffic, especially during winter storms that close State Route 80 over the Sierra Nevada, or at least necessitate the use of tire chains.

State Route 149, a five-mile, two-lane highway, was built in 1975 to connect State Route 70 to State Route 99 and provide a more direct connection with Chico. This route was constructed without interchanges at its two ends, utilizing instead stop signs for left-turning traffic.

In the 1970s, humans were still pretty much adapting the environment to suit their own needs,



with little thought to the consequences.

Photo from California Department of Fish and Game Wildlife Leaflet "Beaver"

The beaver is the largest member of the rodent family in North America. It is the only wild animal that actually changes its environment to suit its needs.

Beavers were trapped nearly to extinction by the

end of the 19th Century. In 1912, the season was entirely closed, and kept closed for the next 35 years. Then, from 1945 to 1955, the Department of Fish and Game (DFG) transplanted 3,000 beavers into all the suitable waters in California.

The operation of a successful beaver colony, with its series of dams and lodges, is one of nature's wonders. In a restricted area like a small valley, beavers soon multiply beyond the carrying capacity of the valley.

If they are not reduced sharply in numbers each year, they soon eat themselves out of house and home by utilizing the regrowth faster than it can be replaced. The beavers must then migrate. This whole cycle takes place in a few short years.

State Route 149 may have unknowingly been cut through a large population of Butte County Meadowfoam, which is considered rare and endangered. Endemic to Butte County, it flourishes at the edges of vernal pools. Of the 16 known sites, with fewer than 200,000 plants altogether, the State Route 149 site ranks third in size, with an estimated 17,575 plants.

The construction of State Route 149 also included roadside ditches for drainage, so while one species was impacted, another was given a golden opportunity.

The beavers along State Route 149 have transformed a small roadside ditch into a 23-acre (and still growing) wetland which now includes numerous dams and as many as three beaver lodges.

Beavers eat bark, twigs, roots, bulbs, grasses and tules all of which flourish in the wetlands the beavers create.

Beaver mating season is February, with most litters born in April or May. The kits stay in the lodge until their second year, when they are driven out to start a colony of their own.

The State Route 70/149 intersection, as presently configured, is particularly dangerous because it involves one road (SR 70) traversing a gentle

curve at 55-mph speeds in both directions. Accidents occur when drivers seeking to make left turns either fail to see or incorrectly estimate the speed of the oncoming traffic.

Mike Mitchell, Public Information Officer at the Oroville office of the California Highway Patrol, shared some statistics and his thoughts on the Highway 70/149 interchange: "If this were such a dangerous intersection, we'd have crashes there every day."

Nonetheless, in the period from January 1, 1998 through July 15, 2002, there were 53 accidents at this intersection, with 2 fatalities and 22 injuries.

Another State agency, the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, acknowledged the danger of this intersection during the "Poe" and "70" fires of 2001, when personnel were staged at fire camps in Durham Park and the Silver Dollar Fairgrounds in Chico. Firefighters and auxiliary personnel were instructed to avoid the 70/149 intersection altogether, utilizing Durham Pentz Road instead.

Meanwhile, the 149 Beavers' home continues to grow. Today the year-round water supports more plant life, which attracts the thirsty and hungry wildlife of the area, and the welcome mat, is now out for many more species, both predator and prey: Virginia Opossum, Northern River Otter, Mountain Lion, Striped Skunk, Common Porcupine, Coyote, Red Fox, Grey Fox, Bobcat, Ringtail Cat, Jackrabbit, Muskrat, and miscellaneous rodents.

DFG Biologist: Henry Lomeli says there are now at least a dozen beavers in residence along Highway 149, but he's more concerned about the River Otters. "I've picked up five dead ones on the road." Lomeli would like to see a square culvert-type undercrossing to help the animals stay out of harm's way.

Judged by human standards, the River Otter is a fun-loving animal. When not engaged in

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Club News

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Fall

Joe Dudek

If you've ever been fortunate enough to have been part of a Sierra Club outing led by Joe Dudek, you may well remember Joe gathering the group in a circle and having each participant introduce themselves. Then he would say in a very serious tone, nodding his head at each person, "You are very important to me, each one of you. I really mean that."

Making people feel welcome was something that Joe always did for the 35 years he led hikes, cross-country ski and snowshoe trips for the Great Lakes and Mother Lode chapters of the Sierra Club.

And that was one of the reasons Joe earned the Oliver Kehrlein award which was presented to him on February 23 at Sierra Club's national awards banquet in San Francisco.

If you know Joe, you know how he loves to tell stories, and though an acceptance speech was not part of the evening's agenda, Joe was allowed to

About this Newsletter

SIERRA CLUB 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.

POSTMASTER: Please send address changes to Sierra Club, Post Office Box 2012, Chico, CA 95927.

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 Goodie Sweatt, 530-849-3988. 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 email 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.

From the Ex-Com:

An issue which is currently stirring up local groups and chapters in the Sierra Club is the proposal to drop club support of mountain biking.

Mountain Biking

The current club policy on mountain biking ("The Park City Accord of 1994") is to not oppose it as long as it does not take place in national parks or designated wilderness areas and is done in a responsible manner on trails. Those wanting to change the club's policy want opposition to any mountain biking on dirt trails. Their argument is that bikes are destructive to trails by creating ruts, widening them and removing topsoil, allow people to go long distances into fragile areas, endanger wildlife and intimidate other people on trails and destroy the tranquility of the wilderness. They also think mountain biking sets a bad example for children that rough treatment of natural areas is okay and directly contradict the club's mission to preserve and protect unique outdoor areas.

Those in favor of keeping the current club policy on mountain biking cite studies showing no more serious damage to trails than from hiking, the support mountain bikers give to environmental issues and trail maintenance, the need for the Sierra Club to be inclusive rather than exclusive and that biking as a non-mechanized means of transportation sets a good example for others. In addition, they believe that having the Sierra Club lead mountain biking trips in non-fragile areas encourages responsible behavior among the mountain biking community.

What do you think? If you feel strongly

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Sunlight was filtering down through the pecan trees on Bird Street one sunny Sunday morning, and in the backlight I could see some kind of particles drifting earthward. Gravity was at work, relentlessly tugging at all tangle objects right down to the finest dust floaters.

It was subtly apparent that everything was, and is, in the process of a fallout. Seeds, leaves, feathers, and rain will fallout from their mother maker, and, I, too, will fallout if I trip or am knocked there by a flying brick. Everything returns to Mother Earth. Breezes stir up fine particles of dust-sized proportions and such things slowly fall, but some dusty condition is constantly apparent in our atmosphere, which is partly the reason we have diffusion of light.

Although Oakland and the Bay Area--and Los Angeles!--have their share of smog days--especially when the wind turns the wrong way--the blemished air condition is also apparent around the Sacramento Valley and the Feather River foothills, where contaminants cast off by agriculture burning and the cultivation of fields and the usage of fuels mars many a fine day. A haze usually lurks on the horizon and around congested areas, and rare is the day when there is a hundred- mile visibility.

Some of those airborne pollutants span the globe, and it was alarming to read that even on Hawaii's 13,677-foot mountain, Mauna Loa, monitoring stations record arsenic, copper and zinc that was kicked into the atmosphere five or ten days earlier thousands of miles away by smelters in China. The United States recorded the highest atmospheric concentrations of China-caused microscopic aerosol arsenic ever seen at Jarbidge, Nevada, population 12--a most remote place where rock hounds can drive for hours to reach agate-producing places like Texas Springs and see no sign of civilization. China pollutes the United States with aerosol pollutants, and the United States pollutes Europe via the wind system. "We live in a small world; we breathe each other's air."

Aerosol pollution, strewn high into the atmosphere by the jet stream, has the potential to dilute sunlight and affect crops as well as cool the planet by shading, or produce a greenhouse effect. I don't think it does our lungs or mental disposition any good either to know we are bombarded by things we would rather not inhale. Then we also have to contend with second-hand tobacco smoke!

As worrisome as such atmospheric news is, we are rather helpless to attain an immediate solution. Commerce and the economy-exercises are the name of the game. "Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers; little we see in Nature that is ours." Wordsworth. We are more attuned to nearby evidence of environmental fallout from visible things like smokestacks and skyscrapers than aerosol arsenic from China. Or neighborhood smoke. I was on the way to the river by way of Blue Oak Meadow Trail when visibility was suddenly glazed over by a veil of smoke. It was a neighbor burning a pile of green leaves, and the smoke fallout was intense. There is a garbage barrel service providing a way of disposing vegetation trimmings, but many people, including

rice farmers, revert to fire as a convenient way out, unaware or uncaring about the effects to the atmosphere.

We are also attuned to nearby forest fallout. A gray pine had fallen across the trail, a massive falldown that must have crashed on the hillside with resounding force. Yet, I wonder if any human heard the violence that must have occurred, as even Richard, the caretaker, had not heard it fall two hundred yards from his camper. I'm sure a considerable number of the woodland denizens must have heard. The jackrabbits that flee across the meadows, ever nervous and on the alert for deadly things, must have been startled. Predators abound, intent on a rabbit meal, and even the owls that had used the pine for perching must have been alarmed.

Along the river, the passageway was strewn with woody sycamore sticks that had fallen during a recent windstorm. There is no stopping it. Things grow upward, grow old, and crumble to the ground in a never-ending fallout of cellulitic compost in addition to the manmade industrial contribution.

To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven," and a time comes for the cottonwood seeds to infiltrate the skies with downy lightness and drift away to distant destinations. There is a time for pine pollen to be shaken to the ground and cover the clods with a yellow film of reproductive overflow. There is a time for clouds to crowd the sky and release a fallout of moisture overload, or retain the detrimental debris. There is a time when birds molt in the summer and fragile feathers drop softly to the surface of the earth.

Out in the late spring meadows, the shimmering grass stems dance easily in the breeze, their seed-children released to the fates of future entrenchment in Mother Earth. That summer tangle, that was so green and blooming in the early spring months, becomes a bristly field of toned tans to slowly crumble into the soil matrix and turn to dust. Of such is the cycle of living things. Grow up, fall down, rise on the wind, drop to the ground, forever trying to cling to the breast of the earth like children clustering around their parents. For the living, energy must be gathered from living things that have their source-roots woven into the matrix of all things that have fallen.

"If the clouds be full of rain, they empty themselves upon the earth: and if the tree fall toward the south, or toward the north, in the place where the tree falleth, there it shall be..."

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speak and soon had the crowd laughing and cheering.

And since I was the one privileged to accompany Joe to San Francisco, I got to hear other stories. There was the time the townspeople had to run and catch runaway horses on the streets of Winnipeg, Manitoba, where Joe was born. And in 1934 during the Depression, Joe and a friend hopped freight trains west from Chicago and landed in Colusa. There they spent the summer loading prune crates onto trucks.

Joe's father worked for the railroad like "everybody did," Joe told me, but Joe worked as a machinist, machine shop foreman and a tool and die maker. He and his wife Florence raised three children, two daughters and a son who still live in Chicago.

But Joe remembered the time he and his wife were visiting California and saw a sign for Paradise. He told her, "Paradise? Gee, we gotta explore that."

So when Joe retired in 1984, they did just that. They moved to Paradise and are living there still. Today Joe still gets out and hikes.

Like me, you may have hiked the Paradise flume trail with Joe, cross-country skied the McGowan Trail or snowshoed in Lassen Park. Whenever I hike Brokeoff Mountain or the Feather Falls trail, I often think of Joe because these were two of his favorite outings.

One time when we were hiking in a group along the flume in Paradise, Joe paused to look over the canyon and then got very serious. Sweeping his arm in an arc toward those magnificent pines Paradise is famous for, he told us the beautiful scene in front of us could be gone one day if the commercial logging companies have their way.

Joe worked hard to stop the logging, collecting more than 800 of the 3524 signatures he and other volunteers took before the Paradise Town Council.

Joe could be passionate about what he believed in, and he was quite passionate about the Paradise trees. It saddened him that they lost that fight, just like it saddened him to see the Great Lakes get progressively more polluted.

But Joe loves nature, and he loved sharing it with others. Only one year after joining the Sierra Club in 1965, Joe led his first hike at Illinois Beach State Park.

Said Joe, "It was in March after a big snowstorm and only one person showed up, a student from Mexico studying at North University... He loved hiking in the snow!"

Joe not only led outings for 35 years, but he helped train outing leaders for six years, spent three years as an outings committee chair, nominating committee chair and member of Paradise's General Plan Sub-committee on Conservation and Land Use. He even led one national outing in 1973 when he took a group on a 9-day backpack in the Nantahala Mountains in North Carolina on the Appalachian Trail.

Joe led his last hike at the age of 85, but his

Restore Hetch Hetchy

"Dam Hetch Hetchy! As well dam for water-tanks the people's cathedrals and churches, for no holier temple has ever been consecrated by the heart of man." -- John Muir

"Let me assure you that we have only begun to fight, and we are not going to rest until we have established the principle 'that our National parks shall be held forever inviolate,' and until we have demonstrated to the satisfaction of every one, including yourself, that the American people stand for that principle. We are going to keep up the good fight without fear or favor, 'if it shall take until doomsday.'" -- William Colby, Sierra Club leader, in a 1909 letter to Gifford Pinchot

Mention Hetch Hetchy Valley to Sierra Club members and their response is immediate: a heartfelt feeling of deep sadness for what has been lost, and a fervent hope that what has been lost can somehow be regained -- for Sierra Club members, for the people of the United States, for the people of the world, for the plants and animals, and for the glorious granite walls and booming waterfalls of Hetch Hetchy Valley.

Probably no environmental issue symbolizes the Sierra Club's historical role in protecting the Earth's natural wonders like its efforts to preserve and restore Hetch Hetchy Valley in Yosemite National Park.

Following a fierce nationwide debate led by John Muir and Will Colby of the Sierra Club, the City of San Francisco was authorized by the U.S. Congress, in the Raker Act of 1913, to construct a dam and reservoir on the Tuolumne River in Hetch Hetchy Valley in Yosemite National Park. The O'Shaughnessy Dam was completed in 1923 and, after the necessary pipelines and power houses were completed, San Francisco began using water from the Hetch Hetchy Reservoir for its water supply and electrical power generation.



John Muir, the first president of the Sierra Club and someone who is often called the "Father of our National Parks," spoke of Hetch Hetchy Valley as "a wonderfully exact counterpart" of Yosemite Valley, and therefore "one of nature's rarest and most precious mountain temples." Josiah D. Whitney, former State Geologist of California, stated that Hetch Hetchy Valley "is not on quite as grand a scale as [Yosemite] Valley; but if there were no Yosemite, the Hetch Hetchy would be fairly entitled to a world-wide fame; and, in spite of the superior attractions of the Yosemite, a visit to its counterpart may be recommended, if it be only to see how curiously nature has repeated herself."

In 1987, following Secretary of the Interior Donald Hodel's proposal to restore Hetch Hetchy



Valley, the Sierra Club's Board of Directors reaffirmed its "historic and fundamental opposition to the damming of the Tuolumne River in Yosemite National Park," and called upon "all interests to take an open minded, long view of this issue, and to study and assess alternatives to meeting their needs and concerns through alternative sources of water, power and revenues."

Hetch Hetchy Valley, in the Grand Canyon of the Tuolumne River, should be restored to its natural condition in order to allow "one of nature's rarest and most precious mountain temples" to be

available for public enjoyment, to be reintegrated into its natural ecological and biological systems, and to provide for scientific exploration.

In addition, Hetch Hetchy Valley should be restored in order to preserve the integrity and inviolate status of our National Parks. As a 1988 report prepared by the Bureau of Reclamation for the National Park Service states: "Such restoration would renew the national commitment to maintaining the integrity of the national park system and keep in perpetual conservation an irreplaceable and unique natural area."

In a letter and accompanying technical response to the Bureau of Reclamation's 1988 report, the

Sierra Club stated it favors options for Hetch Hetchy's restoration "that make fullest use of already developed [water] supplies and efficient management practices in the Tuolumne watershed, before additional supplies are developed." The Sierra Club's Hetch Hetchy Restoration Task Force is continuing the effort to find "win-win" technical/engineering solutions for restoring Hetch Hetchy Valley and satisfying the water and power concerns of the San Francisco Bay Area.

What You Can Do

The Sierra Club's Hetch Hetchy Restoration Task Force is spearheading the renewed effort to restore Hetch Hetchy Valley. Your involvement is welcomed. The Hetch Hetchy Restoration Task Force invites you to:

1) go on an outing to Hetch Hetchy, take photographs, and write articles about your experiences for Sierra Club newsletters and for newspapers of general circulation; 2) encourage your elected representatives to support Hetch Hetchy's restoration. Letters to United States Senators Barbara Boxer and Dianne Feinstein would be appreciated. Their mailing address is: Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510; 3) encourage your Sierra Club group and chapter leaders to take this issue seriously and to support the restoration of Hetch Hetchy. Recently, for example, the Executive Committee of the Yahi Group voted to support Hetch Hetchy's restoration; 4) visit the Sierra Club's Restore Hetch Hetchy website, which includes early and modern-day photographs and paintings about Hetch Hetchy, at: www.sierraclub.org/chapters/ca/hetchhetchy/; 5) contact me via e-mail: ron@hetchhetchy.org; and 6) volunteer your expertise (volunteer organizing and outreach, engineering, economics, geology, law, education). Thanks for your help! Together, we can, as John Muir said, "do something to make the mountains glad."

Highway 149 and the Beavers *(con't from p. 1)*

searching for food, it spends much of its waking hours both night and day playing "tag" and "follow the leader" with its pals. Built a lot like a dachshund, the River Otter has short legs and webbed feet, and is an excellent swimmer. It

(continued on p. 4)

makes its home in carefully concealed dens along the water's edge or in thick tules.

In the 1980s, talk began of constructing improvements to State Route 149, including interchanges at both ends. Surveyors roamed the area, environmental documents were prepared, funding was sought - and more time passed.

The new wildlife activity on the ground attracts notice from the air, as birds discover the bounty, too. Among the avian species that -could occur- in the 149 Beavers' home are the American Goldfinch, American Kestrel, Bald Eagle, Belted Kingfisher, Flycatcher, Osprey, Hawks, Egrets, Wrens, Phoebe, Ravens, Magpies and Starlings.

In the 1990s, Caltrans began converting to the metric system. Now, in their documentation, everything is expressed in feet and meters, acres and hectares, and the volume of paperwork has grown, as evidenced by the mind-boggling size and complexity of the documents themselves.

Now the beavers of State Route 149 are a force to be reckoned with, and Caltrans must take them into account, along with the concerns about Meadowfoam.

~~*New plans are now in the works for State two interchanges. At the 70/149 end, the plan includes a*~~

Getting Out

Fall 2002

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Sierra Club Outings Leader Training

Ever since John Muir advised us to "climb the mountains and get their good tidings" Sierra Club members have been avidly getting out in groups to special places and events. Last year over 250,000 people participated in Sierra Club Outings. The club currently has about 5000 outings leaders. If you are interested in possibly becoming an outings leader for the Yahli Group we will be conducting a complete training class on September 14 in Chico. The class will be from 9AM to 3PM with a lunch break. At the class you will learn all the skills needed to lead others including how to plan an outing, communication skills, location and route planning and emergency/safety management.

What's in it for you? A chance to take people to places or areas you love and share it with them, rigorous outdoor wilderness training, standard Sierra Club liability insurance for your trip, free comprehensive First Aid training and an opportunity to join a group of leaders that have a great deal of fun year-round. You'll also be eligible to tap into the vast Sierra Club outings network of leaders all over the U.S and attend weekend national club outings conferences. Your options for trip ideas are wide-open: day hikes, evening dinner walks, bird-watching trips, bicycling, rafting/canoeing, river and canyon exploration, service outings, multi-day backpacking trips, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, car camping, peak climbs and local community events.

The Yahli Group currently has over 30 volunteer outings leaders. Many of them have been leading outings for over 10 years. A hidden benefit of leading outings is the wonderful people who come on Sierra Club outings and the camaraderie that comes from being with others who care about wild places. Participants tend to be well-educated, easy to get along with and often have special knowledge to share with others about forestry,

Yahli 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 Yahli 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.

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. A customary amount is 6 cents per mile per passenger depending on the vehicle, the number of passengers, and the road conditions. 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 on the back page or on the web site.

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.

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.

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.

Young people: Please consult with the leader for a decision as to whether the outing is appropriate for a youth, whether accompanied by an adult or not. Any person under 18 not accompanied by a parent must have a written parental authorization to give to the outing leader. Forms may be obtained in advance from the outing leader or from the Outings Committee Chair at 872-0419. The completed form is required to provide for emergency medical care if needed.

Volunteer

These are some of the areas where the local Yahli Group can use your help. If no specific project contact is listed, please contact Christy Strauch, 891-0500 or christy@shocking.com.

1. volunteer to help the Forest Service, BLM and State of California maintain hiking trails. Contact Alan Mendoza at 891-8789 or ajmendoza@prodigy.net.
2. volunteer to work on the Pacific Crest Trail this summer (projects in the Lassen, Plumas, Tahoe and Shasta-Trinity National Forest). Contact JoAnn Michael at 938-4826 or jomike@snowcrest.com.
3. volunteer to be on the Yahli Trail Guide committee or to suggest/walk/write up trails to be included in the Guide. Contact Louise Casey at 530-872-9159 or LouiseCasey@netscape.net.
4. volunteer to help with the Stop Skyway Mall project.
5. volunteer to attend specific meetings of City Councils, Town meetings and other public meetings where we know an important issue will be discussed. This is an observer role with a phone call or e-mail to the Ex-Com summarizing what was said.
6. volunteer to attend a few meetings of the Sacramento River Coalition when it is formed.



Hike Classifications

These are general guidelines. If there are questions, ask the outing leader.

Distance Rating

Grade 1: up to 6 miles

Grade 2: 6-10 miles

Grade 3: 10-15 miles

Grade 4: 15-20 miles

Grade 5: over 20 miles

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Yahi Group Fall Programs

Note new start time: **7:30 P.M.** All programs will be held in the Conference Room of the Butte County Library, Chico Branch, East First Avenue at Sherman.

September 12: "Afghanistan, a Look Back to 1972." Larry Crisman will be showing slides of his journey through Afghanistan and several other countries in the Middle East.

October 10: "Parks and Greenways." Susan Mason will update us on the latest happenings of neighborhood parks and greenways in the Chico area. This should also be of interest to Paradise residents as they struggle with the same problems.

November 16: "Death Valley, Land of Stark Beauty." Marvey Mueller will show us her slides and

Yahi Fall 2002 Outings

August / September

Saturday-Monday, August 31-Sept. 2 – Lassen Park Backpack (grade 4, class B). A moderate 3 day and 2 night trip. We'll enter the park from the southeast at the Juniper Lake Trailhead, hike into the Twin Lake area and make a base camp Saturday. On Sunday we will hike to the top of the spectacular Cinder Cone or do an alternate hike and then hike out on Monday. Self commissary. Call leader to reserve space and for more information. Leader: Kevin, 894-0438.

Saturday, September 7 – PCT Hike from Humboldt Summit Potential Wilderness to Carter Meadow (grade 2, class A). From the Humboldt Road in the proposed Humboldt Summit Wilderness at the northern-most end of Butte County, we'll hike a mostly level 7-mile route north along the Pacific Crest Trail to our car shuttle at Carter Meadow. Meet at Paradise Albertson's at 7:30AM or at the Chico Park & Ride at 8:15AM. Bring lunch, water, comfortable hiking boots, binoculars and \$ for drivers. Leader: Stephen Sayre, 876-1391 or sayhart@infostations.com, Asst. Leader: Jeanne, 345-2549.

Saturday, September 14 – Perennials & More Fundraiser Join the Sierra Club at the Chico Avenue Nursery to learn about fall planting and gardening. We will have a plant sale after taking a tour of the nursery. Meet at the Chico Avenue Nursery (3015 Chico Avenue) at 9:30AM. Leader: Goodie, 894-3988.

Saturday, September 14, 9AM to 3PM – New Outings Leader Training Do you enjoy the outdoors and sharing good times with others? Come join us to learn what's involved in becoming an outings leader for the Yahi Group. You will learn everything you need to know to guide others in the outdoors. There is no charge and no obligation! Call Alan, 891-8789 or

ajmendoza@prodigy.net to reserve a space and get the meeting location.

Sunday, September 15 – Indian Spring Trail to Butte Creek (grade 1, class A). Did you know there is a 1,987 acre public Recreation Area on

Butte Creek between Forest Ranch and De Sabla? Join us for an afternoon hike and swim at the south end of the Forks of Butte R.A. at its most car-friendly access point off the road to the De Sabla Powerhouse. Meet at Paradise Albertson's at 1:00 PM for a short caravan to the trailhead. From the graveled parking area we'll drop about 760' in elevation over about 1½ miles down to the creek on gentle switchbacks, enjoy the cool water, then return uphill by the same route late in the day. Bring plenty of drinking water and extra footwear for creek exploring (there's a small twin falls just upstream). BLM has found this stretch eligible for Wild & Scenic status. Rain cancels. Leader: Stephen Sayre, 876-1391.

Friday, September 20 – Concert in the Park A great night of music featuring traditional bluegrass with HIWAY 99. Meet at 6:30PM at Chico Paper Company (4th & Broadway). The concert is from 7PM to 8:30PM. Bring finger food to share: snacks and desserts. Lawn chairs are a good idea. Afterwards possible trip for yogurt or ice cream. Leader: Carla, 891-6977.

Saturday, September 21 – Sulphur Works to Ridge Lakes Dayhike (grade 1, class B). A visit to Lassen Park's mud pots and fumaroles, then a one-mile steep (1000') climb following the West Sulphur Creek to Ridge lakes. Here we'll enjoy the excellent vista and have lunch. Bring lunch, water, suitable footwear and \$for drivers and park entrance fee. A round-trip drive of about 110 miles. Rain cancels. Leader: Jeanne, 345-2549 or jw77@mail.csuchico.edu; Asst. Leader: Peggy, 343-9843. Meet at Chico Park & Ride at 8AM.

Saturday, September 21 – Humboldt Road Moonlight Walk (grade 1, class A). Celebrate the full moon with a walk down Humboldt Road. Great views of Chico and learn about the future of Humboldt Road. Bring comfortable footwear and a flashlight. Meet at the Chico Park & Ride at 6PM. Leader: Jan, 894-0438; Asst. Leader: Goodie, 894-3988.

October

Sunday, September 29 – Heart Lake National Recreation Trail (grade 1, class B). Come see why the Forest Service, the Yahi Group, Senator Boxer and many others have recommended this area as Wilderness. From the 17 Road just NW of

Mineral, we'll gain about 1700' in about 3 miles as we hike up to Heart Lake in the Potential Wilderness Area of the same name, just SW of Lassen Volcanic National Park. Meet at Paradise Albertson's at 7:30AM or at the Chico Park & Ride at 8:15AM. Bring lunch, water, and comfortable hiking boots. Heavy rain cancels. Leader: Stephen Sayre, 876-1391 or sayhart@infostations.com; Asst. Leader: Kevin, 894-0438.

Saturday-Sunday, October 5 & 6 – Thousand Lakes Wilderness Backpack (grade 2, class B). An overnight trip to the beautiful Thousand Lakes Wilderness north of Lassen Park. Along the way we'll see part of the 7000 acre proposed wilderness additions to the Thousand Lakes area, beautiful lakes and outstanding old-growth forests. Individual commissary. Call leader to reserve space and get meeting time and place. Leader: Kevin, 894-0438.

Saturday, October 12 –Flume Hike (grade 2, class A). Come to Paradise to walk the flat, lovely flume trail overlooking the west branch of the Feather River. The 6-mile trek takes us alongside and above the rushing flume, sometimes perched on the edge of the canyon. We'll find a nice spot down by the river to eat lunch. This will require a short, but steep climb. Not recommended for those afraid of heights or of walking on a narrow walkway above rushing water. A fairly rough, dirt road down to the flume. Bring lunch, water and \$ for drivers. Meet at Chico Park & Ride at 8:30AM or at NW corner of Paradise Albertson's parking lot at

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9AM. Return time around 2PM. Leader: Jeanne, 343-2549 or jw77@mail.csuchico.edu; Asst. Leader: Peggy, 343-9843.

Saturday, October 19 – Cross Country Ski Trail Maintenance Free cross country ski lessons for those who work on the Colby Meadows ski area. Tools furnished by the Forest Service. Bring work clothes, gloves, lunch and \$ for drivers (approx. a 75 mile round trip-drive). Meet at 8:30AM at the Chico Park & Ride. Return around 4PM. Leader: Larry, 342-7998.

November

Sunday, October 20 – Upper Bidwell Park Moonlight Hike (grade 2, class A). Come watch the sunset and the moon rise as we hike the upper rim trail, snake down to the canyon and return via the lovely Yahi Trail along the creek. This is an easy 8-mile loop with a 750' elevation gain early on. Meet at Horseshoe Lake at 5PM with dinner, water and flashlight. Return time 9PM. Leader: Jeanne, 343-2549 or jw@mail.csuchico.edu; Asst. Leader: Peggy, 343-9843.

Saturday-Sunday, October 26-27 – Caribou Wilderness Backpack (Grade 3, Class A)

A fairly non-strenuous overnighter among some of the prettiest alpine lakes you'll ever see. This Wilderness area is being proposed for some additions under Senator Boxers California Wild heritage Act of 2002. This would be a good trip for beginners. Individual commissary and bring standard backpacking equipment (Alan has extra backpacks, sleeping bags, stoves, other gear to lend). About a 180-mile round-trip drive. Call leader to reserve space and get meeting time and place. Leader: Kevin, 894-0438; Asst. Leaders: Jan, 894-0438 and Alan, 891-8789.

Saturday, November 2 – Cross Country Ski Trail Maintenance Free cross country ski lessons for those who work on the Colby Meadows ski area. Tools furnished by the Forest Service. Bring

work clothes, gloves, lunch and \$ for drivers (approx. a 75 mile round trip-drive). Meet at 8:30AM at the Chico Park & Ride. Return around 4PM. Leader: Larry, 342-7998.

Sunday, November 3 – Yahi Group Winter Planning Meeting & Pot-Luck Join us as we plan our outings for the winter December 1 – March 2. Everyone interested in outings is welcome. Bring a potluck dish to share and your own serveware. The Yahi Group will provide refreshments. Call for meeting time and place: Alan, 891-8789 or ajmendoza@prodigy.net

Saturday, November 9 - Deer Creek Day Hike (grade 2, class A). Take an 8-10-mile walk through the reds, yellows and greens of Fall as we follow the rush of Deer Creek. We'll begin at the trail just off of Highway 32. Bring water, lunch and carpool \$. Rain cancels. Return at approximately 4PM; about an 80-mile round-trip drive. Meet at Chico Park and Ride at 9 AM. Leader: Charles, 895-3045.

Wednesday, November 13 – Singles Evening Walk In The Park & Dinner (grade 1, class A). We'll meet at a home in the Avenues and take a nice walk via Bidwell Park to downtown for dinner before returning to the Avenues. Bring a flashlight and money for dinner. Call leader for meeting time and place and if rain threatens. Leader: Carol V, 343-9241.

Saturday, November 16 - Feather Falls Dayhike (grade 2, class B). Come see the lovely (640') Feather Falls in the autumn. An 8-mile rigorous loop with nice views of Frey Creek, Bald Rock Dome and the Feather River Canyon. The mostly shady trail is home to the colorful dogwood, big-leaf maple, black oak and madrone trees. If we're lucky we'll see the hatching of thousands of lady bugs prevalent in the fall. Wear boots and bring lunch, water and \$ for drivers. A 100-mile round-trip drive. Meet at the Chico Park & Ride at 8AM. Return time around 4:30PM. Rain cancels. Leader: Jeanne, 343-2549 or jw77@mail.csuchico.edu; Asst. Leader: Peggy, 343-9843.

Saturday, November 23 - 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 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 and sturdy shoes. Rain cancels. Meet at 8:30 AM at the Chico Park & Ride. Leader: Alan, 891-8789 or ajmendoza@prodigy.net.

Saturday, November 30 – Table Mountain Hike (grade 1, class A). Explore the dormant beauty of Table Mountain. If there are early fall rains, wildflowers may be present. Bring binoculars for watching birds, lunch, water and sturdy boots. Rain cancels. Meet at Chico Park & Ride at 9AM. Return time around 4-5PM. Leader: Charlie, 895-3045.

Saturday, December 7 – Cross Country Ski (grade 2, class B). We'll go skiing where the snow is good. This is for people who have their own equipment. Bring skis, boots, gloves, lunch, water, appropriate clothing and \$ for drivers. Call leader for meeting time and place. Leader: Larry, 342-7998.

Saturday, December 14 – Christmas Caroling/Pot Luck Dinner Let's spread some Christmas joy to our community seniors with your sweet voices and smiles. Wear Christmas attire. Musical instruments welcome. Song sheets provided. We'll practice first, carol at a few nursing homes and then return for a pot-luck dinner. Bring a dish to share and your favorite beverage. Call to sign-up and get directions to meeting place and time. Leader: Jeanne, 343-2549 or jw77@mail.csuchico.edu; Asst. Leader: Peggy, 343-9843.

Sunday, December 15 - Annual Yahi Group Christmas Dinner Join us at the Shadtree Restaurant for our annual Yahi Group Christmas

Directions to Meeting Places

Chico Park and Ride. From Highways 99 and 32, go east on 32 and make an immediate left onto Fir Street (it's only about 100 yards from Highway 99). We meet in the lot closest to the freeway.

Paradise Albertson's: The parking lot is at the corner of Wagstaff and Clark Roads; we meet in the northwest corner.

Horseshoe Lake parking lot (the old Rifle Range parking lot): Take East Avenue or Manzanita to Wildwood Avenue (the entrance to Upper Bidwell Park). Continue along the paved road over all the golf course speed bumps. When the speed bumps end you are almost there, so look to the left for the outhouses; we'll meet near there.

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Wildlife Need Habitat Off-Limit to Humans!

The Problem

Human beings think that we own, and have the right to dominate, every square inch of the Earth. That, besides being an absurd idea, is the basic reason why we are losing, worldwide, about 100 species per day. Habitat loss is at the top of every list of the primary reasons why species have become extinct or are in danger of becoming extinct.

Outright destruction of habitat (for example, paving it or turning it into farms, golf courses, housing developments, or parks) is not the only way that an area can become untenable (useless) as habitat. Anything that makes it unattractive or unavailable to a given species causes habitat loss. Have you ever wondered why most animals run away when we come near? It certainly isn't because they love having us around! Many animals simply will not tolerate the presence of humans. The grizzly bear and mountain lion are just two examples. The grizzly needs a huge territory, can smell and hear a human being from a great distance, and will avoid going near a road.

Humans are the ants at every other species' picnic. One of the first things that children learn about wild animals is that most of them run (fly, swim, slither, hop) away whenever we get close to them. (A few, such as mosquitoes, like having us around.) Some are more tolerant of us than others, but in any given area, there are at least some that don't like having us around.

Let's take as a premise that we do not want to cause any extinctions. I think that most people agree with that. But what follows, is that we have to set aside adequate habitat for all existing species, and that much of it must be human-free. That is not understood by most people, even most biologists. We claim to believe in the Golden Rule, but we apply it only to fellow humans. It has been said that "The measure of a culture is how well it treats its least powerful members". By this, our own measure, human society is a failure in its relations with the rest of creation.

In 4 million years of human evolution, there has never been an area off limits to humans -- an area which we deliberately choose not to enter so that the species that live there can flourish unmolested by humans. There are places called "wildlife sanctuaries", where human recreation, hunting, logging, oil drilling, or even mining are usually allowed. There are a few places where only biologists and land managers are allowed (e.g., California's condor sanctuary). There have been

places called "sacred," where only priests could go (in other words, they were "sacred" only to ordinary people). But to my knowledge, there has never been any place, however small, from which the human community has voluntarily excluded itself.

There has been a lot of talk in recent years about looking for life on other planets. For its sake, I hope we never find it! Why, after the inconsiderate way we have treated wildlife on this planet, should we be allowed to invade the even more fragile habitats that may be found in other places? While the thought of finding such life is intriguing, I haven't heard anyone suggest that we consider its feelings and wishes, e.g. the likelihood that it would want to be left alone (quite reasonable, considering our history!) How are we going to communicate with intelligent life on other planets, when we can't even communicate with the intelligent life on this planet? Besides, since the laws of physics and chemistry are universal, it is unlikely that any such organisms would be dramatically different from those on Earth.

If we are to preserve the other species with which we share the Earth, we need to set aside large, interconnected areas of habitat that are entirely off limits to humans ("pure habitat"). Our idea of what constitutes viable habitat is not important; what matters is how the wildlife who live there think. When a road is built through a habitat area, many species will not cross it, even though they are physically capable of doing so. For example, a bird that prefers dense forest may be afraid to cross such an open area where they may be vulnerable to attack by their predators. The result is a loss of habitat: a portion of their preferred mates, foods, and other resources have become effectively unavailable. This can reduce population sizes, cause inbreeding, impoverish their gene pool, and impair their ability to adapt to changing circumstances (such as global warming). It can lead to local (and eventually, final) extinction. Small, isolated populations can easily be wiped out by a fire or other disaster. Other species are not as flexible as we are. We can survive practically anywhere on Earth, and perhaps other places as well!

What Wildlife Need

Wildlife are not that different from us. Chimpanzees, for example, are genetically 98% identical with us. Therefore, we should expect that

they need just what we need: a place to live that contains all necessary resources (food, water, shelter, potential mates, etc.). It is not too hard to tell when animals are dissatisfied -- they vote with their feet; they die, or leave. The key is to look at things from the wildlife's point of view. As simple and obvious as it sounds, it is rarely done. For example, how often do road builders consider how wildlife will get across the road? My cat communicates clearly what he wants: when he wants to go out, he meows and then goes to the door and stares at the doorknob; when he is hungry, he leads me to the refrigerator or his dish. We are proud of our power of empathy, but rarely apply it to wildlife. We don't want to be bothered by wildlife in our homes; wildlife apparently feel the same.

Why Create Pure Habitat?

Some wildlife are sensitive to the presence of people. In order to preserve them, we need to create areas off-limits to humans. It's educational. Publicity about areas where people aren't allowed teaches people about what wildlife need, and how to preserve them.

Some animals are more dangerous to people or livestock than humans are willing to accept (e.g. tigers or grizzlies). The only way we can preserve such species is to grant them a place to live where there are no people or livestock. Otherwise, whenever they attack someone, we kill them, as recently happened to a tiger that attacked a zoo employee in India.

The more accessible an area is to people, the less it is respected. "Sacred" land is accorded the highest respect. "Terra incognita" was not even mapped. A map tells people (nonverbally) that it is okay to go there. So do trails. Roads, which are built by bulldozer, "say" that we can do anything we want to the land. Many park trails are now created by bulldozer. Even when bikes aren't allowed there, it is hard to keep them out, because the use of a bulldozer indicates that the land is not important, and that rough treatment won't hurt it. Part of being sacred is the feeling of mystery. Mapping, roads, and other aids to human access destroy much of that feeling of mystery. For example, a map trivializes all areas and reduces them to a few lines and colors on paper. Beauty (except for some "scenic highways") and biodiversity are generally ignored.

Wildlife generally prefer human-free habitat. Since they are so similar to us (98%, in the case of

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the chimpanzee, and probably a similar large percentage for every other species), we have very little excuse to treat them differently. If we deserve to be unmolested in our homes, so do they.

There are too many species on the Earth, and too little time, to study them all and determine their precise habitat requirements. The only safe course is to assume that they all need at least the habitat that they now occupy, and preferably, access to their traditional territory. Or, as Aldo Leopold said, we need to "save all the pieces."

Obviously, we need to experience wilderness in order to appreciate it. But equally obviously, we need to practice restraint, if we are to preserve that wilderness. Having areas completely off-limits to humans will remind us of that need to practice restraint. It is a reminder of the importance of humility, like the practice of saying grace before meals.

It is the right thing to do. Why not ask for what we want?

Practical Considerations

Parks, because they already provide some protection, are a good place to start building a network of wildlife sanctuaries. They provide the "seeds" of a "full-function" habitat-and-corridor matrix designed to preserve our biological heritage. But they need to be changed and renamed, because "parks" are, by definition and practice, places for pleasuring humans. Many parks should be allowed to revert to wilderness, and wilderness should be a place that we enter rarely, reverently, and on its own terms.

It is obviously nearly always impractical to maintain an area free of people by force. Probably the best that we can do is to remove all human artifacts, including nearby trails and roads. (This should be done soon, because it will become enormously more expensive, as soon as we run out of oil!) Then a few people may be able to enter the

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area, but at least it will be at their own risk (no helicopter rescues!). If we aren't going to go there, then we don't need to retain the area on maps; they can be "de-mapped" and replaced with a blank spot and the words "terra incognita". Roads and other rights-of-way are a particular problem. Due to the fragmenting effect of any such corridor, where it cannot avoid crossing a habitat area, it should, if possible, tunnel under the wildlife area,

so that wildlife can travel freely across it.

Where Should Wildlife Sanctuaries Be Located?

Everywhere. In large wilderness areas, there should be large wildlife sanctuaries, but even in cities, and back yards, where there is less viable habitat available, some of it should still be set aside for the exclusive use of wildlife, because (a) it is fair, and (b) it would serve to remind us to always keep wildlife in mind, just as indoor shrines in Japanese homes (and photos on our fireplace mantels) serve as a constant cue to remember gods and deceased relatives. After all, most human habitations are located on land that was also attractive to wildlife (e.g., near a source of drinking water).

Having pure habitat nearby is very educational. I am experimenting with setting aside a 20 x 20 foot area in my back yard as pure habitat. It gives me a good opportunity to learn how to cope with my feelings of curiosity about what is going on there, desire to "improve" it as habitat, the need for a way to maintain its pristinity in perpetuity, etc. Creating travel corridors is a major difficulty. However, recently I have heard that some San Francisco residents are tearing down their backyard fences in order to make it easier for wildlife to travel across the city.

Difficulties

What will wildlife and wildlands "managers" do for a living? Not all wildlife habitat will be closed to humans. They can manage the remainder. For those that will be closed, they can remove all human artifacts and invasive non-native species, restore the area to its "wild" condition, and educate the public about what they are doing.

Roads, as we discussed, fragment habitat. How can it be prevented? Probably most major roads should be replaced by rail lines, which are much narrower in relation to their carrying capacity, and present much less of a barrier to wildlife. For example, the time between trains is much greater than the interval between motor vehicles on a road. Besides, we will soon be running out of oil, and won't be able to justify keeping so many lane miles of roadway open for the dwindling number of cars and trucks. Many people may have to move. But compared to wildlife, people can pretty well take care of themselves. Wildlife, if we are to preserve them, must be given priority. They cannot protect themselves from us.

We have an instinct to explore; if an area is closed to us, that is exactly where we want to go! There are many areas of life where we need to practice restraint, and where we all benefit from it -- for example, in our relations with our family, friends, and community.

We still need access to wilderness in order to learn to appreciate it, but since we aren't closing all wilderness to people, that need can still be

Please Help: Contact Senator Feinstein in Support of S2535

By Michael J. Vandeman, Ph.D.

Please call or write to Senator Dianne Feinstein right away and spread word in your community about Wilderness legislation in US Congress. In late May Senator Barbara Boxer introduced S2535, the California Wild Heritage Act of 2002. This is a result of a four-year effort by wildland and river activists from over 200 member groups including California Wilderness Coalition, Sierra Club, Friends of the River, and The Wilderness Society to inventory and map the last remaining wild places on federal land in California. S2535 has narrowed a 7 million acre inventory of eligible public land down to 2.5 million through communication and conflict resolution with local stakeholders. Federal Wilderness legislation will permanently protect areas from motorized vehicles and logging. Wild and Scenic River designation precludes any new dams being constructed on designated rivers.

Your help is needed now to encourage Senator Dianne Feinstein to support S2535. After Senator Feinstein's support is secured, it will be easier obtain the support of other Senators across the nation who will vote in Washington DC on this bill.

S2535 names 77 Wilderness areas and 22 Wild and Scenic River segments around the state. Areas in the Eel River Basin include Mount Lassic, Sanhedrin Mountain, South Fork Eel, Elkhorn Ridge, Yuki, and additions to the existing Yolla Bolly-Middle Fork Eel and Snow Mountain Wilderness Areas. Black Butte Creek, a tributary of the Middle Fork Eel River, is the only North Coast Wild & Scenic River candidate named in S2535.

Other North Coast areas in S2535 include Cache Creek, King Range, Mad River Buttes, Underwood, and additions to Marble Mountain, Red Buttes, Russian Peak, Siskiyou, and Trinity Alps Wilderness Areas. South Fork Trinity River has special Salmon Restoration Area designations in S2535 which are named Chinquapin, Pattison, and South Fork Trinity. More information about the areas and the campaign may be found at www.californiawild.org. Please name these places in your letter to Senator Feinstein, especially areas near and dear to you.

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The Sierra Valley Lawsuit

Definitions: Quarry: “an open excavation or pit from which stone is obtained by digging, cutting, or blasting”. Aggregate: “a mixture of materials separable by mechanical means”.

The Sierra Valley lawsuit is an enigma wrapped in a conundrum. The issues of the lawsuit are breaking Sierra Valley’s General Plan: to accomplish spot zoning from agricultural land to mining and to subdivide an adjacent agricultural parcel to allow residential development.

This accommodation would serve a stone quarry many acres large called “Diamond S” Corporation which is owned by former Plumas County Supervisor Jim Smith and his wife. Besides owning the quarry, the Smiths hold its mineral rights and possess adjacent property. “Diamond S” is located in eastern Plumas County on County Road A23, a mile or so south of its intersection with State Route 70, and the small town of Beckwourth, CA.

The global issue is the alteration of the agricultural fabric of the unique open space of the Sierra Valley from rural zoning to urban and industrial development.

The box-shaped Sierra Valley, roughly three-quarters the size of Lake Tahoe, lies at nearly 5,000 feet elevation about a one-hour drive from Reno to the southeast and Truckee due south. The valley, a unique high mountain meadow, includes the eastern headwaters of the Feather River, which begins a coherent flow in the valley’s northwest corner. The vistas across the relatively flat 5,000 foot valley are always inspiring with the 9,000-foot Sierra Range to the west and south, and the Diamond Range to the east and north. Late into spring these mountains are snow-covered.

The Valley is reminiscent of America’s Old West. It is primarily cattle country, and California “Buckaroos” and their horses still tend their cattle as they have done since the mid-1800’s. The other major agricultural industry is alfalfa. The valley is also of importance to wildlife because it is a major bird flyway for west coast migration and a wintering refuge for northern Sierra deer herds.

The subversion of the Plumas County General Plan would serve well the district’s County Supervisor B.J. Pearson, a Realtor, and the re-zoning requirements of Pearson’s sponsors, Jim Smith, and Smith’s quarry operator, Albert Folchi. The rezoning is meant to extend the operational time (in years) of the quarry and allow operation of a road material and concrete recycling operation.

County Planning approved recycling by

redefining the standard of mining. The County also approved an asphalt “batch” plant via a “Special Use Permit” granted Smith in November of 1995. However, the time limit to build his asphalt plant expired so Smith next applied for an extension of the time to implement the project but this wound up in limbo because of the lawsuit.

Valley ranchers, many descendants of the original 1860 Swiss-Italian settlers, are politically conservative and usually at philosophical odds with the goals of conservationists. This has diffused opposition to the politically driven plans to urbanize and otherwise exploit the valley’s open space.

The three litigants against the rezoning are the Plumas Audubon Society, the Sierra Valley Organic Farm (owned by Gary Romano, another descendant of Folchi settlers), and Pat Wormington, another valley resident. The defendants are Plumas County and Jim Smith as the “Diamond S” Corporation (California Corporation C1009608).

Jim Smith ran for Supervisor of Plumas District 1 in 1988 and won his seat by just 7 votes. He served just one 4-year term during which the County approved amendments to the agricultural parcels he had purchased in 1976 from the Folchis, a prominent ranching family. Emilio Folchi originally owned the bulk of the western part of Sierra Valley, several thousands of acres. These Folchis are cousins of Smith’s close friend Albert Folchi, his quarry operator. Albert is the owner of Sierra Aggregates, the actual production side of the quarry operation.

Early on, Smith had floated the idea of a State prison for this site but predictably this was not well received. A fiberboard wafer plant was another of Smith’s failed ideas. Subsequent County approvals allowed Smith’s agricultural land to be developed as an open pit quarry and associated aggregate plant. The entire operation was to have terminated in 2006.

With the tremendous road rebuilding effort in the Feather River Canyon following the devastating floods of 1997, Smith’s and Folchi’s business boomed and more expansion seemed financially justified. By then Smith was no longer Supervisor and logic had entered the decision-making process regarding agricultural use in the Sierra Valley. A General Plan revision was in the making which would have protected rancher and agricultural property rights, as well as leaving open space for resident and migrating birds. It had taken almost 3 years to produce this

document after endless community meetings.

In November of 2000 a non-incumbent Supervisor candidate won election for Plumas County District 1 Supervisor, again by a handful of votes. Bob “B.J.” Pearson, a real estate operator and local land developer, had entered the scene. Pearson’s first official act was to marshal the conservative ranching group against the County’s proposed revision of the Valley’s General Plan. Pearson and the cattlemen perceived the revised plan to be a restriction of their property rights—too environmentally friendly—and succeeded in promptly defeating it. The present Plumas County General Plan is thus many years out of date (last revised in 1985) and any coherent modern update is remote. Pearson’s success was a prelude of things to come.

When he sat at Supervisor meetings involving Smith and Folchi requests, Pearson’s presence insured these meetings would be more contentious than usual. He aggressively pushed the other reluctant Supervisors to accept approvals that Smith had sought for years. These included permutations of multiple requests that revolved around the open pit mine, extension of the pit use until the year 2026, recycling of rocky materials, and residential rezoning. Because they were well attended by the opponents to spot rezoning of the Valley’s agricultural parcels, the Supervisors’ meetings involving Smith issues had always been spirited. Now these meetings became rancorous, driven by Pearson’s cantankerous personality. Within a year, the translation from agricultural preserve to the Smith plan had been accomplished by Pearson. The predictable outcome of the perceived cronyism by Supervisor Pearson for Jim Smith was a lawsuit against the County Board of Supervisors and Smith, and a petition to recall Supervisor Pearson.

Sierra Aggregates—owned, managed, and run by Albert Folchi and his sons—is a large operation which consists of 20 (ultimately 40) acres of a wedge-shaped open-pit surface mine on the upsloping side of a hill about ½ mile distant—and easily seen—from the main County road and about a mile from the Feather River. Albert is the quarry manager, stone harvester, and aggregate manufacturer; he owns the mining and fabrication equipment, and many of the hauling trucks. He employs 5 people who have removed as much as 100 tons of stone on a busy day. Up to 140 trucks in a day have been counted leaving his operation. The trucks are usually tandem type configurations.

The Folchis dynamite blast, dig out the stone, back hoe the material, machine process, crush, and mill the stone, separate it into different sizes and grades from small to boulder sizes, and with conveyors lift the stone to the surface. The open pit and plant consist of structures including a weighing station and containers for stone storage. The fully laden trucks are weighed before departure and Smith collects his fees based on the weight of stone removed. Jim Smith, as the Diamond S Corporation, owns the land and its contents.

Some stone is trucked directly to vendors with the US Forest Service road programs, who are large purchasers of the material. Although the State of California and the County do not purchase stone from the quarry for their road resurfacing purposes, the stone is used for road base and quarry boulders are used for roadside shoring or riprap. Other stone is stored and marketed directly from the Folchi Lumber and Construction yard on State Route 70, the main road in Beckwourth. Although the permit to build an asphalt plant was approved by the County, one has never been built, likely because Smith and Folchi have no ready market for their asphalt product. In part this is because their stone is not of sufficient quality for State and/or County resurfacing.

The lawsuit is based on Plumas County's violation of its own General Plan, particularly the spot zoning granted to Jim Smith. The lawsuit specifically seeks a Court writ that would direct Plumas County to set aside its approvals of Jim Smith's Diamond S open-pit quarry mine, disallow the quarry remaining open until 2026, and prevent fragmenting the second parcel of Smith's agricultural land into residential segments. The suit also demands the County perform an Environmental Impact Study (EIS) that is in compliance with the State of California's Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) guidelines. The suit is an effort to reverse Plumas Planning Department's alleged inadequate environmental studies, while Planning itself was ignoring the County's outdated General Plan and allowing spot zoning for Smith's operation.

The suit lists 23 specific issues claiming noncompliance with the CEQA requirements for environmental approvals. These encompass inadequate consideration of the alternatives to the quarry project, the extent of the quarry operation, mitigation of the quarry's effect on the Valley and its agriculture, the operation's traffic impact, inadequate response to public comments, a flawed project rationale and description, and of course the environmental issues revolving around dust, noise (dynamite

explosions and near-continuous truck traffic) and the impact on wildlife, the Feather River's water, and valley agriculture. The valley marshlands and Romano's organic vegetable farm are a few hundred yards downhill from the quarry/mining/aggregate plant.

Further suit details regarding the operation become convoluted when one considers that County Planning approved EIR number 39 (which fills a file drawer and a half) in 1981 to apply to its still presently active General Plan and then amended that EIR in 1997 with EIR number 63. This later amendment was designed to allow a zoning change from agricultural preserve (80-acre parcels) to "industrial in moderate opportunity with heavy industrial" zoning to allow for an extension of the time frame of the Smith operation and importation of stone materials for recycling. However, the Supervisors passed a resolution for "prime mining" zoning which meant Smith could only process material already on site; i.e., dig out his mountain of its remaining stone until the year 2026, but Smith wanted more than a time extension for his quarry. This led Plumas County Planning to formulate a definition of mining that allowed Smith to continue his open-pit mine operation but now included road material and concrete recycling. Ultimately, the recycling permutation of the rezoning definition for mining did not win the Supervisors' approval and is in limbo undergoing County environmental review, and also because of the lawsuit. The issue of asphalt fabrication is unresolved but could be activated by Smith if he decides to operate one under the terms of his 1995 use permit, and if his extension request is approved by the Supervisors.

The Sierra Valley lawsuit focuses on the technical difference between the environmental document #63 and the Plumas General Plan Amendment that the Supervisors unanimously passed for the Diamond S Corporation (Jim Smith)

on December 10, 2001. Environmental document #63 does not discuss the option of a "prime mining area" as a consideration for the Smith aggregate plant re-zoning but that is exactly what the Supervisors approved. Among the parade of confusing County rulings, counter-rulings, illogical definitions, and faulty environmental reviews, this is the major flaw in the County's logic and likely their most vulnerable position; this and similar inconsistencies are what the plaintiffs hope to exploit. The subdivision of the adjacent agricultural parcel into smaller 20-acre parcels was passed by the Supervisors at their December 10 meeting as well.

Michael Jackson, lawyer for the plaintiffs, also claims that the more global issues are the

Gray Lodge Update



County's acceptance of an outdated General Plan and the use of "spot zoning" to effect industrialization and urbanization. Jackson feels that if his lawsuit fails, then residents can expect the County modus operandi will be the "spot zoning" tool to obtain subdivision of most all open space in the remaining Plumas mountain meadows. Jackson speculates that the County focus is presently on Sierra Valley, but ultimate targets are likely the American, Indian, and Mohawk Valleys. If Jackson is not successful, he feels Plumas County can expect a drive for more intense urbanization of its landscape to enrich large, well-connected development interests. William W. Abbott, Esq., Jim Smith, Albert Folchi, and Bob "B.J." Pearson failed to respond to phone messages requesting an interview. As former Yankee manager Yogi Berra said, "You observe a lot by just watching."

The legal challenge to the Plumas County Board of Supervisor's decisions regarding the Diamond S Corporation and the aggregate plant amendments to the Plumas County's Sierra Valley General Plan will be heard in early December 2002 by Judge William W. Pangman, presiding Judge of the California State Superior Court of Sierra County. The proceedings will be held in Plumas County Superior Court rooms in Quincy and are open to the Public. If interested in attending, contact the Plumas County Superior Court Clerk in Quincy at 520 Main Street, Rm. 104, in Quincy, CA. 95971. Phone: (530) 283-6232 or (530) 283-6305 and quote case number 22707 to obtain specific information.

If interested in supporting the Plaintiffs in this case, donations can be made to the Plumas Audubon Society, P.O. Box 3877, Quincy, CA. 95971-3877, or call Jon Eisler, Treasurer, at 530-283-2323. Michael B. Jackson of Quincy will be representing the Plaintiffs, and County Counsel Shulman and William W. Abbott of

Last Words

Please Help *(continued from p. 9)*

What You Can Do to Help

Write to Senator Feinstein! Help convince Senator Feinstein to join Senator Boxer and Representatives Mike Thompson and Hilda Solis in supporting the California Wild Heritage Act of 2002. North Coast Congressman Mike Thompson introduced legislation in the House of Representatives to mirror the northern half of S2535, and introduced a bill for his own 1st Congressional District. Representative Hilda Solis from the Los Angeles area introduced a House bill to mirror the southern half of S2535. Their bills need additional support in the House.

How to Contribute a Most Effective Letter

Letterhead will catch the Congresspersons' attention, use or create as needed. Hand-written personal letters are more effective than forms and petitions. Emphasize your ties other than environment, such as civic committees, business, spiritual group, familiarity with any of the named places, etc. US Mail to the Capitol is still slowed for anthrax detection, so use the Congressperson's local office address. Senator Feinstein's San Francisco office is given in the sample letter below. Substitute your own thoughts for the suggested wording.

Phone number to call Senator Feinstein is (415) 393-0707.

Sample Letter

[date]
[your address]

Honorable Dianne Feinstein
C/O Chris Norem
One Post Street, Suite 2450
San Francisco CA 94104

Dear Senator,

I strongly support the California Wild Heritage Act of 2002. As a resident of [county], I believe that protecting the [named areas], will help preserve the water quality, wildlife habitat, scenery, and recreation that makes living here [or that makes visiting California] so special. As a [business owner/person, teacher, nurse, parent], I recognize the importance of wilderness to the [economy, spiritual health] of my community.

I particularly care about the [one or more named areas] because I have been hiking there since I was a kid. If it is preserved, I will be able to bring my own children there someday. [State your personal story about the wild places you love and want to see protected.]

As a champion of California's [or other state's] environment, please join Senator Boxer and Representatives Thompson and Solis in supporting this important legislation. Thank you for your past support of important environmental legislation.

Sincerely,
[signed]

Write a Letter to the Editor

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